

David J. Rothenberg. *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music*.

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From the thirteenth until the early sixteenth century, song provided a favorable meeting place for the culture of courtly love and the cult of the Virgin; both the words and the melodies of songs could act as potent signifiers, especially when transposed from one context to another. David Rothenberg's study of this phenomenon draws upon two principal bodies of evidence, Parisian motets of the thirteenth century and a diverse corpus of fifteenth-century polyphony, to suggest continuity of allegorical tradition throughout the Gothic era.

The *Ars Antiqua* motet was inherently allusive: for instance, in the *In seculum* melisma (from the Easter Gradual *Hec dies*), numerous polyphonic descendants drew upon the melody's springtime symbolism, combining the tenor with a variety of added texts, whether overtly Marian petitions or allusive *pastourelles*. Rothenberg illustrates the thematic elision between Easter, natural renewal, and the Virgin Mary with a convincing iconographical analysis of the thirteenth-century motet *El mois d'avril / O quam sancta / Et gaudebit* as transmitted in the Montpellier Codex. The liturgy of the Assumption looms large as a source of Marian tenors, probably because most of the other Marian feasts fell during penitential seasons, when polyphony was proscribed at Notre Dame. Two families of motets based upon tenors taken from the Assumption liturgy (*Flos filius* and *Regnat*) can be understood as snapshots within the unfolding narrative of the Assumption, beginning with Mary's longing for reunion with Christ through her triumphant coronation among the saints and angels, culminating with the second vespers.

Guillaume Du Fay's cantilena motet, *Vergene bella*, exemplifies the internationalizing trends of the fifteenth century, fusing familiar Marian tropes with Petrarchan lyric traditions and French chanson techniques within the English cantilena genre. An early work, probably datable to 1424, *Vergene bella* sets a vernacular Italian text but resembles (and was scribally grouped with) Latin cantilena motets. Conversely, Walter Frye's *Ave regina celorum*, although itself a Latin motet, is most frequently found alongside secular songs in vernacular chansonniers. Frye's motet "praises the Queen of Heaven with the affect of courtly love"; drawing upon the Marian symbolism of the garden, *Ave regina celorum* "stands between chanson and motet, between earthly garden and heavenly paradise." It therefore lent itself to quotation in polyphony by Obrecht and Agricola (probably through its transmission to Bruges) and, more spectacularly, in two angel paintings made in Bruges in the 1480s and on the ceiling of Yolande de Laval's oratory at the Chateau de Montreuil-Bellay.

Two fifteenth-century rondeaux, and their intrusion into Latin liturgical polyphony, provide case studies for Rothenberg's final chapters. Hayne van Ghizeghem's *De tous biens plaine* and Binchois's *Comme femme desconfortée* served as tropes for Mary's virtues and her sorrows. Ghizeghem's song, unmistakably alluding to the Angelic Salutation, was overtly quoted in Loyset Compère's musician-motet, *Omnium bonorum plena*; but it could also symbolize the Virgin when juxtaposed against Ockeghem's potentially Christological song, *D'ung aultre amer*, in Josquin's *Victimae paschali laudes*. The figure of the disconsolate lover depicted in *Comme femme desconfortée*, meanwhile, might represent either the salvific sorrow of the Pietà or the yearning of Christ's mother as she herself lay dying (an image deftly counterpointed by Rothenberg against contemporary visual depictions of Mary's Assumption).

The burgeoning of Marian piety enriched and sustained the allusive mindset, providing a rich fund of images and texts whose migrations between different contexts almost invariably generated symbolic energy. Where musical and visual materials meet directly, Rothenberg's prose crackles with originality. Although

tangential to his textual case studies, his discussion of the Washington Assumption painting by the Master of the St. Lucy Legend intriguingly distinguishes between earthly and heavenly song: the former, a clearly legible cantilena related to Frye's model, *Ave regina celorum*, sung from *rotuli*; the latter, a piece of liturgical music sung from choirbook, its notation intentionally garbled and so indecipherable to the mortal eye. (Given the importance of iconographical evidence to Rothenberg's central arguments, and given the trouble the author went in order to garner accurate visual data, OUP's low-resolution monochrome illustrations fall short.)

MAGNUS WILLIAMSON

Newcastle University