

Ornamented Intabulations and Derived Fantasias:
Parody, *Imitatio*, and Genre in Vincenzo Galilei's Lute Arrangements of
Alessandro Striggio's "Nasce la pena mia"

Peter Argondizza
Humanities and Social Sciences

Jean-Michel Vaccaro in 1981 proposed a four-fold classification of sixteenth-century pieces for solo lute, ordered by the degree to which the composer is constrained by fidelity to a pre-existent model, usually a polyphonic vocal work such as a chanson, madrigal, motet, or mass movement: (1) intabulation of the vocal model with little or no added embellishment; (2) highly ornamented intabulation of the vocal model in the style of Da Ripa and Le Roy; (3) *fantasia* based on a vocal model; and (4) free fantasia (without vocal model).¹ The last few decades have seen continuing interest in the often knotty problems of interpretation raised by the sixteenth century's predilection for solo lute pieces of the first three types in Vaccaro's list—which I shall call, for the sake of brevity, "literal intabulation," "ornamented intabulation," and "derived fantasia," and as a group, "derived" pieces. These interpretive problems often concern the precise nature of the relation between a given derived solo lute piece and its vocal model, and concomitantly between the lutenist (normatively both arranger and performer in one person) and the composer of the vocal original. These relations, it has seemed reasonable to suspect, may be profitably theorized in the same terms as have been applied with some success to certain other, analogous kinds of derivational relations between musical pieces, most familiarly the so-called "parody" technique, in which a new polyphonic work, vocal or instrumental, is based upon the melodic, rhythmic, and contrapuntal fabric of a pre-existent vocal polyphonic work.² Since the early 1980s, the terms applied in the discussion of these issues have fairly often been borrowed from theorists (usually rhetoricians or literary critics) of what the Renaissance called "imitation"; or it has been asserted with some frequency that a significant, perhaps a causal, connection exists between the theory and/or the practice of literary *imitatio* in the Renaissance and the rise of parody as a compositional technique in the fifteenth century.³ Yet the claim (explicit or implicit) that parody technique (which seems clearly related to the instrumental genre of the derived fantasia) owed its efflorescence in the sixteenth century to rhetorical/literary *imitatio* has been sharply and, in my view, convincingly questioned.⁴

¹ Jean-Michel Vaccaro, *La musique de luth en France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1981), p. 35.

² See, e.g., John Ward, "The Use of Borrowed Material in 16th-Century Instrumental Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 5 (1952): pp. 88-98, and *idem*, "Parody Technique in 16th-Century Instrumental Music," *The Commonwealth of Music, in Honor of Curt Sachs*, ed. G. Reese and R. Brandel (New York, 1965): pp. 208-28; Lewis Lockwood, "On 'Parody' as Term and Concept in 16th-Century Music," *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: a Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese*, ed. Jan LaRue et al. (New York, 1966): pp. 560-75; Stephen Mengozzi, "Is this Fantasy a Parody? Vocal Models in the Free Compositions of Francesco da Milano," *Journal of the Lute Society of America*, 23 (1990): pp. 7-17.

³ See, e.g., Howard Mayer Brown, "Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 35 (1982): pp. 1-49; Leeman L. Perkins, "The L'Homme Armé Masses of Busnoys and Ockeghem: A Comparison," *Journal of Musicology*, 3 (1984): pp. 363-96; J. Peter Burkholder, "Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass of the Late Fifteenth Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 38 (1985): pp. 470-523.

⁴ Honey Meconi, "Does *Imitatio* Exist?" *Journal of Musicology*, 12 (1994): pp. 152-78.

The study I am proposing here will engage these issues of interpretation by focusing on a specific instance of them, comprising three solo lute versions of a six-voice madrigal by Alessandro Striggio, “Nasce la pena mia.” The three versions, by the eminent lutenist, composer, musical critic and musical theorist Vincenzo Galilei (the father of Galileo), were published in the two editions of his treatise on the art of lute intabulation, *Il Fronimo* (Venice, 1568 and 1584); they comprise a literal intabulation with minimal ornamentation, a more highly ornamented intabulation, and a derived fantasia, all on the Striggio madrigal just mentioned. The specific interpretive problems to be addressed are raised chiefly by the work of Philippe Canguilhem, in particular the third chapter of his book-length study of Galilei’s *Fronimo*.⁵ Here Canguilhem examines a similar case in which Galilei provides two solo lute treatments—a minimally embellished literal intabulation and a derived fantasia—of a single polyphonic vocal model, Cipriano de Rore’s celebrated four-voice madrigal “Anchor che col partire.” Beginning with a critical look at Canguilhem’s formal analyses, I move on to consider his broader interpretive claims concerning such matters as the “status” of the derived fantasia as compared to the genre of the highly ornamented intabulation cultivated by Da Ripa and Le Roy, in the light of a taxonomy of types of “imitation,” based on Renaissance literary theory, that Canguilhem derives (though not unproblematically) from an important study by Pigman.⁶ In brief, I find that some of Canguilhem’s interpretive conclusions require revision; others, replacement.

I then apply the resulting new interpretive principles to a close study of Galilei’s three lute versions of the Striggio madrigal mentioned above, comparing each of the versions to the others, to Galilei’s techniques in his treatments of the Rore madrigal, and—not least in importance—to his own precepts concerning the arrangement of vocal models for solo lute performance, all in the light of the larger issues already raised concerning such matters as parody technique and the relevance of rhetorical/literary theories of imitation. The conclusions I reach will be of significance for the critical interpretation, not only of solo lute music, but of instrumental music in general in the period of the Renaissance.

⁵ Philippe Canguilhem, *Fronimo de Vincenzo Galileo* (Paris: Minerve, 2001), Chap. 3, “De la mise en tablature à la fantaisie: l’exemple d’ *Anchor che col partire*,” pp. 95-121.

⁶ G. W. Pigman III, “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980): pp. 1-32.