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'De Voluptate Aurium': The Sounds of Heaven in a 1501 Sensory Treatise on the Afterlife

LAURA ȘTEFĂNESCU

A large number of the books printed in Italy in 1501 were religious texts, and between their pages readers could find a great variety of references to music and sound. One of the longest and most complex passages on musical matters is found in a treatise entitled *De gloria et gaudiis beatorum* (*Of the Glory and Joys of the Blessed*), written by the clergyman Zaccaria Lilio. This work is intended to satisfy those curious to know what rewards await the blessed in the afterlife, and among the many delights it reveals is a multi-faceted description of the sounds and music of heaven. Lilio aims to give his readers the vivid impression of a lived experience, by immersing them in an imagined heavenly soundscape featuring sweet angelic melodies and birdsong. These sounds would have contrasted pointedly with the noisy urban soundscapes familiar to Lilio's readers, similar to that described in Giovanni Pontano's dialogue *Antonius*, as discussed in Shephard and Rice's essay in this volume.

Although aiming to show the contrast between heaven and earth, the sounds and the delights of the afterlife are in fact described by Lilio according to the model of human sensory experience. This sensory approach is immediately enunciated at the beginning of the book: 'for indeed, there [in heaven] whatever is related to sight will be delightful; to sound, pleasant; to smell, sweet; to touch, smooth; to taste, mellifluous.'¹ Throughout the text, the full range of heavenly delights is explored through the spiritual senses, which represent enhanced versions of their corporeal counterparts, specifically suited to the spiritual dimension.²

Whether we speak of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, the senses were of great importance to religious life, at the same time generating opposing

¹ 'Ibi namque erit quicquid visu delectabile, auditu iocundum, olfactu suave, tactu leve, gustu mellifluum.' Zaccaria Lilio, *De gloria et gaudiis beatorum* (Venetiis: Simone Bevilacqua, 1501), aivv.

² On the spiritual senses see, among others: Michael Camille, 'Before the Gaze: The Internal Senses and Late Medieval Practices of Seeing', in Robert Nelson (ed.), *Visibility Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 197–223; Gordon Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Paul Gavriluk and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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perspectives regarding their role in the devotional realm. As Hans Gumbrecht has pointed out in his introduction to *Rethinking the Medieval Senses*, these express on the one hand ‘a culture of high sensual intensity (das sinnenfrohe Mittelalter)’ or the ‘Multimiddelalder’, and, on the other, ‘a time of extreme sensual starvation (das asketische Mittelalter)’.³ The senses were the gateway towards understanding and contemplating the divine, while at the same time, paradoxically, representing a path to temptation and sin, a dichotomy that led to many conflicting views upon sensory experience.

In practice, the more sympathetic perspective on the senses was the one generally embraced by the church. Inevitably, liturgy and devotion were very dependent on the many sensory experiences from which they were constructed.⁴ Perception through the senses offered devotees the bodily apparatus with which to access spiritual imagination, thanks to the power of sensations, which lies in the fact that they are lived experiences and not intellectual abstractions.⁵ The sight of images, musical stimuli, perfumes, and even the touching of objects were all meant to elevate the mind through bodily emotions to those of the spirit, expressing these in an intelligible manner.⁶

It is in this context that heaven was also imagined according to sensory perception; the discourse to which Lilio contributed with his treatise was the product of a culture inclined to experience the sacred through the five senses.⁷ This culture is evident across a wide range of sources from the period. For instance, when writing a letter of spiritual advice to the Florentine patrician woman Diodata degli Adimari in the 1450s, the Archbishop of Florence, Antonino Pierozzi, makes a digression on how remaining a widow would provide benefits in the afterlife.⁸ He presents paradise to her through sensory stimuli, among which are splendid lights and beautiful music, an image

³ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, ‘Introduction: Erudite Fascinations and Cultural Energies: How Much Can We Know about the Medieval Senses?’ in Stephen Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun (eds.), *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage, Fascinations, Frames* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 1–10: 2. On the ‘Multimiddelalder’ see Hans Hendrik Lohfert Jørgensen, ‘Into the Saturated Sensorium: Introducing the Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages’, in Hans Hendrik Lohfert Jørgensen, Henning Laugerud, and Laura Katrine Skinnebach (eds.), *The Saturated Sensorium: Principles of Perception and Mediation in the Middle Ages* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015), 9–24: 9.

⁴ On multisensoriality in the liturgy see, among others: Timothy Verdon, ‘Christianity, the Renaissance, and the Study of History: Environments of Experience and Imagination’, in Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (eds.), *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 1–37; Beth Williamson, ‘Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion: Sound and Vision, Invisibility and Silence’, *Speculum*, 88.1 (2013), 1–43; Béatrice Caseau, ‘The Senses in Religion: Liturgy, Devotion, and Deprivation’, in Richard Newhauser (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 89–110: 92–103.

⁵ David Howes and Constance Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7.

⁶ See the discussions in Martina Bagnoli, ‘Introduction: Sensual Awakenings’, and ‘Making Sense’, both in Bagnoli (ed.), *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum, 2016), 13–15 and 17–30.

⁷ See John Casey, *After Lives: A Guide to Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 293–300.

⁸ See Remo Guidi, *La morte nell’età umanistica* (Vicenza: ESCA, 1983), 237.

of heaven which she would also have been able to contemplate in the frescoes and altarpieces adorning Florentine churches. Regarding music, the archbishop explains that ‘in the city of the Lord, the organs of the saints are playing and the angels sing without end ... These songs and sounds are [filled] with so much sweet harmony, that ours down here [on earth] are like cries.’⁹ Thus, to make the invisible visible and easier to understand, fifteenth-century Italians were in the process of departing from abstract theological concepts and replacing them with a more earthly perspective upon the afterlife.¹⁰ In a similar manner, by systematically turning to each of the spiritual senses, Lilio’s treatise offered to his audience a relatable sensory account of the afterlife, which turned away from more abstract ideas, such as that of the beatific vision.

Lilio’s *De gloria* was not an isolated initiative, but rather one that can be placed within a group of similar texts, which I would like to define as sensory treatises on the afterlife because of their characteristic description of heavenly delights according to each of the five senses. This approach was shared and disseminated through a network of Italian clergymen, some closely connected to Lilio, who wrote on the delights of the afterlife in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Lilio’s direct sources of inspiration were a treatise by his mentor, Mateo Bosso, and one by the Florentine Dominican Bartolomeo de’ Rimbertyni, both written earlier in the fifteenth century. Another member of Lilio’s order, Celso Maffei, published a similar type of treatise shortly after, in 1504. This particular interest in a sensory description of heaven can be traced all the way back to a fourteenth-century source of German provenance. Its circulation in fifteenth-century Italy made relevant and popular a perspective on the afterlife, which had not received such a favourable response when it was first written.

Lilio’s treatise might be a rather obscure text, at least for scholars today, but it is certainly not an insignificant one. Its relevance can be grasped when seen alongside these other works that are similar in typology and contents, as part of a larger interest in Renaissance Italy in a sensory manner of imagining heaven. Although originating in the fourteenth century, these ideas did not bear fruit until they found an echo two centuries later in Italy, being promoted by clergymen such as Lilio. And their widespread circulation did not leave devotional life unchanged. For example, the focus on a sensory description of heaven brought to the forefront the idea of an afterlife in which the body became the main protagonist. This interpretation had many implications, from those of a theological and philosophical

⁹ ‘nella città del Signore continuamente suonano gli organi dei santi, e gli angeli senza fine cantano ... I quali canti e suoni sono con tanta soave armonia, che i nostri quaggiù sono pianti.’ Antonino Pierozzi, *Lettere di Sant’Antonino arcivescovo di Firenze precedute dalla sua vita scritta da Vespasiano Fiorentino* (Firenze: Tipografia Barbèra, Bianchi e c., 1859), 169 (Letter 19). The letter is not dated, but it must have been written sometime between 1449–50, when Diodata’s husband died and 1459, the year in which the archbishop died. See also Judith Bryce, ‘Dada degli Adimari’s Letters from Sant’Antonino: Identity, Maternity, and Spirituality’, *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 12 (2009), 11–53.

¹⁰ On this see Casey, *After Lives*, 296–7.

nature to changes in the representation of heaven and its music in visual art. Therefore, Lilio, through his sensory text on the afterlife, was an active protagonist in a larger phenomenon characteristic of fifteenth-century Italy, in which heaven was reimagined following the blueprint of human sensory experience.

Over the last three decades the study of the five senses and their cultural interpretation has witnessed a remarkable surge in interest and output. The main theoretical ideas in the field of sensory studies have been outlined in the classic works of Constance Classen and David Howes.¹¹ The study of religion has taken note of the prevalent role of the sensory in devotional experience, turning it into a focal point of scholarship and almost into a discipline of its own.¹² Scholarly attention to the senses has also given rise to many interdisciplinary encounters, particularly in terms of the representation of sensory experience in works of art, and, more pertinent to the subject at hand, of the interplay between seeing and hearing in musical iconography.¹³

Following this pattern, the study of the senses has also become a topic of interest in the field of musicology.¹⁴ Within the scope of this vein of research, some of the sensory treatises on the afterlife discussed in this article – although not that of Lilio – have already been brought to scholarly attention, especially by the musicologist Klaus Pietschmann, and by Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang

¹¹ Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993); David Howes (ed.), *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2006); David Howes, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010); Howes and Classen, *Ways of Sensing*.

¹² Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, 'Introduction: The Sacred and the Senses in an Age of Reform', in de Boer and Göttler (eds.), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–13: 2. See also the remarks in Richard Newhauser, 'The Senses in Medieval and Renaissance Intellectual History', *The Senses and Society*, 5.1 (2010), 5–9: 6. Among the large literature on this topic, see especially Richard Newhauser (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); and Herman Roodenburg (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

¹³ For the former see, among others: Stephen Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun (eds.), *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage, Fascinations, Frames* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008); François Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010); Bagnoli (ed.), *A Feast for the Senses*. For musical iconography see, among others: Williamson, 'Sensory Experience'; Tim Shephard, Laura Ștefănescu, and Serenella Sessini, 'Music, Silence and the Senses in a Late Fifteenth-Century Book of Hours', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 70.2 (2017), 474–512; Tim Shephard, Sanna Raninen, Serenella Sessini, and Laura Ștefănescu, *Music in the Art of Renaissance Italy c. 1420–1540* (London: Harvey Miller, 2020).

¹⁴ See, among the many articles of Klaus Pietschmann: Pietschmann, 'The Sense of Hearing Politicized: Liturgical Polyphony and Political Ambition in Fifteenth-Century Florence', in Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (eds.), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 273–86; and Klaus Pietschmann, 'Religion and the Senses in Fifteenth-Century Europe', trans. James Steichen, in Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jesse Rodin (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 40–51. See also Giovanni Zanovello, 'Les Humanistes florentins et la polyphonie liturgique', in Perrine Galand-Hallyn and Fernand Hallyn (eds.), *Poétiques de la Renaissance: Le modèle italien, le monde franco-bourguignon et leur héritage en France au XVIe siècle* (Genève: Droz, 2001), 625–38 and 667–73.

in their history of heaven.¹⁵ However, in spite of their importance for the field of sensory studies in the context of Renaissance Italy, there is no critical edition of any of these treatises to date, and no study has been dedicated exclusively to the comparative analysis of their content. Although clearly full remedy of these lacunae lies beyond the scope of this article, I hope at least to contribute a fuller analysis of the relationships between these treatises, Lilio's place among them, and their ramifications for our understanding of religious sensation in fifteenth-century Italy.

Unlike the other treatises on the afterlife implicated in this discourse, Lilio's 1501 text has thus far remained unknown to scholars of sensory studies. Therefore, before proceeding further, a proper introduction to our protagonist is required. Zaccaria Lilio was born in Vicenza sometime during the first half of the fifteenth century. He is perhaps better known for his cosmographic pursuits, brought to fruition in his *Orbis breviarum* (*Breviary of the World*), printed in 1493.¹⁶ Although already in his late years, he had recently joined the Order of the Canons Regular of the Lateran at the time his *De gloria et gaudiis beatorum*, the last work to be written before his death, was completed.¹⁷ In April–May 1498, Matteo Bosso, a humanist connected to the Medici family in Florence and a member of Lilio's order, wrote to him praising the *De gloria*, which he had just read: 'Lilio, once I started reading your books on the perennial glory of the saints, which you offered me, I could not resist their sweet taste.'¹⁸ Following the dating of the letter we can conclude that the treatise had been completed by that time.¹⁹ The text was then printed by Simone Bevilacqua in Venice, on 24 September 1501.²⁰ No other Italian edition of the text exists to my knowledge, nor was I able to find any manuscript copies. At first glance, the *De gloria* does not appear to have been a particularly popular text. However, given that it belonged to a typology widespread at the time in

¹⁵ Pietschmann, 'The Sense of Hearing Politicized'; Pietschmann, 'Religion and the Senses'; Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Several scholars have observed that some Italian Renaissance writers and painters connected the afterlife to bodily delights, departing from the more traditional theological understanding of heaven as the joy of witnessing the vision of God. See George McClure, *Sorrow and Consolation in Italian Humanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 131; Remo Guidi, *Il dibattito sull'uomo nel '400* (Roma: Tielle Media, 1999), 436; Pietschmann, 'Religion and the Senses', 45.

¹⁶ Zaccaria Lilio, *Orbis breviarium* (Florentiae: Antonio di Bartolommeo Miscomini, 1493).

¹⁷ On Zaccaria Lilio see: Bernardo Morsolin, 'Un cosmografo del Quattrocento imitatore di Dante', *Atti del R. Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 7.8.1 (1896–7), 58–84; Guglielmo Bottari, 'Dall'epistolario di Matteo Bosso: Note sulla corrispondenza con Zaccaria Giglio', in Mariacarla Rossi and Gian Maria Varanini (eds.), *Chiesa, vita religiosa, società nel Medioevo italiano: Studi offerti a Giuseppina De Sandre Gasparini* (Roma: Herder, 2005), 105–20; Giorgio Ravagnani, 'LILIO, Zaccaria', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 65 (2005) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/zaccaria-lilio_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/> accessed 01 November 2022.

¹⁸ 'Oblatos tuos de perenni sanctorum gloria mihi libellos aggressus legere ab eorum degustatione et suavitae antea Lili me abstinere non potui.' Matteo Bosso, *Epistolae familiares et secundae* (Mantuae: Vincentius Bertochus, 1498), 219v (letter CCXXIII).

¹⁹ For the dating see Giovanni Soranzo, *L'umanista canonico regolare lateranense Matteo Bosso di Verona (1427–1502): I suoi scritti e il suo epistolario* (Padua: Libreria Gregoriana Editrice, 1965), 291.

²⁰ The edition is Lilio, *De gloria*. I have identified twenty-five surviving copies of this edition.

Italy, we can re-evaluate its popularity and influence from the perspective of the wider contemporary circulation of similar ideas.

The present article aims to bring to light Lilio's treatise and to reinsert it into the context from which it was born. This text occupies a particularly important position on our 1501 Italian bookshelf because of what it reveals regarding the manner of imagining the music of heaven at the time. By delving into its pages, and tracing the origins of its ideas and the connections which they reveal, we can reassess the influence of Lilio's *De gloria* as part of a group of related works that reimagine heaven and its soundscape. At the same time, the rediscovery of this text and its history allows us to trace a clearer and more complete picture of the network of authors writing about the senses in the afterlife, while highlighting an essential aspect of the sensory turn in Renaissance Italy.

1. AN ITALIAN NETWORK OF SENSORY TREATISES ON THE AFTERLIFE AND THEIR MODEL

Lilio's *De gloria* was not a solitary text in the theological arena of fifteenth-century Italy. It followed in a line of sensory treatises on the afterlife from which Lilio derived inspiration. Given the fact that the *De gloria* is relevant particularly when viewed within this context, a detailed explanation of the connections between all these authors is essential to appreciating the significance of their ideas.

Lilio's most direct source was Matteo Bosso's *De veris ac salutaribus animi gaudiis* (*On the true and salutary joys of the soul*), written in 1462–1463.²¹ It was printed only later on, in 1491 in Florence, at the initiative of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Angelo Poliziano, who presented it to Lorenzo de' Medici; the treatise was printed again in Bologna in 1495.²² Bosso was a very important figure in Lilio's spiritual pursuits, as their correspondence attests. According to a letter addressed by Bosso to Lilio in April 1493, he strongly supported his aspiration to join the Order of the Canons Regular of the Lateran.²³ In the introduction to the third book of his *De gloria*, Lilio

²¹ On Matteo Bosso see: Soranzo, *L'umanista canonico regolare* (45–51, for a discussion on Bosso's treatise); Claudio Mutini, 'BOSSO, Matteo', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 13 (1971) <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/matteo-bosso_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/matteo-bosso_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)> accessed 01 November 2022; Pietro Podolak, 'Matteo Bosso priore della Badia Fiesolana e i suoi rapporti con il platonismo ficiniano', in Angela Dreßen and Klaus Pietschmann (eds.), *The Badia Fiesolana: Augustinian and Academic locus amoenus in the Florentine Hills* (Vienna: LIT, 2016), 165–79; Laura Refe, 'Conversazioni dotte nella Badia Fiesolana: Matteo Bosso da Verona (1427–1502) e gli intellettuali fiorentini', in Dreßen and Pietschmann (eds.), *The Badia Fiesolana*, 133–64. See also Klaus Pietschmann, 'Musik für die Sinne: Zum Funktionsspektrum von Hohelied-Motetten des 15. Jahrhunderts', in Laurenz Lütteken (ed.), *Normierung und Pluralisierung: Struktur und Funktion der Motette im 15. Jahrhundert* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2011), 87–112.

²² The printed editions are: Matteo Bosso, *De veris et salutaribus animi gaudiis dialogus* (Florentiae: Francesco Bonaccorsi, 1491) and Matteo Bosso, *De veris et salutaribus animi gaudiis dialogus* (Bononiae: Franciscus de Benedictis, 1495).

²³ Matteo Bosso, *Recuperationes Faesulanæ* (Bononiae: Franciscus de Benedictis, 1493), Oviv-Oviir (letter CXXXII).

openly acknowledges that Bosso's treatise was the source that prompted him to write his own exploration of the afterlife.²⁴

When comparing the references to musical aspects in both books, several of Lilio's imitations can be readily observed. For example, he was inspired by Matteo Bosso when adopting Lorenzo Valla's concept of pleasure (*voluptas*) for his discussion on hearing in the afterlife. He most probably entitled the section 'On the pleasure of the ears' (*De voluptate aurium*) after the marginal annotation 'aurium voluptas' in Bosso's treatise.²⁵ It is interesting to note that Bosso discusses Epicurean ideas taken from Valla extensively throughout his text. Also, in another treatise, *De tolerandis adversis*, Bosso includes a description of the heavenly Jerusalem in which he highlights 'the torrent of pleasure and sweetness'.²⁶ Therefore, Valla's ideas on pleasure most likely entered Lilio's horizon through Bosso's interest in Epicurean thought. In his section 'On the celestial melody' (*De caelesti modulatione*), Lilio also borrows from Bosso several references to classical music-making figures, such as Pythagoras, Orpheus, and the Sirens.²⁷ Lilio's only original contribution here is that of enlarging this list with several other examples, but without really demonstrating any interpretative skill comparable to that of Bosso.

Another important source of inspiration for Lilio is the first Italian sensory treatise on the afterlife, *De deliciis sensibilibus paradisi* (*Of the Sensory Delights of Paradise*), also known as *De glorificatione sensuum in paradiso* (*On the Glorification of the Senses in Paradise*), by the Florentine Dominican Bartolomeo de' Rimbertyni.²⁸ This work was most probably written after Rimbertyni's return from Venice to Santa Maria Novella in Florence in 1460, where he remained until his death in 1466. The treatise was printed posthumously in Venice in 1498 and in Paris in 1514.²⁹ Before its print publication, it circulated among

²⁴ Lilio, *De gloria*, iiii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, hiiiv; Bosso, *De veris* (1491), lv.

²⁶ 'voluptatis torrente atque dulcedinis'. Bosso, *Recuperationes*, bviiv (*De tolerandis adversis*).

²⁷ Lilio, *De gloria*, div-diiv; Bosso, *De veris* (1491), lvir.

²⁸ On Bartolomeo de' Rimbertyni see: Thomas Käppeli, 'Bartholomaeus Lapaccius de Rimbertynis 1404–1466', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 9 (1939), 86–127 (104–106, for a discussion on the treatise); Francesco Santi, 'Bartolomeo Lapacci de' Rimbertyni: Un legato del Papa nell'Europa centrale tra Antichità classiche e Antichità cristiane', in Sante Graciotti and Amedeo Di Francesco (eds.), *L'eredità classica in Italia e Ungheria tra Tardo Medioevo e Primo Rinascimento* (Roma: Il calamo, 2001), 173–83; Luciano Cinelli, 'RIMBERTINI, Bartolomeo de', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 87 (2016) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bartolomeo-de-rimbertyni_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/> accessed 01 November 2022; Peter Howard, 'A Landscape of Preaching: Bartolomeo Lapacci Rimbertyni OP', in Sally Cornelison, Nirit Ben Debby, and Peter Howard (eds.), *Mendicant Cultures in the Medieval and Early Modern World: Word, Deed, & Image* (Turnout: Brepols, 2016), 45–64. His *De glorificatione sensuum in paradiso* was brought to scholarly attention in articles discussing the sense of hearing in the fifteenth century: Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, 'Die Motette im 15. Jahrhundert, ihre Kontexte und das geistliche Hören: Forschungsüberblick und Perspektiven', *Troja*, 9 (2010), 57–86; Pietschmann, 'The Sense of Hearing Politicized'; Pietschmann, 'Religion and the Senses'.

²⁹ The editions are Bartolomeo de' Rimbertyni, *De deliciis sensibilibus paradisi* (Venetii: Jacobus Pentius de Leuco, 1498) and Bartolomeo de' Rimbertyni, *Insignis atque preclarus de deliciis sensibilibus paradisi liber, cum singulari tractatu de quattuor instinctibus* (Lutetiae: Josse Bade and Jean Petit, 1514).

clergymen in manuscript form, as is testified by the survival of at least three manuscript copies.³⁰

In the section ‘De voluptate aurium’, Lilio copies certain passages almost word for word from Rimbertyni’s text. Following the exact same order, he quotes St Augustine on the verse from Psalm 149:6: ‘Let the high praises of God be in their throats’ (*Exultationes Dei in gutture eorum*), then continues with a reference to Thomas Aquinas, followed by a quote from the Book of Job (8:21): ‘He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting’ (*Impletueros tuum risu et labia tua iubilo*).³¹ In his treatise, after all these references, Rimbertyni inserts a passage on the blessed hearing the songs of birds in heaven: ‘From these it results that it is improbable that the saints in heaven lack the most pleasing singing of the nightingale and of the other birds of the terrestrial paradise which Adam has heard before his sin.’³² Lilio continues to follow his source closely, writing that ‘They will hear the sweet voices of the nightingale, of the goldfinch, of the blackbird, of the solitary sparrow and of the frivolous parrot brought from India and of the remaining birds which are already extinct.’³³ From this juxtaposition we can see how Lilio borrows Rimbertyni’s ideas and even their sequence, enhancing them with more examples, as in the case of the enriched list of birds. However, he does so selectively. Rimbertyni’s treatise is a very long and dense exploration of each of the senses in the afterlife. Lilio chooses from it very few ideas, taken only from the beginnings of Rimbertyni’s chapters, as in the case of his section on hearing in heaven.

The sources of inspiration for Lilio’s treatise point to the existence in fifteenth-century Italy of a network of authors and texts describing the sensory experience of heaven in the afterlife. To this list we must add Celso Maffei’s *Delitiosa explicatio de sensibilibus deliciis paradisi* (*The delightful explanation of the sensory delights of paradise*). This text was written after Lilio’s treatise and was printed in Verona in 1504, with a dedication to Pope Julius II.³⁴ It is interesting to note that, just like Bosso and Lilio, Maffei was a member of the Order of the Canons Regular of the Lateran.

³⁰ One of the manuscripts is Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, MS Conventi Soppressi J.VII.46. It was copied in 1470 by Leonardo di Uberti in Rome, but it comes from the convent of San Marco in Florence. See Simona Bianchi, *I manoscritti datati del Fondo Conventi Soppressi della Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze* (Firenze: SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2002), 112. Another manuscript is Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, MS Ross. 1136. The third one is Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, MS B 37 sup. 5, coming from the Dominican church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. It was copied in 1496 by Mathia de Sesto. See Käppeli, ‘Bartholomaeus Lapaccius’, 104–105.

³¹ Lilio, *De gloria*, hiiiv. The correspondent section in Rimbertyni’s treatise is Rimbertyni, *De deliciis*, 26v.

³² ‘Ex hys constat quod non verisimile est quod sancti in celo careant iocundissimo cantu phylomene et aliarum avium paradisi terrestres quas audivit Adam ante peccatum.’ Rimbertyni, *De deliciis*, 27r.

³³ ‘Audient suavissimas voces philomenae, carduelis, merulae, passeris solitarii et quem fert India psitaci nugacis, aviumque reliquarum quae iam esse desiderunt.’ Lilio, *De gloria*, hiiiv.

³⁴ The edition is Celso Maffei, *Delitiosam explicationem de sensibilibus deliciis paradisi* (Veronae: Lucas Antonius Florentinus, 1504). On Celso Maffei see: Nicola Widlocher, *La Congregazione dei Canonici regolari lateranensi: Periodo di formazione (1402–1483)* (Gubbio: Scuola tipografica ‘Oderisi’, 1929); Guidi, *Il dibattito*.

What had triggered this interest in a sensory description of the afterlife in fifteenth-century Italy? The answer lies in the first such Italian treatise, Rimbertyni's *De deliciis sensibilibus paradisi*. At the beginning of the text, we are told that

it was extracted by the same bishop [Rimbertyni] from the treatise of brother Johannes of Dambach of the same order [Dominicans] and professor of sacred theology, whilst he might have been executing the office of legate of the Apostolic seat in the parts of Germany.

extractus per eundem dominum episcopum ex tractatu fratris Johannis de Tambaco eiusdem ordinis et sacre theologie professoris dum in partibus Germanie Apostolice sedis legationis fungeretur officio.³⁵

Thus, during one of his journeys abroad, Rimbertyni had encountered a text entitled *De sensibilibus deliciis paradisi* (*On the sensory delights of paradise*), which was written around 1350 by the Alsatian Dominican Johannes von Dambach. He decided afterwards to explain and propagate Dambach's ideas in his own treatise. Therefore, it seems that the interest in sensory treatises on the afterlife in fifteenth-century Italy was sparked by the rediscovery of an earlier text of German provenance.

Johannes von Dambach was a follower of Meister Eckhart.³⁶ He dedicated his treatise to Pope Clement VI, then in residence at Avignon. His *De sensibilibus*, anchored in ideas from the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas, proposes a description of heavenly experience in which each of the five senses is meticulously explored. To these are added two chapters that take the matter of the body in heaven into uncharted territories. Dambach plunges into a less orthodox discussion on embracing and kissing in the afterlife, in which ideas such as that of being able to kiss multiple persons at the same time are proposed. Strangely enough, this discussion finds its support in the reasoning of Thomas Aquinas.

Dambach's text was not particularly widely circulated at the time when it was written, nor does it seem to have had any immediate impact that is relevant to the matter of the senses. It is only in fifteenth-century Italy that his ideas found a strong echo and were more widely disseminated. I am aware of four manuscripts of the text out of the fourteen that survive

³⁵ Rimbertyni, *De deliciis*, 1r. According to Käppeli, 'Bartholomaeus Lapaccius', 106, there are no known documents attesting his office as legate in German territories. Käppeli considers that the reference might be to Rimbertyni's sojourn in Scandinavia in 1451–2 (*ibid.*, 100).

³⁶ On Johannes von Dambach see: Albert Auer, *Johannes von Dambach und die Trostbücher vom 11. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928) and Francesco Santi, 'Un nome di persona al corpo e la massa dei corpi gloriosi', *Micrologus*, 1 (1993), 273–300.

which are connected to Italy, while no Italian printed edition is known to exist.³⁷

Copies of the treatise had arrived in Rome in the fifteenth century through papal mediation, but not directly from the papal library at Avignon. Two fifteenth-century manuscripts of the text from Pope Nicholas V's collection (now MSS Vat. lat. 964 and 966) have a German provenance. They were copied by the Dominican Henricus de Monte Dei, in Cologne, while he was a student there, as the almost identical colophons of both manuscripts attest.³⁸ MS Vat. lat. 966 is much annotated by the pope himself, who, therefore, must have read Dambach's text.³⁹

In 1455, the Spaniard Cosme de Montserrat, serving as pontifical datary for Pope Calixtus III, drew up the inventory of the library of the previous pope, Nicholas V, and came across Dambach's treatise.⁴⁰ He must have been very interested in the text, given that he had it transcribed that year and probably brought it back with him to Spain, as its presence in the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid attests.⁴¹ Therefore, the presence of copies of Dambach's treatise in the papal library must have enhanced the text's circulation.

Our Italian authors also would have had access to Dambach's text through the papal library, during one of their journeys to Rome, where they were all

³⁷ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, MS Vat. lat. 964; MS Vat. lat. 965; MS Vat. lat. 966; Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MS 443. See Santi, 'Un nome di persona', 292.

³⁸ For the manuscripts see Antonio Manfredi, *I codici latini di Niccolò V: Edizione degli inventari e identificazione dei manoscritti* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994), 299–301. MS Vat. lat. 966 dates from 1420. The decorations are Italian, probably made after the manuscript entered the library of Pope Nicholas V. MS Vat. lat. 964 dates from 1404. There is also another manuscript, MS Vat. lat. 965, which also contains the same text and which dates from the fourteenth century; however, it is not useful for our purposes as it only arrived at the Vatican Library from Avignon in the sixteenth century. On this manuscript see: Marie Henriette Jullien de Pommerol and Jacques Monfrin, *La bibliothèque pontificale à Avignon et à Peñíscola pendant le grand schisme d'Occident et sa dispersion: Inventaires et concordances*, 2 vols (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1991), 2:967; and Daniel Williman and Karen Corsano, *Early Provenances of Latin Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Vaticani latini and Borghesiani* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2002), 20. For the colophons see: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, MS Vat. lat. 964, fols. 150r-v and Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, MS Vat. lat. 966, fol. 113r.

³⁹ Manfredi, *I codici latini*, 300. For more on Pope Nicholas V's library see: Eugène Müntz, 'La Bibliothèque du Vatican sous les papes Nicolas V et Calixte III', *Revue critique d'histoire et de littérature*, 21 (1886), 1–11; Antonio Manfredi (ed.), *Storia della Biblioteca apostolica vaticana: Vol. I: Le origini della Biblioteca vaticana tra umanesimo e Rinascimento (1447–1534)* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2010).

⁴⁰ The inventory's edition can be found in Eugène Müntz and Paul Fabre, *La Bibliothèque du Vatican au XVe siècle d'après des documents inédits: Contributions pour servir à l'histoire de l'humanisme* (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1887), 48–112. The manuscript of the inventory is Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, MS Vat. lat. 3959.

⁴¹ Manfredi, *I codici latini*, 301. See also Eugène Müntz, 'L'héritage de Nicolas V', *Gazette des beaux-arts*, 15 (1877), 417–24; 423–4. The manuscript is Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MS 443. The colophon specifies that the book 'was transcribed in the Roman Curia', 'for the honour and service of ... Cosme de Montserrat' ('in Roma [sic] Curia transcripti', 'ad honorem et servicium ... Cosme de Monte Serrato'). Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, MS 443, fol. 120v. On Cosme de Montserrat see: Joaquín Anselmo María Albareda, 'Il bibliotecario di Calisto III', *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati, IV: Letteratura classica e umanistica* (1946), 178–208; Alfred Strnad, 'MONTERRAT, Cosimo di', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 76 (2012) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cosimo-di-montserrat_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/> accessed 01 November 2022.

regular visitors. All were connected to the papacy and resided at various times in Rome. It is also possible that copies of Dambach's *De sensibilibus* might have circulated simultaneously in other Italian cities, as for example in Florence, perhaps through Dominican mediation; however, as yet I have no evidence in support of this idea.

Apart from the existing copies in Rome, another possible route of textual transmission was via Rimbertyni's treatise, which was very closely based on Dambach's *De sensibilibus*. This is the first known direct connection of an Italian text to Dambach's ideas. Although Rimbertyni might have also read Dambach's treatise in the papal library, it is more probable that he encountered it during one of his journeys abroad, as previously mentioned.

If we can establish with certainty the direct connection between Rimbertyni and Dambach's text, it is unclear whether Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei had come across the idea of a sensory afterlife by reading Dambach's treatise directly or perhaps through Rimbertyni's. The title of Celso Maffei's text is explicit in announcing that it is an explanation of *De sensibilibus deliciis paradisi*. However, he never actually mentions Dambach's name, which might imply another route of transmission. Although I cannot be certain that Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei did not read Dambach's text, I consider it more likely that the transmission of Dambach's sensory ideas on the afterlife to these three authors – and perhaps, consequentially, even in Italy more generally – happened through the circulation of Rimbertyni's treatise. This took place mainly in manuscript form before the text was printed in 1498, and we have three existing examples, which all demonstrate that it was being copied and read in a Dominican milieu.⁴²

The first treatise written after Rimbertyni's was that of Bosso, dating from 1462 to 1463. Both Rimbertyni and Bosso resided in Florence, the former in Santa Maria Novella and the latter in the Badia Fiesolana, but in different periods of time. Both were in Mantua for the 1459 council, at which Rimbertyni gave a much-appreciated oration before the pope, but it is unclear whether the two ever actually met.⁴³ However, Bosso must have been aware of Rimbertyni's reputation as a great preacher and orator and, implicitly, he could have been interested in reading some of his writings. Bosso's treatise is a complex combination of various references in regard to the sensory delights in heaven, stemming also from Lorenzo Valla's ideas and filled with references from classical authors. Therefore, it is more difficult to establish with precision if he had read Rimbertyni or Dambach. I consider, though, that the

⁴² See footnote 30.

⁴³ See Soranzo, *L'umanista canonico regolare*, 30. On the council of Mantua see, among others: Arturo Calzona, Francesco Paolo Fiore, Alberto Tenenti, and Cesare Vasoli (eds.), *Il sogno di Pio II e il viaggio da Roma a Mantova: Atti del Convegno internazionale, Mantova 13–15 aprile 2000* (Firenze: Olschki, 2003); Barbara Baldi, 'La dieta di Mantova nel contesto del pontificato di Pio II Piccolomini', in Renata Salvarani (ed.), *I Gonzaga e i papi: Roma e le corti padane fra Umanesimo e Rinascimento (1418–1620): Atti del convegno Mantova – Roma, 21–26 febbraio 2013* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), 125–38.

former is more likely, given that, as shall be demonstrated in what follows, Lilio and Maffei certainly gathered their ideas from Rimbertyni's text.

If we turn back to the borrowings of Lilio and to his attentive emulation of a particular sequence of references and ideas from Rimbertyni's text (a reference from Augustine, followed by one from Aquinas on the book of Job, followed by a discussion of birdsong), we can establish on the basis of this passage whether Lilio's source had been Rimbertyni or Dambach. If we compare this sequence to Dambach's original, we can observe that in this particular passage Dambach also makes the same reference to Augustine, followed by the same one from Aquinas. However, unlike Rimbertyni, he moves on immediately afterwards to discussing other matters, making no reference to birdsong.⁴⁴ Therefore, the fragment on birdsong was added by Rimbertyni when writing his own treatise and was not there in the original German source. Consequently, its presence in Lilio's text attests to him certainly having read Rimbertyni, rather than Dambach. The same holds true for Maffei's text, which also includes birdsong in the exact same sequence.⁴⁵

Lilio, Maffei, and Bosso were very closely connected, as attested by the latter's correspondence.⁴⁶ All three of them were part of the Order of the Canons Regular of the Lateran, Maffei serving as general eight times and Bosso as prior in several Italian cities. Lilio joined the order during the latter years of his life, following Bosso's encouragement. The existing correspondence between Bosso and Maffei is more extensive than that with Lilio, revealing a very close collaboration and connection between the two. Bosso writes in one of his letters that 'if you will not have gone to Rome, I hope to enjoy your embraces either in Verona or in Venice', which implies that they met quite often.⁴⁷

The three were also connected through the exchange of ideas around the sensory delights of the afterlife, an exchange which starts with Bosso writing his *De veris ac salutaribus animi gaudiis*, which both Maffei and Lilio had read. In December 1467, Bosso writes to Maffei to thank him for having read the treatise and for all his praise; and we have mentioned already the evidence that Lilio used Bosso's treatise as a source of inspiration.⁴⁸ It is interesting to

⁴⁴ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, MS Vat. lat. 964, fol. 12v.

⁴⁵ Maffei, *Delitiosam explicationem*, Aiiiiiv-Avr.

⁴⁶ The letters sent by Bosso to Lilio can be found in Bosso, *Recuperationes*, Oviv-Oviir (letter CXXXII, April 1493); Bosso, *Epistolae*, 221v-220v (letter CCXXIII); Matteo Bosso, *Epistolarium tertia pars* (Venetiis: Bernardino Vitali, 1502), Bviiir-Bviiir (letter VI, April 1493), Lviiiv-Miir (letter LXXVII). On their correspondence see also Soranzo, *L'umanista canonico regolare*, 112-13. The letters sent by Bosso to Maffei can be found in Bosso, *Recuperationes*, Dviiir-v (letter XXXIII), Hviiir-v (letter LXVIII), Hviiiv-lir (letter LXX), Niiiv-Niiir (letter CVII), Niiir-v (letter CVIII), Nvv-Nvir (letter CXIII); Bosso, *Epistolae*, 140r (letters LXVIII and LXX), 149v (letter LXXXI). For more on the letters of Bosso see Soranzo, *L'umanista canonico regolare*. On the correspondence with Lilio specifically see Bottari, 'Dall'epistolario'.

⁴⁷ 'Si tu Romam non iveris, aut Veronae, aut Venetiis spero tuis amplexibus me fruiturum'. Bosso, *Recuperationes*, lir (letter LXX).

⁴⁸ See *Ibid.*, Dviiir-v (letter XXXIII).

note that many years had passed between 1463, when Bosso wrote his treatise, and 1501 and 1504, when Lilio and Maffei respectively published their texts. This new wave of interest in the subject of the sensory afterlife at the beginning of the sixteenth century might stem from the printing of Bosso's treatise in the early 1490s. This initiative likely inspired Lilio to write his own book on the same topic and, two years after Bosso's death, prompted Celso Maffei to publish his *De sensibilibus deliciis paradisi*. All these publications are a testament to the circulation of sensory ideas about the afterlife among these clergymen.

Dambach's text was not influential when it was first written. His interpretation of heaven and the afterlife flourished only centuries later, when it was rediscovered in a different country. These ideas resonated with fifteenth-century Italians, from the pope to the important Dominican figure of Bartolomeo de' Rimbertyni, and to the clergymen that Rimbertyni, in turn, inspired, like Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei. The importance of Lilio's text is therefore better understood in the context of this network of authors. Their treatises contributed to the diffusion in fifteenth-century Italy of a concept of heavenly experience anchored in sensory delight, which was echoed in the devotional life of their contemporaries in various forms.

2. 'DE CAELESTI MODULATIONE': THE MUSIC OF HEAVEN AND ITS PROPERTIES

The *De gloria et gaudiis beatorum* is a theological and cosmographical text that imitates Dante's *Divine Comedy*. It is divided into three books: the first discussing the unity of God and the gifts of the blessed, the second describing the immortality of the soul, and the third describing the planets. The text is dedicated to the prior of the Order of the Canons Regular of the Lateran, Valerius Vicentinus, and the 1501 edition is preceded by Bosso's letter to Lilio from 1498 and by a letter received from the humanist Barnaba Celsano.⁴⁹

Lilio begins his description of heaven and its delights reluctantly, doubting – as any theologian, philosopher or poet writing about such matters would – whether it is even possible to achieve such a task: 'In what way will I, endowed with no talent or eloquence, exalt the dignity of the celestial spirits with worthy praise?'⁵⁰ However, it is not his lack of abilities that makes his mission impossible, but rather the challenging nature of the subject. Throughout the treatise, Lilio resorts to the traditional rhetoric of the impossibility of putting into words what heaven is like. He explains, for example, using a reference to

⁴⁹ On Barnaba Celsano see Marco Palma, 'CELSANO, Barnaba', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 23 (1979) <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/barnaba-celsano_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/> accessed 01 November 2022.

⁵⁰ 'Quomodo ego nullo ingenio aut facundia preditus meritis laudibus caelestium spirituum dignitatem extollam?' Lilio, *De gloria*, aiiiv.

St Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians (2:9), that in heaven 'the delights of the body and the soul will be increased, such that no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined', a trope often employed in this type of discourse on the afterlife.⁵¹

In spite of these barriers, our author still manages to describe the joys of the blessed, discussing each of the senses in the afterlife one by one. His descriptions are supported by a variety of references from classical philosophy and poetry, as well as theology. Bosso praises Lilio's erudition and the variety of his sources:

Not content with our literature and sacred sermons, you cite most beautifully all philosophy and poetic sweetness in what you mentioned (of all that), so that indeed this most diligent investigation of yours may delight no less than it may feast the soul of the celestial [creatures].

Nec contentus nostratibus litteris sacrisque sermonibus, philosophiam omnem poeticamque dulcedinem in eorum omnium quae attigisti pulcherrime citas ut non minus quidem delectet quam pascat animum haec coelestium perscrutatio diligentissima tua.⁵²

As regards music, Lilio dedicates a section of the first book to 'the celestial melody' (*De caelesti modulatione*). He presents here not a description of the music of heaven *per se*, but rather a list of all the best earthly musicians, which includes pagan gods, none of whom can compare with 'the sweet melodies of the angels and the celestial spirits'.⁵³ Although the reader is taken on a lengthy journey through classical examples, such as the songs of Amphion's lyre which helped built Thebes, the discoveries of Pythagoras, Orpheus' taming of the beasts, the instruments of Pan and Apollo, and the songs of the Sirens with their devastating effects upon sailors, there is actually no information about the music in heaven.⁵⁴ 'The celestial melody' is described in negative. We read hoping to find at least one instrument on which the angels play, or some kind of quality of angelic music, but Lilio substitutes these with non-heavenly examples, to conclude disappointingly that 'These [the celestial melodies] are so many and such, that the ears of men cannot understand them in any way, just as they are unable to look towards the sun.'⁵⁵ He seems concerned with emphasising the idea of the supreme quality and variety of the celestial melody,

⁵¹ 'profecto erunt bona corporis et animae, qualia nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec cor hominis cogitare potuit'. Ibid., ciiir.

⁵² Bosso, *Epistolae*, 220r (letter CCXXIII).

⁵³ 'suavissimis angelorum et caelestium spirituum modulationibus'. Lilio, *De gloria*, diiv.

⁵⁴ Ibid., div-diiv.

⁵⁵ 'Quae tantae ac tales sunt, ut eas aures hominum capere nullo modo possent, sicut intueri solem adversum nequirent.' Ibid., diiv.

rather than with providing a thorough explanation of what this melody actually is.

In another passage Lilio emphasises once more that no earthly song can be used to describe the sounds in heaven:

Which organs, which lyres, which citharas or cymbals, which variety and inflection of voice, what harmony of strings of this terrestrial life were ever able to be so sweet and pleasant, so as to be worth comparing with the celestial modulations?

Quae organa, quae lyrae, quae citharae aut cymbala, quae varietas et circumflexio vocum, qui nervorum concentus huiuscae terrenae vitae tam dulces et iocundi unquam esse potuerunt, ut caelestibus modulationibus valeant comparari:⁵⁶

After enumerating all the best earthly music possible, all the best ancient musicians and music-making gods, the celestial modulations are defined as unimaginable sounds that surpass any relatable musical experience.

Although apparently true to his initial discouraging statement that the music in heaven is impossible to describe, Lilio does not stop here. In the second book of the *De gloria*, he proposes a more substantial and coherent explanation of the joys of the blessed, discussing each of the senses, one by one. The section dedicated to the sense of hearing is entitled ‘On the pleasure of the ears’ (*De voluptate aurium*). And this time we are met with precision. Lilio distinguishes here, as well as in other parts of the text, the existence of three qualities related to sound in the afterlife: its variety, its sweetness, and its perpetuity. When writing about these qualities, Lilio enriches the ideas of Dambach and Rimbertyni with concepts taken from other sources which would have been familiar to his readers.

The first quality concerns the great diversity of the sounds which reach the ears of the blessed. These range from the complex vocal music of the angels, to the numerous instruments used by them, and even to the sounds of different birds. For example, he writes

Which songs, which instruments, which melodies, are chanted there without end? Those celestial souls strike the citharas and they beat the drums with rapid beats. The rejoicing choirs sing together and in alternating measures mix sweetly sounding songs. Indeed, the mellifluous instruments always resound with the sweetest melody of hymns.

Quae cantica, quae organa, quae cantilenae ibi sine fine decantantur? Plaudunt cytharis caelestes illi spiritus, et inter veloces articulos tympana

⁵⁶ Ibid., div.

concrepant. Concinunt laetantes chori, et alternantibus modulis dulcisona carmina miscent. Personant enim semper melliflua hymnorum organa suavissima melodia.⁵⁷

This passage suggests the idea of an unimaginable variety of sounds and musical associations. *Varietas* was actually a widely used concept in fifteenth-century Italy, applied to all sorts of different domains of activity.⁵⁸ It originated in rhetoric, but perhaps its most well-known discussion concerns painting and comes from Leon Battista Alberti's *Della pittura* (1435). For Alberti, as explained by Michael Baxandall, *varietas* represents a quality with which abundance (*copia*) should be adorned. In pictorial terms this translates into dressing the numerous figures of a scene in diverse colours and hues, as well as portraying them in varied attitudes.⁵⁹ Of course, the attribute of *varietas* was applied to music as well. For example, Johannes Tinctoris linked it to contrapuntal practice in his *Liber de arti contrapuncti* (1477), writing that 'just as a diversity of flowers makes the fields most pleasing, so the variety of proportions produces a most agreeable counterpoint.'⁶⁰ For fifteenth-century Italians, therefore, *varietas* was a quality commonly thought necessary for any type of composition, be it visual, musical, or textual. And this idea is implicitly applied to the music of heaven, imagined as consisting of all possible sounds, as we find in Lilio's treatise.

The second quality of heavenly music in the *De gloria*, and perhaps the most important one, relates to the effect of delight and sweetness which these sounds produce.⁶¹ Lilio explains that

In that future life, an inestimable delight will intoxicate the good men, and its overflow will saturate all those with inestimable sweetness. The eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, ... of those [men] will be filled up by such a wonderful sensation of delight and sweetness, so that truly all of the pleasure of God would be drunk by the human torrent.

⁵⁷ Ibid., dir-v.

⁵⁸ On *varietas* see, among others: Mary Carruthers, '“Varietas”: A Word of Many Colours', *Poetica*, 41.1/2 (2009), 11–32; William Fitzgerald, *Variety: The Life of a Roman Concept* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

⁵⁹ See Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 94, 137 and Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 133–5.

⁶⁰ 'Quemadmodum enim diversitas florum agros iucundissimos efficit, ita proportionum varietas contrapunctum acceptissimum reddit.' Johannes Tinctoris, *Opera Theoretica: Vol. 2: Liber de arte contrapuncti; Proportionale musices; Complexus effectum musices*, ed. Albert Seay (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1975), 107; Johannes Tinctoris, *The Art of Counterpoint: Liber de arte contrapuncti*, trans. and ed. Albert Seay (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1961), 102 (Book II, Chapter 19). On the concept of *varietas* in Tinctoris see Alexis Luko, 'Tinctoris on Varietas', *Early Music History*, 27 (2008), 99–136.

⁶¹ On the concept of sweetness see, among others: Mary Carruthers, 'Sweetness', *Speculum*, 81.4 (2006), 999–1013; Jason Stoessel, Kristal Spreadborough, and Inés Antón-Méndez, 'The Metaphor of Sweetness in Medieval and Modern Music Listening', *Music Perception*, 39.1 (2021), 63–82.

In illa futura vita inextimabilis delectatio quaedam bonos inebriabit, et dulcedine sui totos eos inextimabili exundantia saciabit. Oculi, aures, nares, os, manus, pedes, guttur, cor, iecur, pulmo, ossa, medullae, singulaque membra eorum tam mirabili delectationis et dulcedinis sensu complebuntur, ut vere totus humano torrente voluptatis Dei potetur.⁶²

The concept of pleasure generated by auditory perception in the afterlife is central here, and it derives from the treatise *De vero falsoque bono* (*On the True and False Good*) written by the humanist Lorenzo Valla in 1431. In a defence of Epicureanism against Stoicism, Valla proposes a bold theory according to which the highest good (*summum bonum*) is actually pleasure itself.⁶³ Therefore, by applying Epicurean ideas to Christian thought, he is one of the first to refer to the supreme delight in heaven by using the term *voluptas*, which he justifies with biblical arguments:

This beatitude, who would hesitate to call it, or who could call it better than pleasure? I find that it is called by this name in Genesis: ‘paradise of pleasure;’ and in Ezekiel: ‘fruits and tree of pleasure;’ and other similar passages where divine benefits are mentioned. ... From which you must understand that, not honesty, but pleasure is desirable for itself, as much for those who wish to be delighted in this life as for those who wish to be delighted in the future life.

Quam beatitudinem quis dubitet aut quis melius possit appellare quam ‘voluptatem’, quo nomine etiam appellatam invenio, ut in Genesi ‘Paradisus voluptatis’ et in Ezechiele ‘Poma et arbor voluptatis’ et quaedam similia, cum de bonis divinis loqueretur. ... Ex quo debet intelligi non honestatem sed voluptatem propter se ipsam esse expetendam tam ab iis qui in hac vita quam ab iis qui in futura oblectari volunt.⁶⁴

Here Valla connects pleasure specifically with the afterlife. Elsewhere, reprising Psalm 36, he explains that to rejoice in God could also be translated from Greek as “to receive pleasure in God”, a pleasure which is part of the eternal pleasure.⁶⁵ Equating *voluptas* with the highest good implies recognising the centrality of sensory experience in the afterlife. It also

⁶² Lilio, *De gloria*, eivr.

⁶³ See Maristella de Panizza Lorch, “Voluptas, molle quoddam et non invidiosum nomen”: Lorenzo Valla’s Defence of “voluptas” in the Preface of his “De voluptate”, in Edward Mahoney (ed.), *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 214–28; Maristella de Panizza Lorch, *A Defense of Life: Lorenzo Valla’s Theory of Pleasure* (Munich: Fink, 1985); Maristella de Panizza Lorch, ‘A Defense of the Senses in Lorenzo Valla’s Theory of Pleasure’, in Helen Rodnite Lemay (ed.), *Homo Carnalis: The Carnal Aspect of Medieval Human Life* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1990), 121–8.

⁶⁴ Lorenzo Valla, *De vero falsoque bono*, ed. Maristella de Panizza Lorch (Bari: Adriatica, 1970), 110 (*De vero falsoque bono* 3.9.3).

⁶⁵ “afficiaris voluptate in domino”, que voluptas pars est illius eterne’. Ibid., 111 (*De vero falsoque bono* 3.10.2).

implies that with the resurrection of the body, the delights perceived through the bodily senses will also be returned, in a perfected state. Valla clearly states that ‘once the bodies are recovered, the intermittent delights ... will be returned.’⁶⁶

By entitling his sections dedicated to each of the senses in the afterlife in the form ‘De voluptate aurium’ or ‘De voluptate olfactus, gustus’, Lilio is choosing Valla’s idea of *voluptas* with all of its connotations, over the term *delicia* (delight), which was more commonly used to indicate the joys of the afterlife. He even includes the idea of the ‘pleasure of God’ (*voluptas Dei*). All of this highlights even further in Lilio’s text the idea of a sensory bodily perception in the afterlife.⁶⁷

The apotheosis of the delight of the ears in heaven consists in ‘the mellifluous voice of Christ, which those happy spirits always desire to hear.’⁶⁸ In fact, for Lilio music seems to be one of the primary reasons for pleasure and joy in the afterlife. He describes an atmosphere of eternal blessings, deriving from the pleasure of sounds, which appear central to the experience of heaven:

Fortunate the one who had heard the most pleasant modulations of the celestial citizens, the sweetest singing, the mellifluous songs, producing with due honour the praises to the highest Trinity. Oh, exceedingly happy those whoever united with the angelic hosts will have deserved to sing the song to God and to resound eternally with the happiest spirits [their] sweet voices and the songs of praise.

Fortunatus illes qui audierit iocundissimas civium supernorum modulationes, suavissimos concentus, carmina melliflua, laudes summae Trinitati debito honore promentia. O nimium foelix quisquis ille meruerit angelicis sociatus agminibus cantare canticum Domino, et cum beatissimis spiritibus dulces in aeternum resonare voces et carmina laudis.⁶⁹

Not only is pleasure central to the auditory experience in paradise, but it is also augmented by a third quality, which is perpetuity because, according to Lilio, ‘there, the choirs of angels sing to God without end.’⁷⁰ And, therefore, ‘this pleasantness is not fleeting and short, as are those for which strive the ones who serve the body, but it is perpetual and gives delight without any intermission.’⁷¹

⁶⁶ ‘Ergo resumptis corporibus intermissa gaudia ... reddentur.’ Ibid., 126 (*De vero falsoque bono* 3.24.5).

⁶⁷ See footnote 62 for the quote in Lilio, *De gloria*, eivr.

⁶⁸ ‘mellifluam Christi vocem, quam semper audire cupiunt foelices illi spiritus.’ Ibid., hiiiv.

⁶⁹ Ibid., div.

⁷⁰ ‘Ibi angelorum chori Deo concinunt sine fine.’ Ibid., ciiir.

⁷¹ ‘Haec est non caduca et brevis iocunditas, ut illae quas appetunt qui corpori serviunt, sed perpetua et sine ulla intermissione delectans.’ Ibid., hiiiv.

The readers of this 1501 treatise would have been able to gather a wide range of information on the music of heaven, starting from its unimaginable quality and its superiority to earthly music, and concluding with more precise information related to sensory experience. These details included the variety of sounds the blessed souls encounter there, the pleasure generated by the sweetness of heavenly music, and the eternity of its duration – all of which amount to a very promising prospect for aspiring devotees and one that was connected to their experience of music through the corporeal senses.

3. THE SENSORY TURN: REORCHESTRATING HEAVEN AND ITS MUSIC

The description of the music of heaven in Lilio's *De gloria* demonstrates an understanding of the afterlife which prioritises sensory experience. Lilio's ideas are influenced by an ever-growing attention to all things sensory in the period, while at the same time contributing to the proliferation of this sensory perspective. As discussed in the introduction to this study, the senses were an essential component of religious experience during the Renaissance. The spiritual senses took centre stage because they allowed heaven to be suggestively imagined according to earthly experience. This sensory image of heaven contained in the texts of Rimbertyni, Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei was, therefore, part of a larger phenomenon, which also shaped other aspects of Italian Renaissance culture, from music to art.

The dissemination of an image of the afterlife centred on perception and the spiritual senses would have influenced the representation of heaven in fifteenth-century Italian art as a space filled with music, colour, flowers, and all sorts of other expressions of sensory delight. This can be seen in terms of Baxandall's concept of the 'period eye', according to which each period had a specific manner of seeing predicated upon an involuntary training in perception.⁷² The paradigm can easily be extended to the other senses, so that one might also refer to a 'period ear'. The sensory treatises in circulation in fifteenth-century Italy were key elements in shaping these 'perception organs of the period'. Therefore, their study is essential for a better understanding of Renaissance Italian culture and religious experience.

But what kind of influence did these treatises have, and how were their ideas disseminated? Given the scarce information on Lilio and his activities, it is more difficult to paint a complete picture of the circulation of his treatise and its overall impact. Nonetheless, we can use the richer documentation that exists for the other authors involved in the same discourse to discuss certain aspects that would also have applied to Lilio. Rimbertyni, Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei were of course very much engaged themselves with these sensory

⁷² Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*.

interpretations, but this interest went beyond their inner circle and was much more widespread than we might think at first glance. Their treatises circulated initially in manuscript form among clergymen and humanists, but their printing towards the end of the fifteenth century allowed for an increased accessibility to their content.

The documentation surrounding Bosso's *De veris ac salutaribus animi gaudii* can help shed light on some aspects regarding the circulation of this type of sensory treatise on the afterlife. In a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, Bosso explains that after writing the text in 1464, 'it remained obscure and barely known by any except by the men in our religious order'. This shows an initial limited access to the text, destined to be read mainly by those within Bosso's inner circle.⁷³ Afterwards, as Bosso became prior of the Badia Fiesolana in Florence, he developed a close intellectual connection with the poet Angelo Poliziano and the philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. At their insistence Bosso decided to print his treatise in the early 1490s, decades after it had been written. After it was printed in 1492, Bosso started circulating his treatise, as we can deduce from three letters recorded in his epistolary, which would have accompanied copies of the text to their recipients. Two are addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, Florence's *de facto* ruler, and Roberto Salviati, one of the intellectuals under his protection; the third to Violante Malatesta da Montefeltro, widow of the ruler of Cesena and half-sister of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino.⁷⁴ Thus, it seems that treatises of this type would also have had a female audience, and that the information they presented was equally useful for all devotees, both men and women alike – something that is also implied by Archbishop Antonino Pierozzi's advice to Diodata degli Adimari, mentioned at the start of this study.

In his letter to Salviati, Bosso highlights the superiority of the delights of heaven to those on earth, a principle which stands at the foundations of the sensory interpretation of the afterlife. His comments suggest the importance and use of this type of treatise in the devotional lives of fifteenth-century Italians:

However, if you haven't done this before, having rejected the bitter sweetness of all earthly things and the false vain joy, look with a high and most firm soul for

⁷³ 'obscurus iacuit et nisi religiosis hominibus nostris ulli vix cognitus'. Bosso, *Recuperationes*, Mviiiir (letter CI). The letter is not dated, but was written probably after 8 February 1492 and before Lorenzo's death on 8 April the same year. See Refe, 'Conversazioni dotte', 154.

⁷⁴ For the letter addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici, see Bosso, *Recuperationes*, Mviiiir-Mviiiir (letter CI). The decorated copy in Lorenzo de' Medici's possession, printed on parchment, can be found in The Ritman Library (Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica), Amsterdam, MS M (no. 63). See Refe, 'Conversazioni dotte', 140. For the letter addressed to Roberto Salviati, see Bosso, *Recuperationes*, Mviiiir-Nir (letter CIII). For the one addressed to Violante Malatesta da Montefeltro, see *Ibid.*, Mviiiir-v (letter CII). See also Refe, 'Conversazioni dotte'. On Roberto Salviati see Armando Verde, *Lo Studio fiorentino 1473–1503: Ricerche e documenti. Vol. 3: 'Fanciulli a scuola' nel 1480* (Pistoia: Memorie domenicane, 1977), 863. On Violante Malatesta da Montefeltro see Francesca Baronio, *Violante Malatesta da Montefeltro, magnifica signora di Cesena* (Cesena: Il ponte vecchio, 2014).

happiness and you may follow, my Roberto, that certain and direct path which may take you where the greatest goods and the eternal joys are.

Si tamen id non ante fecisti spreta terrenarum omnium rerum amara dulcedine inani falsaque laetitia foelicitatem alto atque firmissimo animo quaeras et certum illum directumque callem mi Roberte sequere qui te ducat ubi maxima bona et sempiterna sunt gaudia.⁷⁵

Through printing, these ideas would have found a reasonably wide dissemination. Bosso specifies in his letter to Salviati that his *De veris ac salutaribus animi gaudii* had been printed in more than six hundred copies. This gives us a hint at the scale of the contribution of the printing process to enlarging the audience of the treatise, accessible at first only to the members of Bosso's religious order.⁷⁶

We can go even further than that when thinking about the circulation of these sensory ideas. Although Lilio's treatise and all the others were written in Latin, the sensory heaven they describe would have been known not only to Italian priests and philosophers, or to learned men and women. Rimbertyni, Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei were all clergymen and all were extensively engaged in preaching activities, as well as in private discussions with people from all social strata, during confession or other forms of spiritual guidance.⁷⁷

For example, Rimbertyni's treatise may have been born from sermons which he delivered in Venice shortly before it was written, as we read at the end of a manuscript copy of his text: 'Here ends the treatise *On the Glorification of the Corporeal Senses in Paradise*, which the reverend father Bartolomeo Lapacci the Florentine of the Order of Preachers preached in Venice.'⁷⁸ When remembering the figure of Rimbertyni, Vespasiano da Bisticci gives us information about the audience attending his sermons: 'He had for his sermons enormous crowds, both learned and unlearned, because he was most eloquent and he was a master of doctrine.' Vespasiano also mentions the geographical range of

⁷⁵ Bosso, *Recuperationes*, Nir (letter CIII).

⁷⁶ 'And so, over six hundred volumes are printed and brought to light as if from one birth'; 'Impressa itaque sunt et uno veluti partu volumina supra sexcenta in lucem edita'. Ibid., Nir (letter CIII to Roberto Salviati). He mentions a similar number in the letter to Lorenzo de' Medici: 'from one tree trunk six hundred connected twigs'; 'uno ex stipite sexcenti vel surculi ducti'. Ibid., Mviii (letter CI to Lorenzo de' Medici). See the discussion in Refe, 'Conversazioni dotte', 140 n. 28. Laura Refe questions whether the number was precise or whether it should be taken figuratively as standing for 'many copies'.

⁷⁷ On preaching in the period see, among others: Daniel Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989); Peter Howard, *Beyond the Written Word: Preaching and Theology in the Florence of Archbishop Antoninus, 1427–1459* (Florence: Olschki, 1995); Carolyn Muessig, *Preacher, Sermon, and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Pescatori di uomini: Predicatori e piazze alla fine del Medioevo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005).

⁷⁸ 'Explicit tractatus de glorificatione sensuum corporalium in paradiso quem predicavit Venetiis reverendissimus pater dominus Bartholomeus Lapaccius Florentinus ordinis predicatorum.' Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, MS Conventi Soppressi J.VII.46, fol. 117v. On Rimbertyni's preaching activity see Howard, 'A Landscape of Preaching'.

his preaching: 'He preached in Florence, and in most places beyond Florence, and he was always very well received.'⁷⁹ The fame of his preaching skills was such that it even reached Rome: 'In the Roman Curia, before the pope, he was being called "duke of the word" and "viola" or "lyre" and his eloquence and wisdom were manifested much more through his mouth than in his letters and writings.'⁸⁰

Although his surviving sermon collection is in Latin, Rimbertyni, just like other preachers of the time, delivered his sermons to the general public in the vernacular. The Latin text was mainly destined as a template both for the author and for other preachers, and as a way of circulating these ideas in a more learned milieu. We can imagine the texts in these template collections being reused repeatedly and adapted to different audiences, which means that they had an even wider impact than we might think at first.⁸¹

Maffei, in the dedication of his *Delitiosa explicatione* to Pope Julius II, gives similar testimony concerning who had access to his ideas and how:

At another time, most blessed Father, in the presence of most worthy and most educated men, privately and publicly, I have composed many words for the longest sermons on the sensory delights of paradise. More often, I was exhorted by these men so that I may consent to put into writing that which I had conceived with the mind about such delights.

Cum alias Beatissime Pater apud dignissimos et doctissimos viros privatim ac publice longissimis sermonibus de deliciis sensibilibus paradisi plurima verba fecissem, sepius ab iis viris hortatus fui ut litteris mandare vellem quae de huiusmodi deliciis mente conceperam.⁸²

From this passage, we can conclude that Maffei had, just like Rimbertyni, and most certainly also Bosso and Lilio, preached long sermons, both in private and in public settings. Maffei indicates that his preaching ignited the curiosity of his listeners, who asked him to write down his ideas on the sensory delights of paradise. Therefore, preaching was clearly a very effective means of transmitting this perspective on the afterlife.

⁷⁹ 'Aveva nelle sua predicationi grandissima concorso, così da' dotti come dagli indotti, per essere eloquentissimo, et posedeva bene la sua dottrina. ... Predicò in Firenze, et fuori di Firenze in più luoghi, et sempre fu accettissimo.' Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols (Firenze: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1970–76), 2.287; translation from Howard, 'A Landscape of Preaching', 48.

⁸⁰ 'Hic in romana curia apud summum pontificem dux verbi et viola seu lyra appellabatur et eius eloquentia et sapientia multo amplius in ore suo quam in suis litteris et scriptis elucebat.' Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, MS Conventi Soppressi J.VII.46, fol. 117v. Some of his sermons were preserved in Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, MS Conventi Soppressi G.I.646. See Bianchi, *I manoscritti datati*, 94.

⁸¹ Carlo Delcorno, 'Medieval Preaching in Italy', in Beverly Mayne Kienzle and René Noël (eds.), *The Sermon* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 449–560; Howard, 'A Landscape of Preaching', 52–3; Pietro Delcorno, *In the Mirror of the Prodigal Son: The Pastoral Uses of a Biblical Narrative (c. 1200–1550)* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 114.

⁸² Maffei, *Delitiosam explicationem*, A.II.r.

It was not only Rimbertyni, Maffei, Bosso, and Lilio who preached on these matters. Although a complete review of fifteenth-century Italian preaching on the afterlife lies beyond the scope of this study, we can take an indicative example from a sermon delivered by one of the most famous preachers of the period, Bernardino da Siena. Bernardino invokes the figure of King David, who is tormented by trying to understand what heaven is like; he

started to think and consider ... these visible things to understand the invisible ones. ... He searched in singing or in dancing, or in playing instruments to see if he could find it [true happiness], and thinking in this way, he said to himself: 'Certainly, in the eternal life, there must be sweeter songs, sweeter sounds, more delicate dances than these.'

cominciò a pensare e considerare in ... queste visibili per comprendere le invisibili. ... Cerca se nel cantare o nel ballare o nel sonare la potesse trovare; e così pensando egli dice con seco: "Per certo, in vita eterna vi debba essere più dolci canti, più suavi soni, più delicate danze, che non so' questi."⁸³

Bernardino concludes by telling his audience that earthly delights 'are like a shadow of sweetness in comparison to what is above'.⁸⁴ The topic of the afterlife was always of great interest to devotees, and therefore it was an essential part of any preacher's agenda. In a similar way, although with slightly different ideas, Lilio and the other authors of sensory treatises would have presented to those listening to their sermons an afterlife of delight, disseminating a heaven in which the body and the senses were agents of pleasure.

This sensory turn is evident also in other products of religious and devotional culture. Its traces appear, for example, in the texts of Florentine *laude*, prayers sung by members of *laudesi* companies and also collected by individuals to be used for personal devotion at home.⁸⁵ Those written by Feo Belcari were extremely popular among the laity in fifteenth-century Florence and they contained many references to the five senses and the afterlife.⁸⁶ MS Magl. XXXV 119 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence contains *laude*

⁸³ Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari sul Campo di Siena: 1427*, ed. Carlo Delcorno, 2 vols (Milano: Rusconi, 1989), 2.1232, 1234 (Predica XLII 6–7, 14).

⁸⁴ 'so' come ombra di dolcezza a rispetto che è lassù'. *Ibid.*, 2.1234 (Predica XLII 15). On Bernardino da Siena's preaching see Cynthia Polecristi, *Preaching Peace in Renaissance Italy: Bernardino da Siena and His Audience* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000).

⁸⁵ On the *lauda* tradition see especially Cyrilla Barr, *The Monophonic Lauda and the Lay Religious Confraternities of Tuscany and Umbria in the Late Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1988).

⁸⁶ See Feo Belcari, *Laude di Feo Belcari* (Firenze: Bartolomeo de' Libri, 1490), 42v, 45v; *Laude facte e composte da più persone spirituali*, ed. Jacopo di Maestro Luigi de' Morsi (Firenze: Francesco Bonaccorsi, 1485–6), 33v.

copied by Bruno di Nicholaio di Matteo Lachi in 1481. One of the *laude* is concerned with the five corporeal senses, mentioning each sense individually, and concluding in the last stanza:

My soul, you are eternal/and you want eternal delight./The delights of the senses/you see [to be] fleeting./Make your ascent to God,/as only God can fill you./Over there, the good is without end/and the delight is eternal.

Anima mia tu sse eterna,/eterno vuoi diletamento./De' sensi le diletanze/vedi senza duramento./Ad Dio fe tuo salimento,/esso solo ti puo enpire./Quivi il ben non sa ffinire/che e eterno dilettere.⁸⁷

The prevalence of such a perspective must have impacted the devotional realm on many levels, influencing also musical and visual culture. For example, Klaus Pietschmann has discussed the implications of descriptions of the musical delights in heaven in Rimbertyni's *De glorificatione* and Maffei's *Delitiosa explicatio* in relation to the rise of polyphony in the sacred music of fifteenth-century Florence.⁸⁸ This manner of imagining heaven and its music can also be observed on the painted walls of chapels and on the altarpieces produced by Italian painters from the Quattrocento.⁸⁹ In my doctoral dissertation, I studied the representation of the music of heaven in the art of fifteenth-century Florence. By comparing the instruments of the Virgin from the Trecento and the Quattrocento, I noted several differences.⁹⁰ During the Trecento angels played mainly soft instruments, as in Agnolo Gaddi's ca. 1390 *Coronation of the Virgin* (Fig. 1), and only rarely mixed ensembles of soft and loud instruments.⁹¹ During the Quattrocento the balance was reversed: the majority of fifteenth-century Coronations show angels performing on a combination of soft and loud instruments, as for example in one of the many *Coronations* by Neri di Bicci (Fig. 2).⁹² In light of the ideas in the treatises we have analysed, this change can be viewed as a trend towards *varietas* as an essential quality of the soundscape of heaven. Towards the end of the century, the painted music of heaven acquires even

⁸⁷ Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence, MS Magl. XXXV 119, fol. 241v. For information on why Bruno di Nicholaio di Matteo Lachi copied the text see *Ibid.*, fol. 1r.

⁸⁸ Particularly in Pietschmann, 'The Sense of Hearing Politicized'.

⁸⁹ On the musical iconography of heaven see, more recently, the 'Divine Harmonies' chapter in Shephard, Raninen, Sessini, and Ștefănescu, *Music in the Art of Renaissance Italy*, 41–126.

⁹⁰ See Laura Ștefănescu, 'Staging and Painting the Heavens: Art, Theatre, and Music in Fifteenth-Century Florence', PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2020.

⁹¹ On Agnolo Gaddi and his altarpiece see, among others: Bruce Cole, *Agnolo Gaddi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); Miklós Boskovits, *Italian Paintings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: The Systematic Catalogue of the National Gallery of Art* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2016), 131–7.

⁹² On Neri di Bicci's *Coronations* see, particularly, Ștefănescu, 'Staging and Painting the Heavens', 149–59.



Fig. 1 Agnolo Gaddi, *The Coronation of the Virgin with Six Angels*, ca. 1390, tempera on panel, 161 × 79 cm. Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection. Photo courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington



Fig. 2 Neri di Bicci, *Coronation of the Virgin*, 1461, tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 161 × 148 cm. Paris, Musée Jacquemart-André – Institut de France. Photo © Studio Sébert Photographes

more *varietas*, much like that described in Lilio's text, creating the image of an unimaginable sound. It suffices to refer to the complex choirs of the *Coronation* by Sandro Botticelli's workshop now in the Villa la Quiete in Florence, from 1480–1520 (Fig. 3).⁹³ The painted music of heaven was as

⁹³ On the painting see: Ronald W. Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli*, 2 vols (London: Elek, 1978), 2.147–8; Marco Ciatti (ed.), *L'incoronazione della Vergine del Botticelli: Restauro e ricerche* (Firenze: Edifir, 1990); Cristiano Giometti, 'Breve ma veridica storia di una tavola di Sandro Botticelli e bottega: *L'incoronazione della Vergine* di Villa la Quiete', in Cristiano Giometti and Donatella Pegazzano (eds.), *Capolavori a Villa la Quiete: Botticelli e Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio in mostra* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2016), 61–75.



Fig. 3 Workshop of Sandro Botticelli, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1480–1520, oil and tempera on panel, 350 × 195 cm. Florence, Villa la Quiete alle Montalve. Photo © Scala/courtesy of the Museo di Storia Naturale di Firenze

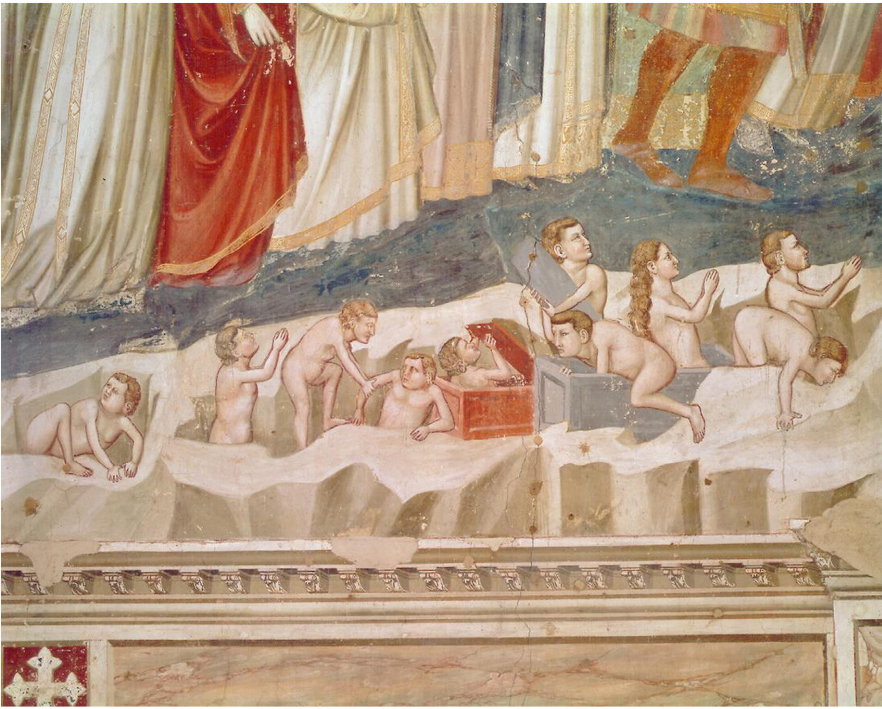


Fig. 4 Giotto di Bondone, *The Last Judgement* (detail), 1306, fresco. Padua, Scrovegni Chapel. Photo © Scala, Florence

much an expression of *varietas* as the descriptions provided by theologians and preachers, an image quite distant from the more modest ensembles of the Trecento.

The idea of *voluptas*, achieved through the spiritual senses in the after-life, places the resurrection of the body at the centre of heavenly experience. Fifteenth-century painters also capture this concept in their startlingly different approach to the subject in comparison to their predecessors. If we take Giotto's *Last Judgement* from the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua (Fig. 4), we can observe how his resurrecting bodies are depicted crawling almost timidly and in surprise out of their tombs, more in an expression of suffering and pain, their limbs contorted.⁹⁴ In contrast, the

⁹⁴ For more on Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel frescoes and his *Last Judgement* see, among others: Roberto Salvini, *The Scrovegni Chapel in the Arena at Padua* (Florence: Arnaud, 1962); Andrew Ladis (ed.), *The Arena Chapel and the Genius of Giotto: Padua* (New York; London: Garland, 1998).



Fig. 5 Luca Signorelli, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, 1499–1504, fresco. Orvieto, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Cappella San Brizio (Cappella Nova). Photo © Scala, Florence/courtesy of the Opera del Duomo of Orvieto

elect that invade Luca Signorelli's frescoes in Orvieto (Fig. 5), after their struggle to resurface, stand proud in full display, in what can be interpreted as a praise of the human body, as receptacle of the senses, and ultimately of pleasure.⁹⁵ Beyond the improved skills in portraying the body, what is impressive here is the large number of the resurrected. If Giotto's elect are barely visible within the greater scheme of the *Last Judgement*, Signorelli's bodies are celebrated in two important separate scenes (Figs. 5 and 6), in which they occupy a large section of the pictorial space, emphasising ultimately the idea that God is pleasure and that these bodies are needed to experience it.

⁹⁵ On the frescoes in Orvieto see, among others: Jonathan B. Riess, *Luca Signorelli: The San Brizio Chapel, Orvieto* (New York: George Braziller, 1995); Laurence Kanter and Tom Henry, *The Complete Paintings: Luca Signorelli* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 45–63, 136–41; Creighton E. Gilbert, *How Fra Angelico and Signorelli Saw the End of the World* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2003), 79–81.



Fig. 6 Luca Signorelli, *The Coronation of the Elect*, 1499–1504, fresco. Orvieto, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Cappella San Brizio (Cappella Nova). Photo © Scala, Florence/courtesy of the Opera del Duomo of Orvieto

A direct link with the sensory treatises on the afterlife is visible in a few paintings from fifteenth-century Italy that introduced a motif rather puzzling for art historians, that of angels greeting and embracing the elect upon their arrival in heaven.⁹⁶ The Dominican Fra Angelico was one of the first to introduce it in his *Last Judgements* from the 1430s (Fig. 7).⁹⁷ Later on, we have an example by Giovanni di Paolo (Fig. 8), but a particularly suggestive painting

⁹⁶ See McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 128–36; Bernhard Lang, ‘Les délices du ciel dans la pensée de la Renaissance: Un chapitre peu connu de l’histoire du christianisme’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions*, 213.2 (1996), 191–212: 205–11.

⁹⁷ See Anna Santagostino Barbone, ‘Il Giudizio Universale del Beato Angelico per la chiesa del monastero camaldolese di S. Maria degli Angeli a Firenze’, *Memorie domenicane*, 20 (1989), 255–78; Gilbert, *How Fra Angelico*, 47; Laurence Kanter, ‘Fra Angelico: A Decade of Transition (1422–32)’, in Laurence Kanter and Pia Palladino, *Fra Angelico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 79–87: 80.



Fig. 7 Fra Angelico, *Last Judgement* (detail), after 1435–40, poplar, 103 × 65.3 cm. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie. Photo © Scala, Florence/bpk, Bildagentur fuer Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin

is Sandro Botticelli's *Mystic Nativity* (Fig. 9), in which the angels not only embrace the newcomers but also kiss them.⁹⁸

I would like to propose that these motifs might have been inspired by the circulation in fifteenth-century Italy of Dambach's treatise on the

⁹⁸ On Giovanni di Paolo's *Paradise* see: John Pope-Hennessy, 'Giovanni di Paolo', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 46.2 (1988), 5–47; Bette Talvacchia, 'The Word Made Flesh: Spiritual Subjects and Carnal Depictions in Renaissance Art', in Marcia Hall and Tracy Cooper (eds.), *The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church* (New York, 2013), 49–73: 69–71. On the *Mystic Nativity* see: Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli*, 1.134–8; Roberta J. M. Olson, 'Brunelleschi's Machines of Paradise and Botticelli's Mystic Nativity', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 97 (1981), 183–8; Rab Hatfield, 'Botticelli's Mystic Nativity, Savonarola and the Millennium', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 58 (1995), 88–114: 94–6.



Fig. 8 Giovanni di Paolo, *Paradise*, 1445, tempera and gold on canvas, transferred from wood, 44.5 × 38.4 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo © CC0 1.0

delights of paradise, which included lengthy chapters about embracing and kissing in heaven. These were emulated by Rimbertyni, who brought the ideas to Florence through Dominican mediation – here there is a direct link to Fra Angelico, who was himself a Dominican. References and even entire chapters on embracing and kissing in heaven were then also included in the treatises of Bosso, Lilio, and Maffei. For example, when discussing the sense of touch, Lilio, referencing Thomas Aquinas through the lens of Dambach and Rimbertyni, says that ‘in the [heavenly] abode



Fig. 9 Sandro Botticelli, *The Mystic Nativity*, 1501, oil on canvas, 108.6 × 74.9 cm. London, National Gallery. Photo © The National Gallery, London

there will be embraces and kisses amongst relatives, children, friends, and dear descendants without any sensual concupiscence.⁹⁹ In the same way, the sensory heaven, with its pleasure-generating music, would have been able to find an echo in the visual descriptions of the time. Therefore, the afterlife of the spiritual senses was not only an idea enclosed within the pages of a few treatises, but rather a widespread concept in fifteenth-century Italy, which circulated through sermons and was reflected in music and art.

4. CONCLUSIONS

If you lived in Italy in 1501, you would have been very well acquainted with ideas about the music of heaven, no matter who you were and where you lived. Moreover, as we learn by exploring the musical references in Lilio's treatise printed in 1501, your ideas about the soundscape of heaven would have been shaped by references to sensory experience and to the pleasure generated by it. In Italy at the end of the fifteenth century, from textual to visual sources, heaven was conceived as a space of perception, and, ultimately, of experience. The idea of imagining heaven and its music sensorially was taken even further through the very popular phenomenon of religious theatre, particularly in Florence, but also in other Tuscan cities and at the courts of Milan and Ferrara. In these performances the sounds of heaven and the afterlife came to life both visually and audibly, to give a more tangible glimpse of that pleasure awaiting the blessed described through books, sermons, and images.¹⁰⁰ This phenomenon, converging with the proliferation of sensory treatises on the afterlife, demonstrates an interest in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century in a lived experience of heaven, and one that prioritises the sensory and its delights. Among the books printed in 1501, Lilio's treatise represents a witness to this sensory turn. Although, overall, he is not perhaps the most important among the Italian authors of sensory treatises on the afterlife, he is nonetheless a most valuable piece within this larger framework.

The aim of this article has been, on the one hand, to bring to the attention of musicologists and scholars of the Italian Renaissance more widely Lilio's neglected treatise, and to situate it within the typology of texts characterised by a sensory perspective on the afterlife. On the other hand, using Lilio as a starting point, this article has set out to provide an in-depth analysis of the intricate connections between all the Italian authors of sensory treatises from the fifteenth century, uncovering for the first time a direct correlation between these texts and the circulation in Italy of the fourteenth-century Dominican treatise of Johannes von Dambach, which contributed to the spread of these sensory ideas.

⁹⁹ 'erunt in patria amplexus et oscula ad parentes, filios, amicos, carosque nepotes absque ulla venerea concupiscentia.' Lilio, *De gloria*, iiv.

¹⁰⁰ See, in more detail, Ștefănescu, 'Staging and Painting the Heavens'.

A further objective has been briefly to explore the connections between these treatises and the musical and visual culture of Renaissance Italy. Starting from the analysis of Lilio's rich description in 1501 of the music and sounds of heaven, we are able to retrace a wider cultural phenomenon that encompasses sounds, texts, devotion, and art. This ultimately outlines the crucial importance of the sensory perspective when thinking about the manner of imagining heaven and its music in fifteenth-century Italy. It was the expression of a society that had embraced the idea that life after death was an enhanced sensory experience, in which the senses generated pleasure as the highest possible good.

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Abstract

In his *De gloria et gaudiis beatorum*, printed in 1501, the clergyman Zaccaria Lilio explores a popular topic in the religious life of Renaissance Italy: what is heaven like and what kind of experience awaits the blessed there? And his answer represents a snapshot of a characteristic manner in which heaven was imagined in the period, both in written and visual form, one strongly focused on a sensory understanding of the afterlife and in which music played an important part. By identifying the sources of Lillio's interpretation of the sense of hearing in the afterlife, a network of clergymen interested in heavenly sensory delights is revealed, initiated by an Italian curiosity for a fourteenth-century text by a follower of Meister Eckart. This article aims not only to bring to the attention of scholars Lilio's neglected sensory treatise, but also to provide an in-depth analysis of the intricate connections between Italian authors of sensory treatises from the fifteenth century. The implications of this textual tradition disseminated through preaching are of great importance to the development of the image of heaven and its music in Renaissance Italy, for which the sensory perspective was of crucial importance.