Fabrice Fitch

Agricola and the Rhizome II – Contrapuntal Ramifications[*]

In a recently published article, I examine the *cantus firmus* mass output of Alexander Agricola, and consider some aesthetic issues arising from his deployment of borrowed materials.[1] Observing how Agricola's music has tended to be marginalized in most scholarly discussions of the period, I argue that modern-day evaluations of the general ›topology‹ of Western art music at the turn of the sixteenth century must take account of Agricola's pre-eminence in his own time. To that end, I propose as an aesthetic model the concept of the »Rhizome«, developed in the late twentieth century by the cultural philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the psychoanalyst Félix Guattari.[2] This, with its related concept of »arborescence«, proposes a framework within which different types of musical discourse may be related to each other – not in simple (binary) oppositional terms, but in a way that more accurately reflects the manner in which divergent aesthetic tendencies may co-exist within the same culture. Such a framework accommodates not only Josquin's or Jacob Obrecht's brands of ›rational‹ organicism (to use Edgar Sparks' terminology),[3] which has found particular favour among latter-day commentators, and which might be described as »arborescent«, but also the »rhizomatic« tendencies of Agricola's style, which as early as 1536 was de-

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[1] Fabrice Fitch, »Agricola and the Rhizome: An Aesthetic of the Late Cantus Firmus Mass,« *Revue belge de musicologie* 59 (2005), pp. 65–92.
[2] This first appeared in Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Rhizome. Introduction* (Paris, 1976), which subsequently formed the first chapter of ibid*., Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, vol. 2: *Mille plateaux* (Paris, 1980). The page numbers below refer to the pagination of *Mille Plateaux*. The English translation appeared as Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schrizophrenia*, transl. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1987 and London, 1988).
[3] Edgar H. Sparks, *Cantus Firmus in Mass and Motet, 1420–1520* (Berkeley, 1963), pp. 119–20.

scribed by Ulrich Brätel as »verkarth/ auff frembd manier«.[4] In this article I seek to extend the application of Deleuze's and Guattari's Rhizome beyond the formal problems posed by Agricola's use of borrowed material, focusing this time on more local issues, including the note-against-note details of contrapuntal technique. In keeping with the theme of this volume, I will draw for most of my musical examples on the textless pieces whose possible ›instrumental‹ destination has played such a crucial role in Agricola's reception-history.

As I have argued previously, Brätel's testimony is of exceptional value.[5] Not only does his characterization depart from the conventional terminology of Renaissance writings on music; just as remarkably (and in this respect Brätel's comment may be unique for its period), there is nothing to suggest the negative value-judgement on Agricola that his choice of words – »crazy and strange«, no less! – seems to imply. His text begins, »So ich betracht, vñ acht der alten gsangk, mit danck wil ich jr kunst hoch preisen«; and although Agricola's name appears at the end of the list which includes Johannes Ockeghem, Josquin, Pierre de la Rue, and Heinrich Finck, there is no implication that he is less worthy of emulation than these others. (By contrast, Ambros's much later characterization of Agricola's style as »mürrischen, übellaunigen, finsteren Contrapunct«[6] is rather more unambiguously pejorative, and closer to the more sceptical stance taken by later commentators.) We might of course dismiss Brätel's evaluation as a one-off, were it not that the source-distribution of Agricola's music returns us to the fact of his considerable status in the eyes of his contemporaries. Is it unreasonable to suggest that the popularity of a composer whose music was regarded as deliberately challenging itself constitutes something of a challenge to our received opinions of Renaissance aesthetic attitudes to music?

In answering this question, one first needs to ask what it is about Agricola's music that might have been regarded as outlandish. Here one can only speculate, but it is easy enough to find turns and sallies that transgress

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4   »So ich betracht, und acht«, *Fünf vnd sechzig teütscher Lieder/ vormals im̄ truck nie vß gangen*, Straßburg: Schöffer & Apiarius; RISM [1536]⁸, no. 63, modern edition in *65 Deutsche Lieder für vier- bis fünfstimmigen gemischten Chor a cappella nach dem Liederbuch von Peter Schöffer und Mathias Apiarius (Biener) (Straßburg spätestens 1536). Erste Partiturausgabe*, ed. Hans Joachim Moser (Wiesbaden, 1967), pp. 207–11.

5   Fitch, Agricola (cf. fn. 1), pp. 91–2.

6   August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik*, vol. 3: *Geschichte der Musik im Zeitalter der Renaissance bis zu Palestrina* (Leipzig, 1868), p. 243, 3ʳᵈ edn., rev. Otto Kade (Leipzig, 1891, Reprint Hildesheim, 1968), p. 247.
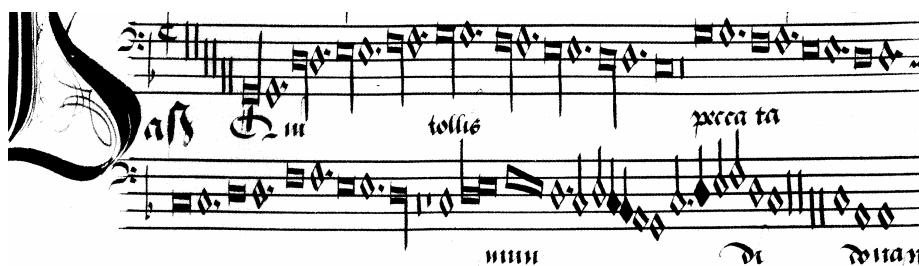
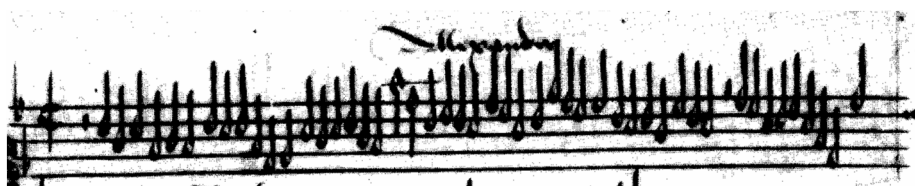Figure 1: Alexander Agricola, *Missa In myne zyn*, Agnus Dei III, Bassus (B–Br, 9126, fol. 115[r])

Figure 2: Alexander Agricola, *De tous biens plaine* II, Discantus (I–Fc, Basevi 2439, fol. 67[v])

contemporary norms of melodic construction, and that may well been held to exceed the bounds of the ›reasonable‹. As Obrecht's work plentifully demonstrates, Agricola has no monopoly on ostinatos and sequences that seem to overstay their welcome; but the impression of mischievous pleasure being taken in deliberate overstatement is arguably more generalized in Agricola's output, as a few brief examples demonstrate. Elsewhere, I have already discussed the first of these (Figure 1),[7] a visual pun that plays on the double meaning of the dot (either *divisionis* or, as here, *additionis*), with profound consequences for the surrounding polyphony.[8] The second is one of Agricola's most characteristic and oft-recorded pieces (Figure 2),[9] a *perpetuum mobile* in minims containing more disjunct intervals than conjunct; and the last two

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7 Facsimiles of this passage in *Choirbook for Philip the Fair and Juana of Castile, c. 1504–6. Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek MS 9126,* introd. Fabrice Fitch (Peer, 2000), fol. 115[r]; and *Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi C VIII 234*, introd. Herbert Kellman. *Renaissance Music in Facsimile* 22 (New York, 1987), fol. 172[r] (orig. fol. clxiv).

8 Fitch, Agricola (cf. fn. 1), pp. 73–4.

9 Facsimile of this passage in *Basevi Codex. Florence, Biblioteca del Conservatorio, MS 2439*, introd. Honey Meconi (Peer, 1990), fol. 67[r].

are not untypical in pushing a commonplace gesture or cliché to extremes (Figures 3 and 4).[10]
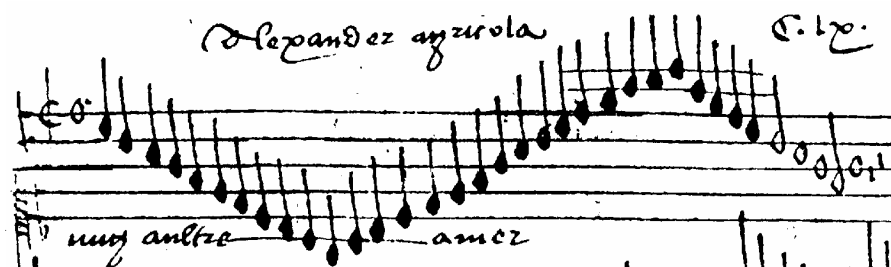

Figure 3: Alexander Agricola, *D'ung aultre amer* IV, Discantus (E–SE, s. s., fol. 160[r])

Figure 4: Alexander Agricola, »Salve regina« I, Discantus, bb. 136–40 (B–Br, 9126, fol. 141[v])

There is something consciously ›overdrawn‹ about these examples, which are as effective in making their point as they are lacking in subtlety. I use the term ›gesture‹ advisedly here, because the physical element is experienced very directly in performance, most immediately by those engaged in enacting it. I suspect that these situations were intended, at least in part, as jokes.[11]

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10 Facsimile of Figure 3 in *Cancionero de la Catedral de Segovia*, ed. Ramón Perales de la Cal, (Segovia, 1977) fol. clx[r]; and of Figure 4 in Choirbook for Philip the Fair (cf. fn. 7), fol. 141[r].

11 Humour has previously been invoked as an explanation of a piece's extraordinary stylistic profile in Clemens Goldberg, »Text and Music as ›Spiel‹: Humour in Ockeghem's Chanson ›L'autre d'antan‹,« *International Journal of Musicology* 2 (1993), pp. 61–83; David Fallows, »The ›Only‹ Firmly Instrumental Piece: A Commentary on Benvenuto Dissertori,« *I codici musicali Trentini: Nuovi scoperte e nuovi orientamenti della ricerca. Atti del convegno internazionale »The Trent Codices: New Findings and New Directions«, Trento ... 1994*, ed. Peter Wright (Trento, 1996), pp. 81–92. On humour in Agricola's music, see also F. Fitch, »Two Fellows from Ghent: For the Obrecht and Agricola Quincentenaries,« *Proceedings of*

And as with the best jokes, particularly with physical humour, lack of subtlety is part of the effect. That the performers are the privileged recipients of Agricola's jokes is also suggested by the visual nature of the pun of Figure 1, which would have been especially obvious to the singers gathered round the choirbook. Such whimsical traits are present in sufficient variety to be symptomatic of a general tendency in Agricola's output; but in what follows I will argue that this tendency is more deeply rooted than the kind of surface details just examined. In claiming this I do not seek to downplay the importance of these details: the ludic element is as important to Agricola's aesthetic as it is to the art of Hieronymus Bosch, with whom Agricola has been associated on the covers of several CD anthologies.[12] But such boisterous games need not blind us, in Agricola any more than they do in Bosch, to the other registers on which one can play.

»Si dedero«: »multiplicities«

To return for a moment to Deleuze and Guattari, one must underline the importance they attach to the notion of »multiplicity« in their adumbration of the Rhizome. (»Les multiplicités sont rhizomatiques, et dénoncent les pseudo-multiplicités arborescentes.«)[13] For it is multiplicity, or rather »multiplicities«, that distinguish the rhizomatic from the root, the tree-structure in which succeeding levels replicate each other in a hierarchical manner: trunk, branches, twigs and leaves, with the network of roots that mirrors and replicates the structure in the opposite direction (described by Deleuze and Guattari as »arborescence«: see Plate 1, p. 24). The botanical rhizome's organization cannot be reduced to any single *modus operandi*. In contrast to the root's strongly vertical and centrifugal thrust (both up and down, above and below ground), the rhizome proliferates only on the horizontal plane, but does so in many directions, its shoots constantly doubling back on themselves

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the *International Jacob Obrecht Quincentenary Conference, Antwerp 2005* (forthcoming 2007, on-line publication of the Alamire foundation, University of Leuven).

12 *A. Agricola: Vocal and Instrumental Works*, Ferrara Ensemble, dir. Crawford Young, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi/BMG RD 77038 (Freiburg, 1990); *Alexander Agricola: Fortuna Desperata – Secular Music of the 15th Century*, Ensemble Unicorn, dir. Michael Posch, Naxos 8.553840 (Hong Kong, 1999); *Agricola: Missa Malheur me bat – Missa In minen sin*, A: N: S: Chorus, dir. János Bali, Hungaroton HCD 32011 (Budapest, 2001); and *Agricola: Missa Malheur me bat - Le serviteur – Missa Je ne demande*, A: N: S: Chorus, dir. János Bali, Hungaroton HCD 32267 (Budapest, 2004).

13 Deleuze & Guattari, Mille plateaux (cf. fn. 2), p. 14 (»Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and denounce the pseudo-mutliplicities of the arborescent«; all translations are mine).
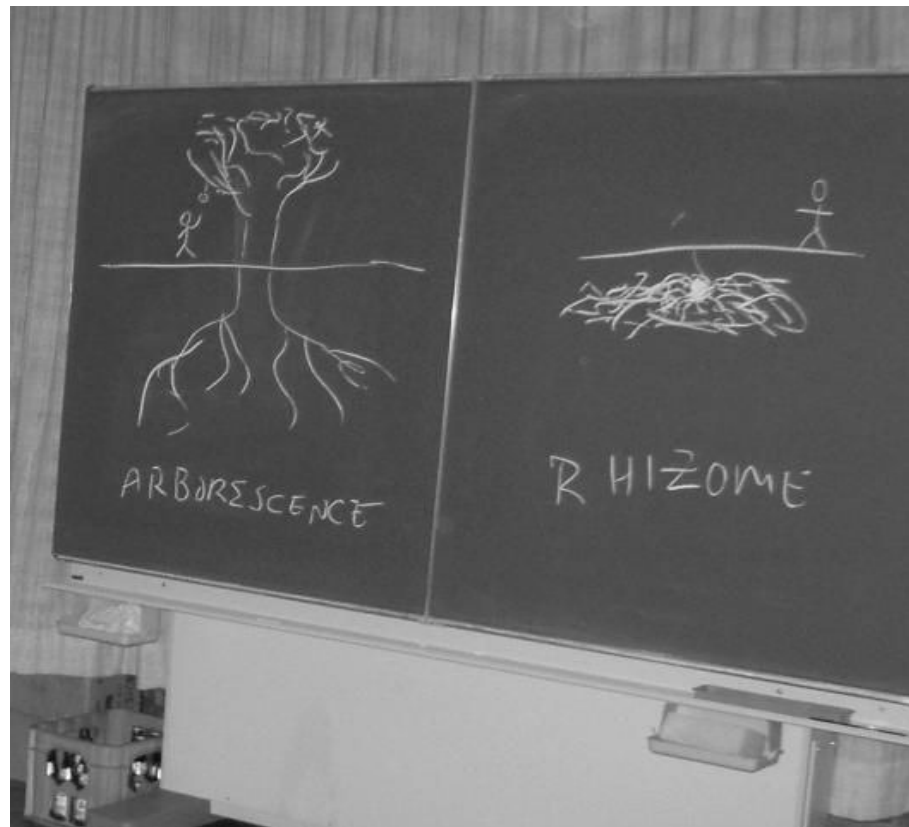
Plate 1: Rhizomes and arborescences: author's illustration at the Symposium, Musik-hochschule Trossingen, 28 April 2006 (Photo: Warwick Edwards)

and meeting together fortuitously, forming local clusters. Considered as a system, the rhizome is anti-hierarchical and has no centre. Where arborescence replicates, the rhizomatic multiplies. The practical implications of such a system are perhaps best summed up in the statement that »[n]'importe quel point d'un rhizome peut être connecté avec n'importe quel autre, et doit l'être«.[14] What follows will shed additional light on some traits that may qualify as properly ›agricolesque‹; but through this consideration of compositional style I mean also to reflect on what a rhizomatic approach to counterpoint might entail in practice.

14 Ibid., p. 13 (»Any point in a rhizome can be connected with any other, and must be«).

I begin with Agricola's most popular work (Example 1),[15] which survives in more sources than any other secular piece of the fifteenth century. Its musical surface betrays none of the overtly outlandish humour we have observed so far. In fact, its profile is in many ways indistinguishable from that of many three-voice pieces of its time: witness the occasional use of paired imitation, the more extensive use of parallel tenths in the outer voices, and of sequence involving all the parts. Imitation is also used extensively, but its deployment is by no means straightforward.

Let us consider the piece's opening material. From the standpoint of dyadic (i.e., two-part) counterpoint, the imitation at the octave between tenor and discantus is perfectly standard; on the other hand, the contratenor's pitch at the point of the tenor entry (bar 6) is rather less so, given that a *c* a fifth below the tenor, instead of the current pitch, *A*, would be consonant with both upper voices, and would pose no problems in relation to the surrounding pitches. (In fact, removing the minim rest in the contratenor at bar 5 achieves exactly this result.) That the contratenor should be at odds with the principal voices is, perhaps, not so surprising; but if we consider the point of imitation with all three voices in mind rather than just two, the situation becomes more complex. The entries of the contratenor and the discantus are separated by the temporal distance of a long, and by the intervallic distance of a fourth. The expectation that the remaining voice will follow suit is not unreasonable, at least as far as temporal distance is concerned; and as it happens, the position of the discantus and contratenor at the downbeat of bar 5 is consistent with a tenor entry on *c* at that point. This is precisely what does not happen; when the tenor does enter, a breve later, it is markedly dissonant in relation to the contratenor, and sits uneasily within the fifth marked out by the contratenor and the discantus.[16] While the seventh between the contratenor and tenor is not directly struck,

15 All musical examples are in original note values, with whole bars always being equivalent to breves (perfect in tempus perfectum, and imperfect in tempus imperfectum). This convention is adopted for the whole movement concerned; hence, bar numbers in the musical examples differ from those in *Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia*, 5 vols., Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 22, ed. Edward R. Lerner (American Institute of Musicology, 1961–70), which appear in brackets alongside the captions for the musical examples. Where reference is made in footnotes to pieces not given as musical examples, the bar numbers cited are those of the *Opera omnia*. In all cases readings have been checked against the original sources.

16 One should note a variant in the Bassus part at this point, which resolves the problem, but it is contradicted by all the other sources (I–VEcap, 757, fol. 24ᵛ–25ʳ).

Example 1: Alexander Agricola, »Si dedero« (complete, continued on next pages)

Example 1 (continued)

Example 1 (continued)

neither is it prepared in any way; nor is it resolved in any sense that would have been recognized in the fifteenth century. In this reading it is the tenor that is the odd one out.

At this point I must pause, because the idea of a ›normative‹ solution in terms of fifteenth-century imitative practice may strike the reader as an over-interpretation of the situation. In my support I can call no less a witness than Jacob Obrecht, who responded to »Si dedero« not only with a companion piece, *Si sumpsero*, but also with an entire Mass cycle. The first three of its movements begin by re-working the model's original point of imitation in different ways (Example 2a–c). Common to all three examples is the temporal distance between the three voices, which is always a long; the most significant difference is that the starting pitch (always in the bassus) changes in each movement. Most significant of these re-workings is that of the Credo, which reproduces exactly the normative realization of the material for which I have just argued, demonstrating that it can resolve cadentially while keeping the point of imitation in the discantus intact (bar 9). To propose this passage as a ›corrective‹ response to Agricola's solecism undoubtedly would be an over-interpretation; nevertheless, the consistency with which Obrecht elaborates the opening point across the three movements clearly underscores that which Agricola's realization eschews.

On the other hand, the three instances of Example 2 themselves exclude the discantus/tenor pairing that Agricola's version alone keeps in play. In this sense, Obrecht's glosses reveal what is most interesting about the opening of »Si dedero«: not so much that two sets of contrapuntal priorities are possible (discantus/tenor framework *vs*. the whole polyphonic fabric), but that they are neither mutually exclusive nor neatly reconcilable. It is neither a case of the famous *Gestalt* situation of duck-or-rabbit, in which one can perceive the one or the other, but not both simultaneously; nor is it one of straightforwardly dialectical synthesis, since the resulting dissonance, far from resolving the ambiguity, deliberately points it up. Rather, a contrapuntal image is created whose strength resides in the tension brought about by the confrontation of two alternatives. The situation at the beginning of »Si dedero« may be described as rhizomatic because, although the integrity of both readings is preserved, the confrontation of the two on the contrapuntal level is left unresolved.

What we have observed so far depends in part on the notion that the long constitutes a significant grouping in terms of »Si dedero«'s mensural organzation. This is confirmed by an ornamental figure in the tenor's state-

Example 2: Jacob Obrecht, *Missa Si dedero*
a) Kyrie (opening), bb. 1–8, b) Gloria (opening), bb. 1–9, c) Credo (opening), bb. 1–8

ment of the opening point, the dotted rhythm at bar 9.[17] This is not motivated by imitation, since it occurs in neither statement of the point in the other voices; rather, it echoes the same figure in the contratenor at exactly a long's distance (bar 7). In re-enforcing the importance of the long, this little figure connects two structurally unrelated parts of discourse, the one imitative, the other non-imitative. Such a connection, I suggest, fulfils Deleuze and Guattari's stricture, quoted above, that »any point in a rhizome can be connected with any other, and must be«.

The rest of »Si dedero« presents several other instances of tension arising from one voice, usually the tenor, being slightly ›off-centre‹ in relation to the others. This happens first with the next point of imitation at »somnum« (bb. 16–36), in which the tenor begins by conforming to the pattern set up by the discantus and contratenor (bb. 16–22). This again establishes the long as the principal temporal unit, but the tenor's next two pitch-changes (bb. 25 and 27) both fall outside the longa downbeats set up by the point of imitation. In fact, none of »Si dedero«'s points of imitation presents an unproblematic profile: there is constant play between breve and long, between imitative figures and the distance between statements expanding and contracting. At bar 40, the discantus imitates the tenor entry of the previous bar, at first doubling the lengths of pitches relative to the initial statement, then suddenly contracting on the breve *c'* at bar 46, which in the tenor had been prolonged melismatically. Similarly, the interval of two longs between the discantus's point at bar 55 and its imitation in the contratenor at bar 59 is telescoped onto a single breve when the tenor follows suit. The piece's closing ostinato sequence (bb. 66–9) also displays a rhythmically ambiguous profile, especially when the material in the outer voices is viewed in the original notation (Figure 5).[18] Examined without reference to the tenor, the accent could fall either on the dotted minim (a possibility reinforced by the return to the same pitch on the fourth minim of each group), or at the beginning of each ascent (with each group marked out by the preceding leap down a third).[19] It is only the tenor's pitches that resolve the ambiguity in favour of the latter reading.

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17 One must again record another unique variant, this time in the Tenor voice, in which this ornament is left out (I–Bc, Q 16, fol. 120ᵛ – 121ʳ).

18 Facsimiles of this passage in *Chansonnier of Marguerite of Austria: Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS. 11 239*, introd. Martin Picker (Peer, 1988), fol. 32ᵛ, and *Ottaviano Petrucci. Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A. A Facsimile of the Venice, 1504 Edition*. Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile 1.10 (New York, 1973), fol. 61ᵛ.

19 See also the very similar four-voice sequence at the conclusion of the Gloria of Agricola's *Missa Je ne demande*, bb. 116–20, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia (cf. fn. 15), vol. 1:

Figure 5: Alexander Agricola, »Si dedero«, Discantus (conclusion). *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1504, RISM 1504[2]), fol. 61[v]

In marked contrast with the more boisterous games encountered at the beginning of this paper, »Si dedero«'s play with metre and temporal articulation is subtle, almost understated. The largely conjunct voice-leading, the exchange of lengthy plainchant pitches between voices, result in a more placid texture than is typical with Agricola; but the longer one examines its contrapuntal relationships, the more tenuous the balance between the voices becomes. It is as though under close scrutiny the musical fabric might unravel altogether.

Rhythmic and linear independence: »ramifications in all directions«

One can hardly begin characterizing Agricola's style in even the most general terms without remarking on its distinctive rhythmic profile. First, there is its high note-density, a feature that appears slightly exaggerated in Edward Lerner's edition (due to its policy of quartering note-values in duple time and in mensurations with diminution, which the composer uses more often than not). Nevertheless, a glance at the music, whether in modern score or in original notation, testifies to its intricate surface, so much so that those pieces in his output in which rhythmic activity is stepped down (as happens in not a few songs, or in some of the shorter motets)[20] seem almost atypical, even though their number is hardly negligible. The impression of surface density is reinforced by the ›over-size‹ quality of Agricola's handling of

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    Missa Le serviteur, Missa Je ne demande, Missa Malheur me bat, Missa In myne zyn (1961), p. 45, and the three-voice sequence at the conclusion of the Agnus II of the same Mass, ibid, p. 63, bb. 61–2. From a syntactical viewpoint their placement near the very end of the section, again mirroring the sequence in »Si dedero«, can hardly be coincidental.

20 Among the songs, »En attendant la grace de ma dame«, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia (cf. fn. 15), vol. 5: *Cantiones, Musica Instrumentalis, Opera dubia* (1970), pp. 26–7, springs to mind on account of its popularity (it survives in 11 sources), but there are many others.

forms and genres. Masses like *In myne zyn* or *Malheur me bat*, songs like »Je n'ay dueil« or »Se mieulx ne vient d'amours«, are as remarkable for their exceptional length as for their density.[21] At first glance, one might think that a tendency to ›note-spinning‹ and formal expansiveness constitutes in itself fertile ground for the rhizome; but I would argue that contrapuntal density is not so much a cause as a symptom of rhizomatic behaviour, which may equally be discerned in Agricola's less prolix creations, as »Si dedero« demonstrates.

Nonetheless, those musical features that qualify as peculiarly agricolesque are rooted in specifically rhythmic phenomena. My initial examples from the original notation (Figures 1–5) owe much of their ›bizarrerie‹ to the fixation on a rhythmic unit: the minim (Figure 2) or semiminim (Figure 3), un-notatable (i.e., highly uncharacteristic) units of thirteen and seven minims (Figure 1), and ostinatos (Figures 4 and 5). As we will observe, ostinato is an especially significant feature of Agricola's style; suffice it for the moment to remark on its rhythmic basis. At the opposite extreme, one finds
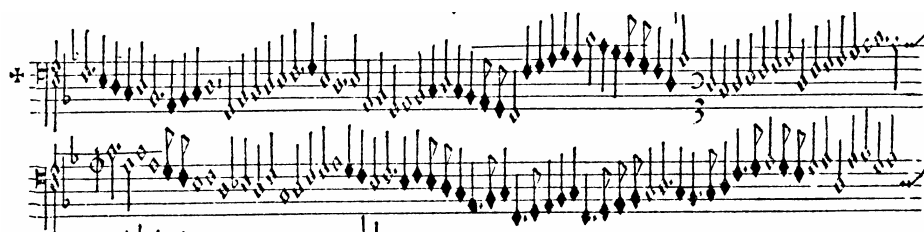

Figure 6: Alexander Agricola, *Tandernaken*, Contratenor. *Canti C numero cento cinquanta* (Venice: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1503/4, RISM 1504[3]), fol. 1045[r] [recte 145[r]]

passages exhibiting a degree of rhythmic variety (Figure 6)[22] and linear in-dependence (Example 3) rarely encountered since the ars subtilior, and whose use in this period is otherwise confined for the most part to the occa-

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21 Hence the remark of an anonymous scholar, reported by David Fallows, describing Agricola as »the Reger of his generation«: David Fallows, Review of *A. Agricola: Vocal and Instrumental Works*, Ferrara Ensemble, dir. Crawford Young, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi/BMG RD 77038, *Gramophone*, 68 (1990–1), p. 252.

22 Facsimile of this passage in *Ottaviano Petrucci. Canti C Numero Cento Cinquanta: A Facsimile of the Venice, 1503/4 Edition*. Monuments of Music and Music Literature in Facsimile 1.25 (New York, 1978), fol. 1045[r] [recte 145[r]].

Example 3: Alexander Agricola, *Missa In myne zyn*, Agnus Dei, bb. 182–195 (109–115)

sional technical exercise or showpiece.[23] The original notation also under-scores Agricola's deployment of the entire durational spectrum, including a greater frequency in the use of the longest and the shortest available values. Hence, longas and maximas occur more often than usual outside *cantus firmus* lines. The prevalence, at the other end, of semiminimas and fusas

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23 E. g., Obrecht's two-voice »Regina celi«, *New Obrecht Edition*, vol. 16: *Motets* II, ed. Chris Maas (Utrecht, 1996), pp. 63–4. See also bb. 61–74 of the Gloria of Agricola's *Missa In myne zyn*, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia, vol. 1 (cf. fn. 19), pp. 108–9.

confirms both what has been observed about note-density and the special status of ornament within Agricola's style. The sense of rhythmic activity cultivated for its own sake explains, among other things, the straggling melismas one finds so often at sectional closes, most often in a single voice after the others have reached their final pitch.[24] Arguably, these flourishes serve no purpose other than to work off the rhythmic momentum accumulated in the foregoing section; this particular function distinguishes the rhizomatic dynamic from the arborescent. Indeed, to criticize such gestures (and Agricola's counterpoint in general) for its lack of direction[25] misses the point of the rhizome, which proliferates in *all* directions.[26]

The maintenance of rhythmic momentum is a contributing factor in Agricola's frequently unorthodox handling of contrapuntal details, for example the prominence of consecutive fifths, octaves, and even unisons. (I use the term »prominence« here not so much quantitatively as qualitatively.) The fifths in both directions between the outer voices in Example 4a (bar 9) are due to the non-essential dotted rhythm in the discantus, whose primary motivation is the avoidance of stasis (both within the line, and simultaneously with the held *b* in the tenor). In Example 4b one finds the same dotted figure deployed in the bassus (bar 56) for the same reason, that of sustaining rhythmic impetus: here again, the consecutives occur between outer voices. The momentum generated by individual lines also induces consecutives when the material is predominantly scalar, as in Example 4c. Here, one notes the same prevalence of dotted rhythms, and the fact that the consecutives at bar 175 (fifths between discantus and tenor, immediately followed by unisons between contratenor and discantus) occur not in simple pairs but in strings of three in the same direction. The prioritization of individual lines over contrapuntal propriety recalls the rhizome's propensity for proliferation in all direction, by which individual shoots may meet fortuitously and tie themselves into knots. The consecutives of Example 4c are momentary knottings together of diverging contrapuntal strands – especially

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24 Fitch, Agricola (cf. fn. 1), p. 90, fn. 76.

25 John Milsom, »Beyond Josquin«, Review of CD by A: N: S: Chorus, dir. János Bali, *Alexander Agricola: Missa Malheur me bat, Missa In minen sin*, Hungaroton HCD 32011 (2001), *Early Music* 32 (2004), pp. 159–65, esp. p. 164, where the counterpoint in these Masses is described as »aimless«.

26 Deleuze & Guattari, Mille plateaux (cf. fn. 2), p. 13: »Le rhizome ... a des formes très diversifiées, depuis son extension superficielle ramifiée en tous sens jusqu'à ses concrétions en bulbes et tubercules ...« (»The rhizome takes very diverse forms, ranging from its superficial ramified extensions in all directions to its concretions into bulbs and tubers ...«).

Example 4: Alexander Agricola, a) *Comme femme* I, bb. 8–10 (4–5), b) *Comme femme* I, bb. 55–7 (28–9), c) *Missa In myne zyn*, Agnus Dei, bb. 173–6 (104–6), d) *Tout a par moy* I, bb. 96–7 (49)

if one considers the stretto-laden context in which they occur. The necessity of maintaining rhythmic momentum equally informs the twists and turns of the lines themselves, as in Example 4d, where the leap of a seventh inflects the bassus' octave leap cadence, allowing the line to extend beyond the octave to its flattened upper neighbour.[27] The density of individual lines is often a contributory factor in those unpredictable contrapuntal twists and turns that seem so peculiarly agricolesque. Example 4a (bar 10, immediately

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27 See also *Amours, amours*, bb. 9–10, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia, vol. 5 (cf. fn. 20), p. 71.

following the consecutives just mentioned) illustrates this point also: the bassus' string of rapid leaps in opposite directions is necessitated by the introduction in the contratenor of that quintessentially ornamental figure, the cadential double leading-note.

Cadential function: »any point of a rhizome ...«

But this ornamental figure (on the pitch g) is not the only cadence to occur in Example 4a: on the preceding beat, the bassus cadences with the tenor on a; the contratenor's figure is initiated before the previous cadence is even completed. Thus, cadential material is presented in all four voices within the space of a long, for the discantus also presents the *tenorizans* component of a cadence on c' (resulting, as we have seen, in consecutives with the bassus); but significantly, it is not complemented by another voice.

   This tightly knit passage introduces several facets of Agricola's peculiar play with cadential function. (Not »cadence«, but »cadential function«: the distinction is important.) In Tinctoris' well-known phrase, the tenor is said to be the »fundamentum totium relationis«,[28] not so much because it carries the *cantus prius factus*, but because it is the voice on which cadences are built. Accordingly, cadential treatment is regarded as a primary indicator in stylistic evaluations of medieval and Renaissance music. Thus, to take an example close to home, Ockeghem has been held up both for his habit of stepping up contrapuntal activity in the lead up to major cadence and for the avoidance of cadence as a syntactical device.[29] This is not as much a paradox as it might appear: rather, that the undermining of cadence on the local level is counterbalanced by its re-enforcement at major points of structural articulation (the famous »drive to the cadence«).

   By contrast, Agricola frequently saturates the music with cadences and cadential material. Example 5, in which a cadence between one pair of voices immediately overlaps with another on a different pitch (similarly to Example 4a), is only an extreme instance of a generalized phenomenon, for Agricola's melodic lines are frequently a concatenation of cadences, as the preceding

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28 *Johannis Tinctoris Opera theoretica*. Corpus Scriptorum de Musica 22, ed. Albert Seay (American Institute of Musicology, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 85–6.
29 This view is first fully articulated in Manfred Bukofzer, »Caput: A Liturgico-Musical Study,« ibid., *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (New York, 1950), pp. 217–310, esp. 281–5 (on the avoidance of cadences) and 285–6 (for the »drive to the cadence«).

Example 5: Alexander Agricola, *Missa In myne zyn*, Credo, bb. 326–8 (164–5)

Figure 4 illustrates *ad absurdum*.[30] And here there really is a paradox: Agricola's cadential saturation and Ockeghem's avoidance of cadence are the flipsides of the same coin, for the frequency of cadences in Agricola undermines their perception as syntactical units, and hence their functional effectiveness. This differs also from the practice of several of Agricola's contemporaries, for example Heinrich Isaac or the mature Obrecht, in whom frequent cadences typically serve as audible formal markers, either by articulating the underlying mensuration, or by helping to establish the mode.[31]

A typical example of cadential saturation is Example 6, the concluding passage of *Amours, amours*, a tenor setting of one of Hayne van Ghizeghem's most popular chansons. These 18 breves contain no fewer than eleven cadences. Earlier I referred to »cadential material« rather than »cadences«, and this passage helps clarify the distinction. It is by no means clear whether every single instance of cadential behaviour requires alteration by *musica*

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30 See for example *D'ung aultre amer* I, Discantus, bb. 7–14, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia, vol. 5 (cf. fn. 20), p. 86. For more extended plays with cadence, see the discantus of *Tout a par moy* I at bb. 15–20 (reproduced here in Example 12), in which a series of characteristic figures skirt round the same pitch (*g*) before a more emphatic melodic gesture rounds off the passage (bb. 19–20). Such delayed cadential resolutions are quite common: see *Missa In myne zyn*, Credo, bb. 183–6, Discantus, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia, vol. 1 (cf. fn. 19), p. 126, or *Comme femme* I, bb. 19–23, Discantus, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia, vol. 5 (cf. fn. 20), p. 73.

31 On the role of cadence in Obrecht's mature style, see Rob C. Wegman, *Born for the Muses: the Life and Masses of Jacob Obrecht* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 224–5. Isaac's tenor re-workings exhibit a similar tendency (along with most of his work) to a similarly clear-cut use of cadence. Examples would be invidious in view of their sheer number; suffice it to remark that the sort of subversions of cadential behaviour observed here are a peculiar feature of Agricola's style.

ficta; indeed, there are so many in this passage that it would seem overly fastidious to sharpen every leading-note.[32] The dilemma would pose itself most acutely to a performer using the original notation, and to whom this piling-up of cadence upon cadence would eventually become properly ›ludicrous‹. Besides, in the opening bars of this passage, it is not so much the cadences themselves as the ostinato treatment of the cadential discantus-figure (dotted minim and three semiminims) that is the main focus

Example 6: Alexander Agricola, *Amours, amours*, bb. 44–61 (22–31)

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32 For this reason I have deliberately refrained from supplying editorial accidentals in Example 6.

of interest – a point confirmed by the contratenor at bars 53–4, where it occurs on the ›wrong‹ part of the beat. An ›ornamental‹ figure is raised to the status of imitative point. This is a fairly widespread occurrence in Agricola's music, whose implications go to the heart of his contrapuntal practice and aesthetic. We will return to it presently.

Earlier, I proposed the weakening of cadential function as one of the main consequences of cadential saturation. A favourite ploy of Agricola's con-

Example 7: Alexander Agricola, a) *D'ung aultre amer* IV, bb. 1–7 (1–4), b) *D'ung aultre amer* III, bb. 1–7 (1–4), c) *D'ung aultre amer* II, bb. 1–2 (1), d) *D'ung aultre amer* I, bb. 1–3 (1–2)

sists in opening a piece with a cadential gesture, placing it so early on in the work that its usual role, that of delimiting the piece's mode, is negated. The opening gestures given as Example 7 belong to four settings of the same *cantus firmus*, Ockeghem's »D'ung aultre amer«. The first (Example 7a, which we have already encountered in original notation as Figure 3), despite the eccentricity noted earlier, at least presents a straightforward example of an opening cadence, with both tenor and discantus in their proper place (bar 7); in addition, the cadence marks the ending of a musical phrase, as shown by the pause immediately following it in the discantus. In Example 7b, a syntactically correct cadence between tenor and discantus is undercut by the contratenor (bar 6). Note that this opening cadence is not on the piece's final, and does not mark the end of a phrase. This less straightforward cadential type is nevertheless quite common, but the opening cadence of Example 7c (bar 2) is at several degrees' remove from cadential norms. It occurs almost immediately, too soon in fact to establish itself conclusively; but in any case it is not on the final, and does not involve the tenor, whose material assumes the position normally taken by the contratenor. In a further twist, the actual contratenor's opening material, an ostinato that repeats over the course of the next few bars and is taken up in all the free voices, is also embedded within the discantus's opening material. The ornamental turn just observed also occurs at the beginning of Example 7d. This time the tenor again assumes the contratenor function in the cadence on *c* between contratenor and bassus (bar 2); but in a near repeat of Example 5, the moment of the cadence coincides with the preparation of another cadence on the next beat between the discantus and tenor.

The discantus's material is straightforwardly cadential, but the tenor's *cantus prius factus* entails that this cadence is in fact a blind. This kind of ›blind cadence‹ (by analogy with a ›blind window‹, which opens out onto no view at all) in which the discantus components of a cadence are presented in the absence of a corresponding tenor motion, is one of Agricola's favourite devices. Example 8a shows another ›blind cadence‹ in which the distinction between cadential function and cadential material is pointed up more sharply still. At bar 45 the contratenor and bassus articulate an embryonic cadence on *c* – embryonic (or *simplex*), because weakened by the absence of a suspension. That suspension is supplied by the ›blind cadence‹ in the discantus, which lacks the corresponding descent down to *g* in another voice, and which results in consecutive fifths with the contratenor. The tenor, which is silent at the point of cadential preparation, enters on the third, functionally the least essential part of the sonority. This example combines all the features

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remarked on so far – the dissociation of cadential material and cadential function, the pointed alienation of the tenor, and the prioritization of linear considerations over contrapuntal propriety. Finally, in Example 8b (drawn

Example 8: Alexander Agricola
a) *Comme femme* I, bb. 42–5 (22–3), b) *Comme femme* I, bb. 14–7 (7–9)

from the same piece) a cadence is set up at bars 15–6 in which the tenor not only assumes the role of the contratenor placed between the cadencing voices, but fails to resolve even this in the normal manner, ascending not by step, but by a third. It is not just that cadences are achieved independently of the tenor, but that they are very often placed as it were in spite of it: its role as the »fundamentum totium relationis« is deliberately undermined.

Ornament and ostinato: »concretions into bulbs and tubers«

The elevation of ornamental and scalar passages to the syntactical status of imitative points underlines the fundamental role of ornament within Agricola's style. Even as minute an alteration as the one noted in the opening point of »Si dedero« plays its part in establishing the network of

embedded connections, ostinatos, and aperiodic exchanges between voices, which I propose is crucial to the notion of a rhizomatic counterpoint. Example 9 gives another typical instantiation of Agricola's imitative practice.

Example 9:
Alexander
Agricola, *Comme femme* I,
bb. 17–28 (9–14)

A characteristic ornamental turn (labelled »a«) is articulated in all free voices in turn. In its first statement by the discantus (exactly shadowed by the contratenor at the tenth below), it is followed by a minim pattern (labelled »b«); but in the next statement by the contratenor on its own (bars 21–2), the two figures are reversed. In the meantime, the bassus entry opens with »b« in immediate imitation of the discantus-contratenor pair (bar 20), and follows this with a semiquaver turn whose rhythmic and melodic profile clearly recalls »a« (bar 21). After a brief pause the bassus introduces »a« in

its exact form (bar 23), this time jettisoning »b«. Following a further descending figure at bars 24–5 outlining the same interval as »a« (a sixth *e–G*), the bassus appears to initiate a final presentation of »a« at bar 26 (signalled by the off-the-beat, dotted quaver *c'*), which is interrupted, or as it were rhythmically diluted, since the general outline is the same and the pitch of arrival, *e*, is eventually reached. At several other points along the way, the appearance of the pitch *c* in the other voices likewise appears to signal another statement of »a« (discantus, bars 20 and 22, and contratenor, bar 24, on the pitch *e'*). Most of these ›near-misses‹ in fact take the form of an on-the-beat dotted crotchet; but the reference to figure »a« in each case clearly implied, since none of its actual appearances occurs in quite the same context.

In its broad outlines, this approach to imitation is reminiscent of Ockeghem;[33] but the use of ornamental figures as imitative points is particularly agricolesque, and is perhaps best understood in terms of the composer's preoccupation with rhythm: it allows imitation to take place without having to reduce note-density. The working-out of such points also recalls (as with Example 6) the rhizome's (dis)organization »from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers«.[34] This describes the manner in which several weaker or ›diluted‹ statements of the point (including the ›near misses‹) follow on from the more exact ones, or may on the contrary precede them. The ›concretion‹ or occasional thickening of material (»bulbs and tubers«) describes the concentration of imitation in passages like this one, a stretto-like clustering whereby statements (here of »a« and »b«) follow each other in close succession, but irregularly. Two features are worth exploring further: first, the appearance of these ›knots‹ of imitative fabric within musical discourse is itself irregular and momentary (we will return to this aspect presently); second, the saturation of the contrapuntal texture by individual rhythmic figures is so pronounced as to blur the distinction between imitation and ostinato.

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33 The uncoupling of a point of imitation so that two components are presented now in one order, and now in another, is sometimes seen in the elder composer's works. See Fabrice Fitch, *Johannes Ockeghem: Masses and Models*. Collection Ricercar 2 (Paris, 1997), p. 185. For a discussion of Ockeghem's imitative practice in the *Mi-mi* Mass, see Irving Godt, »An Ockeghem Observation: Hidden Canon in the ›Missa Mi-Mi‹,« *Tijdschrift van de Koninklijke vereniging voor Nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis* 41 (1991), pp. 79–85, and Fitch, Johannes Ockeghem, ibid., pp. 171–6.
34 See fn. 26 above.

Example 10: Alexander Agricola, *De tous biens plaine* I (three-voice version),
bb. 1–41 (1–21) (continued on next page)

Particularly interesting in this regard is the *De tous biens plaine* setting that
survives as a four-voice piece in Petrucci's *Canti C*. In two other sources the
contratenor is omitted, and although that voice is quite plausibly by
Agricola, the remaining pair of free voices offers such a compelling contra-
puntal profile that it is worth considering the work, for present purposes at

Example 10 (continued)

least, as a three-voice composition, in line with Agricola's other surviving re-workings of the same tenor. More than half of the piece consists of a dialogue between the two voices (Example 10), such that they rarely coincide in the first 40 bars. Strikingly, their material draws almost entirely on the contrapuntal small change of the period: the bassus's opening gesture is typical of an optional contratenor to Hayne's original discantus/tenor

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pair. Nevertheless, each subsequent point introduced by the discantus builds in some way on what precedes. The rhythm at bar 15 is identical to that at bars 9–10, and its descending sixth is replicated and slightly expanded at bar 18 into the figure noted in the previous example (one of Agricola's favourite stock-figures), which recurs, embedded at bar 25 and again further extended (see the bassus's response at bar 28). Following the cadence at bar 31, the bassus initiates another point, this time a cadential gesture immediately echoed in the discantus. The use of such incidental gestures is all the more interesting that the resulting relationship between the voices is difficult to characterize: part imitation, part ostinato, but then again neither quite the one nor fully the other (as Rabelais has it: »Ne l'un ne l'aultre, et tous les deux ensemble«).[35]

An ostinato is no sooner suggested than modified, while imitation is subtly disguised: by embedding the point within a longer phrase, as we have seen, but also by placing the statements of a point on different parts of the tactus, so that its function changes. This is what happens with the opening point: the strong beat in the bassus (bar 1) is exchanged for the weak beat in the discantus (bar 3), and the bassus' syncopated figure becomes the discantus's cadential anticipation (with the resolution on the downbeat of bar 5). My earlier reference to the ›duck-or-rabbit‹ drawing may be invoked here, albeit with a slightly different intention, since the figure may be interpreted as either one or the other; it is not only its mensural placement, but also the tenor's material against it, that determines which of the two readings is to be preferred in each case.

Contingency: »acentred, non-hierarchical and non-signifying«

As intensive (not to say ›thematic‹) as this ostinato dialogue appears to be, it is suddenly abandoned about two-thirds of the way into the setting, and is never re-introduced. This is striking because the setting itself is so short; but whatever the scale of a work, Agricola's music in general is characterized by the localized, limited application of *ad hoc* devices, whether structural or contrapuntal. This has already been observed in the *cantus firmus* treatment of his Mass cycles, which incorporates a variety of systematic techniques (e.g., isomelism, paraphrase, strict presentation, and parody) that may be suddenly introduced, interrupted, or ultimately abandoned and only rarely

35 François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes*. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 15, ed. Mireille Huchon & François Moreau (Paris, 1994), p. 465.

pursued to their conclusion;[36] suffice it here to point to the *cantus firmus* device reproduced and discussed above as Figure 1 (and Example 3), which is applied only as far as the borrowed tenor's first two phrases before being dropped. But the same attitude informs the free voices when the tenor is treated strictly, as in the *De tous biens plaine* setting just examined, or in works that contain (as far as is known) no borrowed material at all. The large-scale ›instrumental‹ pieces *Pater meus agricola est* and *Cecus non judicat de coloribus* feature episodes running up or down the hexachord in one of the voices (with one pitch being added or subtracted with each statement); but in both cases these episodes are introduced in mid-section, and finish well before the sectional break.[37]

The same holds for most intimations of systematic organization. Similarly, contrapuntal *idées fixes* (often but not necessarily ostinatos: see Example 11) erupt into the musical discourse almost at random, and disappear as suddenly as they took hold. In view of this last example in particular, the *perpetuum mobile* setting of *De tous biens plaine* II (as shown in Figure 2) is an anomaly, since its minim motion in the free voices is maintained throughout. Such occasional exceptions notwithstanding, this episodic approach to form bears out on the level of local invention what has been observed in the treatment of borrowed material in Agricola's Mass cycles.

Agricola's aesthetic is thus placed under the signs of contingency and accident, alongside that of ornament. The preference for episodic or *ad hoc* procedures reminds us that »the rhizome is acentred«,[38] for which one can read, is governed by no overriding structuring discourse or principle. This

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36 Fitch, Agricola (cf. fn. 1), pp. 69–83. Cf. Deleuze & Guattari's development of the notion of »rupture asignifiante« (»asignifying rupture«): »Un rhizome peut être rompu, brisé en un endroit quelconque, il reprend suivant telle ou telle de ses lignes ou suivant d'autres lignes« (»A rhizome may be broken or shattered at a given point, and will continue along one or other of its lines, or along other lines«): Deleuze & Guattari, Mille plateaux (cf. fn. 2), p. 16.

37 See *Pater meus* at bb. 26–37, Bassus, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia, vol. 5 (cf. fn. 20), p. 108, and in *Cecus* at bb. 40–9 and 66–72, Tenor, ibid., pp. 103–4. A possible precedent for these passages is the Agnus Dei II of Ockeghem's *Missa Quinti toni*, in which the voice in question (the bassus) is similarly free rhythmically; but its material consists entirely of the hexachordal run, with only a concluding flourish added at the end.

38 »Contre les systèmes centrés (même polycentrés), à communication hiérarchique et liaisons préétablies, le rhizome est un système acentré, non hiérarchique et asignifiant ...« (»Against centred (or even poly-centred) systems, with hierarchical relations and preestablished connections, the rhizome is acentred, non-hierarchical and non-signifying ...«): Deleuze & Guattari, Mille plateaux (cf. fn. 2), p. 32.

Example 11: Alexander Agricola, *Missa In myne zyn*, Credo, bb. 236–46 (119–22)

feature again distinguishes the rhizomatic from the arborescent, which tends to privilege a single over-arching organizational procedure over the course of an entire work. But as I observed in my previous study, Deleuze and Guattari strongly argue against the treatment of the two models as rigorously antithetical.[39] A practical confrontation between them may reveal not only the differences, but also some underlying similarities. At this point, one can turn to Josquin, a composer whose music I have previously invoked as an exemplar of arborescence.

39 »S'il est vrai que... le rhizome [a] essentiellement des entrées multiples, on considérera même qu'on peut y entrer par le chemin ... des arbres-racine ...« (»Although it is true that ... the rhizome essentially has multiple points of entry, one must even consider that one may enter them ... by way of the tree/root«): Deleuze & Guattari, Mille plateaux (cf. fn. 2), p. 14.

Example 12: Josquin Desprez, *Missa Faisant regretz*, Agnus Dei, bb. 46–60

Example 13: Alexander Agricola, *Tout a par moy* I, bb. 1–40 (1–20) (continued on next pages)

Example 13 (continued on next page)

Example 13 (continued)

The relationship between Josquin's *Missa Faisant regretz*[40] (and more specifically its final Agnus Dei, the beginning of which is reproduced as Example 12) and Agricola's four-voice setting of the tenor of Walter Frye's »Tout a par moy«[41] (see Example 13) has already been discussed in the literature. The parallels are clear. The first part of Agricola's setting incorporates the first four notes of the song's A section as an ostinato in the contratenor (corresponding to the song's A section) on several pitch-levels against the song tenor, followed in the second part by the first four notes of the song's B section (setting the words »faisant regretz«). In addition to this basic ground plan, Agricola's setting begins with a motif in the discantus that paraphrases the song tenor's first seven pitches (bb. 1–5). This is immediately echoed in the contratenor (bb. 5–9), which then repeats the phrase a further three times. On each repetition the duration of the song

40 Edition in *New Josquin Edition*, vol. 8: *Masses Based on Secular Polyphonic Songs* 2, ed. Barton Hudson (Utrecht, 1995), pp. 2–29.
41 See M. Jennifer Bloxam, »Masses on Polyphonic Songs,« *The Josquin Companion*, ed. Richard Sherr (Oxford, 2000), pp. 174–5.

tenor's seventh note is modified. Only after the fourth statement (bb. 23–7) does the contratenor introduce the four-note ostinato that prevails for the rest of the section. In Josquin's setting, the song's discantus appears in the corresponding voice of the Mass. Of the remaining voices, only the bassus is freely composed. The same four-note ostinatos both appear simultaneously (again on several pitch-levels), each one confined to one of the middle voices, neither of which incorporates any other material.

As Jennifer Bloxam has remarked, the question which setting inspired the other cannot be decided on the available evidence. On the other hand, the differences between the two versions are emblematic of their composers' respective approaches. The elegance of Josquin's solution speaks for itself: the functional distinction between the four voices, rigorously maintained throughout; the simultaneous deployment of two analogously derived ostinatos; the near-saturation of the polyphonic fabric with material derived from the song; these features testify to the strongly aborescent tendency of the Josquinian aesthetic, hierarchical, rigorous, and economical.

But Agricola's solution is just as clear an embodiment of rhizomatic priorities. Its apparent inconsistencies are consonant with the composer's general practice: witness the repetition of the opening discantus motif in the tenor voice, its arbitrary prolongations of the seventh note,[42] and especially its sudden interruption in favour of the four-note ostinato (a typical case of an *ad hoc* procedure being abruptly abandoned). Consider, too, the final statements of the four-note ostinato in the two sections, each of which incorporates a characteristic element of surprise: the first appears on a pitch not used previously (and never introduced again), after all the other voices, including the tenor, have come to a standstill; the second lies nearly entirely outside the tenor cursus, its first pitch forcing a false relation with the (implicit) sharpened leading-note of the discantus.

Behind these technical differences one discerns vastly divergent aesthetic criteria. Josquin's double *obbligo* makes it possible to account for every note of all but one of the four voices; but such a priority is quintessentially an arborescent one, and almost entirely foreign to Agricola's aesthetic. Proof of this may be sought in the note-density of Josquin's setting which, though low even by his standards, is properly inconceivable within the context of Agricola's textless tenor re-workings.

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42 Note that even this process is not pursued systematically, since in the fourth statement the duration of the seventh pitch reverts to that in the first statement.

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This note-density is a direct result of the double *obbligo*, which also accounts for the near-saturation of the music with material from the song. But as we have seen, a tendency to motivic saturation is also a feature of Agricola's music; there are clear signs of it in this setting, albeit carried out in a very different manner to Josquin. With rare exceptions (e. g., the song tenor's final melisma), the two free voices make little reference to the song tenor or to the contratenor's ostinato; on the other hand, their melodic and rhythmic usage is very consistent internally. The tail end of the contratenor's initial ostinato (bb. 8–9, which is not drawn from the song itself) is taken up several times, most often in tandem with its statements in the contratenor. Another characteristic passage is the discantus's repeated cadential circlings around the pitch-class *g* at bars 29–40, which are closely mirrored in the bassus.

By definition, these strategies are not pursued consistently, but the web of allusions thus created is equally distinctive. From this perspective, Josquin's freely composed bassus has fewer internal correspondences than either of Agricola's, and contrasts sharply with the quasi-Webernian economy of the middle voices; and it is worth observing how frequently Josquin modifies the ostinatos' durations in the interests of maintaining their melodic integrity. These flexible features are signs of rhizomatic (i. e., contingent) behaviour in Josquin's realization.

Conclusion: rhizomes vs. roots?

The preceding point, and the confrontation of the two settings as a whole, demonstrates that rhizomatic and arborescent tendencies may indeed exist in the same work, just as one and the same principle (here, the tendency to motivic saturation) may be a shared characteristic of both. The attractiveness of the two concepts lies precisely in their interdependence. Important as the Josquinian ›economy aesthetic‹ was to become, both for later sixteenth-century and modern reception-history,[43] a significant proportion of music

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43 For a relatively recent discussion of this ›economy aesthetic‹ in relation to Josquin's style, see John Milsom, »Analyzing Josquin,« *The Josquin Companion*, ed. Richard Sherr (Oxford, 2000), p. 435. Milsom's remarks imply that the aesthetic ideals embodied in the Josquin canon (the construction of which is circularly derived from the adherence of pieces to these principles) continue to enjoy wide currency. The attractions of the arborescent approach to latter-day musicology may be gauged in the very process of confronting these two settings of *Tout a par moy*: the procedures governing Josquin's version can be summarized in a couple of short sentences, but those of Agricola's cannot.

from the turn of the sixteenth century incorporates, to a greater or lesser extent, the types of rhizomatic behaviour outlined throughout this article.

As I hope to have shown, these seem particularly well suited to a description of Agricola's style, but by way of conclusion I would observe that the same tendencies can be discerned in the works of many of his contemporaries. (A strongly ornamental bent is noticeable, for instance, in much of Antoine Brumel's output, though even a cursory examination of his works suggests that his stylistic profile is exceptionally varied.) This is especially true of freely composed pieces, but it also holds for works based on pre-existent material. In fact, few composers are as systematic in their deployment of the latter as Josquin; and within his own output, borrowed material is more freely treated in some works than in others (the presumably late *Missa Pange lingua* being a case in point). At the opposite end of the spectrum, one finds even in Ockeghem (so often held up as the archetype of ›asystematic‹ procedures) certain very marked tendencies to arborescence – the use of canon, most obviously – that Agricola, for one, conspicuously avoids.[44]

Throughout this and the preceding study of Agricola's style, Ockeghem has already been invoked several times as a possible (and in my view, probable) influence. It seems to me also that the case of Ockeghem illustrates the potential for the wider applicability of the rhizome in articulating certain types of compositional decision-making, whether formal, structural or contrapuntal. The presence of canon within his output is a powerful counterweight to the asystematic procedures in the works otherwise freely composed, or based on borrowed material, and on which recent scholarship has dwelt significantly. For centuries, it resulted in a significant distortion of the composer's reputation, due to the fixation of sixteenth-century theorists, followed by eighteenth-century historiographers, on two or three canonic and enigmatic works, to the exclusion of all else. In fact, the coexistence within his output of the two tendencies, each expressed in the strongest possible manner, is arguably the most distinctive and original feature of his stylistic profile. As anyone well acquainted with his music will testify, the melodic construction of his canonic works is virtually indistinguishable from that of the rest of his output; hence, the oppositional framework within which constructivist and ›asystematic‹ tendencies are

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44 The few instances of the technique, though characteristically unusual, are hardly challenging technically. See for example the canon in inversion (with rubric »facie ad faciem«) in his »Salve regina« I, bb. 100–21, in Alexandri Agricola Opera omnia (cf. fn. 15), vol. 4: *Motetta, Contrafacta*, 1966, pp. 15–6.

traditionally articulated can hardly adequately reflect the situation, let alone do justice to its complexity. Rather than view the stylistic profiles of composers, or of individual works, in terms of discrete parameters whose treatment occupies a specific point on a continuum from simplicity to complexity, a model based on the interdependence of arborescent and rhizomatic conceptions can assist us in our aspiration to apprehend as a totality the potentially bewildering multiplicity of musical discourses co-existing within a particularly rich historical period: »diversi diversa cantant«.