Studies on Trecento Italian Music in the 21ˢᵗ Century: Some Observations on Present Directions of Research

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§ Nei due ultimi decenni la ricerca sulla musica italiana del Trecento – monodica e polifonica, profana, liturgica, devozionale – ha conseguito nuove acquisizioni, ha formulato nuove ipotesi interpretative e ha potuto aprire nuove e importanti prospettive.
Sono venuti alla luce frammenti di testimoni musicali prima ignoti, sono state proposte nuove analisi critiche, nuove riflessioni sul pensiero teorico, le notazioni, il mensuralismo, le tecniche compositive, le forme musicali e poetiche, la tradizione testuale, le mnemotecniche e le tradizioni commiste di oralità e scrittura, e il patrimonio di conoscenze vecchio e nuovo è stato sottoposto a nuovi scrutini.
Il bilancio di una così ricca attività di studi è molto positivo, nonostante alcune zone, nella ricerca, siano rimaste un po' in ombra. Esiste, in particolare, un problema di contestualizzazione, per affrontare il quale è necessario e proficuo giovarsi di competenze interdisciplinari adeguate e aggiornate.

§ Over the last few decades research on Italian Trecento music – monodic and polyphonic, secular, liturgical and devotional – has made new discoveries and formulated new interpretative hypotheses, thus succeeding in opening up new and significant horizons.
Hitherto unknown fragments of musical evidence have been discovered and fresh critical analyses put forward, along with new evaluations of theoretical approaches; notation; mensuration; composition techniques; poetic and musical forms; the textual tradition; mnemonic techniques; and traditions blending orality and writing. In addition to this, both the older and more recent legacies of knowledge have undergone fresh examination.
The outcome of such a wealth of scholarly activity has been very positive, despite the fact that some areas of research have been overlooked. In particular, a problem exists with regard to contextualization: in order to be adequately dealt with, up-to-date inter-disciplinary areas of competence are required.

I. The current state of studies

In recent decades research and studies have significantly modified the reconstructive framework of Trecento Italian music. The area under investigation has greatly widened and alongside the usual interest in secular polyphony, that in liturgical and devotional music (in mensural polyphony, *cantus planus binatim*, and *cantus fractus*) has received a significant boost, largely due to several important findings.[1] We now have at our disposal:

1. *New discoveries*

The discovery of several fragments of liturgical and secular music even in areas that were peripheral to the places where the great codexes were produced, and which conserve the greatest wealth of material dating from the Trecento, has led to a re-evaluation of the axis between the Northern Po Valley-Veneto area and the Florentine centre, and consideration of the possibility that there might have been a widespread element of decentralization as far as the use and indeed production of polyphony was concerned in the peninsula. Important centres of political power and cultural life are therefore now being studied in a systematic manner with regard to the musical activity that characterized them.

> As far as the second half of the Trecento is concerned, Reinhard Strohm has seen signs in the Visconti court in Pavia and the city (a university seat) of a lively centre of cultural exchange with the French ambience and their theoretical approach and musical activity.[2]
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> With regard to the music and musical theory in Naples during the Anjou period – which was a centre of cultural innovation and intellectual experience, as well as a seat of important political power at an international level – a new contribution to research has come from Carla Vivarelli (VIVARELLI 2007; VIVARELLI 2009), who has managed to trace the profile of a Trecento Neapolitan school on the basis of the presence of Marchetto da Padova and Petrus de Sancto Dyonisio in 1318; she also suggests the presence of Niccolò di Aversa; in the Coussemaker's *Anonimo V* she has managed to recognize a Neapolitan theoretician; she succeeds in reconstructing the essential features – compared to those in other centres under French influence – of Neapolitan musical culture at the time of Giovanna I; she ascertains the presence in Naples of Johannes Vetulus

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[1] A useful overview of the situation is contained in CUTHBERT 2006. An important fragment, discovered by Oscar Mischiati in 1990 in the State archives in Reggio Emilia, with fragments from the oldest secular polyphonic repertoire, was recently analysed, and a suggestion put forward for its contextualization (GOZZI – ZIINO 2007).

[2] Cfr. STROHM 1989 and STROHM 2009 with interesting observations on cities and small Italian towns in the North.

The spread of Trecento polyphony all over the peninsula is also backed up by the distribution of fragments discovered in the places where they were used (PERETTI 1996; BRUMANA – CILIBERTI 2004). The manuscript discovered by Francesco Zimei in a small town in Abruzzo, dating from the second quarter of the Quattrocento, also seems to point to a tradition, most likely longstanding and consolidated, of mensural polyphony in that peripheral area (ZIMEI 2007).

de Anania and Theodoricus de Campo; she puts forward an identity for the unknown maestro Theodoricus as Giovanni de Ipra – King Robert's librarian – and formulates the hypothesis, which still has to be verified, of the presence of Filippotto da Caserta in Naples at the time of Giovanna II.

2. A new critical scrutiny

The complete store of knowledge that has been accumulated through previous musicological research has come under fresh scrutiny.

A significant contribution in this sense has come from the three volumes of *Musica Mensurabilis*[3], edited between 2005 and 2007 by Oliver Huck, and from a monographic issue of the periodical «Die Tonkunst» dating from 2008 (2/3 2008), containing six articles focussing, from various points of view, on Trecento Italian music.

The first of the three volumes by Huck (*Die Musik des frühen Trecento*) elaborates an overview on the current state of studies and offers a rigorously analytical preliminary sounding on the links between metrics, the functions of mensuration, and the articulation of the musical form. The principal referant is the *Capitulum de vocibus applicatis verbis*, from the conviction – shared until very recently by most musicologists that studied it at any length[4] – that this represented the oldest detailed testimony of its type. However, Elena Abramov van Rijk has recently managed to demonstrate (VAN RIJK 2007), by means of a timely analysis of the directionality of the inter-textual links between the *Capitulum* and the juridical and humanistic culture of Antonio da Tempo, how the anonymous treatise certainly comes afterwards, and not before the *Summa artis ritmici vulgaris dictaminis*: this is definitely something that necessitates further consideration in future studies. In the second volume, to which we shall return later, the modern edition of one part of the secular polyphonic vocal repertoire thought to be most antique is presented in two tomes, according to a selection put forward by the editor and the synoptic diplomatic edition of respective witnesses, along with a wide-ranging fund of critical apparatus. The third volume is a well-structured anthology of studies, to which several specialists have contributed with important articles.

3. The publication of facsimiles backed up by studies (following an important line of thought, which has been under intense scrutiny since the 1990s)[5]

The publication of facsimiles backed up by studies follows an important direction, under intense scrutiny since the 1990s. We finally have in our possession the facsimile editions of the Modena Codex (*The Manuscript Modena* 2005)

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[3] HUCK 2005a; *Die mehrfach überlieferten Kompositionen des frühen Trecento* 2007; *Kontinuität und Transformation in der italienischen Vokalmusik* 2007.

[4] Cfr. in particular the attention dedicated to the *Capitulum* in PIRROTTA 1984a e 1984b.

[5] Among the most important initiatives in this sense have been: *The Lucca Codex* 1990; *Il codice Rossi 215* 1992; *Il codice Squarcialupi* 1992; *Il Codice T.3.2.* 1994.

and that of Chantilly (*Codex Chantilly* 2008), both completed by an up-to-date volume of studies. From a different prospective, they too consider aspects of late Trecento Italian music,[6] and are extremely useful research tools.

4. *The systematic study of notation*

Over the last few decades the relationship between mathematics and mensuration has been analysed;[7] new approaches have been outlined with which to reconsider the topic.[8] In a panorama offering a considerable amount of proposals, Bernhard Appel's (APPEL 2003) is particularly worthy of mention: he deals with the relationship between thought and the writing of music, which also regards problems of notational exegesis in a wider context; his approach in this is of a modern philological bent and characterized by its wide-ranging scope.[9]

On the didactic front the work distinguishes itself for its accessibility (COLETTE *et al.* 2003), compared to Apel's venerable work (APEL 1942) (which is definitely not up-to-date, and superseded from a methodological point of view, but nevertheless continues to prove irreplaceable).

5. *The search for new interpretative keys, as borne out by the language and thought of the time*

Since the 1990s, different innovative exegetical tools have been devised. Dorit Tanay has studied the relationship between mensuration, mathematics and Aristotelian thought in the 13th and 14th centuries,[10] a line of research that has been further developed by other scholars (STONE 1994; LÜTTEKEN 1999). Tanay has also put forward a new way of reading the Chantailly Codex (TANAY 2009), as a meeting point for late medieval culture and pre-humanistic impulses, filtered in the *Ars Subtilior* of the Italian component, in relation to the complex and contradictory personality of Petrarch.[11]

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[6] In the margin of the facsimile edition of the Chantailly Codex cfr. the miscellany *A Late Medieval Songbook and its Context* 2009.

[7] The line of research was opened up by Anna Maria Busse Berger (cfr. in particular BUSSE BERGER 1993; BUSSE BERGER 2007a).

[8] Cfr. GOZZI 2001; GEHRING – HUCK 2004; HUCK 2005b; *Le notazioni della polifonia vocale dei secoli IX-XVII* 2007; HIRSCHBERG 2009.

[9] The author is well familiar with French *critique génétique*, but it is indeed a shame that he lacks the update on the (interdisciplinary) Italian bibliography regarding the *filologia d'autore*, which could have allowed him to expand his exegesis and branch out by means of new tools.

[10] Among the most important, cfr. TANAY 1992; TANAY 1993; TANAY 1999.

[11] However the interpretation of Petrarch should be revised. We are familiar with his portrayal as one of the most complex (and foundational) figures of European culture in the 14th century, plagued by the interior anguish caused by finding himself caught between Christian values and the call of Classical thought, and the dichotomy between faith and reason, which made of him such an extraordinary prototype of the modern man. But perhaps the anachronistic idea of his 'secularism' needs revision, as it makes him an 'anti-Augstine': he, who had elected Augustine as his preferred object of enthusiastic analyses, looking to him as a model of introspection and an irreplaceable yardstick.

Elizabeth Eva Leach has opened up an unusual observation point regarding aspects of musical perception that, up to now, have been merely alluded to but never really studied, centred on the nature-culture link in late medieval aesthetics (LEACH 2007); Jason Stoessel (STOESSEL 2009) has put forward an exegesis based on meta-linguistic theories of Aristotelian derivation, with the concepts of intrinsic modes in the signs (form of the notes, colours) and extrinsic (mensural indicators, and everything that points to interiorized criteria).

6. *The finalization of non-anachronistic analytical methodologies, adequate for the purposes of the repertoires and compositional horizons of the 14th century*

Towards the end of the last century the most widespread operative model for the analysis of medieval music was that of Salzer (SALZER 1952);[12] Trecento Italian polyphony, nevertheless, remained outside analytical interests. In 1999 Daniele Sabaino pointed out that

> compositions from the French area (and having French notation) have certainly aroused greater interest among analysts [...] than compositions in Italian linguistic area dating from the same time; despite this, essays on the topic have never felt the need to venture beyond the reassuring confines of Machaut's corpus (SABAINO 1999, pp. 260-261),

and it was suggested to view Landini's ballata *Contemplar le gran cose* – demanding from the point of view of the poetry as well as the music

> without preconceived ideas of adhesion to any particular analytical school, but rather with no *a priori* refusal of codified operative suggestions: ideally equidistant, therefore (if this is ever really possible), from mere close readings as well as systematic applications of orthodox and definite techniques, and with the intention not only of drawing out from the material that accumulates immediate universal consequences on the author and the work [...], but rather to provide objective material for discussion and comparison with regard to some structural probabilities and plausible hypotheses concerning Landini's creative process. (SABAINO 1999, p. 261)

In more recent years further occasions for debate have arisen with regard to the efficacy of the methods, and the manner of examining problems and elaborating proposals for the analysis of Italian polyphony between the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th. Signe Rotter-Broman, for instance, has highlighted the repercussions of the relationship between the analytical approach and the 'received' historical framework, and focussed in particular on two aspects: «Der erste betrifft die Gattungsgeachicte, der zweite die Entwicklungsdynamik der Epoche Trecento im ganzen betrachtet» (ROTTER-

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[12] For a similar methodological approach cfr. SCHACHTER 1970.

BROMAN 2007, p. 198) taking as a reference point the madrigal for three voices by Bartolino, *I bei sembianti*.[13]

7. *The increase in areas of theoretical competence, with new editions of treatises[14] and reflections*

    In the vast context of these studies, we owe to Jan Herlinger important editions on Trecento musical theory, on Marchetto da Padova and Prosdocimus, and studies on the criticism levelled by Prosdocimus at Marchetti's theories and the possible link between all this and the *Nova Musica* of Ciconia (HERLINGER 2003),[15] and on the problems relating to *musica ficta*[16]

8. *New departures in research on modality and organization of sound in space*

    Following the most notable contributions in the area at the end of the 20th century, debate continues to be lively and opinion divided.[17] Attention should also be paid to the studies under way by Marco Mangani and Daniele Sabaino, who have carried out a systematic analysis of secular Trecento polyphony (starting with that for two voices), which they had already applied to Renaissance themes (MANGANI – SABAINO 2003; SABAINO 2005).

9. *The analysis of contrapuntal and techno-compositional peculiarities in the overall framework of relations, which were represented differently depending on the place and temporal collocation over the course of the century, between Italian and French treatises*

    In particular, with regard to the problem of compositions for three voices – which remained unsubstantiated by any kind of specific literary theory up as far as the late 15th century – Memelsdorff's important contributions should be mentioned on the *Ars Contratenoris*;[18] by Margaret Bent on dyadic counterpoint

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[13] ROTTER-BROMAN 2007. It should be borne in mind, however, that it continues to be generally maintained that Bartolino was representative of the latest phase of Italian Trecento polyphony *exclusively* on the basis of biographical reconstructions based on interpretations of textual allusions that have not been entirely resolved, or on ambiguous documentation, which should at this stage be critically revised, while other chronological indicators (above all – but not exclusively – paleographical and codicological) have gone in a completely different direction.

[14] Cfr. in particular BURKARD — HUCK 2002 (which contains an edition of *Capitulum de vocibus applicatis verbis*); MARCHETTO DA PADOVA 2007; *Prosdocimo de' Beldomandi's* Plana musica *and* Musica speculativa 2008.

[15]. Prosdocimus' silence with regard to Ciconia has been interpreted from another point of view, but arriving at a similar conclusion, by BENT 2003.

[16] Cfr. HERLINGER, 2004; PAGE CUMMINS 2006; HERLINGER — PAGE CUMMINS 2008.

[17] Cfr. the two important miscellanies *Modality in the Music of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* 1996, and *Tonal Structures in Early Music* 1998. See also WIERING 2001.

[18] MEMELSDORFF 2002; MEMELSDORFF 2008; MEMELSDORFF 2009a. On the question, cfr. also ROTTER-BROMAN 2008.

(BENT 1998); by Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, on particular aspects of the theoretical horizon with regard to Italian composition in the Trecento (SACHS 2005 and 2007); by Anna Maria Busse Berger on improvised counterpoint (BUSSE BERGER 2009).

10. *The contextualization of Italian vocal music not only in the geographical territory in which it developed and expanded, but also in a European dimension and within a framework of international cultural exchanges*

Over the past few decades, research has, through its undoubted wealth of prospective and expressive channels, enabled us to verify how the relationship between Italian and French music, over the course of the Trecento, and in particular during the second half of this century, was neither a simple nor uni-dimensional phenomenon; it cannot be reduced to the passive assimilation of imported models, rather should it be acknowledged and interpreted as something new and different through the elaboration of original solutions. A process of *assimilation*, but at times also a *conscious dissimilation* in which musicians, theoreticians, and copyists, rather than passively undergoing a simple musical colonization, worked within an articulated and discontinuous process of active receptivity.

> The perception of this process is at times made difficult by the persistence of a Franco-centric vision: whoever has studied French Trecento music and the theoretical literature related to it in depth, in fact, often has the natural tendency to consider that of the Italian Trecento (undoubtedly exposed, ever since its documented beginnings, to French influence) as a sort of local dialect of the former, which is the only real *Ars Nova* officially founded on a theoretical basis. On this basis the expression *Ars Nova* in connection with secular Italian Trecento polyphony is usually rejected as improper; but this denomination, valued by Riemann, was put forward by Nino Pirrotta (PIRROTTA 1966) on account of the particular character and the innovative breadth of the phenomenon, which had been nourished by a poetic culture in the Italian *volgare*, whose roots could be traced to the *Stil novo*, which was taken on, therefore – and despite the chronological non-coincidence – as a term of reference. If the reference to the *stella nova* (PIRROTTA 1984c, p. 159) no longer works (nowadays the history of polyphony in Italy is better known, and the vision that Pirotta had of it regarding the Trecento, like a meteorite that suddenly appeared and just as suddenly disappeared, has become obsolete), the reference to the *Stil novo* as a phenomenon leaving its mark on the history of culture and art with an irreversible propulsive force (and thus leaving a significant mark on the poetic production intoned in polyphony), maintains, in my opinion, its efficacy, and the expression *Ars Nova italiana* comes across as culturally perspicacious and less undifferentiated than that of Italian Music from the Trecento (which, apart from anything else, alludes to a wider musical heritage).
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>   The tendency to place Italian musicians that have assimilated French influences in a direct relationship with places and institutions from France can be traced back to a Franco-centric prospective. This has been made possible by emphasizing their physical presence and a lengthy stay in French-speaking

countries: this may be true, but it is not necessary, since not only composers, but also the repertoires entrusted to manuscripts travelled (and in both directions). But there is also the fact that the most important musical centres in Italy – namely those in Pavia or Padua, which were university seats, as well as those in Florence and Naples that were actually centres of power in a framework of international economic and political relations – were great cultural centres dialectically open to exchanges and debate.

In order to analyse the functions and the inter-relations of Trecento Italian polyphony with the cultural and political milieu of reference, some pointers have been adopted:

(a)   The study of the links between the codexes – as editorial initiatives that are politically and culturally connoted – and the original ambience and destination

Recent research has continued to follow with interest the path opened up by Michael Long's studies,[19] which have highlighted the different reactions on the part of the Florentine élite towards cultural, commercial and political influences on the part of France and Avignon during the second half of the 14th century; these studies have attempted to place Landini in his proper ambience: a *milieu* permeated by Ockham's thought and greatly averse to more innovative circles of a pre-humanistic bent linked either directly or indirectly to Petrarch.[20] We are dealing here with indications that have highlighted a dynamic and differentiated situation with regard to the ambiences that produced the great Florentine codexes of the *Ars Nova italiana*, and which have gained interesting confirmation in the results of philological and codicological research: these indications function as exegetical tools of great usefulness, to be used however with caution, as it is necessary always to bear in mind just how stratified and complex the political and cultural make-up of 14th century Italy was.

(b)   Priority attention should be given to the intoned poem, from a linguistic, literary and metrical point of view (within the context of interdisciplinary research that exploits dual areas of competence such as Romance and Musicological Philology),[21] and the exegesis of poetic texts, in order to decipher their layers of meaning,[22] and therein analyze possible instances of intertextuality

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[19] Cfr. in particular LONG 1983.

[20] It is not possible, however, to entirely agree with the identification of Petrarch as the direct critical target of the Ockhamesque poem by Landini: not even his worst enemy would ever have thought of defining him as «rudissimus unus».

[21] Cfr. LANNUTTI 2005; LANNUTTI 2007; LANNUTTI 2008; LANNUTTI 2009; DIECKMANN – HUCK 2007; DIECKMANN – HUCK 2009.

[22] This type of work, however, necessitates a sure knowledge of the language and its historical dynamics, which cannot always be assumed. In any case, even a knowledge of modern Italian, which would give access to a great deal of specialized musicological and interdisciplinary

This requires that, below the surface of the literal meaning, the other levels on which late-medieval exegesis developed, must be identified[23], in order to correctly contextualize, by means of provable hypotheses, the poetic text and its musical intonation (similar work has already been attempted in the past on some intoned texts that seemed to carry heraldic references or devices of well-known historical personages),[24] and evince a direction and the function of intertextual links between the poems intoned and their direct or indirect models, and comprehend the possible allusions.[25]

The texts intoned by Italian Trecento polyphonists are permeated by Dantesque intertextuality (and sometimes Petrarchan) that gives them sense and explains their creation and spread. Already back in 1965, Carlo Dionisotti recalled that «during the 14th century the *Divina Commedia* had been included in the scholastic canon. Not, of course, in a university canon of study; but it still was the only *in volgare* text which had been recognized as having the same value as the few texts commented on in the schools» (DIONISOTTI 1965, p. 337). This explains the frequency of the quotations from or allusions to passages of the *Commedia*: they were alive in the culture of the Italian poets and musicians during the 14th century (and not only in the Florentine ambience), both if they had had a good-to-excellent education, and if they were artisans, or from a humble background.

In point of fact, while the citations from Petrarch or Boccaccio in intoned texts by polyphonic composers may be indicative of a particular level of cultural updating or of belonging to a certain kind of ambience, the citations from Dante occur throughout Italy.

It is important to grasp these citations, but for anybody who does not have an in-depth familiarity with the *Commedia*, it is not always an easy task. Take, for instance, the case of Jacopo's *Aquila altera* madrigal, which was repeatedly edited and analyzed without anyone identifying the direct, explicit and repeated references to Dante,[26] or even noticing therein any kind of a link with other ma-

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literature, cannot always be taken for granted either. And so it happens that the musicologist analyzing the Italian Trecento music may not have read or properly understood (but merely skimmed through) musicological literature in Italian. Stefano Campagnolo, the author of a well-known article on the Panciatichi 26 Codex was the victim of three cases of misinterpretation (where perhaps only the opening sentence had been read), all the work of eminent scholars: cfr. CAMPAGNOLO 1999, and see also the interpretation in BROTHERS, 2009; PLUMLEY 2008, pp. 87-88 and 171-172; CUTHBERT 2006, p. 6. Sofia Lannutti was rashly attributed with a thought that was very far from her own cfr. HUCK 2008, p. 305; and it would be possible to go on with further examples.

[23] The fundamental point of reference remains Dante, *Convivio*, treatise 2, chap. I, 2-14.

[24] Above all starting with the important article by Géneviève Thibault (THIBAULT 1970) which opened up the road for a great deal of subsequent studies.

[25] Cfr. CARACI VELA 2009, *Intertestualità e arte allusiva*, pp. 117-173.

Much work has already been done in this direction on *Subtilior* polyphony, but much less on Trecento polyphony. Nevertheless, Zacara da Teramo has shown himself to be particularly illuminating in this sense. Cfr. CUTHBERT 2004; CARACI VELA 2004.

[26] Cfr. Huck in *Die mehrfach überlieferten Kompositionen des frühen Trecento* 2007, pp. 145 e 178-179 In this case, for example, a direct comparison with the *Commedia* could have led to the lesson «rimirar nel sole» (attested to in the Reina Codex), which is a clear reference to a verse in *Paradiso* I, 46-48: «quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco / vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole: / aquila sì non vi s'affise unquanco».

terial, such as the medieval bestiaries (VAN RIJK 2008) these are indeed an important part of the cultural horizons of many poets of the time, but – *ubi maior minor cessat* – they are by no means the referents of the three texts intoned in the madrigal, where the inter-textual references to Dante sound, for anyone who has assimilated the *Commedia*, like deliberate and immediate cross-references to powerful ideas and symbols.[27]

A panorama containing so many engaging interests leads one to hope for future research – despite the undoubted difficulties facing medieval studies at the moment[28] – and its continued capacity to give rise to important developments.

II. Same methodological problems

Already during the last decades of the 20th century, Post-Structuralist thought made us aware of how our conception of artistic and cultural phenomena from the past or the present does not derive from an accumulation of objective data; rather is it permeated by endless interpretative perspectives that have passed through the filter of individual consciousness: nevertheless the emphasis placed on the deconstruction of certainties and the subjectivity of interpretations, instead of refining the critical capacity, has led at times to the assumption of new certainties, which have then become authentic *mantras*, taking the place of the ones that had been cast aside. Take, for example:

(a)   The prejudicial impossibility of a reconstructive approach to music of the Middle Ages

Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's book, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music. Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (LEECH WILKINSON 2002) may be collocated in the wake of the deconstruction of 'received ideas'[29] on medieval musicology from the 20th century, carried out in particular between the 1980s and the early 90s.[30]

   The thrust of the book may be explained by the starting point put forward by the author: the debate on the misleading concept of executive authenticity that has taken up musicologists' and musicians' time for more than a decade, starting at the end of the 1970s, which continued to make itself felt for a long time after. Within this debate, a visceral scepticism had arisen towards the obvious observation that it is impossible to clone past experiences by means of the tools of musicology. In this debate, the performance musicologists played a crucial role, as they were interested in establishing effective contacts between research prospects and performance interpretation, and determined to regain the natural

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[27] Cfr. Above all – but not only – the cantos on Cacciaguida in *Paradiso*, XV-XVIII.

[28] Cfr. in this regard CARACI VELA 2009, pp. 243-251.

[29] For a deconstructive proposal of the concept of *Subtilior* notation, cfr. RANDELL UPTON 2009; by the same author cfr. also RANDELL UPTON 2002.

[30] Cfr. in particular PAGE 1993; cfr. in this regard, CARACI VELA 2009, pp. 245-248.

liberty of the interpreter, which they felt to be undermined by the Historical Performance Movement and most of academic musicology.

From statements such as

> Certainly it's impossible to recover the past, let alone the way it was experienced, just as it's impossible to get to the bottom of what music might mean, to oneself or anyone else. But one doesn't do musicology because it's possible: one does it because it's fascinating, (LEECH WILKINSON 2002, p. 9)

or

> It is worth emphasizing, in the context of this book, that musicology need not be historical: it can be about us and our relation to music too, (LEECH WILKINSON 2002, p. 216),

it is possible to understand how the only worthwhile approach to music from the past can, according to the author, be seen to be the freely and charmingly recreational one: an auto-referential choice, but certainly legitimate, provided that one is in a position (as Leech-Wilkinson certainly is) to make interesting proposals in this area.

If historical musicology does not help in «recovering the past», a guiding light may be provided, according to Leech-Wilkinson, by systematic musicology and in particular by Schenkerian analysis, supported by the Salzer approach: but – it could be objected – even the systematic approach does not lead to objective results, because it is conditioned in its turn by its collocation in time and culture, which determine just what the available prospects are, and impacts at the level of ideas, methods, and lexis.

The two parts in which the book is divided follow the same logic of liberation from the weight of dogmatism: in the first part, from the 'dogma' of vocal-instrumental execution of medieval polyphony, and in the second, from the incomprehension of the vertical values of counterpoint dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. In the book, historical musicology – such as the Historical Performance Movement which, with its good points and bad points, provides its foundation – weighs on the present precisely because it is not historicized. In fact, criticism of the ideas and the positions of musicologists from the 19th and 20th centuries, intent on evaluating the nature of their cultural conditioning and their presuppositions, and the inadequacy of their results with respect to our expectations, is obvious; but, if they are collocated in their correct place in history, even scholars whose legacy has become dated may demonstrate that they too created the conditions for enabling us to carry out our work and deconstruct them.

(b) The impredicative nature of the author and its insignificance for medieval music

The problem has complex implications, which certainly transcend the field of Italian music in the Trecento: however, the idea that composers' names made explicit in monographic sections dedicated to them in the great codexes of Italian *Ars Nova* might be of merely categorizing value, removed from any real link

between the composer and the work,[31] arising probably from an automatic extension of Foucault's thought to an inappropriate field of research, deviates from any meaningful understanding of the culture and knowledge of history, since in Italy it is precisely in that era (and with some noted anticipations in the previous century) that the case for the author is made most vigorously, and makes itself felt in all branches of thought, art and culture: philosophical and literary (narrative, poetic, historical, travelogue), religious, devotional, scientific, technical, juridical, and figurative (in all its declinations).

The exercise of attribution (CARACI VELA 2009, pp. 192-210) – by means of which art historians have been able to use highly refined methods and been able to give (and continue to give) important contributions – would make no sense in an area where the composer has been annulled in the nebulous *continuum* of his time: but in recent medieval musicology it has been utilized for some very fortunate cases such as, for instance, that regarding Zacara da Teramo, rediscovered by researchers in the last quarter of the 20th century, whose *corpus* of compositions has been steadily increasing by means of the attributions put forward supported by strong documentary and stylistic proof (the latter being extraordinarily singular and therefore possible to argue in favour of).[32]

(c) The conception of medieval musical texts as registrations of extemporaneousness

In light of debate on the themes of orality and writing, the study of medieval texts on musicology continues to follow the tendency – which came to the fore in the 1990s – to favour only the dimension of orality and those traditions linked to memory, adapting a perspective that is not always up to date in relation to the outcome of the wide-ranging interdisciplinary debate wherein it is collocated.[33]

A great deal of confusion has arisen, for example, with regard to the concepts of *formula* and *formulary structure* (used on the basis of a principal petition linking them only to memory traditions, without taking into any consideration the structuring function assumed during written formalization),[34] and those regarding extemporaneousness and improvisation: they are not at all the same thing, above all when one remembers that in any culture only partially affected by writing (and notation), improvisation is a complex phenomenon that goes

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[31] Another argument often alluded to in order to challenge the reliability of the attribution process to composers in the musical miscellanies dating from the 14th century in Italy is that of the impossibility of verification by means of signed validation: on this basis, logically, we should also doubt whether Dante actually wrote the *Commedia*. Cfr. CARACI VELA 2009, *Valutazione dell'autenticità e attribuzionismo*, pp. 175-210: 175.

[32] Along with the widely known attributions put forward by Agostino Ziino for *D'amor languire* and *In el...carnal* (in the Mancini Codex) and *Dime, Fortuna* (in the Boverio Codex), and by Elvira Di Mascia and Lucia Marchi for *Le temps verrà* (in the Boverio Codex), more recently Marco Gozzi, on the basis of a thorough examination of intertextual elements and compositional technique, has put forward another six compositions. Cfr. GOZZI 2004a.

[33] Cfr. CARACI VELA 2009, *Oralità e scrittura*, pp. 3-60.

[34] A rather clear example of this function in written composition is dealt with by Karl Kügle (KÜGLE 2003).

well beyond primary orality; rather does it develop insofar as it is provided with possible written reference points. Furthermore, as most recent research has underlined, improvisation is definitely not a univocal phenomenon (MCGEE 2003), and it is subject to contextual mutations, the analysis of which would require a historically orientated theory (PIETROPAOLO 2003).

In this vast area of essential synergy between notation and improvisation (which includes in the Middle Ages singing *super librum*, singing *on sight*, *faburden*, and other similar typologies), studies on the tradition of *canto fratto*[35] and on the de-codification of pragmatic notation systems in *simple polyphony* are important sources of new suggestions.

Over the last two decades, much has been said and written with regard to mnemonic techniques and the didactics of improvised composition between the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, with significant results;[36] the tradition of improvised counterpoint, which occupies a rather important place over the course of the 14ᵗʰ century, has been investigated thoroughly by means of the treatise writing concerning it.[37]

The idea of the improvisational roots of the polyphonic repertoire of Italian *Ars Nova* – in itself sensible – has, in more recent times, been pursued by many scholars following a line of research leading back to von Fischer (FISCHER 1961), but which actually centres on an investigation into the genesis of repertoire, and not one into the repertoire itself which, in the format it has come down to us in, has been separated from the original process and fully inserted into the mechanisms of the written tradition.[38] In some cases it is possible to identify in the written tradition that has come down to us traces of the improvisational procedure that accompanied the tradition of memory: but we are dealing here with a phenomenon that can be apprehended through the filter of writing, which passed it on to us. Writing is a critical activity that both selects and formalizes; it is not the reproduction of a sound event, it does not function as a recording of discourse, just as notation cannot record a musical performance, for obvious reasons concerning temporal discrepancies between the sounds being played that it should record and the procedures that it utilizes; these are all the slower and more complex the further back one goes in time, and the more resistant this means becomes. With regard to the

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[35] The important studies miscellany *Il canto fratto. L'altro gregoriano* 2006 is very enlightening on the topic and its numerous implications.

[36] See in particular BUSSE BERGER 2005 (Italian ed.: BUSSE BERGER 2008), and its review CALELLA 2007. By the same scholar cfr. also BUSSE BERGER 2007b.

[37] However, it tends to be forgotten that this long and uninterrupted tradition occupies a different place to that of written composition, as is demonstrated by the way in which the theoretical reflection – with particular emphasis on Tinctoris by Zacconi – keeps it on a different level, thus allowing it a much less regulated status, greater freedom and less exposure to critical censure.

[38] On the distinction between the sphere – and practice – of improvisation on a *Gerüstsatz* and the sphere of written composition, Oliver Huck has made some pertinent observations, based on a systematic examination of the testimonies that have come down to us (HUCK 2008).

discourse (or the music) that it should conserve, writing (or indeed the notation) can only give an interpretation, in which something will necessarily be omitted, and something else fixed down: because writing means, first of all, making a choice (conditioned by the times and the means of the person writing, but also by his tastes and memory), putting ideas and dates in an order that is functional to the message, deciding to lose some things in order to save others, by means of an intellectual activity that is responsible and complex.

Through writing, discourse (or music) may be placed within a new system of communication, on account of which it must re-formalize itself. Memory is the means in the passage from performance to writing: but it may only proceed in a selective manner, focusing on that which seems most relevant and functional, and omitting the rest. No manuscript records a performance: at the most, it can focus on a certain arrangement – deriving from the relationship between what has been memorized and an optimized idea of the object with the contingencies of writing – rather than with any other.

The conception of writing as a recording of discourse (and consequently that of notation as a recording of executive performance: a process that is even more complex at the intellectual level, as opposed to the material one),[39] has been discredited, starting from the final years of the last century, with cogent argumentation put forward by various scholars.[40]

The most recent musicological research has put forward some contributions that are aware of the complexity of the processes of genesis and transmission of music, and of the relationship between the mechanisms of memory (which are behind improvisation as well) and notation.[41]

> For many scholars trying to find traces of improvisational procedures in Trecento music, the preferred object of study is the Rossi Codex[42] which, as far as the current state of knowledge is concerned, is the most antique *Ars Nova* miscellany in existence: that is why it is honed in on by anybody who conceives of the most antique form of Italian notation as a pure registration of a procedure that must still have been largely improvisational.[43] But if one decides that the

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[39] If indeed one were dealing here with the recording procedure, there would have to be an immense jumble of variants at various levels (rather than that of the melodic *formulae* or embellishments which are continually referred to) and not the modest textual exercises that are currently available, which point to interpretative initiatives that are functional to processes of the textual tradition.

[40] For an overall view of the topic (and in particular for the line of thought linking Walter Ong to David Olson, Derrick de Kerckhova and beyond), cfr. CARACI VELA 2009, pp. 3-60.

[41] Cfr. TREITLER 2003, which collects and updates many of the most important articles by the author; BUSSE BERGER 2005.

[42] Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Fondo Rossiano 215 and Ostiglia, Biblioteca della Fondazione Greggiati, rari 35. Cfr. the modern critical edition, edited by Tiziana Sucato, *Il codice Rossiano 215* 2003.

[43] HIRSHBERG 2009 sees a *descriptive* notation in this, not yet *prescriptive*, which has «the task of transcription of oral performance», since with the Italian system this task would have been

repertoire in the Rossi Codex, insofar as it is 'antique', has to demonstrate evident traces of the genetic relationship linking it to improvisation – and if by the term *improvisation* one ends up meaning a sort of disordered experimentation to be considered as consigned in one of its many possible facies to written formalization – the consequences on interpretation – textual and performance – of the music must be strongly influenced.

In the valuable article by Blake Wilson (WILSON 1997), the points of contact between lauda and madrigal are identified in the supply of melodic and embellishment *formulae* in use in the polyphony of Gherardello, Lorenzo, Donato, and the Tuscan Giovanni, who was very active in Northern Italy, is presented as an important linking figure between the 'archaic' phase and the Tuscan one. Huck (HUCK 2005a, pp. 231-232) challenges – in my opinion, rightly so – the alleged singularity of the Florentine style that, according to Wilson (WILSON 1997, pp. 172-176), can be caught in the advanced formalization of the madrigal and the melismas, which appear to have a structural function rather than being purely ornamental. Wilson takes the Rossi Codex as his yardstick and, in the wake of Toliver (TOLIVER 1992, p. 175) who in his turn underlines Long's idea (LONG 1991, p. 259), sees in the music therein a sort of formless exuberance of diminutions, far removed from the balanced organization of the melismas of the Florentine composers: a sort of photograph of an archaic level in which the writing appears to capture the rather confused fluidity of improvisational customs that have endured from the past. Now, even if *improvisational* were the same thing as *formless* (but we know it isn't), the Rossi Codex at this present moment represents the most antique miscellany of secular vocal polyphony (and monody) in the Italian *volgare*, in a noted tradition. What exactly is there in its repertoire that constitutes the improvised and/or barely formalized? The Codex, on the contrary, shows itself to be a distillation of a precise taste in music linked to a refined level of society, of which the people, events, and costumes are alluded to in a sophisticated way, and, at the level of the individual forms, and at that of the collection as an organized complex project, it betrays a structured elaboration that is entrusted to the written tradition. The diminutions of the Rossi Codex are no longer capricious or less formalized than those of Gherardello: they become so only if we decide this *a priori* in order to substantiate the idea – as there is no other way to do so – that this Codex is a recording of extemporary practice.

As far as secular monody is concerned in the Italian *volgare*, represented in the Rossi Codex by monodic *ballate*, nowadays it is recognized that it has a very long history, about which there are two surviving statements dating from the end of the 12ᵗʰ century and the beginning of the 13ᵗʰ, one of which has only been recently discovered (VELA 2005), and both have been put forward and studied on the occasion of the international conference in 2004, *Tracce di una tradizione sommersa* (*Tracce di una tradizione sommersa* 2005), in which the many questions linked to them were given ample occasion to be discussed and explored by scholars.

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easier than with the French one. A brief contribution – containing a wealth of interesting observations that can subsequently be adequately developed through future research – discussed in *National Norwegian Artistic Research Fellowships Programme* and made available on Internet (GUNDERSEN 2009) also moves along the same lines of thought.

The secular monody in the Italian *volgare* that has reached us in the Codexes or noted fragments appears as the natural heir to the troubadour and trouvère repertoire; the monodic *ballate* put to music by Gherardello or Lorenzo, or those in the Rossi Codex come under this centuries' long literary current, where the statute of genre is stable and recognized, where the intonation is entrusted to evolved and refined styles of notation (and substantiated by a well-articulated theoretical reflection of a speculative bent), within codexes produced by political and intellectual ambiences, harbingers of culturally connoted directions.

In my opinion, there are still, however, some areas deserving of special attention, such as:

(a)   The promotion of serious popularizing initiatives, with the aim of making the distance less onerous – and dangerous for the future of these studies – between Trecento music and basic cultural interests

The Italian *Ars Nova* is generally an unknown object even for music lovers familiar with its history. Unlike an awareness of literature, architecture or the figurative arts from the 14th century, which form an indispensable part of one's cultural background – at least along general lines – that relating to music is vague and confused, when not completely absent, even in people with an average to high cultural formation: listening habits and expectations are very far removed, for the modern listener – even when one is cultivated – from his equivalent more than six centuries ago. Therefore good mediation between musicological research and listeners, even niche listeners, is not an easy task, and is generally carried out on the basis of the supply, which is to a greater or lesser extent rendered attractive by the record industry through thematic choices often furnished with up-to-date information.[44]

All too rarely is space given in series of books on music to Trecento music that is not strictly for specialists; and any space that is given is reserved for Francesco Landini.[45]

It is an extremely difficult task to try and recreate, by means of descriptions and references to the notable ambiences in visual art or poetry, the sense of aesthetic pleasure and emotional participation that must have accompanied

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[44] There are several titles that could be mentioned here over the last twenty years. Recent activity, along with great motivation on the part of the vocal *Ensemble* LIBER *UnUsualis*, is particularly deserving of attention. It goes some way towards filling the gap, by means of a perceptive selection, created by one of the most embarrassing omissions that the *Ars Nova* repertoire is suffering from in the performance circuit: music by Niccolò da Perugia (mostly absent from recordings and concerts, or present only with dated material). The *Ensemble* is performing it at an international level, with appreciable results (but the additional information put out on internet <www.liberunusualis.com> is regrettably naïve: «Because the Trecento repertoire is under-represented in both classical music recording and Italian literature studies, (?) my hope is that the Greenberg award will draw attention to our recording, thereby raising awareness and stimulating discussion of both areas», September 2011).

[45] Cfr. the essay by FIORI 2004 and respective review VIVARELLI 2005.

Landini's music. Anna Chiappinelli[46] has taken on this task through a narration that considers the musician as being implicated in the romantic relationship with a 'Madonna Luce' (the term, which emerges in the wake of in-depth exegesis by *señales* that Romance philology offers, is effectively present in several poetic texts set to music by Landini), and this course is outlined.

In order to prepare the reader for the encounter with the acoustic reality, the book opens with a didactic *excursus* focussing on the history of polyphony from its origins to the Trecento (unfortunately confused), and with the addition of a plentiful iconography and undoubted passion, it attempts to recreate through words, the opinions and accounts of 14th century listeners, the effects of Landini's music, all of which is presented in anachronistically mythical and romantic terms.

(b)   Up-date and widen philological areas of competence

With the exception of a certain number of contributions that provide critically evaluated texts, the *corpus* of Italian Trecento music remains available only through two series of publications, which are certainly famous and deserving, but also dated and discontinuous on the level of textual criticism: the *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae*,[47] and the *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*[48] (this latter with some particularly unacceptable areas, both on account of the state of the poetic texts – which often appear to be lacking in sense, being linguistically and metrically incorrect or absurd – and on account of the reading and interpretation of the notation).

The problem[49] is partly balanced on the positive side by an increasingly-strongly felt interest for the manuscripts as single documents attesting to the existence of individuals with precise historical physiognomies, in order to understand the motivations behind the set up, the peculiarities regarding the codex, the relationship between music, poetic text, iconographic material, and the type of notation. But in the absence of a textually critical prospective of great magnitude, the individual witness may wind up becoming an absolute, being read and interpreted on just the one level – rather than being mediated by an awareness of the complexity of tradition – of executive performance.[50]

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[46] CHIAPPINELLI 2007. The author is a cultivated music-lover, spurred by many interests and intellectual pursuits, but not equipped with a musicological training.

[47] Edited by American Musicological Society (published in different places since the Second World War).

[48] Edited by L'oiseau-lyre, Monaco, Les Remparts, in 24 volumes published between 1956 and 1991.

[49] As far as the poetic texts are concerned, the problem has been pointed out several times. Cfr. in particular CARSANIGA 1990, p. 6.

[50] A strangely immediate jump from palaeography to performance, which does not seem to require any critical-textual mediation, has become apparent in recent works going by titles such as that included in the miscellany – which offers very interesting essays – *Music and Medieval Manuscripts* 2004.

On the other hand, in medieval musicology the conviction reigns that philology is to be identified *tout court* with the set up of stemmas, whose use, nevertheless, is sometimes confused with regard to the use of terms and concepts, or even submitted to strained interpretations. The most frequent case consists in the introduction of sub-archetypes and/or successive intermediate (lost) witnesses[51] (and maybe even in direct succession with the archetype), which are not in actual fact reconstructible witnesses (as they should be, if they can be seen in the stemma), but only alleged intermediary levels of the tradition (notoriously they cannot be visualized as such in a conceptually correct stemma, nor quantified). Even a stemma such as the one put forward for the madrigal *La belle stella* in vol. II of *Musical Mensurabilis*[52] presents this improper multiplication of objects.[53]

> Another curious aspect of textual criticism in the field of medieval music is the concept of *unica* as cases that are not only potentially problematic, but also – and above all – ontologically insidious and ungovernable: in no field of philology is *unicum* synonymous with *dubium*;[54] rather is it a legitimate and often important object of textual criticism. If this peculiar criterion had passed, a great deal of the philological work over the centuries on classical, medieval, modern, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, or French, Finnish, or Chinese texts – or texts written in any language from the ancient, recent or contemporary world, as well as on music in a uni-testimonial tradition, would have been impossible. (To this list also belong, just to mention a few of the more notable examples, Pindar,

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[51] They are witnesses whose existence may be postulated at particular points along the tradition, because their existence can be corroborated by at least another two witnesses: they are not the visualization of everything in the tradition that one suspects might have been lost, and which the stemma cannot nor ought not to contain. Cfr. TROVATO 2005.

[52] *Die mehrfach überlieferten Kompositionen des frühen Trecento* 2007, Band I, p. LIV.

[53] Though grounded reasons exist for reconstructing *s* from the concordace of Sq and SL, and even *ps* from the concordace of Pit with the reconstructed *s*, the same cannot be said for *ps* from γ, γ from ω (RD and FC are visualized as if in a supposed extra-stemmatic contamination, and so it can by no means be taken for granted that from their possible concordance with an intermediary, a higher intermediary may be reconstructed), β from ω, ω from α? And what precisely do the five reconstructed elements represent, one after another in a row, between α and the level of Sq and SL? And for that matter, what does α represent? Following the correct use of stemmatic conventions, what is known as α should indicate a lost textual level, to be reconstructed and situated below the archetype: here instead it represents the mythical 'original', which could be reconstructed from the concordance between the Rossi Codex and that of Seville (while all the rest of the stemma is reduced to an accumulation of *descripti*). The stemma is accompanied by a detailed discussion, which justifies the choices made point by point; the idea of the *mouvance* as a harbinger of meaning has certainly been assimilated, but the difficulty in grasping the real relationship between the Florentine codexes (in order to resolve the problem of contacts – but with no direct dependence – between Squarcialupi and S. Lorenzo 2211, *s* may be postulated, and in order to collocate Pit, the reconstructed *ps*), creates embarrassment. The stemma may be taken as a general indicator of the relationship between codexes, applicable to the compositions by Giovanni and Jacopo da Bologna: for 27 (out of the 42 transcribed synoptically in Volume II and published in a modern edition in Volume I) a table of occurrence is provided in order to support this assertion.

[54] Oliver Huck takes this equivalence for granted, even in HUCK 2001, p. 80.

Paean IV; Cielo d'Alcamo, *Contrasto*; Zacara, *Sumite karissimi*; Bach, *Verschiedene Canones*; and Mahler, *Winterlied*).

(c) Increase the commitment to make the codexes (and fragments) 'speak' by means of an analysis of their organization, their internal and external network of references, the decorations, the paratexts, in order to be able to read them as (stratified) products of a cultural project: which explains how dated repertoires may have been made actual through the intervention of one or two copyist-editors on the project;[55]

No matter how successfully the great Italian *Ars Nova* codexes have been studied, there is room for improvement with regard to their contextualization. This may be seen from the unresolved questions posed by the Squarcialupi Codex, the splendour of which can be explained only in reference to a client or dedicatee of very high rank, who to this day has not been identified with any convincing hypotheses. An analytical-exegetical approach on a large scale to this codex is still lacking, such as for instance, that put forward by Emma Dillon for the ms. Paris, Bibl. Nat., fonds francais 146 of the Roman de Fauvel (DILLON 2002).

(d) Widen the study of notations as complex systems, into a non-linear and non-univocal processes of active reception

This necessitates a systematic examination of tradition for each composition, with a view to understanding the motives and direction of these processes. Furthermore, it might be useful, in my opinion, to study the notations not only from the (crucial) prospective of mathematics and philosophy, but also as integrated elements in the figurative system of the visual horizon – scriptural and figurative – of their time.

III. Cultural contextualization

After a long period in which the tendency prevailed of isolating music from the Italian *Ars Nova* as it was passed on by the great anthological codexes, and consider it as a compact historical-musical phenomenon possessing entirely singular and autonomous connotations in its genesis and development, as always occurs with the pendulum-like motion evident in cultural fashions, people have recently begun to see in it a constellation of regular events, marked simply by the gradual increase in French influences in the notation, form, vocal and/or instrumental destination of the compositions, in the melodic writing, the linguistic blendings, and the expressive strategies: a culturally unrelated view, that does not do justice to the carefully wrought dynamic reality of the end product, carried out, noted and spread within an

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[55] With regard to the complex implications concerning the copyist, who may take over functions belonging to the author, and who in actual fact gives a decisive direction to tradition and the future modes of reception of the work, cfr. CANFORA 2002.

open culture that was complex and on the move, in contact with the international setup, from which it may not be abstracted.

And so it is that an Italian *Ars Nova* – as in Pirotta's time – which begins, shines and then disintegrates like a meteorite is no longer suggested; rather is it considered as a phenomenon that appears and spreads within a *vacuum* in which the relationship not only cannot be proved, but is even declared to be of no consequence.

> The painstaking and careful work of reassessment from the beginnings of Italian Trecento music and the exegeses that have been put forward so far, which the afore-mentioned first volume of *Musica Mensurabilis* puts on the level of musical palaeography, mensuralism, metrics, form, compositional techniques and counterpoint, allow scholars access to a great quantity of topics available for further evaluation and discussion; the necessity for a re-contextualization of the repertoire covering all areas of contingency has not been answered, one that might have exegetical relevance and not limit itself to being a mere outline;[56] this lack reduces the incisiveness of the generous attempt to define the 'style', necessarily rendering it generic; it is a very delicate and thorny issue, which cannot be reduced to a list of data or happenings, and furthermore it is not feasible outside a thorough-going contextualization.
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> In *Die Musik des frühen Trecento*, it is possible to see, not without a certain discomfort, both the peremptory 'corrections' to Tiziana Sucato's edition of the Rossi Codex (*Il codice Rossiano 215* 2003) – some choices, different to those made by Huck and in some cases better, are presented all *sic et sempliciter* as errors deserving of a rap on the knuckles (HUCK 2005a, pp. 360-363) –, and also the anachronistically polemical tone with which the limits – historically obvious – of the previous century's approach to musicology are continuously examined, hypostasized as far the the Italian Trecento is concerned by means of the biggest names: Kurt von Fischer and Nino Pirotta, whose ideas are thought to have been conditioned by teleological influences and most of all by an *a priori* comprehension of a historical process which would subsequently be taken for granted: that the Italian Trecento already carries the seeds of some of the crucial instances of Humanism.

This is where a significant point arises. It is universally noted that over the course of the 14th century in Italy pre-Humanistic orientations gradually emerged: in Latin and *volgare* literature, in architecture and the figurative arts, in scientific, juridical, historical and political developments. This is the direction Italian culture was heading in, constantly aiming at consciously enhancing the classical models in all fields of knowledge and art, marked by an increasing desire for direct contact with them, or at least minimal mediation – as opposed to the *vulgatae*, the *periochae*, the translations of translations, and the medieval compendiums. The phenomenon is called, with a

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[56] «In der vorliegenden Arbeit bildet die Einbidung der überlieferten Musik in ihren Kulturellen Kontext daher nicht der Ausgangpunkt, vielmehr wird erst in einem abschliessenden Kapitel eine Kontextualizierung vorgenommen» (HUCK, 2005a p. 4).

conventional term (as are all terms that we use when we want to bring order to comlex subjects) pre-Humanism: a concept with which the history of thought, by means of increasingly refined exegetical instruments, is studying in every one of its fields this wealth of implications and their dynamics.

This orientation took off in Italy (which, for well-known historical and geographical reasons, is a natural repositary for the greatest number of testimonies to classical thought and art), prepared for by a lengthy incubation period in which, starting from the end of the 13th century, gradually led to events that enormously enlarged the field of knowledge and the vision of the world: the great mercantile voyages, supported by scientific speculation (geographers and cosmographers) who looked to the classical texts with new eyes, even in the Latin translations from the Arabic; the development of large cultural centres and universities; the flowering of the city-state (which looked to republican Rome as a model); the impulse given to the search for ancient texts in the libraries and the enlargement of the canonic *auctoritates*; the need to rebuild a style of Latin that was closer to classical models, which made itself felt in the literary, scientific and juridical field; the rediscovery of the parameters of space and volume evident in classical models in the figurative arts and architecture (attested to since the time of Cavallini and then Giotto); the elaboration of a noble style of literary *volgare*, on the same level as Latin, with the extraordinarily innovative contribution of the '*Tre Corone*' and their function as models and lasting reference points.

Over the course of the 14th century, the pre-humanistic ethos may be seen in every field and this gave rise to a proud awareness of cultural primacy, that of continuity (which in medieval Italy was never entirely interrupted) with an illustrious past: this continuity was rediscovered with a new level of awareness and experienced as a guarantee in itself of present excellence.

This attunement with the pre-humanistic developments made itself felt in the field of music as well in a mediated way (the only way possible, given the lack of models passed on from Antiquity, and for more than a century it remained impossible to accede to primary sources of classical theory). Music certainly couldn't look to classical referents, but, in agreement with the other mainsprings of 14th century culture, the awareness of having at one's disposal, if not the classics, at least their 'high' tradition, was developing, which had to be conserved and passed on, to one's own time and to future generations in codexes that contain not only a coeval representation, but also a retrospective one.

But the strongest and deepest attunement with the cultural orientation of the time was evident in music in the clearcut hierarchy, rooted in the classical tradition, which places the word and its intonation on two distinct levels: the first brings meaning, ideas and concepts (of a different register depending on the genre and form); the second is the means by which the first is channelled in order to make it more appealing and fix it in the memory.

Over the course of the 14th century, when treatises on musical form acquired their own importance, the paradigm took shape of the 'elevated' nature of poetic forms, of which knowledge is essential: in other words, it follows, rather than preceeding, the theoretical reflection on poetic forms that it needs as a model. Vice versa, in treatises on poetry, while descriptions of metrics and form are normally well illustrated and precise, the indications supplied on musical intonation are usually optional and generic, and are accompanied without a qualm – as in Antonio da Tempo (ANTONIO DA TEMPO 1977, p. 71) – by the confession that he has no direct competence in music, which was eveidently thought to be optional.

The logocentric culture of the classical tradition therefore reaffirms its epicentre as lying in the word: in vocal polyphony it is the poetic word, consequently, that determines choices regarding form, the underlying structure and the strategies of musical intonation which, in their turn, are the material and means of the intoned texts. These choices and strategies are certainly not what qualifies the great period of the 16th century madrigal: a lot has been made of this qualification, but the result has been that the opposite extreme has been espoused where it is taken for granted that in Italian Trecento polyphony there is absolutely no pondered interrelationship between the text and the music. In the word-sound interrelationship, no link, not even a latent type of continuity, is to be discerned between Petrarch's century and that of Petrarchism.

Throughout the period of music history all vocal music – whether monodic or polyphonic – arises in order to provide a channel for words and give full play to its potential: but the way of approaching this objective and the means of achieving it have been many and diverse.

In relatively recent times studies have increased on the word-music interrelationship in the Middle Ages: many things have been said, for instance, about the 13th century motet and the *Ars Nova* chanson, or the 15th century polyphonic mass. Some aspects regarding the strategies employed by Machaut have been studied, and the fact has frequently been underlined that, perhaps on account of his double identity as both a poet and a musician, the verbal text and the musical text do indeed tend to organize themselves synergetically in a formal construction running parallel to the structure; but just as frequently each of them tends to follow its own independent organization with a lack of syntony between the two (GÖLLNER 1995); the musical composition – which follows its own conventions of genre – may even take precedence over the poetic one, and the results are full of formal and expressive coherence (KÜGLE 2003).

> At some stage during the 1980s, musicologists studying the Italian *Ars Nova* came up with some ideas, the validity of which seems rather weak or dubious to us now, but which should not be discounted without some kind of further investigation.

According to Fischer, the formal model that is chosen on the basis of the poetic text to be intoned (madrigal, ballade, caccia), despite imposing its own conventions of genre, tends to use them – along with the assortment of formulaic diminutives amply attested to from the time of Piero or Gherardello, down to Zacara and Ciconia – depending on the textual dynamics which it channels and often too on its phonic and syntactic features (FISCHER 1984). Furthermore, von Fischer insisted on highlighting the close relationship between the Italian *Ars Nova* and important poetry, not only on account of the – few – cases of intonation of the texts from the '*Tre Corone*', but above all for their shaping presence in the poems set to music. In the 14th century a «bewusst kritische Auseinandersetzung mit literarischen Texten» (FISCHER 1984, p. 52) appears to have begun; unlike the French ambience, the word-tone interrelationship seems not to have depended on the use of musical figures, but rather on the declamation of portions of text with a grammatical sense: this appears to point to a humanistic interest in language.

Ursula Günther tackled the problem of expressive strategies in the *Ars Nova* and especially in the *Ars Subtilior* (GÜNTER 1984), and she noted phenomena that anticipated the concept of 'madrigalism' insofar as it is a musical procedure that is directly linked to the significance of precise segments of the verbal text, present from long before the 16th century. In particular, she distinguished (with examples) different ways of representing the pictorial sound of words or portions of text, with:
— the imitation of sounds or noises (*onomatopoeia*);
— the use of scale-like movements to represent rising or falling verbal indications, or movement;
— the special emphasis given with musical means to important words (and also by means of visual effects entrusted to the notation);
— breaking a norm (in melodic or contrapuntal writing) or the exhibition of a certain compositional technique (canon, diminution or augmentation, or others again) as a musical way of underlining concepts.

In the same miscellany of studies, Fritz Reckow (RECKOW 1984)[57] gave some indications taken up again by recent research, and in particular:
— the dependence of polyphonic music on the aesthetic foundation of *musica plana*;
— the influence of Ockham's nominalism on Trecento music.[58]

Don Harran (HARRAN 1986) has worked at length on the strategies employed in medieval polyphony to communicate and highlight the messages contained in the verbal text (as well as the attention – which varies greatly over time - given to the effects created by the layout of the syllables under the notes). He has insisted on seeing a continuous interest in Italian vocal polyphony and theoretical reflections towards the value accorded to the word much further back than the noted attestations in the 16th century (HARRAN 1984). The conscious use, in accordance with a code that the composer amply shares with the performer and listener, of extremely refined musical means to illustrate and make the most of the messages contained in the poetic text and its structural and formal values,

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[57] For a classification of the repetition of the syllables, cfr. ZIINO, 1984; Dorothea Baumann deals with the problem of the repetition of important words (BAUMANN 1984, pp. 86-88).

[58] Dorit Tanay has worked extensively on this. Cfr. TANAY 1993.

as well as its phonic suggestions, was occasionally applied to the polyphony of the 14th century and 15th century, and the traces have been highlighted of continuity in this use from the late Middle Ages up to the Renaissance,[59] in particular in the Italian ambience where the centrality of the word – a longstanding tradition going back several centuries – and its normative function for musical strategies have deep roots in culture.

These are the lines along which research proceded last century.

Nowadays new points of observation have opened up in the field regarding the interrelationship between the poestic text and the musical text centred on their respective statute of genre. The viewpoint of the formalizing function of verse on musical composition, which has been evaluated with significant results by Oliver Huck (HUCK 2005a), does not exclude other points of observation.

Pedro Memelsdorff, taking Antonio da Tempo's *Summa* and its version in the *volgare* by Gidino as his starting point, highlights the nature of the musical choices by means of an in-depth analysis that utilizes instruments and terminology of the time obviously made explicit theoretically, which were subordinated to the necessity of re-creating the ambiguity of the textual suggestions (MEMELSDORFF 2009b).

On the close relation between the poetic text with strategies of notation, Marco Gozzi has recently put forward some interesting observations that deal in a concrete manner with delicate problems of the transcription and correct translation of the compositional line of thought in the modern edition; these will require further analysis and debate (GOZZI 2009).

A recent book by Elena Abramov van Rijk (VAN RIJK 2009), which represents a new direction for research – but which an article by Franco Alberto Gallo (GALLO 1963) had already anticipated in the 1960s, and which Marco Gozzi took up again more recently (GOZZI 2004b) from a different angle – cogently analyzes with painstaking exegetical accuracy a vast legacy of knowledge and literary and theoretical testaments, some of which are well-known while others have, up to now, not been sufficiently taken into consideration by musicology, or even completely ignored. The objective is that of studying, with the support of all the relevant literary and theoretical testimonies, the art of pronouncing, declaiming, and reciting the verbal texts by following the music within the verse, the sonorities of the words and the calibrated effects in the layout of the accents. The purpose of this is to identify the relation – preparatory and formative – between the performance of the *prolatores* and the different types of intonation of the poetic text in Italian secular music in the Trecento along a historical route that acquires coherence from the 14th to the 17th century.

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[59] In an important contribution regarding the era of Binchois, Leeman Perkins called our attention to categories of phenomena that coincide for the most part with those referred to by Günther concerning the *Ars Subtilior*. Cfr. PERKINS 2000.

In this approach, the awareness with which music is inserted into a network of relations linking it to every other aspect of culture, is to be greatly appreciated, as is the manner in which it is conceived of along lines of historic continuity and in the complexity of its generational processes:

> It may well be that in Trecento music a number of musical traditions converged, from the more ancient forms of expressive folk singing, with their tendency to ignore poetic structure, to new forms with their growing awareness of poetic lexical structures and their impact on the singing style. It can only be hoped that an analytic method based on the uncovering of the lexical structures of the poetic texts would help determine which of these tendencies is dominant in any particular composition. (VAN RIJK 2009, p. 264)

Secular vocal music – whether polyphonic or monodic – spreads poetic texts: not just of any genre, naturally, because only a limited part of them was felt to be suitable for intoning, or were conceived of in relation to the spread of music. The nature of the intoned texts can therefore provide indications as to why music was necessary for their divulgation, and help to identify the possible relation between those texts and the ideological, political and cultural background (or programme) in which the composer could be implicated in whatever way or to whatever extent. As has been said, other aspects linked to the tradition of the texts also give a voice to this programme: the nature of the codexes and the way they were set up, the notational choices made by copyists,[60] the typology of the repertoires within which the individual compositions are included and presented, the paratexts, the iconographic programme, the allusions in the coats-of-arms, the miniatures, the inter-textual references between fields within the page (the individual voices, the allusive range of the decoration) and without (verbal and/or musical inter-textuality with other compositions by the same or other musicians, or with literary texts, historical documents, figurative representations, and so on). These are all elements that the musicologist can use as reference points in order to evaluate his results in the area of internal criticism, the history of form and compositional techniques, theory, and notation, in an approach to the musical-poetic text as a *complex text*, (CARACI VELA 2009, pp. 68-69) which gives rise to a synergy with regard to areas of competence and teamwork in the study of every aspect of musical tradition and the contextual network in which it is implicated.

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[60] The way in which choices of this kind can be linked to a culturally-aware programme has been remarked on several times by Margaret Bent: cfr. BENT 1987, *Bologna Q.15* 2008, vol. I, *Introductory Study*.

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