Remarks on Byrd, *In nomine a 5 (V)*
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Preliminary remarks on Byrd, In nomine a 5 (V)

Other analyses

Oliver Neighbour writes about this work in his volume on the consort and keyboard music of Byrd
(1540–1623).[1] Kerman writes approvingly of Neighbour's evaluative and discursive style of writ-
ing, and while Neighbour does get to grips with the notes in his writing the couple of pages he
devotes to this *In nomine* serve only as a sketch/outline of the work. Neighbour excels, though, in
referencing comparable compositions of Byrd's immediate antecedents. He reckons that the model
for this piece is Robert Parsons's (c. 1535–1572) *In nomine* a 5. There is not so much influence as a
direct integration of a passage by Parsons in Byrd's essay in the genre, at precisely the same cantus
firmus tone, corresponding to the fleeting homophonic passage corresponding to m. 45-6 in the
present edition. What use can we make of Parsons? It's definitely a nice foil to show up Byrd's set-
ting as by far the more sensitive and dynamic (Parsons is plagued by a rigidity of distances between
subject entries). Apart from that, I'm not sure I want to heavily draw on it to explain Byrd.

Contemporary theory

Owing to the likelihood of his studying with Byrd in the mid 1570s, Morley's 'Plain and Easy
Introduction' is taken to represent the closest thing we have to Byrd's conception of music.

Morley tells us a couple of things about fugal writing. First, he calls a *fuge* (what I will consis-
tently refer to as *fuga*) 'when one part beginneth and the other singeth the same, for some number
of notes (which the first did sing)'. He also says that 'in *Fuge* wee are not so straitly bound' (as in

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[1]Oliver Neighbour, *The consort and keyboard music of William Byrd* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978). About 4
pages of writing total; I will scan and distribute.

canon). Later, when Morley talks about the Fantasia genre, he writes that the composer is licensed to stretch and twist the point as much as they desire.

We use Morley's word 'point' in a dual sense to mean both (1) a polyphonic passage of *fuga* based on a (single?) recognizable subject (2) the subject itself of such a passage. This usage is consistent with Morley's. It has the added benefit of suggesting the simultaneous conception of both the musical material and the musical edifice.

The earliest 20th-century writers on Byrd get caught up in identifying Byrd's use of "imitation". Imitation connotes literal repetition. H. K. Andrews (1949) got tied up in knots trying to distinguish (a) rhythmic imitation (implying that interval succession of *fuga* entries change drastically) from (b) single-subject and (c) double-subject imitation (implied that the subjects don't change so much, tonal answer-like; I guess he would include canon too).

This confusion could be related to the (mis-)translation – without discussion save for a cursory footnote! – of *fuga* to "imitation" in a transcribed edition of Morley's treatise by R. Alec Harman in 1952. I need to look into this further.

We should also probably be aware of Morley's kinds of cadence or 'close'. [to be continued...]

Modern theories

When writing about *fuga* in Crequillon and Clemens Non Papa, John Milsom coined more than a couple of terms I find very useful and natural when trying to account for Byrd's music. You can find them and some other terms in common use, which are hardly his to call his own, in the appendix of his article about the same composers.[2] One nice terminology (I doubt it's his own) is that of "shadowing", to explain the content of a voice that tracks another at a paralell imperfect consonance (or its compound). We can use that term to reduce the surfaces of some passages; likewise with the term "continuation line" (meaning 'the residue of melodic material that a voice sings after it has completed its statement of the subject.'). That latter one is a bit problematic because it sort of

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[2]John Milsom, 'Crecquillon, Clemens, and four-voice fuga' in Eric Jas (ed.), *Beyond Contemporary Fame: Reassessing the Art of Clemens non Papa and Thomas Crecquillon* (Brepols)

connotes that what follows an entry is somewhat superfluous (or at least, not essential/functional with respect to *fuga*) which I don't want to commit myself to. After all what follows a statement in one voice necessarily supports/confronts some other statement elsewhere, and can in fact color our hearing of the same subject in a very different light. Nevertheless, it's a handy piece of terminology

My own thoughts are essentially that if we understand fugue subjects/*fuga* subjects/points in the fantasia genre not so much as rigid interval/duration schemes but as specified by their shape (in steps and leaps, roughly) and relative rhythmic profile (short, long, roughly), we can see how tightly integrated each point is. That is, the compositional principle of *fuga* controls more of Byrd's fantasias than Neighbour thinks, partly because of an overly strict definition for his imitation, and partly because when that definition ceases to apply to the music, Neighbour (et al) give up and create a new category (witness: 'non-imitative imitiation', 'rhythmic imitation' (Andrews) etc.).

I suggest that when we're faced with so many varied forms of the subject of point, if we really care about which is the canonic/prime/plainest form of that point, we can look at the differences between all pairwise selections of the subject forms and nominate the form(s) of the subject that is "closest to most". Closeness is measured in terms of the number of moves required to morph one subject form into another, where a move is defined as either (1) enlarging/reducing a single melodic interval in the subject form or (2) rhythmic augmentation/diminution of a single note in the subject. I'm not fully convinced that my heuristic has much utility, but, there it is anyway. It might be useful in telling a story about process within a point; it's not clear if this has a usefulness when trying to talk about the overall form of a piece.

In nomine a 5 (V)

There are at least four distinct points here, but I can see cause for dividing it into six.

First is start to m. 13, with a full close on D. The next is kicked off in part III on the second beat of m. 13 and continues through to a full close on D, again, in m. 24. The third point begins here lead by part IV (?), "shadowed" at the tenth and continues through to m. 33.

At this point we seem to be set up for yet another full close on D but this is abandoned and I

hear the beginnings of another point proper with the four-note figure in part V which is the pickup to and downbeat of m. 35, migrating upwards through the parts.

This where we get to one of the cruxes of this piece. We probably have to decide if (and if so where) this point ends before the near-canonic business starts up in m. 37 between parts I and V. I think Neighbour calls this canonic, but it wouldn't hold up to Morley's definition as such. If the outer voices are almost canonic, what determines the content of the inner voices? I want to believe they are keeping up *fuga* within themselves (total outcome: double imitation/double fugue/two in one?), but something complexifies this.

That something is perhaps one of the more interesting moments in the piece. If you believe me that part-pairs I and V, and III and IV have definitely parted ways by around m. 37, then they certainly come together (again) when III and IV absorb material from the outer voices (m. 44 beat 1, m. 44 beat 3 resp.) spinning what was "merely" some material from the two voice canon (see part I, m. 43 e.g.) back into the fold, for a full-throated four-part stretto which brings that section to a close on the third beat of m. 45.

An interesting moment of homophony in mm. 45–6 lends its shape to the *fuga* in two parts which governs part-pair I and V to m. 51. I'm at a loss to explain part-pair III and IV except to point out that it purports to independence from the outer part-pair.

I want to say that part-pair III and IV have a formulaic full close on G at the start of m. 51, which fits nicely with the notion that a new point, the most sophisticated one so far, begins with the A in part III, m. 51.

The final point, whether we think of it as the fifth or sixth, has no fewer than two distinct subjects. I'll leave what I think about what Morley might have called this to one side for a moment.

(Aside: Morley quotes a work by Byrd most approvingly in his example of a 'canon two in one *per arsin and thesin*'. What makes the musical quotation particularly charming is Morley's admission that his example of the same technique, which immediately precedes the quotation, was based on a contrived cantus firmus. Byrd's, on the other hand, comes from plainchant unadulterated.)

The outer voices work a point based on an engorged cantizans part of a cadential progression.

The inner voices ruminate on a short point with part IV answering part III twice in inversion (m. 51, see ex.).

Now, the first half of the outer voice subject (the kind of triad-outlining part) breaks off and "infects" inner voice/part IV, while part III gets its own full-size statement of the cadential subject (m. 54–55). The cantus firmus for the work is at this point being stretch out and in some sense what's left for the remaining measures is to oscillate, with the help of the triad-outlining first part of this point, between G-ish and D-ish, to close on D (with what feels to me to be a quite pregnant F sharp in the top voice).