

SIGNE ROTTER-BROMAN

*Komponieren in Italien um 1400. Studien zu dreistimmig überlieferten
Liedsätzen von Andrea und Paolo da Firenze, Bartolino da Padova,
Antonio Zacara da Teramo und Johannes Ciconia*

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This is the sixth volume in the series “Musica Mensurabilis”, directed by Oliver Huck and published by Olms (Hildesheim). It re-elaborates, integrates and reformulates the results of various researches carried out by the author in recent years on Italian Trecento music, which have been published in specialized periodicals and miscellanies such as:

- *Die Grenzen der Dreistimmigen Trecento-Satztechnik. Zur Mehrfachüberlieferung von Ballaten und Madrigalen in Italien um 1400* (2007);
- *Leichtbild und Analyse. Überlegungen zur musik des späten Trecento* (2007);
- *Musikzeit und Textzeit in Ballaten des späten des Trecento* (2008);
- *Was there an Ars Contratenoris in the Music of the Late Trecento?* (2008);
- *Temporal Process in Ballatas of the Late Trecento: The Case of Andrea da Firenze’s Non più doglie ebbe Dido* (2010);
- *Analyse – Meistererzählungen – Geschichtsbilder, Zum Zusammenhang zwischen Historiographic und Analyse der Musik des späten Mittelalters* (2010);
- *Zur Funktion musikhistorischer Master narratives für musikalische Analysen* (2012).

The author’s methods and ideas, which are amply illustrated in the above-mentioned contributions, are quite well-known to musicologists concerned with the Middle Ages, and have given rise at times to favourable appreciation as well as reservations, as is normal in the on-going debate within every discipline. Re-organized in this book however, they end up assuming some of the more problematical aspects that characterize this series (which arose as an ambitious project to re-formulate the discipline along new epistemological lines by drawing on issues that were held to be up-and-coming in Medieval theoretical debate during the final years of the 20th century), and on which at this stage the time has come to reflect.

As far as the organization and mode of communication of the book are concerned, the aspect that stands out most is the unacceptably dogmatic tone that emerges in an author who believes she has found the only valid manner of interpreting the music of the Italian Trecento. Consequently, she has compiled a canon of ideas and exegetic instruments that, from this stage on, are no longer to be considered practicable. Whoever does not agree with this is promptly rapped on the knuckles or ridiculed: this includes some great scholars from the past, whose ideas bear, as is natural, the signs of time (this amounts to taking pot shots at easy targets and effectively demonstrates a deep-rooted incapacity to historicize).

As far as content is concerned, the ambitions for methodological *renovatio* are poorly supported by either specialist and inter-disciplinary expertise, or a well-assimilated knowledge of the historical-cultural context, all of which are crucial in order to successfully tackle this task.

Regarding form, it is with deep unease and amazement (repeated with every volume) that one notes the lack of a functional instrument of studies that could enable the classification of the results of research and facilitate their use: an analytical table of contents. Providing at least an analytical table of contents (or, better again, several tables: of the musicians', characters' and scholars' names; the works; the institutions, and so forth) is a basic service that allows whoever is studying to locate a passage, a quotation, or reference, without having to go through the entire volume every time. For books of a critical, scientific or academic nature (and even some modern editions of literary texts), in other words all those aimed principally at scholars who do not limit themselves to reading something from cover to cover, but rather need to return repeatedly to consult, check and reflect upon it, it is good practice to have an analytical table of contents.

That said, it has to be acknowledged that this sixth volume possesses the capacity to provide interesting observations and stimulate reflection, and dedicates a great deal of space to the epistemological foundation of the author's work. The premise is the wish to fill in a gap in musicological studies on the Italian Trecento, an area in which research has made great progress, but in which contributions appear to be missing

die sich mit der Musik des späten Trecento in ihrer spezifischen kompositorischen Machart auseinandersetzen [...] Die Untersuchung verfolgt die Absicht, ein vertieftes Verständnis für die konkrete kompositorische Struktur polyphoner Liedsätze des späten Trecento und das dahinterstehende musikalische Denken zu erarbeiten. (p. 3)

The work is based on an analysis of madrigals and *ballatas* by the five composers mentioned in the title, chosen because the historical-biographical data on them is relatively satisfactory, as are the attributions. In addition to this, the compositions taken into consideration, at least in one witness, have been transmitted in three voice parts. Central to Rotter-Broman's thought in fact is the idea (which the author would like to corroborate with analysis) that in the Italian Trecento secular three-part compositions, often translated into two-part compositions or attested to with different *contratenores*, do not document three-part compositional techniques, just possible options of praxis. This hypothesis, supported by reflection on the nature and function of the *contratenores*, lends itself to reservations to which we shall return subsequently.

The re-foundation project on music studies of the Trecento ranges from criticism to the nucleus of 'received ideas', and takes its starting point from some concepts and perspectives that musicology had made its own, taking them from other disciplinary areas where they had provoked important debate midway through the 20th century: first of all, the discovery of the *master narrative*, which, even in Medieval studies, invalidates both historical-contextual interpretations and analytical methodologies. The range and

breadth of the contribution given by *narrative turn* to historical and anthropological studies from the 1970s on (whose developments Rotter-Broman attempts to cover in depth) and, long before this, the perspective of *linguistic turn* with which it is closely linked (which the author cites, but without dwelling on it) are well known; the topic is dealt with by referring one to some *auctoritates*; but many of the most important scholars who have made significant contributions to debate in subsequent decades, among whom Roland Barthes, Paul Ricoeur, Gérard Génette, Walter Fischer, all of whom could in any case have been functional to the argument, are ignored; and Gustav Droysen is mentioned as ideal forerunner. Regarding the musicological reception to the concept of *master narrative*, only three names are mentioned, even if they are illustrious: Ludwig Finscher, Reinhard Strohm and Leo Treitler. Nevertheless, it appears as if this long *excursus* concludes not with an enhancement of the critical dimension, but merely with a reiteration of the concept that all interpretations of the Trecento which have attempted to give meaning to data and identify lines of tendency and their possible developments, have been irremediably marked by conditioning pre-interpretations, which in their turn can only give rise to automatic *teleologies*. The methodological direction that will lead out of this *impasse*, brought into focus over the course of the volume, is summarized in the final chapter by means of the commented outlining of six *Rückblenden*, based on six efficacious phrases by well-known scholars, which for Rotter-Broman count as fixed points to which she anchors her own deliberations.

The central problem, to which the author dedicates continuous attention, is that of the relationship between the historical and analytical approach in Medieval musicology, with a view to rendering practicable any possible synergy. Step by step, Rotter-Broman covers the stages in the debate that for decades characterized our discipline (above all in the English-speaking world) but which by now has lost its virulence: the idea of a necessary convergence between the two perspectives and awareness – the author shows herself to share this objective following a long-winded discussion – of the historicity of any analytical approach (subject, along with any manifestation of human thought, to the conditioning of a *master narrative* in which the person exemplifying it will find their own orientation), which has been so universally accepted and for such a long time as to come across as obvious (at least in middle-to-high cultural levels). The relevant musicological literature is discussed *ab ovo* in Chap. v (*Geschichtsbild und Analyse: zum Verständnis der Musik des späten Trecento*), which also contains a paragraph on ‘*Early Music*’ *Analyse* (but *Early Music* is an unbearable choice of term, as it squashes together, despite lacking any exegetic utility, the *Ars Antiqua* with Monteverdi, Machaut and Bach. Wouldn’t it be better, seeing as the aim is to reformulate the discipline, to grasp the opportunity to come up with more specific terms?)

On the analytical level, the instruments employed, the validity of which is frequently asserted and repeated in the concluding chapter, are reduced to

Begriffe wie 'Motive' und 'Kadenzen'. Diesen werden jedoch einerseits auf ihre Geschichte innerhalb der disziplinären Methodik befragt und andererseits spezifisch auf die Zielrichtung dieser Arbeit ausgerichtet. [...] Der in Analysen genutzte Kadenzbegriff geht vom heutigen Forschungsstand zur Contrapunctus-Lehre aus; die Kriterien leiten sich zunächst an der Basis daraus ab. Besonderes Gewicht wird jedoch auf die – von der Lehre gerade nicht geregelte – melodische Ansteuerung von Kadenzen durch den Cantus als primäre Stimme gelegt, da hierfür um 1400 klare Muster zur Verfügung stehen, deren Bestätigung oder Entkräftung in die Konzeptionsmacht der Komponisten gestellt sind. (pp. 428-429).

That of «Cantus als primäre Stimme» is by no means a new idea, but it nevertheless seems interesting and of a practical utility in analysis, provided however it is not turned into a *mantra*: different options could be analyzed *ad abundantiam* and find support in other coeval repertoires as well, in regard to which it is not necessarily true that there had to be complete impermeability for Italian musicians around 1400.

It is truly amazing that the organization of the polyphonic space is a topic that is entirely missing from the book: once the unrelatedness of any reference of a tonal system has been stated (as is obvious!), the author does not feel it is necessary to clarify what the possible reference points are for the music she has analysed, nor does she feel she has to discuss the problem of the relationship or non-relationship (musicologists are divided on this) with the modal system. This was internalized by medieval musicians and their listeners right from the outset of the didactic phase and assimilated by means of aural conditioning induced by the liturgical and devotional music to which they were daily exposed; but it remains, as everyone knows, an extremely problematical referent for a lot of monodic and polyphonic music from the late Middle Ages. Rotter-Broman does not feel it necessary to draw contemporary debate back to the issue. She does not cite Lefferts contributions either, along with those who may have accepted or rejected his complex interpretative proposal, or those who made of it a starting point for further reflection, or those who discussed how the testimony should be read – explicit, but not on account of this definitiveness – in the Berkely treatise. To this end, when one speaks of *Kadenzanstreung* (a concept applied with excessive facility: cfr. the example on p. 113), or 'unexpected' sounds in the melodic line of the higher voice, the reader asks himself what the grounds are for this reasoning and in the context of which line of musical thought may it be identified. Furthermore, how is it possible to speak in a non-anachronistic way of repeated «tension at the cadenza»? (p. 218) or of cadenzas that satisfy or thwart our expectations? (p. 207). Which ones? In what system of reference? The style of language here

seems to be more appropriate to an analysis of one of Gesualdo da Venosa's madrigals than the music under discussion in this book.¹

In the author's opinion, the results of her work concerning links between historiography and analysis may be seen on two different levels:

- (1) the reconstruction of a musical object definable as «dreistimmig überlieferte Liedsätze» (given that, as is the central assumption of the volume, the tradition of three voices does not appear to attest to a composition with three voices);
- (2) a reference framework for composition in Italy around 1400, from the observation point of «Komponieren als Gestaltung der musikalischen Eigenzeit».

With regard to the first point, the conceptual confusion between praxis and text is evident, which the author inherits from many of her epistemological models that were in vogue in the 1980s and 1990s. Up-to-date reflection on the dynamics of the inter-relation between orality and writing would have been crucial, with altogether more refined instruments than the concept of writing or notation as an extemporaneous registration of discourse or praxis.

A reading of the secondary testimonies (above all literary, such as the *Decameron*, or *Paradiso degli Alberti*, or *Il Sollazzo*) has given rise to questions and prompted many answers (hypothetical) for musicology in the past; in this the author sees her idea on the variability and not the significance of the number of the voices corroborated, and I think she is right, because the literary description speaks precisely of regular choices in performance praxis that, out of centuries-long habit, have always adapted the music to the diverse capabilities of ambience, voice and instrument.

The issue is entirely different however on the level of whatever is translated from notation: because writing – as at least from Olson on can be seen – is not the mere registration of discourse, but active co-participation, which acts on the formulation of thought and leads to peculiar typologies of formalization, different to those in the oral tradition. Once it has been committed to writing, a verbal text no longer has the same statute as discourse; once committed to writing, music no longer has the statute of the registration of a practice, no matter how varied or disrupted its tradition may be, or no matter how many 'open' areas appear to exist within it. As soon as they are noted, the *contratenores* – even if differently attested within the tradition, even if they are multiple or arise from stratification of phases and different authors – belong to a text (which by its very nature is, of course, nothing but formalized thought in writing), maybe of a particularly mobile type (but to a varying

¹ The method employed by Daniele Sabaino in a cutting-edge analysis of Landi's *ballata*, *Contempler le gran cose*, is hastily ridiculed in note 241 dip. 412: but in the dense «preliminary considerations» of that analysis – which may certainly be subjected to criticism and rejected, like everything, but which at the time it was published (1999) constituted an entirely new proposal – the state of studies, the reference points, the objectives and limits that this work set for itself were declared and discussed with arguments of a cultural depth that seems to have escaped Rotter-Broman.

extent all texts are: the concept is one of the cornerstones of contemporary philology). If the attestations are multiple, different textual stages are produced, which are ontologically different to the stages of praxis.

Establishing – which is one of the main hypotheses of the book – that the Italian predilection for two voices is only apparent, because in actual fact an inessential *countertenor* could still have been inserted, even where the notation never transmitted it and therefore it is not in our possession, is a concept that is not devoid of interesting aspects if it is evaluated against the individual occurrences and in relation to the individual contexts: but in order to be indicative of a real and generalized phenomenon, there should at least be supporting evidence that goes beyond the area that Rotter-Broman advances, taking in liturgical repertoires, cacce, and motets; if on the other hand, it is taken as an absolute, it can only amount to the proposal of a principal. The situation, in any case, is different only by degrees – and not ontologically – from that of the alternative or added *contratenores* in the polyphony of the late 15th century: voices that are usually very structured, which were composed in accordance with the pertinent contrapuntal norms and gave rise, of course, to diversified textual levels.

The concept of *contratenor* as ‘commentary’ is set out in an apodictic and confused way, and Memelsdorff’s reflections, which also provide some contacts with her thought in the lucid response to a specious polemic opened by Rotter Broman,² are not taken into account. Anyway, from a philological point of view a commentary – which is a widespread phenomenon in every kind of medieval textual tradition – is a *paratext*, and as such is reproduced in modern critical editions of any cultural depth by trying simultaneously to adequately visualize the distinction and the exegetic function with respect to the text. The integrating function of the *contratenor* is instead internal to the text, and not paratextual. A composition translated with or without the *contratenor* has at its disposal different textual levels, not just one text and a paratext.

Once the relationship between writing and thought has been reduced to zero degrees, and the phenomenon, which has been studied extensively over the last twenty years, of the conditioning, even at the initial stages of the project, of the latter by the former ignored, then the ‘revolutionary’ crusade kicks off against conceptual differences between notation of an Italian and French type (p. 177).³

For whoever adopts an exegetic perspective, the two types are neither rigid systems nor an equipollent means of transmission (both of these

² P. MEMELSDORFF, ‘*Ars non inveniendi*’: *riflessioni su una straw-man fallacy e sul contratenor quale paratesto*, «Acta Musicologica», 81/1, 2009, pp. 1-21.

³ The choice by Carla Vivarelli to put together an edition of the French compositions by Filippotto and Antonello da Caserta (considered as a sub-group endowed with connoted formal and notational categories, and characterized by some particular problems regarding the tradition), is stigmatised by Rotter-Broman (p. 416). On that score, many other musicologists are rapped over the knuckles for similar reasons.

represent banal simplifications), but connoted tendencies that manifest themselves in varying degrees of combinations, and may be studied both in their complexity and the variability of their links – which condition them always in different ways in space and time – in relation as well to the visual and figurative horizon, with verbal writing and its different *rationes*, with the changing aspects of culture (which has not been touched on in the book), as diversely declinable ways of organizing compositional thought. That the transcription of the same music may be possible with the criterion of the four prolations or with that of the *divisiones* (as the author notes, in supporting her opinion) is an item of data that does not even minimally invalidate this order of ideas: translations and transliterations of thought are always possible, with greater or lesser satisfaction, in all communicative systems.

In order to sidestep the doldrums of *Meistererzählung* in a 14th century characterized in Europe by accentuations in cultural diversity (as historical research in all its areas of application had allowed us to become used to discovering), even formal and stylistic paradigms linked to music from the Italian and French Trecento are emptied of significance and annulled in the blurry *continuum* of a legacy of international compositional techniques. And so it is that the five pre-selected composers for analysis, who are so connoted and diverse among themselves for whoever has engaged deeply with their music, are grouped together in the book and used as laboratory samples of an identical reality. Naturally, anybody who insists on believing that a *ballade* by Filippotto da Caserta or Matteo da Perugia may be interesting for the complex intercultural dynamics that history has habituated us to study in a profitable as well as crucial way, in the field of the figurative arts, architecture, thought and all the aspects of the culture of that time, will be treated with barely concealed disdain. (Just try to imagine what would become of Dufay, should the 15th century be subjected to such a historically misinformed approach, so insensitive to the wealth and dynamics of the culture...)

As far as the second point is concerned, Rotter-Broman seems obsessively preoccupied with avoiding the risks of the great *Meistererzählung* of musicologists that preceded her (except for Oliver Huck, and with a particular thumbs down for Kurt von Fischer): that of reading Italian music of the Trecento within a historical context that is narrowly pre-Humanist. Except that she too, like many other supporters or detractors of this interpretation, perpetuates the unbearable confusion by which the term *Rinascimento* is used in place of *Humanism* and *Pre-Humanism* or as an undifferentiated alternative. (To be strictly true, it should be said that she is by no means the only person to do this; nevertheless Italian scholars are greatly disconcerted by this, as they would not tolerate such a slip even in a school student from Middle School).

The brief *excursus* on the concept of the Renaissance constitutes one of the weakest points of the book. It is based on very few *auctoritas*, of whom the most important are Burkhard and Huitzinga and, among those lesser remote, John Hale and Erwin Panovsky. But, as is universally known, the legacy of

ideas and the long and profitable debate on the nature, cultural implications, innumerable nuances and interpretations of the concept of *Renaissance* (and those – which have been completely ignored in this book – known as *Humanism* and *Pre-Humanism*) have come to include, over the last two centuries, many crucial contributors for scholars and anybody wishing to discuss the subject – even in outline – in a satisfactory manner, which have been written not only in German, but in all the main European languages, and of which there is no trace in the book.⁴ The subsequent examination of musicological interpretations of the concept is slightly more elaborate (with particular attention rightly being given to Reinhard Strohm, who is always sharp and original).

The author is disturbed by the idea that one might claim to pick up signs in Trecento music of a type of link with the verbal text, along the lines of a 16th century madrigal; therefore she rejects von Fischer's evolutionary vision (defined, naturally, as a *Renaissance-narrative*), which in her opinion consecrates precisely this type of conception and to which is imputed a dogmatic rigidity that in actual fact it did not possess. But what scholar worthy of the name would ever adopt the summary and confused idea of *Renaissance-narrative* that Rotter-Borman has come up with, or would nowadays run the risk of looking to Trecento music «unter Bezug auf die Affektenlehre des 17. Jahrhunderts» (p. 427)?

Those who maintain that, in the intonation of secular polyphony of the late Trecento, a type of Pre-Humanistic sensibility was developing towards the word, are not so gullible as to seek out anticipations of 16th or 17th century expressive effects; rather are they saying something else. The foundational role of the verbal text, in terms of formal, melodic and contrapuntal strategies present in the music, is being underlined (with remarkable consequences in the area of mensural and notational speculation) as well as the presence of a hierarchical ordering and a classical stamp, centred on the word in so far as it is the bearer of messages, which the music transmits by rendering them more efficacious and memorable: a structuring and normative role, which may manifest itself to various extents.

Rotter-Borman, in the previously mentioned Chap. ινν (*Musik und Text, Musikzeit und Textzeit in den Gattungen Ballata und Madrigal*) – perhaps the chapter with the greatest wealth of interesting observations – also carefully investigates the link between the verbal text and the music text with an eye to the synergy between the structure of the first, with its metrical paradigm and its strategies of connection or interruption of the verbal flow within the verses, and those of the second, with its points of articulation, transition, intersection, the layout of the cadenzas, the points of declamation and the melismas. However, the relationship between the verbal text and the

⁴ Among the more illustrious names that cannot be ignored are, for example, Jules Michelet, Konrad Burdach, Aby Warburg, Benedetto Croce, Bernard Berenson, Roberto Longhi, Carlo Dionisotti, Oskar Kristeller, Giuseppe Billanovich, Eugenio Garin, Cesare Vasoli...

music text does not consist only of this. The conceptual content of the poetic texts weighs on the stylistic choices, which are careful at the rhetorical level (which is why, for example, the *hoquetus*, which in a long-standing tradition is linked to the 'higher' texts, is applied in the political madrigal but not in the amorous *ballata*), at the level of the allusive strategies, the intertextuality (poetic and musical, with the complex network of evocative links between them) that is functional to these, in a context of increasing respect towards the poetic text: also and above all because the influence of Petrarch creates a lexis, a verbal music, a legacy of images, a quantity of attention paid to the multiplicity and mobility of ideas and emotions, a tissue of allusions and resonances at a deep level, with which new dynamics are put in motion in poetry, which seek new ways of being enhanced in the music. These are issues that cannot be dealt with in a black and white way; rather do they necessitate expertise with exegetic instruments of a musicological and complex interdisciplinary type (just as the objects of analysis and their contextual dynamics are complex), and above all a deep assimilated knowledge of the multiple aspects of art, language and culture in Italy in relation to the European context: there is no trace of these instruments in the book. The lines of analytical thought are founded on insufficient and improper methods and come across as effectively promoting the idea – against the generous intentions of the author – of impoverished and aseptic musical artefacts that should be studied *in vitro*. The historical and cultural contextualization is completely missing.

Given the ambitious reach of the book, one is unpleasantly surprised at coming across instances of outright sloppiness. Here are the most obvious:

- why discuss the section of Bartolino's «*Dactalus de padua fecit*» (with relative doubts about its attribution to him) yet again, which may be read in the Modena Codex at the top of f.30r, above *Imperial sedendo fra piu' stelle* (p. 311)? More than a knowledge of the Italian onomastic (the name *Dactalus* just does not exist, either in 14th century Italy or in previous or subsequent centuries), a knowledge of palaeography would make it evident that there must have been an error in transcription from an anti-graph in which the name *Bartolus* appeared in Gothic italics with the initial *B* swollen out, and easily confused with a *D* with a swirl; a small *r*, could have been confused with a *c*; an *o* attached to the body of the following letter, which could have been confused with an *a*;
- «Da Prato» is not to say as if it were a surname (which is something that many people do); 'da Prato', 'da Barberino', 'da Tempo', 'da Sommacampagna' and such like are indications of geographical provenance, and not of family. It is anachronistic to use them as surnames; the correct citation in these cases starts with the name;⁵

⁵ From ancient names to modern: Maria Teresa Rosa Barezani should be indexed under Rosa Barezani, Maria Teresa and not under Barezani, Maria Teresa Rosa.

- What exactly is meant at p. 185, when we read that at bar 10 of *E piu' begli occhi* by Andrea da Firenze (ed. Pinotta) «Erklingt wieder eine 'geschuppte' Figur, diesmal ohne Vorbereitung der drei Viertel und nicht auf betonter, sondern auf leichter Zeit»? The 'up' beat and the 'down' beat are perhaps suggested by the transcription, but they are extraneous to the horizons of Trecento mensuralism;
- The proper term is *Stil novo*, much better than *Stilnuovo*. And, in this regard, designating the oldest madrigal a *Stilnuovo Modell* (p. 290) is culturally inaccurate and derives from a misunderstanding of Nino Pinotta's well motivated proposal to highlight an ideal link of continuity between *Ars nova* and *Stil novo*, both of which were developments of a strongly innovative and connotative cultural tradition, in whose name, so it seems to us, the term *Ars nova italiana* is not only legitimate but also the bearer of an important cultural meaning. But it is well known how *Stil novo* and *Ars nova* are far from being coeval, since the former precedes the latter by at least seventy years (which, for anyone in the habit of taking into consideration the complexity of history, is a considerable time gap and by no means a marginal detail). At the current state of knowledge, *Stil novo* is not coeval with any known secular polyphony: the oldest that we are aware of dates back to Petrarch's time, not to Dante or Guido Guinizelli (and if one does not feel the need to be aware of the distance, the historical perspective is reduced to the flatness of a postcard);
- What is the current «Stand der mittelalterbezogenen Texttheorie und Editionstechnik» (p. 416) on which the contribution to studies on the Trecento by Oliver Huck appears to be founded? I find the use of the singular disturbing, since textual studies are an extremely complex investigative field, while 'edition technique' is a useful expression for apprentice typography, but completely obsolete in contemporary philology.

There is, in some case, the suspicion that the inaccuracy is not merely involuntary, but arises from a desire to cancel other musicological presences. Here are two examples:

- right at the beginning of the book (p. 2) the extremely odd «*Scuola di paleografia Walter Stauffer* an der Universität Pavia/Cremona» is cited, mangling in actual fact the older name of *Scuola di Paleografia e Filologia Musicale*, from the 2001 *Facolta' di Musicologia* and current *Dipartimento di Musicologia e Beni Culturali*, of the University of Pavia, with a seat in Cremona, and certainly not of the *Fondazione Walter Stauffer*, which is a private institution that supports musical culture by statute, and therefore also musicological research. The singular *Scuola* appears to dedicate itself to "Erforschung der Quellen dieses als spezifisch italienisch aufgefassten kulturellen Phänomen": in order to avoid the ridiculous, it would have been

sufficient to check by using the simple and easily graspable words – *Cremona. Musicologia* or even *Cremona. Paleografia* on the website <<http://musicologia.unipv.it>>, thus obtaining the (accurate) information desired;

- the ballata *Deduto sei* (or rather, *Deducto sei*, as the philological analysis by Roberto Tagliani has proposed)⁶ is rightly cited as a work by Zacara, but not in the critical edition that expressly attributes this to him (2003), but in that by Ciconia, in which it figured as an *opus dubium*, in the series *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century* (Vol. 24, 1985). The correct attribution to Zacara may be found in *Trattato di Vercelli*, which was not known to musicologists before publication in 1998 (cited occasionally in the general bibliography); even when something that has obviously been already said by others in the comment to the *Trattato* is being shared, any reference to that edition is missing in the notes – in this volume as in the first of *Musica mensurabilis*.

The two objectives of research that Rotter-Broman has set herself should have guaranteed the synergy of a historical and analytical approach united with the safety of not falling into some insidious *Meistererzählung*.

It emerges however that, even when – as is claimed in the book – an awareness of cultural and historical conditioning on the part of those studying is accompanied by the critical awareness of being in any case implicated, this can never suffice to reduce the limits of one's own historicity and should logically lead not to some unlikely recipe for eluding them, but rather to the idea of the relativity and continuous perfectibility of the results of research. The data with which the scholar deals – in every field of discipline, not only the humanities but also science – are in themselves neutral: we place them in a perspective and interpret them starting from a working hypothesis that is destined to be verified, modified and maybe even rejected, but without which that data will not speak. There is no cognitive approach outside the practice of interpretation, and there is no interpretation that does not start from some assumption – it is still worthwhile reading an old contribution by Philip Weller, *Frames and Images: Locating Music in Cultural Histories of the Middle Ages* («JAMS», 50/1, 1997, pp. 7-54). That which happened to musicologists of the past, remote or more recent, cannot but happen, *mutatis mutandis*, to them nowadays. Even the choice of field on the part of the author falls within a *Meistererzählung*: minimalist at the level of analysis, unconnected at that of culture, and inevitably conditioned, as all analyses, by its own historical and epistemological framework of reference.

⁶ Cfr. Roberto Tagliani, pp. 281-291 in: M. CARACI VELA – R. TAGLIANI, *Deducto sei: alcune osservazioni e una nuova proposta di edizione*, in «*Et facciam dolci canti*». *Studi in onore di Agostino Ziino in occasione del suo 65° compleanno*, Tomo I, LIM, Lucca 2003, pp. 263-294.