

ECSTATIC DEVOTION: MUSICAL RAPTURE AND EROTIC DEATH IN
SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY ICONOGRAPHY,
OPERAS, AND ORATORIOS

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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There is little doubt among scholars that mysticism played a prominent role in early modern devotional practices. Stemming from a desire to guide – even compel – the individual toward heightened emotionality and an empathetic response to doctrinal subjects, theologians, artists, and composers focused their output on works aimed at stirring the laity’s affections. While the existence of mysticism in early modern literature and iconography is clear (e.g. the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius, or Bernini’s representation of Saint Teresa’s ecstasy), its presence in music is less easily identified.

This dissertation examines the intersection of music with the mystic concepts of divine love, ecstasy, and death, and how these themes are expressed in literature, iconography, and music from the late Middle Ages through the Baroque era. I begin by tracing correlations between death and musical rapture in writings by and about late medieval mystics and visionaries. While baroque representations of musical ecstasy are rooted in late-medieval concepts, they exhibit significant influence from societal changes that occurred during the Italian Renaissance, when Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Bembo, and Baldessar Castiglione rearticulated the incorporation of Neoplatonic philosophies within Christianity. As a result of the widespread dissemination of their writings, Renaissance

Neoplatonism became the preeminent philosophical frame for Renaissance and baroque literary, iconographic, and musical representations of ecstatic transcendence.

Of paramount importance to this study is how composers musically signaled female saints' erotic raptures in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian oratorios (a genre designed to instruct lay audiences in doctrinal matters while appealing to their senses through affective music), specifically those performed in Bologna, Modena, and Rome. The research presented here, in case studies from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, serves as a foundation for deciphering how established societal understandings of ecstasy and death as sensual, devotional events influenced late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century composers' musical representations of rapture, the performances of which resulted in the erotic objectification of female saints. Overall, I argue that the concept of ecstatic death – as it is described by medieval and early modern mystics, and depicted by early modern artists – is intrinsically tied to music as well as to contemporaneous devotional genres.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Above the tomb of Saint Dominic, in the Basilica di San Domenico of Bologna, Italy, is a painting by Guido Reni, *The Ecstasy of Saint Dominic*, depicting the saint as he ascends into heaven toward the Virgin Mary and the welcoming arms of her son, Jesus Christ. Dominic is bathed in light, a light that brightens as he ascends through the celestial spheres (see Figure 1). He follows, or perhaps he is drawn, by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, as it flies toward the center of the light: God. A variety of musical angels perform at Dominic's feet. Their sonorities accompany his journey to heaven; or, is their celestial music the cause of his ascent?



Figure 1. Guido Reni, *The Ecstasy of Saint Dominic* (1613), Bologna, Basilica of Saint Dominic.

Reni's depiction is only one of countless sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century images in and around the Papal States of saints whose entrances into the heavens feature musical angels. The topos is so prominent that music and musical instruments can be said to be two of the key iconological features of Counter-Reformation images; instruments, together with light, seem to be ever present as saints move from the earthly to the celestial spheres and unify with divinity. The vast number of images in which music is present during saints' contact with God and Christ has led me to question, "Why? Why music?" Perhaps music is a symbol of the celebration within the heavens as the saints, pure in their steadfast support of the true Christian faith, finally make their long-awaited journey home. Perhaps it is a symbol of the devotional music that routinely filled the sacred spaces where the paintings originally resided. Perhaps it is a symbol of music's ability to move the heart of the saint toward God, just as it may move the heart of the viewer. Certainly, representations of music in Counter-Reformation paintings signify all of these things; but, perhaps they also signify something more.

Images of saints' ecstasies,¹ like Reni's, are also frequently indistinguishable from (or positioned alongside) images of saints' deaths. Whether the saint is featured in a

¹ The relationship between the words, "ecstasy," and "rapture," is complex and varies depending on author and time period. In medieval theology, ecstasy is often described as being the highest elevation of the "soul" – a term that is itself multifaceted and may be used to indicate the individual's mind or the individual's entire state of being. At times "rapture" is used to signify these same experiences, but it may also denote a state of spiritual unity with God or Christ that is deeper and more profound, and possibly a unity that is arrived at in a more violent and painful manner. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italy, the two terms receive separate entries in the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. In the first edition (1612), "ecstasy" is described as a state of being in which the soul is elevated in contemplation. It is bewildered, or stupefied; it is so enebriated by the taste of the heavens that it does not sense the outside world. In this same edition, "rapture" signifies a seizing of the body and the heart from the earth. In the third edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1691) the words still receive distinct entries, but their definitions become less disparate. Here, "ecstasy" includes the definition, "being rapt in ecstasy" ("Andare in Estasi: Essere rapito in estasi"). Needless to say, a full dissection of the numerous definitions of these terms throughout western European history is beyond the scope of this study. For their purposes here the terms appear as synonyms. Both are used to describe the moment in which God or Christ

gruesome martyrdom, or upon a deathbed during their final peaceful moments, music is present to transport their spirit from one realm to the next. Their musical transport is illuminated by floods of light from above, and the saint is welcomed into heaven with loving smiles and embraces (see Figure 2). Depictions of divine love and religious ecstasy in images and texts from early-modern Italy have long been studied by literary and art historians for their function as Counter-Reformation propaganda, intended to elicit a strong emotional response from viewers and spur within them increased devotion and faith.

By contrast, however, contemporaneous displays of rapturous death within music have received scant attention. While the presence of ecstatic themes in seventeenth-century sacred music has garnered passing mention, musicologists have yet to investigate how Italian baroque composers musically conveyed rapture; they have yet to probe the relationship of sonic realizations of spiritual ecstasy to representations in coeval texts and images. This dissertation examines the intersection of music with concepts of divine love, ecstasy, and death, and how these themes are expressed in literature, iconography, and music from the late Middle Ages through the Baroque era. I begin by tracing correlations between death and musical rapture in writings by and about late medieval mystics and visionaries. While baroque representations of musical ecstasy are rooted in late-medieval concepts, they also exhibit significant influence from changes that appear during the

unite with the soul in spiritual union. In this state the individual loses perception of the surrounding world and is enveloped in divine love. This event may occur while the individual is in contemplation, or spontaneously. For further reading see *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, vol. 1-5, online, <http://www.lessicografia.it/index.jsp>; *Dizionario dei fenomeni mistici cristiani*, Luigi Borriello and Raffaele di Muro, eds. (Milan: Ancora Editrice, 2014); and *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, André Vauchez, ed. (Online: James Clarke & Co, 2002), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780227679319.001.0001/acref-9780227679319>.



Figure 2. Domenico Zampieri, "Il Domenichino," *The Martyrdom of Saint Agnes*, 1625.

Italian Renaissance, when Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Bembo, and Baldessar Castiglione rearticulated the incorporation of Neoplatonic philosophies within Christianity. As a result of the widespread dissemination of their writings, Renaissance Neoplatonism became the preeminent philosophical frame for Renaissance and baroque literary, iconographic, and musical representations of ecstatic transcendence.

Of paramount importance to this study is how composers musically signaled female saints' erotic raptures in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian oratorios (a genre designed to instruct lay audiences in doctrinal matters while appealing to their senses through affective music), specifically those performed in Bologna, Modena, and Rome. The research presented here, in case studies from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, serves as a foundation for deciphering how established societal understandings of ecstasy and death as sensual, devotional events influenced late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century composers' musical representations of rapture, the performances of which resulted in the erotic objectification of female saints.

I approach the concept of musical ecstasy as one that is best examined through a broad humanistic lens. Beginning with literature – namely theological and philosophical writings, saints' vitae, and the erotic descriptions of ecstatic visions recorded by late-medieval women religious up through early modern mystics – I identify how music and musical instruments are referenced as factors contributing to or resulting from ecstatic experiences, and highlight how the connections among divine love, Neoplatonism, ecstatic death, and music differ from the Middle Ages through the Counter Reformation. The musical experiences and metaphors related in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century

hagiography of Saint Francis of Assisi, and the fourteenth-century revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary act as a point of departure. In the former, Francis is sent into rapture through his own performance upon an imagined string instrument. In the latter, the Virgin Mary recounts to Elizabeth her own rapture, likening the physical sensation to God's performance upon her body as if she were a musical instrument.

The connection between music and ecstasy, though modernized to accord with contemporary devotional practices, remained largely unchanged for early modern Italian composers who depicted scenes of female saints' erotic raptures in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Italian oratorios. By identifying the shared musical characteristics in oratorios' ecstatic episodes, I demonstrate that composers utilized an established musical language that signaled the performance of celestial rapture. I focus on ecstatic scenes in Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorios *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* (1685, 1693) and *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola* (1695–1700), and the contrasting settings of Saint Cecilia's martyrdom in Quirino Colombani's *L'ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia* (1701) and Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* (1708). These oratorios show the objectification of erotic rapture and its connection with martyrdom through depictions of female saints who were not otherwise known to have recorded or experienced rapture in life: Cecilia, though increasingly representative of music and musical ecstasy in baroque iconography, was not originally associated with these themes.

Select musicological studies have noted sensuality in baroque sacred music and equated this with the eroticism of ecstasy,² and others have highlighted musical raptures

² Susan McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

in early modern women's convents,³ but none have investigated the compositional conventions utilized by composers who represented rapture in devotional musics.⁴ I argue that musical ecstasy was present in early modern Italian culture in distinct forms – as a product of true, spontaneous celestial rapture that was uncontrolled by the recipient, and as an artificial representation of the experience, presented through depictions of saints' ecstatic deaths in religious operas and oratorios. In accounts of celestial rapture that are recorded by early modern mystics or their communities, music often plays a prominent role in moving the ecstatic from contemplation and into rapture. The documentation of their experiences largely reflects music's function in the ecstatic process as it was described by earlier biographers and theologians. Music is the catalyst for stirring the affects and aligning the soul with the heavens, and music is the impetus for moving the individual into the highest realm of transcendence. In some cases, the ecstatic continues to produce music. Because the ecstatic's music is then a product of the rapture, it can be understood as having been transformed from an earthly to a celestial sonority. As an artificial representation of ecstasy that was presented by way of oratorio performances,

³ Robert Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Colleen Reardon, *Holy Concord within Sacred Walls: Nuns and Music in Siena, 1575-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Craig A Monson, *Disembodied Voices: Music and Culture in an Early Modern Italian Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁴ Also of interest is Andrew dell'Antonio's, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Additional sources that address eroticism, sensuality, and mysticism in late Renaissance and baroque music will be explored at length in the coming chapters. See for example Laura Macy, "Speaking of Sex: Metaphor and Performance in the Italian Madrigal," *The Journal of Musicology* 14, no. 1 (1996): 1-34 (chapter two); Bonnie J. Blackburn, "The Lascivious Career of B-Flat," in *Eroticism in Early Modern Music*, eds. Bonnie Blackburn and Laurie Stras (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 19-42 and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, "Fa mi la mi so la: The Erotic Implications of Solmization Syllables," in *Eroticism in Early Modern Music*, eds. Bonnie Blackburn and Laurie Stras (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 43-48 (chapter four); Christine Getz, *Mary, Music, and Meditation: Sacred Conversations in Post-Tridentine Milan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) (chapter five); Luca della Libera, "Il cielo e la terra: pagine strumentali negli oratorii di Alessandro Scarlatti," *Dramma scolastico e oratorio nell'età barocca, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Reggio Calabria, 5-6 ottobre 2012)*, ed. Nicolò Maccavino, Edizioni del Conservatorio di Musica "F. Cilea," 2019 (chapter six).

female saints' raptures were eroticized and presented as visual and aural objects that early modern audiences could observe, akin to the ecstatic iconography that filled sacred spaces. Their raptures could then be vicariously experienced through acts of voyeurism that were pious and sacred, yet simultaneously sensual and erotic.

Overall, I approach the concept of musical ecstasy as one that is best examined through a consideration of literary, iconographic, and musical sources from the medieval through early modern eras. Only by first considering the ecstatic writings of medieval mystics and theologians can we detect and scrutinize the changes to large-scale frames and narrative details that occur in baroque composers' representations of the same themes. A methodology that uses late medieval and early modern mystic writings to identify rapture in baroque oratorios, and then analyzes those episodes for musical congruities, is crucial to understanding how composers made use of similar compositional traits when depicting women's raptures on the stage.

My investigation of oratorio composers' treatments of female saints necessitates a look back into the evolution of key aspects of European mystic devotion throughout the centuries. In chapter two, "Concepts: Divine Love, Meditation, Contemplation, Rapture, and Musical Death from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Era," I explore the various ways that music intersected with death and mystic devotion from the early Middle Ages through the Early Modern era. Included here is a discussion of ways that celestial music was used to signal physical and spiritual death in literature and iconography, and how this topos was connected with secular and sacred expressions of eroticism. The foundation for this chapter is an investigation of philosophical and theological writings from late

Antiquity through the Middle Ages, namely the writings of Plotinus, Saint Augustine, Jonas of Bobbio, Bernard of Clairvaux, Guigo II the Carthusian, William of Saint Thierry, Richard of Saint Victor, and Meister Eckhart. This is followed by an explanation of how the concepts within these sources continued to be used and adapted by late medieval and Renaissance authors, such as Dante Alighieri, Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Bembo, and Baldessar Castiglione.

The first case studies are presented in chapter three, “Music, Ecstasy, and the Body: The Musical Raptures of Saints Francis of Assisi and Elizabeth of Hungary.” In this chapter, I explore the connection between musical ecstasy and musical instruments through close readings of musical raptures in the hagiography of Saint Francis of Assisi and Elizabeth of Hungary, and the later depictions of Francis’s musical ecstasy by painters of the Carracci school in Bologna. According to Tommaso da Celano’s second biography of Saint Francis, music (and musical instruments) played an essential role in the saint’s mystic devotion, the importance of which remains apparent in the later fourteenth-century *i Fioretti di San Francesco*, and the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century depictions of an enraptured Francis being serenaded by a musical angel that were painted by the Carracci and their “school” in and around the Papal States. My exploration of this iconographic topos builds upon Pamela Askew’s work in “The Angelic Consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting.”⁵ Askew’s article includes information about the practice of depicting Saint Francis with a musical angel in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings, and is one of only a few studies that

⁵ Pamela Askew, “The Angelic consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 32 (1969): 280-306.

has been written on this topic. Problematically, while Askew's article provides valuable background information, it mistakenly identifies a later painting of Saint Francis in musical ecstasy by Guido Reni as being painted by Annibale Carracci, causing problems in her timeline. She also conflates a story of musical comfort from Bonaventura's *Life of Saint Francis* with a distinct scene of musical ecstasy within *i Fioretti*.

Also of note is Giovanni Benyacar's article "L'iconografia del Concerto angelico a San Francesco e la musica della Controriforma."⁶ Benyacar's contextual information and explanation of the depicted scene is based on Askew's study, but his work provides more detailed information regarding the importance of the Franciscan order in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and its influence on Counter-Reformation devotional practices. In the second half of his article, Benyacar focuses on the Franciscan's promotion of a personal relationship with the divine, then surveys the tradition of painting Saint Francis in ecstasy as it developed in various Italian regions.

In my studies of the Carracci family and their role in developing Saint Francis's musically ecstatic iconographic tradition, I have consulted various encyclopedic and secondary sources on their styles and output. Of specific interest is Andreas Henning's and Scott Schaefer's book, *Captured Emotion: Baroque Painting in Bologna, 1575-1725*, which was created as a supplemental guide to the paintings featured in a 2008 Getty museum exhibit.⁷ The first chapter describes the great influence the Carracci family and

⁶ Giovanni Benyacar, "L'iconografia del Concerto angelico a San Francesco e la musica della Controriforma," in *Barocco padano 1: atti del 9. Convegno internazionale sulla musica sacra nei secoli 17-18* (Como: A.M.I.S., 2002), 67-92.

⁷ Andreas Henning and Scott Schaefer, eds., *Captured Emotion: Baroque Painting in Bologna, 1575-1725* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008).

their styles had on painting throughout Europe for the subsequent two-hundred years. It also details the connections between the three Carracci (Ludovico, Agostino, and Annibale) and other leading artists in Bologna and Rome.⁸

Although Elizabeth of Hungary is not regarded by modern scholars to be a mystic saint, her hagiography includes a musical death scene in which hearing and participating in song connects the saint with God in the hours before her death.⁹ Later fourteenth-century *Revelations* that are attributed to Elizabeth include a Marian vision in which the Virgin describes to Elizabeth how God played upon Mary's body as he would an instrument, in order to pull her into rapture and transport her soul to the heavens. Essential to my investigation of Elizabeth's Marian vision is the work by scholars Ottó Gecser, David Falvay, and Sarah McNamer, who discuss the possible authors of Elizabeth's posthumous *Revelations* and provide a translation of the Middle English

⁸ A significant source for considering how iconography and music worked together to enhance religious veneration is the recently published article by Andrew Kirkman and Philip Weller "Music and Image/Image and Music: The Creation and Meaning of Visual-Aural Force Fields in the Later Middle Ages," which highlights music's and iconography's shared purpose in devotional practices. By connecting paintings, sculptures, devotional spaces and the music that was played there, the authors demonstrate that these various sensory elements were meant to work in combination with one another, not as separate entities that should be "museumized" and considered independently. In their study, Kirkman and Weller are considering fifteenth-century polyphonic music, but their ideas speak to more widely accepted sentiments regarding the laity's desire to engage in more personal and embodied meditative experiences. The methodology for their study includes connecting popular literature and musical sources to the devotional iconography of specific locales. See Andrew Kirkman and Philip Weller, "Music and Image/Image and Music: The Creation and Meaning of Visual-Aural Force Fields in the Later Middle Ages," *Early Music* 45, no. 1 (February 2017): 55-75.

⁹ Throughout this dissertation I use the term "mystic" to refer to individuals who engage in devotional practices with the intent of achieving a state of transcendence and/or spiritual union with God or Christ. Such devotional practices may include but are not limited to guided meditation, meditative exercises, fasting and self-mortification, and contemplation. The term is also extended to individuals who are spontaneously brought into spiritual union with God or Christ without engagement in the above-stated practices. Mystics considered in this study include female and male saints, female and male monastics, and unprofessed women religious.

transcription (McNamer).¹⁰ The earliest known Italian vernacular rendition of Elizabeth's *Revelations* survives in the fifteenth-century manuscript MS II.II.390 (Magl. XXXV, 175).¹¹ Recounted there in Elizabeth's fifth revelation is her vision, during which the Virgin Mary describes erotic, ecstatic, devotional love using musical terminology. This erotic vision is also described in an additional fifteenth-century manuscript written in the Italian vernacular, Barb.Lat.4032.¹² Neither of these two sources have been transcribed or translated into modern Italian or English. Chapter three includes an English translation of the musical ecstasy in Elizabeth's fifth revelation, and Appendix B includes a full transcription of the fifth revelation as it is found in Barb.Lat.4032.

Musical rapture, death, and iconographic soundscapes coalesce in chapter four, "Neoplatonic Love and Ecstatic Death in Annibale Carracci's *St. Francis's Vision of the Musical Angel: Seeing and Hearing Musical Rapture in the Late Renaissance and Early-Modern Eras*." This chapter explores how one painting in particular – Annibale Carracci's "Death of Saint Francis" may be read as a late-Renaissance representation of the merging of Francis's and Elizabeth's legends, or as a fusion of Christian and Neoplatonic understandings of divine love and rapturous death. Included in this chapter are suggested ways that viewers may have "heard" Annibale's painting – or, what

¹⁰ Ottó Gecser, *The Feast and the Pulpit: Preachers, Sermons and the Cult of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, 1235-ca. 1500* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo, 2012); David, Falvay, "Elisabetta d'Ungheria: il culto di una santa europea in Italia negli ultimi secoli del Medioevo," *Nuova Corvina: Rivista di Italianistica* 14 (2003): 113-127; and Sarah McNamer, *The Two Middle English Translations of the Revelations of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996).

¹¹ Anonymous, *Revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary*, MS II.II.390 (Magl. XXXV, 175) (Florence: Biblioteca Nazionale).

¹² Anonymous, *Revelations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary*, MS Barberini.Lat.4032 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana).

musical relationships the painting suggests. This methodology builds upon that of Richard Leppert in suggesting that early modern paintings are not silent, but offer a representation of a lively soundscape that the viewer recognized and recreated aurally for herself or himself.¹³ Also important to my exploration of the painting's soundscape is the work of Marc Vanscheeuwijck, Rodolfo Baroncini, Howard Mayer Brown, and John Walter Hill, who have each discussed the various instruments, genres, and musical establishments that flourished in and around Bologna (Vanscheeuwijck, Baroncini, Brown) and Rome (Hill) at the time of Annibale's painting.¹⁴ For my own musical suggestion, I offer an analysis of Giovanni Matteo Asola's sacred madrigal "Come la cera 'l foco," and explain how it represents the type of sacred duo that is present in Annibale's depiction of the dying Saint Francis. This analysis draws upon the work of musicologist Bonnie Blackburn and classicist Leofranc Holford-Strevens, who have argued for the importance of solmization syllables in detecting eroticism in late-Renaissance Italian music.¹⁵

¹³ Richard Leppert "Desire, Power, and the Sonoric Landscape (Early Modernism and the Politics of Musical Privacy)." In *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹⁴ Marc Vanscheeuwijck, *The Cappella Musicale of San Petronio in Bologna under Giovanni Paolo Colonna (1674-95)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Rodolfo Baroncini, "Il complesso di "violini": diffusione, funzioni, struttura e "fortuna" di un assieme cinquecentesco poco noto" *Revista de Musicología (SEDEM)* 16, no. 6 (1993): 3369-3388 and Baroncini "'Se canta dalli cantori ovvero se sona dalli sonadori' voci e strumenti tra quattro e cinquecento" *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* 32, no. 2 (1997): 327-365; Howard Mayer Brown "The Instrumentalist's Repertory in the Sixteenth Century," in *Colloque International d'Études Humanistes (34th: 1991: Tours, France)*, and Jean Michel Vaccaro, *Le concert des voix et des instruments à la renaissance: Actes du XXXIVe Colloque International d'Études Humanistes, Tours, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, 1-11 Juillet 1991*. Arts Du Spectacle. Paris: CNRS Éd, 1995; and John Walter Hill, *Roman Monody, Cantata, and Opera from the Circles around Cardinal Montalto* vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Blackburn, "The Lascivious Career of B-Flat" and Holford-Strevens, "Fa mi la mi so la: The Erotic Implications of Solmization Syllables."

I then demonstrate how the themes in Annibale's painting and Asola's madrigal (saintly rapture and death that are achieved through the performance of music) became a prominent feature of seventeenth-century religious opera. As a case study, I present Stefano Landi's *Il Sant'Alessio* (Rome, 1631, 1632, and 1634), an opera commissioned by the Barberini Papal family. A point of departure for my analysis is the work of Frederick Hammond and Margaret Murata among others, whose work has been foundational for musicological studies concerning seventeenth-century Rome and the Barberini court specifically.¹⁶ Within Landi's opera is a death scene that I have identified as erotic and ecstatic. I analyze the music written for this scene and discuss how this moment – and others like it – were presented to the public as part of the Barberini's Counter-Reformation propaganda, which promoted musical ecstasy as an appropriate post-Tridentine devotional practice.

The presence of rapture and erotic death in early seventeenth-century religious opera serves as a springboard for the exploration of these same themes in late seventeenth-century oratorios. In chapter five, "Mystic Devotion and the Early Modern Era: Saintly Rapture in Seventeenth-Century Oratorios," I focus on two oratorios by Alessandro Scarlatti – *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* (1685 and 1693) and *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola* (c. 1695-1700) – and offer analyses of the libretti and music that are supported by contemporaneous mystic publications, specifically the writings of Saint Teresa d'Ávila and Miguel de Molinos. The first half of this chapter draws extensively upon literary and religious studies that have investigated the rise of vernacular mysticism

¹⁶ Frederick Hammond, *Music & Spectacle in Baroque Rome: Barberini Patronage Under Urban VIII* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Margaret Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court, 1631-1668* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain and Italy, and in particular lay and ecclesiastic tensions surrounding the works of Ignatius, Teresa, and Molinos. This chapter also addresses discourses of musical rapture that concern early modern women religious. For this I draw upon the foundational work of musicologists Robert Kendrick and Colleen Reardon, who have investigated the musical practices of enclosed women in early modern Milan and Siena, respectively. Examples of musical rapture that are included in their studies will be discussed at length in the first half of chapter five.¹⁷

In chapter six, “The Patron Saint of Music: Depictions of Rapture and Ecstatic Death in Two Early Eighteenth-Century Roman Oratorios,” I focus on Quirino Colombani’s *L’ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia* (1701) and Alessandro Scarlatti’s *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* (1708). My analyses of these oratorios also draw from concepts presented in earlier chapters, primarily discourses of Renaissance Neoplatonism and medieval Christian mysticism, the relationship of these philosophies with death and saintly rapture, and the role of music in communicating these themes to the audience. In my discussion of Saint Cecilia, I build upon musicologist Thomas Connolly’s extensive study of the early cult of Saint Cecilia in Rome.¹⁸ Using Connolly’s findings, I demonstrate how eighteenth-century musical depictions of Cecilia combined aspects of

¹⁷ More recent is a dissertation by Lindsay Johnson, “Performed Embodiment, Sacred Eroticism, and Voice in Devotions by Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Nuns,” which addresses the performance of musical ecstasy in seventeenth-century Bologna. Johnson approaches the topic by examining compositions by three different women: Sulpitia Cesis in Modena; Alba Tressina in Vicenza, and Lucrezia Vizzana in Bologna. Her work references Guido Reni’s musically ecstatic portrait of Saint Cecilia, and also points to the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century tradition of depicting Saint Francis in ecstasy, though she does not address the hagiographic origins and iconographic development of Saint Francis’s musical rapture, nor does she address the topic of musical ecstasy beyond women’s enclosed spaces. See Lindsay Maureen Johnson, “Performed Embodiment, Sacred Eroticism, and Voice in Devotions by Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Nuns” (Ph.D. diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2013).

¹⁸ Thomas Connolly, *Mourning into Joy: Music, Raphael, and Saint Cecilia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

her medieval and early modern identities. Supplementing my analysis of Cecilia's ecstatic transformation is Roel van den Broek's extensive study in which he traces the myth of the phoenix from Antiquity through early Christian sources.¹⁹

In the final chapter, I summarize select themes that are apparent in all of the preceding case studies, and offer my conclusions regarding how we might continue to investigate the roll of music in representations of ecstatic death. Most notable is how descriptions of musical ecstasy in literature, and corresponding depictions of the sacred event in iconography and music – though varied depending on circumstance, artistic medium, and time period – contain elements that remain unchanged throughout the eras. These “cultural truths” signal a widespread acceptance and understanding of music's power not only to change the heart of listeners and bring them toward more pious veneration of Christianity, but to initiate a physiological response that could transport the individual toward ecstatic unification with God.

¹⁹ Roel van den Broek, *The Myth of the Phoenix According to Classical and Early Christian Traditions* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTS: DIVINE LOVE, MEDITATION, CONTEMPLATION, RAPTURE, AND MUSICAL DEATH FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE EARLY MODERN ERA

Put simply, ecstatic love and rapturous death in the Early Modern era were a continuation and adaptation of those same concepts as they appeared in philosophical and theological discourses from the Middle Ages and even Antiquity. Though, of course, there is nothing truly simple about them. On the contrary, even for authors of the early Middle Ages, who were chronologically closer in time to the Neoplatonic philosophies of Plotinus and their Christian adaptations by early Church writers like Saint Augustine – philosophies that became the cornerstone of European mystic literature in the later Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Baroque eras – the process of transcendence and spiritual reunification with God through contemplation of his divine love was anything but definitively understood. While each author ruminates upon God’s love for the soul, and describes a sequential process through which the soul can partake in that love and ascend into celestial unity, the specifics of their individual discourses vary widely. Further, it cannot be said that authors’ interpretations of mystic transcendence follow a clear, chronological development. Although each is a reformulation (and often expansion) of previous writings, the sources from which they draw are diverse and by no means all encompassing. In Christian discourses, this diversity is also dependent on the author’s own position within a religious order that more heavily emphasized the rationality of Aristotelianism (such as the Dominicans), versus the embodiment of Platonism (such as

the Franciscans). In sum, there is no single answer to the philosophical questions, “what is divine love, and what is the process of meditation and contemplation that will allow the soul to ascend into rapture?”

Any attempt to provide a universal answer to these questions, when neither modern philosophers nor their medieval subjects have been able to do so (the latter cannot be said to have had such a goal in any case) would be folly indeed. Yet an understanding of the questions and the various ways in which they were taken up by theologians and mystics throughout the ages is of fundamental importance to the exploration of their relationship to music, both in a philosophical sense and in early modern musical performances. And so, in lieu of a chronological tracing of the development of divine love, musical ecstasy, and rapturous death, this chapter presents topical explorations. First, I will provide a brief overview of the ways in which music and death frequently appear together in literature and iconography in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. As this topos will be explored in detail through the case studies of subsequent chapters, its purpose here is to provide the reader with a general introduction. Following this is an outline of Platonic and Neoplatonic mysticism, and how these philosophies influenced Christian discourses in the Middle Ages. This discussion will also serve as a platform for investigating divine love and ecstatic union in the writings of various medieval Christian authors. Of fundamental importance are discourses concerning stages of contemplation, and meditative exercises – including the complex relationship between the two and their influence upon early modern mystic devotion. Also included in this section is a brief introduction to the erotic mysticism of the *Canticum Canticorum*, or Song of Songs, a source that elucidates the intimate

relationship between the enraptured soul and God. This discussion is followed by an explanation of how Neoplatonic and erotic medieval philosophies were reinvigorated during the Renaissance, and how they instigated an extensive body of early modern literature, art, and music that focused on divine love and transcendence. Overall, the concepts presented in this chapter provide a foundation for understanding music's place in mystic devotion, and its relationship to rapture and death, specifically. The purpose is to prepare the reader for the questions that are engaged in the following chapters, including the connection between rapture and music and/or musical instruments during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; how the concepts of musical ecstasy and musically ecstatic death are represented in Renaissance and early modern iconography and music; and how mystic philosophies influenced the libretti and music of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Italian oratorios.

Musical Deaths: Middle Ages and Renaissance

During the Middle Ages, music frequently accompanies death scenes in hagiographic legends. In these cases, the dying individual (and sometimes members of their surrounding community) hears heavenly music before their spirit is transported from their body and into the celestial spheres. In hagiography of the early Middle Ages, musical death scenes do not often include descriptions of the music itself (e.g. instruments, types of music, etc.), as the music is ineffable. The music, then, is not the primary focus of the biographer. Rather, it is what music signifies to the reader that is of greater import: the dying individual is holy and has been deemed worthy of reunification

with God; the soul of the dying individual is separating from the body and transcending the earthly realm.

The literary technique of using music to signal the separation of body and spirit at the time of death is exemplified in book two of Jonas of Bobbio's *The Life of Columbanus and his Disciples*.²⁰ In book two of *Life of Columbanus*, Jonas includes eleven chapters that focus on the female religious community of Faremoutiers. Chapters eleven through twenty-two in particular include a number of scenes in which music is connected to the deaths of Faremoutiers' inhabitants. For the nun Sisetrudis, who lived at Faremoutiers under the abbess Burgundofara, music is what signifies true death.

[...] at a certain time one of her nuns, called Sisetrudis, the cellarer of the monastery, had foreknowledge through a revelation of the end of her life, having been warned that she had a period of forty days in which to prepare for the journey, set right her character, and to amend her life...Thirty-seven days passed dedicated entirely to religion: she wore out her body by fasting and praying with floods of tears and by the labour of vigils so that she might more easily uncover the route of the forthcoming journey. Then two youths, swathed in white stoles, came and separated her soul from her body, and, bearing her through the empty air, they carry her to heaven, having subjected her to searching examination; and having placed her among the choirs of angels, and introduced her into the multitude of the blessed, they encourage her to seize joyful triumphs from the world. And when she was already secure in eternal bliss, exulting with great joy, having been placed among the choirs of virgins, and rejoiced, celebrating in the highest glory, and stood before the judgement seat of the Merciful Judge, she is ordered to be returned to her body and to return in three days...And when the third day comes, she asks the mother to be present and she entreats everyone to await her death. Thus, with everyone present, hoping that she would not die, claiming that her body was healthy, and testifying that these things had not been said openly, Sisetrudis notices the two youths whom she has seen before coming towards her, and asking her if she still wished to go. And rejoicing, she says, 'I shall go now, my lords; I would go now and no longer be detained in this life full of troubles but return to that shining light from which I returned.' ...Then, saying a last farewell to the amazed mother and all the bystanders, she was taken from this present life. Everyone present at her death hears all the choirs of angels

²⁰ Jonas of Bobbio, *The Life of Columbanus*, in *Jonas of Bobbio: Life of Columbanus, Life of John of Réomé, and Life of Vedast*, trans. Alexander O'Hara and Ian Wood (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017). Jonas of Bobbio (c. 600-659).

singing and the sweet melodies drifting down from the sky, and all are struck simultaneously with fear and joy. And having left the cell which held her remains, as far as the human ear could reach they heard the angelic voices ever singing.²¹

In Jonas's tale of Sisetrudis's passing, music indicates that death has actually occurred. At day thirty-seven, when Sisetrudis's spirit is taken from her body and she is allowed to temporarily reside in heaven with the choir of virgins, there is no mention of music – neither a description given from the perspective of the religious community, nor rejoicing by the celestial choir. It is not until Sisetrudis is experiencing true death that music fills the monastery. When the youths return to Sisetrudis and once again transport her spirit to heaven, she rejoices – death is not a solemn event, but a welcome one. Most striking in Jonas's tale is that music is not present during both instances in which Sisetrudis's spirit is elevated. Upon her initial ascent, Sisetrudis experiences a spiritual death. It is not until day forty, however, that her physical death allows for the permanent removal of her spirit from her body – this event is marked by the presence of angelic singing. Her community does not check her body for signs of death, because they hear the “sweet melodies drifting down from the sky.” Music signals death.

A related event is recorded in the death of Augnofledis, another virgin at Faremoutiers. In this case, the description of the music is more specific.

Around the same time another virgin of Christ, called Augnofledis, while she was breathing her last, receiving in exchange for the punishment of this life the riches of eternal life, and in joy at being freed from the bonds of the flesh, merited at her exit from the world to have similar singing at the time of her death. The sisters who were at a distance from her deathbed clearly heard the singing of songs and voices breaking out in these phrases: ‘Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: though shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.

²¹ Ibid., 204-205.

To my hearing thou shalt give joy and gladness: and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice.’²²

In Jonas’s tale of Augnofledis’s death we are again told that the singing is heard by all who are present, not only by the dying sister, herself. The source of the music is unidentifiable, but the words are clearly discernable: they describe the process of cleansing – the application of oil followed by washing for the purpose of purification. For the sisters, the angels and the cleansing ritual that is enacted upon Augnofledis are not visually discernable. Instead, the act of purification is performed by the invisible choir: their celestial song cleanses the dying Augnofledis and purifies her soul in preparation for its ascent to heaven.

If there were any question of music’s use as a literary signifier for death, Jonas provides yet another, even more explicit example. For the virgin, Landeberga, music appears to be the catalyst in drawing her from physical death to spiritual life. In Landeberga’s scene, music signals both the beginning and the end of death. Music begins “at the same time” that a cloud and golden glow cover the sister’s bed; it is the sonic indication that her spiritual transportation has begun. We are also told that once the cloud has risen above Landeberga’s bed and disappeared from view, so too the music is no longer heard.

When [Landeberga’s] calling came through the silent night, all those committed to watching the sick woman, overcome with tiredness, snatched some sleep, and only one woman, called Gernomeda, exhausted with illness, remained vigilant among her companions. So when, as we have said, she was awaiting the final end, a dense cloud, suffused in some measure with a golden glow, covered the bed, and at the same time voices were heard singing and exulting: ‘Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified.’ As soon as Gernomeda heard the voices of the singers resound, she began anxiously to rouse her companions. But as she

²² Ibid., 211.

could in no way wake anyone, she attentively awaits the end of the event, and after a little while she sees the cloud rise from the bed, and at the same time the soul was taken from the body. When the cloud had been raised up on high and her ears no longer heard the singing voices, then at last the sick woman succeeded in waking her companions, and told them to offer the songs owed to the dead.²³

Jonas's *Life of Columbanus* includes a number of additional death scenes in which music is similarly featured. In almost all cases, his application of this literary topos is specific to female virgins. Further, the presence of music in his tales is directly related to the virgins' deaths – this is a moment in which their spirit is taken from their bodies and reunified with God, similar to the spiritual ascent and unification that takes place during ecstasy. In Jonas's *Life of Columbanus*, however, ecstasy and death are not described as separate events; they are entwined as one – in physical death there is also spiritual death, at which time the spirit leaves the body and is transported to heaven, accompanied by (or, perhaps spurred by) celestial sonorities.

The idea that the spirit could be transported to heaven by music continued into the later Middle Ages where it was taken up by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) in his *Divina Commedia*. Dante notably does not encounter music in *Inferno*.²⁴ Hell is the furthest sphere from the center of the universe, the center of divine beauty and harmony, and so it follows that the sounds encountered there are those of “disharmony,” pain, and chaos.²⁵ While Dante does encounter music in *Purgatorio*, it is only the sounds of *musica*

²³ Ibid., 222-223.

²⁴ Kathi Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres and the Dance of Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 128; and Nino Pirrotta, “Dante Musicus: Gothicism, Scholasticism, and Music,” *Speculum* 43 no. 2 (April, 1968): 253.

²⁵ Pirrotta, 253.

instrumentalis, earthly music that functions as a means of penance – the recitation of psalms work upon Dante’s soul to prepare him for his ascent into paradise.²⁶ As scholars Kathi Meyer-Baer and Nino Pirrotta note, celestial music first appears in the *Divina Commedia* as Dante is “approaching the earthly paradise,” when he is on the shore of Lethe.²⁷ The music that occurs at this point is a single angel singing *Beati mundo corde*. As Dante enters paradise and begins his ascent with Beatrice, he continually encounters music, the forms and instrumentation of which change according to the advancement of his spiritual progression.

Of particular interest is a musical episode that Dante’s himself describes as rapture. This scene is not included in Pirrotta’s study, and is interpreted by Meyer-Baer as Dante marveling at the novelty of “the new polyphonic style, the *ars nova*.”²⁸ In canto XIV of *Paradiso*, Dante looks into the eyes of his guide, Beatrice, and is transported from the sphere of the Sun to the sphere of Mars, the first of the superior planets that Dante encounters during his ascent. As he arrives in the higher sphere, Dante witnesses a vision of a burning cross during which he glimpses Christ. The experience overwhelms him.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., 254. Also notable in canto II of *Purgatorio* is the inclusion of the song “Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona,” sung by Dante’s friend, Casella – a song that first appears in book three of the *Convivio*.

²⁷ Meyer-Baer, Appendix III. Also see Pirrotta, 254.

²⁸ See Meyer-Baer, 354.

²⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Random House, Inc., 1984), canto XIV, 103-108. “Qui vince la memoria mia lo ’ngegno;/ ché quella croce lampeggiava Cristo,/ sì ch’io non so trovare essempro degno;/ ma chi prende sua croce’e segue Cristo,/ ancor mi scuserà di quel ch’io lasso,/ vedendo in quell’ albor balenar Cristo.”

“And here my memory defeats my wit:/ Christ’s flaming from the cross was such that I/ can find no fit similitude for it./ But he who takes his cross and follows Christ will/ pardon me again for my omission – / my seeing Christ flash forth undid my force.” All translations of Dante’s *Paradiso* by Allen Mandelbaum.

While in a state of mental stupor, Dante hears a melody spilling forth from the light of the cross. The melody holds him “rapt,” binding his senses with “gentle bonds.”

Paradiso, canto XIV, 118-139³⁰

E come giga e arpa, in temprata tesa
Di molte corde, fa dolce tintinno
A tal da cui la nota non è intesa,
così da' lumi che li m'apparinno
s'accogliea per la croce una melode
che mi rapiva, senza intender l'inno.

Ben m'accors' io ch'elli era d'alte lode,
però ch'a me venia “Resurgi” e “Vinci”
come a colui che non intende e ode.

Io m'innamorava tanto quinci,
che 'nfino a li non alcuna cosa
che mi legasse con sì dolci vinci.

Forse la mia parola par troppo osa,
posponendo il piacer de li occhi belli,
ne' quai mirando mio disio ha posa;

ma chi s'avvede che i vivi suggelli
d'ogne bellezza più fanno più suso,
e ch'io non m'era li rivolto a quelli,

escusar puommi di quel ch'io m'accuso
per escusarmi, e vedermi dir vero:
ché 'l piacer santo non è qui dischiuso,
perché si fa, montando, più sincero.

And just as harp and viol, whose many chords
are tempered, taut, produce sweet harmony
although each single note is not distinct,
so, from the lights that then appeared to me,
out from that cross there spread a melody that
held me rapt, although I could not tell

what hymn it was. I knew it sang high praise,
since I heard “Rise” and “Conquer,” but I was
as one who hears but cannot seize the sense.

Yet I was so enchanted by the sound
that until then no thing had ever bound
me with such gentle bonds. My words may seem
presumptuous, as though I dared to deem
a lesser thing the lovely eyes that bring
to my desire, as it gazes, peace.

But he who notes that, in ascent, her eyes –
all beauty's living seals – gain force, and notes
that I had not yet turned to them in Mars,

can then excuse me – just as I accuse
myself, thus to excuse myself – and see
that I speak truly: here her holy beauty
is not denied – ascent makes it more perfect.

Dante describes the source of the melody using musical terminology – referencing the “giga” and “arpa,” or a bowed string instrument and harp, respectively.³¹ Yet, noteworthy in this example is that the instruments do not produce the melody. Rather, Dante uses them metaphorically. The true source of rapturous music is the light. Just as

³⁰ Alighieri, *Paradiso*, 124-127.

³¹ Dante's specification of a bowed string instrument may indicate ties to Franciscan hagiography, specifically Tommaso da Celano's second vita of Saint Francis of Assisi (see chapter three).

multiple instruments or strings join together to produce one harmony, so too the many lights of the cross unite in their emission of a single melody. In this example, then, music is both the cause of Dante's rapture, and a metaphor by which the poet conjures ecstatic imagery in the mind of the reader. This imagery is resemblant of Richard of Saint Victor's (1110-1173) discussion of the affects of the human heart, and the ability of God to align the affects into a single harmony as he would the many consonances of a harp.

We have already indicated above how manifold and diverse the affections of the human heart are. Yet the Spirit of the Lord daily combines them little by little in His elect and skillfully forms them into one harmony and by the plucking instrument of His graces fits them together in a certain harmonious consonance like a learned harp player who stretches these and loosens those, until a certain melody, mellifluous and sweet beyond measure, resounds from them into the ears of the Lord Sabaoth as if from the playing of many harpers upon their harps.³²

In Richard of Saint Victor's discourse God arranges the affects of the heart and plays upon them in order to create a melody that is "mellifluous and sweet beyond measure." A melody, when sweet and celestial in origin, has the power to remind the listener of their soul's former interior harmony, and to call their mind toward contemplation, even ascension.

[Speaking of the prophet Elisha] Therefore, what else is it proper to feel about the prophetic man except that for him an external harmony brought back to memory that interior and spiritual harmony, and the melody that was heard called back and raised to customary joy the mind of the one listening? ... And so the melody that was heard by the Prophet – what else was it other than a kind of ladder that raised

³² See Richard of Saint Victor, *The Mystical Ark*, book III chapter XXIV in *The Twelve Patriarchs; The Mystical Ark; Book Three of the Trinity*, trans. Grover A. Zinn with Preface by Jean Châtillon (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

him to customary joy? Although it is usually the cause of ruin for carnal persons, in this case the melody emerges as the cause of ascension.³³

For Dante, brilliant lights convene into a celestial melody that pulls him into rapture. This experience is possible because the melody, celestial in its origin, stirs within his soul a remembrance of perfect spiritual harmony. The melody realigns him with the spheres and for a short time, Dante is rapt in unity with divinity. Though the music is indescribable, and the hymn to which the melody belongs unidentifiable, Dante distinguishes the words “resurgi” and “vinci,” “rise” and “conquer.” He experiences spiritual death by way of rapture, but is reminded that with this death also comes life.

Music also plays an important role in framing Dante’s spiritual advancement through Paradiso. Meyer-Baer and Pirrotta have studied Dante’s musical progression at length and observe that in almost all cases the poet references specific genres or styles that were known to him and identifiable to his readers.³⁴ In the beginning, while Dante is in the lower spheres of paradise, he “hears single voices singing; as he goes higher, a choir, and then solo singing combined with the choir. Then dancers sing, and finally in the scene with the Eagle, the dancers form figures as in a ballet, and there is polyphonic singing, where the parts of the song have different texts.”³⁵ Once Dante is pulled into rapture – during the prayer of Saint Bernard to the Virgin Mary – he is enveloped in light

³³ Richard of Saint Victor, *The Mystical Ark*, book V chapter XVII.

³⁴ While Meyer-Baer attempts to provide an overview of the different types of music, Pirrotta focuses on the connection between the polyphony Dante describes and the Notre-Dame polyphony of Leonin and Perotin.

³⁵ Meyer-Baer, 128.

and does not describe sound.³⁶ Leading up to this point, however, are the celestial sonorities of the previous canto, where Dante, who is located within Empyrean, the highest part of heaven, hears singing by the “angelic love” and choirs of heaven.

Paradiso, canto XXXII, 94-105³⁷

e quello amor che primo li discese,
cantando “*Ave, Maria, gratia plena,*”
dinanzi a lei le sue ali distese.

Rispuose a la divina cantilena
da tutte parti la beata corte,
sì ch’ogne vista sen fé più serena.

“O santo padre, che per me comporte
l’esser qua giù, lasciando il dolce loco
nel qual tu siedì per eterna sorte,

qual è quell’ angel che con tanto gioco
guarda ne li occhi la nostra regina,
innamorato sì che par di foco?”

and the angelic love who had descended
earlier, now spread his wings before her,
singing “*Ave Maria, gratia plena.*”

On every side, the blessed court replied,
singing responses to his godly song,
so that each spirit there grew more serene.

“O holy father – who, for me, endure
your being here below, leaving the sweet
place where eternal lot assigns your seat –

who is that angel who with such delight
looks into our Queen’s eyes – he who is so
enraptured that he seems to be a flame?”

The connection between Dante’s ascent into the rapture of the final canto and music can be interpreted in at least two ways. First, considering Meyer-Baer’s conclusion that the changes in the music (from single voice to choir to elaborate singing and

³⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1152) expounds upon God’s use of light to enrapture the soul in his sermons on the Song of Songs. “For he is not one ‘who passes and does not return’ he leads us on from brightness to brightness because he is the Spirit of the Lord. Sometimes he fills us with rapture by communication of his light, sometimes he adapts himself to our weakness and sends beams of light into the dark about us...But whether we are raised above ourselves or left with ourselves, let us stay always in the light, always walk as children of the light,” see Bernard of Clairvaux, “Sermon 17: On the Ways of the Holy Spirit and the Envy of the Devil,” in *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, translated by Matthew Henry, reprint (North Charleston: Createspace, 2016). Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) similarly describes the soul’s progression through contemplation and into rapture as being one in which the soul is filled with divine light. The more the soul is filled with divine light, the more the self is lost. Once the self is lost in divinity, it has entered a state of ecstasy; see Meister Eckhart, “Sermon Two,” in *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. Maurice O’C. Walshe with Foreword by Bernard McGinn, 39-45 (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009).

³⁷ Alighieri, *Paradiso*, 290-291.

dancing) reflect the changing intensity of Dante's experience,³⁸ we may consider Dante's use of music as a metaphor for the process of contemplation and transcendence. The stages of music that he encounters are comparable to the steps of the medieval mystic ladder (to be discussed in detail below). The mystic (in this case, Dante) climbs from one level to the next, each of which is associated with a different spiritual sensation. In *Paradiso*, these steps and spiritual sensations are represented in the differing musical forms. Once Dante is enraptured (canto XXXIII), he no longer tells of what he hears – if sound is present in Dante's experience, he is unable or unwilling to describe it.

In addition to being a metaphor for transcendence and ecstasy, music may be understood as having a functional role in Dante's ascent. In this case, it should not be said that as Dante's experience changes so too does the music, but that as the music changes, so too is Dante pulled through the heavens. This interpretation is even more meaningful when we consider that Dante's text is divided in cantos, songs, and that he opens *Paradiso* with a canto directed toward Apollo, the god of music and a symbol for Christ, in which he implores him to "Enter into my breast; within me breathe / the very power you made manifest / when you drew Marsyas out from his limbs' sheath."³⁹ In this verse, Dante appeals to Apollo to transfer into him (Dante) Apollo's own divine force, a request which is already indicative of an ecstatic unification. The divine life-force that Dante references is the same as that which Apollo utilizes in his performance of music. Music and divinity, then, are united in Dante's request; by filling his soul with Apollo's breath –

³⁸ Meyer-Baer, 128.

³⁹ Alighieri, *Paradiso*, canto I, 19-23. "Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue / sì come quando Marsia traesti / de la vagina de le membra sue." Pirrotta too regards this moment as one in which Dante is "no longer contented with the assistance of the Muses" and "invokes the help of Apollo." See Pirrotta, 254.

a divine music or music of the spheres – Dante will be guided in his mystic ascent toward the heavens. Music will guide him into rapture.

In Dante's ascent through heaven, his musical rapture upon entry to Mars, and in the earlier medieval tales of the virgins' musical deaths, we see what appears to be a cultural truth in which music is intimately connected with the spirit's transcendence toward God. In the case of the virgins, there is a separation of the spirit from the body that occurs during physical death. During Dante's musical rapture in *Paradiso* canto XIV, a melody stirs within him a remembrance of the harmony of the spheres, and momentarily connects his spirit with divinity. While in rapture, he is reminded that this temporary, spiritual death leads to victorious life with Christ. Further, Dante's entire journey from *Inferno* through *Paradiso* may be understood as a window into the relationship between music and the soul during the individual's journey from contemplation to rapture. It may be argued that his voyage through the three realms is a dream, in which case his passage is of a spiritual nature; music guides – or propels – his soul toward God. Yet, various factors support the argument that Dante makes a physical pilgrimage (in canto nine of *Purgatorio*, for example, Dante dreams that he is swept up by an Eagle), in which case his ultimate rapture and engulfment in the light of God could also be explained as something more akin to transfiguration. In all cases (the virgins, Dante's rapture of *Paradiso* canto XIV, and Dante's ascent from hell to heaven), the sound of music marks the beginning of a final move toward celestial unity with God. Music announces death, leads the individual through transcendence, and brings the soul to heaven.

Platonic and Neoplatonic Mysticism and the Early Church Fathers

In canto thirty-three of *Paradiso* Dante details his rapture using descriptive words of light, but he does not describe God himself. This enigma, which is God and the highest location within heaven, is similar to that which is described by Plotinus (204-270 CE) in his *Enneads*.⁴⁰ Plotinus's philosophies are an adaptation of those of Plato (fifth century, BCE), and therefore referred to among scholars as Neoplatonism.⁴¹ In Neoplatonism, there are three parts or sections of the cosmos: the Good or the One, the Intellect, and the World Soul. The Good is the source of all love and beauty. It is all things and yet cannot be considered as containing all things, as it would then be possible to distinguish what exactly it is. It is ineffable, indescribable. The Good emanates (or even, overflows) into the Intellect, which subsequently emanates into the World Soul. A consequence of this emanation into the Intellect is the Platonic forms, or ideas and concepts of objects that exist in a state of perfection, but not in a state of complete unity with each other or with the Good. Divine emanation continues from the World Soul, down into all parts of the physical world including humans, animals, and plants. According to Plotinus, the great aspiration of all individuals should be an empirical knowledge of the Good, achieved through transcendence from the physical world into the World Soul, then into the Intellect, and finally into unification with the One.⁴²

⁴⁰ The writings of Plotinus are contained within the *Enneads*, a collection of his philosophies that was compiled by his student, Porphyry in c.250-270 CE.

⁴¹ For connections between Plato and Plotinus in regards to mysticism, see David J. Yount, *Plato and Plotinus on Mysticism, Epistemology, and Ethics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

⁴² Kevin Corrigan argues that the empiricism in Plotinus's *Ennead V*, 8 "gives rise to the birth of empirical science in the Franciscan tradition a thousand years later." See Kevin Corrigan, *Reading Plotinus: A Practical Introduction to Neoplatonism*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2005), 233.

Christian theology has notable roots in Neoplatonism. Most obviously, Christianity espouses a celestial trinity that is at the same time connected and distinct; it is also a system in which the individual has a small part of the original Good, or God, as a result of divine emanation.⁴³ The Christian adaptation of this part of Plotinus's philosophy is evident in medieval and Renaissance understandings of the macro-microcosmic relationship between the heavens and the individual. The heavens were made of celestial bodies whose rotation was predicated upon rules of perfect consonance and harmony. As the human body held a microcosmic relationship to the macrocosm of the universe, perfect harmonies had the ability to resonate within the individual and draw them into more perfect union with the celestial bodies. This was even more true if the music was indeed celestial in nature, rather than a human emulation (or rather, interpretation) of divine sonorities. Saint Augustine (354-430 CE) and Boethius (c. 477-526 CE) are most often quoted by musicologists as examples of this concept. In his *Confessions*, Augustine remarks upon music's ability to move the listener toward conversion.⁴⁴ Boethius too notes the power of different modes to work within the body of the hearer and change their affects for the better, or for the worse.⁴⁵ Less explored, however, is music's relationship to transcendence, as the latter was described by Plotinus

⁴³ This concept, while recognizable in the early formation of Christian doctrine, is made explicit in Marsilio Ficino's fifteenth-century commentary on Plotinus's *Ennead* III.VIII in which he includes a section heading titled "The Good itself is a father whose son is intellect, always filled by his father; the world is the image of this intellect." For more information regarding Platonism, Neoplatonism, and early Christianity see John M. Rist, *Platonism and its Christian Heritage* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985); and Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972).

⁴⁴ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Albert C. Outler trans. with Introduction by Mark Vessey (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2007).

⁴⁵ Boethius, "Excerpt from *Fundamentals of Music*," in *Source Readings in Music History*, ed. Leo Treitler, revised edition, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998), 137-142.

and understood by early Christian church fathers as being attainable through engagement with meditation and contemplation.

The various Christian authors discussed below provide different opinions as to how the soul could progress through distinct stages of contemplation in order to obtain union with God. Despite their variances, it is clear that their models reflect that which was first put forth by Plotinus (adapted from Plato). The soul loves God, and desires a knowledge of the fullness of the love that God has for the it, the soul. This knowledge is gained systematically as the soul moves through stages of contemplation. Each stage brings the soul closer to perfect unity with God and therefore provides it with increased knowledge, light, and love.

Medieval Christian writers frequently describe this progression as occurring in four stages, at times referred to as rungs of a contemplative ladder. In the first stage, the soul is only beginning, praying, learning what it means to love. The goal is the fourth stage, in which the soul – according to Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) – “loves himself only in God.”

How blessed is he who reaches the fourth degree of love, wherein one loves himself only in God! Thy righteousness stands like the strong mountains, O God. Such love as this is God’s hill, in which it pleases him to dwell.⁴⁶

To begin contemplation, which is necessary for transcendence, the individual must first engage in prayer, study, and meditation. According to Guigo II the Carthusian (1083-1136) in *Scala paradiso*, or *Scala Claustralium*, “reading without meditation is

⁴⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, ed. Emero Stiegman (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), book 10.

idle, meditation without prayer is without effect, but prayer with devotion wins contemplation. To win the high ladder of contemplation without prayer, would be miraculous.”⁴⁷ Guigo notes that the first and second rungs of the ladder are reading and meditation, respectively; three and four are then prayer, and contemplation. In *Scala paradiso*, Guigo addresses an aspect of transcendence that became of great import to ecstasies and ecclesiastics during the Early Modern era: was it meditation or contemplation that joined the soul with God? For Guigo, meditation leads to contemplation, but not to the “sweetness” of rapture.

Meditation shows him, but does not give to him, for neither through reading nor through meditation’s thinking can we come to this sense of sweetness, but through the gift that comes from above.⁴⁸

Guigo’s explanation not only distinguishes meditation from contemplation and positions it as an important but preliminary step toward rapture, it elucidates God’s part in the ecstatic process. The individual moves toward God, but God draws the individual into ecstasy. It is a “gift that comes from above.” This point seems to be agreed upon by most medieval Christian mystics, who use as their primary example Saint Paul, stating that he was “drawn up” into ecstasy – into the “third heaven” (to earlier Neoplatonists this would have been understood as the place of the Good or the One) – as opposed to entering that state on his own accord.

⁴⁷ Guigo II the Carthusian, “How the Four Rungs are Closely Joined Together,” in *Scala Claustralium*, ed. Webmaster Fr Matthew Naumes, “Julian of Norwich, Her *Showing of Love and its Contents*” accessed via www.umilta.net/ladder.html.

⁴⁸ Ibid., III, “of the First and Second Rungs: Reading and Meditation.”

Distinguishing meditation from contemplation was of particular importance to Richard of Saint Victor. In *De arca mystica*, he states that in order to understand contemplation, we must first understand what exactly contemplation is and how it is distinct from meditation.⁴⁹

However, so that we may be able to comprehend more fitly and distinguish more correctly those things which must be said about contemplation, we first ought to inquire by determining and defining what it is in itself and how it differs from thinking and meditation. It ought to be known that we regard one and the same object in one way by means of thinking, we examine it in another way by means of meditation and we marvel at it in another way by means of contemplation. These three differ very much from each other in mode, even though at some times they come together with respect to an object, since concerning one and the same object, thinking proceeds in one way, meditation in another way, and contemplation in a quite different way. By means of inconstant and slow feet, thinking wanders here and there in all directions without any regard for arriving. Meditation presses forward with great activity of soul, often through arduous and rough places, to the end of the way it is going. Contemplation, in free flight, circles around with marvelous quickness wherever impulse moves it. Thinking crawls; meditation marches and often runs; contemplation flies around everywhere and when it wishes suspends itself in the heights. Thinking is without labor and fruit; in meditation there is labor with fruit; contemplation continues without labor but with fruit. In thinking there is wandering; in meditation, investigation; in contemplation, wonder. Thinking is from imagination; meditation, from reason; contemplation, from understanding. Behold these three: imagination, reason, understanding. Understanding occupies the highest place; imagination, the lowest; reason, the middle.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The complex relationship between meditation and contemplation seems to have been as problematic for authors and practitioners of mystic devotion from the Middle Ages through the Early Modern eras as it is for scholars today. While questions such as “where does meditation stop and contemplation begin,” and “is meditation necessary to reach contemplation or ecstasy” are not easily answered, there does seem to be a distinction between the two practices. Meditative exercises – from medieval visionary meditations to the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius – do not appear to contain the same descriptions of erotic burning, languishing, and death that were recorded by Beguine visionary women, and Saints Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross. For more on these concepts see chapters three and five.

⁵⁰ Richard of Saint Victor, *The Mystical Ark*, as translated in Jacob Vance, “Twelfth & Sixteenth Century Discourses on Meditation,” in *Meditatio – Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italian Culture*, Karl Enenkel and Walter Melion, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 159-160.

All of the actions that Richard describes (thinking, meditation, and contemplation) are driven by the individual. First, she or he must think – a process that is slow in nature and wandering, often without direction. Meditation, on the other hand, progresses steadily (and sometimes quickly) and engages reason and concentration. Contemplation is a state of higher understanding; it still occurs within the mind of the individual, but the freedom of this act allows the mind to move unencumbered and with agility. These three stages are self-initiated, and though the first two do lead to the more transcendent act of contemplation, none of them will result in rapture without assistance from God: “Let no person presume that so much exultation or raising up of the heart is due to his own strength; nor should he attribute this to his own merits. Surely it is evident that this is not from human merit but from a divine gift.”⁵¹

In chapter ten of his *De diligendo Deo*, Bernard of Clairvaux emphasizes that this fourth stage of contemplation, one in which the individual is “joined unto the Lord” and is “one spirit with him,” is celestial rapture. Moreover, it is a state of being that Bernard believes the early martyrs experienced before their deaths. Their love for God and his love for them overtook their bodies and carried them into a rapture that eased the pains of their torturous punishments.

I would count him blessed and holy to whom such rapture has been vouchsafed in this mortal life, for even an instant to lose yourself, as if you were emptied and lost and swallowed up in God, is no human love; it is celestial...May we not think that the holy martyrs enjoyed this grace, in some degree at least, before they laid down their victorious bodies? Surely that was immeasurable strength of love

⁵¹ Richard of Saint Victor, *The Mystical Ark; Book Three of the Trinity*, 336.

which enraptured their souls, enabling them to laugh at fleshly torments and to yield their lives gladly.⁵²

Bernard's assertion that pleasurable sensations associated with celestial rapture afforded the early church martyrs joy in physical atrocities coincides with the reports of medieval and early modern mystics concerning their experiences during contemplation and ecstasy. Joy was indeed one of these emotions, yet frequently mystics' language assumes a more intimate and even erotic tone. The mystic "tastes" God's love through contemplation, after which their appetite for him increases; and they "languish" for a fuller union with him during which he "penetrates" their body and infuses their soul with his entire being. Their language constructs an image of the unified mystic and God that resembles the intimacy of sexual intercourse. Such imagery was embraced by mystics as is made abundantly clear in the numerous medieval commentaries on the *Canticum Canticorum*, or Song of Songs.⁵³ In this text God and the soul become bridegroom and bride, respectively, and the soul experiences the consummation of their spiritual marriage in a series of divine consolations and raptures.

William of Saint Thierry's *Exposition on the Song of Songs* (c. 1145) exemplifies the eroticism of this union. In his explanation of song one, stanza eight, William describes the act of contemplation as a courtship between lovers, who are first acquainted through loving flatteries and conversation, and later enjoy the fullness of each other in the marriage bed.

⁵² Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*, book 10.

⁵³ For more information regarding the Song of Songs in the Middle Ages, see Ann W. Astell, *The Song of the Songs in the Middle Ages*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

Song I, Stanza VIII⁵⁴

Behold you are fair, O my Love,
 behold you are fair:
Your eyes are as those of doves!

Behold you are fair, my Beloved, and comely!

Our little bed is flowery.
 The beams of our houses are of cedar,
The rafters of cypress trees.

[explanation by William of Saint Thierry] And now Bridegroom and Bride, in loving companionship and familiar conversation, ingratiating themselves with one another, giving pleasure to one another and praising one another, gain a foretaste of the joy of their mutual union. So while love's affairs are being transacted and making gradual progress in all respects, according to the measure of perfection granted by God, Bridegroom and Bride converse with one another...

[concerning the "flowery bed"] Upon this bed takes place that wonderful union and mutual fruition – of sweetness, and of joy incomprehensible and inconceivable even to those in whom it takes place – between man and God, the created spirit and the Uncreated. They are named Bride and Bridegroom, while words are sought that may somehow express in human language the charm and sweetness of this union, which is nothing else than the unity of the Father and the Son of God, their Kiss, their Embrace, their Love, their Goodness and whatever in that supremely simple Unity is common to both... Upon this bed are exchanged that kiss and that embrace by which the Bride begins to know as she herself is known. And as happens in the kisses of lovers, who by a certain sweet, mutual exchange, impart their spirit each to the other, so the created spirit pours itself out wholly into the Spirit who creates it for this very effusion; and the Creator Spirit infuses himself into it as he wills, and man becomes one spirit with God... Then that something, whatever it is – something loved rather than thought, and tasted rather than understood – grows sweet and ravishes the lover.⁵⁵

In William's exposition, the soul and God give pleasure to and praise one another as a way of glimpsing the delights that will be gained in complete union. Once this union has taken place (within the flowery bed), the lover is ravished by God's spirit. The

⁵⁴ William of Saint Thierry, *Exposition on the Song of Songs*, trans. Mother Columba Hart OSB (Kalamazoo, Cistercian Publications, 1968), 72.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-81.

experience William describes is highly erotic and utilizes sexual imagery at the service of the ecstatic metaphor. Through his words, the reader – like the soul of the lover – is able to be aroused by a desire for spiritual unity, and moved to begin their own contemplative journey. The eroticism that is discernable in the Song of Songs, and highlighted by authors like William of Saint Thierry, is also a staple of the writings associated with the Beguine movement of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. These women religious, though not enclosed nor professed to any specific order, congregated together to live contemplative, ascetic lives similar to Saints Francis and Dominic.⁵⁶ Their desire for intimacy with God and Christ was often manifest through graphic, erotic visions that they solicited through extended fasting and self-mortification. Describing the women, Jacques de Vitry noted the following:

You...saw...some of these women dissolved with such a particular and marvelous love toward God that they languished with desire, and for years had rarely been able to rise from their cots. They had no other infirmity, save that their souls were melted with desire of Him, and sweetly resting with the Lord, as they were comforted in spirit they were weakened in body...The cheeks of one were seen to waste away, while her soul was melted with the greatness of her love. Another's flow of tears had made visible furrows down her face. Others were drawn with such intoxication of spirit that in sacred silence they would remain quiet a whole day, with no sense of feeling for things about them, so that they could not be roused by clamour or feel a blow... I saw another who sometimes was seized with ecstasy five-and-twenty times a day, in which state she was motionless, and on returning to herself she was so enraptured that she could not keep from displaying her inner joy with movements of the body, like David leaping before the ark.⁵⁷

According to Jacques de Vitry, the women languish from desire, they dissolve, they are melted by their longing for a rapturous union with the divine. This language is an

⁵⁶ For an introduction to the Beguine movement see Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 171-178. See also Bernard McGinn, editor, *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994).

⁵⁷ Jacques de Vitry preface to the *Life of Marie d'Oignies* as quoted in Petroff, 174.

important indicator of mystic devotion, and continued to be so throughout the Early Modern era. As will be discussed at length in chapter five, mystics such as Saints Teresa d'Ávila, John of the Cross, and Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi all persisted in the use of similar language: melting, burning, languishing, and dissolving in divine love are and continued to be signals to the reader that the mystic had been taken by God into rapture, and had been intoxicated by the intense pleasure of the experience. The spirituality and eroticism of the event, then, were inseparable: rapture was akin to divine consummation between the soul and God.

Renaissance Neoplatonism & Early Modern Mysticism

The Renaissance was a turning point for discourses in mystic contemplation and religious ecstasy. Marsilio Ficino's *Sopra lo amore ovvero Convito di Platone* and his commentary on Plotinus's *Enneads* re-introduced – or rather, re-emphasized and re-articulated – Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophies, and further incorporated them into Christian theology.⁵⁸ Whereas Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas had been ever present as the unspoken foundation for the mystic writings of the early Church fathers and later medieval authors, Ficino addressed their philosophies forthright and demonstrated how they could be explained by Christian theology. In his commentaries, Christianity, Platonism, and Neoplatonism are complementary, with questionable pre-Christian

⁵⁸ Ficino's *Sopra lo convito d'amore* was first begun in 1469, then later published in 1544. Rather than a direct translation, Ficino's commentary is more accurately described as a compilation. His various sources include Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Aquinas, and others; see Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. Sears Jayne (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), 5-7. Ficino's commentary on Plotinus's *Enneads* was written and published 1480-1492, see Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plotinus: Ennead III Part 2 and Ennead IV*, trans. and ed. Stephen Gersh, vol.5, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018). For more information regarding Neoplatonism in the Renaissance and Early Modern eras, see Kenneth R. Bartlett, Konrad Eisenbichler, and Janice Liedl; Thomas Hyde; Paul Oskar Kristeller; Giancarlo Maiorino; Sarah Rolfe Prodan; Nesca A. Robb.

passages being either adapted to modern theology or discarded entirely. Ficino's commentaries were taken up as a model by subsequent authors, who similarly incorporated Platonic and Neoplatonic concepts into their own writings. The most prominent of these were Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani* (1505), and Baldessar Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528), both of which experienced wide circulation and numerous reprints.

Of fundamental importance to all three authors were once again the Neoplatonic concepts of divine love and beauty. For Renaissance authors, emphasis is placed on love and its definition as the desire for beauty. As with Plotinus, Ficino, Bembo, and Castiglione acknowledge that the source of all beauty is the Neoplatonic "Good," now the Christian God. From the Good or God, beauty emanates into all lower beings, all of which have a smaller and smaller part of that original beauty. Love is a desire to acquire beauty, and it is ultimately driven by an innate desire to return to or unify with that original source of beauty: God or the Good. When an individual who desires beauty decides to partake in that beauty in a profane or earthly way – through sexual intercourse – they have not sinned, as copulation is necessary for the continuation of the divine emanation of God's beauty. Preferable, however, is for the individual to partake in divine love and to allow the desire for beauty to serve as a guide, leading the soul through spiritual transcendence and toward God.

In Ficino's *Sopra lo amore*, Ficino and his followers have gathered for a feast in celebration of Plato's birthday. In honor of the great philosopher, each attendee has been tasked with commenting on one part of his *Symposium*. Like Plato's *Symposium*, their

commentaries emphasize the power of love; now, however, the purpose of love is to lead the soul back to the Christian God.⁵⁹ As Ficino's text explains, love gives life to the dead⁶⁰, love begins in beauty and ends in pleasure,⁶¹ a soul that loves is a soul that dies and is resurrected in the beloved,⁶² and the soul is free to choose between heavenly and earthly love.⁶³ Also of note is Ficino's claim that music is the first stage in the awakening of the higher soul, and its journey back toward unification with the Good.

Therefore, just as it descends through four grades, it is necessary that it ascend through four. But the divine madness is that which raises to higher things, as is established in its definition. Therefore there are four species of divine madness. The first certainly is poetic madness, the second, mystical, the third, prophecy, the fourth, amatory feeling. But poetry is from the Muses; mystery from Dionysus; prophecy from Apollo; love from Venus.

⁵⁹ "And so one and the same circle from God to the World and from the World to God is called by three names. Inasmuch as it begins in God and attracts to Him, it is called Beauty; inasmuch as emanating to the World it captivates it, it is called Love; inasmuch as returning to its author it joins His work to Him, it is called Pleasure. Love, therefore, beginning from Beauty, ends in Pleasure. This was expressed in that famous hymn of Hierotheus and Dionysius the Areopagite, where these theologians sang as follows: "Love is a good circle which always revolves from the Good to the Good." For Love is necessarily good since it is born from the Good and returns to the Good." Ficino, *Commentary on Plato*, 46.

⁶⁰ "Therefore there are three worlds, and three chaos. In all of them finally, Love accompanies chaos, precedes the world, wakens the sleeping, lights the dark, gives life to the dead, gives form to the formless, perfects the imperfect." Ficino, *Commentary on Plato*, 40.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶² "Whenever two men embrace each other in mutual affection, this one lives in that; that one, in this. Such men exchange themselves with each other; and each gives himself to the other in order to receive the other...Certainly while I love you loving me, I find myself in you thinking about me, and I recover myself, lost by myself through my own negligence, in you, preserving me...In this certainly, the power of Cupid differs from the violence of Mars. Certainly dominion and love differ thus. The ruler possesses others through himself; the lover recovers himself through another, and the further each of the two lovers is from himself, the nearer he is to the other, and dead in himself, revives in the other. But in reciprocal love there is only one death, a double resurrection. For he who loves dies in himself once, when he neglects himself. He revives immediately in the beloved when the beloved receives him in loving thought. He revives again when he finally recognizes himself in the beloved, and does not doubt that he is loved. O happy death which two lives follow!" *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁶³ "...but the individual soul is free to eschew the desire for the body which causes it to fall and free also to decide when, or if, it will turn to the desire for ideal beauty, which causes it to rise. That is, once born into the flesh, man is free to choose between earthly love and heavenly love: 'He who uses love properly certainly praises the beauty of the body, but through that contemplates the higher beauty of the soul, the Mind, and God, and admires and loves that more strongly.'" *Ibid.*, 15.

Obviously the soul cannot return to the One unless it itself becomes one. But it has become many because it has fallen into the body, is distributed into various operations, and pays attention to the infinite multiplicity of corporeal things. As a result its higher parts are almost asleep; the lower parts dominate the others...The whole soul is filled with discord and disharmony. Therefore first there is need for the poetic madness, which, through musical sounds, arouses those parts of the soul which are asleep, through harmonious sweetness calms those which are perturbed, and finally through the consonance of diverse things, drives away dissonant discord and tempers the various parts of the soul...

But there is still need for a third madness which leads the intellect back to unity itself, the head of the soul. This Apollo brings about through prophecy. For when the soul rises above intellect into unity, it foresees future things.

Finally, when the soul has been made one, one, I say, which is in the nature and being of the soul, it remains that it immediately recall itself to that One which is above being, that is God. This that celestial Venus completes, through love, that is the desire for the divine beauty and thirst for the Good.⁶⁴

Ficino's explanation harkens back to the four rungs of the contemplative ladder that had been described by Christian exegetes throughout the Middle Ages. In his interpretation, there are four stages of "divine madness," or contemplation, that lead the soul toward unity with God or the One. The ascent into divine madness begins with music, which calms the disharmony of the soul and begins the process of re-unification. When the soul hears sweet harmonies and consonances of the heavens, it is aroused, calmed, and tempered. Ficino, like Dante, once again alludes to music in his reference to Apollo, the driving force of the third stage of madness: prophecy. This stage is the final point of arrival for the soul before Venus, through love, pulls the soul into unity with God. That Ficino references Apollo as the keeper of the third stage, the entity that gives the soul prophecy and prepares it to move beyond intellect and into unity, speaks to the power of music and its role in the contemplative process. Celestial harmonies awaken the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 170.

soul and stir within it desire for unification, and they are the final catalyst in preparing it to move beyond itself and into the Good.

The format of Plato's *Symposium* and Ficino's *Sopra lo amore* is adapted by Bembo in *Gli Asolani*. Here, six young nobles (three male and three female) engage in a series of rhetorical debates concerning the nature of love. Although it has been stated that, as a whole, Bembo's text has little in common with Ficino's – exempting the final book – I do not agree.⁶⁵ Before they begin their debate, Bembo's characters venture out onto the estate of their noble host, admiring the scenic gardens as they survey the grounds. They are particularly struck by the beauty of one garden in particular, and gaze upon it in admiration. The six friends then make their way into the garden, and it is here that they reside for the discourses of the first two books.

In the construction of this scene Bembo has already invoked Neoplatonism. The friends are enamored with the beauty of the garden, a reflection of the Good or God's beauty. Choosing a path of divine love and transcendence would mean a preservation of the garden, untouched by the friends, yet their desire to partake in its beauty is too strong for their youthful hearts. They move into the garden and enjoy its pleasures. Reflecting their choice, the first two discourses concern the perils and the benefits of profane love, respectively. In the third discourse, however, the speaker, Lavinello, describes his journey out of the garden and into the mountains, toward the home of the wise hermit (a

⁶⁵ See for example Pietro Bembo, *Gli Asolani*, trans. Rudolf B. Gottfried (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), Introduction.

reference to Socrates⁶⁶ and possibly also the Christian God), who teaches him about divine love and contemplation. In the broader scheme of Bembo's story, then, is a key component of Renaissance Neoplatonism. Individuals are drawn to God's beauty through discernible forms, shadows, such as the garden. Partaking in this beauty for the individual's own corporeal pleasure results in mixed consequences that are appropriate to engagements with profane love. Allowing the beauty of the object to ignite a desire for elevation results in a higher knowledge of love and movement toward transcendent unification with the divine.

Bembo's text also engages in a discourse concerning the relationship between love and reason – a discourse that experienced continued relevance throughout the Early Modern era (see for example Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorio *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* [1708], chapter six). Love, Gismondo says, is reason. If actions associated with love are unreasonable, then love is not love at all, it is evil. Related to this discussion is the assertion that the desire for physical satisfaction and pleasure is not in fact true desire or love.⁶⁷ Instead, virtuous love is a desire for true beauty, the beauty of God or the Good.⁶⁸ Also similar to Ficino is Bembo's statement that beauty is "born of proportion and the harmony of things," and that desire to attain beauty is guided by sight and hearing.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ James Leshner, "Later Views of the Socrates of Plato's *Symposium*," in *Socrates in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Michael Trapp (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 63.

⁶⁷ Bembo, 174.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

Music, initiating from the heavens, resonates within the body and reminds the soul of its celestial home – it stirs the heart of the individual toward love.

...for since the soul ever desires those celestial harmonies it left behind when it descended into the body, the taste of them makes it fall more joyfully in love with these than it seems possible that one should love an earthly thing. Nay, harmony, my ladies is not a thing of earth, but even like the soul; for there were some men long ago who said the soul was nothing but a kind of harmony.⁷⁰

The primary topics of Bembo's and Ficino's discourses appear once again in Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano*. As with the previous two sources, Castiglione's book is organized as a conversation occurring among friends, during which the characteristics of the perfect courtier are sketched and debated. One of the characters in Castiglione's text is Pietro Bembo, who in the fourth book is tasked with commenting on love. Here too the explanation is Neoplatonic.⁷¹

[Bembo in Castiglione] ...nature has ordained that to every cognitive power there shall be joined an appetitive power; and as in our soul there are three modes of cognition, namely, by sense, by reason, and by intellect: so, from sense comes appetite, which we have in common with animals; from reason comes choice, which is proper to man; from intellect, whereby man can communicate with the angels, comes will. Thus, even as sense knows only those things which the senses perceive, appetite desires these and no other; and even as intellect is turned solely to the contemplation of intelligible things, the will feeds only upon spiritual good. Being by nature rational and placed as in the middle between these two extremes, man can choose (by descending to sense or rising to intellect) to turn his desires now in one direction and now in the other. In these two ways, therefore, men can desire beauty, which name is universally applied to all things, whether natural or

⁷⁰ Ibid., 123.

⁷¹ If there were any doubt regarding the Neoplatonic influences upon Castiglione's text, the reader need only see Bembo's discussion of the source of beauty in the goodness that fills the center of the cosmos. See Baldessar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1959), 342. Castiglione's Bembo also frequently references the medieval ladder of contemplation.

artificial, that are made in the good proportion and due measure that befit their nature.⁷²

Bembo's explanation reiterates that desire for beauty is at the root of love.

Partaking in beauty by way of physical sensations and pleasures is a descent into profane love. Rising to intellect, however, allows man to advance into contemplation and toward communication with the angels. In youth, men are more likely to descend into profane love, while the wisdom that accompanies age is more suited to the choice of divine love. This latter choice, according to Bembo, affords the lover "blessings" that are "greater still" than any that may be obtained through profane love.⁷³ By leaving the sensuality of the profane, the lover climbs toward a love that is "far more sublime." This process requires that the lover turn his focus from the beauty of one lady in particular and instead direct his thoughts toward beauty as a universal concept. This type of contemplation will ignite within him a "better flame" with "greater light."⁷⁴

[Bembo in Castiglione] Thus, when it has grown blind to earthly things, the soul acquires a very keen perception of heavenly things; and sometimes when the motive forces of the body are rendered inoperative by assiduous contemplation, or are bound by sleep, then, being no longer fettered by them, the soul senses a certain hidden savor of true angelic beauty, and, ravished by the splendor of that light, begins to kindle and to pursue it so eagerly that it is almost drunk and beside itself in its desire to unite itself to that beauty, thinking to have found the footprint of God, in the contemplation of which it seeks to rest in its blessed end. And thus, burning with this most happy flame, it rises to its noblest part, which is the intellect; and there, no longer darkened by the obscure night of earthly things, it beholds divine beauty... What sweet flame, what delightful burning, must we think that to be which springs from the fountain of supreme and true beauty – which is the source of every other beauty, which never increases or diminishes: always beautiful, and in itself most simple and equal in every part; like only to

⁷² Castiglione, 336-337.

⁷³ Ibid., 352.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

itself, and partaking of none other; but so beautiful that all other beautiful things are beautiful because they participate in its beauty.⁷⁵

As Bembo's discourse continues, it intensifies. The culmination itself resembles an ecstatic transcendence, one that appears to have a physical and emotional effect upon both speaker and audience.

Having spoken thus far with such vehemence that he seemed almost transported and beside himself, Bembo remained silent and still, keeping his eyes turned toward heaven, as if in a daze; when signora Emilia, who with the others had been listening to his discourse most attentively, plucked him by the hem of his robe and, shaking him a little, said: "Take care, messer Pietro, that with these thoughts your soul, too, does not forsake your body."...Then the Duchess and all the others began urging Bembo once more to go on with his discourse: and everyone seemed almost to feel in his mind a certain spark of the divine love that had inspired the speaker, and all wished to hear more...⁷⁶

In the escalation of Bembo's speech, two key elements are present: the importance of music in the celestial ascension, and the definition of rapture as type of living death. Previously in Bembo's discourse, he remarks that hearing is a key enticer for the soul to move in search of acquiring beauty. Through sound, the lover is able to enjoy the "sweetness of [the beloved's] voice, the modulation of her words, the harmony of her music (if his lady love be a musician).⁷⁷ Although Bembo uses these examples to describe how the soul is initially drawn toward profane love, he contends that the pleasures that are experienced through hearing can "feed [the lover's] soul...without passing to any unchaste appetite through desire for the body."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid., 354-55.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 357.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 347.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

As Bembo's discourse makes its final amplification, representative of his rapturous ascent, he prays to God to "hear celestial harmony" and to have it fill his soul, leaving no room for impure thoughts and desires.⁷⁹ His prayer harkens back to the Song of Songs, referencing God and the soul as lovers who unite in perfect desire for each other's goodness.

[Bembo in Castiglione] Accept our souls which are offered to thee in sacrifice; burn them in that living flame which consumes all mortal ugliness, so that, being wholly separated from the body, they may unite with divine beauty in a perpetual and most sweet bond, and that we, being outside ourselves, may, like true lovers, be able to become one with the beloved, and rising above the earth, be admitted to the banquet of angels, where, fed on ambrosia and immortal nectar, we may at last die a most happy death in life, as of old those ancient fathers did whose souls thou, by the most ardent power of contemplation, didst ravish from the body and unite with God.⁸⁰

Castiglione's representation of the euphoric Bembo includes all of the previously discussed markers of ecstatic union: there is a flame that burns the individual, separation of the soul from the body, a sweet unification with divine beauty, a ravishing of the soul through contemplation, and death that is experienced while living. If we believe Bembo's words, the ascent into rapturous death begins with desire that is ignited by the hearing of "sweet" harmonies; the final transport into ecstasy comes from God, who may achieve the union by filling the soul with celestial music.

All three of the Renaissance Neoplatonic authors, then, cite music as a method by which the soul can move toward reunification with God – either by hearing music in the early stages of desire, or in the final ascent into ecstasy (and in some cases both). These

⁷⁹ Ibid., 356.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 357.

assertions harken back to the medieval understanding of music as a powerful tool by which the soul may connect with divinity. The sonorities of the celestial spheres resonate within the body and draw the soul back to God. Recall, for example, the words of Richard of Saint Victor, who described celestial music's power to awaken the soul to a memory of "interior and spiritual harmony." Melody, he wrote, "emerges as the cause of ascension."⁸¹ For him as for later Renaissance Neoplatonists, music led to the soul to its ecstatic death.

While Ficino's, Bembo's, and Castiglione's texts have been proclaimed by modern scholars to be champions of a heterosexual, non-sensual, platonic love, their designation of rapture as a living death would likely have been recognized by Renaissance audiences for its inherent eroticism.⁸² To summarize Laura Macy's article, "Speaking of Sex: Metaphor and Performance in the Italian Madrigal," Renaissance medical theory was primarily based upon the theories of Galen, who described a system of humors that were connected to the body's organs, as well as physical and emotional states of being.⁸³ Essential to Galen's system was the spirit, which was closely linked to life and death through ejaculation and semen – though filled with life, the emission of semen was also considered to be a moment in which the individual experienced a temporary loss of spirit, a separation of it from the body that was equivalent to a type of

⁸¹ Richard of Saint Victor, *The Mystical Ark*, book V chapter XVII.

⁸² More recent scholarship has questioned this definition of the platonic love that is present in the treatises. See for example Katherine Crawford, "Marsilio Ficino, Neoplatonism, and the Problem of Sex" *Renaissance and Reformation* 28 no. 2 (Spring, 2004): 3-35.

⁸³ Macy, 2.

spiritual death.⁸⁴ To quote Macy directly, “We have seen that sex and death are linked by their shared emission of spirit. And this link is surely at the bottom of the metaphoric use of the word death to mean sexual climax.”⁸⁵ The rapturous deaths described by Renaissance Neoplatonists, then, is a moment in which the sacred and the secular become inseparable. Though the experience is the epitome of contemplative, religious devotion, it is also highly erotic. The soul leaves the body (as it does during ejaculation) and unites with God as bride and bridegroom, they taste each other’s spiritual delights, there is melting, languishing, and dissolving, and the soul endures a death that is pleasurable beyond description.

As I discuss at length in chapter five, “death” continued to be an important term used among mystics to describe their raptures, one which persisted in having cultural associations that were both religious and erotic. Most important for this study are the writings of Saint Teresa d’Ávila and Miguel de Molinos, both of whom expand upon how spiritual death is felt, and what types of death occur during contemplation. Like their mystic predecessors of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Saint Teresa and Molinos relish in the pains they receive from divine love as they are brought into ecstatic union with God. Because a thorough examination of their works is later provided, I will not attempt to develop an analysis of them here. It suffices to say that death continued to be the primary indicator of an ecstatic experience in the Early Modern era, and – as I will

⁸⁴ Macy, 2-4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

argue in the following chapters – that “death” as an erotic mystic topos was frequently represented in literature, art, and music.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have explored the connections between music, rapture, and death from the Middle Ages through the Early Modern era. In the Middle Ages, music frequently appears in hagiographic death scenes to signal an individual’s physical death, the separation of the spirit from the body, and the soul’s ascent into heaven. A similar concept is presented by Dante Alighieri in the *Divina Commedia*. Not only does Dante experience a musical episode that he describes as “rapture,” as he moves through *Paradiso* his journey is accompanied by music; it is music that guides him into the rapture of the final canto. In the Renaissance, texts like Marsilio Ficino’s *Sopra lo amore ovvero Convito di Platone* and his commentary on Plotinus’s *Enneads*, Pietro Bembo’s *Gli Asolani*, and Baldessar Castiglione’s *Il libro del cortegiano* re-introduced and further Christianized Neoplatonic mysticism. All three sources point to music as an important means by which desire for divine beauty can be inflamed: celestial sonorities resonate within the soul of the individual and pull them back to God, the cosmic source of beauty. While it is in rapturous union with God, the soul experiences temporary death, which was understood as a spiritual and secular event that simultaneously represented spiritual ascension to heaven, and orgasmic separation of the soul from the body. In the Renaissance and Early Modern eras, this eroticism can be understood as a continuation of the eroticism that pervaded the ecstatic visions of Beguine holy women and monastic elucidations of the Song of Songs.

In the chapters that follow, I will apply these concepts to analyses of varying case studies that stem from literary, iconographic, and musical sources. A few overarching questions include: what was the relationship between music and/or musical instruments to rapture in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and the Early Modern era; how are musical ecstasy and musically ecstatic death presented in Counter-Reformation iconography; and what is music's relationship to the representation of saints' raptures in the Italian oratorio? Overall, the case studies of the following chapters paint a picture of mystic devotion in which music was a key contributor to the ecstatic process. I argue that the importance of music's relationship to rapture was recognized as a cultural truth, one which is evident in literary, iconographic, and musical sources from the Middle Ages to the early eighteenth century; and while the artistic mediums by which musical rapture was delivered to audiences changed over time (from hagiography, to iconography of mystic duos, to the Italian oratorio), the relationship between music and ecstasy did not. As we shall see, music, the sonorities of the heavens, maintained its ability to infiltrate the heart of the individual and draw them into rapturous union with God.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC, ECSTASY, AND THE BODY: THE MUSICAL RAPTURES OF SAINTS

FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY

In 2004, Ulrike Wiethaus remarked that sound is one of the least explored aspects of medieval mysticism.⁸⁶ Her statement remains true today. Although we recognize the medieval understanding of the universe as consisting of rotating spheres that generated the perfect harmonies of the heavens, and we understand that attempts to emulate and thereby gain access to those harmonies formed the foundation of music treatises from the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, little modern scholarship has been dedicated to investigations of how these concepts were applied to Christian mysticism, and rapture specifically. And yet, references to music are abundant in medieval literary descriptions of rapture, as well as in later Renaissance iconography that features the stories of that same medieval literature. At times, mystics are described by their biographers as producing ineffable sounds (sometimes specifically referred to as “music”) while in the throes of ecstasy; in other instances, it is an external source of music that is responsible for their ascent into rapture.

This chapter investigates music as a literary and iconographic trope that was used to signal saints’ ecstatic unions with God. In the first half of the chapter, I focus on Saint

⁸⁶ Ulrike Wiethaus, “The Death Song of Marie d’Oignies: Mystical Sound and Hagiographical Politics in Medieval Lorraine,” in *The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in the Southern Low Countries*, ed. Ellen E. Kittell and Mary A. Suydam (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

Francis of Assisi, a saint who is remembered for his poverty, asceticism, love of birds, and (in the Renaissance) his frequent ecstasies, but who is scarcely ever regarded for his connection with music. Yet in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, depictions of him being serenaded by a musical angel flourished in and around the Papal States. My exploration of this iconographic topos extends back into the Middle Ages, to some of Francis's earliest (and most well-known) hagiography – vitae by Tommaso da Celano and Saint Bonaventura. Here I locate and analyze scenes of an enraptured Francis, who is led through the ecstatic process (i.e., from contemplation to rapture) by the performance of a stringed instrument.

These same concepts appear in later hagiography for Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, a saint whose asceticism is frequently described as being in emulation of Francis and Beguine devotional practices, but who is almost never celebrated as a mystic or musical saint. Yet, like Francis, her hagiography contains a little-explored tale of musical ecstasy, one that provides insight into music's relationship with the soul's ascension to heaven during moments of ecstasy and death. Also of interest are a set of thirteenth-century revelations attributed to Saint Elizabeth that relate the saint's visionary encounter with the Virgin Mary, during which the latter describes God's performance upon her body, as a musical instrument, with the intent of pulling her spirit into the celestial spheres.

In the case studies that follow, music takes center stage in saints' mystic devotion. While none of the examples are accompanied by notated music or references to specific chants or lauds, the elucidations they provide concerning music's relationship to ecstasy are no less potent. As will be exemplified in the analyses of both Francis and Elizabeth,

music is the connection between the mortal saint and their access to God. It is music (and in some cases, a musical instrument) that stirs the affects and draws the saint into deeper contemplation, lifts them into rapture, and unifies them with the divine.

The Musical Ecstasy of Saint Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis of Assisi's life and work have garnered little attention in musicological scholarship, as the presence of music in his legends most frequently appears as descriptions of him singing with birds⁸⁷ and chanting with fellow companions, for which no clear description or musical notation is provided. The stories of his life that are told throughout numerous medieval, Renaissance, and baroque hagiographic sources overwhelmingly focus on his extreme poverty, his connection to animals and the earth, and his receiving of the stigmata. Francis was also known for radical devotional practices that later served as inspiration for late medieval laity. His decision to live as a wandering ascetic – devoted to strengthening his personal relationship with God through the practice of prayer and meditation – instigated the spread of revolutionary spiritual engagement among his male and female followers. As a saint who exemplified pre-defined traditions of sainthood while at the same time introducing an unprecedented level of spiritual involvement with the divine, Francis served as a bridge between old and new types of Christian devotional activities, as well as a gateway into the practice of ecstatic devotion amongst the laity in Italy.

⁸⁷ See for example the story of Francis and the nightingale in Luke Wadding's *Annales Minorum* II (1625-1648), discussed in chapter four.

By the late Middle Ages, images featuring Francis already included representations of mysticism, and were placed alongside depictions of his most prominent legends. This infusion is exemplified in Giotto di Bondone's thirteenth-century narrative cycle of Francis's life, found in the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi. The cycle consists predominantly of scenes that feature Francis's embodiment of archetypal saintly characteristics – his renunciation of worldly goods, his ministering to his brethren and to the birds, and his receipt of the stigmata – but it also includes five scenes in which Francis is depicted in ecstasy or receiving a vision: Francis's dream of the palace, the miracle of the crucifix, the vision of the flaming chariot, the vision of the thrones, and the ecstasy of Saint Francis (see Appendix A, Figure 3, for example). In the fifteenth century, visual representations of Saint Francis continued to favor narrative scenes, but more frequently focused on one aspect of his vita in particular, his stigmatization. This iconographic trend continued into the first half of the sixteenth century.⁸⁸

In the late sixteenth century, as a direct result of Counter-Reformation ideologies and a renewed interest in the Franciscan order, iconographic representations of Francis shifted dramatically toward explorations of his inner piety, and frequently depicted him in moments of ecstasy (see for example Caravaggio's depiction of an ecstatic Francis supported by an angel, c. 1595, Appendix A, Figure 4).⁸⁹ In the larger context of late

⁸⁸ Francis is the first saint officially recognized as having received the stigmata. There is debate, however, as to whether Saint Paul may have been claiming to have received the stigmata when in his letter to the Galatians he stated that he bore the marks of Christ on his body (Galatians 6:17).

⁸⁹ In studying this iconographic trend, Giovanni Benyacar has noted that as the influence of the mystic devotional practices of sixteenth-century saints like Ignatius of Loyola (b. 1491 - d. 1556) and Teresa of Ávila (b. 1515 - d. 1582) intensified, so too the interest in Franciscan teachings and practices were re-energized. See Benyacar, "L'iconografia del Concerto angelico a San Francesco e la musica della Controriforma."

sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian devotional culture, the focus on these ecstatic episodes is neither unique nor surprising, but can be understood as part of a larger trend of depicting saints in moments of rapture. As art historian Giovanni Benyacar has shown, the increase in scenes featuring an enraptured Francis can be situated amongst similar movements found in iconography of saints Mary Magdalene, Jerome, and Cecilia (see chapter six for iconography of Saint Cecilia).⁹⁰ Benyacar’s discussion of these trends extends to seventeenth-century ecstatic representations of Francis, which can likewise be viewed as part of the growing cultural preference of depicting saints in rapture, regardless of whether the scene was representative of a known legend or if the saint was known to have experienced such episodes during her or his life. In this light, Francis – whose legends include frequent mention of ecstasy and rapture – was the perfect candidate for the representation of religious philosophies that espoused deepened spirituality and a personal relationship with God. Striking, however, is the appearance of images featuring a musically ecstatic Francis, cultivated by members of the Carracci family, their students of the Bolognese school, and various other artists working in and around Rome (see for example Guido Reni’s “Saint Francis Consoled by a Musical Angel” Appendix A, Figure 5). As a saint who was not previously celebrated for his connection with music, the sudden appearance of images of him in ecstasy while in the presence of a musical angel warrants further investigation.

While it is tempting to explain the sudden appearance of Francis’s musically ecstatic scene as an embellished account of one of his many moments of rapture, the story

⁹⁰ Benyacar, 67. For an in-depth discussion concerning Saint Cecilia’s iconographic representations, see chapter six.

it represents – that of Francis being induced into rapture by celestial music – is not a fabrication *ex nihilo*, but can be traced to legends of musical comfort and ecstasy found in three iconic Franciscan sources: Tommaso da Celano’s *Vita II* (1247), San Bonaventura’s *Vita del beato Francesco* from his *Leggenda maggiore* (1263; hereafter referred to as the *Leggenda maggiore*) and the anonymous fourteenth-century vernacular source, *i Fioretti di San Francesco*. The most frequently referenced publication that addresses the relationship between these hagiographic sources and later iconography featuring a musically enraptured Francis is art historian Pamela Askew’s 1969 article, “The Angelic consolation of St. Francis of Assisi in Post-Tridentine Italian Painting,” in which she notes the presence of a single musically angelic scene appearing among all three sources.

Summarizing the story as it appears in Tommaso’s and Bonaventura’s accounts, Askew states that Francis desired to hear beautiful music, imagining it would soothe the pains from his ocular illness. He requested that one of his companions (a man who was a skilled lutenist in his former, secular life) perform for him.⁹¹ The companion was reluctant, however, and later refused, as he feared that Francis’s request would result in an overindulgence of secular pleasures, or at the very least that it would be perceived as such. The following night, Francis heard a lute, but saw no performer.⁹² The music was

⁹¹ For Askew’s summary of Tommaso’s and Bonaventura’s stories, see Askew, 298-299.

⁹² Tommaso da Celano, “Memoriale nel Desidero dell’Anima [vita seconda],” in *Fonti Francescane*, 3rd ed, Felice Accrocca, Saverio Colombarini, Modesto Cerra, and Daniele Solvi eds., (Padua: Editrici Francescane, 2011), 446. “Io vorrei, fratello, che tu in segreto prendessi a prestito una cetra e la portassi qui per dare a frate corpo, che è pieno di dolori, un po’ di conforto con qualche bel verso.”

so heavenly that he became transfixed, and imagined that he had been “transported” to another world.⁹³

Bonaventura’s rendition is only slightly altered from Tommaso’s. Francis still desires to use music as a remedy for the pains of his illness, but he does not make a formal request that his brother perform. Now, he himself is aware of the potential appearance of impropriety.⁹⁴ Even though Francis does not verbally articulate his wish, he eventually hears music from an unidentifiable source that comforts him and diminishes his pain. In every way except for the vocalization of the request, the content of the two stories appears to be identical. The story as it appears in *i Fioretti*, however, is notably transformed:

...Saint Francis, being greatly weakened of the body, due to great abstinence and from battles with the Devil, wanting to comfort the body with spiritual nourishment of the soul, began to think of the immeasurable glory and joy of the blessed with eternal life; and about this he began to pray to God that he would grant to him the grace of tasting a little of that joy; and being in that thought, suddenly an angel with immense splendor appeared to him, having a *viola* in the left hand and a bow in the right, and Saint Francis, being completely bewildered at the appearance of this angel, who struck the bow up on the *viola* once, and immediately so much sweetness in the melody softened the soul of Saint Francis and, it suspended it from every bodily sentiment that, according to what he later recounted to his companions, he doubted, if the angel had drawn the bow down, so that from the intolerable sweetness, his soul would have left his body.⁹⁵

⁹³ Askew, 299.

⁹⁴ Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, “Leggenda Maggiore (Vita di san Francesco d’Assisi)” in *Fonti Francescane*, 3rd ed, Felice Accrocca, Simpliciano Olgiati, and Daniele Solvi eds., (Padua: Editrici Francescane, 2011), 637.

⁹⁵ Benvenuto Bughetti, Felice Accrocca, Feliciano Olgiati and Daniele Solvi, eds, “I Fioretti di San Francesco,” in *Fonti Francescane*, 3rd ed, 2015 reprint (Padua: Editrici Francescane, 2011), 1246. “... essendo santo Francesco molto indebolito del corpo, tra per l’astinenza grande e per le battaglie del demonio, volendo egli col cibo spirituale dell’anima confortare il corpo, cominciò a pensare della ismisurata gloria e gaudio de’ beati di vita eterna; e sopra ciò incominciò a pregare Iddio che gli concedesse grazia d’assaggiare un poco di quello gaudio; e istando in questo pensiero, subito gli apparve un agnolo con grandissimo isplendore, il quale avea una viola nella mano sinistra e lo archetto nella diritta, e stando santo

In her article, Askew notes the variations in the story among the three sources, including the stark differences that arise in *i Fioretti*, but she categorizes the two later sources as adaptations of Tommaso's original tale. In other words, according to Askew, the musical events told by Tommaso, Bonaventura, and in *i Fioretti* are one and the same, with the differences among them ascribed to a morphing of the hagiography. Askew's explanation is one that has largely gone unquestioned and unchallenged in subsequent studies.

My view of the relationship among the three sources differs from Askew's. I propose that the authors have recounted two different musical scenes: one of comfort – told by Tommaso and Bonaventura; and one of ecstasy – recounted in *i Fioretti*. Askew's conflation of the two distinct scenes may stem from the fact that the stories as she presents them have been removed from their original contexts, in which case the basic elements of each story resemble one another: there is an angel, music, and Francis experiences either consolation or ecstasy. In context, however, the scenes are quite different.

A close reading of Tommaso's *Vita II* reveals that the musical episode took place while Francis was resting in Rieti for the care of his eyes.⁹⁶ While Bonaventura does not specifically mention Rieti, modern scholars have accepted it as the location of his

Francesco tutto istupefatto nello aspetto di questo angolo, esso menò una volta l'archetto in su sopra la viola, e subitamente tanta soavità di melodia indolcì l'anima di santo Francesco e sospesela sì da ogni sentimento corporale che, secondo che e' recitò poi alli compagni, egli dubitava, se lo agnolo avesse tirato l'archetto in giù, che per intollerabile dolcezza l'anima si sarebbe partita dal corpo. All translations are mine with editing by Marc Vanscheeuwijck.

⁹⁶ Tommaso, 446, "al tempo in cui soggiornava a Rieti per la cura degli occhi..." Saint Francis was known to have suffered from and routinely received treatment for an unspecified ailment that caused him great pain in his eyes.

adaptation, as he modeled his rendition of Francis's life – and the tale of musical comfort specifically – from Tommaso's *Vita I* and *Vita II*.⁹⁷ Tommaso and Bonaventura are similarly in agreement regarding the impetus of Francis's request. In both cases, his desire to hear music is directly related to his longing for relief from physical suffering.⁹⁸ Finally, Tommaso and Bonaventura agree that the instrument used to provide Francis's comfort was a lute.⁹⁹

In contrast to Tommaso's and Bonaventura's renditions, the author of *i Fioretti* sets the scene on Mount La Verna, prior to Francis receiving the stigmata.¹⁰⁰ As Francis has recently observed Lent, his body is weak from physical abstinence and continual temptation from the devil.¹⁰¹ In this case, Francis's physical frailty is the result of previous, voluntary religious engagement, not illness or poor health. His weakness prepares him to enter ecstasy, and after asking God to provide him with a glimpse of the unimaginable joy of eternal life (“incominciò a pregare Iddio...”), Francis is visited by an

⁹⁷ Bonaventura, 594. The first four chapters of Bonaventura's *Leggenda maggiore* are largely based on Tommaso's *Vita I*, while chapter five (which contains the musical scene) and chapter six are based on Tommaso's *Vita II*.

⁹⁸ See footnote 85 for Tommaso's words. Bonaventura writes, “Una volta il santo, prostrato da molte malattie insieme, senti il desiderio di un po' di bella musica che stimolasse la gioia dello spirito,” Bonaventura, 637.

⁹⁹ Tommaso and Bonaventura both use the term “cithara,” which may be indicative of type of lyre or a lute, both of which were in use in the thirteenth century. Early Italian translations of Tommaso and Bonaventura, however, use the word “cetra,” a term similarly used by Dante in *Paradiso*, canto XX when he compares the murmuring from the eagle's neck with sound that emanates from the neck of a lute.

¹⁰⁰ In *i Fioretti*, Francis's musically ecstatic episode occurs at the end of the second consideration on his receipt of the stigmata – one of five considerations that are found after the main collection of *fioretti*.

¹⁰¹ Prior to experiencing his musical rapture, Francis endures physical deprivation and demonic battles that reflect Christ's own fasting and subsequent temptation, documented in the New Testament writings of Matthew and Luke. The musically ecstatic stories told by Tommaso and Bonaventura are not comparable to Matthew and Luke's descriptions of Christ's suffering.

angel holding a “viola” and bow, who performs such “intolerably sweet” music that he is transported from his body and into rapture.¹⁰²

Overall, there are four main elements that distinguish *i Fioretti*'s rendition from Tommaso's and Bonaventura's: the location, the impetus of Francis's physical discomfort, the nature and direction of his request, and the angel's musical instrument. According to *i Fioretti*, Francis was on Mount La Verna in anticipation of Lent, not in Rieti as Tommaso and Bonaventura state. The source of his discomfort, due to his self-imposed physical frailty, is dissimilar to that of the ocular illness he experienced in Rieti. Furthermore, Tommaso and Bonaventura state that Francis either made the request of a companion or internalized his desire, whereas the author of *i Fioretti* is clear that he made his request to God directly; his request for the ease of physical discomfort is directed to his brother, and is relative to the music of the lesser *musica instrumentalis*, whereas his request to know of the celestial spheres results in the performance of the elevated *musica mundana*. Finally, it should be emphasized that in *i Fioretti* the musical angel leads Francis into ecstasy using a bowed string instrument, rather than a lute as Tommaso and Bonaventura depict.

The most convincing evidence that the musical ecstasy Francis experiences in *i Fioretti* is not an adaptation of Tommaso's and Bonaventura's tales of musical comfort, however, comes from careful examination of all musical scenes contained within Tommaso's *Vita II*. In chapter ninety, directly following the legend of Francis's musical

¹⁰² Bughetti et al., 1246.

consolation, Tommaso recounts an event strongly resembling *i Fioretti*'s account of musical ecstasy:

One time he acted thus. When the sweetest melody of the spirit was aroused in his chest, he displayed it outwardly with French words, and the divine spirit of inspiration came to him, which his ears readily perceived, overflowing in jubilation.

Sometimes – as I saw with my own eyes – *he collected a piece of wood from the ground and, while holding it on his left arm, with the right he took a bow kept curved by a string and there passed it above it, accompanying himself with movements suitable as if it was a viella,*¹⁰³ and sung in French lauds to the Lord.

Very often all of this exultation ended in tears and the jubilation was diluted by sorrowing for the Lord's passion. Then the saint, in the grasp of continual and prolonged sighs and renewed groans, forgot that which he had in hand, and remained stretched out toward the heavens.¹⁰⁴

Tommaso's second story contains undeniable similarities to the musical ecstasy recounted in *i Fioretti*. There is no mention of Francis's experience being related to a physical condition, or a desire for consolation or relief from pain. Additionally, Tommaso's specificity that Francis placed a piece of wood on his left arm and held a bow

¹⁰³ Tommaso uses the Latin word "viellam," accusative singular of *viella*, which is a vielle or medieval fiddle.

¹⁰⁴ "A volte si comportava così. Quando la dolcissima melodia dello spirito gli ferveva nel petto, si manifestava all'esterno con parole francesi, e la vena dell'ispirazione divina, che il suo orecchio percepiva furtivamente, traboccava in giubilo. Talora – come ho visto con i miei occhi – raccoglieva un legno da terra e, mentre lo teneva sul braccio sinistro, con la destra prendeva un archetto tenuto curvo da un filo e ve lo passava sopra accompagnandosi con movimenti adatti come fosse una viella e cantava in francese le lodi del Signore. Ben spesso tutta questa esultanza terminava in lacrime e il giubilo si stemperava in compianto della passione del Signore. Pio il santo, in preda a continui e prolungati sospiri e a rinnovati gemiti, dimentico di ciò che aveva in mano, rimaneva proteso verso il cielo." Bughetti et al., 447-448, emphasis mine. While the Italian translation in Bughetti et al. uses the reflexive gerund "accompagnandosi," suggesting possible insight into medieval performance practices, Tommaso's Latin text does not include this word or any others that indicate performance practice. In fact, he writes "quem quasi super viellam trahens per lignum, et ad hoc gestus repraesentans idoneos, gallice cantabat de Domino," and should be translated as "which, pulling it on the [piece of] wood as if it were a Vielle, and [while] displaying the suitable movements, he sang to the Lord in French."

in his right is reiterated by *i Fioretti*'s description that the angel held "una viola nella mano sinistra e lo archetto nelle diritta."¹⁰⁵ The most obvious of similarities is, of course, the presence of a bowed string instrument. In Tommaso's case, the instrument is not materially present beyond the two sticks – one of which is curved by a string – but the idea of the "viella" is no less powerful.

In the first tale of musical ecstasy recounted in Tommaso's chapter ninety, Francis does not make a request for musical comfort nor does he ask to glimpse the joys of heaven. Instead, his ecstasy is prompted by the stirring of the spirit within his chest, denoted by the presence of a "sweet melody." The power of this divine melody is so potent that it causes Francis, who is overflowing with jubilation, to produce his own "French words."¹⁰⁶ Divine music, then, has entered Francis's heart, stirred his passions and created a resonance that is harmonious with its celestial origin, and led Francis to his own ecstatic exultation. Tommaso's phrasing also indicates that Francis and his followers believed God's spirit could manifest itself in musical form, and that it could be present within the individual prior to the outward expression of rapture. Francis has been infused

¹⁰⁵ Bughetti et al., 1246.

¹⁰⁶ In this case, Tommaso's reference to Francis's "jubilation" (or "giubilo") likely refers to the term as it was understood by Richard of Saint Victor, rather than Saint Augustine. Augustine equated "jubilation" – originally used to describe textless, joyful sound emitted by harvesters – as that which the soul does when in the presence of God: "And whom does jubilation befit but the ineffable God? For he is ineffable whom you cannot speak. And if you cannot speak him, yet ought not to be silent, what remains except that you jubilate?" See James McKinnon, "Preface to the Study of the Alleluia" *Early Music History* 15 (1996): 217. The jubilation that Augustine describes is wordless – ineffable, like God. Francis's words, however, appear to be distinguishable. The episode may be more closely related to Richard of Saint Victor's description of the fifth "spiritual organ": "...we now delight in the melody of the fifth organ, when because of the inebriation of sweetness and the magnitude of admiration we are swept away in mental stupor." See Richard of Saint Victor, "Adnotatio in Psalmum 136," PL 196:373 as cited in Claire Taylor Jones, "Hostia jubilationis: Psalm Citation, Eucharistic Prayer, and Mystical Union in Gertrude of Helfta's *Exercitia spiritualia*," *Speculum* 89 no. 4 (October, 2014): 1017.

with God's own divinity or the divine love of the heavens, expressed by the music of the spheres. This infusion spurs Francis to his own ecstatic, sonic production.

The second part of the story indicates that Tommaso associated at least one of Francis's raptures with the performance of a bowed string instrument. Here Francis's movement into contemplation is self-initiated – he mimics his performance upon a “viella” (a gesture that is strengthened by the presence of two sticks, one of which is held curved by a string) and begins to sing French lauds in praise of God. The reverence of this devotional performance overcomes Francis (in terms of music and contemplation), and he is brought to tearful lamentation. The contemplation continues, however, and we know that Francis is eventually drawn into rapture, evidenced by his sighs and groans, his unawareness of his “instrument,” and the positioning of his body outstretched toward heaven. If in the first part of the story music functioned as a fragment of heaven that infiltrated Francis's heart and drew him to the celestial spheres, here it is a way by which Francis is able to move deeper into contemplation. We may interpret Tommaso's note that Francis “forgot that which he had in hand” to mean that Francis's musical performance ceased – on the one hand the lack of awareness as to the presence of his make-shift instrument resulted in the interruption of his feigned performance; on the other hand, his “prolonged sighs and renewed groans” certainly disrupted the singing of lauds. In this story, then, music propels the soul into contemplation, but is discontinued once Francis becomes enraptured.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Peter Loewen views biographers' descriptions of this musical rapture as important sources for understanding early Franciscan use of rhetoric. Of particular interest is their emphasis on absolute music as a source of piety, and their inclusion of performative gestures. He argues that “absolute music and abstract sound could be the inspiration for Francis's verbal expressions of joy, but in moments of spiritual ecstasy, it

It is clear that Bonaventura's legend is an adaptation of Tommaso's lute scene of musical comfort, but I propose that it is Tommaso's anecdote of Francis and his *vielle* that was featured in *i Fioretti* and its affiliated sources. The story appears in almost exact replication in verse thirty-eight of the *Leggenda perugina*¹⁰⁸ – the oldest of *i Fioretti*'s contributing sources to also contain the tale of musical comfort – and is then retold in the subsequent vernacular source, *Lo specchio di perfezione* (circa 1318), where it contains a slight but important modification. Here, in *Lo specchio*, the author adjusts the last words of the story, clarifying to the reader that Francis has indeed gone into ecstasy, stating that it was as if he was “rapt in heaven.”¹⁰⁹ After *Lo specchio*, the story appears in select manuscripts of the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius* (c. 1327-1337), a contributing source directly preceding *i Fioretti*.¹¹⁰ This suggests that Tommaso's *Vita II* may have in fact been the source of both musical scenes described in Askew's article, one of musical comfort, and one of musical ecstasy that was later featured in *i Fioretti* (for a diagram of *i Fioretti*'s contributing sources see Appendix A, Figure 6). Considering *Vita II* as the source of these two separate hagiographic branches allows us to better understand which legends were valued by the communities that read, re-shaped, and re-told them. In Bonaventura's *Leggenda maggiore*, we find only the anecdote of musical consolation. In

seems he could no longer confine himself to speech, and word would evolve into the physical gestures of pantomime and dance. Pure melody appears to have had its own distinct rhetorical register, which could serve as a medium for a text but also surpass it.” See Peter Loewen, *Music in Early Franciscan Thought*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 31.

¹⁰⁸ The *Leggenda perugina* is also referred to as the *Leggenda antiqua di S. Francesco* and *Compilazione di Assisi*.

¹⁰⁹ “...era come rapito nel cielo.” Bughetti et al., 1093.

¹¹⁰ For dating of these sources see Bughetti et al., 14-19. Regarding manuscripts of the *Actus beati Francisci* that contain this scene, see Paul Sabatier, ed., *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum ejus* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1902), 227-230.

the sources contributing to *i Fioretti*, however, there is a strong tendency to privilege Tommaso's tale of musical ecstasy instead of the scene of musical comfort.

The Carracci School & Francis's Musical Ecstasy

Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century paintings of Francis in musical ecstasy by members of the Carracci 'school' in Bologna depict the story as it is recounted in *i Fioretti*. The topos is exemplified in Guido Reni's 1605 *Saint Francis Consoled by a Musical Angel* (see Appendix A, Figure 5). In Reni's depiction, we see Francis outdoors, reclined against the rocky wall of Mount La Verna. He relaxes in a dream-like rapture, accompanied by an angel who performs the ecstatic music on a violin. In Reni's painting (and others of this same topos), we once again see music as the cause of rapture. The music stems from the angel's performance – as the angel is a celestial being, we know that the music too is divine. For contrast, I include here a 1620 rendition of Saint Francis with a musical angel by the Spanish painter Francesco Ribalta (see Appendix A, Figure 7). In Ribalta's painting, we see Francis on a bed, likely recovering from illness, and serenaded by a lute as Tommaso and Bonaventura describe. Comparing these paintings with the stories in the previously discussed literary sources, it is clear that they represent the disparate renditions (within the two distinct hagiographic branches) in which Francis encounters celestial music: the scene of musical comfort told in Tommaso and Bonaventura, and the scene of musical ecstasy in *i Fioretti* and its contributing sources.

Understanding the iconographic origins of *i Fioretti*'s musically ecstatic scene is complicated by the fact that the most thorough and influential study of the topic is Askew's 1969 article. While Askew's study was a pioneering and highly valuable

contribution to art history scholarship, it includes a significant misattribution and draws from a narrow field of visual sources, necessitating that the study be re-visited and amended in order to continue the important research she began. This re-evaluation is crucial for determining the source of inspiration for the iconographic topos, and how it migrated among artists who moved throughout the Papal States, particularly Rome and Bologna.

Askew's study referenced an outdated attribution of Reni's 1605 *Saint Francis Consoled by a Musical Angel*, stating that it was completed by Annibale Carracci in 1586 or 1587.¹¹¹ Art historian Roberto Longhi's 1960 correction of this labeling precludes Annibale and Bologna as the initiator and birthplace of the iconographic topos. After Annibale, Askew's study lists Francesco Vanni – a Siennese artist whose first depiction of Francis in musical ecstasy only survives in a 1595 engraved copy by Agostino Carracci (see Appendix A, Figure 8). According to this chronology, the practice of depicting Francis's musical rapture as it appears in *i Fioretti* might still be traced to Bologna, as Vanni made several trips to that city and apprenticed there with Bartolomeo Passarotti. In this scenario, it is Vanni whose inspiration would have influenced Carracci's work. Assigning inspiration to Vanni in Bologna, however, necessarily excludes Giuseppe Cesari's 1593 depiction of *i Fioretti*'s scene (a painting not included in Askew's study), completed in Rome two years prior to Vanni's version (see Appendix A, Figure 9). To

¹¹¹ The painting's misattribution had been corrected by art historian Roberto Longhi in 1960 and is now labeled correctly in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna. Roberto Longhi, *Uno sguardo alle fotografie della Mostra "Italian Art and Britain" alla Royal Academy di Londra*, in "Paragone", 125, 1960, as referenced in Emanuela Fiori, "San Francesco consolato da un angelo musicante," in *Sir Denis Mahon per la Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna: Una donazione compiuta*, Grazia Agostini and Elena Rossoni eds., (Mibact-Polo Museale: Emilia-Romagna, 2016), 60-63. To my knowledge, there are no depictions of an ecstatic Francis and a musical angel that are currently attributed to Annibale Carracci.

my knowledge, Cesari did not spend a significant amount of time in Bologna; though, it is possible that the cultivation of the topos began with him in Rome, and later spread to the Carracci school in Bologna through his contact with Annibale and Agostino Carracci, who moved to Rome in 1594 and 1598, respectively.

The source of inspiration and line of influence become clearer, however, when we return to *i Fioretti* themselves and re-consider the important role they played in providing content for Counter-Reformation artists. The *Fioretti* were reprinted in Italy at least three times during the sixteenth century – in 1502, 1522, and 1576 – surviving copies of which have provenances in and around Bologna and Rome, indicating a continued interest in *i Fioretti* in those areas.¹¹² I have established that iconography featuring a musically ecstatic Francis and an angel holding a bowed string instrument is based on the legend told in *i Fioretti* and its preceding sources, and not the tale of musical comfort in Tommaso's and Bonaventura's vitae, with the possible earliest depictions appearing in Rome by Cesari, followed by Vanni, Agostino Carracci, and Reni in Bologna. I do believe, however, that it was the Carracci 'school' in Bologna, and possibly even Ludovico Carracci – the elder cousin of Annibale and Agostino – whose interest in *i Fioretti* prompted some of the first known paintings of its stories. These paintings were

¹¹² The *i Fioretti* sources I have identified to date are: 1502: Collegiata di San Giovanni in Persiceto outside of Bologna; 1522: Vatican library Ross. Collection; 1576: Vatican library Barberini collection. In addition to these sources, a 1550 *Discorsi sopra i Fioretti di San Francesco ne quali della sua vita, & delle sue stigmati si ragiona* by Pietro Paolo Vergerio further attests to the strength of *i Fioretti*'s influence in the sixteenth century. Also notable are the various engravings of *i Fioretti*'s stories, circulating as early as the middle to late 1580s. See Fabien Guilloux, "Saint-François d'Assise et l'ange musicien: un topos iconographique et musical chrétien," *Imago musicae* 25, no. 1 (2012): 29-75.

then replicated by students of the Carracci school in Bologna, as well as by other artists throughout the Papal States.¹¹³

Support for this hypothesis comes from Ludovico's lesser known 1590-92 representation of Francis in musical ecstasy – a painting not included in Askew's study, or in other publications I have found addressing this topic.¹¹⁴ Ludovico's rendition also depicts an outdoor setting – likely Mount La Verna – yet he shows the angel with a lute, more reminiscent of Tommaso's and Bonaventura's accounts (see Appendix A, Figure 10). In this regard, his painting appears to be a hybrid of the two hagiographic traditions – reflecting *i Fioretti's* location on Mount La Verna, but including Tommaso's and Bonaventura's lute. His initial sketch for the work, however, reveals that he first envisioned the angel appearing with a string instrument and bow, indicating that the entirety of the scene was intended to be a depiction of *i Fioretti's* account of Francis's ecstasy, in which an angel appears to him on Mount La Verna, and plays a bowed string instrument (see Appendix A, Figure 11).¹¹⁵

¹¹³ C. van Tuyll van Serooskerken, Lin Barton, Nicholas Turner, and Daniele Benati. 2003 “Carracci family.” Grove Art Online. 6 Oct. 2018. Annibale and Agostino started the Accademia degli Desiderosi in Ludovico's studio c. 1582 with the intent of breaking with the Mannerist school. In the initial years, the academy functioned more as an informal gathering of like-minded individuals. By about 1590, however, it had transformed into an educational institution.

¹¹⁴ Namely Askew, Benyacar, and Guilloux.

¹¹⁵ Additional evidence of *i Fioretti's* influential role on Ludovico's work comes from his 1582-86 painting, labeled by art historians as Francis's vision of the Virgin Mary. While Francis's hagiography does recount multiple visions in which he encounters the Virgin Mary, none fit the story represented in Ludovico's painting as well as that told in chapter forty-two of *i Fioretti*, in which Brother Conrad, not Francis, sees Mary and the Christ child. Art historian Duncan Bull's analysis of the origin of Ludovico's “Vision of St. Francis of Assisi” (“Het visioen van de heilige Franciscus van Assisi”) and its influence on Bolognese painters aligns with my own conclusion that the original story features brother Conrad instead of Francis, and that Ludovico's painting was likely the source of an iconographic topos that spread throughout Bologna and Italy. Duncan Bull, “Ludovico Carracci's ‘Vision of St Francis’: Inspiration and Influence,” *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 60, no. 4 (2012): 282-315.

Attribution of this painting to Ludovico Carracci has been declared by art historians Gail Feigenbaum and Babette Bohn, and was recently re-published by Bohn in her 2004 study of Ludovico Carracci's works.¹¹⁶ The attribution has been questioned by Alessandro Brogi, however, who in 2001 suggested the painting may be the work of Lorenzo Garbieri, a devout follower of Ludovico, and could be dated as late as the 1620's.¹¹⁷ Regardless of whether the painting was created by Ludovico himself, or by one of his followers, the fact remains that the large majority of depictions featuring Francis in musical ecstasy were painted by members of the Carracci family, the Carracci Bolognese 'school,' and various artists in Rome with whom the Carracci had contact.

When viewed alongside the sixteenth-century reprints of *i Fioretti*, the numerous renditions of Saint Francis in musical ecstasy produced by Ludovico Carracci or Lorenzo Garbieri, Giuseppe Cesari, Francesco Vanni, Agostino Carracci, and Guido Reni point to a tradition of depicting the musically ecstatic scene of *i Fioretti* primarily located in and around Bologna with additional reproductions by artists throughout the Papal States. While it may never be possible to ascertain who was the first to paint Francis's musical ecstasy, it is undeniable that among late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Bolognese and Roman artists, there was an initial literary interest that developed into an iconographic tradition of featuring the musically ecstatic scene found in *i Fioretti*, instead of the scene of musical comfort located in Tommaso's and Bonaventura's texts.

¹¹⁶ Babette Bohn, *Ludovico Carracci and the Art of Drawing* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2004).

¹¹⁷ Alessandro Brogi, *Ludovico Carracci: (1555-1619)* Pittori D'Italia; 3, (Bologna: Tipoarte, 2001), 276-277.

Overall, the story of Francis’s musical rapture that first appeared in Tommaso’s *Vita II* and was then adapted in the *Leggenda perugina*, *Lo specchio di perfezione*, the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, and finally *i Fioretti*, and then later featured in the iconography of the Carracci “school,” exemplifies music’s relationship to saintly rapture as the catalyst that initiates the soul’s transcendence. Whether initiated by the performance of Francis himself or by the angel, music produced by a bowed string instrument (real or imaginary) was the source of the celestial harmonies. In these examples, while the music itself may be ineffable, its source is not – it is an instrument well-known to Francis and to his biographers’ audiences. We may ask ourselves, then, if the specification of such an instrument – an earthly instrument, that is – may be an attempt by the authors to connect a saintly phenomenon with the very real, everyday devotional practices of Francis’s followers, and the growing number of unenclosed religious communities across western Europe. Perhaps the presence of an instrument, an identification of the source of celestial harmonies, serves as a rhetorical “grounding” of an otherwise inaccessible saintly experience. The use of a musical instrument to indicate a source of ecstasy was not relegated to Francis, but is similarly present in later hagiographic *Revelations* attributed to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary & Musical Ecstasy

The canonization materials for Saint Elizabeth of Hungary have not been the center of many musicological studies; even less frequent are studies concerning the relationship between her hagiography and musical ecstasy.¹¹⁸ Instead, musicologists have

¹¹⁸ One of the most recent musicological studies concerning Saint Elizabeth of Hungary is Catherine A. Bradley’s 2017 article, “Song and Quotation in Two-Voice Motets for Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.”

habitually focused on the two *historiae* written for use on Elizabeth's feast day: The *Letare Germania* and the *Gaudeat Hungaria*.¹¹⁹

Elizabeth of Hungary was born in 1207 and died in 1231 at the age of twenty-four. Her saintly status was recognized during her lifetime, and she remained one of the most popular female saints throughout the Middle Ages.¹²⁰ The primary hagiographic materials concerning Elizabeth's life employ a variety of tropes to create her saintly make-up including a pious childhood, the desire to be chaste, and elements of queen, beguine, and Franciscan topoi.¹²¹ After the death of her husband, Ludwig, Pope Gregory IX entrusted the care of Elizabeth to her spiritual advisor, Conrad of Marburg. Although she took vows of chastity and poverty, relinquished worldly ties and surrendered her land and wealth, she never joined a religious order nor entered into a convent.¹²²

Elizabeth of Hungary was one of the most famous thirteenth-century female saints. As such, the events of her life have been endlessly dissected and analyzed in an attempt to situate her within a specific saintly mold. In his book, *The Life and Afterlife of*

Bradley investigates the melisma in Elizabeth's office *Gaudeat Hungaria* that is used to represent the saint's deathbed singing, and the melisma's relationship to two-voice motets. See Catherine A. Bradley, "Song and Quotation in Two-Voice Motets for Saint Elizabeth of Hungary," *Speculum* 92 no. 3 (July, 2017): 661-691.

¹¹⁹ See Barbara Hagg, *Two Offices for St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Gaudeat Hungaria and Letare Germania* (Ottawa: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1995).

¹²⁰ The recognition of her sanctity while living is evident by her expeditious canonization by Pope Gregory IX in 1235. While Elizabeth's popularity and widespread veneration allowed for the quick creation of miracle collections that contributed to her canonization, she was also a close friend of Pope Gregory IX, which undoubtedly aided the speed of the process.

¹²¹ Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Life & Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 43-79.

¹²² Wolf, 95. For an elaborated biography of Saint Elizabeth's life, see Wolf, "Dicta quatuor ancillarum," in *The Life & Afterlife of St. Elizabeth of Hungary*.

Elizabeth of Hungary, historian Kenneth Baxter Wolf proposes that Elizabeth cannot be understood as any one saintly trope or model, but is instead an amalgamation of three: the queen, the beguine, and the Franciscan.¹²³ Elizabeth's position as Thuringian royalty and her benevolent acts of charity (e.g. distributing her clothing and other material objects amongst the poor) fit well within the medieval mold of the saintly queen. Yet, as a holy woman who took a vow of chastity (yet did not join a religious order) and united with other lay women in renouncing worldly possessions, spinning wool, and living in poverty, Elizabeth's actions were consistent with those of the newly emerging Beguines. Her desires to live in extreme poverty and to survive as a mendicant also resonate with components of the Franciscan saintly model.¹²⁴ Rarely discussed, however, is the identification of Elizabeth as an ecstatic, despite the fact that her two primary vitae reference multiple moments of rapture, including one that features music.

The primary descriptions of Elizabeth's life and sanctity are a collection of documents submitted during her canonization proceedings: the *Summa vitae* and an accompanying short list of miracles, written in 1232 by Conrad of Marburg; two larger sets of documented miracles submitted separately in 1233 and 1235 as part of Papal commissions; and the *Dicta quatuor ancillarum*, a collection of depositions gathered from four of Elizabeth's close friends and servants, submitted during the Papal

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93. Conrad of Marburg notes that after her husband's death, Elizabeth desired to live her life like a Franciscan and be sustained by begging door to door. Conrad adamantly denied her request. In defiance of Conrad's refusal, Elizabeth publicly "renounced her parentage, her children, her own free will, and all of the pomp of this world." Many hagiographic accounts of Elizabeth's life also place the blame for her poverty on her husband's family, claiming that after his death they quickly disavowed Elizabeth, leaving her homeless and destitute. However, primary source documentation does not support this claim, and it seems more likely that Elizabeth's poverty was self-inflicted. For more information regarding Elizabeth's connection with the Franciscan order, see chapter four.

commission of 1235. It is from these original documents that other vitae and hagiographic texts were created.¹²⁵ Conrad's *Summa vitae* is brief, limited in scope, and focuses chiefly on his own involvement in Elizabeth's progression toward sanctity. Conversely, the testimonies in the *Dicta* were supplied by four women who were intimately acquainted with Elizabeth: Guda and Isentrud, who had a close relationship with Elizabeth between 1222 and 1228; and Irmgard and Elizabeth (hereafter "Elizabeth the handmaid"), two servants who were close with Elizabeth during the years 1228 to 1231.

Both Conrad's *Summa vitae* and the women's *Dicta* contain a musical deathbed scene in which an ecstatic Elizabeth communes with the divine. In both sources, the event occurs toward the end of Elizabeth's life, as she lies in bed, sick and weakened, and preparing for the end of her mortal life. According to Conrad, on the day prior to her death Elizabeth was surrounded by "certain religious men and women," and after conversing with them briefly, she began to experience a musical rapture.

Once this had been said, she was still and the sweetest of voices was heard in her throat without any movement of her lips. And when those sitting around her wondered what it was, she asked them if they had heard the singers that were there with her.¹²⁶

Conrad's scene of musical rapture contained within the *Summa vitae* contrasts starkly with that which is told by Elizabeth the handmaid in the *Dicta*. Unlike Conrad,

¹²⁵ Recent translations of these texts are found in Wolf, 2011.

¹²⁶ Wolf, 94-95. Conrad documents that these events took place on the octave of the Feast of St. Martin, which fell on the sixteenth of November in 1231. Elizabeth's contemporaries listed her death as taking place on the sixteenth of November, however, since she passed away after midnight, her death actually occurred on the seventeenth, placing the musical scene sometime during the day or evening before her passing.

Elizabeth the handmaid does not provide a precise date or time that the event took place. She states only that the rapture occurred, “when my lady blessed Elizabeth lay on her deathbed.”¹²⁷ In the *Dicta*, the musical ecstasy is noted as follows:

When my lady blessed Elizabeth lay on her deathbed, I heard the sweetest voice, which seemed to come from within her sweet neck as she lay facing the wall. After an hour she turned and said to me: “Where are you, my beloved?” I responded: “Here I am,” and then I added: “Oh my lady!” You were singing so sweetly!” She asked me if I had heard the singing and I said that I had. She said: “I tell you, a little bird situated between me and the wall was singing most joyfully to me. Inspired by its voice, it seemed fitting for me to sing along.” This happened only a few days before her death.¹²⁸

In many ways the scenes described by Conrad and by Elizabeth the handmaid accord one with another. Both place the event only a few days or hours prior to Elizabeth's death, and both describe a “sweet” singing that emerges from the saint's throat or neck. There are, however, important differences. Conrad situates the event as something communal, taking place among a group of people. Although he does not specify an exact number, he refers to “those sitting around [Elizabeth]” and states that “certain of the religious men and women” were present. This description not only removes the interiority from Elizabeth's episode (it is no longer experienced solely by Elizabeth, but is shared by the men and women who surround her), it also reflects the musical death scenes that are present in early medieval hagiographies (see chapter two and the stories of the dying virgins at Faremoutiers, for example). In these earlier tales, the deaths of holy women and young virgins are accompanied by celestial music that is

¹²⁷ Ibid., 214-215.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 215.

frequently produced by choirs of angels. The music is heard by the surrounding community and serves as an indicator of the women's physical deaths.

Conversely, it seems that in the story told by Elizabeth the handmaid, she and the saint are alone; and rather than joining with a group of celestial entities, Saint Elizabeth claims to have been singing with one "little bird." Although the entirety of the event is shared between the two women (Elizabeth the saint and Elizabeth the handmaid), it is on the whole more personal – it has not been positioned within a communal context. Instead, the story that is told in the *Dicta* reads more like a glimpse into Saint Elizabeth's rapturous communion with God (represented by the bird) during which they converse through music. This depiction of the musical ecstasy – as an event in which another unprofessed woman witnesses the rapture of her companion – resembles the intimacy of the ecstasies that occurred within beguinages of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In other words, while the construction of Conrad's story is more indicative of earlier hagiographic trends, the anecdote narrated by Elizabeth the handmaid more closely resembles the contemporary tales of rapture recounted by and about Beguine holy women. Perhaps it is not surprising then, that the version given by Elizabeth the handmaid (rather than that of Conrad) was more frequently used in subsequent hagiographies.

The continued dissemination of the more intimate musical ecstasy recounted in the *Dicta* begs the question of whether Elizabeth's contemporaries viewed her as an ecstatic. Though she herself left no descriptions of her ecstatic experiences, both the

Summa vitae and the *Dicta* contain powerful descriptions of her raptures.¹²⁹ Conrad specifically highlights Elizabeth's contemplative nature, stating, "I will say, in the presence of God, that I have rarely seen a more contemplative woman."¹³⁰ While he does not supplement the *vita* with his own memories of Elizabeth's raptures, he remarks that "certain religious women as well as men often saw her face – when she was returning from one of her prayer retreats – shining wonderfully as if rays of sun were emanating from her eyes. If, as was often the case, she was caught up in rapture for several hours, she would sustain herself with very little food, if any at all, for the longest time."¹³¹

Conrad's reference to the light that shines forth from Elizabeth's eyes is reminiscent of Bernard of Clairvaux's description of the light that fills the soul as it progresses from contemplation into rapture.¹³² As she is immersed in prayer, Elizabeth experiences ecstasy, she overflows with God's light. This reading is further supported by Conrad's statement that Elizabeth was often "caught up" in rapture. The episodes were an accepted part of her identity as a holy woman, and served as a marker for her community of her saintly status.

Similar ecstatic events are noted in the *Dicta*. In a statement provided by Isentrud, we are told that during Lent, Elizabeth spent an extended amount of time in church with

¹²⁹ For more information regarding the Elizabeth's position as an ecstatic within her community, and the attempt by Conrad to "silence" her mystic activities see Kathleen Garay, "Speaking Saintly Silence in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of Elizabeth of Hungary," in *Silence and the Silenced: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Leslie Boldt, Corrado Federici, and Ernesto Virgulti (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 233-245.

¹³⁰ Wolf, 94.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² See chapter two.

“her eyes fixed on the altar.”¹³³ After returning home, the saint was weakened from her prolonged devotion, began perspiring, and required physical support from her handmaids. Isentrud continues by describing Elizabeth’s erratic emotions, and remarks that for hours Elizabeth alternated between crying, laughing, and quiet contemplation.¹³⁴ After a prolonged silence, the saint “burst forth with these words: ‘Lord, you want to be with me and I want to be with you and never do I want to be apart from you.’”¹³⁵ Elizabeth later confided in Isentrud that she “saw the heavens open and my sweet Jesus leaned toward me, consoling me about the various afflictions and tribulations that surrounded me...suffice it to say that I was overjoyed and saw some marvelous secrets of God.”¹³⁶ It is clear from this passage that not only was Elizabeth engaged in personal devotion, but that she experienced a vision that resulted in face-to-face contact with God or possibly Christ. She conversed with him, was consoled by him, and became privy to intimate celestial secrets. Elizabeth had on more than one occasion experienced rapture.

In her deathbed-scene of musical rapture, Elizabeth hears the bird prior to joining it in song. She is overcome with the beauty of its melody and is “inspired” to participate, indicating that her rapture was not necessarily sought or self-initiated, but prompted by the music of the bird. It is the music that pulls Elizabeth into the ecstatic episode (inspiration); she contributes to the music of the rapture willingly (join). The “inspiration” that is received from the bird’s song raises the question of whether the

¹³³ Wolf, 202.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 203.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

animal's music was celestial in origin. Is the bird a symbol for divinity? If so, the scene is once again one of rapturous union between the lover and the beloved; it is an ecstatic joining with God that is prompted by music. Or, is Elizabeth's bird simply just a bird. The literary and iconographical presence of birds and their songs in medieval hagiography was complex, particularly in the thirteenth century when there was an increasing fascination with allegorical literature and didactic bestiaries.

Bestiaries and aviaries (books that provided descriptions of animals and their symbolic meanings – in the case of the aviary this was specific to different species of birds) were widely produced and disseminated throughout western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹³⁷ The books functioned as guides for readers, providing them with pictures of diverse animals, didactic glosses regarding the moral significance of each, and instructions as to how readers should understand the animal when it appeared in literature or iconography. In hagiography of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the inclusion of animals, including birds, functioned as a rhetorical device that signified matters of spiritual and theological significance.¹³⁸ In the introduction to his *Aviarium*, written between 1132 and 1152, Hugh of Fouilloy discusses the importance of such associations:

Nor should he attribute it to levity that I paint a hawk or a dove, because the blessed Job and the prophet David bequeathed to us birds of this sort for our

¹³⁷ Simona Cohen, *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 4.

¹³⁸ Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008). Discussing the connection between Irish hagiography and the life of Saint Francis, Edward A. Armstrong remarks that the presence of many birds was often understood to signify the presence of angels, while the presence of one bird could represent an angel, the holy spirit, or Christ himself, depending on the context. See Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic: The Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 94.

edification. For what Scripture means to the teachers, the picture means to the simple folk.¹³⁹

Hugh's statement affirms that the presence of birds in literature and iconography was specifically meant to instruct and enlighten the audience. This concept is further emphasized by literary scholar, Jeanette Beer, who similarly describes Richard de Fournival's thirteenth-century *Bestiaire d'amour* as a didactic text.

Each particular property of 'nature' was shown to have allegorical importance as the illustrator of a higher truth. The creatures of Creation thus acquired a new significance in the early centuries of the Christian Church.¹⁴⁰

The explanations Hugh and Beer provide concerning the instructional nature of animals featured in twelfth- and thirteenth-century iconography and literature can be similarly applied to the description of Saint Elizabeth's musical ecstasy as it is recounted in the *Dicta*. In this case, Hugh's and Beer's comments support the argument that members of Elizabeth's community – who either read the legend in the *Dicta* or in later hagiography, or heard the legend recounted orally – would have understood that the bird was not intended to signify the saint's interaction with an animal. Instead, the presence of

¹³⁹ Willene B. Clark, *The Medieval Book of Birds, Hugh of Fouilloys's Aviary* (Binghamton: New York, 1992), 119. The use of bestiaries and aviaries for didactic purposes was so common in the Middle Ages, that the most popular animals and animal fables made their way to the lay community by their inclusion in a variety of hagiographical mediums, iconography, sermons, and popular texts and stories. For more information see David Salter, *Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 12-13. Since members of the lay community were sometimes illiterate and therefore received information through oral transmission or by engaging with graphic representations, it was essential for them to easily recognize the presence of didactic allegory in vernacular stories, popular tales, and iconography, and to be able to identify the allegorical function. Simona Cohen also discusses the increased availability of allegorical animal literature written in the vernacular for laity who were literate but did not read Latin; see Cohen, 16.

¹⁴⁰ Jeanette Beer, *Beasts of Love* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 9.

an animal signals a didactic metaphor: Elizabeth does not sing with a bird, she sings with an allegorical shadow of divinity.

Although the musical scene depicted in the *Dicta* provides much in regard to imagery and allegory, information concerning the music itself is limited. Elizabeth the handmaid does not describe the music other than to label it as “sweet,” and her inquiry to Saint Elizabeth further suggests that she herself is unfamiliar with the melody. Saint Elizabeth does not elaborate on her interaction with the bird, nor does she describe the type of music she heard. The *Dicta*’s scene of musical rapture is representative, however, of the growing trend in thirteenth-century painting that sought to combine celestial and musical themes through the presence of birds, a practice that allowed audiences to envision the sights and sounds of divine music making. Musicologist Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek describes this phenomenon as follows:

Clearly distinguished and separated in the Bible, birds and angels became somehow reunited in medieval poetic imagination through an aesthetic appreciation of birdsong...The chirping of birds, whose beauty seems to have been left unnoticed by biblical writers, was identified by medieval poets with the song of angels, and the birds themselves became in a sense their earthly, visible representatives.¹⁴¹

According to Żerańska-Kominek’s assessment of birds and birdsongs, the story of Saint Elizabeth’s musical ecstasy not only depicts the saint’s duet with an allegorical bird, it is also a scene of celestial harmony.¹⁴² Knowing that the inclusion of birds in

¹⁴¹ Sławomira Żerańska-Kominek, “Bird-Like Angels Making Music in Mary’s Garden: Gentile da Fabriano’s Madonna and Child with Saint,” *Music in Art* 37 (2012): 177-190.

¹⁴² This reading is further supported by Jacobus de Voragine in his thirteenth-century *Legenda aurea*, where he interprets Elizabeth’s bird as an angel who was appointed to watch over the saint and introduce her to eternal joy. See Linda Burke, “A Sister in the World: Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in the ‘Golden Legend’,” *The Hungarian Historical Review* 5 no. 3 (2016): 524; and Giacombo di Voragine, *Legendario delle vite*, trans. Nicolò Manerbio (Venice: Domenico & Giovanni Battista Guerra, 1586), 744-745.

secular and sacred literature was intended to signify metaphor and allegory – that as a sacred symbol birds often represented angels, the Holy Spirit, Christ, or God – the audience is led to an interpretation of the scene as one in which Elizabeth is engaged in a rapturous communion with the Holy Spirit, Christ, or God himself in the days before her death. Further, the communion of her ecstatic death scene is possible because of music, initiated by the celestial being. As Elizabeth hears the celestial music – music of the spheres – she is drawn into rapture and moved to produce her own melody. For Elizabeth, who sees the divine being and hears its celestial sonorities, her melody is complementary, even harmonious; to Elizabeth the handmaid, an individual who is privy to witnessing the saint’s rapture but not the divine creature nor its song, the saint’s melody is only “sweet,” it is otherwise ineffable.

Performing Ecstasy: Elizabeth’s Bird and Erotic Revelations

The inclusion of Elizabeth’s ecstatic death-bed scene within the *Dicta* and subsequent hagiographies becomes even more fascinating when considering the performative – rather than “purely literary” – aspect of documented visions and raptures during the Middle Ages.¹⁴³ Religious historian Mary A. Suydam has investigated the performative nature of medieval ecstatic texts, specifically within Beguine communities, and notes the inherent communal nature of ecstasies’ experiences. According to Suydam, women’s raptures were “written documents intended to guide ongoing oral and social performances.”¹⁴⁴ Once observed and documented by the community, the events that

¹⁴³ Mary A. Suydam, “Visionaries in the Public Eye: Beguine Literature as Performance,” in *The Texture of Society*, 131-132.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

occurred during women's ecstasies served as models for other women in their attempts to access similar transcendent experiences.

These performative ecstasies may not be far removed from the medieval practice of cultivating religious visions through the act of guided meditations, during which individuals (male or female) envisioned themselves in various New Testament scenes, in order to increase their empathy for the plights of biblical characters and grow closer to Christ and God. The most widely circulated of visionary meditations were the thirteenth-century *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, attributed to San Bonaventura.¹⁴⁵ In this text, and others that served a similar meditative function, the practitioner read descriptions of events from the Virgin's life (e.g. the virgin praying in the temple, the virgin receiving food from the angel, the annunciation, the visitation, etc.) and positioned themselves as one of her companions, a silent witness to the holy scenes. This process helped the devotee to feel the love of the Virgin and her son, and often resulted in experiences where the line between cultivated and divinely received vision became indistinguishable.¹⁴⁶ Whether or not the legend of the ecstatic Elizabeth and her musical bird served as a scene for the

¹⁴⁵ Isa Ragusa, trans., *Meditations of the Life of Christ: An illustrated manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, compiled from the Latin and edited by Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), xxi.

¹⁴⁶ Speaking of similar meditative practices that were cultivated amongst sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Jesuits, Anthony Cascardi notes: "And yet even the *Ejercicios espirituales* call upon the practitioner to become absorbed in "imaginary" scenes of meditation... The practitioner of the *Ejercicios* was expected not just to concentrate consciously but to become lost in – to participate in – the fictional 'scene' of contemplation... In practicing the Jesuit exercises, the "exercitant" was to make himself (for it is invariably a male subject) susceptible to a kind of "transport" that was linked to some other-than-rational state." See Anthony J Cascardi, "The Genealogy of the Sublime in the Aesthetics of the Spanish Baroque," in *Reason and Its Others: Italy, Spain, and the New World*, eds. David R. Castillo and Massimo Lollini, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2006), 231.

practice of meditative visions is not known. For her posthumous *Revelations*, however, it is extremely likely.

In fourteenth-century Italy, communities that venerated Elizabeth sought to unify her with the emerging culture of mystic devotion by creating for her new miracles and a set of *Revelations* that merged her identity as a charitable saint with new legends of visions and ecstasies.¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth's *Revelations* (to be discussed in detail below) were frequently bound with Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*,¹⁴⁸ suggesting that they too were intended to function as performative texts that would guide the reader into a transcendent union with the divine subject(s) of each story.

The thirteenth-century *Revelations* of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary have received only minimal scholarly attention, with the work that has been dedicated to the subject focusing on the authorship of the original text (an issue that remains unresolved) rather than on the content. The first documented accounts of Elizabeth's revelations survive in twelve Latin sources, two in Italian, one in Spanish, one in Catalan, one in French, and two in Middle English – all of which likely stem from a hypothetical but not extant original source in Middle High German.¹⁴⁹ The exact date of the first version of Elizabeth's revelations is not known, but the earliest Latin sources have been dated to the

¹⁴⁷ For more information on the development of new miracles associated with Elizabeth – the miracle of the roses and the miracle of the mantle – see Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Éva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Also of interest are the thirteenth-century “new legends” for Elizabeth written by the Italian Dominican, Bartholomew of Trent. In Bartholomew's legends, Christ appears to the dying Elizabeth and quotes the Song of Songs in order to invite her to heaven. See Gecser, 17.

¹⁴⁸ Klaniczay, 372-74.

¹⁴⁹ McNamer, 16-20.

fourteenth century, suggesting that the hypothetical Middle High German source was completed in either the early fourteenth or late thirteenth century. Of the twelve Latin sources, ten explicitly state that the revelations are those of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, and they include biographical information connecting them with the previously discussed Saint Elizabeth (1207-1231).¹⁵⁰ Historians have noted the implausibility of this claimed authorship, however, and point to multiple other possible creators, including Elizabeth of Schönau, and a third Elizabeth, Elizabeth of Töss – daughter of King Andreas II of Hungary and the great-niece of the first Saint Elizabeth.¹⁵¹ I am inclined to agree with scholar David Falvay’s assessment of the *Revelations*’ authorship. His views align with those of Gábor Klaniczay, both of whom argue that the identity of the author is not as important as the trope of Elizabeth of Hungary upon which the author calls. By identifying herself as “Elizabeth of Hungary,” the author of the revelations takes on the identity of the original Elizabeth, situating herself within her previously established hagiographic tradition and simultaneously aligning herself and Saint Elizabeth with new mystic practices.¹⁵² Also of note are the connections between the *Revelations* of Saint Elizabeth and the “miracles of the Virgin,” a literary genre that flourished

¹⁵⁰ Also of note is these sources’ statement that Saint Elizabeth was a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis. While Gecser’s scholarship has shown that this was not possible, it supports the claim that Elizabeth’s cult considered her to be part of the Franciscan tradition. McNamer, 11.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵² Falvay, 113-127.

throughout western Europe in the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, particularly in Italy.¹⁵³

My study of Elizabeth's *Revelations* focuses on the first Italian vernacular translation of the text, located in MS II.II.390 (Magl. XXXV, 175) and on a later fifteenth-century concordance located in Barb.lat.4032.¹⁵⁴ To date, the only English translation of Elizabeth's revelations is Sarah McNamer's translation of the Middle English versions, which cannot be compared to the Italian vernaculars, as they stem from two distinct groups of Latin sources. According to McNamer, two sets of Latin sources were created from the hypothetical Middle High German original: "Latin Group I" and "Latin Group II."¹⁵⁵ From these groups stemmed the following: Latin Group I: vernacular translations in Italian, French, Spanish, and Catalan; Latin Group II: vernacular translations in Middle English. The two Latin "groups" are constructed from diverse aspects of the original Middle High German, and each includes its own unique additions. For this reason, McNamer's Middle English translation (a source stemming from Latin Group II) cannot be used as a translation for the Italian vernacular (stemming from Latin Group I). For the purpose of this study, then, I refer to my own transcription and translation Barb.lat.4032, the fifth revelation specifically.

¹⁵³ For more information concerning the "miracles of the Virgin" see Ezio, Levi, *Il Libro dei cinquanta miracolo della Vergine* (Bologna: Romagnoli-dall'Acqua, 1917), digitized by the University of Toronto, <https://archive.org/details/illibrodeicinqua00levi>.

¹⁵⁴ McNamer notes MS II.II.390 as being the earliest Italian version of the revelations. Her citation of this source is mistakenly labeled as II.II.340. McNamer, 18. My knowledge of Barb.lat.4032 comes from Falvay's, *Elisabetta d'Ungheria*.

¹⁵⁵ McNamer, 16-18.

In this revelation, the Virgin Mary converses with Saint Elizabeth, and describes for her in musical terms an erotic rapture in which she is taken up into the court of the angels. In McNamer's translation of the Middle English version, the episode begins with Saint Elizabeth contemplating the immaculate conception of Christ, at which point the Virgin Mary appears and tells Elizabeth how God allowed his Son to "[take] flesh from her." In both Italian sources, however, the scene is not set, and the revelation immediately begins with the Virgin Mary describing a moment in which God played upon her body as he would a stringed instrument. This action sends Mary into an ecstatic state, during which her soul joins the angels in heaven. The translation included here is excerpted from the full transcription of revelation five, located in Appendix B.

(excerpt) Revelation five, attributed to
 Saint Elizabeth of Hungary,
 Barberini.Lat.4032

124v

Un'altra volta disse la vergine
 benedetta di me faceva idio
 come alcuno maestro di sonare
 stromento il quale si studia
 d'acordare tutte le corde. Et poi
 chella bene acordate si canta
 e si suona con esso somigliante-
 mente l'anima mia e tutti
 sentimenti del mio corpo ac-
 cordava a suoi piaceri et in que-
 sto modo essendo hordinata
 l'anima mia era portata dagli
 angeli nel cospetto di dio et ivi
 riceveva tanto diletto e tan-
 ta alegrezza ch'io non mi rico-
 rdava ch'io fossi mai nata nel
 mondo ne chi o lavessi mai ve-
 duto et avea tanta familiarita
 con dio et cogli angeli
 che pareva che io fossi istata

Another time the blessed Virgin
 said, "God made of me
 as some master instrumentalist,
 in which he practices
 harmonizing all of the strings. And then
 when the instrument is well-tuned, he
 sings and he plays with me [the
 instrument], aligning my spirit and all
 of the feelings of my body
 according to his pleasures; and in
 this way, being thus ordained,
 my spirit was taken by the
 angels into the presence of God, and there
 it received so much delight and so much
 joy that I did not remember
 that I had ever been born in the
 world, neither had I ever come to it
 or had so much intimacy
 with God and with the angels
 that it seemed that I had always

sempre in quella celesti al corte. Et quando ch'era stata tanto quanto a dio piacevasimmi rendeva a gli agnoli et eglino mi riportavano a luogo nel quale io m'era posta inoratione. Et quando io era tornata in me et vedevami posta in terra mentovarmi di cio ch'io aveva veduto infiammavamasi dell'amore di dio / ca braciava le pietre e legni

125r (left column)

acio poteva trovare per amore del signore che havea create et porrevami essere ancilla di tutte le donne che erano nel tempio et desiderava essere posta a tutte le creature per amore del padre celestiale et questo ma diviene spesso.

been in that celestial court. And when God had been well pleased with me, he returned me to the angels, and they did bring me back to the place in which I, pure, had posted myself in prayer. And when I was returned to myself, and saw myself posited on the earth, calling to mind that which I had seen I was inflamed in the love of God, that embracing the stones and the wood

by which it could be found for God's love having been created, and made myself servant to them all of the ladies that were in the temple, and desired to ask of all of the creatures about the love of the celestial father, and this occurred often.

In Mary's description of her ecstasy, music – more specifically a musical instrument – is the source of her unification with God. In order to prepare her for celestial ascent, God tunes her, “harmonizing” her so that her spirit is aligned with the sonorities of heaven. Once she has been prepared, God sings and plays upon Mary, the well-tuned instrument. It is this act that draws her up into the heavenly court. This experience provides Mary with a level of joy, delight, and intimacy with God that is so extreme that all things worldly are forgotten by her. Further, the enjoyment of the event is shared: the entirety of the episode occurs according to the pleasures of God. He takes pleasure in tuning the strings of her soul; he takes pleasure in playing upon her; he takes pleasure in bringing her into celestial union. And, once God has been “well pleased,” there is a dissolution of the two entities and Mary is returned to earth.

The tuning of Mary, playing upon her, her pleasure and that of God are all literary tropes that harken back to the sensual coupling of the bride and bridegroom in the Song of Songs. And yet, the erotic nature of this revelation is at first shocking, considering Mary's purity and chastity, and her role as the mother of Christ. This eroticization becomes increasingly problematic when considering the frequent conflation of God the Father and his Son in Christian doctrine: Mary is both the lover of God through the immaculate conception, and the mother of God through Christ's birth. This issue has been of particular interest to scholar Rachel Fulton, who addresses the late medieval literary trend of sexualizing the Virgin Mary and placing her alongside Christ in the position of lover in the Song of Songs.¹⁵⁶ According to Fulton, in this context Mary is yet another metaphor for the soul. She connects with God and Christ in loving rapture, as may the soul of the author and reader.

Fulton also addresses the use of musical instruments as metaphors for the body, pointing specifically to the work of the twelfth-century Benedictine monk, Rupert of Deutz. In his exegetical writings on the Song of Songs, Rupert too places Mary in the role of the lover. He also references music and musical instruments, the latter of which he describes as metaphors that signal Christ imparting understanding unto the individual who is being "played."¹⁵⁷ As an example, he cites the following passage from book six of the commentary on the Song of Songs, where Mary has just woken and is speaking to the daughters of Jerusalem:

¹⁵⁶ Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 288-346.

¹⁵⁷ Fulton, 340.

“My beloved,” I say, “who pastures among the lilies,” that is, who loves pure hearts and chaste bodies, “my beloved,” it is understood renders to me an exchange of blessing and praise, a sweet song and a perfect song, as one played with eight strings. For he is both the psaltery and the cithara of God the Father to whom the Father says in the psalm: “Rise up, my glory, rise u, O harp (cithara) and lyre (psalterium) (Psalm 56:9).”¹⁵⁸

Fulton’s inclusion of this passage is intended to demonstrate the connections among the individual, the instrument, and divinity in two ways: the individual as the instrument upon which God plays; and the joining of the individual with God, who is himself the instrument. In the latter explanation, the individual receives from God (the instrument) “the capacity for making music himself.”¹⁵⁹ In both interpretations, Rupert’s words are indicative of a musical rapture. As an instrument wielded by God, the soul plays a “sweet” and “perfect” song that renders it an “exchange of blessing and praise,” and imparts unto it an aspect of the celestial performer’s divinity. Alternatively, in joining with God (who is himself the instrument) the soul experiences a divine merging that is explicitly musical in nature: in melding with God, the soul too becomes an instrument, and the two entities engage in an ecstatic performance of the music of the spheres.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. The instruments to which Rupert refers are more accurately translated as “lyre” (cithara) and “psaltery” (psalterium).

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 341. Rupert hypothesizes that the music God plays as an instrument is a song directed toward Mary, in which he praises her as the chaste beauty that “rises like the dawn” and is “chosen as the sun” to give birth to Christ.

Musical Rapture in the Middle Ages: Shared Themes and Concluding Thoughts

In all of the case studies featured in this chapter, music is the primary mode by which the soul communicates with and joins to God. For Francis and Elizabeth, singing – either alone or with a celestial companion – begins the process of contemplation, a process that culminates in rapture. Elizabeth’s ecstasy takes place at the end of her life, as she approaches death. In Francis’s story, death is of a spiritual nature, occurring during the temporary ascent of his soul to heaven. In both cases, music is what initiates ecstasy. Yet in neither story, nor in that of the *Revelations*, is the music described in detail. No melody is provided, and the saints do not tell their companions of the compositions they sing or hear. More important is the power of music to align the harmonies of the soul with those of the celestial spheres, a concept that remained paramount into the Renaissance when it was once again expounded upon by Ficino.¹⁶⁰

Also common among all four examples (Francis’s own performance upon the imaginary viella, Elizabeth and the bird, the *Revelations*, and the iconographic depictions of Francis’s ecstasy as it is recounted in *i Fioretti*) is a designated medium by which music is produced, or rather, a physical object that allows the ecstatic to access divine sonorities. Francis specifically mentions a bowed string instrument. In Tommaso da Celano’s documentation of the ecstasy, the saint uses a stick and makeshift bow to accompany himself as he sings. In the later adaptation of this story in *i Fioretti*, and in its late Renaissance and early modern depictions by the Carracci, the imaginary viella becomes a bowed string instrument that is wielded by an angel to induce rapture. In

¹⁶⁰ See chapter two.

Elizabeth's legend, the music-producing object is a bird, which functions as a metaphor for Christ or God. And in the *Revelations*, the object is again transformed and becomes the body of Mary, herself. Now, it is she who is tuned and played upon by God.

From Francis to Mary, then, there is a shift from a rapturous ascent that is begun by the individual through musical performance, to rapturous ascent that is initiated by God through a musical performance upon the individual. This transformation regarding the way in which rapture is approached can also be applied to an understanding of the soul's consent. In Francis's early hagiography, he uses music in an attempt to access union with God. He searches for the experience. Elizabeth's legends tell us that she heard the celestial bird, and decided to participate in its music making. In the *Revelations*, Mary makes no request nor is she invited to heaven, but is immediately utilized for God's rapturous pleasures. In other words: Francis initiates, Elizabeth joins, Mary is acted upon. In the later depictions of *i Fioretti's* scene, Francis's request for a taste of divine paradise is not apparent. The viewer sees only a sedentary Francis, who hears the ecstatic music by way of the active, violin-playing angel. In this case, too, rapture by music is an experience that is imposed upon him.

As will become clear in subsequent chapters, these themes remained vital to descriptions and representations of musical rapture throughout the Renaissance and the Early Modern era. The separation of the soul from the body for the purpose of unifying with God – in other words, a rapturous death – was desired, yearned for, and even sought; yet, the ascent from contemplation into ecstasy was at the discretion (and pleasure) of God alone. It could not be predicted, and it was increasingly reserved for the most holy of

individuals. Similarly, a rapture-inducing musical object (or objects) was still relevant to Renaissance iconography, and to musical rapture in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios.¹⁶¹ The most potent reoccurring theme, however, is the use of music to stir the soul, align it with the sonorities of the heavens, and in doing so prepare it for an ascent to the celestial spheres. Regardless of modifications in religious philosophies (for example, Ficino and the reintroduction of Neoplatonism) and scientific understandings concerning the functions of the universe, music remained the great modifier of the soul, the mover of affects.

¹⁶¹ See chapters four and six for the iconography of Francis's musical death and ecstasies of Saint Cecilia; and chapter six for discussions of oratorio melodies as the way by which saints are taken into rapture.

CHAPTER IV

NEOPLATONIC LOVE AND ECSTATIC DEATH IN ANNIBALE CARRACCI'S *ST. FRANCIS'S VISION OF THE MUSICAL ANGEL*: SEEING AND HEARING MUSICAL RAPTURE IN THE LATE RENAISSANCE AND EARLY-MODERN ERAS

As discussed in chapter two, at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, discourses in religious ecstasy and mystic contemplation were significantly re-shaped. This was largely due to the writings of Marsilio Ficino (*Sopra lo amore ovvero Convito di Platone* and commentaries on Plotinus's *Enneads*), Pietro Bembo (*Gli Asolani*), and Baldessar Castiglione (*Il libro del cortegiano*) – writings that merged Christian theology with Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophies. In the above-mentioned texts, divine love and beauty are of primary importance. Since a more thorough investigation of these concepts and their relationships to rapture and death have already been presented in chapter two, I will not repeat those arguments here at length. It suffices to say that Ficino's, Bembo's, and Castiglione's articulation of divine love and beauty as the sources of desire which allowed the individual to join with God in mystic union became arguably the most prevalent themes in Renaissance and early modern art and music, whether their existence be palpable – as in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios that featured the personified Divine Love and Profane Love – or whether they be underlying contributors to a work's broader symbolism.

At the end of the Renaissance, Annibale Carracci (1560–1609) painted *St. Francis's Vision of the Musical Angel*, also titled *Death of Saint Francis*, depicting Saint

Francis of Assisi's death as a musical event that included an angel playing an instrument of the violin family. Although it is not unrelated to contemporaneous depictions of Francis's receipt of musically angelic consolation (see chapter three), nor his musical ecstasy as recounted in *i Fioretti*, Annibale's painting stands outside of these and other traditional sixteenth-century depictions of Francis in that it does not appear to depict any one scene from Francis's legends. This painting, therefore, offers a unique opportunity to explore how late-Renaissance painters readily adapted saints' pre-existing iconographic topoi to better reflect their own cultural environments. These adaptations would have been apparent to early modern humanists, who were well-versed in the writings of Ficino, Bembo, and Castiglione, and who recognized a conglomerate of themes in Counter-Reformation art, from current religious philosophies, to the conflation of saints' legends with ancient Greek and Roman mythological references, and the insertion of modern musical technologies. Overarching these themes was the ever-present Neoplatonic philosophy that divine love and beauty emanated from the One, or God, into the heart of the individual; this same divine love and beauty also served as the gateway by which the individual could gain access to a mystical union with the divine.¹⁶²

In this chapter, I continue with my examination of Saint Francis and Saint Elizabeth, and turn to an exploration of divine love, rapture, and death as they coalesced in Renaissance art and music. First, I show how Annibale Carracci's *Death of Saint Francis* merged Francis's hagiography – whose legends do not mention a musical death – with Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, a saint frequently associated with Francis and whose legends do include a musical death scene. I posit that by including the violin in his

¹⁶² For more in-depth considerations regarding Neoplatonism in the early Middle Ages and the Renaissance, see chapter two.

depiction, Carracci connected the saints to contemporary sacred and secular music trends, and provided viewers with a multi-sensory experience in which the saintly vision was both seen and “heard.” Included in this discussion is an exploration of the ways in which the Neoplatonic philosophies of love and beauty that were commented upon by Ficino, Bembo, and Castiglione are represented in Annibale’s painting. I argue that the presence of these themes results in an interpretation of the painting that suggests music was an indispensable component of ecstatic contemplation and rapturous death. Following these discussions, I will explore the various ways that Annibale’s audiences may have “heard” his painting; or, what type of musics and musical relationships the painting suggests, and how the concept of a musically ecstatic death – such as is depicted in Annibale’s *Death of Saint Francis* – was later represented in musical performances of saints’ deaths in early seventeenth-century religious opera.

Annibale Carracci’s *Death of Saint Francis* was likely painted in 1595 or 1596, during a period in his life when he was transitioning between Bologna and Rome (see Figure 12).¹⁶³ Prior to 1595, Annibale had been stationed primarily in and around Bologna and Venice. At the end of 1594, however, he was invited to Rome by Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, and by September or October of 1595 had relocated to the Palazzo Farnese for the foreseeable future. Little is known about the provenance of Annibale’s *Death of Saint Francis*, which now survives only in a later seventeenth-century engraving by Gérard Audran.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ This dating has been suggested by Pamela Askew, who references R. Wittkower, *The Drawings of the Carracci at Windsor Castle*, 1952 p.143 no. 341, fig. 43. See Askew, 301-302.

¹⁶⁴ The engraving, now housed in the Victoria and Albert museum, was bequeathed to the South Kensington Museum by Reverend Alexander Dyce after his death in 1869. See South Kensington Museum. Dyce Collection, Alexander Dyce, George William Reid, Samuel Redgrave, and Charles Christopher Black, *Dyce Collection: A Catalogue of the Paintings, Miniatures, Drawings, Engravings, Rings, and*



Figure 12. Gérard Audran, *The Death of Saint Francis*, engraving (seventeenth century, after Annibale Carracci 1595 or 1596), London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Miscellaneous Objects Bequeathed by the Reverend Alexander Dyce (London: G.E. Eyre and W. Spottiswoode, 1874).

As the title suggests, the scene represents a dying Saint Francis, identifiable by the marks of his stigmata, the rosary and skull that so often accompany him in Counter-Reformation images, and a saintly halo. He reclines in a bed, surrounded by three companions – likely Leo, Angelo, and Rufino.¹⁶⁵ The room in which he resides is not enclosed, but merges seamlessly to the outdoors, signaling that the scene is not static, but one of transition. As he nears the end of his life, Francis is neither entirely in one world nor in the other, but hovers between the two, his soul’s passage from the earthly to heavenly spheres not yet complete. In the top left corner, we see a violin-playing angel who, while unheard by his companions, serenades the tranquil Francis.

Annibale’s depiction of Francis’s death is striking in that it does not represent the event as it is recounted in Francis’s most important hagiographic sources. In both Tommaso da Celano’s *Vita II* and Bonaventura’s *Leggenda Maggiore*, Francis embraces death by removing his tunic in a final renunciation of worldly possessions, then lies prostrate on the ground and gives his soul to God.

[Tommaso da Celano *Vita II*, chapter CLXII] When he felt that the final days were near, in which by the ephemeral light would follow the eternal light, he demonstrated with the example of his righteousness that he had nothing in common with the world. Exhausted by that so arduous illness, that ended his every suffering, he laid himself nude upon the bare ground, in order to be prepared in that last hour, in which the enemy would have once again been able to pour out his wrath, to fight nude with a nude adversary.¹⁶⁶

[Bonaventura *Leggenda Maggiore*, chapter XIV] In the twentieth year of his conversion, therefore, he asked that they [his brethren] bring him to Santa Maria

¹⁶⁵ Leo, Ruffino, and Angelo were three of Francis’s closest companions, and are the proposed authors of the thirteenth-century *Leggenda dei tre compagni*. See “Leggenda dei tre compagni” in *Fonti Francescane*, ed. E. Caroli, 3rd edition (Padua: Editrici Francescane, 2011, reprinted 2015).

¹⁶⁶ Celano, 503. “Quando sentì vicini gli ultimi giorni, nei quali alla luce effimera sarebbe succeduta la *luce eterna*, mostrò con l’esempio delle sue virtù che non aveva niente in comune con il mondo. Sfinito da quella malattia così grave, che mise termine a ogni sua sofferenza, si fece deporre nudo sulla terra nuda, per essere preparato in quell’ora estrema, in cui il nemico avrebbe potuto ancora sfogare la sua ira, a lottare nudo con un avversario nudo.” Translation mine.

della Porziuncola, to return to God the spirit of his life, there where he had received the spirit of grace. Once he was brought there, in order to demonstrate with the authenticity of his example that he had nothing in common with the world, during that so arduous illness that fixed the end of every infirmity, he prostrated himself in fervor of spirit, completely nude on the bare ground: so, in that final moment in which the enemy could once again let loose his wrath, he would have been able to fight nude with him nude.¹⁶⁷

In both sources, Francis's removal of his tunic served as a gesture of his commitment to a life of poverty – a gesture that was fundamental for him and for his followers, who viewed the abdication of his last earthly possession as a final commitment to emulate the life of Christ. It also served as necessary preparation before Francis could battle “the enemy” and pass into the afterlife. While Tommaso does note that in the days preceding his death Francis frequently sang or requested that his brethren do so – “indeed, he welcomed death singing” – both he and Bonaventura place more importance on Francis's desire to emulate Christ's poverty and suffering.¹⁶⁸ In other words, while music was still an important part of Francis's life in the days preceding his death, and he considered it a tool to aid in the consolation of earthly suffering, neither hagiographer describes a specific musical death-scene, nor do they include music as a necessary ingredient for Francis's transition from earthly death to celestial life. The main points of Tommaso's and Bonaventura's stories remained unchanged in fifteenth-century Latin and Italian editions of Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* – the second most widely-

¹⁶⁷ Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, “Leggenda Maggiore (Vita di san Francesco d'Assisi),” 701. “Nell' anno ventesimo della sua conversione, pertanto, chiese che lo portassero a Santa Maria della Porziuncola, per rendere a Dio lo *spirito della vita*, là dove aveva ricevuto lo *spirito della grazia*. Quando vi fu condotto, per dimostrare con l'autenticità dell'esempio che non aveva nulla in comune con il mondo, durante quella malattia così grave che pose fine a ogni infermità, egli si prostrò in fervore di spirito, tutto nudo sulla nuda terra: così, in quell'ora estrema nella quale il nemico poteva ancora scatenare la sua ira, avrebbe potuto lottare nudo con lui nudo.”

¹⁶⁸ Tommaso da Celano, 503. “Infatti, dimostrò di stimare un'infamia vivere secondo il mondo, amò i suoi sino alla fine, accolse la morte cantando.”

copied and disseminated book of the Middle Ages – and they remained present in later sixteenth-century Italian translations.¹⁶⁹

[Venice, 1571] “Approaching the last days, then, having fallen into a long sickness, he lay himself, nude, upon the bare ground, and he blessed everyone, and in likeness of the supper of the Lord, to each one he divided a parcel of bread.”¹⁷⁰

Annibale’s painting obviously does not reflect Francis’s death as it is recounted in these sources. Instead of a nude Francis, prostrated atop the bare ground, Annibale’s Francis is in bed and fully clothed. Adding to the curiosity of the depiction is the fact that the majority of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century images representing the death of Saint Francis do not actually depict Saint Francis of Assisi, but Saint Francis Xavier (1506-1552). An example of this trend is easily recognizable in *Ciro Ferri’s Death of Saint Francis Xavier* (1670s), in which we see Francis Xavier’s fevered death on the island of Shangchuan (see Figure 13).¹⁷¹ How, then, is Annibale’s scene to be explained,

¹⁶⁹ Select modern English and Italian translations of the *Legenda aurea* omit Francis’s nudity and remark only that the ground upon which he lied was bare. Late fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century sources still include Francis’s nudity, however. See below for transcriptions of the 1478 Latin, 1503 Italian, and 1571 Italian.

¹⁷⁰ [1571] Iacobo de Voragine, *Legendario delle vite dei santi*, trans. Don Niccolò Manèrbi Venetiano (Venice: Gieronimo Polo, 1571), 186. “Accostandosi poi a li estremi giorni, caduto in una longa infermità, si fece ponere nudo sopra la nuda terra, & benedisse tutti, & a similitudine de la cena del Signore, a ciascuno divide una particella del pane.” Translation mine.

[1503] Iacobo de Voragine, *Legendario de santi*, trans. Don Niccolò Manèrbi Venetiano (Venice: Bartholomeo de Zani da Portese, 1503), 168. “Accostandosi dunque alli estremi giorni caduta in una longa infermita si fece ponere nudo sopra la nuda terra benedisse tutti & asimilitudie della cena del signore a ciascaduno divide una particella del pane.”

[1478] Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea sanctorum* (Augsburg: Gunther Zainer, 1475), 298v. “Cum vero ad dies iam appropinquaret extremos, longa infirmitate confectus super nudam humum nudum poni se fecit fecitque omnes fratres ibidem assistentes ad se vocari et manus singulis imponens omnibus ibi praesentibus benedixit et instar cenae dominicae singulis bucellam panis divisit.”

¹⁷¹ Saint Francis Xavier died of a fever on December 3, 1552 on the Chinese island of Shangchuan. He was beatified in 1619 by Pope Paul V, then canonized in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV. I believe the interest in depicting Saint Xavier’s death may have stemmed from a desire to exoticize the event, as can be seen in Ferri’s painting.

a scene which is both unique amongst other iconographic topoi, and unrepresentative of the event it supposedly depicts?

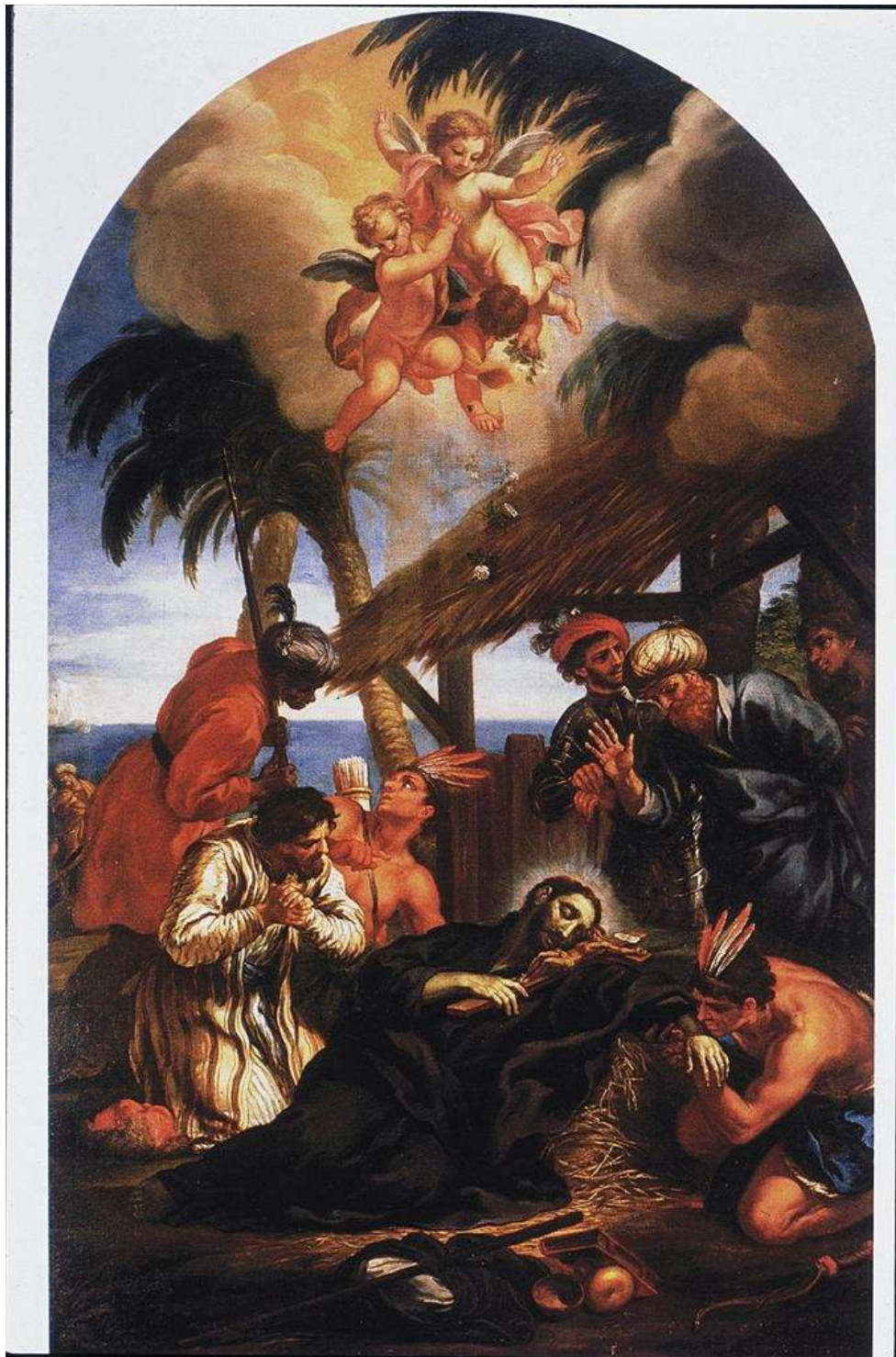


Figure 13. Ciro Ferri, *Death of Saint Francis Xavier* (1670s).

The discrepancy between the representation of Francis's death in Annibale's painting as compared with its description in literary sources has not yet been thoroughly explored. Art historian Fabien Guilloux, however, has offered two possible explanations. First, Guilloux suggests that Annibale may be superimposing the topos of the *Dormitio virginis*, or death of the Virgin, onto the death of Saint Francis.¹⁷² This would not be unprecedented, as similar figurations can be seen as early as Giotto's fourteenth-century depictions of Francis's death in both the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi and the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence. Alternatively, Guilloux points to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century images that depict the legend of Francis's musical ecstasy found in the fourteenth-century *Fioretti di San Francesco*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the tradition of painting the *Fioretti*'s rendition of Francis's musical ecstasy – in which by playing on a bowed string instrument a lone angel uses music to draw Francis into rapture – may have been initiated by Annibale's older cousin, Ludovico Carracci. This topos continued to be of great interest to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century painters associated with the Carracci "school" in and around the Papal States.¹⁷³

Annibale's *Death of Saint Francis* shares two important elements with the *Fioretti*'s story as it is depicted by other painters of the Carracci "school": an angel – positioned above Francis – who plays a bowed string instrument, and Francis, who is visibly affected by the music.¹⁷⁴ These similarities suggest that, at the very least,

¹⁷² Guilloux, 57.

¹⁷³ The earliest version of this topos among the Carracci that I have found is a sketch that art historians Gail Feigenbaum and Babette Bohn attribute to Ludovico. Alessandro Brogi has questioned this attribution and suggested it may have been completed by Ludovico's follower, Lorenzo Garbieri. See chapter three for a more detailed discussion of this issue.

¹⁷⁴ Audran's engraving features the angel on the left side of the frame. Since the images on the engraving are necessarily reversed from those of the original painting, we can deduce that Annibale's angel was

Annibale was influenced by the subject of musical ecstasy and the Carracci “school’s” interest in painting Francis’s musical ecstasy specifically. In addition to this palpable connection, I propose that Annibale’s *Death of Saint Francis*, visually realized the bond between Francis and Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231), a saint who had been associated with Francis since the thirteenth century. This conflation would have been beneficial for both saints, as it updated each individual’s saintly identity and connected them with contemporary devotional and musical trends.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary’s association with Saint Francis of Assisi, the Friars Minor, and Franciscan practices began as early as 1236, one year after her canonization by Pope Gregory IX. Biographers’ attempts to associate her with Francis are apparent in her early legends, which stress her renunciation of worldly goods and her desire to live as an ascetic, and claim that she took the grey habit of the Friars Minor. Further evidence of a desire amongst Elizabeth’s contemporaries to connect her with Saint Francis has been presented by historian Otto Gecser, who notes the alleged affiliation between the two saints as early as the *Zwettle vita* (1236-1239), which states that “by taking on the grey habit of the Friars Minor in Marburg, on the order of the afore-mentioned brother Conrad, [Elizabeth] totally and publicly renounced all enticements of the secular life.”¹⁷⁵

Regardless of the impossibility of these assertions (the Third Order was not officially established until 1289, with the claim in Franciscan hagiography that Francis founded a ‘third order’ not appearing until the 1230s) it is indisputable that by the completion of the

originally on the right side of the frame in accordance with other paintings of the Carracci school that depict Francis’s ecstasy in *i Fioretti* (see chapter three).

¹⁷⁵ Gecser, 8-9. P. Diodorus Henniges has suggested that the author of the anonymous *Zwettle vita* was associated with Italian Franciscan circles, see Gábor Klaniczay, 286.

Zwettle vita in 1239, there was a strong desire to connect Elizabeth with Francis and his followers.

As has been discussed previously, Elizabeth's legends include an often overlooked musical vision in which she sings with a bird.¹⁷⁶ This anecdote survives in two of the earliest records of her life – the brief *Summa vitae*, written in 1232 by her spiritual advisor, Conrad of Marburg, and the 1235 *Dicta quatuor ancillarum*, a compilation of memories and testaments to Elizabeth's sainthood, collected from her four closest companions. In short, the *Dicta* chronicles an anecdote in which Elizabeth's handmaid – also named Elizabeth – claims that when the saint was on her deathbed, she, the handmaid, heard the “sweetest voice” emanating directly from Saint Elizabeth's neck. After about an hour, Saint Elizabeth called to her companion, who commented on the beauty of her singing. In response, Saint Elizabeth told her companion that she had seen a bird and that it had been singing to her “most joyfully.” Being inspired by its melody, Saint Elizabeth had felt compelled to join the bird in song.¹⁷⁷ This version of Elizabeth's musical death scene was frequently retold in subsequent hagiographies, including the *Legenda aurea*.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ For a more thorough analysis of Elizabeth's musical vision see chapter three.

¹⁷⁷ Wolf, 215. Conrad contends that Elizabeth was accompanied by “certain religious men and women,” rather than a handmaid, and that she claimed to have been visited by singers, not a bird. See chapter three for more information.

¹⁷⁸ Klaniczay, 285-286. Legends from the *Dicta* are re-told more frequently than those contained in the *Summa vitae*, and were used in the creation of Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, likely because the *Dicta* is significantly longer and contains more details of Elizabeth's life. Retellings of the *Dicta*'s musical scene include Rutebeuf's hagiographic poem for Isabella, Queen of Navarre, Osbern Bokenham's legend, and Elizabeth's historia, *Gaudeat Hungaria*. For Rutebeuf see Rutebeuf, “Saint Elizabeth,” in *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. and ed. Brigitte Cazelles, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); for Bokenham see Sheila Delany, trans. *A Legend of Holy Women: A Translation of Osbern Bokenham's Legends of Holy Women*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); for Elizabeth's historia see Barbara Hagg, ed., *Two Offices for*

In both the *Summa vitae* and the *Dicta* Elizabeth notes the presence of a musical companion that is only visible to the saint herself. According to the *Dicta* and the *Legenda aurea* – as well as a number of other sources – Elizabeth’s musical companion is a bird. Further, both sources state that Elizabeth was in the company of at least one other individual (Elizabeth the handmaid in the *Dicta*, and religious supporters in the *Summa vitae*) who – though not able to hear the celestial harmonies – testified to Elizabeth’s music-making and her insistence that she was joining music that was already present. Finally, both sources agree that she produced music “from within [her] neck” rather than from her mouth. This final detail is significant in identifying Elizabeth’s experience as more than a musical vision, but as a musical rapture, as reports of singing or sonic emanation from the neck or throat rather than from the mouth are common in descriptions of holy women’s ecstasies from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries.

In the twelfth century for example, Christina of Markyate’s anonymous biographer described her receipt of a divine intimation, alerting her that escape from secular life to the convent was at hand, by means of “something inside her, like a small bird full of life and joy [that] struck her inward parts with its fluttering.” The avian messenger proceeded to “[fly] upwards towards [Christina’s] throat.”¹⁷⁹ In the early thirteenth century, Thomas de Cantimpré remarked that during an episode of musical rapture in which the mystic Marie d’Oignies (1177-1213) communed with God, “the cooing of a dove echoed in her throat with such a sound that no mortal could imitate

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary; and Catherine A. Bradley, “Song and Quotation in Two-Voice Motets for Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.”

¹⁷⁹ Christina of Markyate was a twelfth-century English holy woman who eventually became the prioress of the Benedictine abbey of Saint Albans. See C.H. Talbot, trans, “Of S. Theodora, a Virgin, Who Is Also Called Christina,” in Petroff, 146.

it.”¹⁸⁰ Thomas also noted that a similar phenomenon was observed in Christina of St. Trond, or Christina Mirabilis (1150-1224). Christina’s raptures, which were routinely manifested through violent physical movements, were followed by what was described as “a wonderous harmony [that] sounded between her throat and her breast which no mortal man could understand nor could it be imitated by any artificial instrument.”¹⁸¹ In case there be any confusion regarding the source of Christina’s angelic harmony, Thomas later reiterates that the source was indeed located “between the breast and the throat” rather than Christina’s mouth.¹⁸²

Situating Elizabeth’s own vision among these examples of rapture strengthens the possibility that the episode would have been considered by her contemporaries to be one of musical ecstasy. As in the legends of Christin of Markyate, Marie d’Oignies, and Christina Mirabilis, Elizabeth’s experience, her rapture, resulted in musical emission from the throat. It is this same musical phenomenon that, though not visible, may nevertheless be interpreted from Annibale’s *Death of Saint Francis*. Like Elizabeth, Francis awaits death surrounded by companions who are not able to see that there is a musical angel seated above him; and, even though his mouth is closed, we understand that Francis – like Elizabeth and her mystic counterparts – produces music together with the angel while in a state of musical ecstasy.

The connection between Elizabeth’s vision and Annibale’s *Death of Saint Francis* is further strengthened when considering her long-standing connection with Francis in

¹⁸⁰ Wiethaus, 154.

¹⁸¹ Thomas de Cantimpré, “The Life of Christina of St. Trond, Called Christina Mirabilis,” in Petroff, 187.

¹⁸² Ibid. “The voice or spiritual breath, however, did not come out of her mouth or nose, but a harmony of the angelic voice resounded only from between the breast and the throat.”

Italy. Not only was her canonization celebration held in Perugia, a neighbor city to Assisi, but she continued to be venerated in Italian communities throughout the Middle Ages. In his foundational study, historian Otto Gecser has concluded that orally-transmitted vernacular sermons were essential in propagating Elizabeth's connection with Francis and Franciscan communities after the fourteenth century, and that her association with the Franciscan tertiaries was increasingly widespread.¹⁸³ Indeed, by the fourteenth century, Elizabeth's status as a Franciscan saint was firmly established, an association that continued into the Early Modern era, including in the *Legenda aurea*.¹⁸⁴ Sixteenth-century copies of the *Legenda aurea* continued to feature Elizabeth and her musical vision, including the last of seventeen vernacular reprints, published in Venice in 1586, a date that coincides with Annibale's presence in that city.¹⁸⁵ Considering the importance and widespread availability of the *Legenda aurea*, and Elizabeth's continued veneration in Italy, it is unlikely that Annibale would have been unfamiliar with her legends.

Yet, while Elizabeth maintained a strong presence in sixteenth-century Italian literature, her existence in iconography from the same period is largely non-existent. This lack of iconographic material has not yet been a focus of modern scholarship, but I believe it may be due to her identity as a charitable saint, an attribute not privileged in the

¹⁸³ Gecser, 203.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 128. In his critical edition of the *Legenda aurea*, Giovanni Paolo Maggioni argues that the earliest of Jacobus's manuscripts to contain Elizabeth's vita was written between 1272 and 1276 in the Dominican convent of Bologna, demonstrating the early establishment of Elizabeth's veneration in that city. See Gecser, 18-19. Additionally, Klaniczay suggests that Elizabeth's *Dicta* was inspirational to the Franciscan *Legenda trium sociorum* and the fourteenth-century *Legenda Perugina*, which include accounts from Francis's four closest brothers, demonstrating an additional connection between the two saints (see Klaniczay, 286-287).

¹⁸⁵ For more on Annibale's Venetian studies from the years 1587/8 see C. van Tuyl van Serooskerken, Lin Barton, Nicholas Turner, and Daniele Benati, "Carracci Family," *Grove Art Online*.

sensuous, Counter-Reformation representations of saints in art and music.¹⁸⁶ Elizabeth's identity had not always been bound to her altruistic deeds, however. She was never labeled a martyr, but thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian biographers did endeavor to align her with mysticism and the emerging visionary culture – evidenced by her new mystic legends, the “miracle of the mantle” and the “miracle of the rose,” and the *Revelations* that were attributed to Elizabeth that flourished in Tuscan and Umbrian Franciscan communities throughout the fifteenth century.¹⁸⁷ Her *Revelations* were frequently paired with other mystic texts such as the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, and were included in vernacular sermons written by Italian friars, serving to reposition Elizabeth's identity from one that emphasized charity and good works with the increasingly fashionable erotic visionary culture embraced by lay religious communities.¹⁸⁸

While these texts reformulated Elizabeth's identity and aligned her with the growing interest in mystic devotion in the late Middle Ages, her transformation from charitable to mystic saint does not appear to have continued into the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the Neoplatonic philosophies of Ficino, Bembo, and Castiglione drove the development of the new wave of mysticism espoused by saints

¹⁸⁶ An increasing number of Counter Reformation images depicted Elizabeth, the cousin of the Virgin Mary, during the visitation. The limited iconography that does feature Elizabeth of Hungary still associates her with charitable acts rather than the visions and raptures noted in the *Summa vitae* and the *Dicta*.

¹⁸⁷ See chapter three.

¹⁸⁸ Klaniczay, 372-74. For Elizabeth's connection to the *Meditations on the life of Christ* see Klaniczay 372-74; for the inclusion of the *Revelations* in vernacular sermons see Gecser, 122-123. For more on Elizabeth's *Revelations* see chapter three.

Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Ávila, and John of the Cross.¹⁸⁹ The writings of these Neoplatonic authors and the mystic saints that followed were inspirational to the creation of a plethora of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century depictions of enraptured saints who were enveloped in divine love, experiencing ecstatic death, and enjoying the overwhelming pleasures of celestial rapture. Unlike Elizabeth, Francis became an integral figure in this new wave of mysticism, a phenomenon no doubt tied to the environment of cyclical influence between mystic devotional practices and the resurgence of Franciscan teachings, and the abundance of ecstatic episodes contained within Francis's hagiography.¹⁹⁰

The iconographic privileging of an ecstatic Francis instead of Elizabeth during the Counter Reformation may also be thanks to the ways in which the communities from whence they originated engaged with mystic devotion. On the one hand, Franciscan theologians had an established tradition of engaging in mystic discourse via literature, and by practicing contemplation, but they did not have a strong tradition of documenting their own raptures. Elizabeth's mystic identity, however, was a product of late medieval, lay religious women's first-hand experiences with rapture. In other words, Francis's ecstatic identity had been confined to literature, iconography, and contemplation among monastic theologians who deliberated upon the act of contemplation and the steps one must take in order to achieve union with the divine, but who rarely cited their own

¹⁸⁹ Ignatius of Loyola, *Exercitia spiritualia*, 1548; Teresa di Giesù, *Autobiografia* (1562-65), *Il cammino della perfezione* (1562-64), *Il castello interiore* (1577); John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love* (1618). Also of great importance to studies of early modern mysticism is Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, an influential sixteenth-century mystic. I do not include Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi here, as the documentation of her ecstatic episodes are those gathered by her community and were not written by Maria herself. While these writings are certainly of value in gaining a better understanding of sixteenth-century mysticism, they do not provide insight into the ecstatic process as do those of the authors cited above.

¹⁹⁰ See Giovanni Benyacar, 67-92.

experiences nor documented the occurrence of raptures within their communities. On the other hand, Elizabeth's mystic identity was a reminder of the sensual experiences that were documented by and about late-Medieval lay women religious, who advocated for a life spent pursuing ecstasy outside the confines of enclosure. Considering the frequent skepticism and even hostility faced by sixteenth-century mystics like Saint Teresa – who experienced unpredictable and uncontrollable raptures and then documented them in erotic detail – Elizabeth's ecstatic identity may have been deemed a dangerous or even unmanageable and undesirable encouragement to lay women religious.¹⁹¹

We may consider Annibale's painting, then, as a manifestation of a mutually beneficial hagiographic adaptation, resulting from the conflation of two saints who had been connected in various ways since the thirteenth century. For Elizabeth, Annibale's depiction provided an entry into the ecstatic culture of the Counter Reformation, just as the mystic legends and fourteenth-century *Revelations* had done centuries before. For Francis, a representation of his death that referenced the dying Elizabeth's musical ecstasy connected him with the growing trend of representing saints' deaths as an expression of celestial rapture in Counter-Reformation visual and performing arts. The integration of Elizabeth's vision into Annibale's depiction of Francis is clear – both feature the saint on his or her death bed, both are surrounded by companions, and both engage with celestial music, the source of which is only visible to they themselves. There is, however, one element that is entirely new to both stories: the violin.

¹⁹¹ Barbara Newman has discussed the changing acceptability of the laity's participation in visionary and mystic devotional practices from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern era. See Barbara Newman, "What Did it Mean to Say 'I Saw'? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture," *Speculum* 80, no. 1 (January 2005): 1-43. For a more in-depth discussion of these ideas see chapter five.

In reality, Annibale's violin-playing angel would have held several meanings for sixteenth-century viewers. Most apparent is its function as a substitute for Elizabeth's bird. As a medieval symbol, Elizabeth's bird indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit, or even her communion with God himself, and was therefore an important symbol in marking her experience as rapture.¹⁹² The transformation of the bird into the violin-playing angel suggests a similar type of communion; by superimposing Elizabeth's musical ecstasy onto the representation of the dying Francis, Francis's experience too can be understood as an episode of celestial, musical rapture. In other words, the musical bird that marked Elizabeth's episode as ecstatic is now Francis's violin-playing angel, who similarly indicates that the scene is not just a vision nor divine consolation, but a scene of musical rapture at the time of the saint's death. The idea that Annibale's violin-playing angel may have served as an iconological replacement of Elizabeth's bird is strengthened when considering the absence of birds from the painting, a detail that is especially peculiar considering Francis's association with animals – and birds in particular – and the conspicuously bare outdoor scenery that is featured on the right hand of the frame.¹⁹³ Francis's long-standing association with birds is exemplified in a story included in the second volume of Luke Wadding's *Annales Minorum* – a seventeenth-century compilation of Franciscan legends that postdates Annibale's painting, but that reflects the importance of birds and music in Francis's hagiography. In this anecdote, Francis engages in antiphonal singing with a nightingale in a manner that is not unlike Saint Elizabeth's ecstatic vision.

¹⁹² For more information see chapter three.

¹⁹³ Animals, especially birds, were routinely depicted alongside Francis in iconography spanning the medieval through the Early Modern eras.

“While Saint Francis and Brother Leo were enjoying a meal together in the open air, they were delighted by the singing of a nightingale close by. Francis suggested: ‘Let us sing the praise of God antiphonally with this bird.’ Leo excused himself as he was no singer, but the saint lifted up his voice and phrase by phrase sang alternately with the nightingale. So they continued from Vespers to Lauds until Francis at last admitted defeat.”¹⁹⁴

This story differs from Saint Elizabeth’s rapture in that the bird was witnessed by Brother Leo, and Francis was actually singing, not producing celestial music from within the throat. Yet it provides an example of Francis’s musical association with birds, an association that was not foreign to sixteenth-century viewers; it demonstrates that a recognition of Francis’s musical angel as a modernization of the birds with whom he interacted in established legends is not unlikely. The idea that the musical angel may be interpreted as a substitution for Elizabeth’s bird – therefore symbolizing Francis’s communion with God – is further strengthened when considering the frequent iconographic conflation of Ancient Greek and Christian mythologies and deities. By including the violin, Annibale drew on the more recent sixteenth-century humanistic tradition of reframing violin-playing celestial entities as Apollo and Orpheus, who – in Christian iconography – referenced God and the Messiah, respectively.¹⁹⁵ Interpreting the painting in this way, we understand that the scene is a familial one, in which the father calls the son home to the celestial spheres through the power of music. The violin-playing angel is a metaphor for both Apollo and the Christian God, who uses music to lead the soul of Francis – who already stood as an archetype of Christ, the son of God, and therefore simultaneously Orpheus, the son of Apollo – from the constraints of mortality

¹⁹⁴ Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum* II (1625-1648), 24-25 as cited and translated in Armstrong, 68.

¹⁹⁵ See Rudolf Hopfner, “Gli strumenti musicali nella pittura,” in *Dipingere la musica*, ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden (Milan, Skira, 2001), 85-91.

to the freedom of celestial life. In addition to its multivalent symbolism, Annibale's replacement of Apollo's customary harp, lute, or even lira da braccio with the more contemporary violin-playing angel signifies his desire to connect the viewer's conceptualized aural backdrop with familiar musics found in coetaneous sacred and secular spaces.

Contrary to the previously accepted theory that performances of sixteenth-century violin-family instruments were restricted to dance halls, outdoor entertainment, and popular musics, musicologists have more recently argued that the violin was frequently utilized in sacred spaces and in a liturgical context.¹⁹⁶ According to Rodolfo Baroncini, during the second half of the sixteenth century, the violin would have functioned within liturgical music contrapuntally, as either a solo instrument or by doubling the vocal line.¹⁹⁷ Further support for the violin's presence in sacred spaces is Marc Vanscheeuwijck's finding that in Annibale's home city of Bologna, the violin appeared for the first time on the payroll as a regular member in the *Cappella* of the civic Basilica of San Petronio in 1593.¹⁹⁸ As San Petronio was and continued to be one of the most important Bolognese musical centers throughout the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we can be sure that Annibale was familiar with the music performed there, and

¹⁹⁶ Colloque International d'Études Humanistes (34th: 1991: Tours, France), and Jean Michel Vaccaro, *Le concert des voix et des instruments à la renaissance: Actes du XXXIVe Colloque International d'Études Humanistes, Tours, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, 1-11 Juillet 1991*. Arts Du Spectacle. Paris: CNRS Éd, 1995.

¹⁹⁷ Baroncini argues that the statements, "all'improvviso" and "in concerti et nell'organo" in sixteenth-century descriptions of instrumental performances (including the violin) indicate their use in dances and outdoor settings, and their use in polyphonic church music respectively. See Baroncini, "'Se canta dalli cantori overo se sona dalli sonadori' voci e strumenti tra quattro e cinquecento," 342-343. See also Baroncini, "Il complesso di 'violini': diffusione, funzioni, struttura e 'fortuna' di un assieme cinquecentesco poco noto."

¹⁹⁸ Marc Vanscheeuwijck notes this violinist as Pellegrino Muzoli. Vanscheeuwijck also notes that Gabrieli's *Sacrae Symphonie* was the first print requiring a violin. See Vanscheeuwijck, 77.

that it contributed to his interpretation of which musics and musical instruments were appropriate for devotional expression.

In light of these and other findings, Howard Mayer Brown has argued for a re-evaluation of sixteenth-century performance practices in favor of the confluence of voices and instruments in secular and sacred musics – citing educational practices, treatises that presuppose instrumentalists’ knowledge of modal theories, hexachords, and solmization, and the lack of music prints for specific instruments beyond keyboard and lute intabulations.¹⁹⁹ In support of this final point, Brown points to the sixteenth-century inventories of the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona, which record an extensive collection of madrigals, chansons, *villanelle alla napolitana*, and other “light-weight music,” though almost no publications that specify the use of instruments, despite the high level of instrumental proficiency among the academy’s members. According to Brown, this suggests the regular use of instruments in vocal genres, either in combination with voices, or as purely instrumental pieces.

Brown’s, Vanscheeuwijck’s, and Baroncini’s findings – as well as those of the other musicologists dedicated to the reevaluation of sixteenth-century instrumental performance practices – open the door to a wide range of sonic possibilities that may be suggested by Annibale’s painting. Discerning the exact music that the angel and Francis perform, however, is not possible. Yet, Annibale’s decision to include only one violinist instead of an entire angel concert – as was common practice at the end of the sixteenth century – does allude to two-part musical genres and styles found in sacred as well as amateur music circles both in Bologna and Rome, where Annibale relocated in the year

¹⁹⁹ Howard Mayer Brown, “The Instrumentalist’s Repertory in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Le concert des voix et des instruments à la renaissance*, 21-32.

prior to the proposed dating of the painting. The two-part sonic atmosphere elicited by the scene allows for its further interpretation as an allegory that uses music to describe the relationship between the enraptured soul and God, a topic that was of paramount concern in Counter-Reformation discourses that philosophized mystic devotional practices.

A likely soundscape exhibited in Annibale's painting is that produced by late Renaissance *bicinia*, two-part sacred or secular madrigals, motets, and canons that were both texted and textless, and performed by voices, instruments, or in combination.²⁰⁰ A hypothetical example of this soundscape is Giovanni Matteo Asola's "Come la cera 'l foco," a sacred madrigal from his collection *Madrigali a due voci accomodati da cantar in fuga diversamente*, the poetry of which was widely circulated in a variety of sixteenth-century duo publications; Asola's setting was published in 1587, 1600, 1604, 1624, and 1665.²⁰¹ The primary function of this and other duos was the instruction of choir boys and wealthy amateurs – students led by a skilled instructor who used the duo to teach rules of counterpoint and the proper application and delivery of solmization syllables. The student, who created counterpoint against the instructor's established cantus firmus, was restricted by stringent compositional guidelines. This was especially true in the canon, in which the melody of the primary voice determines that of the secondary, imitative voice.

²⁰⁰ See Andrea Bornstein, *Two-Part Italian Didactic Music: Printed Collections of the Renaissance and Baroque, 1521-1744* (Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2004). Other possible genres of the late Renaissance duo include texted or textless pieces on a cantus firmus, chansons, villancicos, and spiritual canzonettas.

²⁰¹ Giovanni Matteo Asola, *Madrigali a due voci: accomodati da cantar in fuga diversamente: 36 canoni a due voci*, ed. Marco Giuliani (Trento: Rotooffset Paganella, 1993), II. See also Bornstein, vol.1, 182 and 95-99. Asola's 1587 *Madrigali a due voci accomodati da cantar in fuga diversamente* is a purported reprint of a lost 1584 publication of the same name. The poetic text of "Come la cera 'l foco" was widely circulated and appeared in a number of duo and madrigal publications, including Lasso's *Madrigali a 5* (1585).

Once the student gained experience, Asola's *Madrigali a due voci*, and "Come la cera 'l foco" specifically, presented an opportunity for continued learning and entertainment, often in an intimate setting of the student's peers, whether in an ecclesiastical school or an amateur academy.²⁰²

"Come la cera 'l foco" is a canon at the octave, set to a mystic poem by Gabriele Fiamma (1533-1585) that describes the melting away of earthly desires once the soul is ignited by the flames of celestial love.

Come la cera al foco	Like the wax to the flame
Che accende esca terrena	That ignites earthly enticement
Si va struggendo e manca a poco a poco	Melts away and expires little by little,
Così gli affanni onde la vita è piena	So too the griefs of which life is full
E le gioie i diletti	And the frivolous joys,
Vani, e i terrestri affetti	And the earthly delights,
Si van struggendo a queste	Melt away from these flames
Fiamme ch' accende esca d'amor celeste. ²⁰³	By which celestial love ignites.

Fiamma's poem reflects the same Neoplatonic relationship between earthly love and divine love that Bembo describes in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*.²⁰⁴ As with Bembo, the speaker in "Come la cera 'l foco" indicates only one source of the flame: celestial love, which is not revealed until the last line of the poem. The flame can ignite profane desires as well as melt away the sorrows that such profane desires bring, depending on how the heat is applied. In the first three lines of the poem, the speaker reiterates Bembo's point that she or he who receives the flame of divine love into their hearts and

²⁰² Marco Giuliani has noted the academic nature of Asola's *Madrigali a due voci*, citing the dedication to Signor Alessandro Radice, who was likely a student or "allievo" of Asola's as well as a noble amateur within the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona. See Asola, V.

²⁰³ Asola, 43-44. Translation mine.

²⁰⁴ Castiglione, 336-357.

uses its heat for the pursuit of secular delights is not fortified, but dwindles away in spirit. When the heat of the celestial flame is embraced in its sacred potential, however, the dwindling is not that of the individual, but the sorrows from which they previously suffered at the hand of salacious desires.

Asola sets Fiamma's poetry in the G (hard) and C (natural) hexachords, with only two cadences – one on G in m. 18, and one on the finalis C in the primary voice and E in the fugal voice on m. 27. The contrapuntal interaction between the two voices is determined by the canon, yet it is still possible to locate moments in which Asola uses the music to emphasize words of importance. This is especially true, considering the clarity of the text underlay as it appears in the 1587 edition (see Figure 14). An initial observation of Asola's two cadences, points of musical importance, reveals two words that elucidate the key concepts of the poetry: "fiamme" at cadence one (Figure 14 m. 18) and "celeste" at cadence two (Figure 14 m. 27).²⁰⁵ By highlighting these two words at occasions of musical significance, "fiamme" and "celeste" are accentuated, and indicate to the performer and listener the importance of the heavenly flames and their ability to melt away (*struggere*) profane suffering. The second-most point of importance is revealed by Asola's only extended melisma – in mm. 21-22 on the word "accende." Adding this text to those of the cadences, we understand that it is not only the celestial flames that are important, but also their ability to ignite, illuminate, or light up the heart of the devotee.

In addition to locating Asola's points of musical and textual emphasis, "Come la cera 'l foco" may benefit from an analysis of the solmization syllables in the manner suggested by Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, who have put forth

²⁰⁵ All measure numbers refer to a bar division of four minims. For a modern transcription see Asola, *Madrigali a due voci*, ed. Marco Giuliani, 43-44.

evidence that sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century compositions were often composed according to solmization-syllable arrangements that were understood to be indicative of erotic idioms.²⁰⁶

Puga, come di .f. sopra. 25

Ome la cera'l fo co Ch'accend'esca terre na

Si va struggendo e manca a poco a poco Così gli affanni Così

gli affanni onde la vit'e piena E le gioie i diletti Vani e ter-

re stri affetti Si van struggendo ij Si van struggendo Si

van struggend'a queste fiamme Ch'accend'esca d'amor celeste

Ch'accend'esca d'amor celeste Ch'accend'esca d'amor celeste

ca d'amor celeste Ch'accend'esca d'amor cele .f. ste.

D 2

Figure 14. Giovanni Matteo Asola, “Come la cera ’l foco,” *Madrigali a due voci*, 1587. Accessed via Gaspari on line, Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica di Bologna, collocazione: R.108.

²⁰⁶ See Bonnie J. Blackburn, “The Lascivious Career of B-Flat”; and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, “Fa mi la mi sol la: The Erotic Implications of Solmization Syllables.”

The most frequently repeated solmization pattern contained within “Come la cera ’l foco” is fa-mi-la-sol, which appears often in both the G and C hexachords (see for example m. 11, fa-mi-(fa)-la-sol in the G hexachord). This phrase – which, according to Blackburn and Holford-Strevens – may be translated as “do it only to me” or “[he/she/it] does it only to me” – appears most often with the text “si va struggendo,” or “it melts away.” Even more striking are mm. 14-16 in which the alternation between the voices on the repeated text “si van struggendo” results in a hocket of the syllables fa-mi, fa-mi-la-sol. Applying Blackburn’s and Holford-Strevens’s methodology to this section results in a constant reiteration of the text “do me, do it only to me” in conjunction with the primary poetic text “it melts away,” implying a rather intimate relationship between the speakers – or in this case performers – and the initiator of the celestial flames that cause the desired liquifying.²⁰⁷ Considering that Asola’s sacred madrigals were intended for performance by ecclesiastic students and within the academy raises the question of whether these expressions might suggest a homoerotic reading, one that might also be applied to Annibale’s painting. Notably absent from Asola’s canon, however, is the use of the F (soft) hexachord and therefore b-mollis, a conventional sixteenth-century method of referencing sexual intercourse between men.²⁰⁸

Hearing the hypothetical music suggested by Annibale’s violin-playing angel and Saint Francis as a duo means recognizing a power relationship between the performers in which the angel serves as a teacher and guide for Francis. In “Come la cera ’l foco,” this relationship is demonstrated by Francis’s role as the student, or fugal voice. As such, he

²⁰⁷ Alternatively, the solmization syllables may be interpreted as “it makes me,” emphasizing that the initiator of the celestial flames does in fact melt the poet.

²⁰⁸ Holford-Strevens, 44-45.

is musically reliant on the melody produced by the angel, his teacher – referencing a mystical relationship in which his movement is dictated by his celestial partner. Since “Come la cera ’l foco” is a canon, the entirety of Francis’s involvement is prescribed by his teacher’s melody; he has no musical autonomy. In the case of other non-canonical duos, Francis’s intervallic motion would still be restricted, but as a more experienced student – though still under the supervision of his divine tutor – his musical freedom would increase, allowing him to engage in divisions of the melody. In this case, while he moves within the bounds of the melody with relative freedom, Francis is still confined to the pillars of the melodic foundation provided by the angel.

These scenarios convey musical relationships that resemble the act of mystic contemplation. In the duos that allow Francis to divide his melody within the predetermined bounds set forth by the angel, his participation is reminiscent of divine contemplation in that the manner in which he participates is self-determined; his own divisions are self-initiated, reflect conscious decision-making, and indicate the presence of free-will. Within the canon, however, his participation is entirely dictated by his celestial partner; he is pulled through the piece just as the contemplative soul is pulled into the highest realm of divine union: rapture. The ecstatic episodes in which the soul has no control and no conscious ability to decide its participation were said by Saint Teresa to occur while in a state of spiritual betrothal. All aspects of this betrothal are dictated by God, who repeatedly brings the soul into rapture as a means of teaching divine union, and preparing the soul for the more elevated spiritual marriage.²⁰⁹

Annibale’s painting, then, while certainly indicative of celestial rapture, may also signal

²⁰⁹ See Teresa di Giesù, “Mansioni seste,” in *Cammino di perfezione e ’l castello interiore*, trans. Cosimo Gaci (Florence: Stamperia de’ Giunti, 1605).

Francis's state of spiritual betrothal. His soul is directed by the bridegroom through the performance of a sacred duo in order to prepare him for the spiritual marriage that follows death.

Alternatively, Annibale's two-part ensemble may be a reference to music performed in the new Roman-Neapolitan style, in which a solo melody is accompanied by a chordal instrument. This style, which originated in Neapolitan "low" music genres, was quickly adopted into courtly and possibly even sacred realms in Northern Italian courts as well as those within the Papal States.²¹⁰ In this case, Annibale's violin-playing angel should not be considered a representation of true performance practices. Instead, it likely serves as a modern substitute for the increasingly antiquated lira da braccio while alluding to the presence of a harmonic foundation for Francis's melody. The practice of supporting a single voice with instrumental accompaniment was embraced in sixteenth-century Italian courts and academies – even as they began to explore the possibility of setting a purely declamatory vocal line upon a semi-improvised bass, later called basso continuo. Though extant didactic sources of this style largely stem from the early seventeenth century, nearly a decade after Annibale's painting, a preference for them was already present in various centers throughout Italy in the second half of the sixteenth century.

²¹⁰ Laurie Stras has recently investigated the preference for music in the Roman-Neapolitan style at the court of Ferrara in the second half of the sixteenth century. See Laurie Stras, *Women and Music in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). According to Stras, collecting music in the Roman-Neapolitan style and recruiting musicians who were trained to perform it were priorities for Duke Alfonso II d'Este and his sister, Duchess Lucrezia. Stras also suggests that the practice of reducing polyphony to one or two-voices with accompaniment – in emulation of the new Roman-Neapolitan style – may have been applied to sacred music in Ferrara. Whether such reductions were practiced in Bolognese and Roman sacred musics is still to be investigated.

To this point, John Walter Hill notes that singers who were trained in performing monody were already in high demand in Florentine academies and Cardinal courts in Rome during the second half of the sixteenth century. Annibale's employment at the Palazzo Farnese during his first years of Roman residency makes it extremely likely that he would have encountered this fashionable new music.²¹¹ Two-part musical interaction of this type again evokes a musical relationship in which Francis is subordinate to the more authoritative, violin-playing angel. While his melody has the freedom to move within the angel's established harmonic boundaries, he cannot travel outside of them. This musical relationship once again reflects the divine union of ecstatic, mystic betrothal. In this state of union, Francis is enraptured, the movement of his melody, or soul, between death and life is subject to the Godly pleasures that the angel's accompaniment dictates.

It is also plausible that Annibale's painting is not indicative of any one specific musical soundscape, but is instead the representation of Neoplatonic union with the divine, achieved through music. With this in mind, we may consider the painting as being divided into three sections: in the lower level is an earthly sphere, in which Francis and his companions reside; in the upper level is a heavenly sphere, containing the violin-playing angel and four additional *putti*; and to the right is a small but significant glimpse of nature. In this interpretation, the violin-playing angel that is seated in the heavenly sphere is a Platonic shadow or image of the divine love and beauty of Plotinus's "The One," now the Christian God. Through its musical performance, the contemplative Francis is drawn up – away from the earthly sphere – and into ecstasy. As an image or

²¹¹ Hill, 57-120.

shadow of divine love and beauty, the angel represents to the viewer the inconceivable and unknowable God. As its true essence is unknowable, Annibale depicts it as a Platonic shadow that is recognizable in its divinity: an angel. The presence of the tree, then, represents the Neoplatonic understanding of nature as the cyclical generator of beauty and love. It is the love of beauty that produces nature and its forms, and it is nature that then continues to generate beauty; nature is both an image and creator of divine love.

Present in a Neoplatonic reading of Annibale's painting is the philosophical truth that both music and death are a means by which the soul can achieve an ecstatic coupling with God. Francis is brought into the rapturous union through celestial music – the music of the spheres, which had long been noted for its ability to connect the soul with Heaven due to the macro-microcosmic relationship between the universe and the individual. This union is the cause and result of Francis's ecstatic death, an intrinsic part of rapture. As spiritual, ecstatic death is an internal event that cannot be depicted iconographically, Annibale instead presents Francis's physical death.

The use of death as a trope that signified the presence of celestial rapture continued throughout later seventeenth-century iconography, literature, and music – primarily in the Italian oratorio, which will be discussed at length in the following chapters. As an introductory example of the treatment of this topos in early seventeenth-century music, I offer as a case study Stefano Landi's religious opera *Il Sant' Alessio*, commissioned by Cardinal Francesco Barberini and performed in Rome in 1631 at the Barberini's Palazzo ai Giubbonari – only twenty-two years after Annibale's death, and thirty-six years after the proposed dating of his painting.²¹² As will be discussed below,

²¹² Virginia Christy Lamothe states that Elena Tamburini's 2002 dating of *Il Sant' Alessio*'s premiere as 1629 is erroneous. For Lamothe's comments, see footnote one of Virginia Christy Lamothe, "Martyr Saints

the characterization of Alessio in Landi's opera mirrors the representation of the ecstatic Francis in *i Fioretti*. It is, therefore, a useful case study for examining similarities in the treatment of saintly rapture between early modern iconography and music. Important studies of seventeenth-century Roman opera have focused on the artistic patronage of Pope Urban VIII and the Barberini Papal family, and have brought to light their use of opera as a means of self-promotion, displaying power, and the dissemination of political and religious propaganda.²¹³ Using this scholarship as a point of departure, I offer an additional lens: the performance of Counter-Reformation religious opera as a display of the culturally recognized confluence of music and saints' rapturous deaths.

The plot of *Il Sant' Alessio* is a dramatized rendition of Alessio's life: Alessio is a Roman noble who gives up his wealth and leaves his betrothed to live an impoverished life as a devout follower of Christ. After years of wandering in poverty, he is forced to return to Rome where he spends the remainder of his days as a hermit living under the stairs of his family home. It is there that he awaits death and reunification with Christ. The circumstances of Alessio's death are markedly similar to the story of Francis's musical ecstasy as it is told in *i Fioretti*, in which Francis – who has been fasting in observance of Lent – pleads with an angel to provide him with a glimpse of heavenly

on Stage in Light of Papal Exhortations during the Thirty Years War" *Journal of Seventeenth-Century Music* 22, no. 1 (2016): online, <https://sscm-jscm.org/jscm-issues/volume-22-no-1/lamothe-martyr-saints/>, accessed July 1, 2018. Additional performances of *Il Sant' Alessio* occurred in 1632 and 1634 at the Palazzo Barberini.

²¹³ For further reading concerning musical patronage in Rome and at the Barberini Papal court, see: Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court, 1631-1668*; Hammond, *Music & Spectacle in Baroque Rome*; Lorenzo Bianconi and Thomas Walker, "Production, Consumption and Political Function of Seventeenth-Century Opera," *Early Music History* 4 (1984): 209-296; Hill, *Roman Monody, Cantata, and Opera from the Circles around Cardinal Montalto*.

joy.²¹⁴ Alessio, like Francis, has undergone great physical and spiritual duress when he calls upon God, pleading with him to be delivered from Satan and shown the comforts of celestial peace. As with Francis, Alessio's relief appears in the form of an angel, who acts on behalf of God, calming him, and alerting him to the fast-approaching time when he will die and return to heaven. In the presence of the angel, Alessio expresses his joy during an open display of spiritual rapture.

In both cases, we witness the same events that precede the saints' spiritual transportation into ecstasy. Both Francis and Alessio have been physically and spiritually prepared, and each makes a request to God directly, at which point a heavenly messenger functions as a facilitator, guiding the saints into rapture. For Francis, the ecstatic experience is instigated by the angel's musical performance. For Alessio, however, music's relationship to ecstasy seems to be a conglomerate of its role as recounted in *i Fioretti*, and its function in Annibale's *Death of Saint Francis*. Alessio's rapture occurs in the presence of the angel but is not instigated by the angel's musical performance. Instead, it occurs as Alessio prepares himself for death by singing the strophic aria, "O Morte gradita."²¹⁵

O welcome death, I long for you, I wait for you;
From pain to your pleasure, the path invites me;
O Death, O Death, O welcome Death;
From human prison you alone make the passage to life smooth;
O welcome Death, O welcome Death
O Death, O Death, O welcome Death

O pleasing Death, comfort of the righteous;
You lead the ship of every soul to the harbor;
O pleasing death, O pleasing death

²¹⁴ For more regarding Francis's musical ecstasy in *i Fioretti*, see chapter three.

²¹⁵ Alessio's ecstatic aria occurs at the end of Act II Scene VII. Stefano Landi, *Il Sant'Alessio*, (Rome: Appresso Paolo Masotti, 1634).

With frozen key you open to the world a second life;
O pleasing Death, O pleasing Death,
O Death, O Death, O pleasing Death.²¹⁶

Alessio makes it clear that he does not fear death, but that he welcomes it, waits for it, and longs for it. These sentiments do, of course, signal his joyful anticipation of physical death and reunification with God; yet, when considered in the context of early modern Neoplatonic philosophies and seventeenth-century sexuality and eroticism, it is clear that his aria depicts a moment of religious rapture – the epitome of mystical experiences in which the soul endures a spiritual death that separates it from the body. This spiritual “death” is described using erotic language in which the recipient’s painful yet pleasurable penetration by the light of the Holy Spirit or the divine love of Christ also alludes to orgasmic “death” in which the soul temporarily leaves the body in the moments following ejaculation.²¹⁷ When considering the use of “death” as an established sixteenth- and seventeenth-century euphemism for “orgasm” in conjunction with the plethora of contemporaneous erotic literary and iconographic representations of saints’ raptures, Alessio’s repeated exclamations of “O Morte,” and his explanation of “death” as something that invites him from pain to pleasure signify to the listener an erotic, spiritual

²¹⁶ Landi, 108-109. “O Morte gradita, ti bramo ti aspetto / Dal duolo al diletto tuo calle n’invita / O Morte, O Morte, O Morte gradita / Dal carcer’ humano tū sola fai piano il varco alla vita / O Morte gradita, O Morte gradita, O Morte, O Morte O Morte gradita / O Morte soave, de’giusti conforto / tū guidi nel porto, d’ogn’alma al Nome / O Morte soave, O Morte soave / Il viver secondo tū n’apri nel mondo con gelida chiave / O Morte soave, O Morte soave, O Morte, O Morte, O Morte soave.” Translation mine with editing by Marc Vanscheeuwijck.

²¹⁷ Discussing celestial rapture, Saint Teresa speaks of “delectable” death, being “utterly consumed by the great love of God,” and the “sweetness” of intense pain felt after being pierced by the fiery arrow of an angelic visitor. See Susan McClary, “Libidinous Theology,” in *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 132. For a more thorough exploration of Saint Teresa, and the eroticism of the word “death” and its role in Neoplatonic philosophies see chapters five and two, respectively.

ecstasy as well as the physical death of his body.²¹⁸ Not only does “O Morte gradita” use erotically coded language and double meanings to present death as both a sexually gratifying experience and a necessary physical event for progression into heaven, but it uses triple meter, and repetitive text and rhythmic patterns throughout the aria – techniques that are present in similar arias found in later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios, and that establish them as moments in which rapture is either experienced or longed for.²¹⁹

Repetition in “O Morte gradita” is exemplified in its predominant rhythmic pattern – half-note, dotted-half-note, quarter-note, which appears in mm. 1-5, 12-14, and 19-25 in both the soprano and basso continuo lines (Figure 15 and 15.1).²²⁰ The increased length of the dotted half-note followed by the quicker quarter-notes creates a sense of continual motion that persists throughout the aria. Landi also uses this rhythmic pattern to set the words “O Morte,” – appearing seventeen times in only two brief strophes – consistently placing them on the anacrusis of one measure into the down beat of the next, creating a sighing or longing affect that intensifies with subsequent reiterations. This same pattern is found again in mm. 6-8 and 20-22, though here the dotted-half-note is replaced by a half-note and quarter rest, which adds a breathless quality and further intensifies Alessio’s expressed longing.

²¹⁸ See Macy, “Speaking of Sex,” and McClary, “Libidinous Theology.” In addition to these musicological sources, art historians have frequently discussed the intentional erotic nature of baroque religious art, noting that depictions of Christ and saints were both spiritually and carnally sensual in an attempt to evoke an emotional response from the viewer. See Andreas Henning and Scott Schaefer, eds., *Captured Emotion*.

²¹⁹ For musical rapture in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios see chapters five and six.

²²⁰ All measures align with the bar lines as they are found in Landi, *Il Sant’Alessio*, at times appearing after three half-notes and other times after six.

108

tè ri trar dalla mortal pri gione Di gioia si, non di spauento im-

pressa, Lieto l'attendi, & ella Trà palme, e trà co rone Perche tri onfi il tuo valor fu-

perno, Ti farà scorta al Campidoglio e terno.

O Morte gra dita Tibramo tia spetto; Dal duo lo al di letto Tuo

calle n'in vita; O Morte, o Morte ij. gra dita Dal

carcer hu mano Tu fola fai piano Il varco alla vita

S. Alessio.

Figure 15. Stefano Landi, "O Morte gradita," *Il Sant' Alessio*, Act V, Scene VII. Rome: Paolo Masotti, 1634, p. 108.

109

Morte gra dita O Morte gra dita o Morte O Morte o

Morte gra di ta.

Primo Violino.

Secundo Violino.

Terzo Violino.

O Morte soave
 De' giusti conforto
 Tu guidi nel Porto
 D'ogn'alma la Nave,
 O Morte soave.
 Il viuer secondo
 Tu n'apri nel mondo
 Con gelida chiaue.
 O Morte soave.

Figure 15.1. Stefano Landi, "O Morte gradita," *Il Sant' Alessio*, Act V, Scene VII. Rome: Paolo Masotti, 1634, p. 109.

Additional evidence of this intensification appears in mm. 7-11 of both strophes, where Landi sets three successive repetitions of “O Morte” to a brief ascending harmonic sequence that moves down a third and up a fourth, traveling from F ‘major’ to E ‘major.’ In each measure, Alessio leaps into the fifth of the new chord from the third above. Beginning in mm.10 he steps into a chromatically charged D-half-diminished 6-5 chord, moves through the E 4-3 suspension, and resolves the tension as he cadences on A ‘minor.’ In this moment, the textual repetition, rising harmonic motion, and increased chromaticism work together to simulate the sacred and secular aspects of religious ecstasy: heightened spirituality and increased erotic stimulation as the soul ascends into union with God. This is especially apparent in Landi’s placement of the last “Morte” and its descriptions “gradita” – or “welcome” – in verse one, and “soave” – or “pleasing” – in verse two, words that do not appear until the most chromatic moments of the phrase. Viewed in its entirety, this moment acts as a vivid representation of erotic rapture, with each repetition of the word “death” building to a relishing in the “welcome” and “pleasing” chromatic pain of religious ecstasy.

Yet, an ecstatic reading of “O Morte gradita” is incomplete if considered in isolation, for it exists as part of an opera that was intended for moral education as much as for entertainment. Its commission by Cardinal Francesco Barberini (nephew of Pope Urban VIII), an influential patron who controlled the content of the opera and decided which themes would be privileged, renders Alessio’s ecstatic aria an object of religious propaganda that served as a performance of Barberini-endorsed ideologies and devotional practices. Considering that *Il Sant’Alessio* was a featured opera in Rome during three of the four Carnival seasons between 1631 and 1634, with seven performances in 1634

alone, it is safe to say that Roman audiences would have accepted the material, including Alessio's erotic rapture, as "papal approved."²²¹ This is not to say, however, that Alessio's aria served to promote the practice of celestial rapture amongst audience members who witnessed it. As much as Counter-Reformation art and music were intended to stir the heart and move the viewer or listener toward a more intimate religious conviction, claims of having experienced religious ecstasy were viewed by papal authorities with suspicion and at times animosity, despite religious communities', academies', and lay devotees' increasing engagement with contemplative mystic practices. What was the purpose, then, of showcasing Alessio's ecstatic death in a genre that served as didactic, religious entertainment; and why did the practice of depicting saints' erotic raptures in devotional music continue throughout the Early Modern era? These questions will be the point of departure in subsequent chapters, in which I will explore how – and why – divine love, rapture, and death coalesced in the late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Italian oratorio.

In sum, Annibale Carracci's *Death of Saint Francis* presents a true multi-faceted and multi-sensory humanistic depiction of Saint Francis's ecstatic death, one in which Neoplatonic love, mythical and Christian metaphors, saints' legends, and musical soundscapes coalesce into a single painting. For Elizabeth of Hungary, iconographic fusion with Francis was beneficial in that it contemporized her identity and connected her with sixteenth-century mysticism. Whereas her association with mysticism had previously been restricted to the addition of late-medieval legends and the attribution of a

²²¹ Murata, *Operas for the Papal Court*; and Iain Fenlon, "First Nights in Baroque Rome: Stefano Landi's Sant'Alessio," in *City, Chant, and the Topography of Early Music*, eds. Michael Scott Cuthbert, Sean Gallagher, and Christoph Wolff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 39.

set of *Revelations*, the reference to her death scene – superimposed on the death of Saint Francis – created an opportunity for the legend of her musically ecstatic death to have renewed life and continued recognition by sixteenth-century audiences. For Francis, the interpolation of Elizabeth’s musically ecstatic death scene allowed him access to the sixteenth-century trend of combining representations of death and rapture. Although the legend of Francis’s musical ecstasy as it appears in *i Fioretti* was already being cultivated amongst painters of the Carracci school, and was influencing Francis’s iconographic topoi throughout the Papal States, there was no such tradition of conflating Francis’s physical death with spiritual death. Also of note is Annibale’s inclusion of the violin-playing angel – an element of modernization that may have prompted viewers to “hear” in the painting the musical styles that were increasingly fashionable in sacred and secular spaces.

Considering these arguments, one of the painting’s primary themes comes to light: modernization – epitomized in Annibale’s violin-playing angel, which contemporized both Elizabeth’s and Francis’s legends, fashioned for them new sixteenth-century identities, and promoted the violin as a sacred instrument, all while evoking the overarching theme of Counter-Reformation mysticism through the allusion to contrapuntal duos and the performance of “new-style” monody. More important, however, are the references to love and ecstatic death that are woven throughout the painting. Love, a fundamental aspect of Renaissance Neoplatonism, is ever present in Annibale’s image – it is in the regeneration of the nature-scene at Francis’s head, it is in the love Francis’s brothers hold for their dying mentor, it is in the angel’s musical beckoning, which calls Francis’s soul back to the heavenly spheres, and it is in Francis’s

rapture – for only by choosing the arduous heat of divine love’s flame could he also languish in the desirable pains of ecstatic death. It is this desire for the pleasurable suffering of celestial love, rapture, and death that continued to be a dominating theme in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian oratorios, and which will be explored at length in the following chapters.

CHAPTER V

MYSTIC DEVOTION AND THE EARLY MODERN ERA: SAINTLY RAPTURE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ORATORIOS

The divine love and mysticism that infused Renaissance paintings²²² and music²²³ continued to pervade art, literature, and music throughout the seventeenth century. In music these themes were especially potent in the Italian oratorio; here, divine love and mysticism became inseparable from the Old Testament stories and tales of saints' martyrdoms that were featured in libretti. By the late seventeenth century, most oratorios did not include an extended plot or dramatic sequence of events, but rather focused intently on saints' emotions and their spiritual development as they faced opposition to the faith and fought to uphold Roman Catholic ideals.

In this chapter I explore divine love, ecstasy, and death as they coalesced in late seventeenth-century Italian oratorios, specifically Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* (1685 and 1693) and *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola* (c. 1695-1700). Teodosia and Orsola were not regarded as mystic saints but were, rather, early Christian martyrs. And yet, the libretti for these oratorios feature a great deal of mystic language that reflects the vernacular devotional cultures of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For this reason, they provide ample opportunity to investigate why and how such character transformations were made, and how composers used music to convey to

²²² E.g., Annibale Carracci's *Saint Francis's Vision of the Musical Angel*.

²²³ E.g., Giovanni Matteo Asola's *Madrigali a due voci* and Stefano Landi's religious opera, *Il Sant'Alessio*.

audiences the mystical nature of the text. As both of these oratorios feature music by Alessandro Scarlatti, they allow for further discernment of how his own compositional idiosyncrasies may have signaled to audiences representations of different types of mystic relationships between the saintly characters and God.

In order to contextualize the mysticism that is present within these oratorios, I begin with an investigation of how ecstasy and celestial rapture were perceived by contemporaneous audiences. My primary questions are: what was the cultural understanding of rapture, and of mystic devotion in general; how did these understandings shape the way composers like Scarlatti musically depicted expressions of mysticism; and, how might audiences have understood composers' representations of rapture? This investigation grapples with the competing forms of mysticism that were present in late seventeenth-century Italy, and their complex relationships to their medieval and early modern predecessors. Issues of active and passive contemplative practices, the perceived ability of laity to experience rapture, and ecclesiastical control over dichotomously personal and communal ecstatic communions with God were sharply contested, while such controversial figures as Santa Teresa d'Ávila were transformed from mystic pariahs into religious icons. As literary tropes, "rapture" and "death" functioned in sacred and secular contexts, both aspects of which affect our understanding of their roles in oratorio libretti. I argue that the confluence of the above-stated elements resulted in the performance of rapture as devotional spectacle, and that the music of these performances served a different function than that which reflected or accompanied meditative transcendence.

Music and Mysticism: Meditative Transcendence vs. Exemplified Rapture

Andrew dell'Antonio's recent investigation of the relationship between music and mysticism suggests that there are connections among meditative devotional practices, iconography of saints in ecstasy, and rapture-inducing music.²²⁴ In his book *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy*, dell'Antonio investigates the relationship between ecstasy and music from the perspective of early modern listeners who were intimately aware of the meditative devotional practices promoted by Saint Ignatius of Loyola in his *Esercizi spirituali*.²²⁵ He suggests that music performed during the eucharist served as rapture-inducing for the lay community, who likely felt parallels between it and Ignatius's meditations, with which they were well-versed. This connection provided laity with an avenue toward the replication of saintly ecstasy, comparable to what they saw modeled in the Counter-Reformation iconography that surrounded them. In her monograph *Mary, Music, and Meditation: Sacred Conversations in Post-Tridentine Milan*, Christine Getz argues a similar concept.²²⁶ She focuses on Marian cults in Post-Tridentine Milan, rather than on Counter-Reformation listening practices in general, yet she too sees a connection between devotional and liturgical musics that are harmonically restricted and rhythmically repetitive, and the meditative exercises practiced among Jesuits and their lay followers.

While I largely agree with dell'Antonio's and Getz's analyses, and do not discount the importance of meditative practices to seventeenth-century devotion, their

²²⁴ See dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy*.

²²⁵ First published in Spain, 1548.

²²⁶ Getz, *Mary, Music, and Meditation*.

conclusions regarding the individual's engagement with mysticism through meditative music cannot – in my opinion – be appropriately superimposed upon analyses of the mysticism in seventeenth-century oratorios. Rather than functioning as a vehicle by which listeners could actively seek their own transcendent experiences, I propose that the oratorio was a genre in which artificial depictions of saintly rapture could be observed by audiences as a type of devotional spectacle that mirrored contemporaneous ecstatic iconography. In this respect, the ecstatic language and depictions in oratorios are best understood as being indicative of the varying mystic doctrines and practices in circulation at the end of the seventeenth century – they are mystic amalgams. The music that served to depict saintly rapture within oratorios was not intended to be ecstasy-inducing for lay audiences as dell'Antonio and Getz argue in their analyses of meditative music. This classification of the oratorio as representationally ecstatic rather than ecstasy inducing considers the plethora of vernacular mystic publications that were in circulation in Italy at the end of the seventeenth century, as well as the contentions between laity and Catholic authorities regarding the individual's participation in controversial aspects of mystic devotion. The varied nature of these mystic practices, and individual ecclesiastics' opinions regarding the acceptability of such devotional activities, frequently resulted in tensions among subgroups of lay practitioners. Of particular concern during the Early Modern era were preconceptions regarding the spiritual consequences of active and passive contemplation, and considerations of the individual's ability to arrive at a state of celestial rapture – the highest form of divine union. These subjects were further complicated by the varying degrees with which ecclesiastics welcomed or rejected mysticism within their lay and religious communities.

Mystic Devotion in the Early Modern Era

The intricacies surrounding active versus passive contemplation in the Early Modern era are often addressed in modern discourses concerning medieval and early modern theology and vision culture. During the Early Modern era, claims of receiving ecstasy and visions by means of meditation – an active form of contemplation in which the individual initiates and propels their own mental progression toward a state of being that may be considered visionary or even ecstatic – though valued in the late Middle Ages, were frequently debated and often viewed as artificial and even heretical.²²⁷ Increasingly problematic was the number of mystic practitioners engaged in contemplative meditation who were unassisted by spiritual leaders. At the core of these debates was the issue of ecclesiastical control over the devotional activities of religious communities, as well as a general uneasiness concerning the laity's ability to discern the nature of the spirits they encountered during their private engagements with mysticism (i.e., meditation or contemplation practiced without ecclesiastic oversight). Ecclesiastic authorities' preferred solution to these contentions was one that "gave maximal authority to clerics charged with the discernment of spirits," clerics who, in the end, judged the majority of reported visions and ecstasies to be inauthentic or diabolical.²²⁸

Laity and women religious were not considered to have the power of discernment regarding whether episodes of rapture were divine or demonic in origin, necessitating that

²²⁷ Newman, "What Did it Mean to Say 'I Saw'?" See also chapter three and the discussion of the laity's use of texts such as Bonaventura's *Meditations on the Life of Christ* and Ludolph's *Vita Christi*.

²²⁸ Newman, 41.

they report their visions and ecstasies to a more experienced confessor.²²⁹ Justification for this requirement was the belief that any person who opened herself or himself to divine infusion was simultaneously susceptible to possession by more devious and demonic forces; as the weaker sex, women were considerably more vulnerable. Because individuals who experienced rapture were frequently awarded informal saintly status within their communities, the discernment of the origins of their experiences was considered to be of greater importance for the community at large than it was for the individual.²³⁰ Clarity in discernment was not always immediate. The ecstasies of the Florentine Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (1566-1607, canonized 1669) for instance – described by her community as “mad” yet stemming from an “impetus of love” – are exemplary of the inherent ambiguity of rapture.²³¹ To the modern reader, Maria Maddalena’s ecstasies as they are recorded by her community may seem to be madness indeed, but they demonstrate the fine line between celestial rapture and demonic possession.

Ignatius of Loyola recognized the potential danger of demonic infusion for individuals who opened themselves to visionary and or ecstatic episodes while practicing mystic devotion, and therefore urged his followers to recite his meditative *Esercizi* under

²²⁹ Copeland argues that in the case of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, the nuns in her community felt that they themselves had the ability to discern the divinity of the raptures, due to the profound effects that were felt by Maria and by the nuns in her company. Clare Copeland, “Participating in the Divine: Visions and Ecstasies in a Florentine Convent,” in *Angels of Light? Sanctity and the Discernment of Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, Clare Copeland and Jan Machielsen eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 100-101.

²³⁰ Clare Copeland, “Introduction,” in *Angels of Light?*, 14.

²³¹ Copeland, citing the records of the convent on 12 June 1584 in Copeland, “Participating in the Divine: Visions and Ecstasies in a Florentine Convent,” (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 82.

the direction of a more experienced guide.²³² Dell'Antonio argues, however, that this advice was not always followed; rather, it was increasingly common for lay individuals, as well as entire academies and confraternities, to practice Ignatius's *Esercizi* without an appointed mentor.²³³ To this point, Dell'Antonio shows that the absence of a spiritual guide created a devotional environment in which the individual became "responsible for monitoring his own response to the transcendent moment."²³⁴

Ecclesiastical warnings that discouraged lay communities, women religious, and individuals from seeking visions and raptures by means of meditation are clear indicators that such practices did in fact occur. Discouragement from mystic devotion was not universal, however. The varying degrees with which communities of women religious engaged with mystic devotion, and the incongruency among ecclesiastics in their acceptance or dismissal of such practices is detailed by both Robert Kendrick and Colleen Reardon in their investigations of the devotional activities of women religious in Italy. Their discussions of Cardinal Federigo Borromeo's fascination with female ecstasies, and his support of the mystic Caterina Vannini in particular (to be discussed at length below) – a holy woman who regularly conditioned herself for celestial rapture by

²³² Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*. Translated by George E. Ganss, S.J. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1992, Introductory Explanations no. 1-20.

²³³ Dell'Antonio argues that although the Jesuits continued to urge practitioners to use the *Spiritual Exercises* with the aid of a more experienced guide, the popularity of the *Exercises* led to their use more broadly, and more frequently without the presence of an appropriate mentor. He supports this claim with a reference to the generalate of Claudio Acquaviva, during which the *Exercises* became a staple of daily prayer for many societies, even though Jesuit advisors' visits to specific groups were sporadic, even annual. Additionally, Dell'Antonio points to the increasing number of early seventeenth-century prints in the vernacular that were aimed toward a lay audience. Dell'Antonio, 32.

²³⁴ Dell'Antonio, 32.

means of a strict routine that included self-flagellation, meditation, restriction of food, sleep deprivation, and extended prayer – are particularly enlightening.²³⁵

Yet the Inquisition's broader skepticism toward reports of mystic phenomena speak to the complexities surrounding early modern mystic devotion, and the perils faced by mystics at the hands of the religious authorities who were charged with determining the validity of their experiences. Santa Teresa d'Ávila (1515-1582), for example, seems to have been acutely aware of ecclesiastic suspicion toward reports of ecstasy, and the danger of those reports being interpreted as fabricated, diabolical, and heterodox – especially those visions and ecstasies that were claimed to have been the result of an individual's own efforts. To this end, she repeatedly claimed that her raptures could not be achieved through prayerful requests or devotional penance, but were initiated and controlled by God alone. She further distanced herself from assertions that her episodes were self-initiated by arguing that, in her experience, the feelings resulting from somatic conditioning – namely prolonged fasting, extensive penance, and extended prayer, practices that were common among women religious during the Middle Ages as well as the later Caterina Vannini – were not in fact a consequence of celestial rapture.²³⁶

Teresa's documentations and publications of her raptures and mystic philosophies are extremely detailed regarding the act of contemplation, and therefore yield some of the most useful information for detecting musical ecstasy across artistic mediums, including the oratorio. While her writings should by no means be considered the only authoritative source, nor justification for a modern refutation of the experiences described by other

²³⁵ Kendrick, 153-176; and Reardon, 98-122.

²³⁶ Teresa di Giesù, *Il castello interiore*, Room 4.3.11.

women (such as Vannini) they are invaluable in that they give name and organization to the complex and abstract occurrences associated with contemplation, descriptions of which may otherwise be absent or, if present, seem chaotic. Documentation of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi's experiences, for example, often give the impression of incoherency; and Ignatius, while specific in his instructions to the meditator, does not describe for her or him the diverse feelings associated with distinct phases of contemplation. If we consider Teresa's own dissemination of her experiences as an attempt to give name to and to codify the mystic experience – as historian Gillian Ahlgren argues – and recognize the continued popularity of her works throughout the seventeenth century, we must also consider the strong possibility that her contemporary readers found validity, or at the very least a source of fascination in her philosophies.²³⁷

The scrutiny Teresa faced while recording her ecstasies and mystic episodes, and the Inquisition's posthumous analysis of the orthodoxy or heterodoxy of her works, is well documented. Rather than serving as an impetus for dismissing her philosophies, the Inquisition's investigation must be contextualized for its occurrence during a period of intense literary censorship, which (though historically focused on Protestantism) was swiftly turning its gaze toward anything that resembled the controversial Spanish *alumbrados*, a group of Spanish laity that encouraged the practice of internalized rather than vocalized prayer.²³⁸ In her re-evaluation of the contemporaneous and posthumous

²³⁷ For Teresa's attempt to establish a codified mystic theology, see Gillian T. W. Ahlgren, *Teresa of Ávila and the Politics of Sanctity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 30-31. Scholar Bernard McGinn also notes the "expressed need for a 'mystical science,' or 'science of contemplation' during the Early Modern era; see Miguel de Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide*, Robert P. Baird ed. and trans. with Introduction by Robert P. Baird and Bernard McGinn, (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), 26.

²³⁸ This is not to say that the Inquisition no longer scrutinized works for Protestant leanings. Rather, there was an increasing focus on mystic devotional practices within its own congregations. The *alumbrados* are

scrutiny of Teresa's works, Ahlgren argues that the movement against the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century *alumbrados*, those "accused of having been falsely 'enlightened' by prayer," severely affected the treatment of women religious, and by extension, Teresa, especially since her raptures were episodes in which she claimed that her spirit experienced intense, private union with God.²³⁹

The practices of the *alumbrados* were closely tied to the resurgence of Franciscan mystic devotion that was successfully promoted by Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (1416-1517), whose support of *beatas* and lay individuals seeking a life of mystic devotion was "an extremely influential force in Spanish religious reform."²⁴⁰ Cisneros's commitment to encouraging mystic devotion among the laity was so strong that he even commissioned translations of medieval mystic theology in Castilian vernacular, such as the writings of Augustine, Gregory the Great, Cassian, Bernard of Clairvaux, John Climacus, Angela of Foligno, and the *Sol de contemplativos* ("a popularized version of Pseudo-Dionysius' *Mystic Theology*").²⁴¹ Along with their practice of internalized prayer – one of many characteristics that connected them with the Franciscans – the *alumbrados* questioned clerical privilege and the wealth of the church, and encouraged the laity to seek their own relationship with God through private, unmediated prayer.²⁴² These teachings made the *alumbrados* easy targets of the

generally accepted among modern scholars to be the societal precursors to the seventeenth-century *quietists*, who followed after the *Guida spirituale* of Miguel de Molinos, whose most famous work, *The Spiritual Guide*, was first published by Michele Ercole in Rome, 1675.

²³⁹ Ahlgren, 6-7.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 9-11.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 10.

²⁴² Ibid., 12.

Inquisition, which promptly moved against them in an attempt to retain ecclesiastic authority. Resurgences of *alumbradismo* occurred sporadically throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, including in the 1570s, concurrent with Teresa's writings.²⁴³ The reaction of ecclesiastical unease toward Teresa and her raptures should be evaluated then not only for how they may have challenged orthodox understandings of the soul's relationship with the divine (if they did at all), but for the threat they posed to institutional control.

There is no firm consensus among scholars as to why Teresa's writings were not placed on the Inquisition's *Index librorum prohibitorum*, and why she was instead canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. Ahlgren suggests that much of the concern surrounding Teresa's writings was not in fact doctrinal in nature, but focused on issues of authority: her authority to teach, her authority to receive visions, and her authority to experience mystic union with God.²⁴⁴ These arguments were less concerned with unraveling Teresa's claims as to what rapturous union was, and were more focused on carefully defining her right as a woman to engage with mystic devotion. At a time when an increasing number of Spanish laity were drawn toward internal prayer and a more personal relationship with Christian divinities, Teresa's works – written in the vernacular and therefore accessible to a larger audience – were considered dangerous. This was especially true since her works did not cite the need for an ecclesiastic mediator between the individual and God, nor did they instruct the reader to work with a spiritual guide or mentor, as is explicitly called for by Ignatius in his *Esercizi*. Her writings represented a

²⁴³ Ibid., 15.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 141.

promotion of devotional practices among the laity that was not subject to ecclesiastic control, creating increased potential for women religious and laity to circumvent church authority in their practice of mystic devotion.²⁴⁵ By officially sanctifying Teresa, papal authorities redefined her raptures as events that were a privilege of her holy status – episodes that served as consequences of model saintliness to which the broader public could aspire, but that were nevertheless unattainable. The division between model saint and lay aspirers – though certainly not unique to the Early Modern era – intensified in the seventeenth century, when an increasing number of holy women were put forward within their communities “as models for nuns and laywomen and as public objects of devotion.”²⁴⁶ The success of positioning Teresa as one of these models, and as a model of saintly rapture specifically, is evidenced in the demand for her texts, which was sustained throughout the late seventeenth century. Vernacular reprints of her writings and commentaries on them continued to be published in Italy throughout the seventeenth century, including at least sixteen individual publications between 1680 and 1700.²⁴⁷

Although Teresa’s ecstasies represented an intimate spiritual unification with God that was deeply personal, they were also (as a societal norm) open and communal. This

²⁴⁵ Cascardi, 230-231. Teresa’s writings do, however, encourage the reader to seek guidance from a confessor regarding the veracity of feelings and personal revelations experienced during contemplation, in order to ensure that she or he was not deceived by a spirit that was unholy in origin.

²⁴⁶ Kendrick, 154-155. Kendrick notes that whether the women were sanctified as “saints of a foundation, or local figures from the Milanese past whose canonization the urban patriciate was eager to support,” the result an overall increase in “the breadth of female sanctity.”

²⁴⁷ The overwhelming popularity of Teresa’s works is gleaned from a basic search of the OPAC SBN Catalogo del Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale, which lists individual single monographs, published letters, and complete works. For the years 1680-1700: 1680 (2), 1682 (1), 1685 (3), 1688 (1), 1690 (3), 1692 (1), 1694 (1), 1695 (1), 1696 (2). Teresa’s descriptions of divine union are echoed by John of the Cross in his *Fiamma d’amore viva*. See John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love Versions A and B*, trans. Jane Ackerman (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies State University of New York, 1995).

duality is exemplified in the life of Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, whose sisters took a great interest in her raptures and the discernment of their validity and origins. Their detailed descriptions of her episodes include the sisters' own commentaries regarding the enraptured Maria Maddalena's actions and words. Scholar Clare Copeland argues that, although the episodes themselves were extremely personal and felt only by Maria Maddalena, her sisters experienced them vicariously, as they endeavored to act as real-time scribes and interpreters.²⁴⁸ One can imagine the scene of an ecstatic Maria Maddalena, surrounded by sisters who wrote what they saw and heard, while confirming their observations and deliberating their meanings with other women in the convent.

The scene of an enraptured Maria Maddalena surrounded by a community of invested onlookers closely resembles the relationship between viewer and iconographic object. More specifically, it mirrors the relationship between viewer (lay or religious) with the evocative, Counter-Reformation depictions of saints in ecstasy that were purposed with stirring the affects and moving the individual toward a state of penance, enlightenment, or even transcendence. Alternatively, the scene is reminiscent of Bernini's representation of the ecstatic Teresa, in which the intimate and personal nature of Teresa's rapture is scrutinized (and simultaneously dismissed) by those charged with interpreting and validating the episode.

Teresa, Maria Maddalena, and Caterina Vannini are examples of the contrasting passive and active approaches to mysticism that were present within early modern communities of women religious. For Teresa and Maria Maddalena, rapture was

²⁴⁸ Copeland, 89.

spontaneous and passive, a celestial event that was initiated by God and ungovernable by the individual. Vannini, however, demonstrates a clear continuation of the mystic practices that were privileged in the late Middle Ages, in which active conditioning and self-driven devotional activities could lead to state of spiritual elevation or union (see chapter three). The tension between the passive and active contemplation that is realized in these women's experiences is further exemplified in another form of late seventeenth-century mystic devotion that spread throughout Italy at a momentous pace. The doctrines of Miguel de Molinos (1628-1696) illustrate the increasing philosophical divide within Catholicism as to whether active contemplation in the form of meditation (and more specifically Ignatius's *Esercizi*) was a means by which rapture could be experienced, or if it was simply a beginning step in the contemplative process.

The Contemplative Practices of Miguel de Molinos

Miguel de Molinos is often omitted from discussions of early modern mysticism, which habitually conclude with the raptures of saints Teresa and Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, or the women religious who have been the focus of studies such as Kendrick's and Reardon's. Molinos's contribution to the atmosphere of Italian mystic devotion at the end of the seventeenth century is invaluable, however, as his presence and popularity had a forceful influence on ecclesiastics and laity of the most prominent social circles, including those of the Borghese princess, Pope Innocent XI, and the household of Queen Christina of Sweden. Historian Paul Dudon aptly describes Molinos as a "celebrity cleric," and notes the general excitement that surrounded him in his roles as an ideal contemplative and spiritual advisor.

The politicians, who were never lacking in Rome, tried at minimum to approach this man who had the highest connections and who received favors even from the Sacred College. He was sought out by writers, for there was no one like this so-called contemplative who was more current with the thousand rumors of the street and the city. Among the women, there would always be some who sought a reputation more or less founded in the interior life but who would establish that reputation on their comings and goings around the very fashionable spiritual director. Molinos enjoyed an easy triumph from these attentions, and some of his most fanatic devotees would be found among the Roman nobility. The convents supplied him with an army of helpless souls, to whom his teaching served as a bright lighthouse and assured port.²⁴⁹

Molinos's most important contribution to late seventeenth-century mysticism was his *Guida spirituale*, a work that was monumentally successful. By 1685, only ten years after the initial 1675 publication, no fewer than seven Italian and three Spanish editions had been printed. These reprints were soon followed by a 1687 Latin translation, as well as one in French, Dutch, English (1688), and German (1699).²⁵⁰ The *Guida spirituale* is strongly associated with Quietism, a subset of Counter-Reformation Catholicism that embraced internalized prayer and contemplation, much like the earlier *alumbrados*, and the Franciscans.

Molinos and the Quietists espoused a contemplation that differed from that practiced by the Jesuits, and they alleged a clear differentiation between the spoken meditations of Ignatius's *Esercizi spirituali*, and the silent contemplation necessary for higher union. According to Molinos and his followers, the Jesuits' exercises were only the first step toward transcendence, which could only be reached once spoken meditation was abandoned, and quiet, internalized contemplation, or "acquired contemplation" –

²⁴⁹ Paul Dudon, *Le Quiétiste Espagnol, Michel Molinos (1628-1696)* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1921) as translated in Molinos, 6.

²⁵⁰ Baird in Molinos, 7.

achieved by withdrawing the soul from all earthly matters – was embraced. Acquired contemplation could not be reached through meditation, as speech and visualization prohibited the soul from complete earthly withdrawal.

Of note is Molinos's description of an additional, distinct form of contemplation, which he names "passive," or "infused." Regardless of the individual's practice withdrawing her or his soul from the world and reaching a state of acquired contemplation, it was not guaranteed or even likely that it would ever ascend into the higher, infused contemplation of spiritual rapture. Here Molinos agrees with Teresa that this final state of transcendence (rapture or ecstasy) comes at the will of God and God alone, who may "draw it [the soul] up, elevating it without notice, to a perfect repose in which he gently and intimately infuses it with his light, love, and strength, kindling and inflaming it with a true disposition toward all kinds of virtue."²⁵¹ In other words, Molinos argued that meditation was the first step toward mystic union with God, but that it must be abandoned before the soul is able to achieve a state of acquired contemplation. Once in a state of acquired contemplation, the soul may be infused by God and drawn into rapture; this experience is rare, and reserved for a select few who are divinely chosen.

Molinos's doctrine unsurprisingly brewed feelings of animosity among Jesuits, regardless of his continual praise of the importance and usefulness of meditative exercises for beginning and inexperienced contemplatives. His opponents claimed that his philosophies led many devout followers to abandon meditation prematurely, leaving them unprepared to resist impure or evil thoughts and impulses experienced during

²⁵¹ Molinos, (III.13.120).

contemplation. This argument was a priority for Jesuit leaders, who saw in Molinos's teachings a great proclivity for sexual immorality. If, as Molinos claimed, contemplation led to the separation of the soul, in which the higher part was infused by divinity and the lower remained susceptible to demonic temptations, and the individual should never leave a state of contemplation to resist sinful urges but should merely ignore them, then, his opponents argued, under Molinos's doctrine the individual was free to engage in immoral physical acts without considering themselves to be in a state of sin.²⁵² They further accused Molinos of "theological innovation," and sought to construct an image of him that was indistinguishable from the *alumbrados*.²⁵³ In 1681, Molinos was temporarily vindicated and liberated of wrongdoing when a tribunal of the Holy Office placed the Jesuits' primary argument against his teachings (Paolo Segneri's *La Concordia tra la fatica, e la quiete nell'orazione*) on the *Index* of prohibited texts.²⁵⁴ Molinos's victory spurred a new wave of Quietist works and allowed him to remain on amicable terms with the papal court and other Roman nobility.

It is unclear how or why, exactly, Molinos's fate and that of the Quietists in general changed, but in September 1687, Molinos publicly renounced his teachings as heterodox and accepted a life sentence as penance for his deceit.²⁵⁵ These events were followed by Innocent XI's papal bull *Coelestis pastor*, condemning sixty-eight points of Molinos's teachings. What is clear, however, is that the errors decreed in the *Coelestis*

²⁵² Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 139.

²⁵³ Baird in Molinos, 9.

²⁵⁴ Segneri's text was published posthumously in 1701.

²⁵⁵ Baird in Molinos, 16-20.

pastor have very little foundation in Molinos’s published doctrine. Instead, they are based on third-party accounts of his private work as a spiritual mentor.²⁵⁶ It is very likely that Molinos’s downfall was more the result of political maneuvering than a full rejection of his philosophies. Jesuit influence on the ruling is evident in article twenty-three of the *Coelestis Pastor*, which directly confronts the Quietist practice of abandoning meditation in favor of contemplation.

[Article twenty-three] The mystics with St. Bernard in the *Scala Claustralium* (*The Ladder of the Recluses*) distinguished four steps: reading, meditation, prayer, and infused contemplation. He who always remains in the first, never passes over to the second. He who always persists in the second, never arrives at the third, which is our acquired contemplation, in which one must persist throughout all life, provided that God does not draw the soul (without the soul expecting it) to infused contemplation; and if this ceases, the soul should turn back to the third step and remain in that, without returning again to the second or first.²⁵⁷

Article twenty-three nullifies Molinos’s philosophy regarding the necessary progression from meditation to contemplation, and discredits his belief that meditation should not be returned to once acquired contemplation has been reached. It does not – nor do any of the remaining articles – repudiate Molinos’s teaching that there is a distinction between acquired meditation (or, St. Bernard’s “prayer”) and infused contemplation, or rapture, in which God draws the soul into union. This aspect of Molinos’s philosophy –

²⁵⁶ Molins and Baird, *The Spiritual Guide*, 17.

²⁵⁷ “Coelestis Pastor: Condemning the Errors of Miguel de Molinos,” Papal Encyclicals Online, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/innoc11/i111coel.htm>, accessed 14 October, 2019. “Mystici cum S. Bernardo vel auctore, 'Scalae claustralis', sub nomine ejusdem Bernardi (in 'Scala Claustralium') distinguunt quattuor gradus: lectionem, meditationem, orationem, et contemplationem infusam. Qui semper in primo sistit, numquam ad secundum pertransit. Qui semper in secundo persistit, numquam ad tertium pervenit, qui est nostra contemplatio acquisita, in qua per totam vitam persistendum est, dummodo Deus animam non trahat (absque eo, quod ipsa id exspectet) ad contemplationem infusam; et hac cessante, anima regredi debet ad tertium gradum et in ipso permanere, absque eo, quod amplius redeat ad secundum aut primum.” “Denzinger 2095,” Congregation for the Clergy, <http://www.clerus.org/bibliaclerusonline/en/dvz.htm#cnw>, accessed 14 October, 2019.

which is grounded in the teachings of previous medieval and early modern mystics, including Teresa – survived the papal censure unscathed.²⁵⁸

When we consider all of these events together – the fierce ecclesiastical scrutiny of mystics and their claims, the canonization of Teresa that signified to laity the sanctity and unattainable nature of celestial rapture, and the widespread popularity and subsequent downfall of Molinos and Quietist practices – we are left with a picture of seventeenth-century mysticism that is replete with tensions and complexities. It is clear that much of mystic devotional culture was aimed at lay participation, with many vernacular texts describing stages of unification with God or attempting to provide readers with the tools to achieve their own transcendence. Simultaneously, claims of reaching a state of elevation were distrusted and swiftly investigated for heresy, and the highest form of transcendence (ecstasy or rapture) was increasingly removed from the laity and labeled as a saintly phenomenon.

Musical Rapture: Experience vs. Trope

It is within this atmosphere of devotional tension that representations of mysticism in late seventeenth-century oratorios must be considered. How is mystic devotion depicted, and for what purpose; what was music's relationship to the mysticism featured in devotional entertainment? As stated previously, I do not propose that the music heard during scenes of performed rapture in seventeenth-century oratorios was rapture-inducing for audience members, even though contemporaneous lay attestations of spiritual transcendence as a result of music are not uncommon. Certainly, music was a

²⁵⁸ See chapter two.

tool for moving the passions and for affecting an emotional change in the listener that would propel her or him toward increasing faith in God and Catholicism. Yet I question whether early modern claims of laity being sent into an ecstatic state upon hearing exquisite music or viewing a particularly compelling image should be taken at face value. Perhaps instead they are merely rhetorical emphases, hyperboles, designed to communicate to the reader a feeling of exorbitant intensity. Such descriptions serve as literary exaggerations that made cultural reference to the two events in which the soul temporarily separated from the body in a state of overwhelmingly pleasurable ecstasy: the moments immediately following orgasm, and celestial rapture. To exemplify the difference between the use of “ecstasy” or “rapture” as literary hyperbole, and descriptions of early modern celestial rapture, I offer two brief case studies, previously cited by Tim Carter, and Robert Kendrick and Colleen Reardon, respectively.²⁵⁹

Carter includes English traveler Thomas Coryat’s frequently cited description of music at the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice (6 August 1608) to illustrate how performers, through music, were able to “seize the mind, heart, and even body” of listeners.²⁶⁰

This feast consisted principally of Musicke, which was both vocall and instrumentall, so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so super excellent, that it did even ravish and stupifie all those strangers that never heard the like. But how others were affected with it I know not; for mine owne part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with St. Paul into the third heaven. Sometimes there sung sixteene or twenty men together, having their master or moderator so keepe them in order, and when they sung, the instrumentall musitians played also. Sometimes sixteene played together upon their instruments, ten Sagbuts, foure Cornets, and two Violdegambaes of an extraordinary greatnesse; sometimes tenne, six Sagbuts and foure cornets; sometimes two, a Cornet and a treble viol.

²⁵⁹ Tim Carter, “Listening to Music in Early Modern Italy: Some Problems for the Urban Musicologist,” in *Hearing the City in Early Modern Europe*, Tess Knighton and Ascensión Mazuela-Anguita eds. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018); Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens*; and Reardon, *Holy Concord within Sacred Walls*.

²⁶⁰ Carter, 42.

...Of the singers there were three or foure so excellent that I thinke few or none in Christendome do excell them, especially one, who had such a peerelesse and “as I may in a manner say) such a supernaturall voice for the sweetnesse that I thinke there was never a better singer in all the world, insomuch that he did not onely give the most pleasant contentment that could be imagined, to all the hearers, but also did as it were astonish and amaze them.²⁶¹

Coryat’s writing is rich with his own evaluation of the quality of the music, but he gives no details regarding how he came to be “rapt up,” or what the rapturous experience entailed. Phrases such as “so good,” “so delectable,” and “so rare,” enliven the reader’s imagination, but contribute little to our overall understanding of the episode. In that regard, Coryat’s most noteworthy contribution is his observation of the large number of singers and instrumentalists, sometimes “sixteene or twenty men together,” often joined by instrumentalists of small and large numbers. We may imagine the overwhelming sound such forces would produce, a sound so astounding that it may in fact have resulted in his and other listeners’ sublime transcendence. Yet Coryat’s description does not suggest that he did indeed experience such a sublime transportation of spirit. Aside from his reference to St. Paul’s ecstasy, his documentation is noticeably lacking of any language characteristically used in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mystic literature. There is also no mention of his soul burning with pleasure, or the intoxicatingly sweet pain that customarily signifies a rapturous death.²⁶²

Considering the environment of mystic devotion at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is unlikely that Coryat would have been without a sufficient lexicon to supply him with the appropriate language to describe his ecstatic

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² See chapter two.

transcendence. More likely is that he rhetorically drew upon a spiritual phenomenon that was well known to him and his readers, knowing that it would aptly convey the overpowering nature of the performing forces and the acute pleasure he felt upon hearing musicians of such high quality. While the excerpt does include music and a reference to ecstasy, the two do little more than cross paths, suggesting that Coryat's "rapture" functions as a literary embellishment that emphasizes the superiority of the music.

Alternatively, Kendrick and Reardon offer an excerpt from Cardinal Federigo Borromeo's 1616 *De ecstaticis mulieribus et illis*, in which he describes the musical ecstasy of an unnamed religious woman, likely the previously discussed Caterina Vannini. Borromeo's example differs from Coryat's in that it is somewhat vague in its discussion of the music, but it provides more information regarding the relationship between sound and the ecstatic episode. The following excerpt appears here as it is cited by Reardon, who provides an extended translation of Kendrick's transcription of Borromeo's original.

An ecstatic woman of holy life, who later died in the aura of great sanctity, was sometimes constrained by the pleas of her companions ...to offer a sign and an example of what the harmony of paradise might be. Because she was most humble and did not think that she was more favored than her companions, she used to at first put up some resistance, but then she would do as they desired with good will and a happy soul. And thus, in their presence alone, she used to take into her hands a lute, which she had learned to play when she was very young, and touching the strings, she used to play a song that was both most delicate and most far removed from the melody and the form of songs that we hear on earth: it has been certified by the worthiest people of faith that here on earth such a manner of singing and such successions of harmonies had never before been heard. Now, this woman continued to sing and play for only a little while before she was enraptured, and although she ceased to sing, she continued to play, never once erring in her choice of harmonies. When some time had passed, she came out of her ecstasy and blushed because she had lost touch with the world of

normal sensations in the presence of her companions; and her right arm and hand, with which she plucked the strings [of the lute] hurt her somewhat.²⁶³

As opposed to Coryat's detailed account of performing forces and quality of musicians, Borromeo's description of the "harmony of paradise" includes enigmatic language that imitates the unknowable (and therefore indescribable) beauty of the celestial spheres. The rapture-inducing music was "most delicate," and with a melody, form, harmonies, and a manner of singing that were so "far removed" from earth that they were, in essence, ineffable. Within this concentration of ambiguous descriptors is the lute, the only definable, material contributor to the ecstasy, and an instrument with clear ties to Tommaso da Celano's anecdote of Francis's angelic consolation and Mary's rapture described in Elizabeth's *Revelations*, in which she is drawn to heaven while God strums upon her body as he would the strings of an instrument.²⁶⁴

Borromeo's example contains additional key elements, including insight into music's relationship with rapture. After the holy woman begins to play, she is quickly taken up into ecstasy, during which she no longer sings, but never ceases plucking the

²⁶³ Reardon, 107. Full transcription available in Kendrick, Appendix A no. 26, 444-445. Una estatica di santa vita la quale poi è morta con fama di gran santità, tal uolta er costretta dalle preghiere delle sue compagne, le quali tutte erano eleuati spiriti, e celesti a dare ad esse alcun segnale, et alcun esempio, comme fosse l'harmonia del Paradiso: Ella sicome humilissima, e che non istimaua di hauer gratia maggiore delle Compagne, fatta in prima alcuna resistentia, di buona uoglia poi compiaceua loro, e con lieto animo. E cosi nella presentia di esse sole, predeua nelle mani un liuto, poiche ne i primi suoi anni haueua imparato à sonare, e toccando alcune corde di esso insuonaua un canto cosi delicato, mà insieme cosi lontana dall'aria, e dalla forma di quelli che sono consueti à sentirsi in terra, che affermato hanno persone dignissime di fede, che qua giù maniere somiglianti di canto, et andamenti simili di consonanze, non si sentiuano. Hora questa donna non procedeuà innanzi un piccolo spatio di tempo cantando, e suonando ch'ella restaua rapita, e all' hora cessaua il canto, ma seguitaua à suonare, punto non errando nelle vere consonanze. Passato poi alcun altro puoco spatio di tempo, ella tornaua in se, e si arrossiua, che in presenza delle compagne hauesse perduto i sentimenti, e doleuasi alquanto del braccio e della mano destra, con cui moueua le corde.

²⁶⁴ See chapter three.

lute. This suggests a relationship between music and ecstasy in the Early Modern era that was not distinct from that of the Middle Ages, but rather a continuation, with modifications reflecting contemporary cultural priorities. Before the holy woman's ecstasy, the music was already of an ethereal quality. This was also the case in *i Fioretti's* account of Francis and the music angel, in which it was the performance of celestial music that provoked rapture. Yet, as in the tales of Elizabeth's musical death in the *Summa vitae* and the *Dicta quatuor ancillarum*, the continued production of music was a key signifier that the holy woman had entered an enraptured state.²⁶⁵

Kendrick contends that Borromeo's example exhibits rapture as a disruption to music, and he concludes that, "although both singing and playing may have aided in achieving rapture, the actual experience of ecstasy served to impede performance, and music was therefore a preparation to trance."²⁶⁶ His reading is undoubtedly influenced by Borromeo's, who similarly remarks that the woman ended the song as ecstasy began, "because instruments and the vocal apparatus must have been impeded by rapture."²⁶⁷ He continues his reading of the event by describing the pain felt by the woman in her arm and her hand upon returning to her senses. Clearly, he explains, her movements were not her own, she was in a true ecstasy.²⁶⁸ I agree with Borromeo that the woman's actions exhibit an ascent into rapture; however, I disagree with Kendrick's interpretation of the

²⁶⁵ See chapters three and four.

²⁶⁶ Kendrick, 157.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 445. "Ella cessaua dal canto, incominciando le Estasi, perche gli Istrumenti, e gl'organi della voce doueuano essere impediti dal rapto."

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 445. "Le doleva poi il braccio, e la mano, imperoche era suo proprio, quando perdeua i sentimenti, di inrigidirsi, e di essere alquanto [illegibile] in tutta la persona, e percio in lei il mouimento all' hora delle mani era cosi violenta, e nociua l' operazione poi del braccio, e della mano [illegibile] faceuassi quasi in quel modo, che i dormienti fanno cose somiglianti."

event and Borromeo's statement that music – rather than the instrument and the voice specifically – was an impediment. Once in rapture, the music continued. The woman's performance on her instrument and the sounds produced by her voice were no longer adequate for the heavens, yet she never ceased playing, and never "[erred] in her choice of harmonies."²⁶⁹ Her story beautifully elucidates the coalescence of music's dual roles as antecedent to and consequence of rapture; singing and playing are crucial to achieving contemplation, after which she is pulled into rapture where the music is no longer her own, but a product of the celestial ecstasy.

When asked to perform, the holy woman initially declined the invitation. This behavior is, of course, in perfect accordance with Castiglione's instructions in *Il libro del cortegiano* regarding the conditions under which a woman may perform while still maintaining social propriety. Because it was not brazenly offered, nor executed in a display of hubris, but instead done with reluctance and humility, there was in her performance no danger of an affiliation with the activities of secular courtesans.²⁷⁰ Her reluctance to perform also separates her rapture from the activities of mystic practitioners who attempted to draw closer to God through meditative efforts; she, unlike them, does not actively seek transcendence.

The woman's identity as an "ecstatic" is directly related to the communal recognition of her as "holy," a woman who died "in the aura of great sanctity." This

²⁶⁹ Reardon, 107.

²⁷⁰ "Hence, when she starts to dance or to make music of any kind, she ought to begin by letting herself be begged a little, and with a certain shyness bespeaking a noble shame to is the opposite of brazenness." Castiglione, 210. The holy woman's reluctance again reflects the anecdote of Saint Francis's angelic consolation, in which his brother refused to perform for him upon the lute, for fear of being wrongly associated with improper music making (see chapter three).

observation supports Copeland's arguments regarding the communal veneration of mystics, and the ensuing need for communities to definitively verify the divine origins of the mystic's episodes. The pleas of the woman's companions indicate that the performance and resultant ecstasy were welcome, and further demonstrate the communal nature of mystic devotion; they also further connect the scene with Francis's rapture in *i Fioretti*, where he, like the holy woman's companions, requests a glimpse of eternal paradise.²⁷¹ God's consent to Francis's appeal – music with “so much sweetness” that it induces celestial rapture – is mimicked in Borromeo's tale. That is not to say that the woman's companions experienced their own ecstasies comparable to that of Francis, but that their desire to know paradise was satisfied by the performance of rapturous, celestial music. Their presence and witnessing of the event had a profound effect upon them, one which led them to solicit repeated performances.

Disseminated accounts of ecstasy – such as the accounts of rapture notated by Maria Maddalena's community, Teresa's writings, and Borromeo's description of the holy woman – also serve as a form of spectacle that forge a performer-audience relationship with readers. In these cases, the rapture is a real, lived experience for the mystic and community, while also existing as a performed, even artificial representation of paramount spirituality for the reader. Here too, the relationship the reader creates with the mystic and their ecstasy mirrors that which is created through viewing; reading becomes a way of seeing, a way of experiencing a divine union that is otherwise relegated to saints. It is this type of relationship that exists between the enraptured and the

²⁷¹ Benvenuto Bughetti, Felice Accrocca, Feliciano Olgiati and Daniele Solvi, eds, “I Fioretti di San Francesco,” 1246. See chapter three, footnote 85 for complete transcription.

viewer in the depictions of ecstatic saints in late seventeenth-century oratorios; a relationship in which ecstasy is confined to artificial representations performed by saints who then function as a type of living iconography, viewed by a lay audience who is immersed in the devotional milieu of Ignatius's meditations, Teresa's fiery raptures, and Molinos's transcendent contemplation.

Depictions of ecstasy in oratorios represent saintly protagonists' desires for celestial rapture, the final state of divine union – which was only reached when initiated by God – rather than the meditative transcendence and acquired contemplation practiced by the laity. To be sure, it was possible for God to draw an individual lay practitioner into divine rapture; such occurrences appear to be extremely uncommon, however, and, by the late seventeenth century, were indicative of a dangerous engagement with heterodox quietist practices. Representations of saints' ecstasies in oratorios were likely not meant to be rapture-inducing for the audience, then, but performed depictions of an ideal, unobtainable saintliness.

Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* and *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*

In the following case studies of Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorios, *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* and *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola*, I exemplify how music functioned as an aural signifier of different aspects of performed celestial rapture.²⁷² *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* was first performed in Modena during the Lenten seasons of 1685-86, under the direction of Giovanni Battista Vitali. The author of the libretto (published by Soliani, the

²⁷² All analyses reference the manuscript scores from the Biblioteca Estense, Modena (*Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, I-MOe Mus.f.1058) and the Yale University Beinecke Library (*Il martirio di Sant'Orsola*, US-NHub Ms.24).

ducal press) is unknown, as are the date and location of the first performance.²⁷³ Also unknown are the librettist and original performance location of Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola*. Some of the oratorio's characters – the antagonist, “Giulio,” for example – are names derived from a vision associated with the medieval mystic, Elizabeth of Schönau. The origins of others remain unknown, including the puzzling character, Florida, who appears at various times in manuscript US-NHub Ms.24 as “Florinda” and “Florindo.”²⁷⁴

As a foundation for my analyses of the ecstatic unions represented in these oratorios, I use the seventeenth-century Italian translation of Saint Teresa's *Il Castello interiore* (Spain, 1577) and Miguel de Molinos's *Guida spirituale* (1675), as both were well known among seventeenth-century Italian audiences.²⁷⁵ I have chosen Teresa's and Molinos's writings because they offer detailed explanations of the difference between meditation and acquired and infused contemplation (Molinos), and a sixteenth-century interpretation and codification of what rapture is and how it is felt in the body (Teresa). In Teodosia's aria, “Mi piace il morire” (*Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*) and the duet “Dio clemente,” sung between Florida, Orsola's virgin companion, and Ereo, her intended spouse (*Il martirio di Sant'Orsola*), recognition of the arias' shared compositional techniques provides insight into how Scarlatti musically represents the union of mystic

²⁷³ See Victor Crowther, *The Oratorio in Modena* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 81-94.

²⁷⁴ See Ellen Rosand and Zachariah Victor, “Alessandro Scarlatti in Manuscript,” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 78 no. 3-4 (April, 2004): 155-163.

²⁷⁵ My analyses of Teresa's text refer to the 1605 publication of *Il Castello interiore*, translated from Spanish into Italian by Cosimo Gaci, canon of San Lorenzo in Damaso in Rome.

betrothal. This type of union differs from Scarlatti's musical depiction of spiritual marriage, represented in Sant'Orsola's own aria, "Nò strali soavi."

In *Il Castello interiore*, Teresa informs the reader that mystic union with God occurs in varying intensities within seven distinct dwelling places, or rooms of the soul's interior castle. In rooms one through three, the soul explores quiet prayer and receives "consolations," or "contentments," feelings of love and adoration for the abundance of God's blessings. Contentments, Teresa explains, come to the soul as a result of the individual's own efforts, such as when it regularly engrosses itself in meditation. These feelings are different from the "spiritual delights" that the soul encounters in the last four rooms, for spiritual delights can only be experienced if God decides to give them. They cannot be obtained by way of the soul's own efforts.²⁷⁶ In rooms four through seven, the soul moves gradually deeper into contemplation; as it does so, the divine union it experiences is intensified. Many souls will find abundant comfort and satisfaction in rooms four and five, and may never move beyond them to rooms six and seven where the final stages of union occur; their presence in the final two rooms is subject to God's own desire to draw them up into rapture.

As Teresa guides the reader through the sensations associated with each room, she uses vivid language and graphic metaphors that serve as tools for identifying and defining early modern ecstasy. I have isolated the rooms in *Il Castello interiore* that address mystic union, rooms four through seven, and calculated the use-frequency of the words Teresa habitually chooses to describe her experiences. For each chapter of these dwelling

²⁷⁶ Teresa di Giesù, *Il castello interiore*, 4.1 Teresa's original terms are "contenti" and "gusti spirituali."

places, I have calculated the number of times Teresa uses the most common descriptive words, and have organized them into separate categories: words of love, words of death, rapture, and ecstasy, words of desire, words of pain and torment, words of fire, and words of longing and physical sensation (see Appendix C, tables 1-4 for *Il castello interiore* rooms four through seven). The result is a clearer distinction among the types of mystic union that occur in each interior room, and a greater awareness of words and word-pairings that signal the presence of rapture. The intent of these calculations is not to suggest that a scientific analysis can provide a single definition for the complex episodes Teresa describes, but to demonstrate that there is a discernible correlation between descriptive language and early modern mystical experiences.

The language Teresa uses when describing her raptures blurs the lines between pain and pleasure, and consists of seemingly oxymoronic combinations that obscure the otherwise clear polarity between death and life – a literary technique that was common among mystic writers when describing the turbulent yet desirable suffering of ecstasy.²⁷⁷ Teresa continually uses words of love and affection, such as “amore” and “amare” to describe her raptures, and applies similar words of desire, longing, and delight (“desiderio,” “deliziare,” “bramare,” and “struggere”) to words of pain, torment, and fire (“pena,” “dolore,” “tormento,” and “fuoco”). These dichotomous couplings appear in highest concentration in the sixth interior room, where the soul and God are in a state of

²⁷⁷ See Willis Barnstone, “Mystico-Erotic Love in ‘O Living Flame of Love,’” *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 37 no. 4 (1972/1973): 253-261. Julia Farmer describes this literary technique as Teresa’s “paradoxical desire to escape a body that must remain textually present,” see Julia Farmer, “‘You Need But Go to Rome’: Teresa of Ávila and the Text/Image Power Play,” *Women’s Studies* 42 (2013): 395-396.

mystic betrothal. They decrease in the seventh room, once the soul and God have been united in spiritual matrimony.

In Scarlatti's arias "Mi piace il morire" and "Dio clemente," the martyrs use similar oxymoronic language to express a longing or desire for death and torment.

Teodosia ("Mi piace il morire")²⁷⁸:

Mi piace il morire
Perché la mia Morte
Disserra le Porte
D'eterno gioire.

Death is pleasing to me
Because my death
Unseals the doors
Of eternal joy.

È dolce il tormento
Se certa è la speme
Che dopo le pene
Celeste è il contento.

Torment is sweet
Since hope is certain
That after the pains
Contentment is celestial.

Florida & Ereó ("Dio clemente")²⁷⁹:

Dio clemente speranza de cori
quanto è dolce per te il languire
quanto è dolce per te il penar.
Il martire il tormento
si cangia in gioire in bear.

Benevolent God, hope of hearts
For you, how sweet is languishing
For you how sweet is pain
The torment, the suffering
Changes into joy, changes into bliss

For Teodosia, "death is pleasing," because it "unseals the doors of eternal joy," "torment is sweet" because she is certain it will bring celestial contentment. Florida and Ereó describe the "languishing" they do for God as "sweet" and "welcome," since "torment" and "suffering" will ultimately transform into "joy" and "bliss." These

²⁷⁸ Scarlatti, *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, fol. 74v-80r. Translation mine.

²⁷⁹ Scarlatti, *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, 77-84. Translation mine.

sentiments can be understood as the librettists' attempts to establish the characters as true martyrs by emphasizing their happy anticipation of physical death and ascension to heaven. They also reflect Teresa's explicit naming of rapture as an event in which the soul has "died to the world"²⁸⁰ – it is a death that is so delightful that the recipient wishes she could always "dissolve" and "die a thousand times" for God.²⁸¹ Teodosia's, Florida's, and Ereos' desires to die from sweet torment and languishing also find centrality within Molinos's philosophy regarding God's perfection of the soul in preparation for ecstasy. According to his teaching, there are two ways in which God cleanses souls with whom he desires to unite. The first is through "bitter waters of afflictions, temptations, anguishes, straits, and interior torments"; the second is through the "burning fire of inflamed, impatient, and ravenous love."²⁸² In Molinos's *Guida spirituale*, both of these experiences are defined as forms of spiritual martyrdom.

Molinos's discussion of the two forms of spiritual martyrdom emphasizes a key to acquired and infused contemplation: intense spiritual and physical suffering inflicted by God and welcomed by the mystic.²⁸³ By embracing, even yearning for this suffering, the contemplative soul positions itself as a martyr, comparable to the heroic martyrs of the early church. Yet Molinos tells the reader that her or his spiritual death, suffered during their preparation for and ascent into rapture, is "more severe and more horrible" than the

²⁸⁰ Teresa di Giesù, *Il castello interiore*, 45, 5. "Finalmente come chi di tutto punto è morto al mondo, per maggiormente viver in Dio. Che è una morte soave..."

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 50-51, 5.1. "Si sente così desiderosa di lodare il Signore, che vorrebbe disfarsi, e morire per lui mille volte."

²⁸² Molinos, 144, 3.4.28-29. Molinos's philosophy regarding spiritual martyrdom is not refuted in Innocent XI's *Coelestis pastor*.

²⁸³ McGinn in Molinos, 35-36.

martyrs of the early church. The pain is so great, that it “seems nothing but a prolonged death and continuous martyrdom.”²⁸⁴ It is possible, however, for the soul to perceive these sufferings as pleasing, if only it will recognize (like Florida and Ereos) that they are the result of God’s love and the pathway to unity; it is in this state of being, as a spiritual martyr, that “suffering changes into joy, changes into bliss.” The sweetness of this transformation is profound, and requires “a miracle from God for [the soul] to survive.”²⁸⁵ Scarlatti’s martyrs, then, are not only physical martyrs, they are martyrs of contemplation, of rapture; their physical deaths made them heroines and heroes of the early church, their contemplative deaths made them ecstatic martyrs of the Counter-Reformation.

As has already been noted in literary and musicological scholarship, the use of the word “death” held erotic implications in late Renaissance and early modern secular and sacred texts.²⁸⁶ Martyrdom, then, presented an opportune motif to connect oratorios with erotic, mystic culture. Because saints’ desires for pain and death could stand as representations of their pious yearning for martyrdom or as a longing for rapture, it was the accompanying music that signaled to listeners the presence of erotic ecstasy. Not only do the words “death,” “torment,” and “languish” appear repeatedly in “Mi piace il morire” and “Dio clemente,” Scarlatti highlights their importance by setting each word melismatically in otherwise largely syllabic compositions. In other words, Scarlatti’s

²⁸⁴ Molinos, 3.5.44-45.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.5.50.

²⁸⁶ See chapter two. Also see Macy, “Speaking of Sex”; McClary, “Libidinous Theology,” and McClary “The Cultural Work of the Madrigal,” in *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1-37; and Barnstone, “Mystico-Erotic Love in ‘O Living Flame of Love.’”

melismas serve as a musical emphasis akin to the emphatic oxymorons in Teresa's *Il Castello interiore*. The saints' desires for "sweet" and "welcome" languishing, torment, and death already presented the possibility of an ecstatic reading; it is Scarlatti's musical setting, however, that signals their connection with the language of mystic texts and solidifies their interpretation as a desire for spiritual rapture.

The language in both arias closely aligns with Teresa's descriptions of the sixth interior room, where she uses the word "morte" twenty-three times to indicate a state of spiritual betrothal. The experiences felt in this room, are the delights that God, the bridegroom, begins to give to the soul, his bride.²⁸⁷ During betrothal, when God is simply courting, testing, and preparing the soul for the complete union of spiritual marriage, the experiences are equally painful and pleasurable. This duality is evident in Teresa's balanced use of words that denote pain or torment and those that indicate desire or longing – at least 103 times and ninety-nine times, respectively. Teresa equates these experiences with love, a word which appears forty-two times in the sixth room alone.

Teresa almost always describes the mystic encounters between the betrothed as "raptures" or "rapimenti."²⁸⁸ This is significant, in that it once again elucidates that a key requirement for the episode to truly be ecstatic is that it cannot be initiated by the individual or achieved through the act of meditation. It occurs at God's will and for his own pleasure, with no consent from the receiving party; it is a true "rapimento,"

²⁸⁷ "Queste son le gioie, che lo sposo comincia à donare alla sua sposa..." Teresa di Giesù, *Il castello interiore*, 88; 6.5.11.

²⁸⁸ In the eleven chapters that she dedicates to describing the sixth room, Teresa refers to the event as "rapture" twenty-seven times, as opposed to "ecstasy," which appears only six.

“abduction,” or even “rape” of the soul.²⁸⁹ Considering that the language in “Mi piace il morire” and “Dio clemente” is reflective of the mystic union in Teresa’s sixth interior room, the audience may interpret that Teodosia, Florida, and Ereos are in a state of spiritual betrothal. Their yearnings and Scarlatti’s musical settings then reference the raptures associated with this stage of union.

In addition to the textual similarities that connect “Mi piace il morire” and “Dio clemente” with rapture, Scarlatti links them through related compositional features that serve to construct a musical representation of the saints’ mystic betrothals (for arias “Mi piace il morire,” “Dio clemente,” and “Nò strali soavi” see Appendix C). Overall, “Mi piace il morire” and “Dio clemente” are comparable in meter, cadences, melodic range and motion, and texture. In *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, “Mi piace il morire” is Teodosia’s only 3/2 aria in which she revels in her “languishing” and desire for death. Throughout the oratorio, four of Teodosia’s arias are set in 3/2 meter, including “Mi piace il morire.” The first and the last of these, “Son pronta all’offese” and “Spirti beati,” do not feature ecstatic language. In the third, “Soccorretemi cieli” Teodosia does reference “death” and “languishing,” but she does not relish in them as she does in the truly rapturous “Mi piace il morire.” Similarly, “Dio clemente” is the only aria of *Il martirio di Sant’Orsola* that is set in a 3/2 meter, and the only aria where the martyrs delight in the pain of erotic ecstasy.

²⁸⁹ Teresa is insistent that divine union is at the will of God, with no initiation from the receiving individual. “Contenti” that are achieved through the act of meditation, or any act initiated by the soul, are not the same as “gusti spirituali,” – a term that encompasses the varying forms of divine union. Teresa may have been emphatic about the difference between self-initiated “contenti” and uncontrolled “gusti spirituali” as a way of protecting herself from ecclesiastic inquisitors, who viewed mysticism with threatened skepticism because of its inherent “subversive elements.” See Michael J. Call, “Boxing Teresa: The Counter-Reformation and Bernini’s Cornaro Chapel,” *Woman’s Art Journal*, 18 no. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1997): 34-39 and Farmer, 391-392.

Scarlatti sets “Mi piace il morire,” in two strophes that can roughly be characterized as having an ABA¹ structure with irregular phrase lengths that create a sense of instability.²⁹⁰ Both A-sections are in D minor with Teodosia intermittently dipping to E-flat for additional chromatic emphasis. In the B-section, her melody is largely unaltered; instead, Scarlatti uses the bass line to introduce ascending F sharps and G sharps that briefly pull the composition toward a cadence in A minor. The prevailing duo texture created by Teodosia and the basso continuo is punctuated by brief string ritornelli that appear between each section and at the end of the aria. Overall, the aria is driven forward by the harmony of the walking bass line, which propels the otherwise restricted and at times static Teodosia, exemplified by her confined vocal range and repeated E half-notes in mm. 13-15 of both strophes.²⁹¹

Florida’s and Ereó’s duet, “Dio clemente,” features similar compositional traits. Here, Scarlatti sets the text within one large ABA structure. In contrast to Teodosia’s aria, which was driven by the harmonic motion of the walking bass, “Dio clemente” develops contrapuntally with a largely step-wise theme that is first introduced by the continuo, then imitated successively by Ereó and Florida. Clear phrase endings occur in the middle of the A-section at a cadence in A minor, and at the end of the A- and B-sections, which, like “Mi piace il morire,” feature cadences in D minor and A minor,

²⁹⁰ That is not to say that “Mi piace il morire” resembles the da capo aria form that was increasingly used in oratorios at the end of the seventeenth century. It can be argued that this aria does not contain a true B section, as Scarlatti does not change keys, nor does he present new thematic material, both of which became standard components of the da capo aria B section in the eighteenth century. “Mi piace il morire” begins with eight measures that are aurally divided into four plus four, followed by a twelve-measure vocal phrase and a six-measure instrumental ritornello, and ends with a final eight-measure phrase that is divided into smaller vocal subunits of three plus four.

²⁹¹ Scarlatti, *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, fol. 75 v. Teodosia’s range is largely restricted to a fifth, with brief movement outside of that interval.

respectively, creating a prevailing atmosphere of D minor.²⁹² The textural similarity between the two arias comes in the role of the instrumental accompaniment. Like Teodosia, Florida and Ereò are only ever joined by the basso continuo, pointing to Scarlatti's decision to prohibit the saints from interacting directly with the other ripieno instruments. In "Mi piace il morire," the ripieno is merely commentary; in "Dio clemente," it is absent entirely.

Viewing these ecstatic arias side by side, we see that Scarlatti sets them both in 3/2 meter, uses tonal centers of D minor and A minor, composes each melody with largely step-wise motion and expressive chromaticism, and privileges a texture in which the voice or voices are only paired with the basso continuo.²⁹³ The presence of shared compositional traits between two arias that also use language reflective of Teresa's descriptions of spiritual betrothal signals that Scarlatti may have utilized his own ecstatic musical language that would have been identifiable by seventeenth-century audiences. This idea is further strengthened by examining Sant'Orsola's aria "Nò strali soavi," an aria that stands in contrast to "Mi piace il morire" and "Dio clemente," and suggests that

²⁹² Within each section Scarlatti creates a "weak" cadence before the first and second cadences, each of which has a bass line of 5-6-7-1 and 6-5-5-1, respectively. In the B section, the bass line of the cadence, 6-5-4-5-1, is an echo of a bass motion appearing in mm. 45-46 of the B section, where Scarlatti hints at a cadence in CM.

²⁹³ Charpentier (*Règles de composition*, c. 1682), Mattheson (*Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre*, 1713), and Rameau (*Traité de l'harmonie*, 1722) assign D minor as having a "serious and pious," affect that is "somewhat [devoit], calm, also somewhat grand, pleasant, and expressive of contentment," and that expresses "sweetness and tenderness." Charpentier and Mattheson describe A minor as "tender and plaintive," and "somewhat plaintive, melancholy, honorable, and calm." While I do not suggest that Scarlatti consulted a codified Doctrine of Affections while composing "Mi piace il morire" and "Dio clemente," these descriptions do reveal a broader cultural acknowledgment of D minor and A minor as keys that would have effectively conveyed a state of spiritual betrothal. See Mary Cyr, *Performing Baroque Music* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1992, reprint 1998), 33-34.

Scarlatti did have an awareness of the differences between mystic betrothal and marriage, and treated them appropriately.

“Nò strali soavi” is the last of Orsola’s arias, sung during the moment of her martyrdom, as she is “wounded” and “torn” by the arrows that will allow her to return to Jesus.

Orsola (“Nò strali soavi”)²⁹⁴:

Nò, nò, strali soavi
Ch’io non vi sdegno
Feritemi squarciatemi
Contenta io morirò.

No, no, sweet arrows
I do not avoid you
Wound me, tear me
I will die content.

Non più cari dilette
Non voglio viver più
Scorgetemi guidatemi
Trafitta al mio Giesù.

No more, dear delights
I no longer want to live
Glimpse me, accompany/guide me
Pierced, to my Jesus.

Her aria is similar to mystic texts in that it references death and pain; yet, Orsola does not languish for them as do Teodosia, Florida, and Ereo. Death does not produce Orsola’s delight; she dies already content. This is because her union with God is not a rapture located in the sixth interior room. Christ and Orsola refer to each other as “sposo” and “sposa,” terms that are also used by Teresa in the sixth room, in which the soul is in a state of betrothal, indicating that Orsola too has been chosen as a celestial bride.²⁹⁵ The contrasting tranquility of her aria – manifest by way of divergent compositional techniques and overall affect – separates it from the turbulent raptures of “Mi piace il

²⁹⁴ Scarlatti, *Il martirio di Sant’Orsola*, 117.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 84-85. The audience is alerted to Orsola’s status as celestial spouse in her accompanied recitative, “O mio sposo immortale.” (“O mio sposo immortale, Giesù dolce ristoro, nel tuo bel nome io spiro.”) This status is confirmed by Christ, who later refers to Orsola as “sposa.” (“Vieni ò sposa, affretta i vanni bella martire di fè, terminati son gl’affanni, e le pene oggi per te. Offri o cara questi gigli sparsi d’oro il tuo bel crin entro un mare di rubini naufragar i tuoi perigli,” see Scarlatti, *Il martirio di Sant’Orsola*, 131-132.)

morire” and “Dio clemente,” and instead reflects the peacefulness of spiritual marriage, the union of Teresa’s seventh interior room.

Scarlatti musically depicts Orsola’s higher union by contrasting the compositional features of her aria with those found in “Mi piace il morire” and “Dio clemente.” At 148 measures, “Nò strali soavi” is the longest of all three arias. Here, Scarlatti merges the two primary forms used in “Mi piace il morire” and “Dio clemente” and creates a strophic, ABA-aria in which the B-section is fully developed. Unlike the previous arias, “Nò strali soavi” is in common time, rather than 3/2. It too features expressive chromaticism, but unlike Teodosia, Florida, and Ereó, Orsola is not confined to a melody in step-wise motion, nor is her range restricted. She moves gracefully through an octave within the first three measures, and routinely performs upward and downward leaps of fourths, fifths, and sixths. The impression of these musical gestures is that, as a bride of Christ, Orsola has more musical autonomy than Teodosia, Florida, and Ereó, who are subject to imposed participation in their erotic “rapimenti.” The purity of Orsola and Christ’s relationship is evident in the aria’s texture, which Scarlatti again sets in imitative counterpoint. In this case, however, it is not counterpoint between the saint and the basso continuo, but five-part counterpoint involving the basso continuo, Orsola, violone, and two violins that recalls the heightened religiosity of the five-voice sacred music of Colonna and Perti, or even the older style of Palestrina.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁶ Ellen Rosand and Zachariah Victor note that in *Sant’Orsola*, Scarlatti often uses accompanied recitative when Orsola’s text is directed toward God. This may indicate that along with providing a sense of heightend religiosity, the presence of full instrumental accompaniment indicates that Orsola and God are in dialogue. See Rosand and Victor, 162.

Scarlatti's musical differentiation between Teodosia's, Florida's, and Ereos' "Mi piace il morire" and "Dio clemente," and Orsola's "Nò strali soavi," created clear, musical representations of the erotic raptures associated with mystic betrothal, and the pure devotionality of spiritual marriage. Yet, just as there were varied philosophies of mystic devotion in circulation at the end of the seventeenth century, so too would audience interpretations of the mystic arias vary depending on which texts and philosophies they regularly engaged. Some cultural truths appear to exist, however. These truths are manifested within oratorios as references to mystic devotion, and longings for divine rapture. Death, for example, once a signifier of the individual's willingness to give their physical life to withstand pagan influences and defend the true Christian faith, now also signified the saint's desire to martyr their soul by way of contemplative, rapturous unity with God.²⁹⁷ Literary expressions within the libretti that suggest an ecstatic, spiritual death are exhibited in the saints' longings and yearnings for the torments that led to physical death, torments that the saints welcome as sweet and gratifying. Their appetites for an overwhelmingly pleasurable death also function as secular references to copulation, which eroticized the oratorio and created an environment where devotional dramas had the potential to deliver the same type of profane stimulation as secular opera.

Musically, Scarlatti seems to represent the mystic language in his seventeenth-century oratorios according to the type of mystic union they describe. For Teodosia, Florida, and Ereos, who express a longing for spiritual martyrdom attained through rapture, Scarlatti writes in triple meter, favors cadences in D minor and A minor,

²⁹⁷ The influx of martyrs in Counter-Reformation art and music can also be understood as Papal propaganda that emphasized the martyrs' triumphs (and that of the Catholic church) over pagans (or the heretical Reformation.) See for example Virginia Christy Lamothe, "Martyr Saints on Stage in Light of Papal Exhortations during the Thirty Years War."

composes melodies that are restricted in range and melodic motion, and uses minimal accompaniment. For Orsola, whose language indicates the purity of mystic marriage, a state of union arrived at after experiencing ecstatic death, Scarlatti writes in five-part counterpoint with a full orchestral accompaniment that mirrors the elevated purity of the saint's exalted status.

Scarlatti's manipulation of meter, key, melodic range and motion, basso continuo, and orchestral accompaniment serves as a form of compositional authority that controls how episodes of rapture (like those of Teodosia, Florida, and Ereio) were presented to the audience. In both "Mi piace il morire" and "Dio clemente," the vocalists' musical lines are submissive to the basso continuo. While this does reflect late seventeenth-century musical styles, it also creates a musical depiction in which the saintly characters have no control over their ecstasies. This musical depiction reflects early modern mystics' own assertions that their raptures were not pre-meditated, and were uncontrolled by the mystics themselves. Yet while Scarlatti's musical depictions reflect mystics' defenselessness at the hands of Divinity, they also represent their defenselessness against institutional control and regulation. In the oratorio, the circumstances of rapture and the rapture itself are meticulously constructed within the controlled environment of the libretto, which by necessity reflected the priorities of the patron (often a religious authority). In the libretto, the mystic is submissive to God while expressing a desire for martyrdom that simultaneously exhibits her/his humble acquiescence to the righteous authority of the Church. In the act of the oratorio performance, the presentation of saints' bifurcated submissiveness reflected the Church's ability to control how the mystic experience was represented to audiences. In other words, during the act of performance,

the distinction between the two entities that control the mystic, God and the Church, becomes blurred, even indistinguishable. The mystic, now reduced to an instrument that is played upon by both, is stripped of her/his original independence from ecclesiastical authority and repurposed as a symbol of Counter-Reformation devotional zeal.²⁹⁸

We should also question whether the inherent intimacy of the mystic's relationship with God, and the erotic nature of vocalized longings for "death," suggest that audiences observing the performance of celestial rapture may be considered as having participated in a type of large-scale community voyeurism. In this regard, listeners who perceived saints' "rapimenti" through a recognition of Scarlatti's ecstatic compositional language could vicariously enjoy the pleasurable pain of the rapturous music. Historian Sarah Toulalan has similarly discussed seventeenth-century audiences' voyeuristic engagement with a broad variety of iconographic materials, from paintings to medical texts. These materials, which brought the eroticism of sexuality from the private to the public sphere, became then a type of pornography that was open "indiscriminately to the gaze of many."²⁹⁹ In these circumstances, Toulalan argues that the viewer's pleasure, which comes without consent from those who are viewed, constitutes a form of voyeurism. Toulalan's definition aptly describes the circumstances of oratorio performances, in which saints' private declarations of their erotic, spiritual yearnings were performed for audiences with the intention that their affects be stirred, even inflamed with similar eagerness. Though still a devotional genre, the oratorio was

²⁹⁸ Julia Farmer discusses Bernini's similar repurposing of Sant Teresa, from controversial mystic to Counter-Reformation icon. See Farmer, 391-392.

²⁹⁹ See Sarah Toulalan, *Imagining Sex: Pornography and Bodies in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 161.

increasingly performed in secular contexts, namely in educational institutions, academies, and homes of noble patrons. Frequently within these performance settings, oratorios were further secularized by the insertion of refreshments (instead of the traditional sermon) between the oratorio's two halves.³⁰⁰ While in this case the subjects of oratorios were still sacred, the performances, occurring in secular spaces, may be better understood as operas in devotional disguise. In this context, the eroticization of sacred themes, objectification of mystic saints, and an audience gaze directed at the erotic undertones of their celestial raptures, is even more likely.

This discussion of the varying ways in which mysticism and its many complexities took hold in seventeenth-century oratorios results in an overall picture of rapture as a spiritual phenomenon that was simultaneously removed from audiences and made increasingly more available. As a topos repeatedly associated with saints and their longings for martyrdom, ecstatic death was positioned as a spiritual event that was reserved for the holiest of souls, something unattainable for the laity and accessible only vicariously, through the act of listening. In the form of devotional spectacle, the ecstatic phenomenon – once intimate for the individual and the community, and unmediated by the Church – became public and controllable, and therefore submissive. And while the oratorio was first and foremost a devotional genre, the continual use of “death” as a signifier of holy and erotic desire fostered within it an increasing secularization that closely resembled contemporaneous opera. Inseparable from these cultural underpinnings was the music, designed to convey the meanings and affects of the libretto, and intensify

³⁰⁰ Howard Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 1 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 258-277.

the listener's connection with saints and their desires. At the end of the seventeenth century, then, the rapturous death depicted in oratorios certainly did serve as a type of aural iconography, where the brilliant representations of ecstatic saints that could be seen throughout sacred and secular spaces came to life, and Counter-Reformation icons died erotic spiritual and physical deaths before the audience's very eyes.

In the following chapter, I investigate how the representation of saintly rapture within the oratorio was adapted to presentations of Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music. As a saint who was said to have experienced a connection with God that was forged by music, and who was increasingly depicted in early modern iconography in the midst of a musical rapture, oratorios that tell the story of her martyrdom are of particular interest. Considering the renewed interest in Cecilia's cult in the Early Modern era, musical performances of her ecstasy and death had the potential to stimulate viewers' associations of the rapturous saint with contemporaneous iconography and literature, perhaps even more so than with Teodosia and Orsola. In the following case studies, Cecilia becomes the point of convergence for all past themes; in her, contemplation, Neoplatonism, rapture, death, and music collide in order to transport the saint and the listener into union with God.

CHAPTER VI

THE PATRON SAINT OF MUSIC: DEPICTIONS OF RAPTURE AND ECSTATIC DEATH IN TWO EARLY EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ROMAN ORATORIOS

The aura of mystic devotion that permeated so much of late seventeenth-century literature, art, and music continued to influence composers in the early eighteenth century. Despite Miguel de Molinos's downfall in 1687, and the church's attempt to eradicate Quietist practices, saintly ecstasy remained a frequent topos of iconography and devotional music genres. In eighteenth-century oratorios specifically, musical depictions of saints' ecstatic deaths, such as those discussed in the previous chapter, continued to be fashionable.

In this chapter I will explore musical ecstasy as it was represented in iconographic and musical depictions of Saint Cecilia, an early Christian martyr who in the late Renaissance and Early Modern era was increasingly associated with music making and musical ecstasy. First, I will outline the changes in interpretations of Cecilia's legend and establish how and why representations of her saintly persona changed over time – both in literature and in iconography. This will be followed by an exploration of other tropes associated with Cecilia that correspond to rapturous death, tropes that continued to be relevant to her eighteenth-century identity as an ecstatic saint. I will then expound upon these concepts in analyses of two eighteenth-century Roman oratorios featuring Cecilia – Quirino Colombani's *L'ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia*, or *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*

(1701); and Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* (1708). I argue that these two oratorios exemplify a coalescence of the medieval and Renaissance mystic philosophies that have been discussed in previous chapters: the convergence of music and rapture through representations of death or martyrdom; Neoplatonic transcendence; and the presentation of ecstasy as artificial, devotional spectacle within an environment in which saintly rapture was removed from individual practice, but delivered to audiences by way of dramatic exhibition.

Saint Cecilia: Saint of Music, Saint of Contemplation

Contemporary scholars have already demonstrated that Cecilia, the patron saint of music, was not historically venerated as such.³⁰¹ Her legend – which focuses almost exclusively on her role in the conversion of her husband, Valeriano, and his brother, Tiburtio, as well as on the martyrdoms of all three saints – includes only one mention of music. At the beginning of the legend, during Cecilia's and Valeriano's nuptial festivities, Cecilia silently joins the sounds of the celebratory instruments as she pleads with God to keep her heart and body chaste.

(Legenda aurea, "Legenda di Santa Cecilia")

"... & mentre che sonavano gli organi,
cantava nel cuore suo al Signore solo,

"...and while the organs [or instruments]
sounded, she sang in her heart to the Lord

³⁰¹ Currently, the most authoritative musicological study regarding the veneration of Saint Cecilia is Thomas Connolly, *Mourning into Joy: Music, Raphael, and Saint Cecilia*. The subject has also been addressed by a number of art historians. See for example Nico Staiti, *Le metamorfosi di santa Cecilia: L'immagine e la musica* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2002); Franca Trinchieri Camiz, "Santa Cecilia: 'Cantatrice in Terra...Suonatrice al Mondo' nel primo Seicento romano," in *Le immagini della musica: Atti del seminario di iconografia musicale metodi e pratica di catalogazione di materiali aventi rilevanza per la storia delle arti e della musica*, ed. Francesca Zannoni (Rome: Fratelli Palombi Editori, 1996); and Volker Scherliess, "Santa Cecilia. Da martire a patrona della musica," in *Dipingere la Musica: Strumenti in posa nell'arte del Cinque e Seicento*, Sylvia Ferino-Pagden ed. (Milan: Skira, 2000).

dicendo: Signore fa il cuore, & il corpo mio immacolato, accioche io non resti confusa.”³⁰²

alone, saying: Lord, make my heart and my body immaculate, so that I am not left confused.”

This musical detail is minute, even fleeting, and occurs within the first few sentences of the legend; yet it became the focal point of late Renaissance and early modern iconographic representations that featured Cecilia. From Raffaello’s iconic depiction of the saint surrounded by perishable instruments of the secular world (see Appendix D, Figure 16) to representations of Cecilia as a performer – for example Carlo Saraceni’s lutenist, Guido Reni’s violinist, and Sebastiano Conca’s organist (see Appendix D, Figures 17, 18, and 19, respectively) – the emphasis on Cecilia’s martyrdom was gradually replaced by an underscoring of her association with music. One explanation for this iconographic transformation is a comparable evolution in the interpretation and translation of Cecilia’s legend. The original text of the *Passio Caeciliae*, “Cantantibus organis in corde suo soli Deo decantabat dicens: Fiat Domine cor meum immaculatum ut non confundar,” indicates only that the saint sang or prayed in her heart while instruments associated with the wedding festivities sounded.³⁰³ Over the centuries, however, varying interpretations of this passage depicted a Cecilia whose pleas occurred during the playing of a single organ (as opposed to a group of instruments, an alternative definition of “organis”), and a Cecilia who was herself the performer, playing upon the organ while communing silently with God.

³⁰² Giacomo di Voragine, *Legendario delle vite*, (1586), 748. Translation mine.

³⁰³ Scherliess, 59.

Early modern depictions of Cecilia as a performing instrumentalist are abundant, and have been posthumously analyzed for their varying interpretations by and influences upon viewers, ranging from proposals of Cecilia as a symbol of changes in instrumental virtuosity, to Cecilia as a model for feminine piety and the domestication of women's performance.³⁰⁴ In all cases, the result of these varying interpretations is an iconographic characterization of Cecilia as a saint who was understood to have harnessed the power of music to communicate with the heavens. Whether explicitly or implicitly depicted (for example, Saraceni's and Reni's respective paintings), early modern iconography of Cecilia exhibits a discernible connection between the saint and divinity, a connection forged through the presence of music. Inherent in these early modern representations of Cecilia, then, is her role as mystic. This interpretation aligns with the characterization of Cecilia presented in Thomas Connolly's exhaustive study on the origins and early veneration of her cult. Connolly argues that by including a reference to Cecilia's silent prayer, or singing in her heart, her biographer distinguished her as an early contemplative not unlike Saint Augustine.³⁰⁵ According to Connolly, this detail is the key to understanding Cecilia's association with music.

Within the liturgical texts for the station-day at Santa Cecilia in Trastevere is a call for singing that will "turn our mourning into joy."³⁰⁶ As Connolly explains, this

³⁰⁴ For Cecilia's transformation from symbol of *virtus* to symbol of musical virtuosity, see Sabine Meine, "Cecilia Without a Halo: The Changing Musical Virtues" *Music in Art* 29 no. 1/2, Music in Art: Iconography as a Source for Music History 1 (Spring–Fall 2004): 104-112; for the domestication of Cecilia see Camiz, 59-68.

³⁰⁵ Connolly, *Mourning into Joy*, 62-63 and 238-261.

³⁰⁶ Thomas H. Connolly, "Cecilia (i)," *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed 18 Apr. 2020, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005243>.

transformation is the essence of Cecilia's internalized devotion, her contemplative singing of the heart. He further argues that the connection between Cecilia as contemplative, and Cecilia as a saint who used music to arrive at joy from a state of mourning is discernable in Raffaello's *Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia*. By singing in her heart, Cecilia leaves the mourning of the sinful world and joins the choirs of heaven.³⁰⁷ Connolly proposes that Cecilia's identity as a contemplative who sings from the heart is largely absent from later iconographic depictions, particularly those in which she is featured as a performer, but I believe his conclusions remain applicable to many of these representations. The majority of iconography that features Cecilia as a performer emphasizes the very moment in which she has reached a state of higher elevation: she looks up, toward the heavens or an angel, her attention seemingly transported to a higher sphere. Though her internalized singing is now discernible instrumental performance, it is still through music that the contemplative Cecilia has become enraptured.

In representations of Cecilia that resemble those of Domenichino and Orazio Gentileschi, for example, (see Appendix D, Figures 20 and 21, respectively), we can be fairly certain that music was a contributor to ecstasy, or a way by which elevated contemplation was more easily acquired. In both depictions, Cecilia plays from music that is supplied to her by angelic putti. Regardless of the putti's identification as celestial beings, the music they provide is printed (and bound in Domenichino's rendition),

³⁰⁷ Raffaello's *Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia* is also frequently interpreted as the saint moving away from the joys of earthly pleasures (represented iconologically by the broken, perishable instruments) and aligning her heart, or gaze, with the will of heaven. With this consideration, the painting may also benefit from a Neoplatonic reading. In looking away from the joys of the world, Cecilia also looks away from profane love and beauty. The true love she seeks is accessible by way of celestial beauty, represented by the choir of angels. Additionally, the choir and instruments call to mind Ficino's explanation that earthly music in emulation of celestial sonorities serves to initiate transcendence by realigning the body with higher spheres.

indicating that while it is holy it does not constitute the indescribable sonorities of the heavens, but is rather music originating from the earthly sphere. We also see that for both Domenichino's and Gentileschi's renditions of Cecilia, music may have a relationship with rapture similar to that which Borromeo detailed in his description of the ecstatic Caterina Vannini (see chapter five). In both paintings, Cecilia remains in playing position, signifying to the viewer the continued production of sound. Domenichino's Cecilia looks up toward heaven, her performance no longer guided by the putto's manuscript, but directed from above. Gentileschi's Cecilia, on the other hand, looks down toward the keyboard, yet once again away from the putto. Her posture here is striking: she is slumped over, her back arched in a manner decidedly contrasted with the feminine propriety that is exemplified in other versions of Cecilia at the keyboard (see Appendix D, Figures 22, 23, and 24, by Matteo Rosselli, Campi Bernardino, and Carlo Dolci for example).³⁰⁸ We may understand, then, that although Cecilia continues to play, she no longer controls her body; like Vannini she is in an enraptured state, the music that sounds is not truly her own.

These depictions feature a Cecilia that has been drawn into rapture during the act of performance, reflecting a connection between music and the ecstatic episode in which heavenly sounds assist the mystic by guiding or drawing her into union with God. This relationship has been exemplified in previous chapters through analyses of Saint

³⁰⁸ For discussions of representations of women and female musicians in early modern art see Linda Austern, "Portrait of the Artist as (Female Musician)," in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women: Many-Headed Melodies*, Thomasin K. LaMay, ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Catherine King, "Looking a Sight: Sixteenth-Century Portraits of Woman Artists" *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58 no. H.3 (1995): 381-406; and Sarah Pyle, *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Musical Portraiture of the Late Renaissance and Early Baroque: Reading Musical Portraits as Gendered Dialogues* (University of Oregon, Master's Thesis), 2014.

Francis's feigned instrumental performance and subsequent rapture, Saint Elizabeth's ecstatic singing with the celestial bird, Annibale Carracci's depiction of Saint Francis's musical death, and the musical depictions of saintly rapture in Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* and *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola*, suggesting that the association between music and spiritual ecstasy, though modified to reflect contemporary musical trends and environments, was essentially unchanged in literature and iconography ranging from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern era.³⁰⁹ Despite the many changes in early modern scientific thought, the medieval understanding that music of the cosmos contained a potent ability to infiltrate the heart and soul of the listener and join them with its divine origin continued to be of cultural import.

For Connolly, understanding musical depictions of Cecilia as scenes of contemplation – ecstatic contemplation, I argue – is of the utmost importance. The organ (or other secular instruments) with which she is featured in medieval and later Renaissance art serves as a metaphor of her contemplation and her participation in silent, internalized prayer. Yet the instrument is also a reminder to the viewer that Cecilia is a converter, a saint who had the ability to change hearts.³¹⁰ As will be discussed in the case studies below, Cecilia's identity as converter did remain a prominent component of her representation in eighteenth-century music. In the libretti of both Colombani's and

³⁰⁹ Also of note is this relationship's similarity to the Neoplatonic process of emanation and reversion, though in this case an inverse direction of the cycle: music aids in the reversion of the soul toward God or the Good, and then becomes part of the ensuing celestial emanation. See chapter seven for a more thorough discussion of this idea.

³¹⁰ Connolly, *Mourning into Joy*, 64.

Scarlatti's oratorios, the audience is presented with a steadfast, even obstinate Cecilia who is determined to be God's instrument in the conversion of pagan Rome.

Connolly identifies two additional aspects of Cecilia's persona that are discernable in the following case studies: Cecilia as the saint of healing and restoration of sight, and Cecilia as phoenix. In his investigation of the origins of the cult of Cecilia, Connolly argues that there is a strong connection and possibly even a conflation between the early Christian veneration of Cecilia and the pagan veneration of the Good Goddess, or Bona Dea, a goddess known for her ability to heal, and to cure eye disease specifically.³¹¹ Through the conflation of the two subjects, Cecilia could be seen as a saint who healed the figurative blindness of unbelievers. In her legend, this role as healer and giver of sight is closely tied to her actions as teacher and converter: the blind will see, she promises, once they accept Christianity and obtain faith. This concept is exemplified in the transformation of Valeriano, her husband, who is initially blind to truth and unable to view Cecilia's celestial guardians. Only after his conversion (prompted by Cecilia's faithful constancy) are his eyes opened to a vision of the angel that protects her chastity. Once he has been baptized, Valeriano's figurative blindness is healed, and he witnesses the angel that appears to place upon his and Cecilia's heads crowns of lilies and roses.³¹²

Cecilia's association with the phoenix is referenced at multiple points within the *passio* and is expounded upon during the conversion of Maximus, a Roman officer.³¹³

³¹¹ Ibid., 23-59.

³¹² Giacomo di Voragine, 749.

³¹³ Connolly, *Mourning into Joy*, 71-76.

Although he is originally tasked with confining Valeriano and Tiburtio prior to their final judgements – the brothers persuade Maximus to bring them into his home where they might seek to explain their unwavering devotion to Christianity. During the night, Cecilia arrives and converts all who are in the house. While this section of the *passio* makes frequent reference to the phoenix, it is within the ensuing passage that Connolly recognizes Cecilia’s own resemblance to the mythical creature.

And so as dawn put an end to night, and a great silence fell, Cecilia spoke: ‘Hearken, soldiers of Christ! Cast aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light! You have fought the good fight, you have finished the course, you have kept the faith! Go to the crown of life which God, the just judge, shall give you – and not only you, but all who love his coming!’³¹⁴

In Connolly’s estimation, the soon-to-be-martyred Cecilia’s “heralding of the approaching day” is a direct reference to the phoenix, a bird that was well-known and deeply significant in early Christian art and literature as an animal that exemplified the continuance of life after death.³¹⁵ What significance might the connection between Cecilia and the phoenix have held in the Early Modern era, however? And more specifically, what might the connection have suggested when it occurred within the context of eighteenth-century oratorios? A brief overview of the phoenix myth will serve as a foundation for the in-depth investigation of these questions in the case studies below. For this overview, I join Connolly in referencing Roel van den Broek’s extensive study of the myth of the phoenix as it appears in classical and early Christian writings. As van den Broek notes, early modern sources that include the phoenix (and at times even engage in

³¹⁴ Ibid., 75.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

discourse aimed at determining its validity) rely primarily upon descriptions of it found within ancient Greek and Roman, and early Christian texts. These texts remained foundational in eighteenth-century anecdotes that include the phoenix. The most vital facets of the myth are as follows:

- 1) The phoenix is a bird that gains new life by experiencing death; “the essence of the phoenix myth is that by dying the bird renews its life.”³¹⁶
- 2) All variations of the myth describe the phoenix as a bird with a long life. It makes its appearance in the world of man shortly before or after its death and in doing so becomes an animal that is primarily associated with the transition from life to death, and from death to life.
- 3) It was generally believed that the phoenix knew when its death was approaching.³¹⁷
- 4) The phoenix is primarily a bird of the sun³¹⁸ (in select sources, the phoenix greets death by praying while facing East toward the rising sun³¹⁹).
- 5) In Lactantius’s account, one of the most cited of early Christian sources, the phoenix turns toward the rising sun, then, “as soon as the soft glow of the first light becomes visible, the bird begins to sing a sacred song and to summon the new day with a beautiful sound.”³²⁰

While Cecilia’s relationship to these elements as they appear in eighteenth-century oratorios will be discussed at length below, select connections between the phoenix and Christian mysticism are immediately apparent. Most prominently, the phoenix is a bird that awaits, even longs for death, and sees in it the opportunity for continued life. This

³¹⁶ van den Broek, 146.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 161.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 199-200.

³²⁰ Ibid., 282-83. Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius (c. 240-320 CE) was a Christian advisor to Emperor Constantine.

aspect of its mythology speaks directly to the desires of Christian martyrs to physically die for their faith, but it also resembles mystic death, which – as has been discussed at length in previous chapters – was a desirable, spiritual death that presented a gateway to life in union with Christ. Additionally, the phoenix waits for the sun, which is at times specifically described as the rays or fire that ignite the bird. In early modern mysticism, this translates as the mystic’s desire for the flames of God’s fiery arrows, which scorch and melt the enraptured in the sweet pains of divine love. Finally, there is the phoenix’s song, which calls to mind the power of music to transport the mystic from earth through ecstatic death, and toward renewed life.

Saint Cecilia in Two Eighteenth-Century Roman Oratorios: (1) Quirino Colombani

I have chosen Colombani’s *L’ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia* and Scarlatti’s *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* as case studies because they beautifully elucidate the pervasiveness of medieval and Renaissance mystic philosophies in early modern devotional music. Whether mysticism appears as a depiction of saintly rapture – as was the case in Scarlatti’s previously discussed oratorios featuring Teodosia, Florida, and Ereο – or it is present by way of literary references to transcendence or spiritual elevation, these oratorios demonstrate that representations of mystic phenomena were not relegated to literature and iconography, they were equally present in music. They also offer a unique opportunity to examine how Cecilia and her musical ecstasy were represented in music, and how the representations compare to analogous iconographic depictions. Moreover, Colombani’s and Scarlatti’s oratorios exemplify the early modern practice of depicting rapture in music by way of devotional spectacle. They are only two

of the hundreds of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios that do so and as such, they serve as models for investigating the presence of mysticism in other contemporaneous music.

Quirino Colombani (c. 1671 – 1711)³²¹ was an Italian cellist and composer who lived in Rome and was active in the same circles as Alessandro Scarlatti and other prominent musicians of the time; included among his many patrons was Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, the librettist of Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia*. Colombani's oratorio was first performed in 1701 in Rome at the oratorio of San Girolamo della Carità, under the name *L'ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia*.³²² Though it is now habitually referred to as *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, for the sake of clarity I will refer to this oratorio by its original title. The libretto was written by Giovanni Nicolò Benedetti, about whom little is known. Two additional Italian performances are documented: one in Perugia in 1705, and another in Spoleto in 1707.³²³ Surviving manuscript copies of Colombani's oratorio are located in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (X.963 and Vm¹-1487) and the British Library in London (Add. 34264). My analysis of *L'ape industriosa* refers to a modern

³²¹ Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni marks Colombani's death as 6 January 1711 and notes his age as approximately forty years. See Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni, *Notitia de' Contrapuntisti e Compositori di Musica*, Ms c. 1735; Cesarino Ruini ed. (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1988), 343.

³²² Teresa Chirico, "Serenate alla corte romana del cardinale Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740) nell'epoca di Arcangelo Corelli: Storia e Proteizzazione di un genere," in *Serenata and Festa teatrale in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Iskrena Yordanova and Francesco Cotticelli eds. (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2018), 177.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 177.

transcription of the two French copies and Benedetti's libretto as it was printed for the 1705 performance.³²⁴

L'ape industriosa is set in pagan Rome circa 230 CE, after the wedding reception of Cecilia and her new husband, Valeriano. In Benedetti's libretto, the audience does not witness Cecilia's musical contemplation as it is described in her vita, nor is reference made to her internalized prayer amidst the joyous nuptial celebration. Rather, the oratorio begins after the festivities, as Valeriano (contralto) expresses his elation regarding the marriage and his anticipation of its consummation. Cecilia (soprano) has already devoted herself to a life of chastity and taken the Christian God as her true spouse. Valeriano is outraged, and attempts to assert himself as Cecilia's rightful partner. His lack of understanding prompts Cecilia to teach him about the differences between profane and divine love. Finally, Valeriano is convinced; Cecilia instructs him to go to Pope Urban I, denounce the worship of idols, and be baptized.

At this point, the oratorio "changes scenes" and the audience is introduced to Tiburtio (tenor), Valeriano's brother, and Almachio (bass), the prefect of Rome. Here, Tiburtio and Almachio describe the atmosphere of animosity that currently exists between the predominantly pagan Rome and the growing community of devout Christians. For Almachio, the Christians are a constant source of aggravation, one that he wishes the Roman Gods would eliminate. As Tiburtio contemplates the human mind's ability to

³²⁴ I am grateful to Emily Korzeniewski for her work in creating a modern transcription of the two French copies of Colombani's *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*. Quirino Colombani, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, X.963 and Vm¹-1487. Nicolò Benedetti, *L'ape /industriosa / in / S. Cecilia / Vergine, e Martire, / per / la conversione de' santi / Valeriano, e Tiburtio. / Oratorio a quattro voci / Parole di Gio: Nicolò Benedetti. / Musica di Quirino Colombani, / Recitate la sera della festa di detta / Santa, / Nell' Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri / in Perugia*. (Perugia: Stampa Vescovile, per gli Eredi del Ciani, e Sebastiano Amanti, in Via Pinella, 1705).

comprehend suffering as joy (and more pointedly, the Christian mind's ability to do so), he comes upon Cecilia and Valeriano, who blissfully sing of their love for God and for each other's conversions. Tiburtio is overcome by the power of the celestial music and the sweet fragrance of roses and lilies that fills the air. Together, the music and fragrance – along with Cecilia's and Valeriano's persuasions – convince Tiburtio of the truthfulness of Christianity. By the end of the first half, Cecilia, Valeriano, and Tiburtio have all dedicated themselves to Christ.

In part two of the oratorio, Almachio has been alerted to Valeriano's and Tiburtio's rebellious determination to leave the Roman gods and follow a life of Christianity. Almachio orders the brothers to renounce their new faith or pay for their offenses by way of torture and beheading. To Valeriano and Tiburtio, torture and death are most welcome; they are convinced that their suffering and martyrdom will bring them closer to Christ and provide them entry to heaven. The oratorio ends with tearful, yet joyous goodbyes between Cecilia and the two brothers. Cecilia, who has not yet been sentenced to death, must remain alive while Valeriano and Tiburtio are allowed to die and be reunited with God. After the saints' final goodbyes, Cecilia sings her closing aria, one of hope in which she looks forward to the day of her own martyrdom – a day that will surely come.

Overall, the events of Colombani's *L'ape industriosa* reflect those of Cecilia's legend as it is told in contemporaneous literary renditions, such as the *Legenda aurea*. The oratorio is limited in scope, however, to Cecilia's role in the conversion of the two brothers – it does not include her own martyrdom. In the *Legenda aurea*, Cecilia is depicted as a teacher and converter who demonstrates that sight, or understanding, is

provided to those who have the faith to act. Her efforts in these respects constitute the majority of the vita, and therefore suggest a prioritization over the narrative of her death. She has no fear of dying for God, yet neither does she express a strong desire to do so. Instead, Cecilia resolutely proclaims her paradoxical conviction that although Almachio holds the power to dictate the time and circumstances of her physical death, he cannot provide her with life. Her words reference Christ's ability to raise the dead, as well as his own resurrection, but they also hold mystic significance in their allusion to the moment in which an ecstatic is united with God through rapturous, spiritual death – in this moment, she or he is given renewed life.

(Legendario dei Santi, “Legenda di Santa Cecilia”)

Almachio: O infelice, non sai tu che m' è stata data la potestà di dare la morte, & la vita?

Almachio: Oh, miserable woman, do you not know that it has been given to me the power to give death, and life?

Cecilia: ... à coloro che vivono, tu puoi dar la morte, ma à queglii, che sono morti, tu non puoi dar la vita.³²⁵

Cecilia: ... to those that live, you can give death, but to those who are dead, you cannot give life.

These same concepts are expressed in the oratorio – Cecilia is a teacher, a converter, and a giver of sight – but Benedetti's libretto also constructs a version of the saint that situates her medieval identity within a mystic discourse of love and beauty akin to that found in the previously discussed Renaissance Neoplatonic treatises of Marsilio

³²⁵ Giacomo di Voragine, 748. Translation mine.

Ficino, Pietro Bembo, and Baldessar Castiglione (*Sopra lo amore ovvero Convito di Platone, Gli Asolani, and Il libro del cortegiano*, respectively).³²⁶

Cecilia's identity as a healer or giver of sight is primarily expounded upon in the first half of the oratorio, and is directly related to her interactions with Valeriano and Tiburtio. Valeriano, frustrated at Cecilia's insistence that she has already dedicated herself to God (and that her virginity is protected by his love), demands that she reveal her God to him; she must show him proof that the Christian God does in fact exist.

Valeriano ("Se voi l'alma ti creda")³²⁷:

Se voi l'Alma ti ceda,
Fà che quel Nume io veda,
Per cui ardendo tu, gela il cor mio.
Sciogliè non può il mortale
Quel nodo sì fatale
Onde il Ciel in un sen due spirti unio.

If you want me to give my soul to you,
make sure that I see this God
for whom you, burning, freezes my heart.
The mortal cannot undo
this fatal knot where the heavens
unite two spirits in one breast.

As in the *Legenda aurea*, Benedetti's Cecilia requires that Valeriano first turn away from his veneration of the pagan gods – only then will he receive the sight that he desires. Valeriano insists that he already yields to Cecilia's faith, but that is not enough, she replies. He must open his own eyes to the inaccuracies of his current beliefs. In other words, Cecilia and her god will not give Valeriano sight until he acts on his own behalf; if he does not open his eyes, he will remain blind.

³²⁶ See chapter two.

³²⁷ Colombani modern transcription, "Se voi l'alma ti creda." All translations of Benedetti's libretto are mine, with assistance and editing by Marc Vanscheeuwijk.

Cecilia & Valeriano (“Se de Numi bugiardi”)³²⁸:

Cecilia:

Se de numi bugiardi
Il culto detestando,
A i raggi della fè non apri i lumi,
Li corporei tuoi sguardi
In quel Sole Divino,
Cieca talpa fissar in van’ presumi.

If you do not open your eyes
to the truth of the faith and detest
the cult of the lying Gods, you will
presume in vain, you blind mole,
to have fixed your sight
in this divine sunshine.

Valeriano:

Già la tua fede inchino.

I already yield to your faith.

Cecilia:

E ciò non basta.

And that is not enough.

Valeriano:

Eccomi pronto, imponi!

Here I am, ready, direct me!

Once Valeriano expresses his readiness to accept Cecilia’s instructions, she directs him to Pope Urban I where he must denounce the pagan idols and confess the truthfulness of the Christian God. In Cecilia’s final lines of the recitative, and in her succeeding aria, she outlines the necessary components that all faithful souls must have in order to heal their blindness and have their vision clarified: action, faith, and righteous love.

Cecilia & Valeriano (“Se de Numi bugiardi”)³²⁹:

Cecilia:

Vanne ad’Urbano, esponi
L’idolatra Cervice al Fonte pio;
Indi con fè sincera

Go to Pope Urban I, expose
the idolatress, Cervice, at the pious
fountain, where, with sincere faith,

³²⁸ Ibid., “Se de Numi bugiardi.”

³²⁹ Ibid.

Confessa il vero Dio,
E di lui fido amante adora, e spera.

confess the true God and of him, faithful
lover, adore and hope.

(“Spera si che dà quell’Onde”)³³⁰:

Spera si, che dà quell’Onde,
Più del sol lucida, e bella,
L’alma tua risorgerà.
Fida Ancella al suo fattore,
Tutta fede, e tutto amore
Il suo bel mirar potrà.

Give hope that by the waves of the water,
that are more beautiful than the sun,
your soul will be reborn.
The faithful servant, all faith and love to
her creator, will be able to admire his
beautiful soul.

Valeriano:

Già pronto al tuo voler’ si muove il piede.
E del desio su l’ale
Impatiente lo spirito al piè precede.

Already prepared, my feet move to your
will, and the spirit precedes my steps
on the impatient wing of desire.

In impatient anticipation, Valeriano takes action and proceeds toward Christianity; he now has the ability to see the true beauty of Cecilia’s soul – something that she has seen in him from the beginning of the oratorio. Clarity of sight is represented in the duet, “O come vaga o come grato,” in which the spouses’ musical lines alternate fluidly, then join in the perfect harmony of their faithful unity, the peacefulness of which Colombani depicts through an abundance of major and minor thirds. In the beginning of the duet, the thirds appear by way of alternation (see Figure 25, part one, mm. 662 – 665); Valeriano’s melody begins on C₅, and is immediately followed by Cecilia’s reiteration of the tune, now beginning on E₅. This alternation continues until the two saints join in a string of consecutive thirds that represent the clarity with which they now see each other’s beauty (see Figure 26, part one, mm. 666-668). Now that each has

³³⁰ Ibid., “Spera si che dà quell’Onde.”

become an “eternal acquisition” of heaven, their beauty is a reflection of celestial love and goodness.

Cecilia & Valeriano (“O come vaga o come grato”)³³¹:

Valeriano:

O come vaga, cara più sembri

Oh how beautiful, you seem more dear

Cecilia:

O come grato, caro più sembra

oh how welcome, you seem more dear

Cecilia & Valeriano:

Caro più sembri’ a gl’occhi miei,

you seem more dear to my eyes,

Valeriano:

Che a Dio rinato

because to the reborn God

Cecilia:

Eterno acquisto

an eternal acquisition

Cecilia & Valeriano:

già di tè fei.

I made of you.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: Cecilia (Cec.), Valeriano (Val.), and Bass (Bc.). Cecilia's part is in the soprano clef, Valeriano's in the alto clef, and the Bass part in the bass clef. The score is in common time (C) and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines. Cecilia's lyrics are: "O co-me gra - to, Ca - ro più sem-bri' a gl'oc-chi mie - i, Ca - ro". Valeriano's lyrics are: "O co-me va - ga, Ca - ra più sem-bri' a gl'oc-chi mie - i, Ca - ra va - ga." The Bass part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.

Figure 25. Quirino Colombani, “O come vaga,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm.662-665.

³³¹ Ibid., “O come vaga o come grato.”

Figure 26 shows a musical score for the opera *L'ape industriosa*. It features four staves: Cecilia (Cec.), Valeriano (Val.), Tiburtio (Tib.), and Bass (Bc.). The lyrics are in Italian and are repeated for Cecilia and Valeriano. The score includes a double bar line at the end of the passage.

Figure 26. Quirino Colombani, “O come vaga,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm.666-668.

Valeriano’s brother, Tiburtio, hears the couple’s duet and seeks to discover the origin of the beautiful sonorities. Yet while he recognizes the delicacy and grace of the harmonies, he misunderstands the reason for Cecilia’s and Valeriano’s rejoicing, and incorrectly identifies their duet as a celebration of earthly union.

Tiburtio (“O concenter graditi”)³³²:

O concenter graditi,
 Sì sì lieti godete;
 Né mai il tempo edace
 Al vostro bel gioir turbi la pace.
 Ed il seno fecondo
 Di così illustre Sposa
 Novi Cesari fia, e a Roma, e al Mondo.

Oh welcome harmonies,
 enjoy happiness
 and let fleeting time never disturb the
 peace of your rejoicing.
 Let the fertile womb
 of such an illustrious spouse make new
 emperors for Rome and for the world.

I gradimenti tuoi
 Del tuo spirto gentil son puri affetti.
 Ma qual di Gigli, e Rose
 Fragranza non più intesa
 Quivi d’intorno spira?
 Da maraviglie ascose
 La fantasia sorpresa
 L’invisibile apprende, ò pur delira.

The pleasures of your
 gentle spirits are true emotions.
 But, what scent of roses and lilies
 is diffused here, which has not been
 present before?
 From hidden marvels
 stupefied desire comprehends the
 invisible, or otherwise it is delirious.

Tiburtio:
 E pur il crine adorno
 Non vi scorgo di fiori.

And yet, I do not glimpse
 the adorned crown of flowers on you.

³³² Ibid., “O concenter graditi.”

Tiburcio further remarks that although he cannot identify the source, a strong scent of lilies and roses is diffused throughout the room. Its presence is stupefying. This moment of the oratorio references the celestial coronation scene in Cecilia's vita, during which she and the newly converted Valeriano are crowned by an angel with beautiful, flowered wreaths. As a topos that was frequently represented in iconography of the late Renaissance and Early Modern eras, the story would have been easily recognizable to eighteenth-century audiences (see for example Francesco Francia, *Legend of Saints Cecilia and Valerian*, scene 4 (1504-1506); Anton Woensam, *Saint Cecilia and Saint Valerian* (1526-27); and Lelio Orsi's *Saints Cecilia and Valerian* (c. 1555); Appendix D, Figures 27, 28, 29, respectively). To Valeriano, whose blindness has been removed, the angel and the wreaths are visible; Tiburtio's sight, however, remains obscured – although he perceives their scent, the heavenly objects themselves are concealed from view.

Scent continues to play a prominent role in Tiburtio's conversion. Like Valeriano, he desires proof (evidence of the source of the aroma) of that which he cannot see. Cecilia again embodies the role of converter as she patiently informs Tiburtio that his inability to see the fragrant wreaths stems from his own blindness – as long as he remains blind, “never will [his] darkened vision see the splendors of the Sun.” Once Tiburtio's eyes “catch fire with the beautiful clear light of faith,” Christ will discover him.³³³ Here too, Cecilia emphasizes that the proof Tiburtio requires, discovered by way of clarified vision, will only be provided once an internal fire of righteousness has ignited. Yet, unlike Valeriano, Tiburtio remains hesitant; Cecilia's and Valeriano's reassurances of the

³³³ Ibid., “Si, si fido.”

fallaciousness of the Roman gods does little to comfort him. More convincing than their words is the overwhelming appeal of the aroma.³³⁴

Cecilia & Tiburtio (“Offuscata pupilla”)³³⁵:

Cecilia:

Offuscata pupilla
Mai del Sole mirar potè i splendori.

Blind eye,
never can you see the Sun’s splendors.

Della Fede il chiaro lampo
Se il tuo ciglio avamperà.
Mio Giesù ch’è fior del Campo
Anco a te si scoprirà.

If your eye will catch fire
with the beautiful clear light of faith,
my Jesus, the flower of the field,
will discover you.

Cecilia, Valeriano, Tiburtio (“Si, si fido”)³³⁶:

Valeriano:

Si, si fido ti rendi al mio Signore.

Truly, yes! Make yourself faithful to my Lord.

Tiburtio:

E i numi.

And the idols?

Valeriano:

Son
fallaci.

They are false.

Tiburtio:

Nostra legge?

Our law?

Cecilia:

È un’inganno.

It is a deceit.

³³⁴ The power of scent in Tiburtio’s journey to Christianity may be yet another reference to Neoplatonic thought. Ficino points to the perfume of God as one of the main enticements for the lover, even though he or she does not know to what they are drawn: “For this reason lovers do not know what they desire or seek, for they do not know God Himself, whose secret flavor infuses a certain very sweet perfume of Himself into His works. By which perfume we are certainly excited every day. The odor we certainly smell; the flavor we undoubtedly do not know. Since, therefore, attracted by the manifest perfume, we desire the hidden flavor, we rightly do not know what we are desiring and suffering.” See speech II chapter VI in Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato*, 52.

³³³ Ibid., “Si, si fido.”

³³⁵ Colombani modern transcription, “Offuscata pupilla.”

³³³ Ibid., “Si, si fido.”

Tiburtio:
Il comando d'Augusto?

Augustus' command?

Valeriano:
È un empio errore.

It is a blasphemous error.

Cecilia:
Irresoluto taci.

Hesitant, you fall silent.

In Cecilia's next aria, "Vago sero di gigli e di rose," she explains to Tiburtio that he is drawn to the scent because of its sweetness and its celestial origin – its purpose is to invite and guide him to faith. Through melody, Colombani transforms the angelic perfume into a sonic realization of the alluring fragrance, one that also serves as a reference to music's ability to alter the heart of the listener. This phenomenon was not only tied to the listener's affects, but to a physiological change resulting from the body's internalization of or connection with the music of the spheres, represented in this case by Cecilia's aria. In other words, the presence of Colombani's melody shapes the interpretation of the libretto: alone, Benedetti's text emphasizes the role of scent in Tiburtio's conversion; paired with Colombani's melody, however, the power of scent is transformed into music's potent ability to change the listener's heart and guide them toward a deeper connection with Christ.³³⁷ As such, the melody is itself a complex tool for mystic devotion: it is sound, it is scent, it is celestial, and it has the power to elevate the listener.

³³⁷ See for example Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.33.49.

Cecilia (“Vago serto di gigli, e di rose”)³³⁸:

Vago serto di gigli, e di rose
La fronte né infiora
Del Ciel per mercè.
E soave, se senti ch’odora,
Con voci odorose
T’invita alla fè.

Beautiful garland of lilies and of roses,
for mercy the brow
decorates itself before Heaven.
And sweet, you smell that aroma;
it invites you to faith
with fragrant guidance.

Colombani sets the celestial melody of “Vago serto” in the key of A major within a series of I-IV-V progressions.³³⁹ The stability of the harmony allows for an active Cecilia, who nimbly lilts across the span of a tenth within the first few measures (see Figure 30, part one, mm. 705-707). Her gracious octave and fourth leaps alternate with rising and falling step-wise motion, creating a sonic representation of the fragrance that reflects its diffusion throughout the room; while the aroma wafts around Tiburtio, the melody similarly drifts around the audience. The legerity of the fragrance is similarly present in Colombani’s orchestration, which features a single violin line above the basso continuo, that mirrors the octave leaps and sixteenth-note turns of the voice (see Figure 30, part one, mm. 707-710). Overall, the aria is pleasant and joyful, it is a musical representation of the inviting smells that lead Tiburtio toward conversion. As such, it also serves as an invitation to the audience to move toward Christ, strengthen their faith, and let the music guide them toward more perfect sight.

³³⁸ Colombani, modern transcription, “Vago serto di gigli, e di rose.”

³³⁹ For the audio recording of this aria see the University of Oregon Oratorio Orchestra 2019 Musicking Conference performance, recorded May 17, 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYaknFnr0Mw&t=76s> (48:22).

705
Cec. va - go ser - to di Gi - gli'e di Ro - se la fron - te nè'in - fio - ra del Ciel per mer - cè.
Vln. I
Bc.

709
Cec. In - fio - ra la fron - te in - fio - ra la fron - te del Ciel per mer - cè del Ciel per mer - cè.
Vln. I
Bc.

Figure 30. Quirino Colombani, “Vago ser-to di gigli e di rose,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 705-711.

Eventually, Colombani’s melody and the garlands’ heavenly perfume become irresistible to Tiburtio. He is converted and hastens toward Christianity. Now that he has acted (he runs, he flies to Jesus), he will be filled with warmth and light – he will have the ability to see. Yet according to Cecilia, Tiburtio’s conversion renders more than a figurative healing of his eyes – it is a rebirth. Through his faith and action Tiburtio will be reborn as the phoenix; his transformation through death and toward renewed spiritual life was prompted by the smell of the lilies and roses, represented to the audience by Colombani’s melody. Through its depiction in the oratorio, then, death and rebirth are a consequence of music.

Cecilia, Valeriano, Tiburtio (“Si, si fido”)³⁴⁰:

Tiburtio:

O grato odor, o sospirato fiore.

Oh welcome perfume, oh yearned for flower.

Valeriano:

Dunque non tardar più.

And so, don’t wait any longer!

³⁴⁰ Colombani, modern transcription, “Si, si fido.”

Tiburtio:
Corro volo à Giesù.

I run, I fly to Jesus!

Cecilia:
Vola in grembo à Giesù alma felice,
Che nel divino ardore
Dell'Indiviso benché Trino lume.
Arso l'empio costume
Risorgerai del Ciel vera Fenice.
E tu mio Dio intanto
Mi prometti pietoso,
che de trionfi tuoi, io goda il vanto.

Fly into the bosom of Jesus, happy soul.
That in divine warmth
of the indivisible, although triune, light,
the blasphemous custom is burnt and you will
be reborn from the Heavens, a true Phoenix.
And in the meantime, you, my God, full of
compassion, promise me that
I will delight in your triumphs.

In addition to the reconfiguration of Cecilia's medieval identity as healer and converter, I propose that Colombani's oratorio can be seen as a discourse on divine love that is comparable to those contained within Neoplatonic treatises. Throughout the first half of the oratorio, Cecilia and Valeriano – like the participants in Ficino's, Bembo's, and Castiglione's dialogues – engage in a debate regarding desire, beauty, and love. The discourse begins with Cecilia's contemplative aria, "Sei pensier del mio desire," in which she desperately attempts to convince Valeriano that, contrary to his current understanding, he is the only thought of her desire. For Cecilia, however, this desire is tarnished – the beauty with which it begins is changed into a guilty torment, because Valeriano does not have faith. In other words, because the source of Cecilia's and Valeriano's desire is not shared – his does not stem from aspiration to unite with God (in Neoplatonic treatises, "the Good") – the shared experience of enjoying its pleasure is spoiled. Because Valeriano does not have faith, his desire for beauty remains tied to terrestrial expression, marital consummation; it is unable to mature and lead him back toward God through transcendent love.

Cecilia (“Sei pensier del mio desire”)³⁴¹:

Sei pensier del mio desire
Sol desir del mio pensiere,
E il pensier desia sol tè.
Mà si cangia in reo martire
Del desio il bel piacere
Al pensar, che non hai fè.

You are the thought of my only desire,
the only desire of my thoughts,
and the though desires only you.
But, the beautiful pleasure of desire
changes itself into guilty torment
because you do not have faith.

Colombani illustrates this section of the discourse with a pensive melody in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, set in the key of A minor with a B section in E minor. The melody begins on E₄ and after an opening fourth continues in vain to climb the octave, first returning to its initial starting point, then resting briefly at the half-way point of A₄ before finally reaching the top (see Figure 31, part one, mm. 183-189).³⁴² The achievement is anticlimactic, however, as Colombani positions the melodic climax on the tonic of a V chord, signaling to the listener that transcendence – like the purity of Valeriano’s desire – is still beyond reach. The shortcoming of Valeriano’s love that is expressed in Colombani’s half-cadence is immediately followed by Cecilia’s own insistence that Valeriano is “the thought of her only desire, the only desire of her thoughts,” (Figure 31, part one, mm.189-193). Colombani depicts this moment of literary *regressio* or *epanodos*³⁴³ with a musical *repetitio*, occurring in thirds between the voice and violins, that is unsupported

³⁴¹ Ibid., “Sei pensier del mio desire.”

³⁴² For the audio recording of this aria see the University of Oregon Oratorio Orchestra 2019 Musicking Conference performance, recorded May 17, 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYaknFnr0Mw&t=76s> (13:12).

³⁴³ In this case, Benedetti’s *epanodos* reflects the figure as it is described by Johann Christoph Gottsched, in which an expression is repeated in regression or reverse order. Quintilian conversely defines this figure as one in which an orator returns to a previous argument in order to expand upon it. This figure is primarily associated with literature and is less common in musical composition. See Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 259.

by the basso continuo. The result is a striking occurrence of musical *hypotyposis*, in which the circular nature of Cecilia’s words are brought to life – they, like Colombani’s accompaniment and Valeriano’s love, are momentarily “stuck” and unable to advance.³⁴⁴ There is no harmonic foundation, and no direction; it is as if time has ceased to exist. Neither the music nor Valeriano’s impure desires can progress toward the true source of beauty.

Figure 31. Quirino Colombani, “Sei pensier del mio desire,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 183-193.

This discourse continues in Cecilia’s aria “Fragil bellezza.” Here, she expands upon the argument she made in “Sei pensier,” and explains to Valeriano that the beauty that he sees in her, the beauty that makes him languish and desire their physical union, is

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 307.

fragile and inconstant. Here too Cecilia’s argument references the Neoplatonic concept of beauty, desire, and love. Love is a desire for beauty, and while beauty does reside within her (it is the cause of Valeriano’ attraction), it is a meager and unstable fragment of the beauty that may be found within God. Only a pure and righteous desire to acquire beauty – a desire removed from earthly or physical lust – will lead to spiritual elevation and renewed life. This union is not possible if Cecilia’s beauty is only regarded for its earthly, physical potentials. In the B-section of “Fragil bellezza,” Cecilia further develops her argument: if there is but a small portion of beautiful faith residing in fragile hope, it will blind earthly desire.

Cecilia (“Fragil bellezza”)³⁴⁵:

Fragil bellezza,
Che in mè risplende
Il sen t’accende,
E il fà languir.
Mà folle speranza
La bella fede
Che in lei risiede
Cieco il desir.

It is fragile beauty
that shines in me,
that illuminates your soul
and makes you languish.
But the beautiful faith
that resides in frail hope
blinds desire.

Colombani sonically connects “Sei pensier” and “Fragil bellezza” by setting the text within the same key, meter, and melodic framework. Like “Sei pensier,” “Fragil bellezza” also features an A section in A minor and a B section in E minor.³⁴⁶ Colombani also sets “Fragil bellezza” within a triple meter, though its active bass line with continual

³⁴⁵ Colombani, modern transcription, “Fragil bellezza.”

³⁴⁶ For the audio recording of this aria see the University of Oregon Oratorio Orchestra 2019 Musicking Conference performance, recorded May 17, 2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYaknFnr0Mw&t=76s> (18:39).

eighth-note movement from one measure into the next creates an affect that is more dance-like and urgent than that of “Sei pensier.” Cecilia’s delivery of her oration is intensifying. Colombani further connects the arias through the melody of “Fragil bellezza,” which is noticeably resemblant of “Sei pensier.” Both melodies begin with an ascending fourth from E₄ to A₄ and continue upward by either a third or a fourth before returning to the initial E. Like “Sei pensier,” the melody of “Fragil bellezza” attempts a continual ascension toward the octave, yet it is unsuccessful and returns briefly to an A before climbing once more to the octave E (see Figure 32, part one, mm. 266-270).

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Cecilia (Cec.) and Bass (Bc.). The time signature is 3/4. The Cecilia part is in treble clef, and the Bass part is in bass clef. The lyrics are: "Fra-gil bel - lez - za, che in me'ri - splen - de e'il sen t'ac - cen - de e'il fa lan - guir lan-guir t'ac -". The score shows measures 266 through 270.

Figure 32. Quirino Colombani, “Fragil bellezza,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 266-270.

The B sections of the arias’ melodies continue to resemble one another: in “Fragil bellezza,” Colombani creates a modified inversion of “Sei pensier.” In “Sei pensier,” the melody of the B section once again begins with an ascending fourth, now B₄ to E₅, followed by a climb to G before a return to B. In “Fragil bellezza,” this motion is flipped: the melody still begins B₄ to E₄, but now in a descending fifth; this leap is also followed by a climb to G₄ before a final return to E₄ (see Figures 33 and 34). Even in the rhythmic ending of the B section Colombani turns the ear of the listener back to “Sei pensier.” Both melodies end the motif with two preceding notes in a rhythmic diminution: in “Sei pensier,” the final quarter note is anticipated by two eighth notes; in “Fragil bellezza,” the final eighth note follows two sixteenths.

Mà si cangia in reo mar - ti - re

Figure 33. Quirino Colombani, “Sei pensier,” *L’ape industriosa*. mm. 209-211 (B section).

Mà fol - le spe - ran - za — la bel - la fe - de — che'in lei ri -

Figure 34. Quirino Colombani, “Fragil bellezza,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 287-289 (B section).

The result of these similarities is two arias with shared literary content whose melodies are noticeably connected. This likeness strengthens the relationship between the two arias, as well as the possibility that Colombani’s audience may have noticed the thematic similarity. In essence, Colombani has created a sonic reference for divine love. My assertion that Colombani’s music audibly reinforces Benedetti’s Neoplatonic argument is further strengthened when examining the aria, “Fida Speranza cara m’invita,” in which Cecilia provides the resolution to the discourse.

In the first aria, “Sei pensier”, Cecilia discussed the inability of a terrestrial desire for beauty to develop into elevated purity. In “Fragil bellezza,” she reinforced her claim that fragile beauty leads the individual toward improper languishing, while reminding the audience of the power of faith and its ability to blind misdirected desire. If we consider the first two arias of Cecilia’s discourse as her *exordium*, then the *confirmatio* and *refutatio*,³⁴⁷ respectively, “Fida speranza” serves as her *peroratio*, in which she brings together elements of the previous assertions in order to strengthen her discourse and conclude the dialogue.

Cecilia (“Fida speranza cara m’invita”)³⁴⁸:

Fida speranza	Faithful hope
Cara m’invita	invites me,
Lieta a gioir:	happy, to rejoice.
E al cor mi dice	And to my heart it tells me,
Festeggia, e ride,	celebrate and laugh,
Che de tuoi fidi	that the exalted, bold constancy
L’Alta Costanza	of your faithful men
Già stanca ardita	already tires
Ogni martir.	every suffering.

In this aria, Cecilia returns to the ideas of faith and constancy. True faith is happy and rejoices, it instructs the heart to celebrate and to laugh; bold constancy weakens earthly suffering. The Neoplatonic mysticism of this text is apparent in its main components: constancy, faith, and suffering that is not bitter or even unwelcome. Even

³⁴⁷ I view the B section of “Fragil bellezza” as Cecilia’s *refutatio*, as she introduces into the oration material that initially appears to be contradictory, but that in actuality serves to strengthen her argument. This portion of the discourse, marked by the conjunction, “ma,” signals that Cecilia will counter her previous statements. Instead, her words further support a distinction between earthly and celestial desire and love.

³⁴⁸ Colombani, modern transcription, “Fida speranza.”

more, the context of “Fida speranza” is vital in recognizing its Neoplatonic and mystic connotations – it occurs late in the second half of the oratorio, directly prior to the saints’ unanimous expressions of their desires to suffer and die for God (“Si che sperar”). Given this positioning, we understand that in “Fida speranza” Cecilia describes a type of faith and constancy that not only diminish the bitterness of suffering, but that create joy and languishing for the torment that will inevitably lead to union with God.

Cecilia, Tiburtio, Valeriano (“Si che sperar”)³⁴⁹:

Cecilia:

Si che sperar, si che gioir voglio.

I want both to hope and to enjoy.

Valeriano:

Godo sol di penar per tè mio Dio.

I delight only from suffering for you my God.

Tiburtio:

Solo ambisco morir per tè mio Dio.

I aspire only to die for you my God.

Cecilia:

O fortunati affetti, o beato desio.

Oh fortunate affections, oh blessed desire.

Just as Benedetti creates in “Fida speranza” a *peroratio*, or a culmination of the literary arguments presented in “Sei pensier” and “Fragil bellezza,” so too Colombani constructs its melody from different aspects of the previous two arias.³⁵⁰ Like “Sei pensier” and “Fragil bellezza,” “Fida speranza” is composed in A minor and E minor, and although it is written in a 12/8 meter – as opposed to the previous two arias in 3/4 – it

³⁴⁹ Ibid., “Si che sperar.”

³⁵⁰ For the audio recording of this aria see the University of Oregon Oratorio Orchestra 2019 Musicking Conference performance, recorded May 17, 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYaknFnr0Mw&t=76s> (1:26:07).

primarily consists of triplet figures that create an affect and rhythmic pulse that is not far removed. As in “Fragil bellezza, Cecilia is supported throughout the aria by the basso continuo alone; violins join in the final ritornello only.

In “Fida speranza,” Cecilia’s melody is once again an inversion of previous iterations. While “Sei pensier” and “Fragil bellezza” both begin with an ascending fourth from E₄ to A₄, then climb to C₅ or D₅ before returning to the initial E, “Fida speranza” begins at the high E₅ and performs a leap of a descending fifth to A₄, then performs two turns of B-G#-A before returning back to the initial E₅, creating an overall melodic arc that is broadly concave as opposed to the convex melodic arc of the previous two arias (see Figure 35, part two, mm. 442-443).



Figure 35. Quirino Colombani, “Fida speranza,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 442-443.

Additional similarities among the arias are subtle, yet indicative of Colombani’s attempts to construct a sonic relationship. Measures 457 and 458 of “Fida speranza” are an almost direct quotation of mm. 225-228 and mm. 229-232 of “Sei pensier,” for example (see Figure 36); and Colombani ends the B section of “Fida speranza” (part two, mm. 459) with striking resemblance to the vocal cadence in the B section of “Fragil bellezza” (see Figure 37, part one, mm. 294-296).

- sar che non hai fè non hai fè al pen - sar che non hai fè non hai fè.

This block contains the top part of the musical score for two songs. It features a vocal line with lyrics and two piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "- sar che non hai fè non hai fè al pen - sar che non hai fè non hai fè."

l'al-ta co-stan-za già stan-ca'ar-di- - - - - ta o - gni mar-tir già stan-ca'ar -

This block contains the bottom part of the musical score for the same two songs. It features a vocal line with lyrics and two piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "l'al-ta co-stan-za già stan-ca'ar-di- - - - - ta o - gni mar-tir già stan-ca'ar -"

Figure 36. Quirino Colombani, "Sei pensier," *L'ape industriosa*, mm. 225-232 (top); Colombani, "Fida speranza," mm. 457-458 (bottom).

- sir, che in lei'ri - sie - de cie - co'il de - sir.

This block contains the top part of the musical score for two songs. It features a vocal line with lyrics and two piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "- sir, che in lei'ri - sie - de cie - co'il de - sir."

- - ta o - gni mar-tir già stan-ca'ar - di-ta o - gni mar-tir.

This block contains the bottom part of the musical score for the same two songs. It features a vocal line with lyrics and two piano accompaniment staves. The lyrics are: "- - ta o - gni mar-tir già stan-ca'ar - di-ta o - gni mar-tir."

Figure 37. Quirino Colombani, "Fragil bellezza," *L'ape industriosa*, mm. 294-296 (top); Colombani, "Fida speranza," mm. 458-459 (bottom).

One of the most compelling similarities, however, is Colombani's creation of a period of *repetitio* within "Fida speranza" in which time is suspended (see Figure 38). This moment is markedly reminiscent of the *repetitio* in mm. 189-193 of "Sei pensier." In "Fida speranza," the performing forces are already voice and basso continuo alone. Instead of a further reduction in texture (recall "Sei pensier"), Colombani creates the effect of temporal suspension by displacing the pulses within the melodic *repetitio*, and in doing so disrupts the rhythmic predictability that he has so far established. In the initial repetitions of the vocal motif, Colombani places the rhythmic elongations of the voice on large beats two and four of the 12/8 bar. This pattern occurs consistently throughout the first six measures of the vocal line (part two, mm. 442-447). Beginning in measure 447, however, Colombani shifts the elongation, first to large beats one and four (part two, mm. 448), then to large beats two and three (part two, mm. 449), then finally, as Cecilia moves out of the *repetitio*, onto beats one, two, and four (part two, mm.450). The result of this pulse displacement is, for the listener, an audible breakdown in time, in which the rearrangement of the pulses signals one measure in 12/8, one measure in 9/8, one measure in 6/8, one measure in 3/8, and one final measure in 9/8. This disintegration of time occurs while Cecilia herself circles around her text in a dizzying manner that confuses their meaning: "fida speranza cara m'invita m'invita cara m'invita lieta lieta' à gioir." The resulting effect suggests a final moment of *dubitatio*, in which Cecilia and the listener question the truthfulness of her assertion that faithful hope does indeed invite her to rejoice in suffering. As she exits the *dubitatio* and resolves into the cadence of the A section, Colombani repeats the text "m'invita lieta à gioir" – Cecilia is assured in her resolution that true faith and hope lead to the joyful pains of divine love.

439
Cec. Fi - da spe - ran - za ca - ra m'in - vi - ta lie - ta à gio - ir,
440
Bc.

444
Cec. fi - da spe - ran - za ca - ra m'in - vi - ta lie - ta à gioir m'in - vi - ta ca - ra lie - ta'à gio - ir fi - da spe - ran - za ca - ra m'in - vi - ta m'in - vi - ta
444
Bc.

449
Cec. ca - ra m'in - vi - ta lie - ta lie - ta'à gio - ir m'in - vi - ta lie - ta lie - ta'à goi - ir.
449
Bc.

Figure 38. Quirino Colombani, “Fida speranza,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 439-451.

Overall, these arias create a cohesive whole, one discourse on faith and divine love that models the Neoplatonic treatises discussed in previous chapters.³⁵¹ In them, Cecilia takes upon herself the role of orator as she debates with Valeriano, refutes opposition, and confronts her own internal uncertainties.³⁵² As in treatises on Neoplatonic mysticism, she begins by defining love and desire, and notes that their relationship to beauty serves a higher purpose, one that is nullified if their connection with purity and faith are not recognized and accepted. She continues, as do Neoplatonic treatises, by conceding that physical beauty does “illuminate” the soul and make it languish. Languishing that is only directed at fragile, or earthly beauty, however, will not elevate the soul into divine union. Finally, in a powerful conclusion, Cecilia declares that faith,

³⁵¹ See chapters two and four, primarily.

³⁵² Cecilia also assumes a prominent role as an orator in the *Legendario dei santi*, where she successfully engages in separate debates with Valeriano and Almachio.

hope, and constancy lead to joy in suffering; these components are driven by the pursuit of celestial beauty and divine love that was elucidated by Renaissance Neoplatonists. She, Valeriano, and Tiburtio all yearn for the pains and torment that will lead them to spiritual and physical death. This desire now surpasses any lust for physical union. It is now a desire for the beauty of the Neoplatonic Good, a desire to be enveloped in divine love during a rapturous union with God.

In Benedetti's libretto, Valeriano's and Tiburtio's longings for martyrdom are fulfilled while Cecilia must wait for that goodness of physical death, ("Di quel Ben, che certo aspetto").³⁵³ The delay is emotionally distressing for Cecilia, who expresses her affliction in the doleful aria "Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto." In the recitative immediately following, she explains the nature of her tears – they are an offering, made in honor of Christ's bloody sacrifice and in place of her own martyrdom. To Cecilia, dying in the name of Christianity is the ultimate emulation of Christ; and yet it is an action from which she is prohibited. Her replacement of the sacrificial blood of martyrdom with contrite and penitent tears likely resonated with oratorio audiences, who were instructed to conform their lives in replication of Christ's, but who were not expected to relinquish physical life as did he and early Church martyrs.

Cecilia ("Così al mio Dio")³⁵⁴:

Così al mio Dio ch' esangue
Sul calvario si rese
L'Acque tributo, or che non lice il
Sangue.
Ah Tiburtio, Ah mio Sposo

So, to my God, who surrendered
bloodless on Calvary,
I make an offering of water, since blood is not
permitted.
Oh Tiburtio, oh my spouse!

³⁵³ Colombani, modern transcription, "Mi consola la speranza di quel ben che certo aspetto."

³⁵⁴ Ibid., "Cosi al mio Dio."

Voi a penar, voi a morir per Dio,
Ed io in vil riposo
Ancor viva rimango,
Ah ch' a ragion io mi quero, io piango.

You either suffer or die for God,
while I in cowardly ease
still remain alive. Oh, and for this reason
I quarrel with myself, I cry.

As a musical expression of the tears intended to take the place of sacrificial death, Cecilia's tearful aria "Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto" is the focal point of the oratorio's mysticism. In it, Cecilia describes to Valeriano and Tiburtio that although she cries, her tears are sweet and joyful; divine love melts her heart, just as the dawn dissolves at the sight of the sun.

Cecilia ("Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto")³⁵⁵:

Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto
Strugge il cor divino amore;
Come l'alba al Sole accanto
Si distempra in ricco umore.

I cry, yes, but in sweet weeping
Divine love melts the heart;
like the dawn next to the sun
dissolves in rich humor.

Upon first glance, it does not appear that Cecilia's aria contains the ecstatic language discussed in previous chapters, language that would signal an experience of rapture. She does not express a longing for death, she does not include dichotomous literary couplings to signal both pain and pleasure, and she does not mention celestial union. She does, however, describe the heart as melting ("strugge"), and compares this "sweet" event to the dissolving ("distempra") of the dawn – all of which are words used in mystic literature to describe varying sensations associated with ecstasy. Yet the

³⁵⁵ Ibid., "Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto."

absence of death – both Cecilia’s inability to die for Christ and the omission of the word from the poetry – seems to preclude the aria from ecstatic categorization. I argue, however, that Cecilia’s “Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto” is the epitome of a musical representation of ecstatic death. Cecilia does not describe rapture, nor does she desire it, she experiences it in real time, before the eyes of a watchful audience. As stated previously, Benedetti’s text does include ecstatic markers, namely “dissolving,” “melting,” and the overall “sweetness” of the experience. His text also informs us that Cecilia’s tearful manifestation of her dissolving and melting come at the hands of Divine Love – a Neoplatonic shadow of God. We may, therefore, consider them to be an actualization of the Neoplatonic emanation of God’s divinity. In other words, her tears are a physical realization of the overwhelming force of Divine Love (the shadow of God) within her heart: God’s love and divinity pour from Cecilia’s eyes.³⁵⁶ Her connection with God’s shadow, Divine Love, signals that she has entered the Neoplatonic World Soul, and possibly even the higher Intellect. We know, then, that she is experiencing transcendence; she is moving toward celestial union. It is not yet clear, though, if God has taken Cecilia up into rapture.

Perhaps the most important element of the text is Cecilia’s metaphor that the melting of her heart resembles the dissipation of the dawn, a sentiment that harkens back to her connection with the phoenix. Like the phoenix, Cecilia too welcomes the sun with singing. In the myth of the phoenix, the rising sun ignites it in flames that consume the bird and leave it in ashes; and from this death, it regains new life. Considering “Piango sì,

³⁵⁶ Also of note are the many Neoplatonic references to rays of light emanating from the eyes of youth for the purpose of creating a desire in others to seek union with the Good. See for example, Ficino, *Commentary on Plato*, speech VII, 153-174.

ma in dolce pianto” in this sense, the aria becomes the phoenix’s song and Cecilia herself the phoenix – Divine Love acts upon her as do the flames upon the phoenix, it melts and dissolves her heart just as the fire disintegrates the physical body of the bird. Through her aria, then, Cecilia experiences a metaphorical death and rebirth. This interpretation of Cecilia’s aria – that it is a musical representation of her rapturous death and subsequent rebirth – is supported by Colombani’s musical accompaniment.

Similar to the ecstatic arias that were the topic of the previous chapter, “Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto” is in 3/4 time.³⁵⁷ Colombani sets the aria in A major and F# minor, and supports Cecilia’s line with basso continuo and a series of heartbeat-like eighth-notes occurring in unison between both violin lines; the resulting texture is two voices (Cecilia and accompanimental violin) above the basso. While Colombani’s texture already creates a breathtaking affect, most intriguing is Cecilia’s opening phrase, which is an exact melodic replica of that of “Vago serto” and is similarly composed within a I-IV-V framework (see Figure 39, “Vago serto” part one, mm. 700-704 and “Piango sì” part two, mm. 567-576).

Recall that in “Vago serto,” Colombani created for Cecilia a melody that sonically realized the alluring fragrance that drew Tiburtio toward conversion – it was a melody that transformed affects and created a physiological link between the listener and the heavens; it was a melody that had the power to compel the listener toward Christ; it was a melody that elevated the listener.

³⁵⁷ For the audio recording of this aria see the University of Oregon Oratorio Orchestra 2019 Musicking Conference performance, recorded May 17, 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYaknFnr0Mw&t=76s> (1:37:13).

700
Cec. Va - go ser - to di Gi - gli.e di Ro - se.
700
Vln. I
700
Bc.

567
Cec. Pian - go sì ma'in dol - ce pian - to, p
567
Vln. I
567
Vln. II
567
Bc.

Figure 39. Quirino Colombani, “Vago serto,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 700-704 (top); Colombani, “Piango sì,” mm. 567-576 (bottom).

In repurposing the music of “Vago serto” for “Piango sì,” Colombani musically illustrates the moment in which Cecilia experiences her metaphorical death and rebirth by providing her with a melody that has already proven its transformative capabilities. In doing so, he establishes a sonic link between the two arias that signals to the audience the mystic nature of the scene.

If we consider the enraptured Cecilia in the act of performance, music’s role in her mystic transformation becomes increasingly clear. In the A section of the aria Cecilia sings of her tears and of their origination in Divine Love. Her ecstatic transformation does not begin until the B section, however, when her death and rebirth are represented in the dissolving of the dawn. In other words, Cecilia’s song as the phoenix, in which she welcomes her approaching death or rapture, is initiated in the A section, before the true

rapture of the B section (see Figure 40).³⁵⁸ In Colombani’s oratorio, then, music is both a contributor to and consequence of ecstasy. Much like the anecdotes of Francis’s musical raptures, Elizabeth’s musical death scene, and Borromeo’s description of Caterina Vannini, the presence of music is a key factor in the saints’ ascension into ecstasy; once enraptured, the music continues and becomes a product of the celestial union.

The image displays a musical score for the B section of "Piango sì" from *L'ape industriosa*. It features five staves: Cecilia (Cec.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Bassoon (Bc.), and a second Cecilia part. The first system (measures 596-600) shows Cecilia singing "Co-me l'al - ba'al so - le ac - can - to co - me" with a melodic line. The Violins play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Bassoon provides a low, steady accompaniment. The second system (measures 601-605) shows Cecilia singing "l'al - ba'al so - le ac - can - to si di - stem - pra si di - stem - pra in ric - co uo - re si di - stem - pra in ric - co uo - re." with a melodic line. The Violins continue their accompaniment, and the Bassoon remains active. The score concludes with a *D.C.* (Da Capo) instruction.

Figure 40. Quirino Colombani, “Piango sì,” *L’ape industriosa*, mm. 601-619, B section.

After Cecilia’s musically ecstatic death and metaphorical rebirth, and her explanation that her tears must serve as an offering in place of sacrificial death, Valeriano calms her with the reassurance that her rapturous death has been sufficient. Physical death, he says, is not a pre-requisite for Cecilia’s martyrdom; the languishing of her heart,

³⁵⁸ The rapturous death in the B section of “Piango sì” occurs in the key of F# minor, a key that in performance creates uncomfortable dissonances for the performer and listener. Colombani’s choice to set the B section in this key may speak to an intention on his part to aurally represent the pain of Cecilia’s ecstatic transformation. I thank Dr. Margret Gries for pointing out the importance of Colombani’s key in this section.

her desire for death, and her dedication to divine love have already made her a martyr in the eyes of God.

Valeriano (“Consolati, non piangere”)³⁵⁹:

Consolati, non piangere,
Non sospirar più nò.
Che l’aspro tuo dolore
Già martire d’Amore
Al cielo ti donò.

Console yourself, don’t cry,
yearn no longer;
because your biting pain
already gave you, a martyr of love,
to heaven.

Present in Valeriano’s words is the implication that Cecilia has already achieved martyrdom through rapture. The connection between ecstasy and martyrdom once again references the spiritual death described by Saint Teresa, and more specifically the spiritual martyrdoms of Molinos.³⁶⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, both of these texts claimed a large, lay readership; and while Molinos had experienced societal ruin almost fifteen years prior to the first performance of Colombani’s oratorio, internalized devotional practices, meditative exercises, and veneration of mystic saints continued. We may wonder, then, what Valeriano’s words may have signaled for audiences, who sought an elevated state of devotion that was conventionally exemplified as a saintly phenomenon. Perhaps they too could experience ecstatic, celestial martyrdom through intense longing for Christ and a languishing for death.

Before I continue to an examination of Saint Cecilia as she is represented by Alessandro Scarlatti, I provide here a final example – a quotation from Barbara Russano

³⁵⁹ Colombani, modern transcription, “Consolati, non piangere.”

³⁶⁰ See chapter five.

Hanning, extracted from her discussion of representations of Cecilia in seventeenth-century Florence – that illustrates the vital role of music in the performance of celestial rapture. I invite the reader to imagine within this example Colombani’s Cecilia and her performance of musical ecstasy. Hanning’s quotation is taken from “the dedication letter by the poet and playwright Jacopo Cicognini to a volume of ‘sacred verses’ by the Elevati member Ottavio Rinuccini (1562-1621), published in Florence in 1619.”³⁶¹

But I absolutely must not fail to mention the wonderful amazement that signora Arcangela Paladini Brohomans left in the hearts of everyone there as she represented Saint Cecilia in such a beautiful and devout manner, both with her presence and her song...because she expressed the words and their conceits not only with her truly angelic voice but also with heavenly gestures and movements, sometimes emitting from her upturned eyes the purest rays of humility and devotion, sometimes her face so glowing that it seemed to burn with seraphic love; and, depending on the sense of the song, sometimes her face glistened with a serene and sparkling HOLY JOY (una santa Letizia serena e scintillante), so that with sweet force she imprinted on the heart every affect so vividly that the listeners, stunned, resembled those who have been transported out of themselves.

Hanning’s example notably pre-dates Colombani’s oratorio, but it provides crucial insight from the perspective of an audience member witnessing a musical performance of ecstatic transformation. Primarily, the quotation is exemplary of musical ecstasy as artificial representation, a topic discussed at length in the previous chapter. Furthermore, it likely serves as a case of rhetorical hyperbole: signora Arcangela Paladini Brohomans depicts rapture in a way that is so convincing and so enchanting, that even her listeners begin to *resemble* those experiencing mystic elevation. And yet, the passage may indicate an even stronger connection between the viewer and musical rapture. “Rassembavano,” translated by Hanning as “resembled,” was in the sixteenth and

³⁶¹ Barbara Russano Hanning, “From Saint to Muse: Representations of Saint Cecilia in Florence,” *Music in Art* 29 no. 1/2, *Music in Art: Iconography as a Source for Music History* 1 (Spring–Fall 2004): 98.

seventeenth centuries synonymous with “sembrare,” or “to seem.”³⁶² In this case, Cicognini may have been remarking that the listeners seemed enraptured – not only did they resemble those who are ecstatic, in his estimation they appeared to be so themselves. His word choice may still amount to rhetorical hyperbole,³⁶³ intended to impress upon the reader the captivating power of the performance; but, it may also indicate that for some listeners, Brohomans’ artificial representation of saintly joy (una “santa letizia”) – or, saintly rapture – was powerful enough to overwhelm the senses and urge the soul into a state of devotional transcendence.

Most importantly, however, is the single clause, “depending on the sense of the song.” In this phrase music’s importance to the representation of celestial rapture is affirmed: the first half of the quotation describes Brohoman’s representation of ecstasy as compelling, and enthralling, but it is the composer who dictates whether the performance of rapture will be transferred onto the listener. We should therefore question the influence Colombani’s transformative melody may have had on audiences, first in “Vago serto” and then “Piango sì,” especially in consideration of contemporaneous views (articulated explicitly by Valeriano) regarding the accessibility of a martyred union with Christ through rapturous, spiritual death.

³⁶² See, for example, Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso di Messer Lodovico Ariosto con gli Argomenti in ottava Rima di M. Lodovico Dolce, et con le Allegorie à ciascun canto di Tomaso Porcacchi da Castiglione Aretino* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Brigna, 1656), canto 5.82. “Rinaldo vi compar sopra eminente, E ben rassembra il fior d’ogni gagliardo.

³⁶³ The scene Cicognini describes is markedly similar to Castigliano’s in *Il libro del cortegiano*, in which Peitro Bembo’s quasi-ecstatic oration enraptures his attentive audience. See chapter two.

Saint Cecilia in Two Eighteenth-Century Roman Oratorios: (2) Alessandro Scarlatti

The music for Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorio, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* (1708),³⁶⁴ was presumed lost for nearly three hundred years and has therefore been excluded from the majority of scholarly discourses concerning both Scarlatti and the oratorio as a genre. A sole surviving manuscript, written in the composer's own hand, resurfaced in 1949 when it was sold by Sotheby's London to the private collector Martin Bodmer.³⁶⁵ Today, the manuscript is held by the Foundation Martin Bodmer at the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana near Geneva in Switzerland. Despite the twentieth-century rediscovery of the manuscript, the 1986 publication of the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana's catalogue of music manuscripts,³⁶⁶ and the broadcasting of a performance in Zurich under the acclaimed early music director Diego Fasolis in the year 2000, contemporary scholarship has continued to refer to Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia* as lost. To my knowledge, no modern transcription of the score has been published; thus, my analysis of the music refers to Scarlatti's manuscript.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Scarlatti's manuscript contains annotations for both February 1708 (opening page) and Friday, March 2, 1708 (end of final duet).

³⁶⁵ Alessandro Scarlatti, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635. For more information concerning the history of the manuscript see Karl Böhmer, in Diego Fasolis and I Barocchisti, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, CPO Records, 2008. Inserted into Scarlatti's manuscript are thirteen arias by Giovanni Battista Costanzi. Each aria sets the same text as the Ottoboni/Scarlatti oratorio. Costanzi's arias are frequently bookended by markings that cross out Scarlatti's setting of the same text. It is my hypothesis that this may in fact be Costanzi's "lost" *Santa Cecilia* oratorio of 1725. His oratorio, then, uses the same Ottoboni libretto and all recitatives by Scarlatti, but replaces all of Scarlatti's solo arias for Cecilia and Nutrice as well as select oratorios for Almachio and Consigliere.

³⁶⁶ See Tilman Seebass, *Musikhandschriften der Bodmeriana: Katalog* (Cologne-Genève: Fondation Martin Bodmer, 1986).

³⁶⁷ The only recording of Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia* (Diego Fasolis and I Barocchisti, 2008) references the use of a modern transcription prepared "with the publisher Oliver Mattern." It appears that this transcription was created by Mattern, likely under the parent company *NoteType*, specifically for the use of

The tone of Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia* is markedly different than that of Colombani's *L'ape industriosa*. Instead of recounting the conversions of Valeriano and Tiburtio, and the sufferings of the saints as they face impending death, the libretto – written by a shared patron of Scarlatti and Colombani, Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni – provides the audience with an elaborate love story in which Almachio (contralto), the antagonist, is enamored with the religious zealot, Cecilia (soprano), and attempts to save her life by offering his affection.³⁶⁸ Throughout the oratorio, the two main characters are each accompanied by a companion who offers guidance and counsel. For Almachio, advice arrives from his trusted *consigliere* (tenor), who encourages Almachio to offer his love to Cecilia and provide her with an avenue to escape the snares of death. Cecilia is accompanied by her *nutrice* (soprano), a devoted character who ceaselessly pleads for the saint to come to her senses, accept Almachio's offer of marriage, and be saved. In Scarlatti's oratorio, Valeriano and Tiburtio are not featured – rather, as the oratorio begins, we learn that they have been sent to die; by the beginning of part two, their martyrdoms have occurred. With Valeriano and Tiburtio absent from the entirety of the

I Barocchisti's recording, and was not published for broader circulation. I have not been successful in obtaining a copy of Mattern's transcription.

³⁶⁸ The characters Cecilia and Almachio were likely performed by castrati, as was common for soprano and alto roles in Roman oratorios at this time. In his liner notes for the Fasolis/I Barocchisti recording, Karl Böhmer argues that Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia* is closely related to baroque opera, in that the libretto contains specifications for stage entrances and exits, as well as mentions the presence of non-speaking characters (for example, Cecilia is at various times listed as "in catene," and in part two the *consigliere* is said to be accompanied "con Ministro, che non parla"). Böhmer also cites the likely use of more elaborate staging and machinery; of this I am not yet convinced, as his assertion likely references an annotation at the end of the last duet of the manuscript. The annotation is not in Scarlatti's hand, however, and the duet it is attached to is itself an insertion (also not in Scarlatti's hand, but not noted to be Costanzi's – as are all of Costanzi's other inserts) in front of Scarlatti's ending. While it is likely that staging and machinery were used at some point, it is still unclear if this was the case in the original 1708 performance. For the libretto, see Alessandro Scarlatti, *Il martirio di S. Cecilia Oratorio* (Rome: Per Antonio de' Rossi alla Piazza di Ceri, 1708), Biblioteca del Liceo Musicale di Bologna (now Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica), Collocazione Lo.8968.

libretto, the story focuses instead on Almachio's love for Cecilia, his internal conflict at the ruthless manner in which he must seal her fate, and Cecilia's own religious enthusiasm.

Despite the differences between the two oratorios – or, rather, as a consequence of their distinction – I propose that Ottoboni's libretto may in fact be a continuation of Benedetti's, a conclusion to the story that is otherwise absent. While I have yet to substantiate this claim with documentation that explicitly states Ottoboni's intent to write his *Santa Cecilia* as a response to Benedetti's, a number of factors support this hypothesis.³⁶⁹ Ottoboni's involvement in Rome's cultural events, and in those which were musical in particular, have been discussed at length in previous studies; I will therefore not repeat them here.³⁷⁰ It suffices to say that Ottoboni was already active in Rome as a patron of music and musical spectacle in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Between the years 1692 and 1698, Ottoboni was a patron of Quirino Colombani, meaning that he would have had at the very least a close working relationship with him and known his music well. Further, Scarlatti and Colombani had more than once crossed paths (or nearly crossed paths) in their various employments

³⁶⁹ The lack of documentation surrounding the years in which Ottoboni's/Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* (1708) was created is noted by Stefano La Via in his extensive research of the musical activities of Ottoboni's court. La Via notes a general lack of information for years 1703, 1706-13, 1730, 1732, and 1738-39. See Stefano La Via, "Il Cardinale Ottoboni e la Musica: Nuovi Documenti (1700-1740)," in *Intorno a Locatelli: Studi in Occasione del Tricentenario della Nascita di Pietro Antonio Locatelli (1695-1764)*, ed. Albert Dunning, (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1995), 319-526.

³⁷⁰ See for example Flavia Matitti, "Il cardinale Pietro Ottoboni mecenate delle arti: Cronache e documenti (1689-1740)," *Storia dell'arte* 84 (1995): 156-243. Teresa Chirico provides a collection of the most important musicological sources concerning Pietro Ottoboni in Chirico, "Il testo oratoriale e la *fede trionfante per l'eresia soggiogata da S. Antonio da Padova* di Paolo Campello (1643-1713), *Dramma scolastico e oratorio nell'età barocca, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Reggio Calabria, 5-6 ottobre 2012)*, ed. Nicolò Maccavino (Reggio Calabria: Edizioni del Conservatorio di Musica "F. Cilea", 2019), 122.

within Rome's musical-social networks: in January of 1703 Ottoboni helped to secure for Scarlatti the post of assistant *maestro di cappella* of the Oratorio dei Filippini at the Chiesa Nuova, a post that Colombani had recently vacated (this timeline also suggests an overlap between Colombani and Scarlatti in the years the two composers enjoyed Ottoboni's patronage).³⁷¹ In close temporal proximity of the premiere of Colombani's *L'ape industriosa* (1701) and also occurring in Rome were the performances of Ottoboni's own oratorio, *La Santissima Annunziata* (1700 and 1703, music by Alessandro Scarlatti).³⁷²

Taken together, these diverse bits of information point to Ottoboni having an intimate knowledge and working relationship with Colombani and Scarlatti, both as patron and librettist, strengthening the possibility that he knew Colombani's *L'ape industriosa* and used it as inspiration for his own libretto. Also of note is musicologist Gloria Staffieri's compelling argument that Ottoboni's libretto for the opera *Ciro* (1712, music by Tommaso Albinoni) devises a continuation of the plot represented in Pietro Pariati's *Costantino* (1711).³⁷³ Similar to the relationship between Benedetti's *L'ape industriosa* and Ottoboni's *Santa Cecilia*, Ottoboni's libretto for *Ciro* utilizes the same protagonist of Pariati's *Costantino*. Yet, as is also the case in Ottoboni's *Santa Cecilia*, while his protagonist of *Ciro* and other main themes in the opera remain unchanged, his libretto (unlike Pariati's) centers primarily on the intertwining plots of the two sets of

³⁷¹ Arnaldo Morelli, *Il tempio armonico: Musica nell'Oratorio dei Filippini in Roma (1575-1705)*, (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1991), 53-54.

³⁷² Luca della Libera, 166.

³⁷³ Gloria Staffieri, "I drammi per musica di Pietro Ottoboni: il grand siècle del cardinale" *Studi musicali* 35 no. 1 (2006): 166-167.

lovers, Sandane and Elcino, and Erenia and Arsace.³⁷⁴ In consideration of Staffieri's findings, it becomes all the more likely that Ottoboni's *Santa Cecilia* is a conclusion, perhaps even a "sequel," to Benedetti's *L'ape industriosa*.

Whereas Colombani's *L'ape industriosa* is rife with Renaissance mysticism and Neoplatonic thought, the themes in Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia* reflect its composition during a period in which eighteenth-century Europe began to position accepted religious philosophies against arguments centered on reason. If Colombani's oratorio is best described as a devotional spectacle that mirrors the content of Renaissance Neoplatonic discourses, Scarlatti's may be described as one that looks toward the Enlightenment.³⁷⁵ That is not to say that mysticism and religious philosophy have no foothold in Ottoboni's text, but that their inclusion serves to fuel a larger debate regarding the primacy of rational thought over unwavering (and unquestioning) devotion. Like Colombani's oratorio, Scarlatti's rendition of Cecilia's story includes an abundance of references to divine and earthly love; yet, while the topos of love in Colombani's oratorio lays the foundation for a discourse in Neoplatonic mysticism, in Scarlatti's work it serves as a framework within which reason and religious veneration can be thoroughly deliberated.

In part one of Scarlatti's oratorio, the audience is immediately alerted to the importance of reason as a preeminent subject. The text opens with a distraught Almachio, who expresses his internal conflict at the opposing necessities of Reason and the desires

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 167-168.

³⁷⁵ For more concerning the importance of reason in early eighteenth-century Rome, specifically at the court of Pietro Ottoboni and amongst the members of the Arcadian Academy, see Edward J. Olszewski, "The Enlightened Patronage of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667-1740)," *Artibus et Historiae* 23 no. 45 (2002): 139-165 and Ayana O. Smith, "On Tupos: Iconography and Verisimilitude in Early Arcadia," *Music in Art* 34 no. 1/2 (Spring – Fall 2009): 7-20.

of Love. He is aware that the logical and judicious response to Cecilia's pro-Christian activities is punishment, comparable to that which has been prescribed to Valeriano and Tiburtio: torture and death. And yet, his love for Cecilia urges him to reject such a harsh and cruel sentence.

Almachio ("A dispetto del mio core")³⁷⁶:

A Dispetto del mio core
Pur m'è forza esser crudele.
Straggi chiede a me ragione,
Alle straggi Amor s'oppono;
Ma ragion vince, e d'Amore
Mi fa sordo alle querele.

Against my heart's loving feelings,
I must force myself to be cruel.
Reason demands that I be cold,
Amor opposes such harshness;
But reason prevails, and so I turn
A deaf ear to Amor's pleadings.

Almachio ends his aria with a resolution to adhere to the logic of reason; he will turn away from the loving desire of his heart and follow justice. Cecilia has broken the law and will not recant her Christian professions. She must, therefore, endure the same fate as her husband and brother-in-law before her. But relief is quickly delivered to Almachio by his *consigliere*, who advises him that, if offered, Cecilia will gladly accept the honor of becoming the "consort of the Prefect of Rome."³⁷⁷ The populace, who have not taken kindly to the torture and condemnation of Valeriano and Tiburtio, will look upon Almachio with favor – they will say that he has "saved a beauty, endowed to delight and marvel every beholder, from the deadly blow."

³⁷⁶ Fasolis, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 2008, 23. All translations of Ottoboni's text reference those provided by Susan Marie Praeder in the printed booklet of the 2008 recording by Diego Fasolis and I Barocchisti.

³⁷⁷ Consigliere: "Di Donna entro del petto / Ambizione possente è più d'ogn' altro affetto. / Sciolta dal primo nodo, oggi la mente / Rivolgerà ver te meno ritrosa, Coll'altero desio d'esser tua Sposa; / Che non è poca sorte. / (Vanti pur grande, e chiaro il suo natale) / Del Prefetto di Roma esser Consorte ... Che dal fatale / Colpo togliesti una beltà, ch' è resa / Delizio d'ogni sguardo, e meraviglia." Fasolis, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 2008, 23-24.

It quickly becomes apparent, however, that Cecilia has no intention of accepting Almachio's advances. She "thinks little of death," as her own understanding of love is one that is infinite, celestial; it is one that extends beyond the confines of Almachio's earthly love, and even the love that is bestowed upon her by her beloved *nutrice*.³⁷⁸ Her true spouse is Christ, and she welcomes the torment and suffering that she must endure in order to feel the burning fire of his divine love.

Cecilia ("Esca pura del foco mio")³⁷⁹:

Esca pura del foco mio
 Mio Sposo, e Dio,
 Amor dolcissimo di questo sen.
 Quai tormenti io sentirò?
 E in soffrirli io li vedrò,
 Farsi pegno del mio ben.

Pure kindling of my fire,
 My spouse and God,
 This heart's sweetest love.
 What torments will I feel?
 If I behold him while I suffer,
 This sight will be my salvation's pledge!

In the first half of the oratorio, Cecilia's devotion is juxtaposed with the logical reasoning of the three other characters, creating a representation of the saint that borders on religious fanaticism. Whereas in Colombani's *L'ape industriosa* Almachio was the clear antagonist, blind to the truthfulness of Christianity, in Scarlatti's *Santa Cecilia* we are presented with a depiction of the saint that makes us question the virtue of her actions, a depiction that emphasizes her decisiveness to move against reason and pursue devout veneration of Christ at any cost. Cecilia is frequently reminded by the oratorio's other characters that her resolution to proclaim the Christian religion has resulted in the deaths of Valeriano and Tiburtio; but for this, she has no regret. Even Almachio's threat

³⁷⁸ Nutrice: "giacche il morir disprezza..." Fasolis, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 2008, 34.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 30.

to seek out and destroy all Christians on account of Cecilia's perseverance holds no sway.³⁸⁰ We, the audience, begin to wonder if Almachio's *consigliere* is correct, perhaps Cecilia's obstinance, while obviously against reason, also opposes heaven.³⁸¹ After all, it is possible for Cecilia – whose religious conviction has already resulted in the downfall of Valeriano and Tiburtio – to accept Almachio's love, and continue to practice Christianity in secret.³⁸²

At the end of the first half of the oratorio, the audience is left to consider if Almachio's worldly love is strong enough to save the unreasonable Cecilia. If there were any question of Ottoboni's suggestion that, to the heavens, reason and earthly love may in fact be preferable to Cecilia's absolute devotion, part one of the oratorio ends with a duet by the *nutrice* and the *consigliere*, in which this suggestion is made clear: Cecilia's obstinance is an irrational offence against the empire and heaven.

Nutrice & Consigliere ("Il Cielo, l'Impero")³⁸³:

Il Cielo, l'Impero,
Chi sprezza, chi offende,
Indegno si rende
D'Amor, di Pietà.
Ma poi se ostinato
Nol teme sdegnato,
Lo sprezzo all'errore
Dà peso maggiore,

He who disdains and offends
Heaven and the empire
Renders himself unworthy
Of love and mercy.
He whose heart is stubborn
And shows no fear of scorn
Lends greater weight to his error
By persisting in haughty refusal.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 56.

³⁸¹ Consigliere: "Amica, il mio Signore a te m'invia, / Perché saper desia, / Se ostinata Cecilia ancor s'opponne / Al Cielo, alla ragione." Ibid., 34.

³⁸² Almachio: "Chi sa, che a te legato / Con dolce nodo di Conforte, un giorno / Non cangi voglia anchi'io: in tanto puoi / Senza vergogna, o scorno / Occulti voti offrire a' Numi tuoi. / Che più brami da me?" Ibid., 54.

³⁸³ Ibid., 36.

E allor più severo
Il Cielo, e l'Impero
Punir lo saprà.

Heaven and the empire will find
A fitting punishment for him,
And it'll be all the severer.

In part two of the oratorio, Ottoboni explores more fully the mutual source of Almachio's reason and Cecilia's irrationality: love. At this point, it is clear to the audience that Cecilia's love for God and Christianity will destroy her; Almachio's earthly love can save her. Her declaration of allegiance to divine love – already made known in the first half of the oratorio (“Questo solo è quell'ardore”) – contains key terms that are reminiscent of Colombani's *L'ape industriosa*. Hope and faith guide Scarlatti's Cecilia toward eternal love. It is a love that is not tied to earthly bounds of physical life and death, but a passionate love between the loving (or lover) and the beloved that remains at the core of Cecilia's heart.³⁸⁴

Cecilia (“Questo solo è quell'ardore”)³⁸⁵:

Questo solo è quell'ardore,
Che di se fa centro un core,
E lo rende Amante Amato.
Dolce Speme, invitta Fede,
Scorte sono alla mercede
D'un eterno Amore beato.

He alone is this ardent passion
Elected by a heart as its center,
Rendered beloved and loving.
Sweet hope, invincible faith
Serve as guides to our reward
Of blessed, eternal love.

Since by the second half of the oratorio, Cecilia's conviction is still misunderstood by all three “rational” characters, she attempts to define true love – the

³⁸⁴ Of note is the libretto's capitalization of “Amante” and “Amato,” which may in fact signal their representation of the “beloved” and the “loving” as personages who are engaged in the heart's passionate love. This interpretation connects Ottoboni's libretto to the Christian tradition of God and the mystic spouse as beloved and lover, respectively, while also relating it to Neoplatonic discourses of divine love.

³⁸⁵ Fasolis, *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 2008, 28.

source of her “irrationality” – clearly and directly. True love is constant, she says; it “strengthens steadfastness and faith,” regardless of the earthly torments that oppose it.³⁸⁶ In Cecilia’s eyes this love is the opposite of that expressed by Almachio – his love consumes his heart and fills him with torment. He does not understand that the antidote for his grief is love redirected, love that is purposed with uniting him with the Christian God.³⁸⁷

As the oratorio progresses, Cecilia remains unmoved by the pleas of Almachio and her *nutrice* to abandon her proclamations (to them, her incomprehensible ramblings) and return to a life of sensible, reasonable veneration of the Roman gods. Rather, she is increasingly emboldened in her resolution to accept physical suffering and death; it is a small cost for the pleasure that the faithfulness of her soul will provide.³⁸⁸ Whereas in the first half of the oratorio Ottoboni characterized Cecilia as acting in opposition to the logic of Almachio, the *consigliere*, and the *nutrice*, the audience now begins to understand her resolution as the source of her mental and spiritual preservation. The more she embraces divine love – accessible to her through unwavering veneration of the Christian God, regardless of the physical punishments she will incur – the more she is invigorated and strengthened.

In contrast, Almachio’s unwavering adoption of profane love seems to have the opposite effect. The more that he clings to his desire for a rational, earthly union with

³⁸⁶ Cecilia: “Un vero Amor rinforza / La Costanza, e la Speme, e fa che un’Alma / in mezzo alle più crude aspre procelle / Non perda mai sua calma.” *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁸⁸ Cecilia: “Voli il mio piè / Con l’ali del Desio / Ove la Fè / M’addita il piacer. / Piacer non è / Che inganni il pensier mio / Rende il mio Dio / Sicuro il mio pensier.” *Ibid.*, 60.

Cecilia, the more he deteriorates. Indeed, by the end of the oratorio, Cecilia has died and Almachio is reduced to a raving madman, driven to insanity because he has been devoured by profane love – his love was not enough to save Cecilia from her martyrdom, it was not enough to dissuade her from her irrationality.

Almachio (“Dammi quel ferro”)³⁸⁹:

Dammi quel ferro. Ecco la face, Aletto
Seguimi; questo è Averno,
Non è più Roma; in fosco, orrido aspetto
La Maestà cangiò; Ma voi, ch’eterno
Vantate, o Numi, il Regno, in Ciel che fate?
Abbatute, atterrate
Sian l’Are vostre; e Tempii, e Sacerdoti,
Destini il Lazio al Nazzareno Dio,
E alla Vergine Ebreja porga i suoi voti.
Che parlo? Ove son’io?
Chi mi scuote, e mi sgrida?
Sangue, Sangue, che bolli
Su questo brando a vendicarti arrida
Fierissimo destin; de’ sette Colli
Regga il freno sovrano,
Un successor di Lui, che in Vaticano
Già fù scopo di morte indegna, e ria;
De tuoi Cesari oblia
Misera Patrio, il braccio alto e possente.
Sembra suo Genio altero,
Col suddito Oriente
Cangiar sede, ed Impero;
E questo con vergogna, e danno,
Vil preda offerire a barbaro Tirrano.

Aria (“Vi mostrate agl’occhi miei”)
Vi mostrate agl’occhi miei
Archi ecclesi, alti Trofei
Non di Palme, o Lauri adorni.
Anzi infranti; le memorie
Delle antiche vostre glorie
Cancellar con nuovi scorni.

Give me the sword. Here’s the torch, Alecto,
Follow me; this is Avernus,
it’s Rome no more; majesty has turned
into a dark, horrid aspect; but you, gods,
who boast of eternal rule in heaven, what do you do?
May your altars be pulled down and razed to the
Ground; may Latium consecrate
its temples and priests to the Nazarene God,
And direct its prayer to the Hebrew Virgin.
What am I saying? Where am I?
Who’s shaking me? Who’s shouting at me?
Blood, blood that seethes under this sword
And years to avenge you, wretched fate!
May a sovereign ruler command
The Seven Hills,
A successor of him who in the Vatican
Once suffered an undeserved and cruel death.
The wretched fatherland forgets its emperors
And their high and mighty arm.
Its proud genius seems
To exchange places and rule
With the subject Orient.
And this with shame and ruin
Offers vile booty to a barbarous tyrant.

You show to my eyes
Lofty arches, high trophies,
Adorned not with palms but with laurels.
But they’re broken; the memories
Of your ancient glories
Fade with new disdain.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 76.

Ottoboni's representation of Almachio's emotional breakdown is a complex analogy of the relationship between reason and divine love. Profane love has driven Almachio to madness – his promotion of reason above Christian devotion has driven him to insanity – leading the viewer to conclude that Cecilia's championing of divine love and seemingly irrational veneration was truly more sensible after all. Yet in his madness Almachio begins to deliver truthful prophecies regarding the downfall of the Roman empire and the spread of Christianity. In other words, in madness Almachio finds religious truth, and therefore becomes more sane. And so, what is reason, what is insanity? Ottoboni's answers appear to be increasingly convoluted. I propose, however, that the issue is clarified by Scarlatti's music, which represents a mystic progression from earth to heaven and in doing so accentuates one of the oratorio's main points: regardless of rationality or irrationality, immersing one's self in the divine love of Christ, through faithful constancy and unwavering devotion, yields a spiritual elevation that reason itself can never provide. Almachio's rational, earthly love will never supply him with transcendence or salvation (in the end, the consequence of his sacrilegious prophecy is captivity); but Cecilia's irrational, divine love gives sustenance to her soul and transports her into heaven.

This point is seen most clearly when considering the music of *Santa Cecilia* in accordance with Luca della Libera's assessment of how Scarlatti creates musical depictions of the earthly and heavenly realms.³⁹⁰ According to della Libera, Scarlatti frequently uses the *sinfonie* of his oratorios to create a terrestrial atmosphere – when

³⁹⁰ Regarding the study of Italian oratorios that contrast earthly and celestial themes, della Libera also calls attention to the work of Ursula Kirkendale. See (as cited in in della Libera), Ursula Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara, Life and Venetian-Roman Oratorios* (Florence: Olschki, 2007), 205-209.

doing so, his *sinfonie* can be organized into two categories: those that are warlike (“belliche”) and those that are descriptive of natural wonders or phenomena (“descrittive, connesse a fenomeni naturali”).³⁹¹ Typical distinguishing compositional traits of those *sinfonie* that are warlike include: a key of D major, the use of trumpets (della Libera notes that in the case of Scarlatti’s *Giuditta* the trumpets double the basses), a fast tempo, and melodies that are positioned above arpeggiation.³⁹²

Della Libera’s criteria for an earthly, warlike *sinfonia* are exactly those that are found in the opening of Scarlatti’s *Santa Cecilia* (see Appendix D, Scarlatti, “Introduzione”). The *sinfonia* (a brief, three-page “introduzione” with no contrasting sections) is scored for two trumpets, three violins, *oubuè* (i.e., oboes), timpani, and basso continuo. The music is set in D Major, *presto*, and opens with a string of arpeggiated triplets. In almost all cases, the trumpets reinforce the rhythms of the timpani and basso continuo. In short, the introduction for *Santa Cecilia* is exemplary of Scarlatti’s earthly, warlike model. Importantly, Scarlatti’s terrestrial opening prepares the way for the first vocal entrance, Almachio’s aria “A dispetto del mio core” (see Appendix D, Scarlatti, “A dispetto del mio core”). Here too, the key is in D major. The tempo is still a lively *allegro* and the energy is sustained by the activity of the violins, whose introductory triplets are now animated sixteenth notes. The overall impression is an audible connection between Scarlatti’s *sinfonia* and Almachio’s first aria – if the former is warlike and earthly, then so too is the latter. Yet while the introductory material has a clear relationship with Almachio’s persona – a character who spends the entirety of the oratorio steeped in his

³⁹¹ Della Libera, 167.

³⁹² Ibid.

obsession with earthly love – it also sets the tone for the opening of the oratorio as a whole; it connotes to the audience that what they are witnessing takes place in a terrestrial sphere.

Almachio's final aria of the oratorio, "Vi mostrate agl'occhi miei" is similarly in D Major with a tempo *allegro stretto* (see Appendix D, Scarlatti "Vi mostrate agl'occhi miei"). As with the introductory *sinfonia*, the orchestration includes a trumpet that accentuates the bass line. Although the aria is constructed more of step-wise ascents and descents instead of warlike arpeggios (though, not entirely), the offset punctuation between strings and trumpet – or voice and trumpet – and dotted rhythms create an affect that is above all militaristic in nature. While the text of this aria delivers Almachio's prophecy that the pagan dieties of Rome will be replaced by the Christian God, Scarlatti's music signifies that Almachio is still confined to the terrestrial sphere. Although reason is beginning to be replaced by religious truth, Almachio's persistence in his esteem of earthly love has resulted in an inability to transcend earthly bounds. Reason for the sake of profane feats is weak and ineffective.

As discussed previously, Cecilia, though first painted as a religious fanatic who delighted in irrationality, is spiritually nourished by her devotion to God. She seeks his divine love and consequently rises above her earthly trials. Scarlatti musically depicts her spiritual ascent during the moments before her death, and in her death itself. In her arioso, "Sommo Padre, eterno Figlio" and "al mio Signore in Croce" the musical atmospheres once again reflect della Libera's descriptions, this time of the celestial spheres. As an example of Scarlatti's celestial representation, della Libera points to the oratorio *Il trionfo*

della Gratia, in the moment in which the Maddalena, who is torn between earthly and divine love, wonders how it is possible that she will no longer suffer. The character Penitenza responds with an invitation to Maddalena to listen to the sounds of heaven.³⁹³ Penitenza's aria, "Spirti voi, ch'il ciel reggete" is a demonstration to Maddalena of celestial sonorities. Della Libera notes that this point is made clear in the manuscripts of *Il trionfo della Gratia* that are housed in the Biblioteca Estense, Modena, and the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome. The former contains the annotation "Siegue sinfonia che dinota il moto de' cieli," and both bear the note "si sona senza cimbalo, con li soli stromenti d'arco" and "Tremolo. Largo, e piano."³⁹⁴ The sources are explicit: this music is the music of the heavens. Scarlatti depicts the celestial atmosphere through an orchestration that features bowed instruments alone, without harpsichord, and in a quiet, slow, tremolo.

These compositional elements are exactly those featured in Cecilia's final arioso. In "Sommo Padre" she begins the arioso three times, as the first two times she is interrupted by the *Nutrice*, who begs Cecilia to reconsider her welcoming of death (see Appendix D, Scarlatti, "Sommo Padre"). Each time, Cecilia is accompanied by unison upper strings and two solo violoncelli (without harpsichord) that are instructed to play "piano" and "lento." The solo bowed instruments perform constant eighth notes in octaves, creating a heartbeat-like pulse that is not unlike the effect of a tremolo. The

³⁹³ Ibid., 173.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 173-174.

harpsichord is included only during the *Nutrice*'s interruptions; its timbral contrast breaks the celestial ambience and pulls the audience (and Cecilia) back down to earth.

Similar compositional tactics can be seen in “al mio Signore.” At this point, Cecilia has received the fatal blows of the executioner’s sword; her blood is spilled (“O felice terreno, ricevi, ricevi il sangue mio”) and she prays for Jesus to take her soul to heaven (see Appendix D, Scarlatti “al mio Signore”). Scarlatti supports Cecilia’s final pleas and death with music set in a piano adagio. At first, strings and harpsichord are harmonically sustained, their chords unchanged for one and one-half measures. As Cecilia appeals to Christ to comfort her soul (“mio Gesù consola quest’Alma”), however, the music begins to change. Scarlatti once again reverts to a texture that is *senza cembalo* with bowed string instruments engaging in constant piano, adagio, eighth-note pulses. Della Libera argues that the constant pulse of eighth notes in all parts results in the musical effect of temporal suspension.³⁹⁵ I agree with this assessment in regard to his analysis of *Il trionfo della Gratia*. In the case of Cecilia’s death, however, the solo strings are not in harmonic unison. Their changes do create a sense of motion, though at first the motion is slow, almost imperceptible. The movement intensifies in the final moments of Cecilia’s death. As she sings her final words, “dà lume agl’ empìi e me raccogliere in Cielo,” the strings are joined by the harpsichord, and the passage further intensifies as the first violins and basso continuo – now in sixteenth notes – increase in speed. Above the flurry, Cecilia rises the octave from G₄ to G₅, her rhythms gradually elongating as she is

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 174.

taken into heaven. The moment is breath-taking. Through music, Scarlatti has transported Cecilia through death and into union with God.

Overall, Scarlatti's music supports the main arguments of Ottoboni's libretto. Almachio's love is profane, earthly, and it remains unchanged throughout the oratorio. In the beginning, we hear his love depicted through the warlike and terrestrial *sinfonia*, an affect that is matched in both his opening and closing arias. Cecilia, however, acts against terrestrial reason and chooses divine love. This love, not the sensibility of the profane, allows her to experience mystic death. Unlike many of the mystics discussed in previous chapters, Cecilia's death is physical, a true martyrdom; but like them, death is a gateway for union with the divine. She arrives at her mystic union by way of Scarlatti's accompaniment: his celestial music initiates her transcendence and carries her toward divinity.

Concluding Thoughts

While Quirino Colombani's *L'ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia* (1701) and Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia* (1708) tell the story of the same saint, their foci often seem quite disparate. Colombani's Cecilia is dedicated to the work of conversion and healing, it is her goal to bring truth to Valeriano and Tiburtio, and to deliver their souls to God. For Scarlatti's Cecilia, however, this work is already completed. She instead focuses on her own divine salvation, expressed through steadfast conviction that appears to defy reason. Yet both oratorios ground their narrative in the religious philosophy of love. In *L'ape industriosa*, the oration concerning love is a reflection of Renaissance Neoplatonism, and can be seen as a continuation of dialogues

that had commenced hundreds of years prior in the writings of Ficino, Bembo, and Castiglione. In *Santa Cecilia*, love is positioned at the center of a discourse concerning reason and its place in religious veneration, a topic that would become a keystone of Enlightenment thought.

Perhaps most important, however, are the oratorios' similarities in regard to ecstatic death. Colombani's Cecilia is denied the martyrdom she craves, yet her rapturous spiritual death and rebirth as the mythical phoenix awarded her the status of "martyr" in the eyes of heaven. Physical death does come for Scarlatti's Cecilia, and it is a moment that is made beautiful and glorious through the musical transportation of her soul to the celestial spheres. While the two versions of the saint's death could not be more different (one is spiritual and the other physical) they are both depicted as elevation and transformation, made possible only through music. In Colombani, it is his reuse of Tiburtio's conversion melody that drives Cecilia's rapture. In Scarlatti, music is what conveys to the audience that Cecilia has finally been united with Christ. Music, then, is what prompts ecstasy, and it is what describes it. And yet, it is intriguing that in both representations Cecilia does not experience her ecstatic contemplation as it is described in her legend; it does not occur during the celebration of her wedding as her heart prays to God. In both cases, Cecilia experiences rapture because of death, represented by Colombani and Scarlatti through music.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

This study has focused on the relationships between music, ecstasy, and death from the Middle Ages through the Early Modern era, and how those connections have changed depending on historical time and cultural situation. Yet while the mediums by which musical rapture is described do indeed change (e.g. saints' hagiographies, revelatory visions, Renaissance and baroque iconography, sixteenth-century duos, and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious operas and oratorios), the case studies presented here suggest that the core of the relationship between music and ecstatic transcendence remained essentially unaltered. Regardless of era, music was understood to be a tool by which a very real connection with divinity could be forged: within music was the power to align the soul with the heavens and connect with God.

In chapter three, I exemplified this process in Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, as well as in the fifth *Revelation* attributed to the latter saint, in which the enraptured Virgin Mary is taken up into heaven. In all cases, music initiates the ascent towards ecstasy. For Francis this process is begun with singing and his emulation of performance upon a stringed instrument, represented by two sticks, one of which is held curved by a string. Elizabeth is drawn into rapture by the sweet music of a celestial bird that is representative of Christ or God the Father. In both cases, participation in the rapture – or, at least the movement into the contemplation that precedes ecstasy – is

consensual and even sought by the saints. The ecstasy also comes about by way of an external musical source: the stringed instrument and the bird. Conversely, Mary's experience – as it is recounted in the fifteenth-century Italian transcriptions of Elizabeth's *Revelations* – is more closely related to later Renaissance and early modern descriptions of rapture as an event in which the soul is taken up by God without any prior effort or initiating actions on the part of the ecstatic. Furthermore, the musical object in Mary's rapture is Mary herself. She is the musical instrument that God plays upon in order to harmonize her soul with heaven's spheres. In these case studies from the later Middle Ages, then, there appears to be a shift from the individual's initiation of the ecstatic process (Francis), to an ecstatic experience in which celestial action is imposed upon a passive individual. Similar in all examples, however, is the lack of description regarding the rapturous music: the music itself is not as important for the reader as is the idea of celestial music's potent ability to guide the soul into ecstasy.

During the Renaissance, Neoplatonism is one of the primary ways by which an ecstatic transcendence with God (or the Good) is described. Within this philosophical framework, two key elements emerge: reunification with God through love, and reunification with God through spiritual death. In both cases, this reunification is understood to be ecstasy. According to Renaissance Neoplatonists (namely, Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Bembo, and Baldessar Castiglione), love is the desire for beauty; it is this desire that moves the individual toward contemplation. In contemplation the soul arrives at a more complete knowledge of love and beauty, but it can only access the source of true beauty (God or the Good) by being brought up into it by God himself. Rapture cannot be attained by the individual but – as Saint Teresa later insists – is at God's

discretion. There is a distinction, then, between meditation, contemplation, and rapture. According to Molinos, this difference may be thought of as a progression from self-initiated mystic devotion to involuntary engagement in contemplative thought. However, rapture is still only experienced when God reaches down to the individual and brings her or his spirit up into the highest realm of heaven.

In Renaissance iconography and music this process is represented through a conflation of spiritual (or ecstatic) and physical death. Annibale Carracci's *Death of Saint Francis* exemplifies this fusion: Francis is depicted in the moments preceding his physical death, being led into a rapturous spiritual death by a musical angel. The scene is not unlike those of the musically ecstatic Francis depicted by other members of the Carracci "school." In these paintings, music is used to represent a two-part mystic relationship between the soul and God. This two-part representation of the mystic relationship is also present in late sixteenth-century duos and early seventeenth-century religious opera, both of which feature texts that are akin to contemporaneous mystic literature. In them, the soul longs for re-unification with God. It burns, it melts, it languishes, and it yearns for the pains of death that signify ecstatic transcendence. In Stefano Landi's opera *Il Sant'Alessio*, the saint's longing for death is explicitly tied to his identity as a martyr. As is evident in the case studies of Alessandro Scarlatti's and Quirino Colombani's late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century oratorios, martyrdom becomes a fundamental method by which rapture can be expressed.

The rapture that is conveyed musically in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century oratorios is also akin to the examples of rapture in Renaissance duos and early religious

opera, in that the music in the ecstatic scenes primarily consists of a two-part texture. In Landi's *Sant'Alessio*, this is exemplified by the presence of early accompanied monody. A similar compositional construction is present in Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia* and *Il martirio di Sant'Orsola*. In both cases, Scarlatti privileges a two-part texture, triple meter (also present in Landi's *Sant'Alessio*), cadences in D minor and A minor, and melodies with restricted range. The use of a two-part texture and triple meter appear again in Colombani's *L'ape industriosa in Santa Cecilia*, during Cecilia's ecstatic aria "Piango sì, ma in dolce pianto." Common among all then, is a meter in three – a hallowed number, likely indicative of the extreme holiness of religious ecstasy – and a texture that is primarily in two parts, thereby representing the relationship between the coupled soul and God. While a triple meter is not present in Scarlatti's musical rendition of Cecilia's death and spiritual ascent into heaven, the moment still features a simplified texture in which the *cembalo* is removed and Cecilia's melody is supported by sustained strings.

Also present within the raptures of early modern religious operas and oratorios is the eroticization of the scene. As a spiritual death, ecstasy was akin to ejaculation – another time in which the spirit temporarily left the body. Furthermore, there was a long-standing cultural understanding of rapture as an intimate joining of the soul with God as bride and bridegroom – their union was comparable to marital consummation. This interpretation extended back to the Middle Ages, when it was expounded upon in countless exegetic commentaries upon the Song of Songs. In oratorios, then, spiritual death was eroticized through martyrs' longings to experience painful death (physical and

spiritual) and enjoy the sweet torments that would reunify them with Christ. Their longings for suffering are also longings for the erotic copulation of religious ecstasy.

Performances of such sentiments resulted in the presentation of erotic religious ecstasy as a form of devotional spectacle. I refer to these scenes as aural iconography, as they provided a way for audiences to hear composers' interpretations of the music that was associated with the religious ecstasies featured in the countless depictions of saints' raptures that surrounded them. Ecstatic scenes in oratorios simultaneously removed the experience of rapture from, and made it more accessible to the laity. By featuring it as an event that was experienced by saints alone, the performance of ecstasy became a topos, a conventional experience associated with saints rather than with lay practitioners of mystic devotion. And yet, by presenting saints' erotic raptures as spectacle, their intimate couplings with divinity could be similarly experienced by the audience through the presence of affective music.

And so, in sum, one might say that there is a transformation from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern era in which music is present in the ecstatic scene as an outside force that is used to work upon the saint and bring him or her into rapture, to music which is both outside force as inducer of ecstasy, and the way by which the scene may be felt, even shared, by a wider audience. In hagiographic case studies from the Middle Ages, the reader does not hear the music associated with the rapture; it is a signifier of the soul's ascent. And in Renaissance iconography the sounds of the musical rapture are only intimated; the viewer constructs her or his own musical soundscape. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious operas and oratorios, however, the music of the rapture is

heard. Its presence allows the audience to step into the sounds of ecstasy, feel their souls stirred to a realignment with the heavens, and imagine their own rapturous death.

APPENDIX A

CHAPTER III FIGURES



Figure 3. Giotto di Bondone, *Legend of Saint Francis: Ecstasy of Saint Francis* (1297-1300), Assisi, Basilica of Saint Francis.



Figure 4. Michelangelo Merisi, “il Caravaggio,” *Saint Francis in Ecstasy* (1595), Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum.



Figure 5. Guido Reni, *Saint Francis Consoled by a Musical Angel* (1605), Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale.

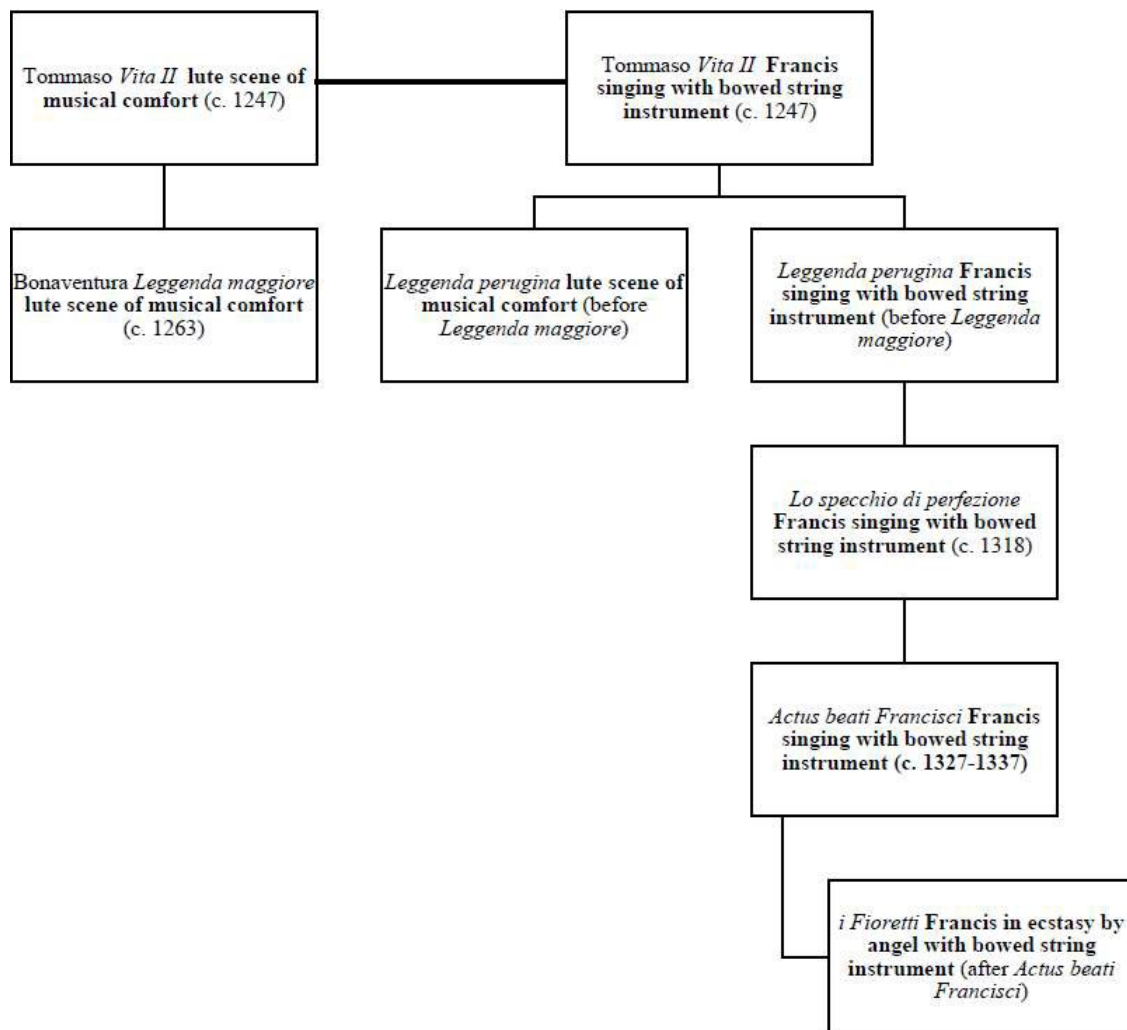


Figure 6. Hagiographic tree of Saint Francis' musical consolation and musical ecstasy legends.



Figure 7. Francisco Ribalta, *Saint Francis Consoled by an Angel* (1620), Madrid, Museo del Prado.



Figure 8. Agostino Carracci after Francesco Vanni, *Saint Francis Consoled by a Musical Angel* (1595), San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.



Figure 9. Giuseppe Cesari, “il Cavalier d’Arpino,” *Saint Francis Consoled by an Angel* (1593), Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse.



Figure 10. Ludovico Carracci, *The Angelic Consolation of Saint Francis* (1592), Paris, private collection.



Figure 11. Ludovico Carracci, *Ecstasy of Saint Francis of Assisi* (c. 1592), Paris, Musée du Louvre.

APPENDIX B

REVELATION FIVE TRANSCRIPTION

Attributed to Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Barberini. Lat.4032

124v

Un altra volta disse la vergine
benedetta di me faceva idio
come alcuno maestro di sona-
re stornamento il quale si studia
dacordare tutte le corde. Et poi
chella bene acordarte si canta
e si suona con esso somiglante-
mente lanima mia e tutti
sentimenti del mio corpo aco-
rdava a suoi piaceri et in que-
sto modo essendo hordinata
lanima mia era portata dagli
angioli nel cospetto di dio et ivi
riceveva tanto diletto e tan-
ta alegregça ch'io non mi rico-
rdava ch'io fossi mai nata ne-
l mondo ne chi o lavessi mai ve-
duto et avea tanta familia-
rita con dio et cogli angioli
che pareva che io fossi istata
sempre in quella cielesti al co-
rte. Et quando ch'era stata
tanto quanto a dio piaceva-
simmi rendeva a gli agnoli
et eglino mi riportavano a luo-
go nel quale io m'era posta ino-
ratione. Et quando io era torna-
ta in me et vedevami posta
in terra mentovarmi di cio
ch'io avea veduto infiamma
vamasì dell'amore di dio ca
braciava le pietre e legni

125r (left column)

acio poteva trovare per amo-

re del signore che l'avea create
et porrevami essere ancilla di tutte
le donne che erano nel tempio
et desiderava essere posta a tutte
le creature per amore del padre
cielestiale et questo ma avviene
spesso. Et casi dovresti fare tu.
Ma tu sempre contendi e die perche
mi sono fatte queste cose. Con cio
sia cosa che io ne sia degna et
faciendo cosi perdi la buona speranza
che dovresti avere et non riconosci
i benefici di dio. Voglio figliola
che tu te ne guardi et mai non dire
più cosi che molto dispiace a dio
percio che ella sua guardissima
bonta et sapienza. Da queste gratie
acchui li piace et conosce bene
acchui si debbono fare. Anche le disse
io sono venuta stanotte per ispetiale
gratia et percio dimanda sicuramente
di col che tu vogli. Et io ti rispondero
et finite queste parole si passo accato
a santa elisabetta una sua famiglia,
acchui santa elisabetta rispuose
dalcuna cosa per alcuno segno. Et la
vergine gloriosa la riprese duramente
di cio che la intendeva aver un'altra
cosa mentre chella era con lei. Et
di elle dicio penitentia che non
intrasse quella notte i letto. Et la
mattina venuta si doleva santa
Elisabetta che non aveva dimandata
la Vergine maria percio che essi
dubitava di non aver piu quella
gratia. Et la donna piena di
misericordia rispuose

125r (right column)

a suo celati pensieri e dissele non
temere figliola domandami
di cio / che tu vuoi e io ti sodisfarro

pienamente. Et santa helisabetta disse priegovi Madonna che voi mi diciate per che voi con cosi grande desiderio domandavate a dio gratia di vedere quella vergine che doveva portare il figliolo di dio. Et la vergine rispuose la avea spesso le consolationi le quali tue dette. Et quando io sentiva che quella consolatione hove io era dovea finire non poteva sostenere. Et una volta pensando che io non mi vorrei mai partire dallui lavarmi et andai al libro per trovare alcuna cosa onde il mio animo si confortasse et avendo aperto il libro trovai inanci quel detto d'Isaya profeta. Che dice vergine santa che concepera et partorira il figliolo didio. Incontenente intesi che il figliuolo didio doveva che giare vergine della quale dovea prendere carne sui mai nel mio animo di conservare sempre verginita ariverençia di quella vergine e di darlami per ancilla e di sempre servira e di non mi partir mai dallei se mi convenisse andare con lei per tutto il mondo. Et una notte mi gitai con animo molto divoto in oratione et pregai idio che mi concedesse che vere tanto tempo ch'io vedessi quella vergine con miei occhi essere utile colle mie mani et collo mio capo inchinassi inanci allei con grandissima riverença. Et dessimi tutta a suoi servigi. Et subitamente mi fu dinanci uno splendore maggiore che quello del sole et

125v (left column)
del meço di quello splendore
veniva una voce che disse. Appa-

recchiati a partorire il mio figliolo. Et sappi per certo chella subgessione che tu ai in cuore di fare ad altrui per amor di me voglio io che altri faccia a te. Et voglio che tu sia madre del mio figliolo e dona che abbia signoria sopra chiunque tu vorrai per la mia gratia nel mio amore. Non avra ne del mio figliolo chi te non amerà. Et chi non confessera che tu sia madre del mio figliolo. Non conterrà nel mio regnio. Tu mai domandato che io ti faccia gratiosa nel conspetto di quella vergine che porterà il mio figliolo. Et chella si fidi tanto di te chella ti presti. Il mio figliolo che tu adempi di lui il tuo desiderio. Et io ti dico che tu laverai et da me ti sarà dato et non da altrui. Et chi la tua gratia non domanderà del mio figliolo di lui non potrà avere consolatione ne potrà avere sua gratia. Et gli angeli furono incontinentemente a levarmi et confortarmi. Et quella hora mi diede al lodare idio et aver dargli gratia. Et non mi potea dicio satiare ne di ne di notte. Et aspettando per certo il dio della promessa el fatto pregava devotissimamente il padre celestiale idio onnipotente e diceva/ Priegoti misericordioso e dolcissimo signore e padre poi che ti piace ch'io detta partorire il tuo benedetto figliolo che tu mi detti donare lo spirito della sapienza che mi amaestri a se-

125 v (right column)
rivillo secondo la sua volonta
ancora mi dona il dono dello
intendimento che mi faccia
conoscere la sua volonta per c-

io ch' egli nasciera aguisa hu
mana / so chegli non potra fa-
vellare incontenente. Et il do-
no del consiglio parlo cui aiuto
sappia insegnare tutti coloro
perfettamente come anno affa-
re alcuna cosa colui. E il dono
no della pieta che mi insegni
essere pietosa verso lanecista della
sua humanita et prove dello
come si converra el dono del
timore il quale mi faccia essere
humile che io con timore et co-
n amore et colla riverença
che si converra io gli serva que-
ste sono le cose che io domanda-
va addio padre ançi che mi do-
nasse il suo figliolo. Et se tu con-
sideri bene la salutatione che
dio mi manda per langiolo tu-
tte le mie petitioni troverai
adempite.

APPENDIX C

CHAPTER V SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

	Love	Words of Ecstasy-Rapture-Death						
	<i>amore/amare</i>	<i>morte</i>	<i>gusti spirituali /gusti divini</i>	<i>rapimento estasi</i>		<i>acqua</i> (as a metaphor for the source of ecstasy)	<i>contenti</i> (used in the fourth room to distinguish consolation from spiritual delights, then used as a signifier of pleasure)	
Fourth Room								
Chapter 1	9	1	2	0	0	1	11	
Chapter 2	4	1	2	1	0	11	2	
Chapter 3	5	1	2	1	0	3	0	
Room Four Total	18	3	6	2	0	15	13	

	Words of Desire				Words of Fire and Heat			
	<i>dolce diletto/dilettare</i>	<i>desiderio</i>	<i>deliziosa/ deliziare</i>	<i>deliziare</i>	<i>infiammare/ fiamma</i>	<i>fuoco</i>	<i>scintilla</i>	<i>bruciare calore</i>
Fourth Room								
Chapter 1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Chapter 2	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0
Chapter 3	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
Room Four Total	4	1	12	0	0	1	0	0

	Words of Pain				Words of Longing and Other Physical Response					
	<i>tormento</i>	<i>ferita</i>	<i>pena</i>	<i>dolore</i>	<i>bramare</i>	<i>tremare</i>	<i>lamenti</i>	<i>struggere</i>	<i>sciogliere</i>	<i>stringere /spingere</i>
Fourth Room										
Chapter 1	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Chapter 2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
Chapter 3	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Room Four Total	1	0	5	0	3	0	1	0	0	2

Table 1. Teresa di Gesù, *Il castello interiore*, room four, descriptive word usage.

		Love	Words of Ecstasy-Rapture-Death						
							<i>acqua</i> (as a metaphor for the source of ecstasy)	<i>contenti</i> (used in the fourth room to distinguish consolation from spiritual delights, then used as a signifier of pleasure)	
		<i>amore/amare</i>	<i>morte</i>	<i>divini</i>	<i>rapimento</i>	<i>estasi</i>			
Fifth Room									
	Chapter 1	3	4	0	0	0	0	1	
	Chapter 2	6	9	0	0	0	0	2	
	Chapter 3	17	7	0	0	0	0	0	
	Chapter 4	6	0	1	3	0	0	1	
	Room Five Total	32	20	1	3	0	0	4	

		Words of Desire				Words of Fire and Heat				
					<i>deliziosa/ deliziare</i>	<i>infiammare/ fiamma</i>	<i>fuoco</i>	<i>scintilla</i>	<i>bruciare</i>	<i>calore</i>
		<i>dolce</i>	<i>diletto/dilettare</i>	<i>desiderio</i>						
Fifth Room										
	Chapter 1	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 2	0	0	8	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Chapter 3	0	0	6	3	0	0	0	0	2
	Chapter 4	1	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Room Five Total	1	1	19	7	1	0	0	0	3

		Words of Pain				Words of Longing and Other Physical Response					
						<i>stringere</i>					
		<i>tormento</i>	<i>ferita</i>	<i>pena</i>	<i>dolore</i>	<i>bramare</i>	<i>tremare</i>	<i>lamenti</i>	<i>struggere</i>	<i>sciogliere</i>	<i>/spingere</i>
Fifth Room											
	Chapter 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 2	4	0	7	5	2	0	0	1	0	0
	Chapter 3	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
	Room Five Total	4	0	11	6	3	0	0	1	1	0

Table 2. Teresa di Giesù, *Il castello interiore*, room five, descriptive word usage.

		Love	Words of Ecstasy-Rapture-Death									
		<i>amore/amare</i>	<i>morte</i>	<i>gusti spirituali</i> <i>/gusti divini</i>	<i>rapimento</i>	<i>estasi</i>	<i>acma</i> (as a metaphor for the source of ecstasv)	<i>contenti</i> (used in the fourth room to distinguish consolation from spiritual delights, then used as a signifier of pleasure)				
Sixth Room												
	Chapter 1	3	1	0	2	0	0					
	Chapter 2	5	0	2	1	0	0					
	Chapter 3	2	2	0	0	0	0					
	Chapter 4	5	3	0	13	5	0					
	Chapter 5	2	0	0	4	0	1					
	Chapter 6	3	2	0	1	1	3					
	Chapter 7	6	6	0	0	0	0					
	Chapter 8	3	0	0	0	0	0					
	Chapter 9	6	1	0	3	0	0					
	Chapter 10	2	0	0	1	0	0					
	Chapter 11	5	8	0	2	0	3					
Room Six Total		42	23	2	27	6	7					5
		Words of Desire					Words of Fire and Heat					
		<i>dolce</i>	<i>diletto/dilettere</i>	<i>desiderio</i>	<i>deliziosa/deliziare</i>	<i>infiammare</i> <i>/fiamma</i>	<i>fuoco scintilla bruciare calore</i>					
Sixth Room												
	Chapter 1	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0		
	Chapter 2	2	0	6	9	1	1	4	0	0		
	Chapter 3	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	0		
	Chapter 4	0	0	7	0	0	0	1	1	0		
	Chapter 5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1		
	Chapter 6	1	0	8	1	0	2	0	0	0		
	Chapter 7	0	0	4	3	2	3	1	1	0		
	Chapter 8	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Chapter 9	2	1	11	2	0	0	0	0	0		
	Chapter 10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0		
	Chapter 11	0	0	4	0	1	2	0	2	1		
Room Six Total		5	2	50	16	4	9	8	4	2		
		Words of Pain				Words of Longing and Other Physical Response						
		<i>tormento</i>	<i>ferita</i>	<i>pena</i>	<i>dolore</i>	<i>bramare</i>	<i>tremare</i>	<i>lamenti</i>	<i>struggere</i>	<i>sciogliere/spingere</i>	<i>stringere</i>	
Sixth Room												
	Chapter 1	10	1	13	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 2	1	3	10	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	0
	Chapter 3	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Chapter 4	1	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 5	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 6	1	0	7	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
	Chapter 7	2	0	6	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 8	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Chapter 9	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 11	9	0	11	5	2	0	0	1	0	1	0
Room Six Total		26	4	55	18	8	4	7	4	0	3	

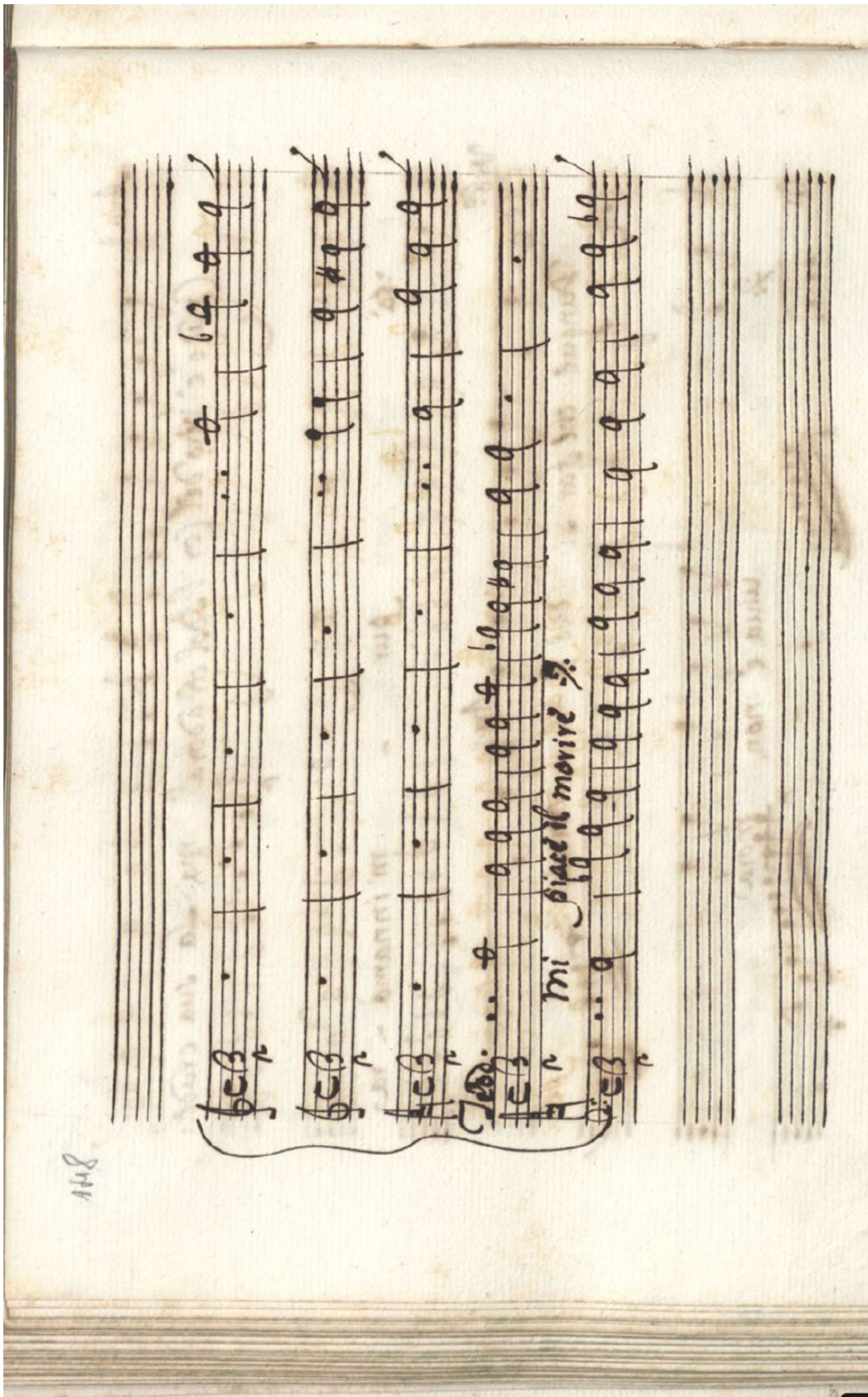
Table 3. Teresa di Giesù, *Il castello interiore*, room six, descriptive word usage.

		Love	Words of Ecstasy-Rapture-Death						
				<i>gusti spirituali /gusti divini</i>	<i>rapimento estasi</i>	<i>acqua</i> (as a metaphor for the source of ecstasy)	<i>contenti</i> (used in the fourth room to distinguish consolation from spiritual delights, then used as a signifier of pleasure)		
		<i>amore/amare</i>	<i>morte</i>						
Seventh Room									
	Chapter 1	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	
	Chapter 2	4	1	1	0	0	5	0	
	Chapter 3	4	5	1	2	1	1	1	
	Chapter 4	6	4	0	0	0	0	6	
	Room Seven Total	16	12	2	4	1	6	7	

		Words of Desire				Words of Fire and Heat			
		<i>deliziosa/</i>				<i>infiammare/</i>			
		<i>dolce diletto/dilettare</i>	<i>desiderio</i>	<i>deliziare</i>	<i>fiamma</i>	<i>fuoco</i>	<i>scintilla</i>	<i>bruciare</i>	<i>calore</i>
Seventh Room									
	Chapter 1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Chapter 2	0	2	2	0	2	1	0	0
	Chapter 3	0	0	9	1	1	0	0	0
	Chapter 4	0	0	7	2	0	1	0	0
	Room Seven Total	1	3	19	3	3	2	0	0

		Words of Pain				Words of Longing and Other Physical Response						
						<i>stringere</i>						
		<i>tormento</i>	<i>ferita</i>	<i>pena</i>	<i>dolore</i>	<i>bramare</i>	<i>tremare</i>	<i>lamenti</i>	<i>struggere</i>	<i>sciogliere/spingere</i>		
Seventh Room												
	Chapter 1	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	
	Chapter 2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Chapter 3	3	0	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	
	Chapter 4	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Room Seven Total	5	0	8	1	5	1	1	0	0	0	

Table 4. Teresa di Gesù, *Il castello interiore*, room seven, descriptive word usage.



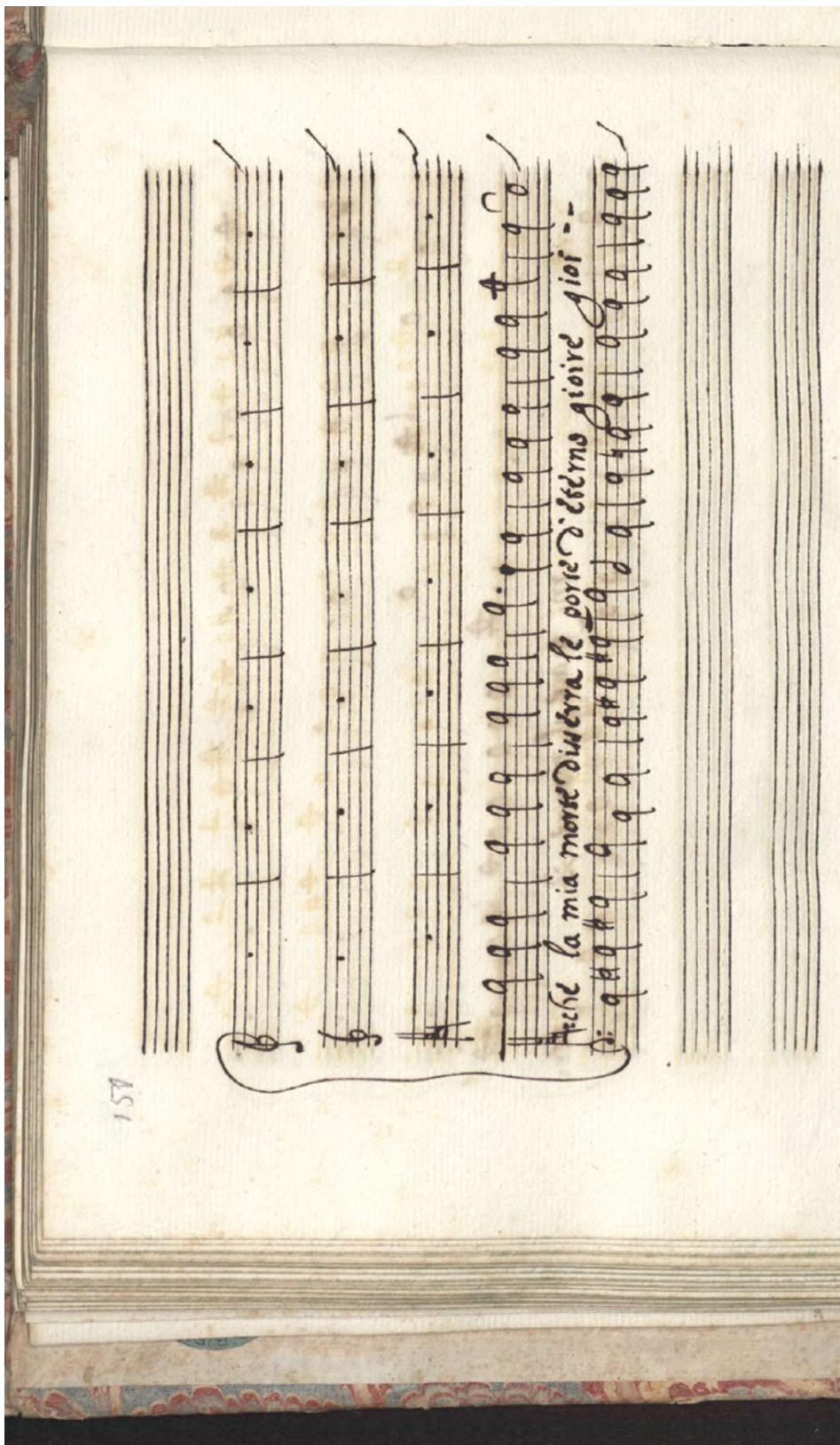
Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, fol. 74v.

68

mi piace il morire

54

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, fol. 75r.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, fol. 75v.

151

mi

76

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, fol. 76r.

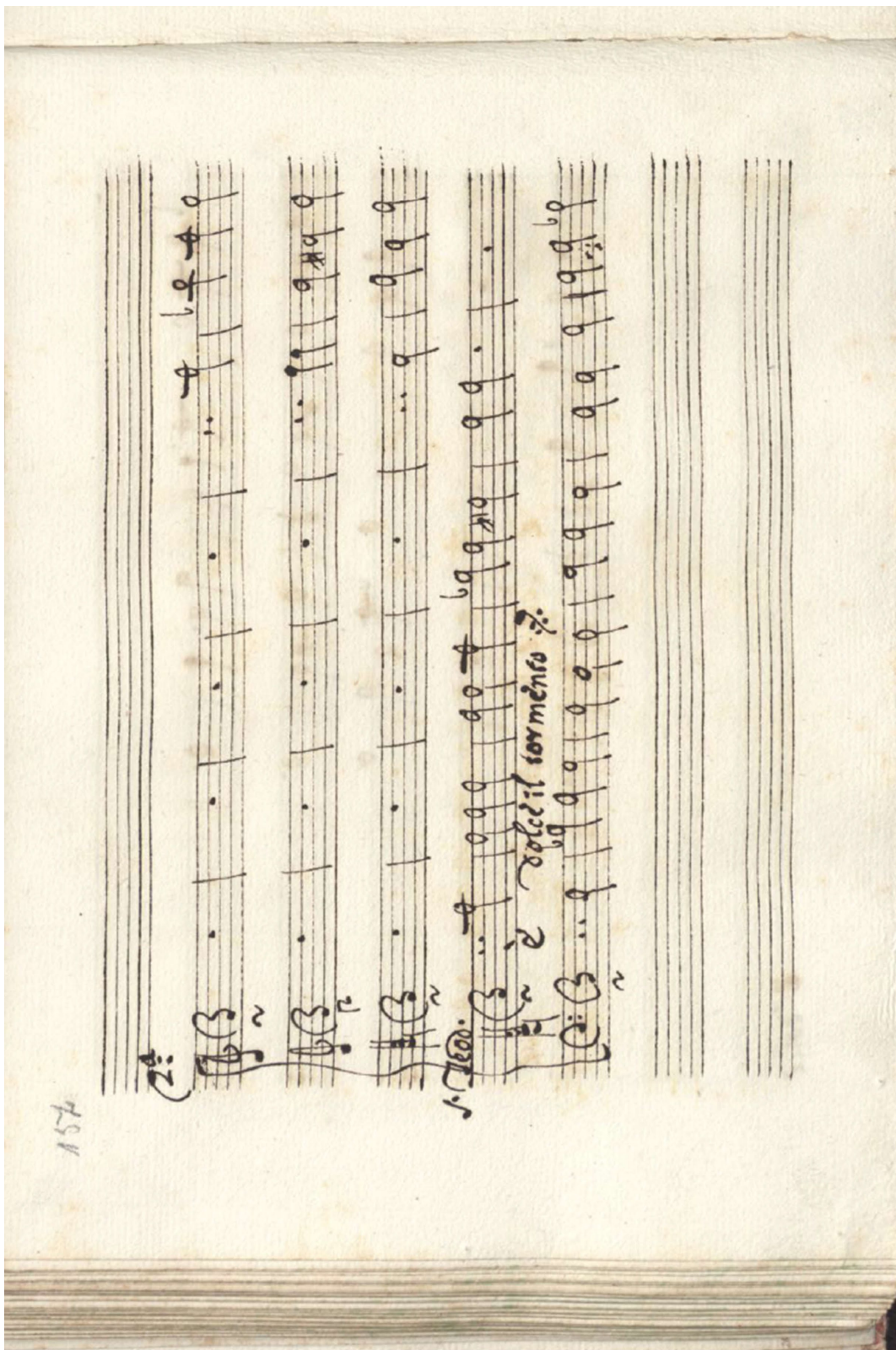
152

Mi piace il morire mi piace il morire
il morire
e dolce

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 76v.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 77r.

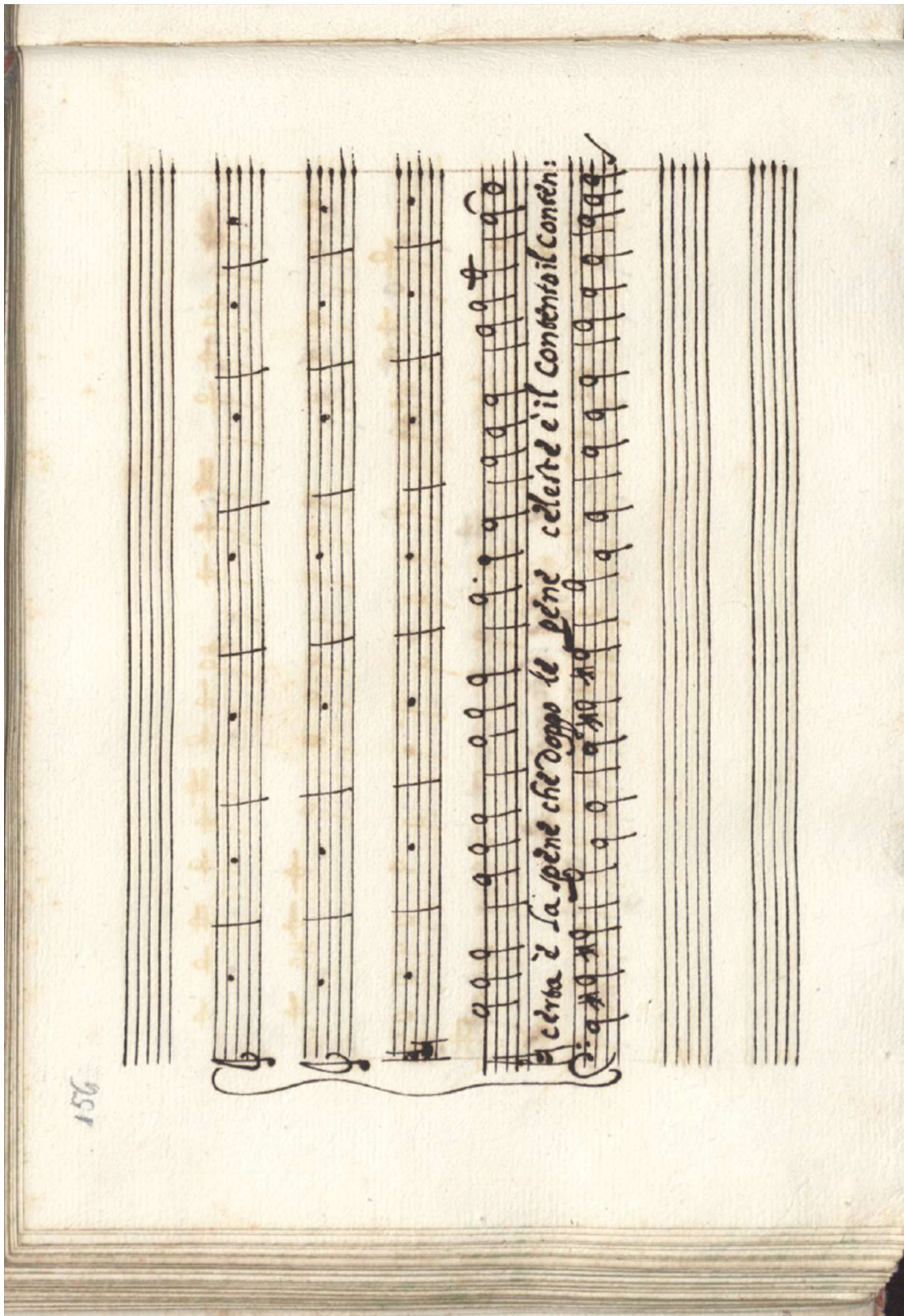


Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 77v.

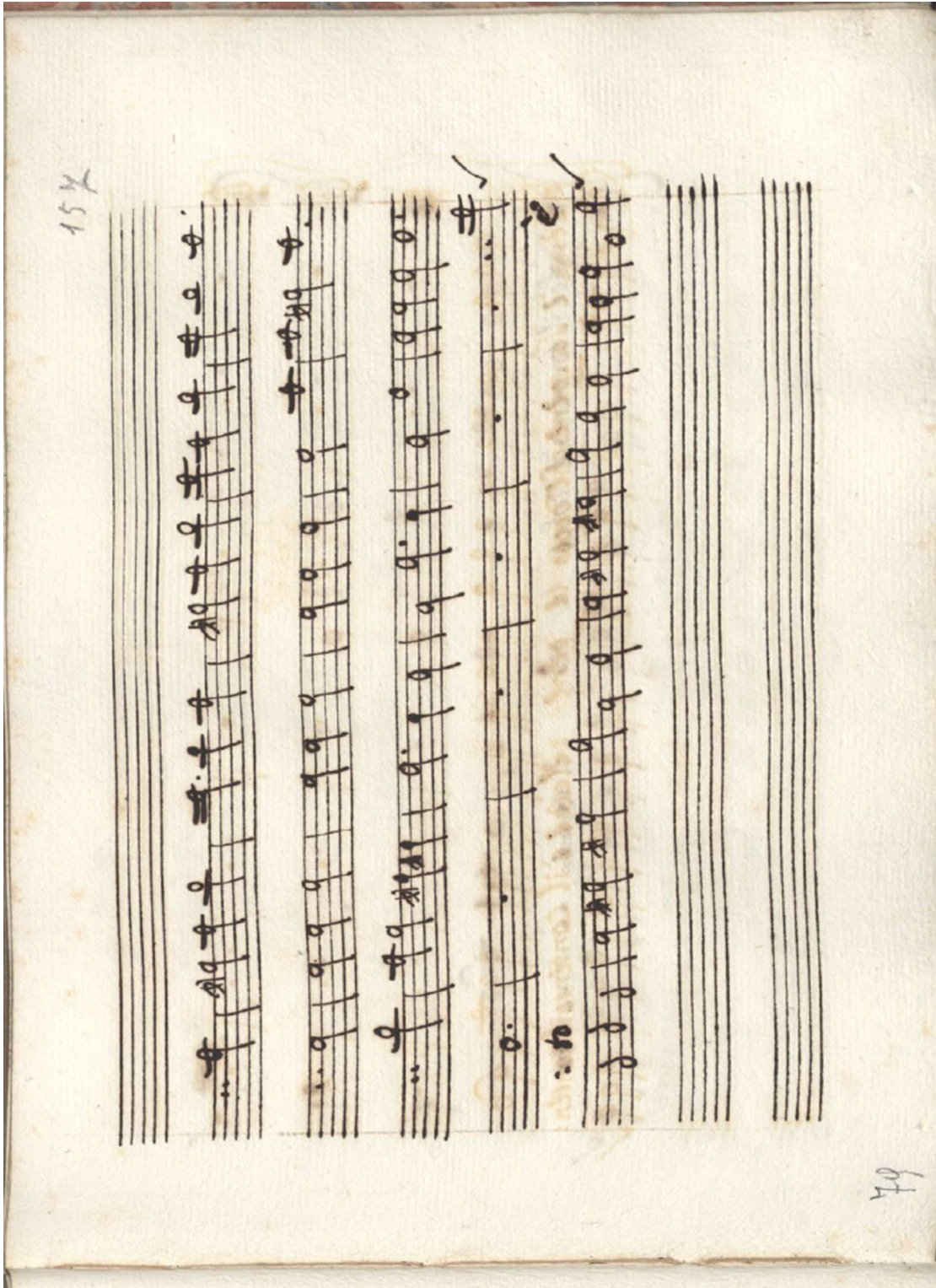
155

48

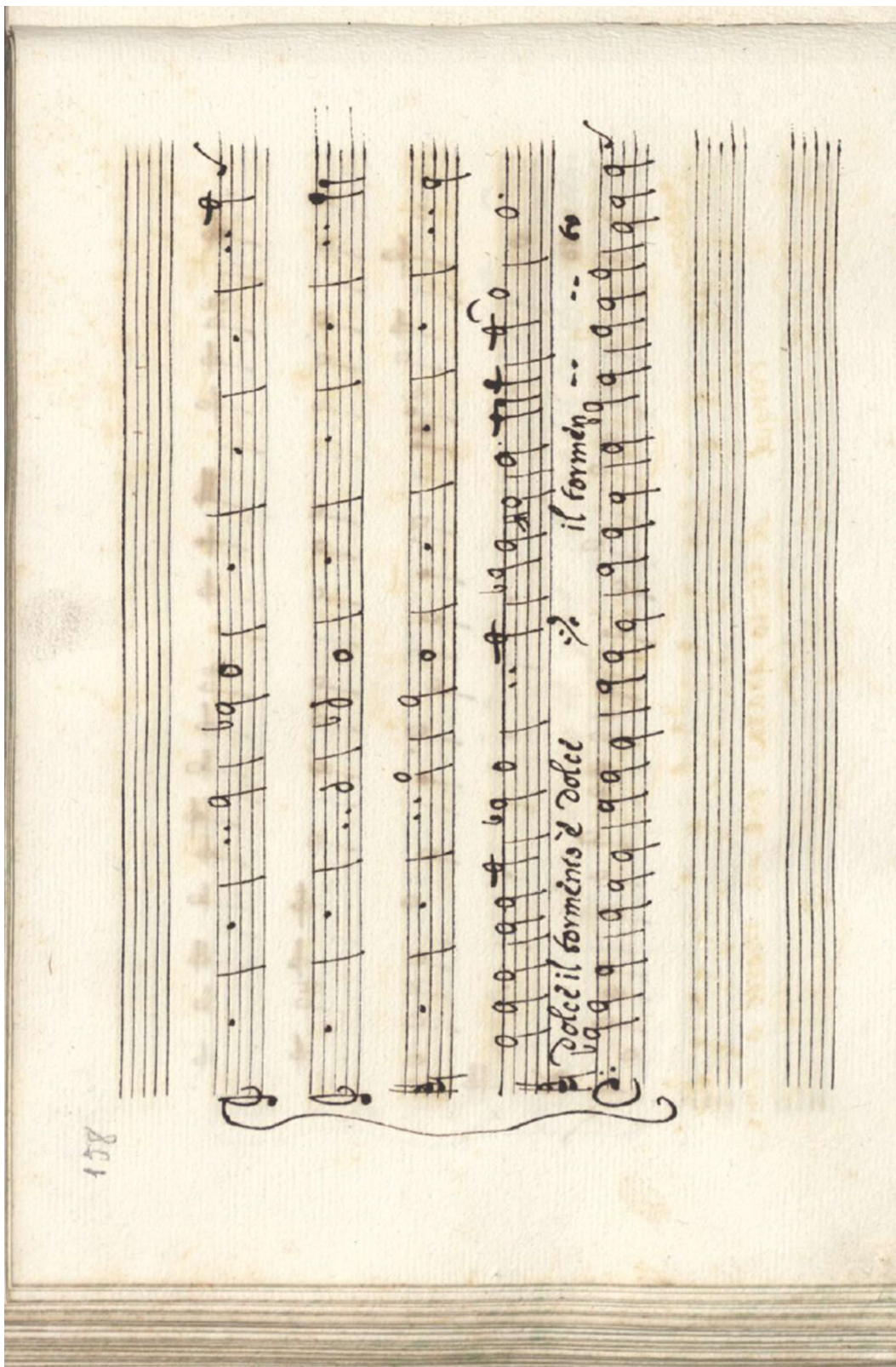
Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 78r.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 78v.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 79r.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 79v.

159

Vrbani.
C: c
Punque se tanto gratao t'è la morte o domi.

80

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Mi piace il morire," *Il martirio di Santa Teodosia*, 80r.

Handwritten musical score for "Dio clemente" by Alessandro Scarlatti. The page features two systems of staves. The first system includes a Flauto part marked "Largo" and a Fico part. The lyrics "Dio clemente speranza de" are written above the vocal lines. The second system continues the vocal lines with lyrics "ranza de cori quanto è dol" and "cori quanto è gra". The score is written in a historical style with various musical notations and clefs.

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 77.

Handwritten musical score for "Dio clemente" by Alessandro Scarlatti, page 78. The page features two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are: "il can - ce per te - to per te", "qui - re il - penar e dol -", and "e grato per te il penar e". The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings like "il can" and "dol".

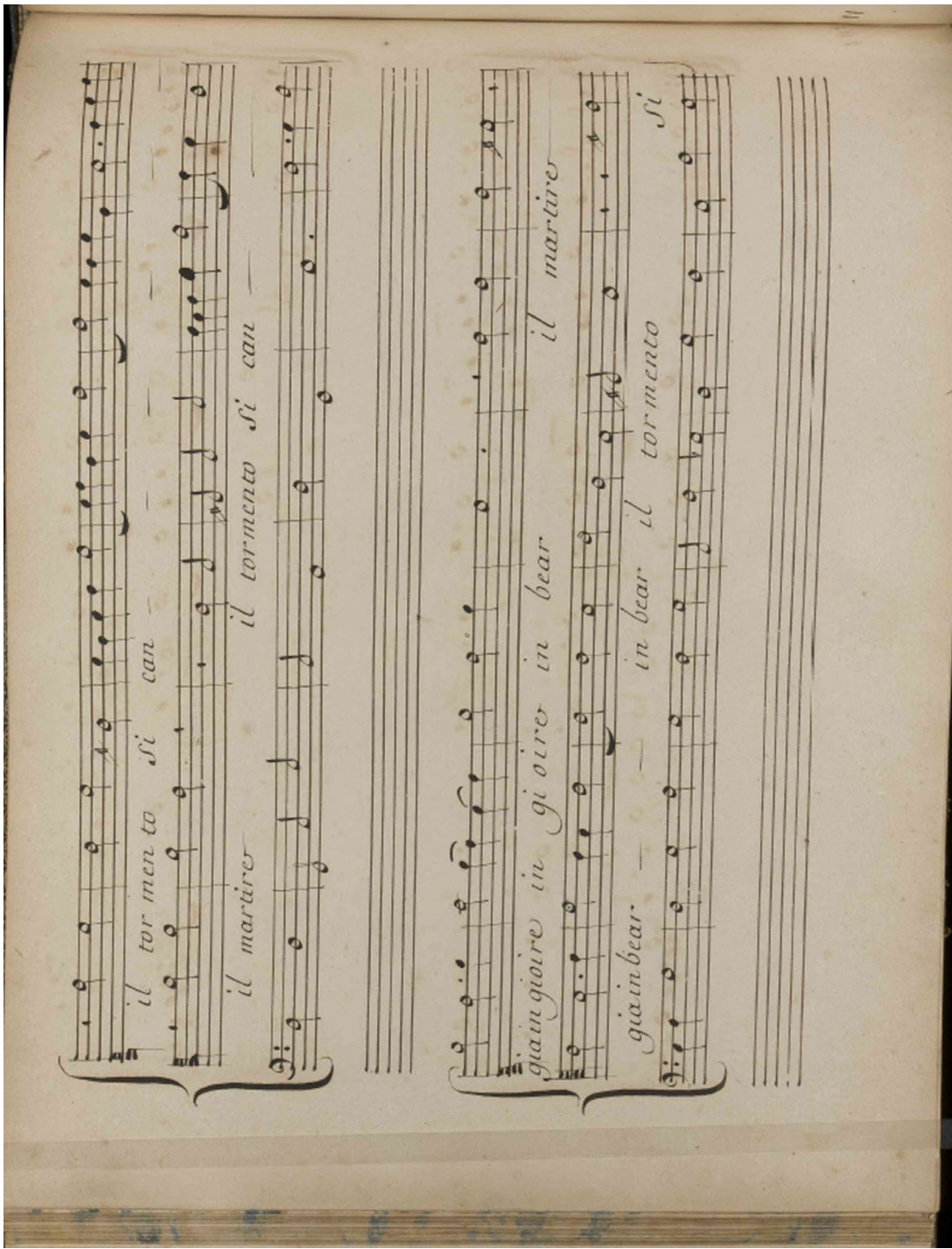
Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 78.

29

co - il langui - - re
gra - to il penar
il langui -

è grato e grato il penar -
re - il pe nar
pe nar

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 79.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 80.

il tormento si can - gia in gioire in bear -
gia in bear

Dio clemente
in gioire in gioire in bear
in bear

81

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 81.

mente speranza de cori
quanto e dol

anza decori
quanto gra

co per te
to

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 82.

il langui - - - reil - - penar e' dol - -
to - - e grato per te il penar il
il langui - - re

gra - - to il penar il langui - -
il langui - -

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 83.

grato e
re- il penar.

s. Orsola
mio spovoinmortale Giesu dol ce dolce ristoro nel

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Dio clemente," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 84.

117

Violino Primo
Violino Secondo
Violino Terzo

No. Strali

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 117.

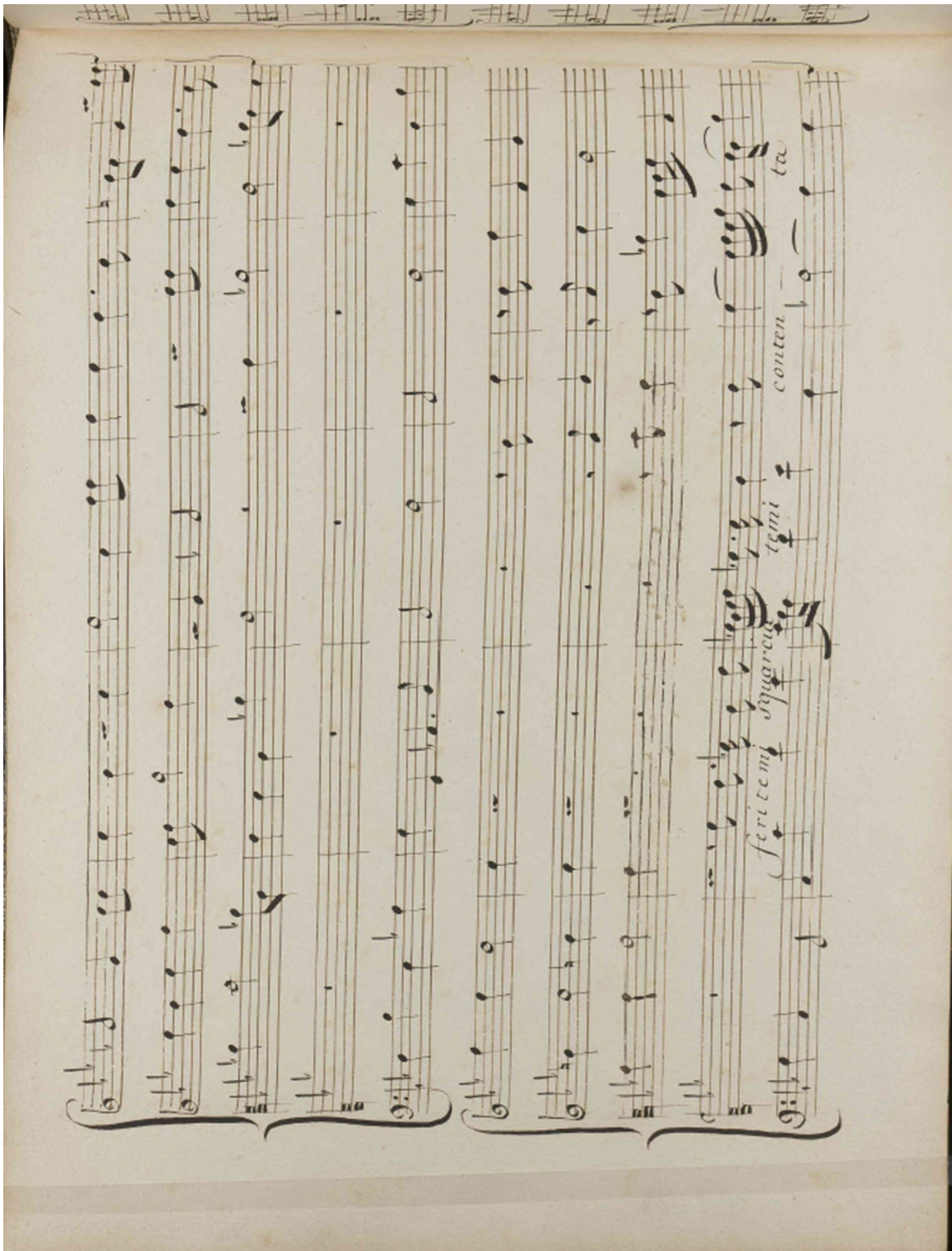


Alessandro Scarlatti, "No strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 118.

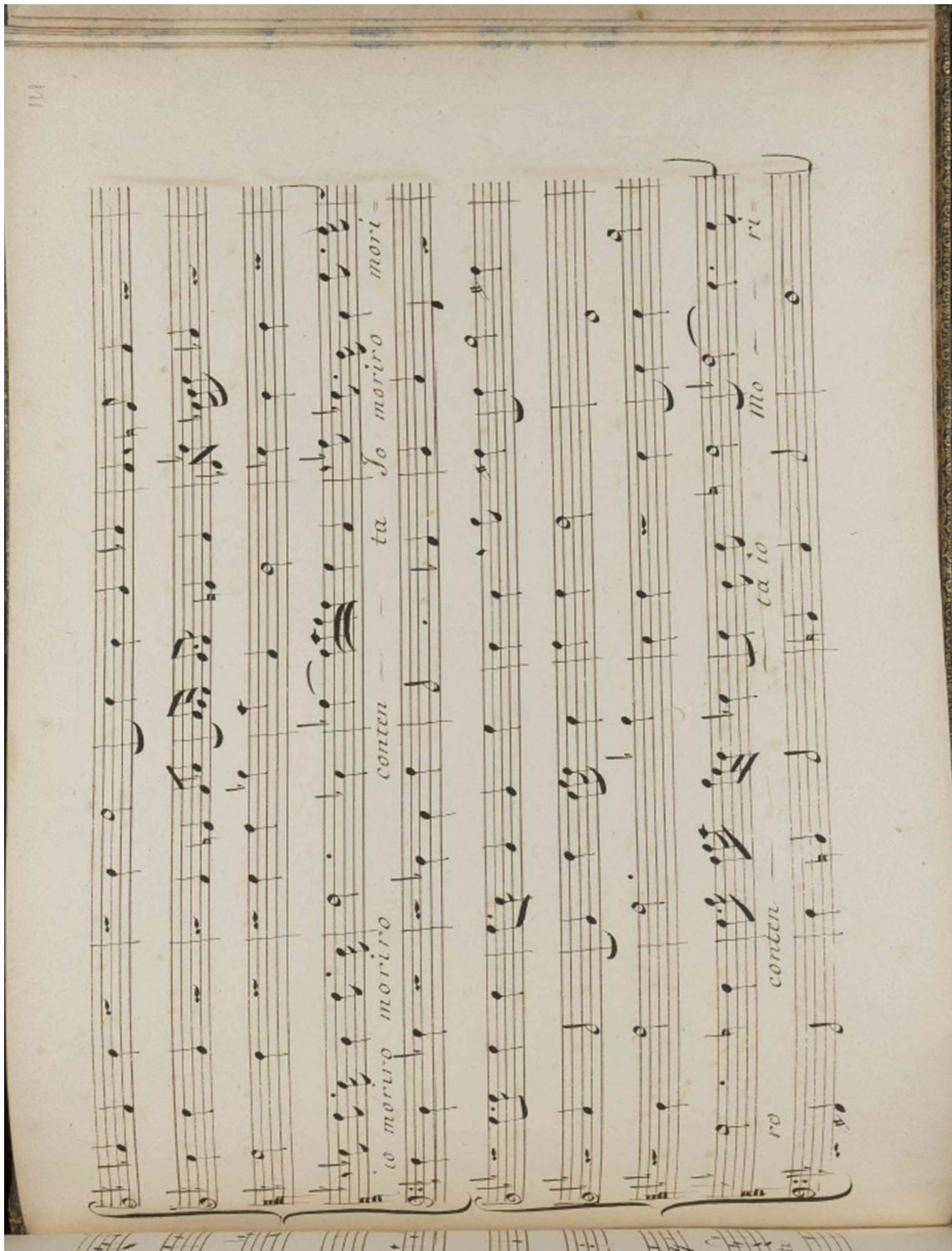
119

qui chio non ui sdegno no non ui sdegno no chio non vi sdeg
no
Strali soavi no no chio non qui sdegno chio non vi sdegno no no
no

Alessandro Scarlatti, "No' strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 119.



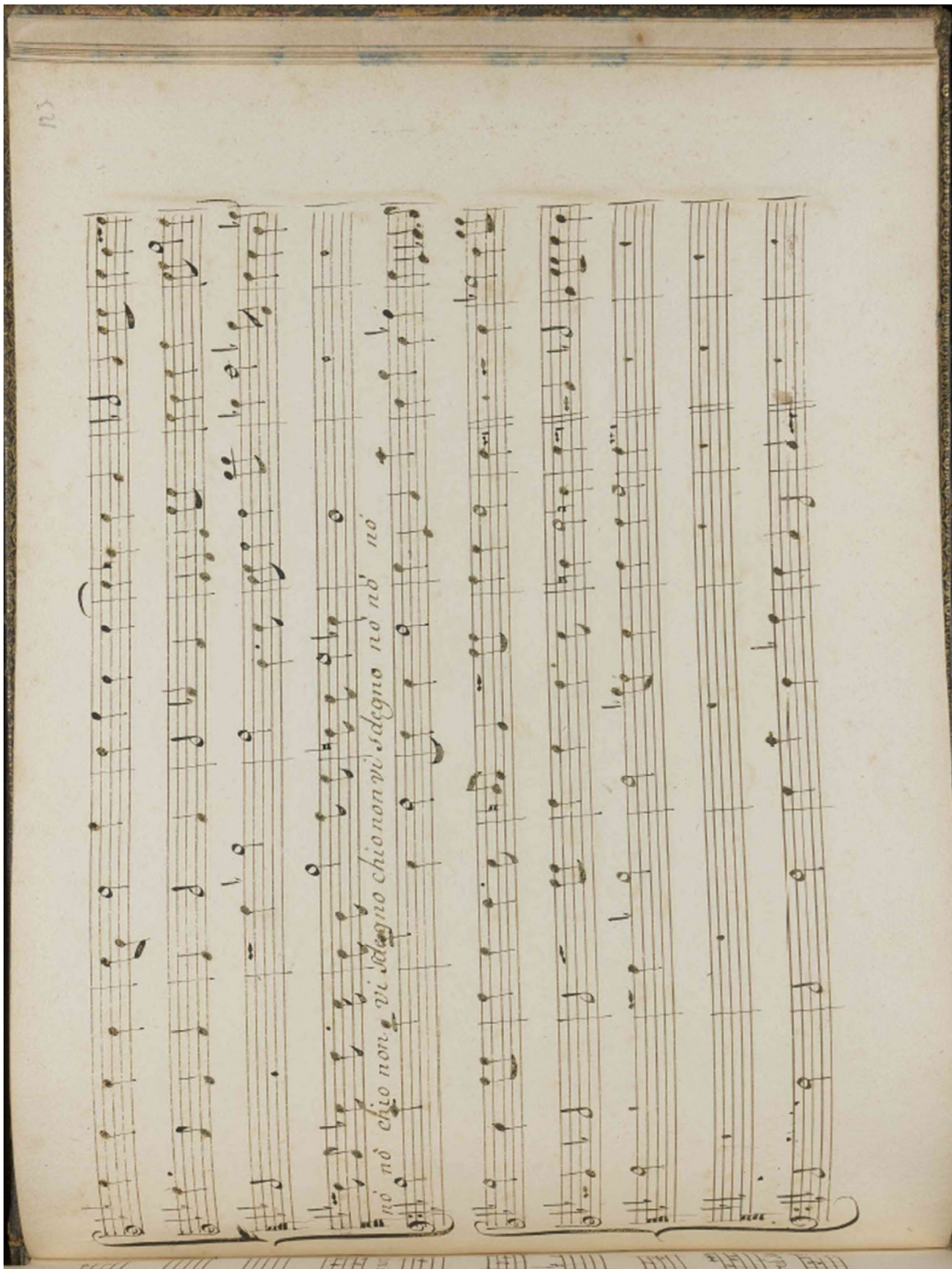
Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 120.



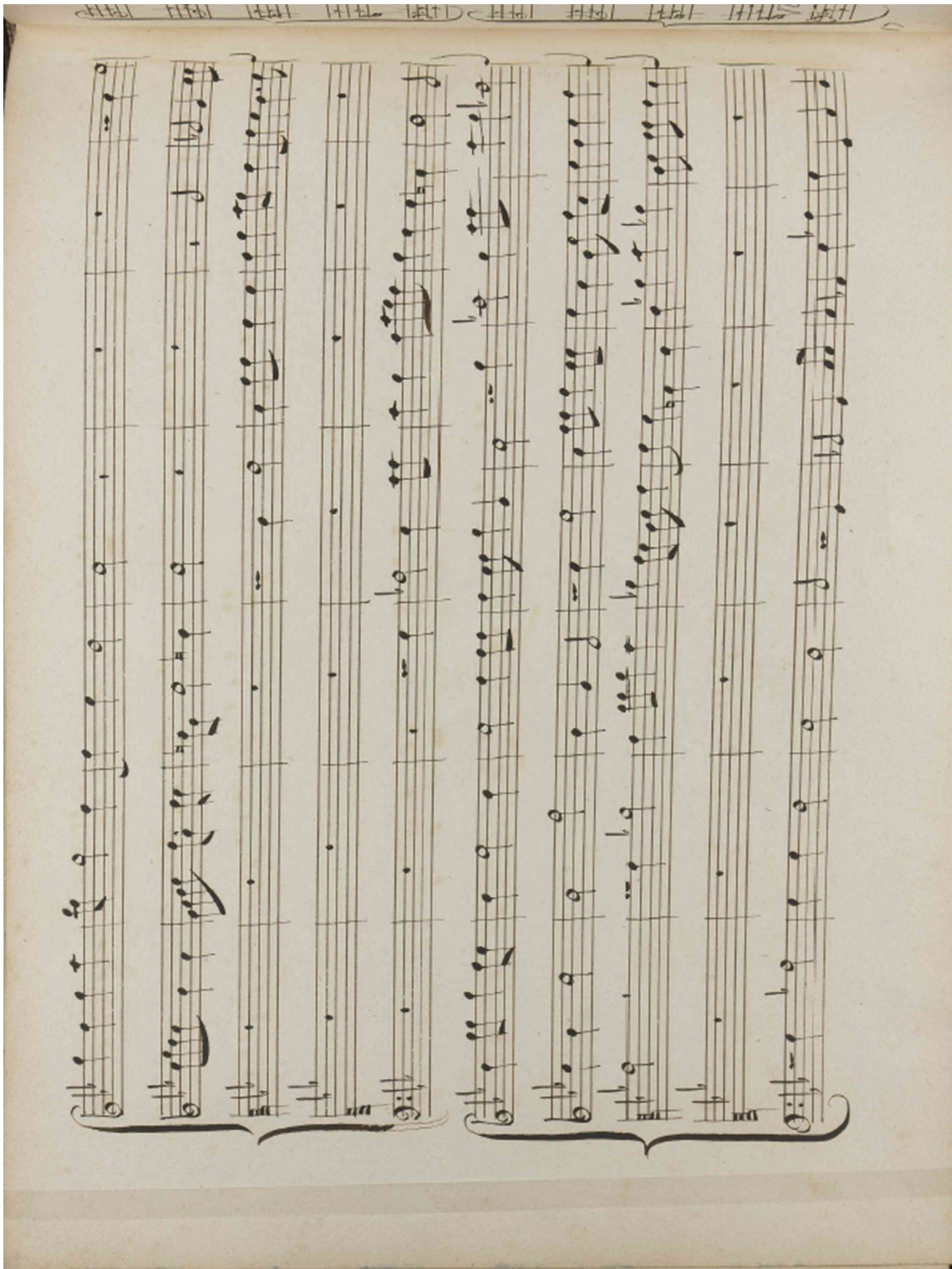
Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 121.

A page of handwritten musical notation for a vocal piece. The score is written on ten staves, with the first five staves grouped by a large brace on the left and the last five staves by another large brace on the left. The notation includes various note values, rests, and clefs. The lyrics are written below the notes. The lyrics are: "no no strali soavi chio non vi", "segno no non vi segno no chio non vi", and "strali soavi". The paper shows signs of age, including some staining and a small tear at the top edge.

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 122.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 123.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 124.

121

Non piu cari diletti non voglio
viver piu non voglio viver piu non voglio

17

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 125.

vi-uer più cari diletti non voglio viuer più non voglio viuer più

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 126.

127

Scorgetevi quida te mi trafir - ta al mio gicou mio gicou tra

tra al mio gicou mio gicou trafir - ta al

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 127.

Handwritten musical score for "Nò strali soavi" by Alessandro Scarlatti. The page features two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a keyboard accompaniment. The lyrics are written in Italian and include the words "mio", "Gicu", "non piu cari diletti non voglio piu non voglio piu", "qui no voglio vi uer piu cari diletti non voglio piu non voglio".

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 128.

Largo
Maggia sen-

Voglio viver piu
to ch'il core agoniz(a) nel sangue orbe infido empio auerno iugano amore

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Nò strali soavi," *Il martirio di Sant' Orsola*, p. 129.

APPENDIX D

CHAPTER VI FIGURES



Figure 16. Raffaello Sanzio, *Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia* (1516-1517), Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale.



Figure 17. Carlo Saraceni, *Saint Cecilia and the Angel* (c. 1610), Rome, Palazzo Barberini, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica.



Figure 18. Guido Reni, *Santa Cecilia* (1606), Pasadena, Norton Simon Museum of Art.



Figure 19. Sebastiano Conca, *Saint Cecilia* (c. 1735), private collection.



Figure 20. Domenico Zampieri, "il Domenichino," *Saint Cecilia* (c. 1617-1618), Paris, Musée du Louvre.



Figure 21. Orazio Gentileschi, *Saint Cecilia and an Angel* (c. 1618-1621), Washington, National Gallery of Art.

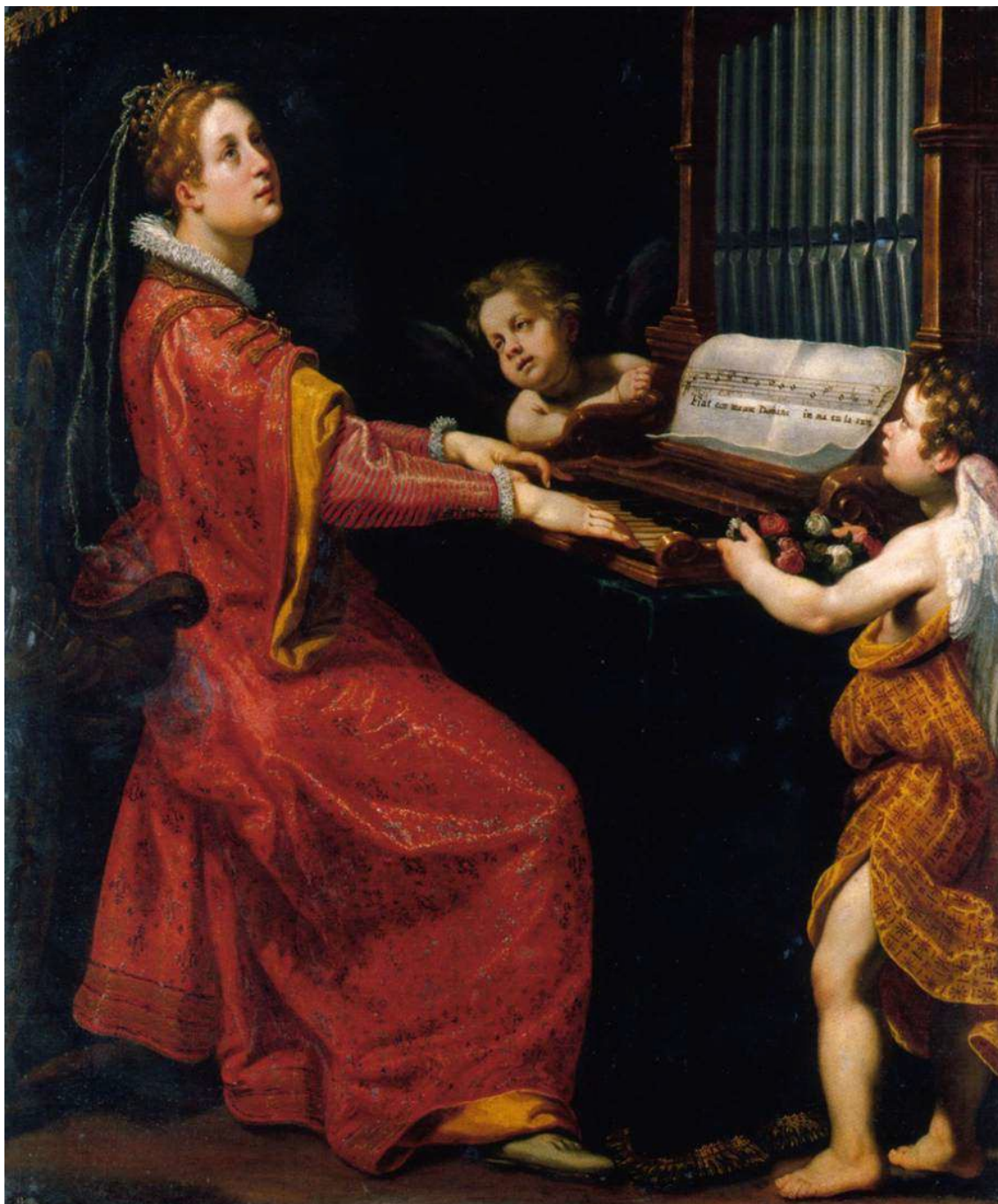


Figure 22. Matteo Rosselli, *Saint Cecilia* (seventeenth century), private collection.



Figure 23. Campi Bernardino, *Saint Cecilia and Saint Catherine of Alexandria* (1562-1566), Cremona, Church of Saint Sigismondo.

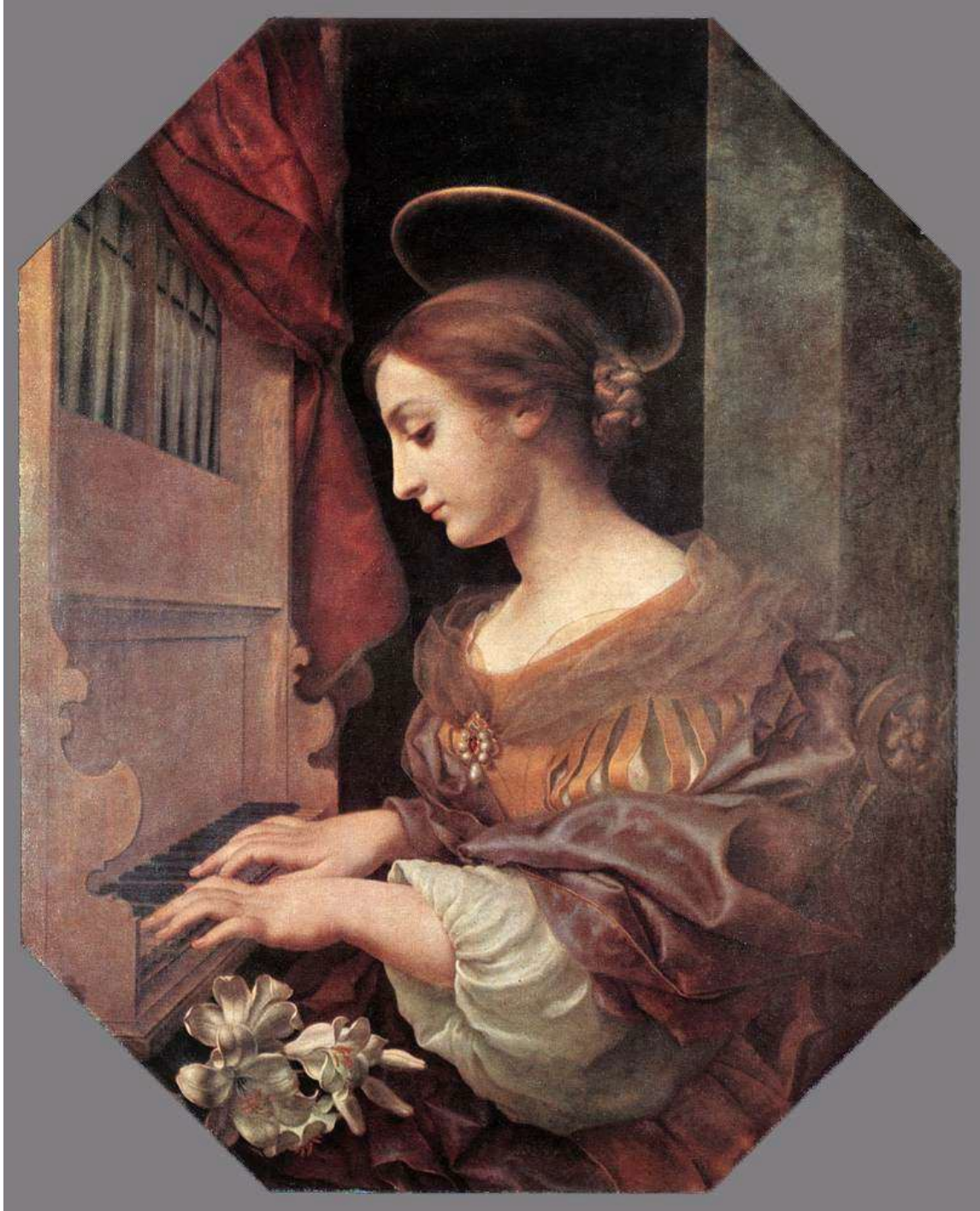


Figure 24. Carlo Dolci, *Saint Cecilia at the Organ* (1671), Dresden, Gemäldegalerie.

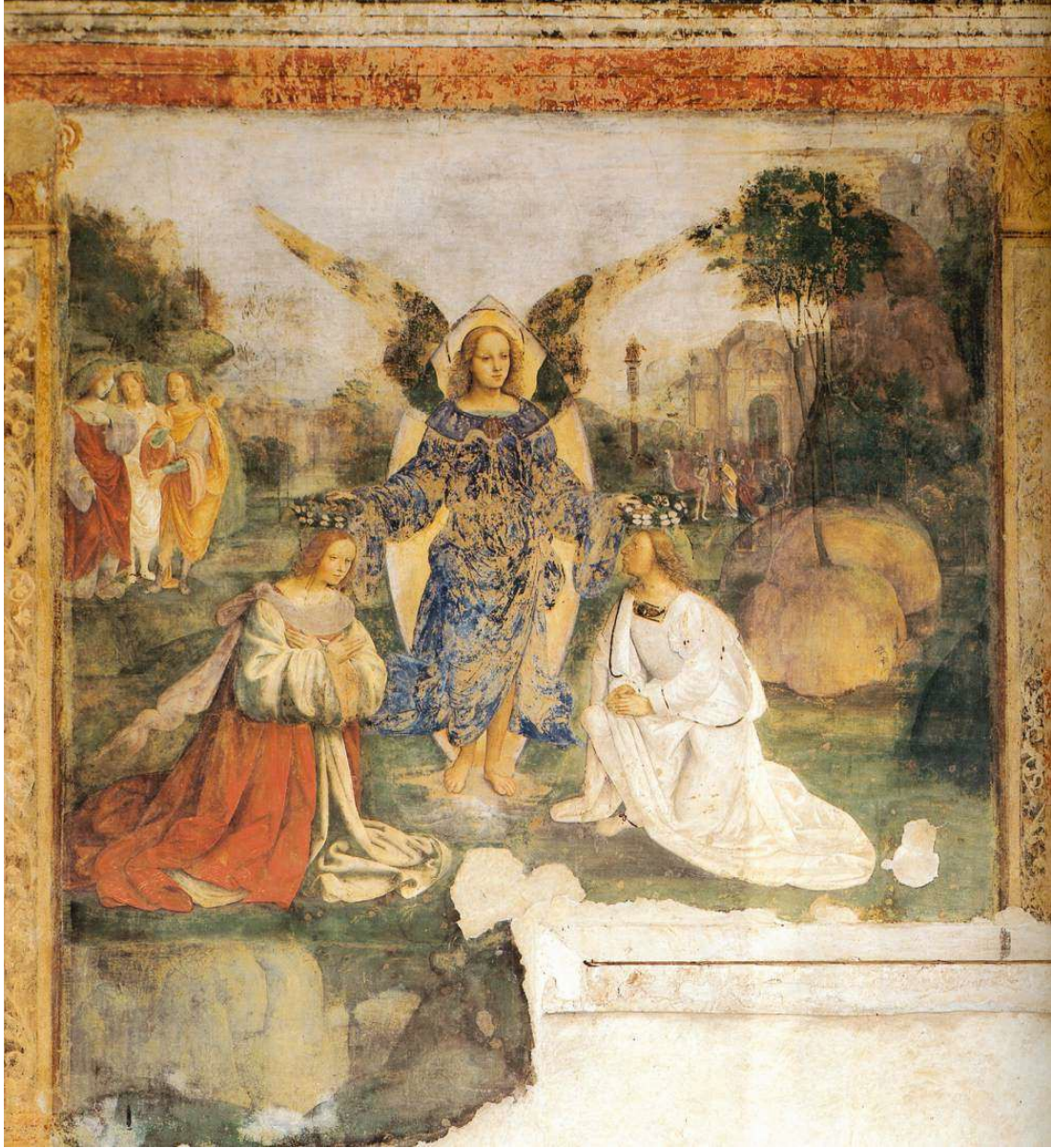


Figure 27. Francesco Francia, *Legend of Saints Cecilia and Valerian, scene 4* (1504-1506), Bologna, Oratory of Saint Cecilia, San Giacomo Maggiore.



Figure 28. Anton Woensam, *Saint Cecilia and Saint Valerian* (1526-1527), Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum.



Figure 29. Lelio Orsi, *Saints Cecilia and Valerian* (c. 1555), Rome, Galleria Borghese.

Introduzione

Violino I
Violino II
Violoncello e Contrabbasso
Fagotto
Clarinete
Flauto
Violino III
Violino IV
Trombe e Tromboni

Presto
Lento
Presto
Lento
Presto
Lento
Presto
Lento
Presto
Lento

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Introduzione," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635, fol. 2.



Alessandro Scarlatti, "Introduzione," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635, fol. 3.

Handwritten musical score for the introduction of "Il martirio di Santa Cecilia" by Alessandro Scarlatti. The page features ten staves of music. The first five staves contain complex instrumental or vocal passages with various ornaments and dynamics. The last two staves are vocal lines with lyrics written below them. The lyrics are: "S. Cecilia. Soprano. Almachio Contralto. / A. Urbice. Soprano. Contraltone Tenore."

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Introduzione," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635 fol. 4.

201

f. fire a barbaro Tirano.

Tromba
Organo
Solo
Cello
Basso

all. 4
stretto
all. 4
stretto
all. 4
stretto

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Vi mostrate agl' occhi miei," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635 fol. 201.

165

Violino
 Viola
 Violoncello

piano
piano b4
piano b5
2. Violon.

Sonno la dne, eterno glo, Santo Amor Confes do, ca-
 star Consiglio.

do no. A. ferma non ferir, & pe na io moro. Figlia ingrata, ingrata a te stesso, e all'Amor

Con Cembalo

16

Alessandro Scarlatti, "Sommo padre," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635 fol. 165.

171

Muz.

Mio: De. Nume eterno, Tempio Anzi per de bellar Inferno. Superata mi parto; ancor la Voce

piano

piano

piano

Digno

Di Costei mi ha figge... Che gaudenti? replica, replica il figlio; al mio Signore in Croce

Alessandro Scarlatti, "al mio Signore," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635 fol. 171.

172

piano
piano
piano
 oryo. *st. l.*
 non fu scassa giudice nel dar forment.
 ma fuggi, e semo usua qu' in abbandoni.
 mio Ge-
piano
Cembalo

su, mio se in conola quest' alma, a te
 se del se del
 infolza, infolza, e au

Alessandro Scarlatti, "al mio Signore," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635 fol. 172.

173

viva lo Spirto mio, e me a precezza inusta, spogliando l'Alma del cerre no velo, da

Lume aff' empi, da Lume aff' empi e me, e me racco sp' in Cie. Co.
(con Cembalo)

29

Alessandro Scarlatti, "al mio Signore," *Il martirio di Santa Cecilia*, 1708, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS. 11635 fol. 173.

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