

# SYMBOLIC SCORES

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## GUILLAUME DUFAY'S CONCEPT OF FAUX-BOURDON\*

It is certainly no exaggeration to say that the term 'faux-bourdon'<sup>1</sup> is "enigmatic"<sup>2</sup> and that the creation of the technique is "one of the most strenuously-debated and enduring mysteries of musical history".<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the reader who is familiar with previous studies on this musical phenomenon may expect from the author of a new essay on faux-bourdon that he will justify his project carefully. Although the various studies by Brian Trowell,<sup>4</sup> Ernest Trumble,<sup>5</sup> and Ann Besser Scott<sup>6</sup> offer different views on the historical meaning and development of faux-bourdon, they provide a good survey of the problems involved and suggest at the same time that some of Heinrich Besseler's earlier theses, formulated in his epoch-making study *Bourdon und Fauxbourdon*,<sup>7</sup> can no longer be maintained. After summarizing in the next paragraphs the quintessence of our present knowledge of the subject, I shall raise the question which has made me search for an interpretation of the origin and application of faux-bourdon technique in works by Guillaume Dufay. I shall then argue that the composer invented faux-bourdon to express, allegorically, Christ's words "You that have followed me" in the Communion of his *Missa Sancti Jacobi*, and that he chose the name given to the drone (Fr. *faux bourdon*) for the new musical technique, prompted by the well-known medieval analogy between the world of the bees and the Christian Church.

Faux-bourdon is "a technique of either improvised singing or shorthand notation",<sup>8</sup> utilized by musicians in the fifteenth century and occurring in manuscripts from about 1425 to about 1510. Over 170 compositions are preserved with the instruction 'faux-bourdon'. They are notated as two-part pieces with the *cantus prius factus* normally in the top voice, but they are meant to be performed in three parts. In its simplest form, a faux-bourdon piece results in a series of parallel sixth chords. Its style has fittingly been

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with French orthography, I spell the musical term 'faux-bourdon' in two words, connected by a hyphen. In this study, the French word 'faux bourdon', as a designation of the male drone, is spelled without a hyphen and printed in italics.

<sup>2</sup> B. Trowell, *Fauxbourdon*, in NGD 6, p. 434.

<sup>3</sup> A.B. Scott, *The Beginnings of Fauxbourdon: A New Interpretation*, in JAMS 24 (1971), p. 345.

<sup>4</sup> See fn. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Fauxbourdon: An Historical Survey*. Musicological Studies 3 (Brooklyn 1959); *Authentic and Spurious Faburden*, in RBM 14 (1960), pp. 3-29.

<sup>6</sup> See fn. 3.

<sup>7</sup> (Leipzig 1950), pp. 229-39.

<sup>8</sup> Trowell, *op. cit.* (fn. 2), p. 444.

described as "essentially monotonous".<sup>9</sup> In the excellent introduction to his *Fauxbourdon: An Historical Survey*, Trumble provides a census of the repertoire. It consists of 46 hymns, 31 psalms, 22 Magnificat-settings, 19 Introits and 2 Communions, 14 Kyries and 3 Kyrie litanies, 14 antiphons, 12 sequences, 9 settings of the Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus dei and Benedicamus domino, 1 St Matthew Passion, 1 Preface, 1 versicle, 1 secular motet, 1 Latin song, and 1 chanson.<sup>10</sup> With the exception of three secular compositions, all texts utilizing this technique belong to the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup> More than half of the transmitted faux-bourdon settings are anonymous. The remaining part can be attributed to 21 composers. Trumble lists, among others, 24 pieces by Dufay, and six each by Binchois, Brassart, and Rouillet. Johannes de Lymburgia, with his five faux-bourdon compositions, also belongs to the group of Franco-Netherlandish composers that made the most substantial contribution to the written repertoire. Trumble's Analytical Index (pp. 68-80) is impressive and very useful as a survey, but it cannot reflect accurately the frequency with which faux-bourdon technique may actually have been used. Just how does one identify the presence of this particular technique? If, like Trumble, one relies on the actual appearance of the rubric 'faulx bourdon' in the manuscripts, then one is completely at the mercy of the accuracy and consistency of the scribes. However, there are obvious dangers inherent in this approach because "occasionally ... works designated 'a faulx bourdon' in one manuscript appear in another without this direction".<sup>12</sup> In no less than 21% of Trumble's faux-bourdon compositions, this direction is missing in one of the sources. Clearly, the actual repertoire of faux-bourdon pieces must have been larger than the corpus of music that is transmitted along with the rubric 'faulx bourdon' (as is surely the case with plainchant, to which, incidentally, faux-bourdon technique was most frequently applied).<sup>13</sup>

In this context it should be remembered that, as a harmonic phenomenon, continental faux-bourdon has much in common with English faburden. It has even been advocated that the practice of singing in faux-bourdon grew directly from the English model.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not this was the case, it is very

<sup>9</sup> Trumble, *Fauxbourdon: An Historical Survey* (fn. 5), p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Trumble later added a Magnificat by the Polish composer Nicolaus de Radom, a Magnificat sexti toni by Busnois, and the anonymous sequence *Eya recolamus*. See *Autobiographical Implications in Dufay's Song-Motet 'Juvenis qui puellam'*, in RBM 42 (1988), p. 72, fn. 125. I am indebted to Professor Trumble for having sent me the typescript of his article. To the census should also be added the Sanctus of Isaac's six-part *Missa Paschalis*. For a discussion of the chanson see *Excursus 2*, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> The anonymous carol *Te deum laudamus ... O blesse God* (Trumble, *Fauxbourdon: An Historical Survey* (fn. 5), no. 171), is, according to Catherine Miller (*The Early English Carol*, in *Renaissance News* 3 (1950), p. 63), para-liturgical. However, the music of the burden cannot, as both Miller and Trumble say, be performed in faux-bourdon.

<sup>12</sup> Scott, *op. cit.* (fn. 3), pp. 350-1.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. R. Strohm, *Round Table on Constitution and Conservation of Polyphonic Repertories in the 14th and 15th Centuries*, in *AcM* 59 (1987), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Scott, *op. cit.* (fn. 3), p. 361.

probable that "faux-bourdon was used quite early in its history, like faburden, as a simple means of harmonizing a plainchant *super librum*".<sup>15</sup> The tenor in faux-bourdon pieces shows a more flexible shape at the beginning of the fifteenth century than it does later in the century, and Trumble cites this trend in support of his view that "the historical style must have consisted of more than unadulterated sixth chords".<sup>16</sup> Surely, though, we should not exclude the possibility that the direction 'faux-bourdon' was often used simply to save time in the process of copying the music.

Of the various aspects by which faux-bourdon can be characterized, the following are essential for our discussion: (1) Faux-bourdon was above all connected with the performance of Gregorian chant. (2) It was mostly employed in syllabic chants which were sung *alternatim*, that is with two alternating choirs. (3) The technique was primarily a simple procedure to enhance the sonority of *liturgical* music and did not make significant demands of the singers' capacities. (4) The duration of a passage in faux-bourdon was usually relatively short. (5) Its artistic value is determined by the degree in which the mechanical duplication takes place (see below).

Since these statements indicate that as a compositional technique, faux-bourdon offered very little possibility of development, one may wonder why Guillaume Dufay, the greatest composer of his generation, appears to have favoured this "essentially monotonous style" more than any other of his colleagues. His contribution to this 'genre' consists of no fewer than 24 pieces. Trumble's index mentions 9 hymns, 1 Magnificat, 4 antiphons, 5 movements of Mass ordinary, 2 sequences, 1 motet, 1 Communion, and 1 Latin song. One explanation for Dufay's curious penchant for faux-bourdon may lie in the liturgical nature of the compositions in which this technique was used: most of the listed pieces by Dufay are settings of liturgical texts in which, traditionally, some form of *alternatim* is practised. Only the four antiphons, the Communion, the motet, and the secular song do not belong to this type of chant. Further, the pieces represent categories of liturgical texts in which fifteenth-century composers displayed less interest than they did in the Mass cycle and motet. It was in the latter two genres, of course, that they tended to exhibit the stronger measure of their musical creativity.

Half of Dufay's faux-bourdon pieces are settings of hymns, a genre in which he was the most prolific composer of his time and in which he always paraphrased the plainsong melody in such a way that the old chant was 'translated' into the language of the fifteenth century.<sup>17</sup> His hymn settings remained in use until the 1490s, and some of his finest adaptations served as models for later composers.<sup>18</sup> Because of their simplicity of style, however, Dufay's hymns are in marked contrast with his other polyphonic settings of

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Trowell, *op. cit.* (fn. 2), p. 434.

<sup>16</sup> Trumble, *Fauxbourdon: An Historical Survey* (fn. 5), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. D. Fallows, *Dufay* (London 1982), p. 136.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. T.R. Ward, *Hymn: Polyphonic Latin*, in *NGD* 8, pp. 841-2.

liturgical texts. The answer to the question why Dufay used faux-bourdon so often in settings of hymns may be that he wanted to show his unmatched melodic inventiveness in adapting well-known chants into a style which was so widely disseminated throughout Western Europe. The hymn settings by Binchois, for example, are, compared with those by Dufay, in a more simple, almost mechanical fashion, akin to the sound of faburden.

It is obvious that in the performance of both polyphonic settings and the plainsong version of hymns, psalms, and the Magnificat, the incorporation of verses in faux-bourdon was functional, since it could help alleviate the monotony of the continual repetition of the same melodic formulas. The same kind of variation was, in Dufay's days, applied to such sectional types of chant as the introit and sections of the Mass like the Kyrie. However, how can we justify the use of faux-bourdon in the short antiphon and the Communion? And why does faux-bourdon occur, at least partially, in three settings of secular texts? Altogether, these compositions form only about ten percent of the total number of transmitted faux-bourdon pieces.

It is my aim to propose an answer to these questions by investigating the relevant works of Dufay's oeuvre. Particularly Dufay's secular pieces, in which the style of the faux-bourdon passages contrasts so clearly with the music in the other parts of the compositions, seem to offer a clue. In *Supremum est mortalibus bonum*, for instance, it appears from the musical context that faux-bourdon is not introduced as a means of achieving variety, but as a deliberate transgression of the contemporary rules of musical composition. According to Prosdocimus de Beldemandis (1412) a violation of musical syntax would occur "when one voice sings the same as the other" (*quum idem cantaret unus quod alter*) – which is the case in faux-bourdon.<sup>19</sup> Now the 'irregularity' in musical syntax was only accepted by contemporary music theory when its application was determined by a rational intention of the composer. In a context such as that of *Supremum est* the irregularity had to be understood as a so-called *color rhetoricus*, a concept formulated by Gobelinus Person in his *Excusatio irregularitatis cantuum* of 1417.<sup>20</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that in Burmeister's *Musica poetica* of 1606, which was the first printed treatise on rhetoric and music, the term 'faux-bourdon' was acknowledged as a rhetorical figure along with a number of other musical figures, which were analogous to the rhetorical tropes found in writings of the ancients.<sup>21</sup> Person's concept of *color rhetoricus* deals with the theme of duplication that we also encounter in Tinctoris's *Liber de arte contrapuncti* of 1477. Here it is stated that the same melodic note-group should not be repeated (i.e., there should be no *redicta*) unless as imitation of bells, trumpets, etc.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Tractatus de contrapuncto*, ed. by E. de Coussemaker. *Scriptorum de musica medii aevi* 3, p. 197. See also Besseler, *op. cit.* (fn. 7), p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Tractatus musicae scientiae*, ed. by H. Müller, in *KJb* 20 (1907), p. 195.

<sup>21</sup> (Rostock 1606), p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. by A. Seay. *Musicological Studies and Documents* 5 ([Rome] 1961), p. 137.

In other words, Tinctoris also accepts a divergence of the normal musical structure if it is intended as a rhetorical figure, that is *hypotyposis* (a figure which stresses the pictorial nature of a word). I think that we therefore can consider Dufay's two secular works as *pièces de résistance* in our investigation of his concept of faux-bourdon.

### *The Motet Supremum est mortalibus bonum*

Dufay wrote the motet *Supremum est mortalibus bonum* for the celebration of the first meeting of Pope Eugenius IV and Sigismund, king of Hungary, the German territories, Bohemia, and Lombardy. After having been involved in a political conflict for many years, the two rulers of the Christian world had made a peace treaty that was signed on April 8, 1433. Ten days before the coronation of Sigismund on May 31, 1433, the emperor-elect was received in Rome by the pope, an event depicted by Filarete on the bronze central doors of Old St Peter's.<sup>23</sup> Dufay had joined the papal chapel in 1428. Probably to celebrate the coronation of Pope Eugenius IV in 1431, he had written *Ecclesiae militantis*, a grandiose isoperiodic motet for five parts. It is therefore likely that it was the pope himself who two years later commissioned Dufay to write a musical ode to peace.<sup>24</sup> *Supremum est mortalibus bonum* has a strict formal design, as does the coronation motet, but unlike *Ecclesiae militantis*, in which all voices have a different text, *Supremum est* has only one text.

Dufay may have made the decision to use the same text in all voices in order to enable a more effective coordination of music and text. Despite the fact that both works are isoperiodic, they differ considerably with respect to the rhetorical presentation of their texts. The complete text of *Supremum est* follows, along with its translation:

- 1 *Supremum est mortalibus bonum*  
Pax, optimum summi Dei donum.
- Pace vero legum præstantia  
Viget atque recti constantia.
- 5 Pace dies solutus et lætus  
Nocte somnus trahitur quietus.  
Pax docuit virginem ornare  
Auro comam crinesque nodare.  
Pace rivi psallentes et aves
- 10 Patent læti collesque suaves.  
Pace dives pervadit viator  
Tutus arva incolit arator.
- O sancta pax, diu expectata,  
Mortalibus tam dulcis, tam grata,

<sup>23</sup> In Book XIII, p.18, of his *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter*, neu herausgegeben von W. Kampf (Basel 1957), F. Gregorovius gives an account of the event.

<sup>24</sup> Eugenius IV is one of the first popes after the restoration of the papacy in 1417 who appeared to be a great patron of arts and letters.

- 15 Sis eterna, firma, sine fraude.  
Fidem tecum semper esse gaude.  
Et qui nobis, o pax, te dedere  
Possideant regnum sine fine:
- Sit noster hic pontifex eternus  
20 EUGENIUS ET REX SIGISMUNDUS.  
Amen.

- 1 The supreme good for mortals is  
Peace, the best gift of God the Highest.
- In true peace the rule of law  
And the constancy of the right prevail.
- 5 In peace the day closes, and at night  
Joyous and quiet sleep is brought.  
Peace teaches the maiden to adorn  
Her hair with gold and to bind her tresses.  
In peace the streams psalmodize and the birds
- 10 Are joyous and the hills are soft.  
In peace the rich traveller reaches his destination,  
And the ploughman inhabits the arable in safety.
- O holy peace, long awaited,  
So sweet and welcome to mortals,
- 15 Be eternal, firm, without deceit.  
Rejoice that faith in you is everlasting.  
And may those, o peace, who gave thee to us  
Rule over their reign for ever:
- May our eternal pontiff be  
20 EUGENIUS AND OUR KING SIGISMUND.  
Amen.

The poem is composed of decasyllables, and is based on two different metres, iambic (1-2) and trochaic (3-20). Its first two lines form the *exordium*. Lines 3 to 12 describe the world of mankind in time of peace and have a narrative character. They correspond to the part of a speech which, in rhetorical terminology, is called *narratio*. Line 13, "O sancta pax ...", opens with an exclamation. The idea here expressed can best be considered the central purpose of the text, and this part should therefore be called the *propositio*.<sup>25</sup> With the mention of the names of both the 'apostles of peace', the peace treaty has its *confirmatio* (19-20). The "Amen", finally, is the *peroratio*.

In the musical design of the motet, the disposition of the text can be outlined as follows: (see Table 1)

The *exordium* is set as a free introduction. Then starts the first isoperiodic section (bars 11-55) which covers only the *narratio*. In the second isoperiodic section (bars 56-100), we find the *propositio*. Although of the same length,

<sup>25</sup> Cf. H.-H. Unger, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Musik und Rhetorik im 16.-18. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg 1941), p. 51.

Table 1. The Rhetorical Plan of *Supremum est mortalibus bonum*

	Exordium	Narratio			Propositio		Confirmatio	Peroratio
color	[free]	I...			II...		[free]	
talea	[free]	1...	2...	3...	4...	5...	6...	[free]
text	1-2	2-6	7-9	10-12	13-14	15-16	17-18	19-20 "Amen"

the first section has four lines more text than the second. From this division it is evident that the motet's isoperiodic structure was not merely a matter of allotting equal portions of text to predetermined sections but of creating a synchronous textual and musical organisation. For the *confirmatio*, a new section is introduced. This one lies out of the isoperiodic plan. The same holds for the *peroratio*. There are several places in the music that illustrate clearly the composer's intention to underline the contents of the text with rhetorical figures. The most conspicuous examples have been described in my article *Guillaume Dufay as Musical Orator*.<sup>26</sup> It is apparent, however, that the application of some well-known ornaments had hardly exhausted the composer's oratorical powers. The attention of the audience and their readiness to believe what they heard must certainly have been increased by an effect, which had never been heard before, as far as we know, in this kind of music: the effect to which I am referring is the use of faux-bourdon. Four times, and at prominent junctures in the rhetorical design of the text, the discant is sung simultaneously at the fourth below, which produces the remarkable series of sixth chords described in the introduction above. The second time that faux-bourdon technique is applied is in line 9: "In peace the streams psalmodize ..." Because the sound of faux-bourdon was clearly evocative of a liturgical context – its principal use, as we have seen, was in the setting of liturgical forms, including psalms – this passage of Dufay's motet can be interpreted as an imitation of psalmody (Ex. 1).

We may further suggest that such imitation has the rhetorical character of *parodia* as it is defined by Quintilian.<sup>27</sup> However, since faux-bourdon is first used at the very beginning of the *exordium*, then later on at a central place in the *propositio* after the words "O holy peace, long awaited, So sweet and welcome to mortals", and, finally, in the *peroratio*, there can be little doubt about the nature of its function: At these places the unity of the two voices in parallel fourths corroborates the idea of peace, which is the result of the new friendship between Eugenius and Sigismund! Below I will return to this symbolic function.

<sup>26</sup> TVNM 31 (1981), pp. 11-3.

<sup>27</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, ed. by H.E. Butler. The Loeb Classical Library (London/Cambridge, MA, 1959-68), IX.ii.35.

## Ex. I

*The Latin Song Juvenis qui puellam*

The other secular composition by Dufay which exhibits some passages in faux-bourdon technique is *Juvenis qui puellam*. The date of this piece, which is only preserved in incomplete form, cannot be fixed precisely and has been the subject of some dispute.<sup>28</sup> In its unique source, the Ms. Munich 3224, it is headed "decretalis Guill[er]mus du fay", that is Guillaume Dufay, skilled in Canon law. According to the most recently discovered documents, Dufay obtained the degree of Bachelor of Canon law after 1435. It seems to have been credited to him by papal fiat when he acquired a prebend at Cambrai;<sup>29</sup> but *Juvenis qui puellam* may very well have been written some years earlier. This is indicated by the use of major prolation in the last section.<sup>30</sup>

The text of the song and its translation follow:

- (a) Juvenis qui puellam nondum septennem duxit, quamvis aetas repugnaret, ex humana tamen fragilitate forsitan temptavit quod complere non potuit.
- (b) Quia igitur in his quae dubia sunt, quod tutius est tenere debemus, tum propter honestatem ecclesiae.
- (c) Quia ipsa coniux ipsius fuisse dicitur, tum propter dictam dubitationem:
- (d) Mandamus quatinus consobrinam ipsius puellae quam postea duxit, dividas ab eodem.
- (e) *Primum argumentum*. Contra vos arguitur: Ubi per vos innuitur affectum velle

<sup>28</sup> Cf. C. Wright, *Dufay at Cambrai: Discoveries and Revisions*, in JAMS 28 (1975), p. 187; Trumble, *An Interpretation of Dufay's 'Juvenis qui puellam'*, in Abstracts of Papers of the American Musicological Society, Annual Meeting 1978, p. 36; and Fallows, *op. cit.* (fn. 17), p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. A. E. Planchart, *Guillaume Dufay's Benefices and his Relationship to the Burgundian Chapel*, in Abstracts of Papers of the American Musicological Society, Annual Meeting 1984, p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ch. Hamm, *A Chronology of the Works of Guillaume Dufay, Based on a Study of Mensural Practice* (Princeton 1964), pp. 34-5, 56. The sole piece later than 1433 in which this mensuration appears is the sequence *Isti sunt due olive*; see *ibid.*

- puniri et effectum non sortiri, quod clare probaretur, sed brevitatis non patitur.
- (f) *Solutio primi argumenti*. Ad hoc sic dico breviter non recitando fontem quae contra me dixitis: Quod publicae honestatis iustitia non patitur id quod per vos innuitur.
  - (g) *Secundum argumentum*. Quamvis bene dixeritis, tamen contra vos arguo. Nam in fine vos dicitis, quod dividatur ab eo, et contrarium videtis in capitulo unico quod alias allegastis sexto eodem titulo.
  - (h) *Solutio secundi argumenti* [missing].
  - (a) A young man took a girl of not yet seven years to himself and, in spite of her age, he attempted, out of human weakness, perhaps to fulfil what nature did not permit.
  - (b) Because in matters of doubt we must keep to safe paths, on account of the honour of the Church [and]
  - (c) Because this girl is considered to be the wife of this young man, on account of the said doubt,
  - (d) We command that her cousin, whom he thereafter married, be separated from him.
  - (e) *Primum argumentum*. This is brought forward against you: Where you emphasize that the natural tendency must be punished and may effect no results, that might be clearly shown if time were not too short.
  - (f) *Solutio primi argumenti*. To this I say briefly, without repeating the source, that which you have said to me, namely that the justice of public honour does not permit that which you yourself maintain.
  - (g) *Secundum argumentum*. Although you have spoken well, yet I argue against you. For in the end you say that she must be separated from him, and you can see the contrary in the one chapter which you have brought forward elsewhere, under the sixth heading.
  - (h) *Solutio secundi argumenti* [missing].

Ernest Trumble summarized his paper on this composition, read at the Annual Meeting of the AMS in Minneapolis, 1978, as follows: "The text has, understandably, been interpreted as a joke, but there is a serious intent behind the humorous façade. This motet summarizes, in pseudo-legal form, a difficult and crucial decision Dufay had to make in 1439 whether to stay with the schismatic House of Savoy, losing his lucrative income and respected position in the Roman church, or return to the Roman obedience. He chose the latter, and the fictional characters and situations represent his wry view of his dilemma. The young man is Dufay himself. The young girl not yet seven represents his contracts with the Roman Popes Martin V and Eugenius IV in whose chapels Dufay sang and composed for approximately six years, nine months. Then, the young man allegorically married the young girl's cousin on her mother's side. This refers to his contract with the House of Savoy in the 1430s to serve as Maître de Chapelle. The head of the House of Savoy was Amadeus VIII who, in November 1439, was elected anti-Pope as Felix V by the Council of Basel. Dufay thought of Eugenius IV and Felix V as cousins because they had a common ancestor, the Council of Constance, which had created both a papal and conciliar line of ecclesiastical government. The fact that the relationship was said to be on the mother's side refers to the Holy Mother Church within whose bosom the whole drama

unfolded. The time of 'uncertainty' refers to the impending schism in 1439, and the 'safer course' is the Roman obedience. This interpretation also clarifies his reference to a desire to protect the 'respectability of the church'.<sup>31</sup>

Another interpretation, derived from this one and hardly less subjective, has been put forward by David Fallows: "Couched in the manner of a legal argument ..., the text seems on the surface to be a discussion of the canonical propriety of a youth marrying a girl 'not yet seven years old' and then marrying her cousin. But that girl is surely the Council of Basle, which had opened in July 1431 and was therefore not quite seven years old when Dufay joined it."<sup>32</sup> About four months after the competing Council of Ferrara had opened (8 January 1438), Dufay was appointed to be one of the representatives of Cambrai Cathedral at the Council of Basle.<sup>33</sup>

Both interpretations lean on the assumption that Dufay wrote a kind of parody of a case in Canon law, and stand or fall on the fact that the girl is nearly seven years old. However, it is not so much the girl's age that is crucial, but the question as to whether a marriage, once made, can be dissolved. The sentences (a) to (d) present a legal argument, that can be found in the *Epistolae et privilegia* by Pope Eugenius III (1145-53) and have been transcribed by Migne as follows: *Ad Aesculapium presbyterum* ... "Juvenis ille qui puellam nondum septennem duxit, quamvis aetas repugnaret, ex humana ramen fragilitate tentavit quod complere non potuit. Quia igitur in his quae dubia sunt, quod certius aestimamus, tenere debemus; tum propter honestatem Ecclesiae, quia ipsa ipsius conjux esse dicitur, tum propter praedictam dubitationem, mandamus tibi, ut consobrinam ipsius puellae, quam postmodum duxit, ab eo divides."<sup>34</sup> It is these sentences that build the basis of both Trumble's and Fallows's interpretations. The *argumenta*, however, are incomplete, and the judge's findings are missing. As a consequence, Dufay's opinion of the question remains unknown, and it is therefore dangerous to connect the text with his biography.

What cannot be denied is a correspondence between the girl's age and the periods of nearly seven years which have been put forward by Trumble and Fallows.<sup>35</sup> Yet it is difficult to see why Dufay should have chosen a twelfth-century legal case to disguise contemporary ecclesio-political issues when contemporary writers did not hesitate to deal with these same issues in a most outspoken manner. Surely a more convincing interpretation would be that Dufay tried to settle a historic medieval case. Indeed, if one considers the word "decretalis" in the heading of the song, it seems more plausible that he made use of the example in order to give proof of his skill in law and rhetoric

<sup>31</sup> *An Interpretation* ... (fn. 28), p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> *Op. cit.* (fn. 17), p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> *Cf. ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Eugenius III, *Epistolae et privilegia*. Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina, vol. 180, col. 1564. I wish to thank Maria van Daalen and Hans Voorbij for kindly providing me with this information.

<sup>35</sup> Trumble: 1428-33; 1435-37 / Fallows: 1431-38.

than to allude to his personal situation in 1438 or 1439. The choice of the text can perhaps also be connected with the pope who awarded the degree of Bachelor of Canon law to the composer: Gabriele Condulmer (i.e. Pope Eugenius IV) took in 1431 the name of Eugenius out of regard for the pope under whose pontificate the case originated.

For a proper understanding of the text one should realize that it confronts Canon and Roman law of divorce, in particular in connection with the problem of the *matrimonium non consummatum*. After the introduction, in which the case is explained (a), the public prosecutor pronounces on the basis of Canon law (b, c) a command (d), which is disputed by the defender of the young man (e). The defender's argument, then, is refuted (f) after which the latter brings forward a second argument (g). The continuation of the text, which certainly also contained the peroration, is missing.

Although the text of *Juvenis qui puellam* follows a late medieval form, its rhetorical plan can best be described by comparing it with the guidelines for forensic oratory as formulated in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. A complete copy of this treatise was rediscovered in 1416 by Poggio Bracciolini at St Gall. Normally, the forensic speech has five parts: the *exordium*, the *narratio* (statement of facts), the *probatio* (proof), the *refutatio* (refutation), and the *peroratio* (peroration). By *exordium*, "we mean the portion of speech addressed to the judge before he has begun to consider the actual case" (IV.i.3). Its "sole purpose ... is to prepare our audience in such a way that they will be disposed to lend a ready ear to the rest of our speech" (IV.i.5). This prescription is clearly followed within our text in sentence (a). According to Quintilian, the *narratio* is not indispensable: some cases are so evident that one may "dispense with the *statement of facts*, when for instance the charge can neither be denied nor palliated, but turns solely on some point of law" (IV.ii.8): "What statement of the case can be made when a wife is accusing a jealous husband of maltreating her" (IV.ii.30)?

Of the three kinds of *probatio* as described by Quintilian, the prosecutor of *Juvenis qui puellam* adheres to the second class. In this class the "proofs are wholly the work of art and consist of matters specially adapted to produce belief" (V.viii.1). For, "since an argument is a process of reasoning which provides proof and enables one thing to be inferred from another and confirms facts which are uncertain by reference to facts which are certain, there must needs be something in every case which requires no proof" (V.x.11). Now, while there is obviously doubt whether or not the young man has had intercourse with the girl, the prosecutor refers to the ecclesiastical prescription that in matters of doubt one should keep to the safe paths; and since the fact of the marriage of the man and the girl "is believed to be true, ... doubtful things [i.e., whether the intercourse occurred] may be rendered credible" by it (V.x.12). After giving his evidence, the prosecutor comes to the conclusion: the cousin of the girl, whom the man thereafter married, must be separated from him. Thus arises the legal question that has to be solved.

The refutation by the man's lawyer follows. Quintilian tells us: "As a rule

no strong appeal to the emotions is made in refutation" (V.xiii.2). And he adds: "When it is impossible either to deny the facts or to raise the question of competence, we [i.e. the defender] must attempt to justify the facts" (V.xiii.7). Dufay seems to let the defender speak precisely according to this advice: if, after all, it would appear that the man had no child out of his second matrimony, his natural tendency should not have effected results, and, thus, be punished. To this the prosecutor brings forward that justice to public honour does not permit what the defender maintains. And again, Dufay reacts as prescribed by Quintilian: "It is, however, sometimes an orator's duty to make it appear that some argument of his opponent is contradictory..." (V.xiii.17). No further analysis of the text is possible, because of its incompleteness.

As in *Supremum est*, Dufay used several rhetorical figures as 'embellishments' of his musical discourse. A description is given in the article mentioned above.<sup>36</sup> It should not come as a surprise, however, that if one compares the settings of *Supremum est* and *Iuvenis qui puellam* from the rhetorical point of view, the latter is more impressive. Writing about the study of law, Petrarch pointed to the example of antiquity, "when lawyers and orators had been one and the same ... The proper pursuit of law ... required that it be joined with rhetoric."<sup>37</sup> Coluccio Salutati, chancellor of the *Signoria* in Florence in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, himself a professional rhetorician, described the study of law as being even more than an art of speech. In his opinion, "jurists had taken over some tasks which had once belonged to orators, including representing clients in court. Thus he thought it legitimate to defend the dignity of law with arguments drawn from the tradition of rhetoric."<sup>38</sup>

Also in *Iuvenis qui puellam*, Dufay introduces faux-bourdon at conspicuous moments. The technique is used once in the prosecutor's statement and once in that of the defender, for stretches of no less than 13 and 18 bars, respectively. It is present in the following contexts. The prosecutor says: this girl is considered to be the wife of this young man (c) (Ex. 2).

The defender refutes, arguing that the cousin *can not be separated from* the young man (g). It appears that Dufay, who seems to have used faux-bourdon for distinctly rhetorical purposes in *Supremum est*, does the same in *Iuvenis qui puellam*. At both places in the latter work where the technique is used, the text stresses the idea of permanent union in matrimony. Surely, the unity of the two voices in parallel fourths can be seen not merely as the composer's attempt at achieving textural variety, but as a *color rhetoricus*, designed to underscore in musical terms the essential rhetorical point of the legal argument.

<sup>36</sup> See fn. 26, pp. 5-8.

<sup>37</sup> J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton 1968), p. 41.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Ex. 2

Qui - a ip - sa con - iux ip - si -  
 Qui - a ip - sa con - iux ip - si -  
 Qui - a ip - sa con - iux ip - si -  
 -us fu - is - se di - ci - tur,  
 -us fu - is - se di - ci - tur,  
 -us fu - is - se di - ci - tur,

#### Faux-bourdon in Dufay's Antiphons

In addition to the two secular compositions, Dufay set four antiphons in faux-bourdon. In pursuit of an answer to the question why he applied the technique in this liturgical category, I have compared the texts of these pieces with those of Dufay's ten other antiphon settings.<sup>39</sup> The texts of the antiphons in faux-bourdon are as follows:

- Hic vir, despiciens mundum et terrena, triumphans, divitias celo condidit ore, manu. [LU, 1199: De Confessore non Pontifice] (This man, despising the world and earthly things, hath by word and deed laid up treasure in heaven, where he is triumphant.)
- Petrus Apostolus et Paulus Doctor gentium, ipsi nos docuerunt legem tuam Domine. [LU, 1547: In Octava SS. Apostolorum Petri et Pauli] (The apostle Peter and the teacher Paul have taught us the Law of God.)
- Propter nimiam caritatem suam, qua dilexit nos Deus, Filium suum misit in similitudinem carnis peccati, alleluia. [LU, 440: In Circumcisione Domini] (For his exceeding charity wherewith God loved us He sent his

<sup>39</sup> Not included is *Si queris miracula*. This piece is normally listed as an antiphon, but it is actually a responsory.

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, alleluia.) – This last text is derived from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans 8:3.

- Sapiente filio, Pater gloriatur, Hoc et in Antonio, Digne commendatur. [In festo Sancti Antonio] (When a son is wise, the Father rejoices; also Anthony is rightly praised for this.) – Anthony of Padua taught theology at Bologna, Montpellier, and Toulouse, and won great admiration as a preacher. In art he is often portrayed with a book. He is called 'Doctor of the Gospel'.

It is remarkable that the texts of the first two antiphons have the idea of two equal 'elements' ("words *and* deeds"; Peter *and* Paul) in common, which is absent in Dufay's other antiphons. Possibly faux-bourdon expresses here in the harmony of its parallel fourths the oneness of two constituent parts. This may be the case also in the third antiphon since St Paul here points to the fact that in the person of Christ both his divine and human nature are united. More difficult to explain is the reason why Dufay used faux-bourdon in the fourth antiphon. There is no common denominator here that could have prompted the composer to express it in faux-bourdon harmony.

#### *The Communion Vos qui secuti estis me*

Finally, the Communion antiphon of the *Missa Sancti Jacobi*, Dufay's earliest faux-bourdon composition, has as its text:

- Vos qui secuti estis me, sedebitis super sedes, judicantes duodecim tribus Israel. [LU, 1570: Sancti Jacobi Apostoli] (You that have followed me shall sit upon seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. – after Matth. 19:28) (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3

The musical score for 'Vos qui secuti estis me' is presented in three staves. The top staff is labeled 'Vos' and contains a single note. The middle and bottom staves are in parallel fourths, with the lyrics 'qui se-cu-ti es-tis me' written below them. The notation is in a medieval style with square notes on a four-line staff.

Here it is surprising that faux-bourdon occurs in the last movement of the Mass. If the composer had introduced faux-bourdon at this place merely as a musical conclusion, rather than as a rhetorical figure, we would be forced to accept the unlikely assumption that Dufay allowed his Mass to end with a pointless anticlimax. Therefore, I consider it as certain that Dufay, using faux-bourdon probably for the first time of his life, chose the technique of a middle voice in strict togetherness with the upper voice in order to express, allegorically, the idea implied in the words "You that have *followed* me". In Matthew 19, Jesus teaches about matrimony and divorce, and about perfect living in general. To the rich young man he said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me" (Matth. 19:21). It is important to remember that Christ gives the admonition to the young man in the presence of his disciples. One of them is the apostle James the Great, to whom the Mass is dedicated. In Matthew 20:20-21, the mother of James and John comes to make a request to Christ: "Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom." As the first apostle to die for the Christian faith – he is the only one whose martyrdom is recorded in the New Testament (Acts 12:2) – James followed Jesus unconditionally.

#### *The Symbolic Function of Faux-bourdon*

I now come to the concluding part of my study. Here I will try to show that in two of the compositions dealt with above, Dufay has conceived faux-bourdon not only as a figure of style, but also as a figure of thought,<sup>40</sup> and that he may have been prompted to do so under the influence of the revival of ancient music theory.

As one of the first Netherlandish composers who worked in Italy, Dufay was deeply impressed by the movement of humanism.<sup>41</sup> The texts of several of his Italian compositions show the influence of humanist thought in the exhibition of certain ideas, in the use of specific words, as well as in the composition of the poetical form. The musical structure of these pieces is highly dependent on the premises of rhetoric, and sometimes the composer even seems to observe to a certain degree the word-accent, verse metre or both of the highest-sounding part. However, "Renaissance music is not a set of compositional techniques but a complex of social conditions, intellectual states of mind, attitudes, aspirations ..., which add up to a thriving matrix of musical energy. Eventually many of these impulses were translated into mu-

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Quintilian (fn. 27), IX.i.26: "As regards the composition of continuous speech, as soon as we have acquired the smoothness of structure and rhythm of which I have spoken, we must proceed to lend brilliance to our style by frequent embellishments both of thought and words."

<sup>41</sup> See W. Elders, *Humanism and Early-Renaissance Music: A Study of the Ceremonial Music by Ciconia and Dufay*, in TVNM 27 (1977), pp. 65-101.



sical style ..."<sup>42</sup> In my view, faux-bourdon, being a manifestation of a new harmonic technique, must also be considered against the broad background of Renaissance culture.

In ancient times and in the Middle Ages harmony was thought to consist in the natural relations between numbers. This idea recurs with Leon Battista Alberti and Nicholas of Cusa, who pointed out that arguments for praising the arts should mainly be derived from the use of number and proportion. In his *De re aedificatoria* (1452) Alberti repeats Plato's statement, "that the same numbers by means of which the agreement of sounds affects our ears with delight, are the very same which please our eyes and our mind."<sup>43</sup> Here the word harmony is used as a union created out of diversity of voices or pitches. Cusanus wrote in his *De docta ignorantia* (1440): "The highest harmony is proportion in equality, which man, living in the flesh, cannot hear" (*Maxima harmonia est proportio in aequalitate, quam vivus homo audire non potest in carne*).<sup>44</sup> Although this could mean that the interval of the unison indeed produces the highest degree of consonance, it is obvious from the second part of the sentence that a theological doctrine is explained by means of an analogy with a musical phenomenon. Cusanus was but one of many scholars drawing analogies between "different processes, events, and objects" to indicate "the ways in which people think".<sup>45</sup> Analogies witness to similar states of affairs, or to similar relations. In his fine study on Cusanus's metaphysics, Werner Schulze gives the following explanation of the analogy principle: "Different spheres of being are set together in comparison, while the highest possible similarity of the elements of the analogy is pursued. A mere similarity (*similitudo*) exists when the single terms of the analogy can be brought only conditionally into a meaningful connection."<sup>46</sup>

In humanistic discussions on proportions during the early Renaissance, instances of ratios expressing natural harmony were accepted mainly from Pythagorean and Platonic sources.<sup>47</sup> However, the Pythagorean idea of music had already been set out for subsequent generations in Boethius's *De musica*, along with Platonic and Aristotelian views of the moral and educative powers of music.<sup>48</sup> Like Cusanus, Boethius expressed his aesthetic doctrines in the form of analogies: "for, human beings appreciate music by use of reason, not by the ear alone. Although consonance and dissonance are initially perceived, they are not understood until men comprehend them through the science of

number."<sup>49</sup> Several Boethian ideas were reiterated, in the first half of the fifteenth century, by the Italian theorist and composer Ugolino of Orvieto, an older contemporary of Dufay's. In his *Declaratio musice discipline*, which was probably completed in Ferrara between 1430 and 1435, Ugolino draws "an analogy between speculation, in which he includes the understanding of music, and ethics."<sup>50</sup> It is not known whether Dufay, who had connections with Ferrara at the time of Ugolino's stay in this town, became acquainted with the contents of the *Declaratio*. In any event, his musical oeuvre shows that he was strongly indebted to the humanistic ideal of a renewal of learning in which the *artes liberales* were combined.

It has been argued above that Dufay used faux-bourdon in *Supremum est* and *Iuvenis qui puellam* as a figure of style in the Quintilian sense of the term. It is very probable, however, that the series of parallel fourths must also be understood as a figure of thought, that is as a phenomenon with an extra-musical meaning. If its function would indeed be that of analogy-based harmony, it is not difficult to uncover the elements of the analogies: The texts of both compositions, which deal with the values of the friendship in time of peace and the unity in matrimony, point to moral philosophy as the domain in which we have to seek. Since many of the writings of the early humanists deal with moral questions,<sup>51</sup> anyone who undertook higher courses of instruction could not but become involved with them. Certainly, one of the most popular and influential classical authors was Plutarch. His surviving writings on moral topics are known as *Ἠθικά* (Lat. *Moralia*). These essays were introduced into Italy by Byzantine scholars. The *Moralia* are even the first of Plutarch's works to be printed in the original Greek (Venice 1509). Although probably unauthentic, the dialogue *De musica* (Περὶ μουσικῆς) was, in Dufay's time, thought to be by Plutarch.<sup>52</sup> Along with the *Moralia*, *De musica* is one of the most important sources for the study of ἁρμονία (harmony) and musical humanism. Thomas Mathiesen has shown that early in the fifteenth century translations were made of this treatise by Leonardo Bruni.<sup>53</sup> I hold it to be probable that parts of Plutarch's writings were known to Dufay in some way. Before setting forth the arguments which support this belief, I shall briefly summarize some of Plutarch's observations on the theory of music.<sup>54</sup>

Plutarch was convinced that numbers and their symbolic meaning are indispensable in human life. To demonstrate this, he worked out the theory of

<sup>42</sup> Cl. V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven/London 1985), pp. 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> D. Koenigsberger, *Renaissance Man and Creative Thinking: A History of Concepts of Harmony 1400 - 1700* (Hassocks 1979), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. W. Schulze, *Zahl, Proportion, Analogie: Eine Untersuchung zur Metaphysik und Wissenschaftshaltung des Nikolaus von Kues* (Münster 1978), p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> Koenigsberger, *op. cit.* (fn. 43), p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> See *op. cit.* (fn. 44), p. 129.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Koenigsberger, *op. cit.* (fn. 43), p. 50, fn. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. P.O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York 1961), p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Th.J. Mathiesen: *Round Table Humanism and Music*, in IMSCR Berkeley 1977, ed. by D. Hertz and B. Wade (Kassel 1981), p. 890.

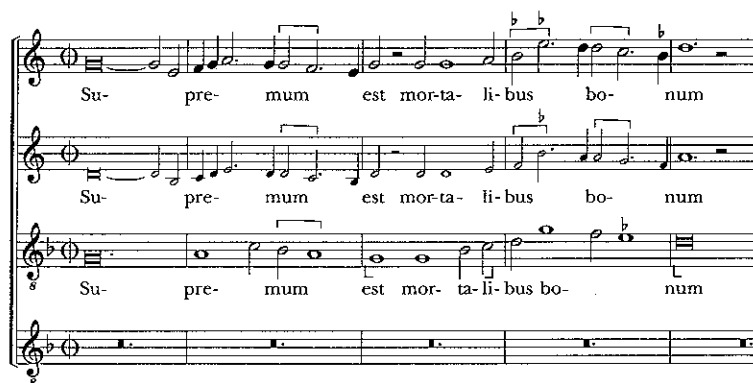
<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 891.

<sup>54</sup> The following considerations are based upon J. Smits, *Plutarchus en de Griekse muziek* (Bilthoven 1970). For a translation in English of Plutarch's *Moralia*, ed. by F.C. Babbitt, see The Loeb Classical Library (London/Cambridge, MA, 1959).

the harmonious proportions of numbers. "Plutarch ... frequently points to musical ἀρμονία, in order to show how one can attain the right equilibrium and the *tranquillitas animae* in one's own life. Plutarch does this above all in his *Moralia*, particularly in those essays which have to do with a balanced disposition, with the quest of the right mean between two extremes and with the attempt to find a compromise between two contrasting things. These essays deal with matrimony and friendship, harmony in civil government, self control and the rule of reason in human life."<sup>55</sup>

Plutarch's comments on the harmonious proportions are based on the Pythagorean concept of symphony. According to this concept, there is harmony in the octave and in all consonant intervals within the octave. Of these intervals, only the fourth, with the numerical proportion 4:3, could in fifteenth-century music be used in a parallel movement of voices.<sup>56</sup> When Dufay had the texts of *Supremum est* and *Iuvenis qui puellam* before him, he must have realized that the technique of faux-bourdon could offer him a most spectacular effect if used as an analogy between harmony and the idea of friendship and unity in matrimony (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4



Astonishing though it may seem, his model may have been Plutarch's *Moralia*, for precisely these two forms of relationship are used to explain the principle of analogy-based harmony: In *Coniugalia praecepta* (*Moralia*, 139D), Plutarch compares the unity of man and woman in matrimony with two consonant tones, which despite the difference in pitch nevertheless form a unity, on the understanding that one of the two tones is carrying on the

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-1.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. H. Besseler, *op. cit.* (fn. 7), p. 22; Kl.-J. Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zum Terminus, zur Lehre und zu den Quellen*. Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 13 (Wiesbaden 1974), p. 135.

melody. In *De amicorum multitudine* (*Moralia*, 96E), Plutarch draws an analogy between friendship and harmony, which results when dissimilar tones flow together to become a unity ("... and it must be as if one soul were apportioned among two or more bodies"). Of course, these comments of Plutarch have never become common property in the fifteenth century. And people who were familiar only with the use of faux-bourdon in the performance of psalms, hymns, and other liturgical chants, may have asked themselves, when listening to *Supremum est* and *Iuvenis qui puellam*, why Dufay produced this particular musical effect in these compositions. But they must have felt that an orator was speaking.

As an epoch in the history of culture, the Renaissance gave rise to a long series of new artistic and scientific experiences. The artist was bent on investigating his own possibilities and the possibilities of his *ars*, he explored the confines that were given, and tried to pass beyond them.<sup>57</sup> To impress patrons and public, difficulties were created and surmounted. In his thorough contribution to Karl Gustav Fellerer's *Geschichte der katholischen Kirchenmusik*, Rudolf Bockholdt has rightly pointed out that the historical importance of faux-bourdon should not be over-estimated: it had no influence on the later textural innovations in four-part music.<sup>58</sup> However, as a stylistic phenomenon faux-bourdon inspired Dufay to show his creativity and flexibility both within and beyond the bounds of the *ars musicae* of his time.

#### *A New Thesis on the Origin of the Term 'faux-bourdon'*

Several explanations have been offered of the meaning of the term 'faux bourdon' or 'au(x) faux bourdon', as it is found in its earliest source, the Ms. Bologna Q15. The explanations vary from 'false staff' as an allusion to St James's *bourdon* or 'false support' (of the unwritten contratenor for the discantus) to a low voice part or the ghostly 'fictus bardunus', produced by the strong resultant tones from the consecutive fourths.<sup>59</sup> Ernest Trumble rightly remarks that since the term 'faux-bourdon' is not found in Latin, its original concept probably "refers to something outside the body of classical and musical doctrine of Dufay and his circle."<sup>60</sup> I would like to advance a new thesis on the origin of the term, which derives its argument from the generally accepted assumption that it was indeed Dufay who first used the term in his Communion antiphon *Vos qui secuti estis me*.<sup>61</sup> This fact seems to be confirmed by the presence of a Latin canon in the Communion which tells

<sup>57</sup> Cf. S. Dresden, *Wat is Creativiteit? Een Essay* (Amsterdam 1987), p. 101.

<sup>58</sup> *Englische und franko-flämische Kirchenmusik in der ersten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, in *Geschichte der katholischen Kirchenmusik*, vol. 1, ed. by K. G. Fellerer (Kassel 1972-76), p. 430.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Trowell, *op. cit.* (fn. 2) p. 435.

<sup>60</sup> *Op. cit.* (fn. 5) p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Trowell, *op. cit.* (fn. 2), p. 435; see also Trumble, *Autobiographical Implications ...* (fn. 10), pp. 50 and 82.

the singers how to perform the third voice, that is the faux-bourdon part, a canon which occurs only here.

Soon after Bessler's *Bourdon und Fauxbourdon* appeared, the German philologist Flasdieck pointed out that from the fourteenth century onwards one of the meanings of the word 'bourdon' was 'drone bass'.<sup>62</sup> Before the term 'faux-bourdon' originated in the context of musical composition, it would have meant, according to Flasdieck, 'a false drone bass'. Its normal meaning, however, was 'drone' (male bee)! According to Flasdieck, the adjective *faux* in connection with bourdon probably refers to the redundancy of the drones after the queen has been fertilized. (For this reason drones are eliminated in the autumn by the workers.)<sup>63</sup> As far as I know, Flasdieck's etymological observation has never been explored in later studies on faux-bourdon. In the following part of my study I shall try to show that the *original* meaning of the word 'faux-bourdon' (i.e., as an entomological term) may have led to its genesis as a musical term and to its use to denote a musical technique.

Drones, male bees, are characterised in two ways. In the first place, they are larger than the workers (the undeveloped females), and they produce, when flying, a strong, *buzzing* noise. In the past, this noise must have led to the musical term 'drone' (Fr. *bourdon*), which was given to a sustained droning sound. "Instrumentally produced drones generally accompany melodies played on the same instrument ... and are usually tuned to the keynote of the melodies and often to its 5th also."<sup>64</sup> The drone occurs in primitive music, but its origins are uncertain. The second remarkable feature is that in early summer the drones fly out of the hive together with the new young queen, when she makes her bride's flight. This flight is really an endurance test for the drones, who try to *follow* their queen as well as they can. Also in this respect, the term 'faux-bourdon' fits the musical technique perfectly.

Earlier we have seen that the phenomenon of a middle voice *following* the discantus in Dufay's Communion may have been inspired by Christ's admonition to the rich young man in Matthew 19. The apostle Peter replies to the words of Jesus that the disciples have indeed followed him, that is, that they have been trying to *behave* like him (Matth. 19:27). In this connection it seems to me of the utmost interest, that in the Middle Ages the apostles were compared with bees. In Ms. 151, fol. 107v, of the Stiftsbibliothek in Lilienfeld, which dates from the mid-fourteenth century, there is a representation of Christ sending out Apostles, under which bees are depicted, surrounding the queen bee.<sup>65</sup> (Fig. 1) Christ has in his right hand a scroll with an inscription from Matthew 28:18 – "Data est mihi omnis potestas in celo et terra." (All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.)

<sup>62</sup> H.M. Flasdieck, Franz. 'faux-bourdon' und frühneuengl. 'faburden', in AcM 25 (1953), p. 118.

<sup>63</sup> Mrs. Janneke Bodewitz (Utrecht) has suggested that the word *faux* instead may refer to the fact that a faux bourdon is not a real bourdon.

<sup>64</sup> A.C. Baines, *Drone* (i), in NGD 5, p. 637.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Index of Christian Art, 'bee'.

These words precede Christ's instruction: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The text occurs in the Gospel of Easter Friday. Although representations of this bee allegory are scarce, medieval Christian writings provide more examples. Christian bee symbolism goes back to ancient times, when it was customary to connect poets with bees, as they did, for instance, with Sophocles, Homer, Horace, and Vergil.<sup>66</sup>

The patron of bee culture is St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (374-397), to whom tradition has assigned "a musical significance exceeding that of any other early Christian leader."<sup>67</sup> He was particularly noted for having introduced into the Latin church antiphonal singing and hymns, two elements in music which are markedly represented in Dufay's faux-bourdon repertoire.<sup>68</sup> Ambrose's patronage of bee culture has its origin in the legend that a swarm of bees had alighted on his mouth as he lay in the cradle. The miraculous event, which is connected with Ambrose's eloquence as an early-Christian preacher, is related in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine (ca. 1229-1298).<sup>69</sup> The *Golden Legend* is a collection of saints' lives and accounts of events in the lives of Christ and Mary that became immensely popular and was translated into all Western European languages. Also Dufay owned a copy of it!<sup>70</sup> Undoubtedly, the composer was interested in hagiography, and may have known that in his *Hexameron* ("On the Six Days of Creation"), St Ambrose devoted a chapter to the bee.

Drawing on the fourth book of Vergil's *Georgics*, Ambrose defended by erudite philosophical allegory the spiritual meaning of the praise of the bee by referring to Proverbs in the Old Testament: "merito quasi bonam operariam Scriptura apem praedicat dicens: *Vade ad apem, et vide quomodo operaria est. Operationem quoque quam venerabilem mercatur, cujus laborem reges et mediocres ad salutem sumunt. Appetibilis enim est omnibus et clara* [cf. Prov. 6:6-8]. Audis quid dicit propheta? Mittit utique te ut apiculae illius sequaris exemplum, imiteris operationem." (Scripture rightly commends the bee as a good worker: 'Behold the bee, see how busy she is, how admirable in her industry, the results of whose labors are serviceable to kings and commoners and are sought after by all men.' Do you hear what the Prophet says? He enjoins on you to follow the example of that tiny bee and to imitate her

<sup>66</sup> See H. Wagenvoort, *Inspiratie door bijen in de droom*. Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe reeks, vol. 29/8 (Amsterdam 1966), p. 60.

<sup>67</sup> J.W. McKinnon, *Ambrose*, in NGD 1, p. 314.

<sup>68</sup> For an edition of these hymns see *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, vol. 16, cols. 1473-6 and vol. 17, cols. 1209-60.

<sup>69</sup> *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine*. Translated and adapted from the Latin by Granger Eyan and Helmut Ripperger (New York 1969), p. 25.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Wright, *op. cit.* (fn. 28), p. 215.

work.)<sup>71</sup> The quotation makes clear that Ambrose, while imitating the analogy of the ant in Proverbs, recommends the community of the bees to the attention of his readers as an example that should be followed, and reveals at the same time the analogy between the society of the bees and the Church.<sup>72</sup>

Animal allegory played a central role in medieval bestiaries, a literary genre based on the description of certain qualities of animals, which were often used as a metaphor to depict virtues or vices. The tradition to use allegories of animals in Christian religious and moral instruction partly finds its basis in Aristotle's concept of animal sagacity, but the numerous manuscripts of medieval bestiaries are ultimately derived from the *Physiologus* ("Naturalist"), a Greek work from the second century AD. In the Middle Ages, the *Physiologus* was widely disseminated throughout the Christian world. Bestiaries were especially popular in France and the Low Countries. Vincent of Beauvais, Thomas of Cantimpré and Bartholomew the Englishman belong to the most famous compilers. As one of the characteristic features of the bee it is mentioned that the commoners follow the 'king' with marvellous obedience.<sup>73</sup> In Christian thought, the 'king' was seen as Christ.<sup>74</sup>

Bishop Ambrose's allegory of the society of the bees and the Church was further elaborated by Thomas de Cantimpré (1201-1263). Before he settled as a Dominican friar in Louvain, Thomas lived fifteen years in the Augustine abbey of Cantimpré, near Cambrai.<sup>75</sup> In his *Bonum universale de apibus*, a manual that instructs the ecclesiastical leader how to reach the state of perfection, Thomas compares the life of the bees with the community of the Church, the hive being the Church.<sup>76</sup> The leader's main task is the *imitatio Christi*. While referring to passages in the Holy Scriptures like Matthew 19, from which Dufay's Communion text derives, Thomas names the apostles Peter and Paul as models. The *Bonum universale* is considered to be one of the most influential books of allegorical examples of the late Middle Ages. King Charles V (1337/1364-1380), who founded a magnificent library, had a French translation made of it. Soon afterward, Dutch and German translations also appeared. In view of the fact that the abbey of Cantimpré was so near to Cambrai, where Guillaume Dufay served as a choirboy at the cathedral from 1409 until 1414, it seems plausible that the young chorister visited the famous place, and became acquainted with the life of Thomas and with the contents of his most popular treatise.

<sup>71</sup> Ambrose, *Hexaemeron*. Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina, vol. 14, col. 250. The translation is after The Fathers of the Church, vol. 42 (New York 1961), p. 215.

<sup>72</sup> See M. Misch, 'Apis est Animal - Apis est ecclesia'. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Naturkunde und Theologie in spätantiker und mittelalterlicher Literatur. Europäische Hochschulschriften I/107 (Bern/Frankfurt a. M. 1974), pp. 49-50.

<sup>73</sup> See for instance the description of the bee in Brunetto Latini's bestiary, ed. by G. Biancotto, in *Bestiaires du Moyen Age* (Paris 1980), p. 198.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. L. Koep, *Biene*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart 1950-....), vol. 2, p. 280.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. W. A. van der Vet, *Het Biënboec van Thomas van Cantimpré en zijn Exempelen* ('s-Gravenhage 1902), p. 4. The abbey was demolished in 1580.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 35-73; Misch, *op. cit.* (fn. 72), pp. 74-9.

It may indeed surprise people from the twentieth century to see that the allegory of the bee seems to emerge again in liturgical music in the fifteenth century. However, in the early and later Middle Ages animals were currently used by man in art and literature to symbolize not only his social and political, but also his religious life. An example of bee allegory can be found in Roman liturgy of that time. Once a year, on Holy Saturday, the *Exsultet* was sung during the solemn Easter Vigil. This text, which has its origin in the sixth century, "treats the essential themes [of Easter] in lyrical vein"<sup>77</sup> and, while celebrating the purity of the candle's wax, mentions the work of the bees. (cf. LU, p. 776N) This passage too draws on the *Georgics* of Vergil and "recalls the literary habits of St Ambrose".<sup>78</sup> Like the artists who decorated the *Exultet Rolls* with bees gathering honey,<sup>79</sup> (Fig. 2) musicians who had been ordained as priests, as was the case with Dufay, must have been familiar with this attitude.

The last question to be answered is, why the literal meaning of the French word *faux bourdon* never before has been connected with the musical term. I think there are two reasons for this. In the first place, no fifteenth-century theorist dealing with *faux-bourdon* as a musical phenomenon gives an explanation of the term. Only Adam von Fulda connects its "awkward" sound with the invention of the term 'faulx bordon' (see *Excursus I*). But can we expect a German theorist to have known the literal meaning of the word *faux bourdon*? Secondly, the insight that the musical term has probably been derived from the entomological meaning of the word *faux bourdon* can only be reached after one has become conscious that the musical style does conceal an extra-musical meaning. Until now, however, no musicologist has ever acknowledged the fact that *faux-bourdon* in Dufay's Communion antiphon *Vos qui secuti estis me* can only be understood as a climax in his Mass if it indeed means *more* than a series of sixth chords. Finally, the sole musicologist discussing *faux-bourdon* who may have been aware of the normal meaning of the word *faux bourdon* is Suzanne Clercx. She concentrated, however, on the question in which country Dufay's first *faux-bourdon* composition originated and came to the conclusion that Dufay invented both term and technique in Italy.<sup>80</sup>

In medieval etymology, it was generally accepted that terms in particular branches of knowledge were derived from words used in the realm of natural history.<sup>81</sup> The writings by Isidore of Seville – they comprise, among other things, the *Etymologiae*, *De natura rerum*, and the *Allegoriae* – which "influenced a broad range of writers and thinkers throughout the Middle

<sup>77</sup> M. Huglo, *Exsultet*, in NGD 6, p. 334.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335. Page 335 reproduces part of an *Exsultet Roll* from the twelfth century showing "the chaste and fecund bee" in the context of an homage to the Virgin mother.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. F. Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages* (London 1971), p. 248.

<sup>80</sup> *Aux origines du fauxbourdon*, in RdM 40 (1957), p. 165.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Klingender, *op. cit.* (fn. 79), pp. 163-7.

Agēs",<sup>82</sup> testify to this habit. The musical term 'bourdon', indicating a drone or pedal point, a musical instrument or part of an instrument, is certainly an example of it. As a designation of low organ pipes 'bourdon' occurs as early as 1382 in Rouen.<sup>83</sup> And that this term indeed was inspired by the insect of the same name is proven by the equivalents *hommel* in Dutch and *Hummel* in German.<sup>84</sup> Therefore I believe, that, *mutatis mutandis*, the onomatopoeical character of the sound of faux-bourdon and the analogy described above are two mutually reinforcing arguments in favour of my thesis.

#### Excursus 1: *The Twofold Meaning of Faux-bourdon in Rhetoric*

If my interpretation of the meaning of faux-bourdon in *Supremum est mortalibus bonum* and *Iuvenis qui puellam* is to be upheld, this style figure is both a *virtus orationis* and a *vitium orationis*. At first it appears to be a literal representation of harmonious living, invented as such by Dufay. Later in the fifteenth century, however, its meaning changed. In his *De musica* (1490), Adam von Fulda calls the fourth a "semidissonantia" and describes its sound as "awkward" ("tetrum reddit sonum"), for which reason, he says, musicians started to speak of *faulx bordon* if fourths are used in combination with consonances.<sup>85</sup> In Josquin's *Miserere mei, deus*, the parallel progression of sixth-chords underlines the idea that God would not delight in holocaust (bars 331-333; the sin is symbolized by the eleven statements of the words "non delectaberis"). In Lassus's *Omnia que fecisti nobis*, sixth-chords emphasize the words "peccavimus" (we have sinned). Cipriano de Rore employs in his madrigals sixth-chords to express harshness and pain.<sup>86</sup> For Zarlino, the fourth accompanied by the major third below it, "is not really very consonant" (non è veramente molto consonante).<sup>87</sup>

#### Excursus 2: *Faux-bourdon in Busnois's Chanson Terrible dame*

Dufay's *Supremum est* and *Iuvenis qui puellam* are not the only secular compositions that employed faux-bourdon. Antoine Busnois's *Terrible dame* pro-

vides another example.<sup>88</sup> It is likely that Busnois also utilized faux-bourdon in his chanson to express an extra-musical meaning. In Brian Trowell's view, "the two lower voices, in 'empty' and unsatisfied gymel, represent the lover who complains that he is dying 'par deffau[l]t', while his lady, characterized by the top two voices with a third in fauxbourdon, asks 'Que vous fault?' ('What do you lack?'), after which the four voices mesh contentedly together for four beats in four-voice fauxbourdon."<sup>89</sup> Joshua Rifkin has suggested that the *faux* (= false) harmony possibly symbolizes the unyielding lady.<sup>90</sup> If the use of faux-bourdon in Busnois's chanson would conceal a hidden meaning, it can be considered as an argument in favour of my symbolic interpretation of faux-bourdon in Dufay's secular compositions. I think Busnois's chanson and Dufay's song *Iuvenis qui puellam* also call into question Bonnie Blackburn's suggestion that Dufay would have used faux-bourdon in *Supremum est* only because it "is better suited acoustically to the large space in which the piece must have been performed."<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> See for a transcription of the first part of the chanson A. Pirro, *Histoire de la musique de la fin du XIVe siècle à la fin du XVIe* (Paris 1940), p. 120. In this transcription, the faux-bourdon voice has not been added.

<sup>89</sup> *Op. cit.* (fn. 2), p. 435.

<sup>90</sup> See his comments on the sleeve of Nonesuch recording H-71247.

<sup>91</sup> *On Compositional Process in the Fifteenth Century*, in JAMS 40 (1987), p. 228, fn. 29.

<sup>82</sup> D.M. Randel, *Isidore of Seville*, in NGD 9, p. 340.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. N. Dufourcq, *Documents inédits relatifs à l'orgue français* (Paris 1934-35), p. 25.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. M.A. Vente, *Bouwstoffen tot de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse orgel in de 16e eeuw* (Amsterdam 1942), p. 30; G. Persoons, *De orgels en organisten van de Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk te Antwerpen van 1500 tot 1650* (Brussels 1981), p. 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ed. by M. Gerbert, *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica* 3, pp. 351-2.

<sup>86</sup> D.P. Walker, *The Expressive Value of Intervals and the Problem of the Fourth*, in the same author's *Studies in Musical Science in the Late Renaissance* (London 1978), p. 80. About the function of faux-bourdon in the sixteenth century see also B. Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony Described According to the Sources* (New York 1988), pp. 246-7. Sixth-chords are used, with the same significance, in compositions by H. Schütz and J.S. Bach; see A. Clement, 'O Jesu, du edle Gabe'. *Studien zum Verhältnis von Text und Musik in den Choralpartiten und Kanonischen Veränderungen von Johann Sebastian Bach* (Ph.D. diss. Utrecht 1989), p. 119.

<sup>87</sup> *Le istituzione armoniche* (Venice 1558), III, 60, p. 246.

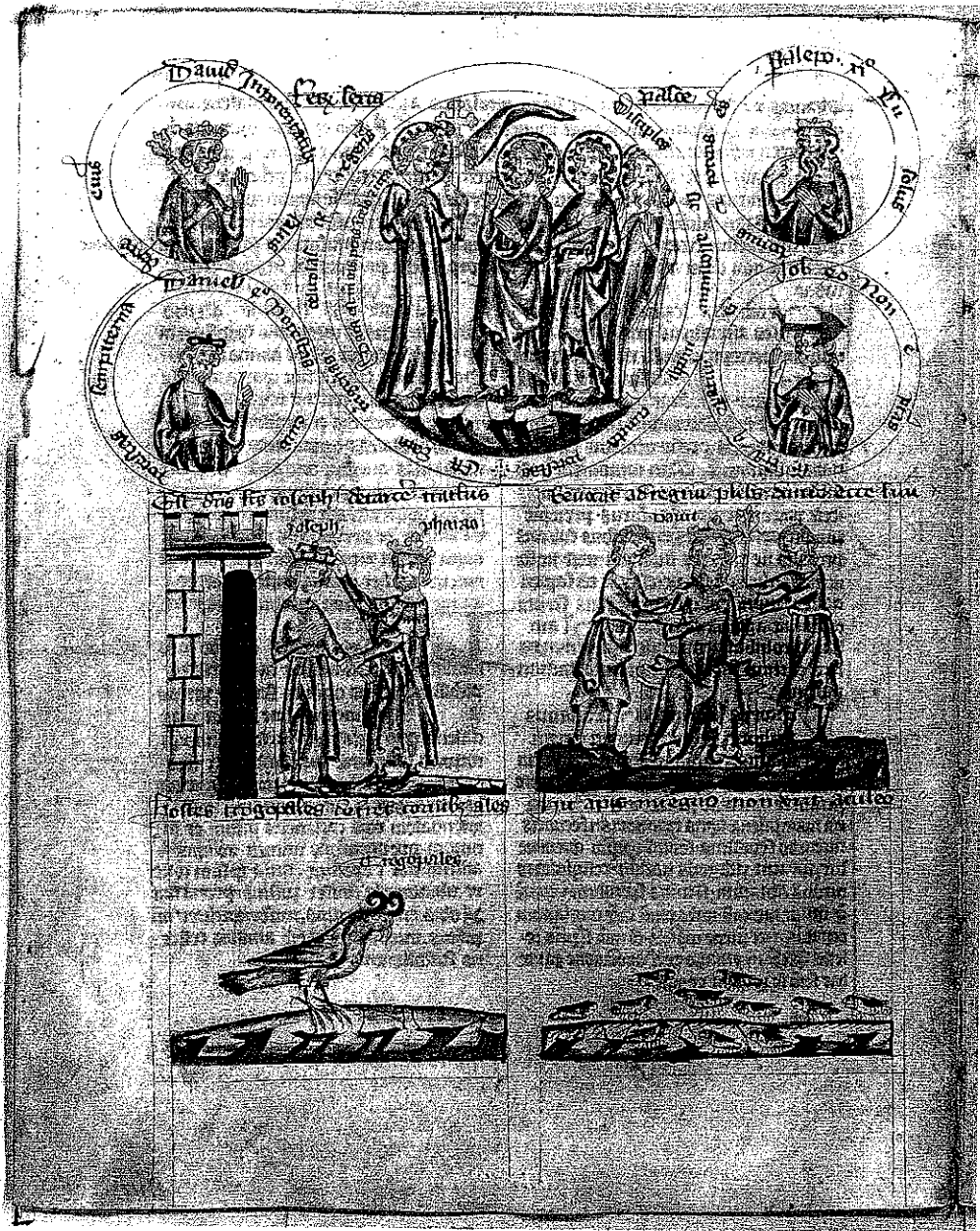


Fig. 1. Christ sending out Apostles.  
Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, Ms. 151, fol. 107v (fourteenth cent.).  
The manuscript contains the Concordantie Caritatis by Ulrich of Lilienfeld.

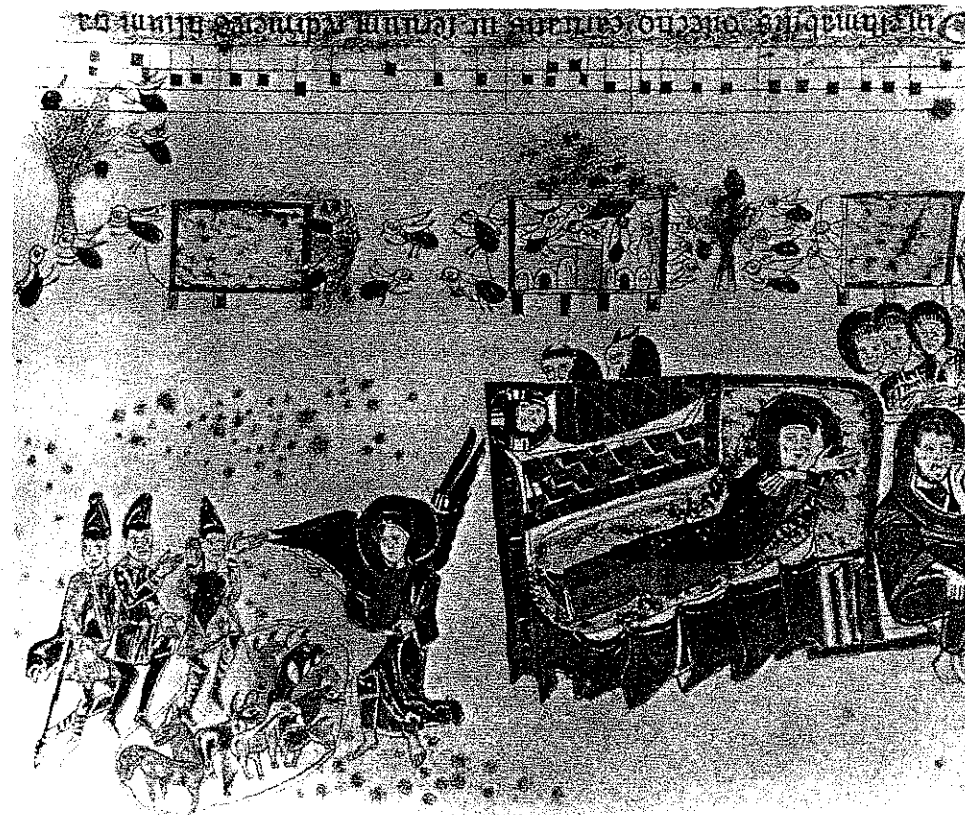


Fig. 2. Bees gathering honey (Detail of the Nativity).  
Exsultet Roll (eleventh cent.).  
Gaeta, Cathedral Archives.