# "And Josquin Laughed . . ." Josquin and the Composer's Anecdote in the Sixteenth Century*

ROB C. WEGMAN

*For Bonnie & Leofranc*

Friedrich Nietzsche once said that it takes only three anecdotes to typify the character of a historical individual. For Josquin des Prez we possess several times that number: he is, in fact, the first composer in Western history about whom stories circulated widely after his death.[1] The Swiss theorist Heinrich Glarean alluded to his reputation when he noted in his treatise *Dodekachordon,* of 1547: "He is said to have done many pleasing things before he became generally known." And, on the same topic: "jesting is praiseworthy and has true merit if it occurs with dignity and is selected for a favorable moment: some relate such stories about Josquin des Prez."[2]



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[1] Cf. Helmuth Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez,* 2 vols. (Tutzing, 1962–65), I, 79–93. In what follows I will use the term "anecdote" (and interchangeably "story") in its conventional sense as a narrative, usually brief, of a separable incident or event of curious interest, usually biographical. Where relevant I will also discuss "reports," by which I understand statements about the historical Josquin that are repeated as something heard or said. Both anecdotes and reports are to be distinguished from documentary evidence, which may often be of anecdotal interest today, but was recorded for purely administrative reasons (the obvious borderline case being letters).

[2] "Is multa iucunda relatu fecisse dicitur, antequam in hominum noticiam uenerit . . . Caeterum plus laudis habent ac uere merentur Ioci, si qui incidunt cum grauitate et

The anecdotes portray Josquin in often striking ways, and their impact on modern perceptions of the composer may be more powerful than we might sometimes like to think. Yet however much they may suggest about his personality, their value as historical evidence remains, inevitably, anecdotal. All the stories are unverifiable and uncorroborated. Several are implausible; others are contradicted by historical evidence. Even when an anecdote seems *prima facie* believable, there is not much that a biographer can actually do with it—except perhaps utilize whatever bits of historical information are volunteered in passing. The stories may be memorable, but they are rarely of particular consequence to the larger story of Josquin's life.

Part of the problem is that there is almost no other evidence to tell us anything about Josquin's personality: this has made us more dependent on the anecdotes than they may seem to warrant. Yet there is also an undeniable appeal in repeating the stories to those who may not yet know them, perhaps even a reluctance to spoil the effect by immediately qualifying their claims to historical truth. What could be the source of that appeal? Do the anecdotes convey something that we could believe to be true—as the sixteenth-century Italian saying has it: *se non è vero, è molto ben trovato*? But then, how can we even say about some story that it is *ben trovato,* when we know so little about Josquin in any case? Anecdotes seem to enjoy a state of near-immunity from falsification, making any old story as incontrovertible as any other. And yet, even if we assume that there was a certain amount of creative storytelling, as was undoubtedly the case, would people truly have been indiscriminate in their beliefs about Josquin?



It is these and other questions that will concern us in the following essay, and exploration of the significance and value of anecdotes to our understanding of Josquin des Prez. The paper is structured in two sections. In the first, I will identify a number of themes that tend to recur in narratives about Josquin, and examine how these themes bear on our interpretation of other biographical evidence. In the second section I will present evidence that may allow us to interpret those themes against a broader explanatory background, and thereby perhaps to appreciate the value of anecdotal evidence from a different perspective.

## I

Let us begin by examining a few anecdotes in detail. A good place to start might be the following story, one of the most puz-

occasione quaesiti: Quales Iodoci Pratensis aliquot feruntur." Heinrich Glarean, *Dodekachordon* (Basel, 1547), 440 and 468; trans. after Glarean, *Dodecachordon,* trans. Clement A. Miller, 2 vols. (American Institute of Musicology, 1965), II, 271 and 284.

zling ever told about Josquin, and one whose meaning may not be immediately apparent. This is the story of the *maestro* who sang the tenor of the *Missa L'homme armé*—a little moment of mirth in the life of Josquin, reported by the Neapolitan music teacher Giovan Tomaso Cimello in a treatise from the 1540s:[3]

> A pupil of Josquin whose name I remember, he was called Johannes L'Héritier, told me that he gave this tenor [*L'homme armé*] to a *maestro* to sing, and the latter sang it well according to the sign [of prolation]. And Josquin laughed because he did not observe the words "L'homme armé," that it was a canon, like *crescat in duplum.* [L'Héritier] told me that after laughing a good deal Josquin told him how this Mass was written and how it should be sung.

Is there any truth to this story? There is no way of telling, of course, though Cimello seems concerned to give it at least the appearance of authenticity. He learned the story, or so he says, from the composer Jean L'Héritier (*c.*1480–after 1552) who, he claims, was a pupil of Josquin. There is no evidence to support the latter claim, however, and it is implicitly undermined by the existence of several similar claims about other composers—none of them especially plausible.[4] Not that this would necessarily have worried his readers. The sixteenth century often pictured Josquin as surrounded by a circle of disciples, as the master of a "school" of composers who passed on his artistic legacy to subsequent generations.[5] One favorite image of him was that of the unapproachable, reserved master, a loner, impatient with his singers



[3] "Mi dissero anco tali discepoli di Giosquino che me recordo il nome d'uno chiamato Giovan l'Heriter che dava a cantare quel tenore a qualche mastro, e colui il cantave bene secondo il segno e Giosquino rideva ch'egli non notava le parole l'Homme Arme, ch'era Canone, come crescat in duplum e si disse, che all'hora rideva alquanto, e poi gli diceva il come fu composta tal messa e come dovea cantarsi." James Haar, "Lessons in Theory from a Sixteenth-Century Composer," in id., *The Science and Art of Renaissance Music,* ed. Paul Corneilson (Princeton, NJ, 1998), 149–75 at 153–54; for the date of the treatise, see ibid., 152.

[4] See Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez,* 1, 77–78; Jeremy Noble, "Josquin des Prez," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* 20 vols. (London, 1980), IX, 713–38, at 717–18; Paula Higgins, "Musical 'Parents' and Their 'Progeny': The Discourse of Creative Patriarchy in Early Modern Europe," in Jessie Ann Owens and Anthony M. Cummings, eds., *Music in Renaissance Cities and Courts: Studies in Honor of Lewis Lockwood* (Michigan, 1997), 169–86, at 176. The earliest self-styled pupil of Josquin on record is Arnoldus Juliani Causin, of Ath in Hainaut, who was described as *magnus musicus Jusquin discipulus* when he matriculated at the University of Craców in 1526; see Gerhard Pietzsch, *Zur Pflege der Musik an den deutschen Universitäten bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim and New York, 1971), 45.

[5] Herman Finck, *Practica musica* (Wittenberg, 1556), fol. Ssiv: ". . . summi artifices, qui ex eius schola prodierunt, Nicolaus Gombertus et alij . . .".

and pupils, and quick to rebuke them for their asininity. A quiet word in the vestry was not his style:[6]

> When Josquin was living at Cambrai [*sic*] and someone wanted to apply ornaments in his music which he had not composed, he walked into the choir and sharply berated him in front of the others, saying: "You ass, why do you add ornamentation? If it had pleased me, I would have inserted it myself. If you wish to amend properly composed songs, make your own, but leave mine unamended!"

Whether authentic or not, that image was a powerfully attractive one. It served, indirectly, to confer a status of exceptional distinction on the few students he allegedly deemed worthy to be initiated in the secrets of his art—which may be one reason why self-styled Josquin disciples (and later on their students) would have liked to perpetuate it in anecdotes.[7] Cimello's tale may be untypical in this context, since it emphasizes a more good-natured side to Josquin's personality. Yet it does imply that L'Héritier belonged to the composer's inner circle as well, if only because he is cited as the source for the story.



Of course, none of this necessarily makes the anecdote any more plausible. The point of the story seems to be that Josquin meant the words "L'homme armé" to be read as a verbal canon, calling for duple augmentation: "and Josquin laughed because he did not observe the words 'L'homme armé,' that it was a canon, like *crescat in duplum.*" As Cimello explains right before the anecdote, "one might say that

[6] "Josquinus, vivens Cameraci, cum quidam vellet ei in suo cantu adhibere colores seu coloraturas, quas ipse non composuerat, ingressus est chorum, et acriter increpavit illum, omnibus audientibus, addens: Tu asine, quare addis coloraturam? Si mihi ea placuisset, inseruissem ipse. Si tu velis corrigere cantilenas recte compositas, facias tibi proprium cantum, sinas mihi meum incorrectum." Johannes Manlius, *Locorum communium collectanea* (Basel, 1562), 542; trans. after Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez,* I, 222. On this anecdote, see also David Fallows, "Embellishment and Urtext in the Fifteenth-Century Song Repertory," *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* XIV (1990), 59–85. Manlius claimed to have collected his anthology of anecdotes, *exempla,* and other stories from the public lectures at Basel of the Lutheran reformer Philipp Melanchthon (*d.*1560), as well as of other, unnamed, scholars. The book was enormously popular: by 1600 it had been reprinted fourteen times and published twice in German translation. (This may explain why the Josquin anecdotes were still being reported by Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* [Hamburg, 1739], 242.) See Ernst Heinrich Rehermann, "Die protestantischen Exempelsammlungen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts: Versuch einer Übersicht und Charakterisierung nach Aufbau und Inhalt," in Wolfgang Brückner, ed., *Volkserzählung und Reformation: Ein Handbuch zur Tradierung und Funktion von Erzählstoffen und Erzählliteratur im Protestantismus* (Berlin, 1974), 579–645, esp. 594–97 and 631–33.

[7] "Josquin did not judge everyone capable of the demands of composition. He felt that it should be taught only to those who were driven by an unusual force of their nature to this most beautiful art"; Adrian Petit Coclico, *Musical Compendium (Compendium musices),* trans. Albert Seay (Colorado Springs, 1973), 16.

'l'homme armé' could be called a double man, of living flesh and of steel; and thus the notes and rests of this chanson and of the *Missa L'homme armé* were doubled." This explanation appears to be offered in earnest, yet to modern ears, at least, it sounds almost too nonsensical to be believable. Who could realistically have inferred such a reading from the words "L'homme armé" alone? If the anecdote is to imply anything about Josquin's character, it can only be that he took a somewhat childish delight in making words mean just what he chose them to mean, and that he somehow found it very amusing when others failed to second-guess his meaning. The problem with this is not that the anecdote is probably apocryphal, which is not unusual, but that it is not even a good story, which is.

I suspect, however, that Cimello's anecdote may be a distorted or misremembered version of a better story, one to which the word "maestro" could provide a possible clue. It seems significant that it was a figure of professional authority, a man licensed to teach, who was made the target of Josquin's ridicule, not just one of his pupils or fellow-singers. This may point to a possible underlying theme. Contemporaries never stressed about Josquin, as humanists had done with Ockeghem, that he was a man of particular learning. (Perhaps not coincidentally, no document ever mentions him with the academic title of *magister* or *maestro.*) What was important about Josquin, as sixteenth-century theorists often said, is that his genius was inborn, that Nature had endowed him with his "divine" talent.[8] This made the question of his formal education less relevant. Anecdotes could give dramatic shape to that point, for instance by portraying the composer as an artist who could not abide pedantry and bookishness.[9] So one could well imagine a different version of the story, one in which Josquin was seen to have exposed the ridiculous pretensions of some pompous, self-important *maestro*—perhaps one who had presumed to lecture him on the notation of the *L'homme armé* tenor, whereupon the idea of the "double man" would have been offered as a facetious rejoinder. This is speculation, of course, but at least it accounts for the curious twofold emphasis on Josquin's laughter, which makes little sense in the anecdote as related by Cimello. More important, it explains why anyone should have wanted to make up such a story in the first place.



Yet why lavish such interpretive scrutiny on a story that is likely to be apocryphal in any case? The main reason, I would suggest, is that it underlines an important if obvious point: it is that anecdotes have to

[8] See Edward E. Lowinsky, "Musical Genius—Evolution and Origins of a Concept," *The Musical Quarterly* L (1964), 321–40 and 476–95, esp. 479–92.

[9] This, for instance, is what Coclico stressed in his alleged reminiscences of Josquin's teaching; *Musical Compendium,* 5, 7–8, and 16–17.

make sense.[10] It is only when they make a great deal of sense that we would like them to be true, and that sixteenth-century readers presumably accepted and passed them on as true. Cimello's anecdote does not make apparent sense, though it is possible to think of a different version that might have.

That version need not actually have been older. Often stories get better in the course of transmission, and the tales about Josquin may be no exception. A good example is the most famous Josquin anecdote: it relates how he once composed a setting of Psalm 118: 49–64, "Remember the word unto thy servant," to remind the king of France of a promise to grant him a benefice. This story has come down to us in four different versions. The earliest version is also the least known: it dates from 1516–17, and oddly enough, it is not about Josquin at all. Since this version has received little attention in Josquin scholarship, it may be helpful to narrate it briefly here.

The version survives in the correspondence of Sebastiano Giustiniani, Venetian ambassador at the court of King Henry VIII, and his secretary Niccolò Sagudino. It begins with a letter to the Doge dated 30 September 1516, in which Giustiniani confirms the recent arrival in England of Friar Dionisio Memo, the organist of St. Mark's:[11]



> He played not merely to the satisfaction, but to the incredible admiration and pleasure of everybody, and especially of his Majesty . . . said Majesty has included him among his instrumental musicians, nay, has appointed him their chief, and says he will write to Rome to have him unfrocked out of his monastic weeds, so that he may merely retain holy orders, and that he will make him his chaplain.

Undoubtedly the king was serious about this promise, but more than a half year later, in March 1517, Friar Dionisio had still not been released from his monastic vows.[12] Two months after that, on 19 May, Giustiniani's secretary Sagudino wrote to Venice:[13]

[10] For an exploration of archetypal ideas underlying artists' anecdotes, see Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler: ein geschichtlicher Versuch* (Vienna, 1934); see also the revised English translation *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: An Historical Experiment,* trans. Alastair Laing and Lottie M. Newman (New Haven, 1979).

[11] Rawdon Brown, trans., *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII,* 2 vols. (London, 1854), 1, 296; see also J. S. Brewer et al., eds., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII,* 21 vols. (London, 1862–1910), 2/1, 748–49.

[12] On 24 March 1517, Cardinal Wolsey wrote to the Bishop of Worcester, then at the Vatican, that the king begged him to expedite the business of his organist Dionisio; see Brewer et al., *Letters and Papers,* 2/2, 975.

[13] "Dito missier Dionisio à composto uno canto belissimo a quatro, e lo ha intitulato: *Memor esto verbi tui servo tuo perpetuo in quo mihi spem dedisti.* Dovealo sonar a questa Maestà e darli le parole; per le qual so po' ben intender il desiderio suo non li mancherà;

> The said *messier* Dionisio has composed a most beautiful song in four parts, and has entitled it *Memor esto verbi tui servo tuo perpetuo in quo mihi spem dedisti* [Ps. 118:49 "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope"]. This he was to play (*sonar*) to the King, giving him the words; by which he may understand that he will not forget his wish; and this is certain, "what is postponed is not accomplished," one may not delay too much, etc.

We do not know whether the setting was performed before the king. If Dionisio intended to play it to him on the keyboard (as seems to be implied in the word "sonar"), he must have had many opportunities, since Henry clearly valued his company and musicianship. (A few months later, when the plague forced the king to dismiss his entire court and to remain in quarantine at Windsor, the only people who remained with him were Memo, a physician, and his three favorite gentlemen.[14]) In any case, on 10 July 1517 Giustiniani reports that "his Majesty has a greater opinion of him than words can express," and then refers to Memo in passing as "his chaplain."[15] At last, we may infer, the king had fulfilled his promise and made Memo chaplain—and with this happy ending the first version comes to a conclusion.



It is perhaps important to stress that the history of Memo and his *Memor esto* is not actually an anecdote, or at least has not come down to us as one: it has to be pieced together from isolated news items in a diplomatic correspondence, extending over a period of more than nine months. And those items were recorded not because they made a good story, or were especially noteworthy, but because Memo happened to be a Venetian musician in whom the Doge took a particular interest.

The three subsequent versions, however, dated 1547, 1611, and 1633, were all told as anecdotes. They are about Josquin (whose setting of *Memor esto* first turns up in the mid-1510s), and identify the employer who made the promise as the king of France.[16] According to Glarean,

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e questo è certo, *quod differtur non aufertur,* non po' tropo indugiar etc." Marino Sanuto, *I diarii,* 58 vols. (Venice, 1879–1903), XXIV, 392. The passage is not referred to in the summary of the letter given in Brewer et al., *Letters and Papers,* II/2, 1045. To my knowledge Memo's setting of *Memor esto* has not been identified.

[14] Brewer et al., *Letters and Papers,* II/2, 1149 and 1188; Brown, *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII,* II, 126 and 136.

[15] Brown, *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII,* II, 97–98. The presentation of Memo to the church of Henbury, in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, is recorded on 14 August of the same year; Brewer, *Letters and Papers,* II/2, 1135.

[16] The three versions are printed in Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez,* I, 206–7. The earliest known sources for Josquin's *Memor esto verbi tui* are 1514[1] and FlorBN II.I.232 (*c.*1515).

in 1547, it was Louis XII who had promised Josquin a benefice, and discharged the favor after the motet *Memor esto verbi tui* "was brought to the college of singers, and then examined with strict justice, [and] admired by everyone."[17] Glarean adds that Josquin expressed his gratitude by composing another psalm setting, *Bonitatem fecisti cum servo tuo* (Ps. 118:65–80): "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word." There is indeed a setting of that title ascribed to Josquin in two manuscripts from the 1540s (KasSL 24 and SGallS 463, the latter copied in the direct vicinity of Glarean). Yet the same piece bears the name of Elzéar Genet *dit* Carpentras in two northern Italian sources from the mid-1510s.[18] *Bonitatem fecisti* is now generally accepted as a work by Carpentras, which means that the anecdote as related by Glarean must be at least partially inaccurate. But it is a great story, and Helmuth Osthoff, for one, was inclined to accept it. "Probably," he said, "it was Memo who copied the meanwhile famous idea of Josquin."[19]

The story gets even better in the next versions. Petrus Opmeer, in 1611, adds that Josquin composed the second section of the motet only later, after the king had failed to register the point of *Memor esto.*[20] He further improves on the story by changing the incipit of that section, which reads *Portio mea Domine, dixi ut custodiam verbum tuum* (Ps. 118:57:



[17] "Verum cum promissa leuiter, ut in Regum aulis fieri solet, caderent, ibi commotum Iodocum psalmum composuisse. Memor esto uerbi tui seruo tuo, tanta maiestate ac elegantia, ut ad Cantorum collegium relatus ac deinde iusto iudicio excussus, admirationi omnibus fuerit." Glarean, *Dodekachordon,* 440; *Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller, 2, 272.

[18] Petrucci's *Motetti de la corona* (1514[1]) and FlorBN II.I.232 (*c.*1515); these also happen to be the earliest sources for Josquin's *Memor esto.* Elzéar Genet (Carpentras), *Opera omnia,* Corpus mensurabilis musicae, 58, 5 vols. (American Institute of Musicology, 1973), V: xii and 57–69.

[19] "Wahrscheinlich ahmte Memmo den inzwischen berühmt gewordenen Einfall Josquins nach"; Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez,* I, 42. It is quite possible that Glarean's anecdote inspired the composer and theorist Eucharius Hofmann (whose *Doctrina de tonis* of 1582 was based directly on Glarean's *Dodekachordon*) to adopt this strategy as well. In January 1565 he sent a four-part composition to Nicolaus Gentzkow, mayor of the north-German seaport of Stralsund, where Hofmann had been hired as Cantor in the previous year. The mayor recorded its receipt in his diary as follows (my trans.): "On 7 January the Cantor of the school sent me a song in four parts which he had apparently composed himself. What he meant by this I don't know, but I think it could be a reminder of the previous song with which he honored the town, for reason of recompense, which perhaps he has eagerly awaited up till now." For the diary entry, see Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller, *Untersuchungen zu Musikpflege und Musikunterricht an den deutschen Lateinschulen vom ausgehenden Mittelalter bis um 1600,* Kölner Beiträge zur Musikforschung, liv (Regensburg, 1969), 97 n. 57. The mayor did not identify the piece by title, but Hofmann did in fact leave a collection of four-part psalm settings, printed at Rostock in 1577, *Deutsche Sprüche aus den Psalmen Davids* (now lost); it is not inconceivable, therefore, that he had composed a setting of Ps. 118: 49–64 in Luther's translation. See Martin Ruhnke, "Hoffmann, Eucharius," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians,* VIII, 626–27.

[20] Petrus Opmeer, *Opus Chronographicum* (Antwerp, 1611), 440; Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez.* I. 207.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words"), to the more pointed but non-scriptural *Portio mea non est in terra viventium:* "my portion is not in the land of the living" (apparently based on Ps. 141:6). Claude Hémeré, in 1633, does not include these details, but he adds more color by explaining that the king had kept granting newly-vacant benefices to other courtiers, who had managed to be more politic, diplomatic, or lachrymose than Josquin.[21] He also updates the anecdote by situating it at the court of François I (*r.* 1515–47).

This is a textbook example of oral transmission if ever there was one: whatever had actually happened, the recollection was passed on in a living and growing tradition. Plainly—and unlike Cimello's anecdote—this was a story which made excellent sense. But is it true? The only way to corroborate the accounts of Glarean, Opmeer, and Hémeré would be to identify the benefice which Louis XII allegedly granted to Josquin. (This would also allow us to establish the date of *Memor esto.*) Yet Louis ruled from 1498 to 1515, and the composer is not known to have received any benefices during those years.[22] In fact, of his several benefices that are documented in the Vatican, the latest dates from 9 November 1494.[23] This is four years before Louis's accession, at a time when Josquin was still working at Rome. Besides, and although it has often been done in the past, I would urge extreme caution in dating a Josquin motet more than twenty years, or even ten, before it turns up in any known source. Still, perhaps one could rescue the anecdote by assuming that Louis XII had made the promise in the early 1510s, shortly before the publication of *Memor esto* by Petrucci. It is true that Josquin was living in Condé at the time, but Glarean does not actually state that he was in the king's employ.[24] (Nor should this necessarily have been implicit, for a French subject, in the words *servus tuus.*) Perhaps there might even be some significance to Glarean's formulation "*brought to* the college of singers"—as though Josquin was not one of its members—"and then examined with strict justice."



[21] Claude Hémeré, *Tabella chronologica decanorum, custodum, canonicorumque regalis ecclesiae S. Quintini* (Paris, 1633), 161; Osthoff, Josquin des Prez, I, 207.

[22] The only exception is the canonry at the church of Our Lady at Condé-sur-l'Escaut, which Josquin accepted on 3 May 1504, yet this was not at the collation of the King of France but bestowed by election of the chapter. See Herbert Kellman, "Josquin and the Courts of the Netherlands and France: The Evidence of the Sources," in Lowinsky and Blackburn, eds., *Josquin des Prez,* 181–216, at 207.

[23] Jeremy Noble, "New Light on Josquin's Benefices," in Edward E. Lowinsky and Bonnie J. Blackburn, eds., *Josquin des Prez: Proceedings of the International Josquin Festival-Conference* (London, 1976), 76–102, at 88–89 and 100–1.

[24] Of course he does in a later anecdote (*Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller, II, 284), as do Opmeer and Hémeré.

Yet if such speculations tell us anything, it must surely be this: we may try to anchor this anecdote in history, yet this inevitably forces us to be arbitrarily selective about which details we choose to believe and which we do not. Even setting aside the obvious methodological problem about this, it is to treat a great story as though it were a mere collection of biographical truth-claims, each to be accepted or rejected in light of some working hypothesis. That would be to gloss over the sense which this anecdote evidently made to people in the sixteenth century, and to sidestep the most important question here, why they were so fond of telling it in the first place. This question would need to be addressed even if—or rather, perhaps, especially if—the story had its origin in Memo's life, and only subsequently attached itself to Josquin's *Memor esto,* travelling wherever that piece was transmitted and performed. (The motet survives today in three prints and nine manuscripts.)

One possible approach to that question has already been suggested: it is to distinguish the underlying sense of an anecdote from its putative historical truth-content. "Sense" may seem a conveniently vague term, yet by now we have already identified three themes which give it a precise definition in Josquin's case. Just as there was the theme of the stern and difficult teacher, and of the artistic prodigy who scoffed at bookish learning, there is now the theme of the court musician, at once bound in service and yet asserting his artistic independence in witty compositional choices. The latter, an image clearly expressive of changing perceptions of musical authorship, could be said to take shape in anecdotes like that of *Memor esto.*[25] "And again," as Glarean continued after that anecdote, "when Josquin sought a favor from some important personage and when that man, a procrastinator, said over and over in the mutilated French language, 'Laise faire moy,' that is 'Leave it to me,' then without delay Josquin composed, to these same words, a complete and very elegant *Missa La sol fa re mi.*"[26]



These various themes could be said to delineate an image, a profile —one of remarkable precision and consistency. Significantly, that image is defined not only by the themes on which the stories dwell, but also by the conspicuous exclusions they make. I have already noted that there are no anecdotes which seek to portray Josquin as a man of par-

[25] See Rob C. Wegman, "From Maker to Composer: Improvisation and Musical Authorship in the Low Countries, 1450–1500," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XLIX (1996), 409–79, esp. 467–69.

[26] *Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller, II, 272. For a thoughtful evaluation of this anecdote's plausibility in the light of other musical and poetic treatments of the theme 'Lassa far a mi' / 'La sol fa re mi,' see James Haar, "Some Remarks on the 'Missa La sol fa re mi'," in Lowinsky and Blackburn, eds., *Josquin des Prez,* 564–88.

ticular learning. This is not to imply that he was unread; rather, it suggests that sixteenth-century audiences were not particularly concerned about the question of his formal education, for obvious reasons. There are several other aspects to which little or no emphasis is given. To mention but one obvious area of potential interest, there are no anecdotes about Josquin's relations with women—even though he left plenty of songs to which piquant stories might have become attached. Come to think of it, there is not a single anecdote about his private life.[27] All the stories take place in the professional sphere, and all are concerned, in one way or another, with the way he (and others) related to his music.

Implicitly this helps to give further definition to Josquin's image, in two important ways. First, it leaves the impression that he was so dedicated to his art, and so preoccupied with composition, that there was little else about him that was worth remembering. Secondly, it suggests that he kept his private life very much to himself, that there were few who knew what went on in his mind. Neither impression need be historically accurate. Still, the anecdotes undeniably invest Josquin's art with an aura of privacy and secrecy—giving even greater perceived distinction to those who claimed to be his disciples and intimates. Paradoxically, the few reports that appear to lift the veil only intensify that aura. It could be argued that the following anecdotal accounts are as much about privacy as they are about compositional process:[28]



[27] It is true, of course, that there are few stories about the private lives of composers in any case. Among the exceptions is the report that Nicholas Gombert was sentenced to the galleys for violating a choirboy whilst in the service of Emperor Charles V; see Hieronymus Cardanus, *Writings on Music,* ed. and trans. Clement A. Miller, Musicological Studies and Documents, XXXII (American Institute of Musicology, 1973), 30–32 and 210–11, and Clement A. Miller, "Jerome Cardan on Gombert, Phinot, and Carpentras," *The Musical Quarterly,* LVIII (1972), 412–19, at 413–15. The 16th century has not left us a musical counterpart to Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Architects, Sculptors, and Painters* (1550). Tantalizingly, however, the German theorist Hermann Finck announced in his *Practica musica* of 1556, fol. Aij$^{v}$, that he would publish a book about the major composers of his time, including Ockeghem, Obrecht, Josquin, La Rue, Brumel, Isaac, Clemens, Hellinck, and many others: "I will review these, and others whom I have not mentioned here, in another little book. And there I will add many things regarding the life and pursuits of these men themselves, both ancients and more recent [composers], not only everything I have seen and read myself, but also what I have been able to learn from the reports of others." It would be a musicologist's dream come true if this book, or Finck's drafts for it, were to surface in a manuscript collection some day.

[28] Glarean, *Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller, II, 265; *Dodekachordon,* 363: "Aiunt enim qui nouerunt, multa cunctatione, multifariaque correctione sua edidisse, nec, nisi aliquot annis apud se detinuisset, ullum in publicum emisisse cantum, contra atque Iacobus Hobrecht." Manlius, *Locorum communium collectanea,* 542; quoted after Osthoff, *Josquin des Prez,* 1, 220: "Quoties novam cantilenam composuerat, dedit eam cantoribus canendam, et interea ipse circumambulabat, attente audiens, an harmonia congrueret. Si non placeret, ingressus: Tacete, inquit, ego mutabo."

> Whenever he had composed a new song, he gave it to the singers to be sung, and meanwhile he walked around, listening attentively whether the concordant sound came together well. If he was dissatisfied, he stepped in: "Be silent," he said, "I will change it!"
>
> Those who knew him say that he published his works after much deliberation and with manifold corrections; neither did he release a song to the public unless he had kept it to himself for some years, the opposite of what Obrecht appears to have done.

Josquin's portrayal in the first report is already telling. Although it is not remarkable in itself that he needed to hear his new music performed,[29] there is an unstated code of interaction in this little scene which is at least noteworthy. Whoever employed these singers, they seem to be at Josquin's beck and call. It is taken as completely self-evident that they will sight-read his finished drafts whenever he needs to hear them. The composer can stop and dismiss them in mid-performance without owing them any explanation. Indeed, although he is presumably their colleague, he does not condescend to await their response let alone ask their advice (One could easily imagine another anecdote about some unfortunate singer who was scolded for suggesting a minor emendation; or a *maestro* who was ridiculed for the same reason.) The implication here is obvious: no one comes between Josquin and his music. In fact, no one gets to see his latest work for years —or so claim those who knew him, as opposed, one might say, to the world, which knew him not.[30]



There is thus a fourth theme, closely related to the first: Josquin's works are seen to have their origins wholly in the private, inner world of his creative mind—a world to which others have no access except through the music he has already allowed to circulate. So determined is he that a new composition should match his inner musical conception, that he has it sung to him in order to discover even the slightest imperfection. Even when Josquin's inner conception has been realized on

[29] There is evidence to suggest that this was normal practice for composers until at least the mid-16th century, when score notation became more widely current; see Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450–1600* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 55–56.

[30] This attitude is not without parallels in the literary sphere. William Prizer has cited a letter of the Ferrarese poet Antonio Tebaldeo, dated 10 Jan. 1491, in which he explains to Isabella d'Esta, marchesa of Mantua: "I do not give any of my [poems] out because I want to change and improve them from day to day, and, if some were out, my [poems] would be stolen by some of my companions." William F. Prizer, "Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Borgia as Patrons of Music: The Frottola at Mantua and Ferrara," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXXVIII (1985), 1–33, at 11 n. 46.

paper, it remains firmly within the fence surrounding his private sphere. Evidently the only artistic criteria by which his drafts are to be emended are those dictated by his unique musical vision. No one else can help him here. And when he finally unveils the result of that intensely personal effort—one can only wonder what sort of occasion that might have been—the terms of its public reception are clearly defined: whatever the liturgical function or potential usefulness of the piece, it is to be heard principally as the accomplishment of its author.

I will return to these themes in the second section below, but for now we must address some obvious reservations that could be voiced. Most important, are any of these themes actually germane to our knowledge of the historical Josquin—as opposed to the way he was perceived? Might they not merely reflect the wishful thinking of his contemporaries, their constructions and fabrications? Certainly the themes give the impression of being a little stereotyped, as if there was a prevailing image of the "artist genius" which recollections about Josquin were somehow selected and tailored to fit. Yet if we must consider this as at least a possibility, would it not be safer to relegate the anecdotes to the realm of reception history, and to place the biography of Josquin on a more secure footing by grounding it exclusively in hard, documentary evidence?



The answer to these questions may be a truism, but it bears repeating nevertheless: even in documentary evidence there exist no pure, clean facts uncontaminated by the sense that people made of them at the time, or that historians might make of them today. We may dismiss the contemporary image of Josquin as "merely anecdotal," but why should documents necessarily be innocent of that image—or some other one? When it comes to anecdotes, moreover, it might well be over-scrupulous to dismiss all of them, even the patently spurious ones, as irrelevant to our understanding of Josquin. Although he was obviously in a position to discredit false stories about him, and might well have done so, that does not mean that their underlying sense necessarily conflicted with his own way of thinking. To give an example, even if he never actually dreamed up Cimello's "double man" conceit, as seems likely, it may well be that he enjoyed ridiculing philistines and know-alls —who wouldn't? Or that he encouraged others to think he did. Indeed, given that so many composers are known to have purposely engineered their public image, and some easily outdid their contemporaries in the fabrication of falsehoods,[31] why should we assume that

[31] For a well-known if not uncontroversial example, see Maynard Solomon, "Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity," *Journal of the American Musicological Society,* XL (1987), 443–70.

Josquin was distinguished for his disinterested concern to certify *wie es eigentlich gewesen*? He would hardly have been the only composer in history to tell exaggerated but flattering stories about himself—or, for that matter, to believe them to be true on some level.

When it comes to the sense that modern historians make of documents, it is possible to show the tenacious influence of anecdotes even on issues of marginal biographical importance. For example, it is a documented fact that Josquin disappears from the payment records of Duke Ercole d'Este of Ferrara after 22 April 1504.[32] It is also a documented fact that he was formally admitted as a canon of the Church of Our Lady at Condé on 3 May 1504, eleven days later.[33] Lewis Lockwood has made historical sense of these facts by suggesting that Josquin decided to leave because of a lingering plague epidemic: "Josquin's departure from Ferrara could have been a purely prudent gesture. Chroniclers and letter writers tell us that in July 1503 plague broke out at Ferrara and lasted throughout the summer and autumn."[34] This makes good sense: it would be consistent with the "merely anecdotal" image of Josquin to assume that he was fully in charge of his career, and that the decisive factor behind such a major decision would have been a personal one.[35]



Yet it is also inconsistent with other evidence. For one thing, as a servant in the retinue of the Duke of Ferrara, Josquin was not going anywhere—not even for a week—without the express approval of his lord. This, too, could be said to be a documented fact. For instance, when Ercole's singer Bartolomeo de Fiandra wanted to go home for three months, in August 1502, both he and the court agent Girolamo da Sestola had to submit written requests for permission, citing every conceivable argument in favor of the leave.[36] There are several other documented cases which suggest that running off without authorization was almost like becoming a fugitive from the law. For instance, when Alexander Agricola left the court of France without permission, in 1491, letters demanding his immediate return were sent to every court in Italy where French agents traced him.[37] At the very least, therefore,

[32] Lewis Lockwood, "Josquin at Ferrara: New Documents and Letters," in Lowinsky and Blackburn, eds., *Josquin des Prez*, 103–37, at 114–15 and 136.

[33] Kellman, "Josquin and the Courts of the Netherlands and France," 207.

[34] *Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400–1505* (Oxford, 1984), 205.

[35] So much sense does this interpretation make that another Josquin scholar has already accepted it as an established fact; see Willem Elders, "Josquin's *Absolve, quaesumus, Domine:* A Tribute to Obrecht?" *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* XXXVII (1987), 14–24, at 21.

[36] Lockwood, "Josquin at Ferrara," 129–31.

[37] See Martin Picker, "A Letter of Charles VIII of France Concerning Alexander Agricola," in Jan LaRue et al., eds., *Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music: A Birthday Offering to Gustave Reese* (New York, 1966), 665–72, and Allan W. Atlas, "Alexander Agricola

Josquin would have had to explain the reasons for his resignation to Ercole, and wait for his lord's decision. In this connection one wonders whether the Duke of Ferrara would have been favorably impressed by the suggestion that his court was liable to become infested with the plague. It was something else if Josquin had to flee for his life, of course, but in fact he left Ferrara nearly a year after the disease first emerged. What would have carried much more weight, I suggest, is a formal request from the church of Condé—just as Ercole himself, in 1487, had asked the church of St. Donatian's, Bruges, to release their choirmaster Jacob Obrecht for a six-month visit to Ferrara.[38]

Of course, in view of the anecdotal image, and of our own estimation of Josquin, it can only strike us as demeaning that a composer of his stature would have had to defer to higher authorities in such a matter. Yet I suppose that this is precisely why stories like that of *Memor esto* and *Missa La sol fa re mi* were so meaningful. They played on the obvious tension between the realities of his professional existence and his dignity as a creative artist.[39] Awareness of these literally patronizing conditions shines through in another of Glarean's anecdotes about Josquin and Louis XII, when he concludes: "The king laughed merrily at the trick and gladly dismissed the composer with a present and with the desired favor."[40] *Exit* servant, and back to international statesmanship. And with this, paradoxically, we seem to have established an informative connection between documents and the anecdotal image after all.



So in trying to make historical sense of two documented facts, Josquin's departure from Ferrara and his arrival at Condé, we have been moving back and forth between anecdotes, the image they project, and the archival records. As this example suggests, it may be nearly impossible to extricate the influence of anecdotes from our interpretation of the documentary sources. Even as we recognize their dubious value as biographical testimony, their underlying sense seems to influence the very conclusions we might like to be based on hard evidence

and Ferrante I of Naples," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXX (1977), 313–19. Of course one is also reminded of Johann Sebastian Bach, who was imprisoned and then dismissed in disgrace, in 1717, for being too insistent after the Duke of Weimar had refused to let him go.

[38] Rob C. Wegman, *Born for the Muses: The Life and Masses of Jacob Obrecht* (Oxford, 1994), 139–41.

[39] Lowinsky, "Musical Genius," 484–85; Wegman, "From Maker to Composer," 468–69.

[40] "Risit machinamentum Rex hilariter, ac cum gaudio hominem dimisit nec indonatum, nec absque optata gratia." Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, trans. Miller, II, 284; *Dodekachordon*, 468. It is not clear from the anecdote what favor Josquin had desired from the king, though it seems significant that this is the third story in which some favor was granted in response to a new composition.

alone. Whether that is a bad thing or not is open to discussion. On the one hand it seems reassuring that we tend to understand Josquin on the same terms as his contemporaries understood him. On the other hand, it is surely not without relevance that all anecdotes about the composer date from after his lifetime, in some cases as much as half a century or more. This ties in with a point made earlier: what we are witnessing in these stories may well be the remnants of a largely posthumous tradition—one from which we might conceivably wish to maintain reflexive distance.

There seems to be a way out of this dilemma, however. It is offered by the most famous Josquin document, and the one that is most frequently cited in discussions of his personality and creative temperament. I am referring, of course, to the letter of Gian de Artiganova to Ercole d'Este, dated 2 September 1502, in which Josquin is compared to Heinrich Isaac.[41] At the risk of rehearsing an already over-familiar story, both composers were at this time being considered for the vacant position of *maestro di cappella* at the Ferrarese court. Two agents scouted and negotiated on the duke's behalf, and sent back letters advising him in this important matter. Girolamo de Sestola *dicto* il Coglia had met Josquin and was ecstatic about the possibility of his coming to Ferrara: "My Lord, I believe that there is neither lord nor king who will now have a better chapel than yours if Your Lordship sends for Josquin . . . by having Josquin in our chapel I want to place a crown upon this chapel of ours." But Gian de Artiganova, in his letter of 2 September, reported the recent arrival in Ferrara of Isaac, and warmly recommended the latter to the duke. Since the implications of this document will concern us in much of what follows, it may be helpful to cite the relevant section here once more:



> Most Illustrious Lord: I must notify Your Lordship that Isaac the singer has been in Ferrara, and has written a motet on a *fantasia* entitled "La mi la so la so la mi" which is very good, and he wrote it in two days. From this one can only judge that he is very rapid in the art of composition; besides, he is good-natured and easy to get along with, and it seems to me that he is the right man for Your Lordship. Signor Don Alfonso bade me ask him if he would like to join Your Lordship's service, and he replied that he would rather be in your service than in that of any other lord whom he knows, and that he does not reject the proposal; and he has taken the period of one month to reply as to

[41] For this and what follows, see Lockwood, "Josquin at Ferrara," 109–14 and 130–33.

> whether he will serve or not. We have accepted that term for taking him into service (only in order to advise you about it) and we have promised him 10 ducats a month, provided that you approve, and we ask you if you will deign to let us know if you approve of this or not. To me he seems well suited to serve Your Lordship, more so than Josquin, because he is of a better disposition among his companions, and he will compose new works more often. It is true that Josquin composes better, but he composes when he wants to, and not when one wants him to, and he is asking 200 ducats in salary while Isaac will come for 120—but Your Lordship will decide.

This letter, as many scholars have pointed out, fits magically with the anecdotal profile of Josquin, and seems to provide it with a firm documentary underpinning. The reference to Isaac's "better disposition among his companions" confirms Josquin's contemporary image as a stern, inaccessible, secretive artist—a man who might conceivably trample on sensitivities by ridiculing *maestri* who graced the court with their learning and scholarship. Josquin's insistence on a salary of 200 ducats, vastly more than that of any other singer in the history of the chapel, appears to reflect the same superiority that anecdotes report about his conduct towards fellow-musicians. And it is not surprising to learn that he "composes when he wants to," since, as we infer from several stories, composition is an intimately personal and private matter for him, brooking no interference or outside pressure. As Edward Lowinsky concluded: "A picture emerges of an altogether original character, endowed with a strong temperament and a deep sense of obligation to his genius, an individual utterly unwilling and unable to compromise in matters of his art."[42] Would it be at all warranted, in the light of this document, to continue speaking of a "merely anecdotal" image, perpetuated by a "largely posthumous" tradition?



And yet, there are some difficulties with this reading. To begin with, even if it is true about a candidate for a musical position that he is less easy to get along with than another, that does not necessarily make him an artistic genius, of course. One needs only to browse through the chapter acts of numerous late-medieval churches to learn how well musicians were known to get along with one another. To mention just one example, on 14 August 1558 two singers of Courtrai, Johannes Bertram and Raphael de Nootere, were reprimanded for fighting in the sacristy during High Mass: Bertram had boxed De Nootere on the ear because the latter, entering from the choir, "intruded in a discussion which the

[42] Lowinsky, "Musical Genius," 485.

same Bertram had with several others concerning the difference and value of musical notes."[43] Of course, these two men were not composers. But then the following is documented, in 1461, about Antoine Busnoys—one of the most prodigiously gifted composers of the fifteenth century: "[He] beat a certain priest in the cloister of the [cathedral of Tours], and arranged to have him beaten by others, and encouraged these beatings, at five separate times, such that blood was shed."[44] As Paula Higgins has emphasized, incidents like these only exemplify the widespread phenomenon of clerical violence in the late Middle Ages, and might well be misconstrued if we selectively attributed them, in the case of composers, to artistic temperament.[45]

Even setting aside the issue of how to interpret Josquin's apparent temper, it is open to question whether he was actually as unpopular as the letter seems to make out. While Gian draws attention to Isaac's "better disposition" among fellow-singers, his colleague Sestola (who favors Josquin) can report that "the entire chapel" wishes to write to Ercole that he should appoint Josquin.[46] That would not appear to suggest a musician whose daily company was expected to create significant problems. (In fact, if Sestola was right it might well have been Isaac's appointment that was likely to cause discontent among the singers.) True, Josquin was superior: we can tell this from the salary he demanded. Yet although the figure of 200 ducats may seem exorbitant in comparison with Isaac's 120, it did not exactly break the record. Nine years previously, in February 1493, Alexander Agricola had negotiated an annual salary of 300 ducats when King Ferrante I of Naples tried to lure him from the French royal court—a sum which comfortably exceeds Josquin's 200.[47]



[43] ". . . ingessit se questioni quam idem Bertram habebat cum nonnullis alijs super differentia et valore notarum musicalium"; G. Schmidt-Görg, "Die Acta Capitularia der Notre-Dame-Kirche zu Kortrijk als musikgeschichtliche Quelle," *Vlaamsch Jaarboek voor Muziekgeschiedenis* I (1939), 21–80, at 62 doc. 359.

[44] Pamela F. Starr, "Rome as the Centre of the Universe: Papal Grace and Music Patronage," *Early Music History* XI (1992), 223–62, at 249–51 and 260.

[45] Paula Higgins, "Musical Politics in Late Medieval Poitiers: A Tale of Two Choirmasters," in Paula Higgins, ed., *Antoine Busnoys: Method, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music* (Oxford, 1999), 155–74, at 161–62.

[46] Lockwood, "Josquin at Ferrara," 113 and 131.

[47] Atlas, "Alexander Agricola and Ferrante I of Naples," 317. There is a possibility that Ferrante's offer was made in a different currency from the one referred to in Gian's letter. However, Atlas points out (ibid., n. 18): "It is a safe assumption that the letters of both Ferrante and Gian refer to the *ducato d'oro,* and that we need not, therefore, take into account differences in local currency. Yet, even if by some chance Ferrante's offer was made in terms of *ducati di moneta di conto,* Agricola's would-be salary is not drastically altered. According to an entry in an account book of Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, dating from December 4, 1490, the ducat of gold and that of 'money of account' stood in Naples in a ratio of 1:1.15."

As for Josquin's apparent refusal to write new compositions on commission, it is certainly possible to read this as a statement of artistic independence. Yet there are a number of things one might take into consideration. At this time, there was only one composer in history who had ever worked under terms of employment that included composition on demand: Heinrich Isaac. Five years previously, on 3 April 1497, he had been appointed court composer of Maximilian I of Habsburg, signing a contract in which he declared "that I will use my art for the needs of his royal chapel, and will do all that a true composer and servant is obliged to do."[48] Isaac's unique experience as court composer was an obvious asset, and Gian understandably took care to bring it to the attention of the duke. However, the claim that Josquin "composes when he wants to" may imply no more than had been true of every late-medieval musician except Isaac. Indeed, the large majority of professional singers chose not to compose at all, and those who did could not expect to obtain any income from it, let alone a paid position as court composer. It is quite possible, in fact, that Josquin simply never expected that composition on demand might be among his duties: apart from the one precedent of Isaac's 1497 appointment, there was no particular reason why he should. What Gian seems to be saying, then, is this: if Josquin writes new works when he chooses, like every other musician except Isaac, it does not make any difference whether you hire him or not. For although he may be the better composer, copies of his music, once released, are bound to reach Ferrara in any case, even without the treasury having to shell out 200 ducats a year. Isaac, on the other hand, is not only less expensive, but he offers the unique advantage of delivering new works when commissioned, exclusively for the court.



Let us step back and consider the implications of this. There is no question that Gian's letter can be seen to make good historical sense in the light of later anecdotes about Josquin. Yet it can also be seen to make different sense in the light of archival documents. The perceived significance of this document seems to depend, then, on whatever evidence we choose to bring to bear on it—and ultimately that must be an arbitrary decision. As I said before, even in documentary evidence there exist no pure, clean facts uncontaminated by the sense that people made of them at the time, or that historians might make of them today. Obviously we would like to recover the sense that Gian sought to

[48] For this and what follows, see Wegman, "From Maker to Composer," 465–67, and id., "Who Was Josquin?" in Richard Sherr, ed., *The Josquin Companion* (Oxford, 2000), in press. See also Hansjörg Pohlmann, *Die Frühgeschichte des musikalischen Urheberrechts (ca. 1400–1800)* (Kassel, 1962), 21–24.

communicate to Ercole. But if that is our goal, one cannot help wondering whether the letter has seemed to confirm the later anecdotes simply because our modern readings were conditioned by them. After all, nineteenth-century scholars could report Glarean's stories long before this document appeared to confirm their credibility.[49] With this we seem to have come full circle, hermeneutically speaking: we have tried to back up the anecdotal image with Gian's letter, only to discover that it may not provide the needed support unless backed up, in turn, by the anecdotal image.

I have stressed that there is inevitably an element of arbitrariness about our selections of relevant evidence. Yet this does not mean that the interpretation of Gian's letter is a fundamentally undecidable issue. There is ample scope for discussion as to whether one reading makes better historical sense than another. That would involve us in nothing more confusing or problematic than the evaluation of competing hypotheses. On the other hand, there will always be the potential for new evidence to turn up, evidence which might conceivably cast a different light on the matter, and lead us in other directions. It is on this note that we may now turn to the second section of this paper.



## II

We remain at the court of Ferrara but move back sixty years in time, to the year 1442. This is the date of a treatise on human physiognomy, *Physionomia,* written by Michele Savonarola. He was the court physician of Marquis Leonello d'Este, and grandfather of Girolamo Savonarola, the notorious Dominican preacher who was burned at the stake at Florence in 1498 on charges of heresy.[50] A doctor of medicine, Michele was born around 1384, trained at the University of Padua, and on the faculty there from 1412 to 1440. His appointment as court physician at Ferrara—at a salary of 400 ducats, by the way—came in September 1440, and from then on he served in this position until his death in 1468.

Michele dedicated his *Physionomia* to Marquis Leonello. It was never printed, but two manuscript copies, dated 1465 and 1491, survive in Venice and Paris. There is no modern edition, and the treatise is

[49] The letter was first published in 1882 by Edmond Vander Straeten, *La musique aux Pays-Bas avant le XIX^e siècle,* 8 vols. (Brussels, 1867–88) VI, 87–88.

[50] For an accessible overview of Michele's life, see Massimi Alberini, *Breve storia di Michele Savonarola seguita da un Compendio del suo "Libreto de tutte le cosse che se manzano,"* 2 vols. (Padua, 1991), I, 19–38. I have not been able to consult Arnaldo Segarizzi, *Della vita e delle opere di Michele Savonarola* (Padua, 1900). On Girolamo and music, see now Patrick Macey, *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy* (Oxford, 1998).

mainly known today from a thoughtful discussion in Lynn Thorndike's *History of Magic and Experimental Science.*[51] Thorndike drew attention to several side remarks of the physician, and one of these is of particular interest to our discussion. Here, Michele reports the popular view that every artist is a bit bizarre. The relevant passage reads as follows:[52]

> For those who excel in some art appear to have a quality of melancholy, in that such persons are said by ordinary people to lack prudence to some degree. For like melancholics they are fixed in their opinions; they are neither softened by entreaties to exercising the activities of their art, as we frequently see happen with singers and those experienced on lutes [or other plucked string instruments], nor do they carry such activities to a conclusion unless moved by their own *fantasia.* And ordinary people call such persons *bizari,* and say that no one can be an excellent artist unless he suffers to some extent from *bizaria;* from this flaw of *bizaria* the excellent physician must be altogether free.

This comment is clearly relevant to Gian's letter. Apart from anything else, it confirms that some sort of artistic independence was avowed by singers and lute players already by the early fifteenth century. As Michele reports, certain musicians are so self-willed and melancholic that they refuse to perform unless their own *fantasia* happens to move them. This attitude is encountered not just occasionally but frequently—so frequently that ordinary people tend to identify such musicians, as well as other artists, as *bizzarri.* Paradoxically, their unconventional behavior does not elicit public censure so much as further the perception that they must be extraordinarily gifted. In fact, one cannot be an excellent artist (or so people say) without having at least a touch of the bizarre.



In light of this comment (in a treatise of which Duke Ercole must have inherited the presentation copy), it is not difficult to imagine a possible subtext to Gian's claim that Josquin "composes when he wants

[51] Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science,* 8 vols. (New York, 1923–58) IV, 190–97.

[52] "Nam in arte aliqua excellentes certe aliquid melancholie habere videntur eo quod tales aliqua ex parte prudentia carere a vulgo dicuntur. Sunt enim ut melancholici in opinionibus fixi neque precibus ad exercendum artis operationes molliuntur ut in cantoribus et fidibus doctis sepe contingere videmus, neque eas operationes non nisi propria a fantasia moti perfectas conficiunt. Et hos bizaros vulgares nominant aitque vulgus neminem artificem excellentem esse posse nisi aliqua ex parte bizaria vexetur a qua culpa bizarie excellens medicus omnino vacuus esse debet." Thorndike, *History of Magic and Experimental Science* IV, 196 n. 56. I am grateful to Leofranc Holford-Strevens for emending my translation.

to." One is almost tempted to read between the lines: he may be excellent, but then he is one of those, you know, *bizarre* musicians. Yet we need to proceed with caution. There are a number of reservations that could be expressed here. To begin with, the idea that artists tend to be afflicted by melancholy and its symptoms was of course hardly a novel one. As a doctor of medicine and philosophy, Michele may well have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the well-known "problem" then thought to have been posed by Aristotle:[53]

> Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholics, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile? . . . For many [poets] have bodily diseases as the result of this kind of temperament; some of them have only a clear constitutional tendency towards such afflictions, but to put it briefly, all of them are, as has been said before, melancholics by constitution.

This influential "problem" could still be said to resonate in Michele's remark. On the other hand, it is also clear that he is not merely rehearsing a received medical opinion, based purely on scholarly authorities. For he stresses three times that the view was current among the *vulgus*—ordinary people, who could scarcely have known about pseudo-Aristotle's *Problematum* or its commentaries. Still, even here it might be possible to object that this could well have amounted to a vague prejudice about artists in general. Art historians, as well known, have done extensive research on perceptions of artistic behavior in the Renaissance, and they have found much material that could be seen to bear out Michele's comment. To mention just one example, in the late fourteenth-century *Trecentonovelle* of Franco Sacchetti, the unfaithful wife of a Florentine painter is heard to exclaim: "You painters are all fanciful and temperamental (*fantastichi e lunatichi*); you are always getting drunk and are not even ashamed of yourselves!"[54] The danger in assembling such collateral evidence, it seems, is that the



[53] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London, 1964), 18–19; see also the corrected and updated German translation, *Saturn und Melancholie: Studien zur Geschichte der Naturphilosophie und Medizin, der Religion und der Kunst,* trans. Christa Buschendorf (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), 59–61. With regard to musicians in particular, the eccentric behavior noted by Savonarola may have a classical parallel already in Horace, *Satira,* I. iii. 1–3: "All singers have this fault: if asked to sing among their friends they are never so inclined; if unasked, they never leave off."

[54] "Che maladetto sia chi mai maritò nessuna femina ad alcuno dipintore, ché siete tutti fantastichi e lunatichi, e sempre andate inebbriando e non vi vergognate." Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle,* ed. Emilio Faccioli (Turin, 1970), 225.

historical picture becomes diluted just when we would like it to be more precise. That is why we may not expect much help even from the most comprehensive study of historical perceptions of artistic behavior, Rudolf and Margot Wittkower's *Born Under Saturn*.[55] When perusing this richly-documented and entertaining history of madness, depression, obsession with work, idleness, solitude, suicide, cleanliness mania, weird hobbies, obscenity, debauchery, rape, abstinence, sodomy, jealousy, extravagant spending, theft, fighting, murder, and much else besides, it is hard not to wonder whether all this does not amount simply to a fair description of the human condition—at least as experienced by one half of humanity. The particular problem at issue here, on the other hand, is a letter which makes specific claims about a composer. It is their precise sense and implications that we would like to explore.

And yet, Michele's observation is clearly a unique piece of evidence. As far as I know he is the only fifteenth-century author who illustrates the eccentric behavior of artists by invoking the example of practical musicians—not, as one might expect, painters, sculptors, or poets. And on closer inspection his comment does seem to offer the sort of precision we have been looking for. This is because he construes artistic behavior specifically on the terms of medieval faculty psychology. As his comment implies, *bizzarria* is not a frame of mind which professionals are required to develop to meet the specific demands of their art. Rather, it springs from their psychological makeup, their mental and physical constitution, and this is what accounts for both their excellence and their eccentricity.



Of course, that, too, may not be new as far as artists in general are concerned. However, the value of Michele's comment lies in three key terms which he brings to bear on this phenomenon—none of which are associated in quite this way with music elsewhere: *bizzarria, fantasia,* and *melancholia.* These terms, as we will see, point to an underlying model of creative activity, a model which—given Michele's threefold emphasis on "ordinary people"—may well have influenced Gian's letter and perhaps even the later anecdotes. The pervasive and enduring influence of that model may be illustrated by a document written nearly 160 years after Savonarola's treatise. In an undated letter from the late sixteenth century, Luigi Zenobi, responding to six questions from an unnamed prince about the qualities and skills needed in good musicians, addresses the difference between "true musicians" and those who

[55] Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (New York, 1963). See also Edgar Zilsel, *Die Entstehung des Geniebegriffes: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Antike und des Frühkapitalismus* (Tübingen, 1926; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1972), 269–74.

merely pretend to be musicians.[56] Like Savonarola, Zenobi observes that talented musicians do not always perform when asked to—though he ascribes this behavior not to melancholy, or to the workings of their *fantasia,* but rather to a justifiable disdain for unworthy listeners. He adds that such musicians are often called *bizzarri, fantastici,* and *lunatici,* terms so resonant with overtones of artistic excellence that many untalented men affect the same behavior in order to earn these titles:

> Those who pretend to be musicians sin mostly in this respect: they see a man of real and rare talent refusing to play or sing readily at the request of those not worthy of hearing him, without discrimination, being called *bizzarri, fantastici,* and *lunatici.* The poseurs, therefore, who affect to pass for men of talent, they too play the *bizzarro,* the *fantastico,* and the *lunatico,* always out of place and unreasonably, and for that they are called half-wits and stupid, and rightly so, for they are like bearers who want to play colonels and generals. But their madness can easily be unmasked, either with a good meal or with four shillings, and they bray and strum and pound so that they become disgusting and nauseating to everybody.



Although neither report dates from within Josquin's lifetime, Savonarola and Zenobi agree on such specific details that it seems reasonable to postulate a continuous tradition stretching from (at least) the 1440s to the end of the sixteenth century. We will see in the following pages that there is much evidence to bear this out.

What could be the connection between *bizzarria, fantasia,* and *melancholia?* Let us begin by reviewing briefly the significance of these terms in the fifteenth century. To begin with melancholy, this was usually understood to mean either of two things. The melancholic complexion was a temperament defined by a constitutional preponderance of black bile—one of the four humors—in the human body, and accounted for a range of physiognomy and personality traits. Yet melancholy was also a pathological condition, arising from harmful excess of black bile in the body and hence requiring medical treatment. Symptoms of the illness could include anything from brooding, depression, epilepsy, palsy, and lethargy, to delusion and downright insanity. Melancholy is of considerable interest to the music historian, if only because music was considered one of the most powerful treatments for this condition.[57]

[56] For this and what follows, see Bonnie J. Blackburn and Edward E. Lowinsky, "Luigi Zenobi and his Letter on the Perfect Musician," *Studi musicali* XXII (1993), 61–114, esp. 89 and 106–7.

[57] For an excellent overview, see Werner Friedrich Kümmel, *Musik und Medizin: Ihre Wechselbeziehung in Theorie und Praxis von 800 bis 1800,* Freiburger Beiträge zur

Of more immediate relevance to our discussion, perhaps, is the fundamental reconceptualization of melancholy by the neo-platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino, in the 1480s.[58] Ficino viewed the "saturnine" temperament of melancholics as a divine gift bestowed on those born under Saturn, and associated this condition with Plato's "divine mania." According to him, only the melancholic temperament was capable of the creative frenzy of poets and artists spoken of by Plato.[59]

Turning now to *fantasia,* this was one of the "inner senses" identified in medieval psychology—others being common sense, imagination, instinct, and memory.[60] Like the latter, *fantasia* was thought to have a discrete location in the brain, in one of the so-called chambers or ventricles.[61] By this faculty, humans were able to create new images and ideas from forms stored in the memory or in the imagination. In addition, *fantasia* denoted any thought or image produced by this

Wissenschafts- und Universitätsgeschichte, ii (Freiburg [Breisgau] and Munich, 1977), esp. 285–306. See also Günter Bandmann, *Melancholie und Musik* (Cologne, 1960), and Werner Kümmel, "Melancholie und die Macht der Musik: Die Krankheit König Sauls in der historischen Diskussion," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* IV (1969), 189–209. The classic study of melancholy is Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy.*



[58] For this and what follows, see Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy,* 254–74.

[59] It is important to note, however, that the connection between artistic eccentricity and melancholy was prominent already in the late 14th-century Parisian society of *fumeurs,* led by the poet Eustache Deschamps, and apparently involving the musicians Solage and Johannes Symonis *dit* Hasprois (who composed the rondeau *Fumeux fume* and the ballade *Puisque je sui fumeux,* respectively). On this connection, especially in the poetics of Deschamps, see Henrik Heger, *Die Melancholie bei den französischen Lyrikern des Spätmittelalters* (Bonn, 1967), 153–66.

[60] Literature on the subject is extensive. See Murray W. Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought,* University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, vol. xii, nos. 2–3 (Urbana, 1927; repr. Norwood, Pa., 1977); Francis A. Walsh, "Phantasm and Phantasy: A Study in Terms," *The New Scholasticism* IX (1935), 116–33; Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," *Harvard Theological Review* XXVIII (1935), 69–133; E. Ruth Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1975); Katharine Park, "Picos *De imaginatione* in der Geschichte der Philosophie," introduction to Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, *Über die Vorstellung: De imaginatione,* ed. and trans. Eckhard Keßler (Munich, 1984), 16–40; Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, "Φαντασία und Einbildungskraft: Zur Vorgeschichte eines Leitbegriffs der europäischen Ästhetik," *Poetica: Zeitschrift für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft* XVIII (1986), 197–248; Gerard Watson, *Phantasia In Classical Thought* (Galway, 1988); Francis Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques de la littérature narrative médiévale (XIIème–XIIIème siècles): L'Autre, l'Ailleurs, l'Autrefois,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1991), esp. I, 31–59. For the meaning and significance of *fantasia* in Italian, see also Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana,* 19 vols. to date (Turin, 1961– ) V, 642–47.

[61] Cf. Walter Pagel, "Medieval and Renaissance Contributions to Knowledge of the Brain and Its Functions," in *The History and Philosophy of Knowledge of the Brain and Its Functions* (Springfield, Ill., 1958), 95–114, esp. 97–103, and Nicholas H. Steneck, "Albert the Great on the Classification and Localization of the Internal Senses," *Isis* LXV (1974), 193–211, esp. 201–02; Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* (New York, Westport, Conn., and London, 1990), 53–76.

faculty, including artistic ideas or designs, but also dreams, delusions, and hallucinations. In Gian's letter, quoted earlier, we saw that Isaac had composed a motet upon a *fantasia* called "La mi la so la so la mi." Here, it is an eight-note motif which is qualified as a *fantasia:* an original idea or invention. The word *fantasia* as a conventional designation for a musical genre (usually keyboard or lute pieces in improvisatory style) is not attested before the beginning of the sixteenth century.[62]

*Bizzarria,* finally, was an Italian vernacular term, in use since at least the late thirteenth century. Its original and principal meaning was quick temper: a person was *bizzarro* or *bizzarra* if he or she was prone to sudden and violent outbursts of anger, often at the slightest provocation.[63] (An example might be the anecdote about Josquin lashing out at the singer who had added ornaments to his music, quoted earlier.) In the early fifteenth century *bizzarro* acquired the additional connotation of "strange,"[64] and in the course of the sixteenth it became richly invested with aesthetic overtones. "The bizarre" features prominently, for example, in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550).[65] It was a key concept in his critical vocabulary, especially



[62] Dagmar Teepe, *Die Entwicklung der Fantasie für Tasteninstrumente im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert: eine gattungsgeschichtliche Studie,* Kieler Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft XXXVI (Kassel and New York, 1990); Thomas Schipperges and Dagmar Teepe, "Fantasie," in Ludwig Finscher, ed., *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* Sachteil, 9 vols. (Kassel and New York, 1994– ), III, 316–45, esp. 316.

[63] As in Boccaccio's commentary on Dante, *Inferno,* viii. 62: "*E 'l Fiorentino spirito bizarro,* that is, quick-tempered; I believe this word *bizarro* is uniquely Florentine, and is always used in a pejorative sense. We call those people *bizzarri* who are quickly angered, even for the slightest reason, and cannot be persuaded to calm down"; cf. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy,* trans. and comm. Charles S. Singleton, 3 vols. (Princeton, 1970–75), 1/2, 127–28. Other attestations of *bizzarro* up to *c.*1375 can be found in the 16.8 million-word electronic text resource *Opera del Vocabulario Italiano* (URL: http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/OVI), and, for later periods, *Liber Liber* (URL: http://www.liberliber.it/home/index.htm). On the etymology and history of the term *bizzarro* until the 19th century, see Fritz Schalk, "Das Wort *bizarr* im Romanischen," in id., *Exempla romanischer Wortgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1964), 21–59, and Horst Bursch, "*bizarr,*" *Romanische Forschungen* LXXXVI (1974), 447–50. By the late 13th century, the word *bigerai* seems to have been in use for jongleurs and traveling entertainers; see Giovanni Villani, *Istorie Fiorentine,* 8 vols. (Milan, 1802–3), III, 160: "onde di Lombardia e di tutta Italia vi traevano buffoni e bigerai" (at a Florentine feast in 1283). The 18th-century historian Lodovico Antonio Muratori assumed *bigerai* to be a derivation from the French language, "where *bigarrè* denotes a man dressed in clothes of diverse colors"; cf. Vito Pandolfi, *La commedia dell'arte: Storia e testo,* 6 vols. (Florence, 1988), I, 45.

[64] The earliest known examples of this semantic expansion appear in the writings of Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472); see Nicoletta Maraschio, "Aspetti del bilinguismo albertiano nel 'De pictura'," *Rinascimento: Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento,* 2nd ser., XII (1972), 183–228, at 225, and especially Luigi Trenti, "Libripeta misantropo: Nota all'intercenale albertiana 'Religio'," *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana* XCI (1987), 39–45, at 44. See also below, n. 87.

[65] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' piú eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri,* ed. Luciano Bellosi and Aldo Rossi (Turin, 1986).

in relation to anything that was ornamental, decorative, or accessory.[66] *Bizzarria,* for Vasari, typically involved the almost unbridled indulging in *fantasia* and *imaginazione,* and impressed the beholder as strange, astonishing, beautiful, eccentric, stupendous, or simply crazy.[67] Interestingly, Vasari singled out several artists as peculiarly bizarre. Here, for instance, is his characterization of the Florentine painter Graffione (1455–1527): "This man was a bizarre and fantastic person (*bizarro e fantastico persona*). In his house he would never eat off any table-cloth save his own cartoons, and he slept in no other bed than a chest filled with straw, without sheets."[68] I have not as yet been able to ascertain the use of *bizzarro* and *bizzarria* among Italian music theorists—though one does occasionally encounter the closely related concept of *stravaganza.* Certainly *bizzarria* was not used by Vasari's contemporary Gioseffo Zarlino, whose aesthetic sensibility was the subject of an important study by James Haar.[69]

Armed with this information, let us now sharpen our interpretive focus by exploring the intersections between these three terms, and their potential bearing on Josquin's image. The most important point to emphasize is that the three concepts shared a fundamental ambivalence. This is most clearly seen in the creative faculty of *fantasia.* On the one hand it allowed poets and artists to dream up new ideas that would astonish their audiences for their novelty and originality. On the other hand, it could equally well lead someone down the path of monstrous visions, nightmares, and delusions, especially if suffering from fever, madness, or melancholy. The ambivalent status of *fantasia* may be



[66] Roland LeMollé, "Le bizarre et le capricieux ou: le vocabulaire de l'insolite et de l'extravagant," ch. 7 of id., *Georges Vasari et le vocabulaire de la critique d'art dans les "Vite"* (Grenoble, 1988), 153–207.

[67] LeMollé, *Georges Vasari,* 163–65: "Le bizarre définit une esthétique qui a pour finalité l'ornement et le décoratif, ce qui sous-entend la prédominance de l'ornement sur la structure, du décoratif sur le fonctionnel, de l'accessoire sur l'essentiel. Le bizarre est associé à des moyens psychologiques, techniques ou de mise en œuvre qui sollicitent essentiellement la fantaisie, mais aussi la finesse, la vérité dans l'expression et l'étonnement. Est également bizarre ce qui provoque la stupeur, le rêve, l'imagination, l'étrangeté, quelquefois l'envie de rire, qui va jusqu'à éblouir l'intelligence, qui se remarque par son excentricité, sa folie, son sens de l'extraordinaire ou du fantastique. Enfin, le bizarre est étroitement lié à tout un arsaenal né avec le Maniérisme florentin . . . il traduit le climat psychologique d'un art nouveau qui s'installe avec sa mythologie propre, ses accessoires et son sens du théâtre."

[68] Vasari, *Le vite,* 368; Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* trans. Gaston du C. de Vere, 2 vols. (New York, 1996), I, 432.

[69] James Haar, "A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Music Criticism," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* XXXVI (1983), 191–209. See also Hermann Zenck, "Zarlino's 'Istitutioni harmoniche' als Quelle zur Musikanschauung der italienischen Renaissance," *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* XII (1930), 540–78. For another study of the critical vocabulary of 16th-century music theorists, see Don Harrán, "Elegance as a Concept in Sixteenth-Century Music Criticism," *Renaissance Quarterly* XLI (1988), 413–38.

illustrated by the following report about a certain Johannes "Orbo," a blind German musician who was reputed to play "marvelously on every instrument." In his case, *fantasia* can only translate as delusion, paranoia, or phobia:[70]

> . . . but there has been the greatest difficulty in the world in convincing him to come even to Mantua because he is the most suspicious man ever heard of and, outside his playing, he lives like a child and has taken this *fantasia:* that Italian instrumentalists will poison him for jealousy. Neither will he eat anything except what my daughter [Margherita of Bavaria] the most illustrious Consort of Federico [I Gonzaga] has prepared for him by her ladies, in whom he has faith because they are from his country; neither will he eat anything prepared by my cooks.

A "bizarre" man like Johannes, who was otherwise an excellent musician, might well have been considered a melancholic by his contemporaries: throughout the Middle Ages, delusions like his *fantasia* had been included among the typical symptoms of this ailment.[71] According to a longstanding tradition, melancholy could cause the faculty of *fantasia* to fill the mind with strange, distorted visions and apparitions —for which reason poetry and music were sometimes regarded as inherently dangerous activities, dwelling on the imaginary and the unreal.[72]



[70] Ludovico Gonzaga to Galeazzo Maria Sforza (11 Mar. 1470): ". . . ma l'è stata la mazore difficultà del mondo a poterlo condurre fin a Mantua perchè l'è un homo el più suspectoso che sentisse mai et del sonare in fori le vive [como] un putino et se ha posta questa fantasia: che li sonatori de Italia per invider, lo debano tosicare: nè vole manzare cosa alcuna se non quello che gli fa fare la Illustrissima fiola consorte de Federico per la via de le donne suoe, de laqual se confida pur per essere de la natione sua; nè mangeria cosa se fasesse per mano de mei cochi." William F. Prizer, *Courtly Pastimes: The Frottole of Marchetto Cara* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1980), 3–4 and 168 n. 22.

[71] Heinrich Schipperges, "Melancolia als ein mittelalterlicher Sammelbegriff für Wahnvorstellungen," *Studium generale* XX (1967), 723–36.

[72] Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination,* 208. For the ambivalent status of poetic "fantasye" in Elizabethan England, see William Rossky, "Imagination in the Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic," *Studies in the Renaissance* V (1958), 49–73. Another well-known example is the comment of Pierre Ronsard in his *Abbregé de l'art poetique français* (1565): "When I tell you that you should invent beautiful and great things, I do not, however, mean those fantastic and melancholy inventions (*inventions fantastiques et mélancoliques*) which have no more relation to one another than the disconnected dreams of a madman, or of some sufferer severely tormented by fever, to whose injured imagination there are represented a thousand monstrous forms without order or connection." Trans. after Pierre Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes,* ed. Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager, and Michel Simonin, 2 vols. (Paris, 1993–94), II, 1178; see also Olivier Pot, *Inspiration et mélancolie: L'épistémologie poétique dans les Amours de Ronsard* (Geneva, 1990). For the ambivalent status of fantasy

Fifteenth-century art theorists had spoken of *fantasia* as the initial idea for the work, the plan, draft, or sketch.[73] The activity by which it was invented was sometimes called *fantasticare.* This was a time-consuming process, which made strenuous demands upon the mental faculties. The process was not wholly within the conscious control of the artist. For instance, the painter Andrea Mantegna wrote to Isabella d'Este, in a letter dated 13 January 1506, that he would not be able to proceed on a promised design unless "*fantasia* comes to my aid." Here we can hear a clear echo of Michele Savonarola's report, "nor do they carry such activities to a conclusion unless moved by their own *fantasia.*" To rely on the unpredictable and erratic workings of the faculty of *fantasia* was to invite the criticism of outsiders, as in the reproach of the Florentine painter's wife, quoted earlier: "You painters are all fanciful (*fantastichi*) and temperamental." In a letter dated 10 November 1504, Isabella d'Este, exasperated at the endless delays of artists, ascribed their tardiness to "the *bizarria* of those painters"—another comment which ties in with Michele Savonarola's report.[74]

This background may help us to appreciate the significance of one of Josquin's earliest compositions, an untexted piece in three parts entitled *Ile fantazies de Joskin.*[75] It survives with this designation in RomeC 2856, a manuscript prepared for Isabella d'Este around 1490 (or earlier), and it is likely to have been composed in the 1480s. Significantly, *Ile fantazies de Joskin* is the first known composition in history to be identified in terms of the concept of *fantasia.* Outside a musical context, such a designation could have carried any number of connotations, including the ideas, fancies, visions, or even delusions of Josquin. Within a musical context, however (and bearing in mind Isaac's motet on an eight-note *fantasia*), it would probably have meant something like: the musical inventions, or ideas, of Josquin. Gregory Butler has attempted



and imagination in the early modern period, see also Murray W. Bundy, "Fracastoro and the Imagination," *Philological Quarterly* XX (1941), 236–49, and Ian Dalrymple McFarlane, "Montaigne and the Concept of the Imagination," in D. R. Haggis et al., eds., *The French Renaissance and Its Heritage: Essays Presented to Alan M. Boase* (London, 1968), 117–37.

[73] Martin Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia': The Quattrocento Vocabulary of Creation, Inspiration and Genius in Visual Arts," *Viator* VIII (1977), 347–403, esp. 361–75. For what follows, see ibid., 374–75.

[74] Isabella d'Este to Paride de' Ceresari: "M. Paris. Non sapemo chi habbi in maggior fastidio la longhezza de li pictori, o nui che non vediamo finito el nostro Camarino, o vui che ogni dì havete ad fare nove inventione; quali poi per la bizarria d'essi pictori, non sono nè cossì presto, nè cossì integralmente designati como vorressimo, et per questo havemo deliberato esperimentare novi pictori per finirlo alli giorni nostri." Fiorenzo Canuti, *Il Perugino,* 2 vols. (Siena, 1931) II, 223, doc. 346.

[75] Josquin des Prés, *Werken,* ed. Albert Smijers, 11 vols. (Amsterdam, 1927–69), Afl. 53: Wereldlijke Werken, bundel IV, 16–17.

to construe the piece along these latter lines, and concluded that "*Fantasies de Joskin* is in fact exactly what the title suggests—a number of 'fantasias of Josquin' which are strung together to form a larger work. There are five of these fantasias, set off from one another by staggered rests in all three voices."[76]

What is perhaps more significant than its formal layout, however, is this: that Josquin, as a virtually unknown composer in his early thirties, should have sent a piece into the world that was announced to be, in some sense, about himself—or at least about his inner musical thoughts, his *fantazies*. Its designation clearly implies that this setting was not composed for anyone else, nor produced on commission. Rather, Josquin is seen to have written it (paraphrasing Michele Savonarola) when moved by his own *fantasia*. In context, this amounts to a resounding affirmation of the composer's creative privacy. To hear this piece—or so its designation promises—is to be drawn into his inner creative world, a world in which we find him freely at play with his musical inventions, unburdened by external pressures or obligations. This, of course, is essentially one of the themes which we have identified in the anecdotes about Josquin.



The assertion of the privacy of the composer's creative world implies a tension with the demands of patrons, employers, and society at large—another theme elaborated in several anecdotes. It is almost as if Josquin declares, at a remarkably early date: whatever else I am obliged to do, this piece, at least, springs spontaneously from my *fantasia*. This apparent tension ties in with a well-established medieval *topos:* that of the poet's sense of alienation at the court, his dejection at the corruption, deceit, and vanity among courtiers, and his hope for consolation in a life devoted to art. This *topos* is best-known to music historians from Phillippe de Vitry's motet *Colla iugo subdere / Bona condit* (?1320s), a complaint about the courtier's dependent life, pointedly based on the tenor *Libera me*.[77] It is also reflected in one of the earliest pieces of bio-

[76] Gregory G. Butler, "The Fantasia as Musical Image," *The Musical Quarterly* LX (1974), 602–15, at 603.

[77] To quote David Howlett's translation of the *triplum:* "One puts one's neck under a yoke by attending at courts, at which disasters are innumerable, good habits few. He who can should be up to living on what is his own. Leave the property of others alone; live in an open square; eat from your own bread; be your own master. If you want money, avoid being mangled by cares. I prefer to nibble a bean and rejoice as a free man than to abound with provisions and be sad as a slave. The duties of a courtier are always to flatter, to utter feigned praises, and to hunt for profits, and to try to take feathers away from the unfeathered, to play up to lords, to compose false things. Woe to those whom the words which are placed below have to sting: There is no faith or piety in men who follow camps." See Andrew Wathey, "The Motets of Philippe de Vitry and the Fourteenth-Century Renaissance," *Early Music History* XII (1993), 119–50, at 138. On humanist critiques of late-medieval court life in general, see Jacques Lemaire, *Les visions de la vie de cour dans la littérature française de la fin du Moyen Âge* (Brussels and Paris, 1994), where Vitry's motet is discussed on pp. 379–82.

graphical evidence we have about Josquin, a sonnet of the poet Serafino dall'Aquila addressed "To Josquin, his companion, musician of Ascanio." This poem must date from the years during which both Serafino and Josquin were in the service of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, from 1484 onwards.[78] It is well-established that Serafino, at least, experienced these years as oppressive, and his sonnet implies that Josquin may have shared that sentiment. Here is Edward Lowinsky's translation:[79]

> Josquin, don't say the heavens are cruel and merciless, that gave you genius so sublime (*sublime ingegno*): and if someone is well dressed, do not mind, for this is the privilege of buffoons and fools. Take your example from these, I pray: silver and gold that bear their value in themselves appear unclothed; but wood is overlaid when stage or temple are bedecked. The favor to those others lent fades fast; a thousand times a day, however pleasant, their status turns from white to black. But who has talent may wander through the world in his own way; like the swimmer wrapped in a vest of cork: put him under water, yet he fears not drowning.



As Lowinsky remarked: "An unforced interpretation of the poem yields nothing more than the poet's wish to comfort a friend, whose genius is universally admired, when he finds him in a depressed mood, seeing around him the easy success of courtiers strutting about in fine dress."[80] Perhaps that was also the reading of Zarlino, who printed the poem in his *Sopplimenti musicali* (1588), and described Josquin as "wailing and lamenting oftentimes with his friends over his *trista fortuna*."[81] In quoting these readings it is not my intention, incidentally, to demonstrate that the composer was somehow clinically melancholic or depressed. He may have been, or he may not have: there simply is no way

[78] Edward E. Lowinsky, "Ascanio Sforza's Life: A Key to Josquin's Biography and an Aid to the Chronology of his Works," in Lowinsky and Blackburn, eds., *Josquin des Prez*, 31–75, esp. 51–60. Joshua Rifkin has advanced compelling arguments against the identification of Josquin d'Ascanio with the composer, in his unpublished paper of 1990, "A Singer Named Josquin and Josquin D'Ascanio: Some Problems in the Biography of Josquin des Prez" (I am grateful to Joshua Rifkin for allowing me to consult his text). Meanwhile, however, documentary confirmation of Josquin's service at the court of Cardinal Ascanio in 1484 has been discovered by Lora Matthews and Paul Merkley, "Iudochus des Picardia and Jossequin Leboitte dit Desprez: The Names of the Singer(s)," *The Journal of Musicology* XVI (1998), 200–26, at 218–21. For the date of Serafino's entry in Ascanio's service, the fall of 1484, see Lowinsky, "Ascanio Sforza's Life," 51–54.

[79] Trans. after Lowinsky, "Ascanio Sforza's Life," 56.

[80] Ibid., 57.

[81] Gioseffo Zarlino, *Sopplimenti musicali* (Venice, 1588; repr. Ridgewood, N.J., 1966), 314: "Giosquino de Pris, ilqual teneua à i suoi tempi nella Musica il primo luogo . . . che si dolea & si lamentaua spesse fiate con i suoi amici della sua trista fortuna; & specialmente con il Serafino Acquilano Poeta nominato in quei tempi, alquale, cercando egli di consolarlo, come amico, cosi scriue."

of telling.[82] Rather, my concern here is to explore why contemporaries chose to remember certain things about Josquin and not others—and especially what this reveals about the sense they made of his personality. Why did it make sense to picture Josquin as a melancholic? Why were anecdotes portraying him as a reserved, moody, and difficult individual more likely to circulate than those in which he might appear to be jovial, outgoing, and good-natured?

The answer, I suggest, is not because of a vague prejudice about artists in general, but because there was a close perceived connection between *fantasia* and *melancholia.*[83] Just as melancholy might induce *fantasia*—the faculty responsible for the creation of new images and ideas—to fill the brain with strange, erratic fantasies, so the excessive exertion of one's *fantasia* could prompt the onset of melancholy—or worse. The latter had been the case, for instance, with the composer Carpentras (whom we have already encountered as the probable author of *Bonitatem fecisti*). His example was invoked by the sixteenth-century philosopher, mathematician, and physician Jerome Cardan, in a warning about the dangers of exhausting one's mental faculties:[84]



> You must take care not to work with such excessive mental strain that you become insane, so that the remedy becomes a poison; for it is said that when the musician Carpentras labored too strongly in that art (to which the pope was very devoted), he lost his reason. Yet he composed (in imitation of a swan) nothing more pleasing than his last song.

Richard Sherr has recently examined this report in light of other evidence about Carpentras's illness, chiefly autobiographical statements in dedications to prints of his music.[85] In the latter, Carpentras declared that his ailment had been "hitherto unheard of," and the cause unrecognized. Yet the symptoms he described led Sherr to propose that he probably suffered (in today's terms) from a severe and debilitating depression, announced and perhaps caused by tinnitus. Although the

[82] To mention just one of many other possible readings, Clytus Gottwald has suggested that the direct occasion for Serafino's poem might have been a row between Josquin and Cardinal Ascanio; see his "Lasso–Josquin–Dufay: Zur Ästhetik des heroischen Zeitalters," *Musik-Konzepte* XXVI/VII (1982), 36–69, at 66.

[83] For the history of this connection in the 16th and 17th centuries, see Heinz-Günter Schmitz, "Phantasie und Melancholie: Barocke Dichtung im Dienst der Diätetik," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* IV (1969), 210–30.

[84] Miller, "Jerome Cardan," 417; Cardanus, *Writings on Music,* 211 and 220.

[85] Richard Sherr, "Ceremonies for Holy Week, Papal Commissions, and Madness (?) in Early Sixteenth-Century Rome," in Owens and Cummings, eds., *Music in Renaissance Cities and Courts,* 391–403; for the full texts of those dedications, see Carpentras, *Opera Omnia,* 1:xi–xiv, 2:xi–xv, and 3/1:ix–xiii.

composer stated that nothing had given him so much joy in former days as composing new music, he does not actually confirm that his illness was caused by composing too much—though it is significant that a later physician should have viewed this as the cause of his alleged insanity.[86] That is to say, even though the details of Carpentras's case were not publicly known, it made sense for a later writer to assume that he had lost his mind owing to excessive exertion of his creative faculty of *fantasia.*

It is that particular sense that concerns us here. If Josquin was viewed as a man so preoccupied with composition that there was little else about him worth reporting, then it also made sense to remember him as particularly susceptible to symptoms of melancholy: temper, solitariness, and sadness at his *trista fortuna.* These symptoms might have been viewed as positive by some contemporaries (if one considered them in terms of Ficino's saturnine temperament), but equally well as negative by others (if one associated them, for instance, with the example of Carpentras). The possibility of a negative interpretation is important here, for it suggests that if Josquin was to be criticized, certain criticisms were more likely to make sense than others. Excessive strain on the creative faculty of *fantasia* was not only likely to cause melancholy, but it could also lead to artistic results that were either breathtakingly original or utterly eccentric and self-indulgent—depending to some degree on the taste of the commentator. Interestingly, criticisms along the latter lines were a recurring theme in Glarean's appraisals of Josquin, as we will see below. Composers such as Josquin and Carpentras, like many other gifted artists and poets, were seen to operate in the perilous twilight between the real and the imaginary, the conventional and the fantastic, between moderation and excess, reason and madness, rapturous beauty and hideous abnormality.



What, then, of *bizzarria*? I have already noted that the term carried originally and principally a negative connotation—quick, violent temper—but underwent a semantic expansion in the fifteenth century. By 1550 it had become part and parcel of Vasari's Mannerist aesthetic, his taste for the eccentric, extravagant, and stupendous, especially in ornamental and decorative elements of an artistic design. There is evidence to suggest that this expansion was well advanced by the late fifteenth century. We have already seen the example of Isabella d'Este, who complained in 1504 about "the *bizarria* of those painters," a comment

[86] Ironically, Carpentras does say that he eventually overcame his affliction by forcing himself to compose again: "Meanwhile, in order that continuous sadness might not consume my heart, I turned my mind, thus afflicted, to the composition of music, and I have compelled it even against its will to serve the task, not, to be sure, without the greatest effort." Carpentras, *Opera Omnia,* 1:xiii; Sherr, "Ceremonies for Holy Week," 401.

which clearly ties in with Michele Savonarola's report sixty years earlier. In addition, *bizzarria* often carried a meaning related to *fantasia,* in the sense of: strange, fancy, or erratic behavior.[87] For instance, in a letter written at Mantua in 1519, we learn about an insane woman called Cathelina that "a *bizarria* has entered her mind" when she has begun to talk incessantly about a dowry she expects from the Duke of Ferrara.[88] Similarly, in a letter to Isabella d'Este, dated 27 June 1495, an unnamed viol maker from Brescia is said to "have somewhat of the *bizaro*" when he demands the unreasonable price of 25 ducats for three viols (he is paid 15 in the end).[89] It might not be farfetched, in this context, to read a similar implication in Gian's report that Josquin "composes when he wants to, and not when one wants him to, and he is asking 200 ducats in salary."



[87] It is important to note, in this context, how often *bizzarria* and *fantasia* are found in direct proximity in 16th-century Italian texts, confirming the intersections between their semantic fields. We have already seen Vasari's description of Graffione as "bizarro e fantastico." Likewise, in the preface to his *Dubbi Amorosi,* Pietro Aretino (1492–1556) speaks of "vostra bizzarra fantasia," while Bernardo Davanzati (1529–1606) mentions "nuovi capricci e bizarre fantasie" in his *Coltivazione Toscana.* (For these and many other attestations of *bizzarro* and *bizzarria* in 16th-century literature, see Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana,* II, 263–64.) One of the earliest examples may be found in Leon Battista Alberti's dialogue *Theogenius,* completed in 1440 and (like Savonarola's *Physiognomia*) dedicated to Leonello d'Este. Here, in a discussion on the blessings of the solitary existence devoted to learning and scholarship, Teogenio remarks that people often accuse him of being "taciturno e pervicace, e quanto e' diceano, fantastico e bizzarro." Alberti, *Opere volgari,* ed. Cecil Grayson, Scrittori d'Italia, ccxviii, 2 vols. (Bari, 1960–73) II, 58. It is worth adding that the close association between *bizzarria* and *fantasia* is also attested in French by the late 16th century. In Henri Estienne's *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage françois* (1578), the fictional character Philausone (who speaks a modish italianate French) is censured for his use of the new-fangled italianism *bizarre* by the purist Celtophile. The latter suggests that a good French alternative would be *phantastique,* "drawn from that noble Greek language," though Philausone remains doubtful whether this word would capture the precise sense of *bizarre.* See Henri Estienne, *Deux dialogues du nouveau langage François italianizé et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps,* ed. Pauline Mary Smith (Geneva, 1980), 145–46.

[88] Mario Equicola to Duke Alfonso of Ferrara (4 Sept. 1519): "La Cathelina sta bene et tucta jocosa. Li è intrato nela mente una bizarria, che non dice altro se non che vole V. S. li dia la sua dote, che l'ha ben servita. Con omniuno et sempre ragiona de questa dote et ne fa mille disegni. L'havema facta retrare de naturale." Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, "La coltura e le relazioni letterarie di Isabella d'Este Gonzaga: II. Le relazioni letterarie," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* XXXIV (1899), 1–97, at n. 8.

[89] Marco Nigro to Marchesa Isabella d'Este: "A la secunda de 19 dico Zuan Angelo [Testagrossa], sonator de Vostra Sublimità, vene qui e conpite le viole: insieme con lui fu cum el maestro per concluder el mercato, qual maistro, che ha del bizaro, me rechiexe XXV ducati. Zuan Angelo el menò via e disse che 'l conzeria la cossa. Tandem eri el maistro vene a mi, dicendo che el voleva li danari et io li offersi de darli, pur fossamo d'acordo del precio el qual lui par de non contentarse de li XV ducati li offersi." Clifford M. Brown, *Isabella d'Este and Lorenzo da Pavia: Documents for the History of Art and Culture in Renaissance Mantua,* Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 189 (Geneva, 1982), 201–02 n. 3.

Of more direct interest to our discussion, however, are some letters from the early sixteenth century which associate *bizzarria* directly with music. In the following letter, dated 13 September 1514, Marchese Federico Gonzaga of Mantua writes to Marchetto Cara, the composer, that he has found some new poems which he considers the best he has seen for years. Although the book in which they will be printed is not finished yet, he wants Cara to come over immediately to set them to music, and sends the poems along in his letter:[90]

> Meanwhile, I beg you to be willing to exercise your talent (*ingegno*) and to put all the art into making some beautiful songs upon [the poems], but since I desire above all that you make the song of *bizaria* with excellence, and that you will not be distracted by other thoughts or troubles, you would do me a great favor if you came here to stay with me, with pleasure.

Just what "song of *bizaria*" might mean in this context is open to question, of course, and I would welcome suggestions. Yet it seems significant, in view of what we have said about the unpredictable workings of the artist's *fantasia,* that Federico Gonzaga asks Cara to put all other thoughts and cares aside, and to devote himself wholly to composition in his palace—surely not without liberal treatment and handsome remuneration. One is reminded of the recommendation of Antonio Filarete (*c.*1400–*c.*1469), in his treatise on architecture, that the artist should be awarded a sum of 100 ducats in order that he should be free "to investigate and search for new *fantasie* and new things."[91] Federico, too, seems to recognize that a composer like Cara needs free time and leisure to exercise his *ingegno* and *arte*—at least if the end result is to demonstrate musical *excellentia.*



In this context, there are two tentative suggestions one could make as to the meaning of "song of *bizaria.*" First, might *bizzarria* perhaps imply the leisure for Cara to allow his fantasy to dream up excellent music only when it is ready to do so—even if this means spending many days

[90] "In questo mezo vi prego vogliati affaticar l'ingegno vostro et ponervi tutta l'arte per far qualche bel canto sopra, ma perchè summamente desidero che faciati il canto di bizaria in excellentia et che non siati distratto da altri pensieri et fastidij, mi fareti gran gratia ad venir qui ad star con me in piacer che ve ni invito et vi facio di quarta et perchè vi aspetto ad ogni modo, chè al altro mercato che ci farà qua il stampator mi portarà il fine et la parte che ni resta." Prizer, *Courtly Pastimes,* 39–40 and 293, doc. 100. Two days later Cara begs to be excused because he is bedridden with fever, but he promises to compose settings as soon as he is recovered, and comments that the poems seem "truly ancient and from the time of the learned Dante and the delightful Francesco [Petrarch]." Ibid., 40 and 293–94, doc. 101.

[91] Kemp, "From 'Mimesis' to 'Fantasia'," 372.

in the sort of creative inertia that so exasperated Isabella d'Este? That would keep us close to Michele Savonarola's report that "no one can be an excellent artist unless he suffers to some extent from [and, perhaps, is allowed to indulge in] *bizaria.*" Nor do we seem too far removed, in this context, from the Josquin who reportedly "composes when he wants to."

Second, might *bizzarria* perhaps describe the desired musical result of Cara's creative efforts? Certainly the term seems to have carried musical connotations at this time. When Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona wanted a new organ to be despatched to Mantua, in 1518, he described it to Isabella as having "many *bizzarie* and varieties of sounds."[92] Here, conceivably, *bizzarrie* might mean something like new (and perhaps delightfully strange) sound effects. It suggests a taste for the novel, the original, the unheard-of, indeed the fantastic: anything, in short, that a talented artist or craftsman might come up with by indulging in his *fantasia.*[93] Thirty years before Vasari, such a reading may not strain plausibility.

The semantic overlaps and intersections between *melancholia, fantasia,* and *bizzarria* outline a model of creative activity which is remarkably consistent. It is that consistency, I would argue, which may account for the consistency of Josquin's anecdotal image. The model, once in place, may well have helped determine what made sense to report about him, and what did not. Yet I have also emphasized the fundamental ambivalence inherent in that model. It was possible to criticize Josquin on the same terms as one could praise him. That is why Gian's letter, although disparaging of the composer, has always been open to construal on positive terms—indeed has seemed positively to invite it: someone who composes when he wants to, and who is asking 200 ducats on top of it, may not make the most tractable servant (as Gian hinted), but he is all the more likely to be an uncommonly gifted artist.



[92] Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona to Isabella d'Este (22 Sept. 1518): "Mandando in compagnia de Jo. Maria Capilupo suo creato un Jouanni Ungaro che si delecta de organi per condurne uno che ho fato far in Brischino quale secondo mi scriue el maestro e lo vescouo detto è riuscito in tucta perfectione et benche sia piccolo ce seranno de molte bizzarie et varietà, de voci, supplico V. S. Ill. mi uogli fare gratia di farlo prouider de uno mulo et uno homo che lo mena in fine a ly ad ciò possa condurre dicto organo cum quello in fine ad Mantua." Antonino Bertolotti, *Musici alla Corte dei Gonzaga in Mantova dal secolo XV al XVIII* (Milan, 1890; repr. Bologna, 1969), 32.

[93] This may be the sort of taste to which a Spanish organ builder appealed when he offered the canons of Limoges Cathedral, in 1523, to render their organ "à la mode" with tympani, cymbals, and five or six flute registers, just as he claimed to have recently done at Dorat. The cathedral chapter accepted his offer, even though the Limoges organ had been renovated as recently as 1494. See Michel C. Kiener, "Jeux de vilains, jeux de villauds dans le Limousin des XVI$^{e}$ et XVII$^{e}$ siècles," in Philippe Ariès and Jean-Claude Margolin, eds., *Les jeux à la Renaissance: Actes du XXIII$^{e}$ colloque international d'études humanistes, Tours, juillet 1980* (Paris, 1982), 599–621, at 607.

Similarly, what might have appealed to a taste for the novel and the bizarre in Italy could equally well have offended more conservative tastes elsewhere. In his *Dodekachordon* of 1547, Glarean famously complained about the pursuit of novelties for their own sake among composers of his time. He distinguished three ages in the history of music, the first two of which preceded his time by seventy and forty years, respectively. The third was the age of the mature Josquin, the age of the *ars perfecta,* which was now, however, entering the inevitable stage of decadence and decay:[94]

> The third [category] are examples of an already perfect art, and just as nothing can be added to it so also it must expect nothing else in the end than final debility; men have been singing in this manner for 25 years now. But unfortunately, this art has now reached such unrestraint that learned men are almost wearied of it, and this has many causes, but especially, since it is ashamed to follow in the footsteps of predecessors who observed the relation of modes exactly, because we have fallen into a certain other distorted song which is in no way pleasing, unless because it is new, all of which we have earlier bewailed elsewhere.



Beyond the *ars perfecta,* then, anything novel was destined to exhibit only "unrestraint," "distortion," and "final debility." Ironically, however, the first signs of this decline had already been apparent in many of Josquin's compositions—at least if we are to believe Glarean. Although the theorist frequently held up the composer as the example to follow, and admitted that "my judgment . . . is corrupted by too great a sympathy toward Josquin,"[95] it is a recurring theme in his treatise that the composer had indulged too much in the display of his *ingenium,* lacked moderation and restraint, and engaged in excessive and ostentatious pursuit of *raritates* (see Table 1).

It is true, of course, that Glarean applied very specific criteria (of modal treatment) in arriving at these verdicts, criteria that are unlikely to have been universally shared when he published his treatise. On the other hand, just as not every conceivable recollection about Josquin was likely to be repeated, not every conceivable criticism of him was likely to stick. It is perhaps significant that Glarean tried to make sense of Josquin's perceived licenses by ascribing them to a personality trait: his

[94] Glarean, *Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller II, 248 (in the final sentence Glarean refers to ibid., I, 150–51). For perceptions of music history in the Renaissance, see Jessie Ann Owens, "Music Historiography and the Definition of 'Renaissance'," *MLA Notes* XLVII (1990), 305–30.

[95] Glarean, *Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller II, 249.

TABLE 1

Criticisms of Josquin's music and creative attitude in Glarean's *Dodekachordon* (1547). Translations quoted after Glarean, *Dodecachordon,* trans. Miller, II: 254, 264, 266, 276, 278.

But as [*Magnus es tu, Domine*] is more ingenious so it is far more unrestrained; this is my opinion, and the reader is free (as we everywhere suggest) to judge as he wishes. . . .

But in many instances [Josquin] lacked a proper measure and a judgement based on knowledge and thus in some places in his songs he did not fully restrain as he ought to have, the impetuosity of a lively talent, although this ordinary fault may be condoned because of the otherwise incomparable gifts of the man.

[In *Victimae paschali,*] I do not know whether it will please everyone that he rises so far in the bass at the word *Galilea;* but just as we cannot deny that this results from the undue freedom of his genius, so also one should acknowledge that it was added gracefully.



[In connection with the unorthodox ending of *De profundis*], he has done this in other songs also, nor is he alone in a clearly immoderate love of novelty and an excessive zeal to snatch a little glory by being unusual, a failing with which the more talented professors of disciplines are almost always afflicted, so that however much this failing may be characteristic of [composers], they still have it in common with many others.

In [the Benedictus of *Missa Mater Patris*] there is certainly more freedom in ascent and descent than the range of the modes desires. But so our Josquin was a man indulging too much in skill, as we have said earlier.

[Obrecht] certainly was not such a lover of the unusual as was Josquin. Indeed, he did display his skill, but without ostentation, as if he may have preferred to await the judgement of the listener rather than to exalt himself.

disinclination or inability to restrain his "lively" and "impetuous" talent. Glarean contrasted this with Obrecht's moderation (*mediocritas*) and apparent inclination "to await the judgement of the listener." (This ties in with a more general tendency to view Obrecht in terms of the sanguine rather than the melancholic temperament.) Josquin, in other words, was the man in love with his *ingenium,* who frequently abandoned re-

straint in exercising it, pursuing the unusual, the novel, and the eccentric to excess. Only three years after the publication of *Dodekachordon,* Vasari was to associate *bizzarria* with a range of concepts which similarly imply transgression and distortion: *deformità, stranezza, stravaganza, straordinario, stravolgere.*[96] If it was possible to criticize Josquin on the same terms as one could praise him, then perhaps one of those terms might have been *bizzarria*—along with *fantasia* and *melancholia.*

It is time to sum up. If, as Nietzsche said, it takes only three anecdotes to typify the character of a historical individual, then perhaps any three anecdotes about Josquin would suffice. For as I have tried to show in this essay, anecdotes offer more than biographical truth-claims to be verified or falsified. They reflect underlying structures of thought which endowed them with their sense, their value, their wit. There is no particular reason to assume that those structures would have stopped short of Josquin's own outlook and ways of thinking—not even if every anecdote about him would turn out to be spurious. In fact, the structures may well have shaped his artistic beliefs, and guided his actions and compositional choices. They are not a distorting filter, to be eliminated in order to get at pure, clean biographical facts, but rather they constituted an interpretive framework—one which allowed his contemporaries (and perhaps himself) to tell what things were worth knowing about Josquin in the first place.



Of course, that framework is also responsible for the loss of many things that we would have considered worth knowing. The anecdotes, as a corpus, make many omissions that can only strike us as unfortunate; we must place our hope in documents to make up for those omissions. However, there is one thing which the framework did accommodate, and for which it even provided the terms: negative views and criticism of Josquin—whether voiced by Gian de Artiganova or Heinrich Glarean. Recovery of the framework may allow us to acknowledge, and perhaps appreciate, darker sides to his personality and musicianship, to accept the possibility that the very qualities we have so valued may have their inevitable shadows. In our time those shadows have been largely excised by another interpretive framework, one that has tended to stamp as "inauthentic" everything that might undermine Josquin's modern image as a musical genius. The construction of the latter framework has been among the achievements of twentieth-century scholarship. But that, perhaps, is another story.

*Princeton University*

[96] LeMollé, *Georges Vasari et le vocabulaire de la critique d'art,* 164.