

*Ti lascio, anima mia*

**Poem by Girolamo Preti**

Ti lascio, anima mia: giunta è quell'ora,  
L'ora, oime, che mi chiama alla partita.

I leave you, my love, that hour has arrived  
The hour, alas, that calls me to my departure.

Io parto, io parto, oime: convien, ch'io mora,  
Perche convien partir da te, mia vita.

I go, I go, alas, I may as well die  
Since I must part from you, my beloved, my life.

Ah pur troppo è'l dolor, ch'entro mi accora;  
Non mi dar col tuo duol nova ferita.

Ah, such misfortune, pain grieves my heart  
Do not wound me further with your pain

Deh non languir, cor mio: ch'al mio partire,  
Mi duole il tuo doler più, che'l morire.

Ah, don't languish at my departure, my love,  
For your pain pains me more than death itself.

*(Frescobaldi's setting ends here)*

Deh perche tante lagrime, ò mio core,  
Da que' begli occhi tuoi piover vegg'io?

Ah, why, my love, do I see so many tears  
Rain down from your eyes?

Deh frena il pianto, oime, frena il dolore  
Che spargi nel tuo pianto il sangue mio.

Ah, cease your crying, cease your pain  
For you strew my blood with your tears.

Temi forse, cor mio, che nuovo ardore  
Il tuo amor, il mio ardor ponga in oblio?

Do you perhaps fear, my love, that a new love  
Will cast my ardor into oblivion?

An nò, nò: farà spento in ogni loco  
Di quest'onda di pianto ogn' altro foco.

Alas, no, no: this wave of tears  
Will extinguish any other fiery passion.

Translation, Ashley Mulcahy

When I first encountered Frescobaldi's "Ti lascio anima mia" a few years ago, I interpreted the text by Girolamo Preti to be about two lovers parting. Upon revisiting this poem, it occurred to me that one could also interpret "departure" as death. Questioning my reading, I sent the text to an Italian friend. Although initially arriving at the latter interpretation, she clarified that she would not have done so if not for the current pandemic. After searching for the [original 1614 print](#) of Preti's poem, I discovered that it has a second stanza excluded from Frescobaldi's musical setting. The speaker concludes this stanza vowing that his passion for his lover will not be extinguished, nor will he replace it with passion for another lover, supporting an interpretation in which death is absent. That Frescobaldi had such an interpretation in mind is further supported by his setting the poem to the ruggiero ground bass, historically associated with the spoken or sung recitation of courtly love poetry. By alternating harsh and sweet (duro e molle) harmonies, Frescobaldi seems to emphasize that it is the sweetness of love that makes parting so painful.

Frescobaldi left Rome for Florence in 1628 at the request of Duke Ferdinando II de Medici, who recruited Frescobaldi as court organist. Just two years later in the summer of 1630, the plague spread to Florence. Although Frescobaldi, as a member of the Medici court, was minimally affected, there is no question that the common Florentine was suffering. In June of 1630, Florentine officials began implementing stringent “precautionary” public health measures upon learning that the plague, which had already ravaged Milan, had spread to other northern Italian cities. Some of the more draconian measures included denying city entry to “jews, gypsies, and vagabonds,” mandating the poor to bathe and clean their homes, and forcing beggars outside the city walls. Though Frescobaldi likely composed his two volumes of secular arias over a period of time that includes his years in Rome, he saw them published in September of 1630. That same month, the severity of the plague in Florence began to increase, as evidenced by Rondinelli’s observation: “The distance of the sun also has a notable effect. Things began to get much worse on the 1630 September equinox, and the peak of the illness came in November, beginning to subside with the Capricorn equinox...” Although these observations and precautionary measures are scientifically and ethically dubious by today’s standards, this account aids our understanding of the conditions in Florence at the time of Frescobaldi’s publications.

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