Introduction

Bologna, 2004. I am compiling the musical corpus for my doctoral dissertation. My eyes scan a long list of madrigals. Each one hints at hours of work: locating scattered ancient sources throughout Italy and beyond, transcribing, analyzing. Choices have to be made. My attention is caught by the name Maddalena Casulana. A woman? Curious. I am surprised to find her there, my musicological education in France having left me virtually ignorant about the history of women composers. I dismiss Casulana, perhaps feeling that no one would hold it against me. Later, I came to realize that this decision had left me with a lingering sense of unease.

If experience is the epistemological starting point of all research, then the moment I decided to exclude Casulana from my doctoral corpus is surely the foundation of this book. Feminist theory, women's history, and critical musicology later helped me to understand the reasons behind this thoughtless decision, which I had believed to be purely pragmatic but was in fact deeply situated, as all scholarly practices are.[1] The idea for this research then took shape when I discovered an intersection between music and proto-feminist thought in early modern Italy, with Casulana as its most outstanding representative.

Maddalena Casulana: Music Advocating for Women in Early Modern Italy delves into the groundbreaking life and work of the sixteenth-century Italian madrigalist Maddalena Casulana (ca 1535–ca 1590), the first woman to publish music under her own name. The book aims to show how such a pioneering figure could have emerged in mid-sixteenth-century Italy by contextualizing Casulana within her intellectual, artistic, and political milieu, one in which a number of individuals struggled to uphold the value of women against a pervasive and enduring misogyny. It argues that this pro-women environment created a propitious terrain in which

[1] My feminist analysis of situated knowledge is much indebted to Donna Haraway. See Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1911), particularly the chapter "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," 183–202.

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Casulana could flourish, and that she, in turn, contributed to the defense of women by becoming an example of female worth and creativity. This book, therefore, considers Casulana as a nexus of the history of women composers, the history of feminism, and the history of the madrigal.

By signing her name to her first pieces in Venetian anthologies in 1566–1567, and even more so by publishing her *Primo libro a4* in 1568, Casulana put an end to long-standing invisibility of women in musical sources, which dated back to the late thirteenth century. A brief survey of early music sources preserving pieces signed by women reveals how the publication of Casulana's *Primo libro a4* broke into a realm that had been male-dominated for centuries. While we possess a substantial corpus of medieval monophonic pieces by female composers – Kassia of Constantinople, Hildegard of Bingen, Beatritz de Dia – the presence of women in musical sources dwindles at the end of the thirteenth century with the spread of contrapuntal writing. This technique was taught primarily in ecclesiastical institutions and universities, and thus largely restricted to men. Women continued to compose, as evidenced by sporadic mentions in documentation, but their music either was not preserved or remained anonymous.[2] Between the late thirteenth century and 1566, when Casulana published her very first madrigals, Gracia Baptista is the only known female composer whose music has survived with a secure attribution – a Spanish nun, Gracia Baptista published a hymn in a tablature collection by Luis Venegas de Henestrosa in 1557, but nothing else is known about her.[3]

Casulana is not only the first woman to publish a book of music. She can legitimately be considered "our" (even if not "the") first modern female composer, or at least the first whose substantial body of work has come down to us: two books of four-part madrigals (Scotto, 1568 and 1570), one book of five-part madrigals (Gardano, 1583), to which must be added two phantom books of spiritual madrigals, possibly published in the late 1580s

[2] On the disappearance of women from musical sources at the end of the thirteenth century, see Karin S. Pendle, "Musical Women in Early Modern Europe," in *Women & Music: A History*, ed. Karin S. Pendle, 57–96 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 83–85. For an example of an anonymous musical publication by a woman, see Laurie Stras, "*Voci pari* Motets and Convent Polyphony in the 1540s: The Materna Lingua Complex," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 3 (2017): 617–96. See also Laurie Stras, "Sixteenth-Century Women Composers, beyond Borders," in *The Cambridge Companion to Women Composers*, ed. Matthew Head and Susan Wollenberg, 116–36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 116–36.

[3] See Martha Furman Schleifer and Sylvia Glickman (eds), *Women Composers: Music through the Ages: Composers Born Before 1599*. Vol. 1 (New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1996), 118–22; and Stras, "Sixteenth-Century Women," 122–23.

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by Giacomo Vincenti and now lost.[4] Casulana also made a name for herself by articulating a sharp critique of the misogyny that pervaded the intellectual circles of her time, using language that still resonates deeply in our contemporary feminist consciousness. In the dedication of her first book to Isabella de' Medici, the daughter of the Duke of Tuscany, she bluntly denounced the presumption of men who considered themselves the sole "masters of the high gifts of intellect," implicitly inviting women to follow her example. Casulana was a pioneer in this regard, as she was one of the few female voices that rose to publicly defend women against misogynistic attacks in sixteenth-century Italy. In doing so, she anticipated by several decades the moment when Italian women writers would enter the arena of what is now called the "Querelle des femmes," the long-running debate between women's detractors and their defenders in early modern Europe.[5]

[4] These two collections of four-part spiritual madrigals are mentioned in a catalog published by the Venetian publisher and bookseller Giacomo Vincenti in 1591 (see Geneviève Thibault, "Deux catalogues de libraires musicaux: Vincenti et Gardane (Venise 1591)," *Revue de Musicologie* 10, no. 31 (1929): 179). According to Jane Bowers, this may have been a mistake by Vincenti, who may have confused them with Casulana's two books of four-part madrigals published by Scotto in 1568 and 1570 (Jane Meredith Bowers, "The Emergence of Women Composers in Italy, 1566–1700," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane Meredith Bowers and Judith Tick, 116–67 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 146, note 3). While it is true that this inventory includes many books published much earlier by other printers (see Jane A. Bernstein, *Print Culture and Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 30), it is not correct that Vincenti's catalog "indicates that these works were originally published by the firm of Girolamo Scotto" (Bowers, "The Emergence"). The inventory of 1591 also lists many published works that Vincenti had just published, and there is no reason why Casulana's two books of spiritual madrigals should not have been among them or have been previously printed by another publisher. Many music prints have been lost entirely, and the fact that we have no other evidence of these two books does not necessarily mean that they never existed. Karin Pendle also cast doubt on the possibility that Casulana had published these two collections of spiritual madrigals, arguing that "the composer cited could be another person by the same name or from the same area of Italy." (Pendle, "Musical Women," 84). However, since Casulana is a feminized surname, it seems highly unlikely that two women composers of the same name published music in the same years.

[5] The bibliography on the Querelle des femmes is too extensive to be cited here in its entirety. For an excellent overview, see Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr, "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: Introduction to the Series," in *Declamation on the Nobility and Preeminence of the Female Sex*, by Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, ix–xxviii (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). See the seminal works of Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956); Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); and Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the 'Querelle Des Femmes', 1400–1789," *Signs* 8, no. 1 (1982): 4–28. Also see Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Gisela Bock, *Women in European History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Carlo Flamigni, *Il diritto di pensare: Storia della disputa sulle donne*, 8 vols. (Turin: Ananke, 2020); and the four volumes of *Revisiter la Querelle des femmes*. The *Querelle des*

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At a time when many are seeking to demasculinize the canon by rediscovering women's musical heritage, it is not surprising that Casulana's music and figure are of growing interest to scholars and musicians alike. However, the musicological literature focused on Casulana is still limited to a handful of articles, the historical foundations of which are largely based on the pioneering edition and historical work that Beatrice Pescerelli published in 1979.[6] In particular, Ellen D. Lerner, Thomasin LaMay, Joseph Willimann, and Peter Schubert, although they did not provide any additional archival or biographical data, did undertake an analytical work on Casulana's music that Pescerelli had not yet begun to outline.[7] Casulana also made her way to less specialized audiences via

femmes corpus has given rise to several editorial projects. Since 1996, the collection "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe" (University of Chicago Press) has published English translations of dozens of volumes by early modern pro-women authors and female writers. With the Canadian "Querelle" project led by Marguerite Deslauriers and McGill University, research on the Querelle has taken a digital turn. Querelle (querelle.ca) has published or is planning to publish 25 digital editions of Italian, French, Latin, and English texts, including manuscripts that are currently difficult to access. In 2020, Mercedes Arriaga Flórez and Daniele Cerrato (University of Seville) launched the "Men for Women" project, focusing more specifically on the Italian and Spanish domains. Finally, beginning in 2021 with "The Digital Bronzini," the Medici Archive Project launched an artificial intelligence-assisted digitization and transcription project on "Della dignità e nobilità delle donne" by Cristofano Bronzini (ca 1622), whose 36 volumes, the vast majority unpublished and in manuscript, constitute the greatest body of writing ever published in defense of women.

[6] See Pescerelli's Introduction to Maddalena Casulana, *I madrigali di Maddalena Casulana*, ed. Beatrice Pescerelli (Florence: Olschki, 1979).

[7] See Ellen D. Lerner, "Maddalena Casulana," in *Women Composers: Music Through the Ages: Composers Born Before 1599*, ed. Martha Furman Schleifer and Sylvia Glickman, 98–109 (New York: Hall and Co., 1996); Thomasin LaMay, "Madalena Casulana: My Body Knows Unheard of Songs," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, ed. Todd Borgerding, 41–71 (New York: Routledge, 2002); Thomasin LaMay, "Composing from the Throat: Madalena Casulana's 'Primo Libro de Madrigali' (1568)," in *Musical Voices of Early Modern Women: Many-Headed Melodies*, ed. Thomasin LaMay, 365–97 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Joseph Willimann, "'Indi non più desio': Vom Verzichten und Begehren: Die Madrigale von Maddalena Casulana," *Musik & Ästhetik* 10, no. 37 (2006): 71–97; Peter Schubert, "Maddalena Casulana. 'Per lei pos'in oblio' from Cinta di fior (1570): Finding the 'Air' in Maddalena Casulana's Madrigals," in *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Secular & Sacred Music to 1900*, ed. Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft, 47–73 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018). Casulana is also mentioned more briefly in other significant works, including, among others, Anthony Newcomb, "Courtesans, Muses, or Musicians? Professional Women Musicians in Sixteenth-Century Italy," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane Meredith Bowers and Judith Tick, 90–115 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Bowers, "The Emergence"; Donna Cardamone, "Isabella Medici-Orsini: A Portrait of Self-Affirmation," in *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, ed. Todd Borgerding, 1–25 (New York: Routledge, 2002); Pendle, "Musical Women"; Eleonora Di Cintio, "'Princeps Musicorum Mediolani': Antonio Londonio e il mecenatismo musicale nella Milano spagnola," *Il Saggiatore musicale* 24, no. 1 (2017): 23–56; Daniele Torelli, "Il madrigale nella Casale dei Gonzaga: Nuove fonti, testimonianze

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encyclopedias in the 1980s,[8] then in widely distributed English textbooks from the late 1990s onward,[9] before tardily (and very discreetly) reaching other musicological territories, notably Germany and France.

Now a key figure in the history of women composers, and indeed in the history of music as a whole, Casulana was virtually unknown in the 1970s. A glance at the older literature reveals that her exclusion from musical knowledge is actually a relatively recent phenomenon, more akin to a passing eclipse. Casulana appears in the earliest eighteenth-century encyclopedias of music, in Johann Gottfried Walther's *Musicalisches Lexicon* (1732) and Johann Andrea Fabricius's *Abriß einer allgemeinen Historie der Gelehrsamkeit* (1754).[10] In the nineteenth century, this initial corpus of German encyclopedic work was augmented by contributions from French- and English-speaking scholars, such as John Sainsbury's *Dictionary of Musicians* (1827) and François-Joseph Fétis's *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (1835), both of which contain a few lines on Casulana.[11] Casulana is also mentioned in the first historical synthesis on women composers, published by Arthur Elson in 1880. In his *Woman's Work in Music*, Elson rightly identifies Casulana as the "first great name" in the history of women composers after the Middle Ages.[12] Not surprisingly, Otto Ebel also devoted a short entry to Casulana in *Women Composers: A Biographical Handbook of Woman's Work in Music*, published in

inedite e un unicum milanese," in *Musica se extendit ad omnia: Studi in onore di Alberto Basso in occasione del suo 75° compleanno*, ed. Rosy Moffa and Sabrina Saccomani, 133–210 (Lucca: LIM, 2007); Daria Perocco, "'. . . più di quello che a professione donnesca conviensi': Donne (e musica) nel Cinquecento veneziano," ed. Alessandro Cinquegrani and Ilaria Crotti. *Italianistica. 'Un viaggio realmente avvenuto': Studi in onore di Ricciarda Ricorda* 10 (2019): 23–32; Stras, "Sixteenth-Century Women."

[8] Thomas Bridges, "Casulana [Mezari], Maddalena," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 4:1 (London: Macmillan, 1980); Alberto Basso, ed. "Casulana de Mezari, Maddalena." In *Dizionario enciclopedico universale della musica e dei musicisti: Le biografie*, 2:148 (Turin: UTET, 1985); Gabriele Nogalski, "Casulana, Mezari, Maddalena," *MGG* (2000), 432–33; Vittorio Bolcato, "Mezari, Maddalena," *DBI* (2010).

[9] See notably Allan W. Atlas, *Renaissance Music: Music in Western Europe, 1400–1600* (New York: Norton, 1980), 458, 651. Casulana was included in the Norton *History of Western Music* starting with the seventh edition, published in 2006.

[10] Johann Gottfried Walther, *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig: Deer, 1732), part 3, 148; Johann Andrea Fabricius, *Abriß einer allgemeinen Historie der Gelehrsamkeit* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1754), 367. On the presence of women composers in music encyclopaedias, see Julie Anne Sadie, "Women Composers in Musical Lexicography," *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* (New York: Norton, 1994), ix–xiii.

[11] John Sainsbury, *A Dictionary of Musicians: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (London: Sainsbury & Company, 1827), 139; François-Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique* (Bruxelles: Leroux, 1835), vol. 2, 210.

[12] Arthur Elson, *Woman's Work in Music* (Boston: Page & Company, 1880), 63.

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London in 1902 and translated into French in 1910.[13] Following these early works by music writers, another encyclopedic tradition emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century that led to Casulana's lasting disappearance from musicological knowledge. The key dates of this erasure can be identified by the publication of the major twentieth-century encyclopedias, all of which omitted mention of Casulana: George Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* in 1900; Albert Lavignac's *Encyclopédie de la musique* in 1913; Carlo Schmidl's *Dizionario universale dei musicisti* in 1937; and the first edition of *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (the volume devoted to entries beginning with the letter C was published in 1952). Like many women composers, Casulana was thus buried under what we now consider the cornerstones of professional musicology, whose emergence was accompanied by the drastic masculinization of the canon.[14] Her gradual rediscovery coincided with the significant wave of women's studies that began in the 1970s and reached the shores of musicology from the 1980s onward.

Since the seminal research of Pescerelli, the history of early modern women musicians, the history of women, gender, and feminism, and the social history of sixteenth-century Italian music have made great strides. Access to literary, archival, and musical sources is now considerably facilitated, and advanced research tools and databases have made it possible to reel in fresh pieces of evidence. All this allows for a new reassessment of Casulana, which will hopefully fill a significant gap. Still, writing a monograph on Casulana remains exceptionally challenging due to the scarcity of historical documentation about her. It requires navigating through an archipelago of scattered sources that must be reconnected to gain a comprehensive understanding. Musically speaking, only two of her five books of madrigals have come down to us in their entirety, one of them only recently.[15] Until 2023, only Pescerelli's edition was available, representing about a third of Casulana's music: the complete *Secondo libro a4* of 1570, and five pieces published in anthologies in 1566–1567, four of which were republished in the *Primo libro*

[13] Otto Ebel, *Women Composers: A Biographical Handbook of Women's Work in Music* (Brooklyn: Chandler, 1902), 33.

[14] For an overview of the fluctuating presence or absence of women as an object of study in various Western musicological journal in the twentieth century, see Catherine Deutsch, "Écrire sur les musiciennes. une question de genre?," *Revue de Musicologie* 104, no. 1 (2018): 305–25. For the same type of quantitative analysis focused on a more recent corpus, see Sally MacArthur et al., "The Rise and Fall, and the Rise (Again) of Feminist Research in Music: 'What Goes Around Comes Around'," *Musicology Australia* 39 (2017): 73–95.

[15] For details on the surviving copies of Casulana's madrigal books, see Table 5.2.

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a4 in 1568.[16] With Stras's providential rediscovery of the missing Alto voice from the *Primo libro a5*, the publication of her edition in 2023, and the 2024 recording by the Fieri Consort, another third of Casulana's madrigals has become accessible.[17] Yet, the *Primo libro a4* of 1568 still suffers from an important lacuna, since its Alto and Bass parts are lost. Four-fifths of the pieces were not included in better-preserved anthologies and remain incomplete. I have reconstructed the missing voices in collaboration with Marc Busnel, and the music was premiered in April 2025 by the ensemble Doulce Mémoire at the French festival Présence Compositrices. I am currently completing an open-access digital edition of the fully reconstructed *Primo libro a4*.[18] Of her two books of spiritual madrigals, not a single note has survived. Although our understanding of Casulana's music is more complete than ever before, many shadows still remain.

From a historical and biographical point of view, it is extremely difficult to trace an individual trajectory in sixteenth-century sources when it comes to little-known people, as musicians almost always were. The difficulties are even greater when it comes to female musicians, who rarely appear with the rest of the *musici* in sixteenth-century Italian court registers, but are listed under other functions or hidden behind a husband, a father, a brother. Anyone writing about Casulana thus faces accumulating difficulties. She seems never to have been employed on a permanent basis by a court; her surname was subject to many variations and changes; and, at a time when mothers almost never appeared in filiations, she had no chance of featuring in the baptismal records of her children. Yet Casulana was far from being a woman "without history." On the contrary, her life seems to have been tumultuous, and she was involved many times in episodes of "Great History" (such as wars, epidemics, and massacres). Moreover, Casulana's vivid personality left traces in the extant documentation. Her life thus provides ample material for the reconstruction of a historical narrative, even if what we know necessarily remains fragmentary, incomplete, and at times conjectural.

This book builds on the research that has analyzed Casulana from a critical feminist standpoint (especially that of LaMay), but it historicizes

[16] Pescerelli did not include "Amorosetto fiore," published in the anthology *Terzo libro del Desiderio* (1567) and reprinted in the *Primo libro a4*, as it was incomplete at the time.

[17] Maddalena Casulana, *First Book of Five-voice Madrigals*, ed. Laurie Stras (Southampton: Musica secreta edition, 2023). I am most grateful to Laurie Stras for sharing her edition before its publication. For the recording, see *The Excellence of Women: Casulana & Strozzi*, Fieri Consort, Fieri Records 005, 2024.

[18] Catherine Deutsch (ed.), "Digital Casulana," https://cenhtor-msh-lorraine.cnrs.fr/s/digital_casulana.

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this theoretical perspective by situating it within a broader historical arc.[19] To achieve this, it considers "feminism" in early modern terms, alongside contemporary medical discourses, classical rhetorical techniques, and cohorts of exemplary ancient matrons and allegorical figures. By historicizing the analytical tools of feminist criticism, this book aims to reaffirm their relevance for the study of ancient periods and to refute the "charges of anachronism and skepticism about the possibilities of political resistance" that Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchez have rightly highlighted when it comes to gender history.[20] My approach also resonates with that of Emily Wilbourne, who has rooted her critical analysis of race and slavery in seventeenth-century Medici music within the ancient concept of "razza" (lineage), unraveling "the ways in which anachronistic scholarly assumptions about race have concealed the workings of the early modern racial imaginary."[21] However, I do not claim that my analytical framework is entirely historicist. Rather, I subscribe to what Nicole Loraux has termed a "controlled practice of anachronism."[22] Regarding ancient Greek societies, Loraux, despite her aversion to universalist historical theories, asserts: "we had to share, in one way or another, something of their feelings and thoughts."[23] My analyses also entertain the hypothesis of a continuity between early modern writings in defense of women and contemporary feminist theories, and affirm the heuristic value of their hybridization.

Casulana is perhaps the figure who best embodies the convergence of the musical sphere and proto-feminist thought in early modern Italy, and it is from this perspective that I analyze her trajectory and her music. I argue that female exemplarity and discourses in defense of women were instrumental for Casulana's empowerment. They created the necessary social, cultural, intellectual, and political conditions that allowed such a trailblazing figure to emerge. I examine her accomplishments as the outcome of a synergy between her extraordinary personality and talent and a milieu that was eager to support women's creativity and value against the prevailing misogynistic ideology. This book therefore draws on two central and

[19] LaMay, "Madalena Casulana"; LaMay, "Composing from the Throat."

[20] See the Introduction of Ania Loomba and Melissa E. Sanchex (eds), *Rethinking Feminism in Early Modern Studies: Gender, Race, and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

[21] Emily Wilbourne, *Voice, Slavery, and Race in Seventeenth-Century Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press), 30–33, 60.

[22] "une pratique contrôlée de l'anachronisme." Nicole Loraux, "Éloge de l'anachronisme en histoire," *CLIO, Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés & Espaces Temps* 87–88, no. 1 (2005): 131.

[23] "Il fallait bien d'une façon ou d'une autre que nous partagions quelque chose de leurs sentiments et de leurs pensées." Ibid., 129.

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closely related notions: philogyny and exemplarity. By "philogyny," I refer to the corpus of texts in defense of women that flourished in Italy between the end of the fifteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, the most intense period of the Italian Querelle des femmes. The word "philogyny" and its more common antonym "misogyny" have the primary advantage of their philological propriety, as both terms, which already existed in ancient Greek, were known in early modern Italy.[24] Although scholars such as Joan Kelly, Constance Jordan, and Sarah Ross have not hesitated to speak of "Renaissance feminism," philogynistic writings cannot always be described accurately with this term, as Virginia Cox has rightly pointed out.[25] Even accepting a very broad view of feminism entirely disconnected from social struggles and assertive political claims, philogynistic thought, like the love of women, remains too protean to be equated with feminism, or even proto-feminism. It can range from a genuine critique of women's condition, involving the deconstruction of the difference between men and women, to an encomiastic philogyny or a gallant gesture, or even a mere literary exercise. Moreover, Italian philogynistic writings were almost exclusively authored by men until the beginning of the seventeenth century, and the two foundational works of modern misogynistic and philogynistic thought were penned by one and the same author, Boccaccio. While Boccaccio's *Corbaccio* fueled misogynistic invectives well into the seventeenth century, his *De mulieribus claris* (*Concerning Famous Women*) was extensively plundered by defenders of women throughout the early modern period, as it formed the core of the corpus of exemplary illustrious women.[26]

The *exemplum*, an essential part of ancient and modern rhetoric, stands at the foundation of philogynistic thought.[27] All treatises in defense of women rely on ancient and/or modern female examples. Beyond their

[24] The name "Filogenio" was adopted as a pseudonym by a few advocates of women, notably Ercole Marescotti, *Dell'eccellenza della donna discorso di Hercole Filogenio* (Fermo: Sertorio de' Monti, 1589).

[25] Kelly, "Early Feminist"; Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*; Ross, *The Birth of Feminism*. On the terminological problems posed by early modern texts in defense of women, see Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy, 1400–1650* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2011), xxvii.

[26] See Stephen Kolsky, *The Genealogy of Women: Studies in Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris* (New York: Lang, 2033); Stephen Kolsky, *The Ghost of Boccaccio: Writings on Famous Women in Renaissance Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005). On Boccaccio and women, see Thomas Stillinger and Regina Psaki (eds), *Boccaccio and Feminist Criticism* (Chapel Hill: Annali d'Italianistica, 2006).

[27] See Beatrice Collina, "L'esemplarità delle donne illustri fra Umanesimo e Controriforma," in *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: Studi e testi a stampa*, ed. Gabriella Zarri, 103–19 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996).

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memorial function, these illustrious exemplary women served to challenge misogynistic theses on female inferiority and were held up as precedents in all fields of activity and knowledge and for all moral virtues, as proofs by example. Accordingly, Casulana climbed on the shoulders of her illustrious predecessors before being held up as an example in her own right. Wendy Heller and Kelly Harness have analyzed how the great examples of illustrious women permeated the scenic musical repertoire in the seventeenth century, but the interactions of the female musicians themselves with the corpus of female *exempla* is a question that remains little explored.[28] Casulana provides an excellent entry point for conducting such an inquiry, as female exemplarity was one of the major driving forces of her endeavors.

In a broader sense, exemplarity intersects with another central notion in madrigal studies that will also be discussed in these pages: imitation. Musical *imitatio* during the Renaissance has been studied extensively since the seminal writings of Howard Mayer Brown.[29] The relevance of the concept of *imitatio* for analyzing Renaissance music has been widely debated and questioned.[30] *Imitatio*, which refers to rhetoric and ancient models, was a term rarely used in this sense in Renaissance music theory. While it may be appropriate to speak of borrowing for the repertoire of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth centuries, imitation remains an extremely useful concept for a later and highly intertextual genre like the madrigal.[31] The term loses its philological incongruity for late sixteenth-century music, as several theorists used it to describe borrowings at the turn of the seventeenth century.[32] Moreover, imitation possesses a moral dimension that extends beyond strictly musical concerns,

[28] On the exemplarity of female musicians in philogynistic texts from the late fifteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, see Catherine Deutsch, "Musique et *eccellenza delle donne*: Les musiciennes dans les catalogues de femmes illustres en Italie, de Boccace à Cristofano Bronzini." In *Revisiter la Querelle des femmes: Discours sur l'égalité-inégalité des sexes en Europe de 1400 aux lendemains de la Révolution*, ed. Marie-Élisabeth Henneau and Rotraud von Kulessa, 4:125–36 (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2015).

[29] Howard Mayer Brown, "Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 35, no. 1 (1982): 1–48.

[30] See Honey Meconi, "Does Imitatio Exist" *The Journal of Musicology* 12, no. 2 (1994): 152–78; and Honey Meconi (ed.), *Early Musical Borrowing* (New York: Routledge, 2004), particularly Meconi's Introduction (pp. 1–4).

[31] On imitation in the madrigal, see Glenn E. Watkins, "'Imitatio' and 'Emulatio': Changing Concepts of Originality in the Madrigals of Gesualdo and Monteverdi in the 1590s." In *Claudio Monteverdi: Festschrift Reinhold Hammerstein*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, 453–87 (Laaber: Laaber, 1986).

[32] Catherine Deutsch, "Pétrarque transalpin, de Cyprien de Rore à Claude Le Jeune: Réception, imitation et jeux de miroirs intertextuels," *Revue de Musicologie* 97, no. 1 (2011): 3–11.

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a nuance that is missing in the more neutral term "borrowing."[33] To imitate is to take as an example. Studies on musical imitation have rarely addressed the issue of exemplarity in the processes of imitation or borrowing.[34] Discussing exemplarity involves questioning the status of the model person and the relationship between the imitator and the imitated. This issue is far from trivial in the case of Casulana. In analyzing the imitations of her madrigals, one can discern a resonance with the philogynistic question, revealing significant insights into her authorship and authority. Comparative analysis, a classic tool of madrigal studies, acquires new significance when viewed from the perspective of gender. The madrigalists who imitated Casulana's music implicitly recognized her legitimacy as a composer and granted her a place within their artistic community. Musical imitation also establishes connections between individuals. When cross-referencing with other sources, intertextuality enables us to reconstruct the networks to which she belonged, the composers she knew, and those who were familiar with her music.

This book also undertakes an in-depth stylistic analysis of Casulana's music, with some pages flirting with a formalism that occasionally deviates from the generally critical approach adopted throughout. Considering the current state of research on Casulana, I deemed it necessary to provide a comprehensive discussion of her output to reveal her compositional skills, which form the very foundation of her advocacy for women. In doing so, I also hope to address the lack of analysis of music by women composers that Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft have highlighted.[35] However, because the genre of the madrigal is conceived as a signifying system largely subordinated to a poetic text, it is also fair to consider Casulana's music as conveying a more articulated discourse on women's issues. I contend that Casulana, who explicitly criticized misogyny through her words, may have also sought to say things with her music. In this respect, this book draws to some extent on the analyses of later music of women composers by Susan

[33] On the poetic and moral dimensions of exemplarity, see Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu and Pierre-Oliver Dittmar, "Polysémie de l'exemplum: Modèle moral, modèle iconographique." In *Apprendre, produire, se conduire: Le modèle au Moyen Âge*, ed. Société des historiens médiévistes de l'Enseignement supérieur public, 285–98 (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019).

[34] On the importance of "esemplarità" in building a musician's reputation in Marenzio's time, see Marco Bizzarini, *Luca Marenzio: The Career of a Musician between the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation*. Trans. James Michael Chater (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2017), 2–3.

[35] See the Introduction by Parsons and Ravenscroft to Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft (eds), *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Secular & Sacred Music to 1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), vol. 1, 3–4.

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McClary and Marcia Citron, and it is sympathetic to their hermeneutic approach.[36]

The six chapters of the book roughly follow a chronological progression, but without sequencing Casulana's trajectory into discrete episodes. Not only is the source material insufficient for that type of linear biographical narrative, but it is often necessary to move back and forth between different periods of Casulana's life in order to interpret a source or support a hypothesis. Still, the book does begin with Casulana's origins and end with her reception in the 1620s, with particular emphasis on the years 1566–1570 and the publication of her first two books.

Chapter 1 examines Casulana's origins and her marital history. It investigates the way she acquired her various names and had to contend with patriarchal violence throughout her life, particularly in Siena during the siege that led to the fall of the Sienese Republic. It also shows how Casulana likely thrived early on in a Sienese environment that encouraged female literary creativity and celebrated women's heroism and value. Chapter 2 addresses Casulana's formation and growth as a musician and a composer. Through historical network analysis, it presents evidence that suggests Casulana was connected to Nicola Vicentino for a significant part of her life. Vicentino, the leading theorist of chromaticism in the mid-sixteenth century, was also a lifelong ally of female musicians. The chapter posits that Casulana established her initial clientelist network through Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este, Vicentino's powerful patron.

Chapter 3 puts forth hypotheses regarding Casulana's musical networks at the outset of her publishing career and examines the potential motivations behind her decision to dedicate her first book to Isabella de' Medici. The dedication of the *Primo libro a4* demonstrates how Casulana was able to leverage arguments that had been pervading Italian philogynistic treatises for several decades to establish herself as a living example of feminine excellence. Chapter 4 analyzes the contrasting personae of Casulana that circulated at the time of the publication of her *Primo libro a4*: the morally and intellectually exemplary lady that appears in Antonio Molino's *Dilettevoli madrigali*; the lascivious, courtesan-like woman penned by

[36] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), particularly Chapter 4, "Music as Gendered Discourse," 120–64. For a more recent reflection on feminist analysis, see Susan Wollenberg, "In Search of a Feminist Analysis." In *The Cambridge Companion to Women Composers*, ed. Matthew Head and Susan Wollenberg, 36–49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).

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Giovanni Battista Maganza; and finally, the image of an erotically free woman that Casulana reveals through her own music.

Chapter 5 examines what is at the heart of Casulana's plea for female intellectual excellence: her music. An analysis of her four-part madrigals from 1568 and 1570 reveals that they span the entire spectrum of the *arioso* style, from the most modest poetic recitations to the most advanced elements of the "new music," including experimental chromaticism. The chapter concludes with a consideration of Casulana's *Primo libro a5* of 1583, a collection that softens the roughness of her earlier manner and fully embraces the new hybrid style. Chapter 6 focuses on the reception of Casulana and her music. After formulating some hypotheses regarding the philogynistic manner in which her music might have been heard and utilized, it analyzes how Casulana's madrigals were adopted as models by her peers in the two decades following their publication. Finally, it traces how Casulana was incorporated into the corpus of illustrious women in the first decades of the seventeenth century, and how her example came to serve philogynistic discourses.

This book is as much an ending as it is a beginning. Much remains to be discovered about Casulana's life, which will require time in the archives, a fresh perspective to ask new questions, and a good deal of luck. New pieces of evidence may fit more or less easily into the puzzle I put together in these pages, solidifying some parts of the picture and perhaps dismantling others. This study also leaves room for future research on Casulana's music. Open access to a growing corpus of madrigals, the development of computational analysis tools, and the increasing dissemination of Casulana's music through editions and recordings will likely allow new avenues of research to emerge. Beyond the possible continuation of historical and musicological research, this book invites us to revive the figure of Casulana for the here and now. Far from being limited to documentary value, the political significance of her exemplarity can transcend centuries and continue to resonate in our contemporary societies. In this sense, Casulana's example not only adds another "first" to women's history, but it can also serve today as a figure of identification and anchor the existence of female composers in the long term. It tells us of a musician who used the critique of misogyny to gain access to creation, recognition, and memory, to push the boundaries of her agency and that of other women who published music after her. It is my hope that Casulana will, once again, serve as an example.

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