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SMT Graduate Workshop

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Theme as Formal Marker in Francesco da Milano’s Ricercare No. 55

**Question:** How might the consideration of a theme (or themes) help us to parse a work like Ricercare No. 55?

**What?**

Figure 1. Theme M and Variants

 or  or 

Although these figures appear with different melodic configurations throughout the piece, similarity in their rhythms and contexts indicates that they may be considered as a single theme.

**Where?**

Figure 2. Cadence and transitional points in which the theme is involved.



mm. 4-6. Theme M as part of a weak, elided cadence across the bar line of mm. 5-6.



mm. 33-34. Theme M acting as a transitional point between two textures.

**Conclusion:** Although Theme M does not unravel the form of the whole ricercare, by noting its presence at certain cadential and transitional points and its association with certain compositional textures we may conclude that it indicates the presence of related formal sections.