Another 'Imitation' of Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* – and Some Observations on *Imitatio* in Renaissance Music

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ANTOINE Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* must have been one of the most highly esteemed polyphonic Mass cycles of its time.[1] It survives in no fewer than seven sources, an exceptionally large number not equalled by any other cycle from the 1460s or 1470s – even those by Dufay and Ockeghem.[2] In this respect Busnoys's Mass stands alongside a work such as the anonymous English *Missa Caput*, whose widespread popularity in the fifteenth century is also well established.[3] It is a measure of their extraordinary esteem that both Masses served as models for 'imitations' by later composers. The entire cantus firmus layout of the *Caput* Mass was copied

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[1] Edition by Laurence Feininger, *Antonius Busnois: Missa super L'Homme armé*, Monumenta polyphoniae liturgicae Sanctae Ecclesiae Romanae, series 1, i/2 (Rome, 1948). On this Mass, see Leeman L. Perkins, 'The *L'Homme armé* Masses of Busnoys and Ockeghem: A Comparison', *Journal of Musicology*, 3 (1984), 363–96; Richard Taruskin, 'Antoine Busnoys and the *L'Homme armé* Tradition', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 39 (1986), 255–93; and the correspondence following the latter article (*Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 40 (1987), 139–53 and 576–80). Taruskin in particular stresses the historical importance of Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé*, but the main contentions of his article are unfortunately weakened by several inaccuracies and inconsistencies, in particular concerning mensural usage.

[2] This was noted by Richard Taruskin, 'Antoine Busnoys', 265. Masses preserved in six, seven or more sources are exceedingly rare before *c.*1480. After that date they are found more often since the number of surviving Mass sources increases dramatically. The only pre-1480 Masses which challenge *Caput* and Busnoys's *L'Homme armé* cycle in this respect are Dufay's *Missa Resvelliés vous* (seven sources) and the *Sine nomine* Mass by Benet (or Dunstable or Power; six sources). However, several sources for the latter Masses do not contain the full cycle, a circumstance which makes the complete transmission of Busnoys's Mass in six sources (the seventh, ModAS s.s., is fragmentary) even more impressive. The manuscript sigla used in this article are as follows. LonBL 54324: London, British Library, Add. MS 54324; LucAS 238: Lucca, Archivio di Stato, MS 238; ModAS s.s.; Modena, Archivio di Stato, MS without shelfmark; MunBS 3154: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Mus. MS 3154; TrentC 88: Trent, Castello del Buon Consiglio, MS 88; VatS 160: Vatican, Sistine Chapel Archives, MS 160.

[3] This Mass is attributed to Dufay in TrentC 88 but is now generally acknowledged to be an anonymous English cycle dating probably from the 1440s (see Thomas Walker, 'A Severed Head: Notes on a Lost English *Caput* Mass', *Abstracts of Papers Read at the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society* (Saint Louis, 1969), 14–15; Alejandro Enrique Planchart, 'Guillaume Dufay's Masses: Notes and Revisions', *The Musical Quarterly*, 58 (1972), 1–23; Reinhard Strohm, 'Quellenkritische Untersuchungen an der Missa "Caput" ', *Quellenstudien zur Musik der Renaissance*, ii: *Datierung und Filiation von Musikhandschriften der Josquin-Zeit*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, 26 (Wiesbaden, 1983), 153–76). Of its seven sources, two have been discovered within the last 20 years (LonBL 54324 and LucAS 238); there is thus some reason to expect that more sources may turn up in the future. Modern performances of the cycle confirm that it is an outstanding composition. Its transmission, and the existence of several 'imitations' (see below note 4), suggest that it enjoyed considerable popularity in England, France, the Low Countries and Italy.

in Ockeghem's and Obrecht's cycles on the same tune, and possibly in a fourth *Caput* cycle of which only the Agnus dei survives.[4] Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* likewise served as the model for a later work, Obrecht's *L'Homme armé* Mass.[5] There exists however a second 'imitation' of Busnoys's cycle, an anonymous *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*, which probably dates from the 1480s or 1490s. This Mass has a less conspicuous relationship with its model than the other 'imitations' mentioned here, but it raises as many important questions concerning Renaissance practices of borrowing and structural modelling.

The *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista* appears in VatS 160, copied probably between 1516 and 1519 in Petrus Alamire's scriptorium at Mechlin.[6] The cycle is closely related to Jacob Obrecht's *Missae de Sancto Donatiano* and *de Sancto Martino* in four respects (see Table 1):[7]

(1) In all three Masses, series of chants relating to one saint are used as cantus firmi. In Obrecht's Mass for St Donatian there are two additional cantus firmi which have no direct connection with the saint.
(2) The chants are taken not from the Mass Propers of the saints, but from their Office Propers. The chants in the St John Mass are drawn from the Office for the Nativity of St John.
(3) The cantus firmi are distributed over the different sections in an apparently unsystematic fashion. Each section is based on one chant, except for two sections of Obrecht's *Missa de Sancto Donatiano* in which two cantus firmi are stated simultaneously.
(4) The chants are sung to their original words in place of the Mass text. In the case of Obrecht's two cycles, the sources are not always consistent in this respect, but it can be shown that where Mass Ordinary text is provided in a source for either Mass, this is almost certainly the result of scribal revision.

The anonymous Mass for St John, and Obrecht's Masses for St Donatian and St Martin, appear to be the only extant fifteenth-century Mass cycles which have all four of these characteristics – although some of Pierre de la Rue's Masses come close.[8] Since the two Obrecht Masses were almost

[4] See Manfred F. Bukofzer, 'Caput: A Liturgico-Musical Study', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (New York, 1950), 217–310. The anonymous Agnus dei setting is edited in *New Obrecht Edition*, ii, ed. Thomas Noblitt (Utrecht, 1984), 76–85. A setting of the *Caput* melody which is unrelated to the anonymous *Caput* Mass is Richard Hygon's *Salve regina* (Frank Ll. Harrison, 'An English "Caput" ', *Music and Letters*, 33 (1952), 203).

[5] This was noted by Oliver Strunk in 1937; see 'Origins of the "L'Homme armé" Mass', *Bulletin of the American Musicological Society*, 2 (1937), 25–6; repr. in *Essays on Music in the Western World* (New York, 1974), 68–9.

[6] See the entry in *Census-Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music 1400–1550*, ed. Herbert Kellman, iv (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1988), 61, and the literature cited there. The *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista* appears on ff. 49^{r}–63^{r} of VatS 160. It was edited in *Early Sixteenth-Century Music from the Papal Chapel*, ed. Nors S. Josephson, Corpus mensurabilis musicae, 95 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1982), i, 1–39. See also Sherry E. Hains, 'Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista' (M.A. dissertation, Smith College, 1974). The latter edition was not available to me.

[7] Both are edited in *New Obrecht Edition*, iii, ed. Barton Hudson (Utrecht, 1984).

[8] See, for instance, his *Missa pascale*, which employs seven chants from the Easter period in a manner similar to that in the two Obrecht Masses and the *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*. On the face of it, that would seem to make Pierre de la Rue a likely candidate for the latter Mass, particularly since VatS 160 comes from Mechlin. However, the *Missa pascale* uses Mass Proper chants as well as Office Proper chants, and hence does not share the second characteristic. Moreover, Pierre de la Rue's style in the *Missa pascale* is much more advanced than that of the three other cycles. As will be seen below, Jacob Obrecht is by far the most likely candidate for authorship of the St John Mass. It

TABLE 1

CANTUS FIRMI USED IN JACOB OBRECHT'S *MISSAE DE SANCTO MARTINO* AND *DE SANCTO DONATIANO*, AND IN THE ANONYMOUS (OBRECHT?) *MISSA DE SANCTO JOHANNE BAPTISTA* (VatS 160, ff. 49^{r}–63^{r})

Note: — = no separate section with this text; the text is either set in the previous section or omitted.

Section	Obrecht: *Missa de Sancto Martino*	Obrecht: *Missa de Sancto Donatiano*	Anon.: *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*
Kyrie	*Martinus adhuc*	*O beate pater*	[*Johannes vocabitur*]
Christe	*Martinus adhuc*	*O beate pater*	NONE
Kyrie	*Martinus adhuc*	*O beate pater/ Gefft den armen*	*Inter natos mulierum*
Et in terra	*Dixerunt discipuli*	*Confessor domini*	*Iste puer magnus*
Domine fili	*Dixerunt discipuli*	—	—
Qui tollis	*Dixerunt discipuli*	*Cumque sacer*	*Iste puer magnus*
Quoniam tu solus	—	—	*Reges videbunt*
Patrem	*O virum ineffabilem*	*O sanctissime*	*Elisabet Zacharie*
Et incarnatus	*Martinus episcopus*	NONE	*Johannes vocabitur*
Et resurrexit	*Oculis ac manibus*	*O clavis David/ Defende nos*	—
Et in spiritum	*O beatum virum*	—	—
Et unam sanctam	—	*Exaudi preces*	—
Confiteor	—	—	*Innuebant patri*
Sanctus	*Adoremus Christum*	*O beate pater*	*Puer qui natus*
Pleni	*Ego signo crucis*	NONE	NONE
Osanna	*Martinus adhuc*	*O beate pater*	*Inter natos*
Benedictus	NONE	NONE	NONE
Qui venit	—	NONE	—
Osanna	[*ut supra*]	[*ut supra*]	[*ut supra*]
Agnus I	*O beatum pontificem*	*O beate pater*	*Apertum est os*
Agnus II	[cont.]	NONE	[no music provided]
Agnus III	[cont.]	*O beate pater*	*Johannes vocabitur*

may be of interest that MunBS 3154 contains an anonymous Sanctus *Iste puer magnus* (ff. 137^{v}–141^{r}) in which the St John antiphon is stated in long note-values and is to be sung to its original words. According to Thomas Noblitt, this Sanctus was copied in MunBS 3154 in 1476 ('Die Datierung der Handschrift Mus. ms. 3154 der Staatsbibliothek München', *Die Musikforschung*, 27 (1974), 36–56). Since the Munich source seems to have drawn much of its repertory directly from the Low Countries, there is a strong probability that the anonymous Sanctus was a forerunner of the type of Mass exemplified by the cycles for St Donatian, St Martin and St John. The movement could possibly have been written for the rich Florentine merchant Tommaso Portinari, a man who is known to have been involved in the recruitment of musicians in Bruges, and who erected a chapel of St John the Baptist in St James's Church, Bruges, in 1474; see Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford, 1985), 36.

certainly endowed by Bruges citizens,[9] it seems most likely that the Mass for St John was written for a similar purpose.

The *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista* is modelled on the *Missa L'Homme armé* by Antoine Busnoys (see Example 1). Apart from taking over the entire mensural scheme of the contrapuntal voices, it casts the tenor chants in precisely the same rhythmic layout as the *L'Homme armé* tune in Busnoys's Mass. The pattern of alternating cantus firmus statements and rests in the tenor is thus identical in both cycles. Indeed in most of the passages the rhythms themselves are also identical. Unfortunately the tenor and superius of the first Kyrie are lost, but in this section, too, the tenor surely followed the rhythmic pattern of Busnoys's tenor. The antiphon *Johannes vocabitur* makes good counterpoint with the extant two voices if it is laid out in this way.[10]

At the beginning of the Credo of the anonymous St John Mass the melody of Credo IV is paraphrased in the contrapuntal voices.[11] Another noteworthy feature is in the second Kyrie, where the entire chant melody *Inter natos mulierum* from the Office of St John is stated simultaneously in the tenor and – at the lower fifth – in the bass (see Example 2). This is quite a contrapuntal *tour de force*, since the tenor is at the same time cast in a pre-existent rhythmic layout. Very similar canonic or quasi-canonic treatments of cantus firmi are to be found in various Masses by Obrecht, for instance *De tous biens plaine, de Sancto Martino, Libenter gloriabor* and *Sicut spina rosam*.[12] In all these cases, the voices are so contrived that frequently one sounds while the other rests.

Obrecht's own *Missa L'Homme armé*, identically modelled on Busnoys's cycle, is relevant here. The anonymous composer of the Mass for St John probably knew Obrecht's *L'Homme armé* Mass: at the beginning of the Christe he quotes directly from the first six bars of the 'Qui tollis' of that cycle (see Example 3). A strikingly similar passage, but transposed up one step, is to be found in the 'Domine fili' of Obrecht's *Missa Ave regina caelorum*.

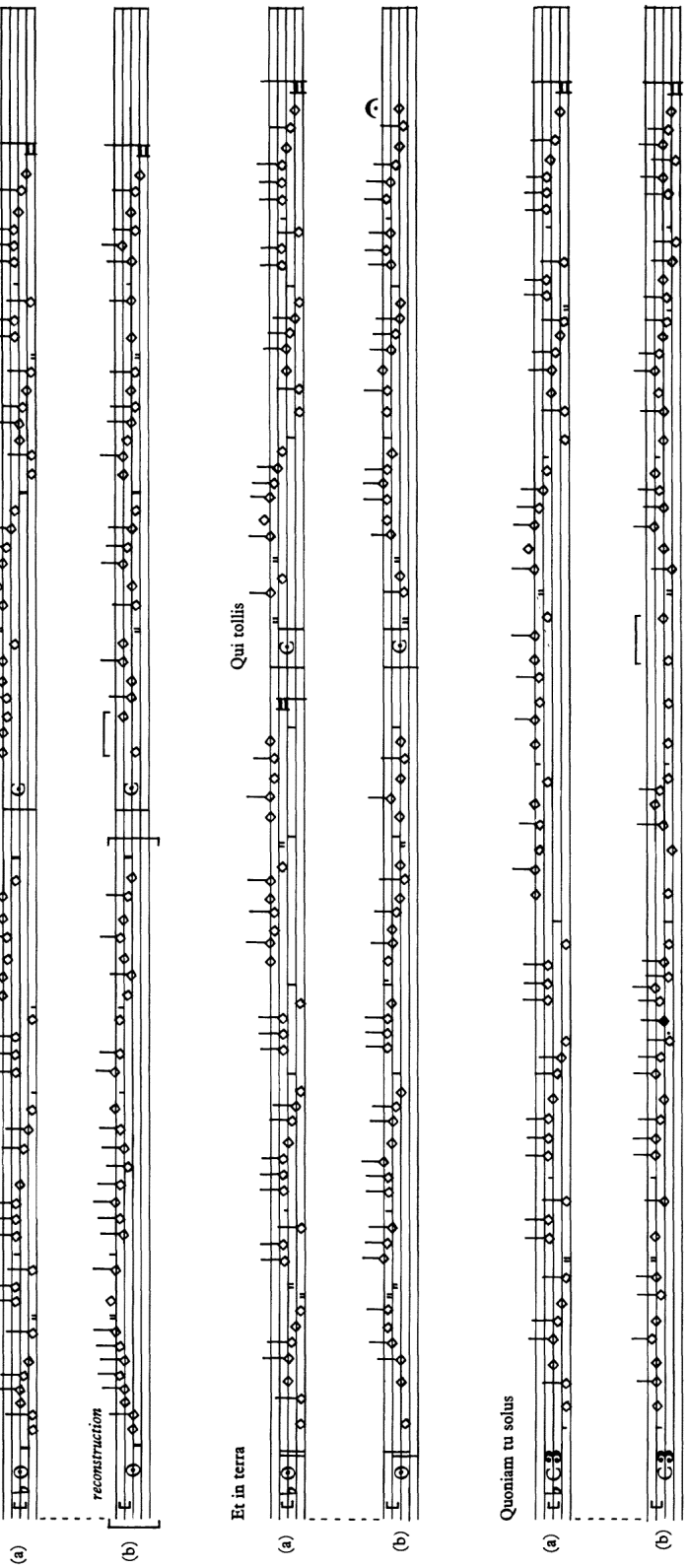
The occurrence of various structural features which are otherwise known to be unique to, or typical of, Obrecht makes it very likely that he was the composer of the Mass for St John. In addition to this, the source for the Mass contains two other cycles by Obrecht, *Ave regina caelorum* and *Sicut spina rosam*, the latter immediately following the Mass under discussion. All three Masses appear there anonymously since their first

[9] Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, 40–1 and 145–7. Obrecht's Mass for St Martin was probably endowed by the Bruges singer Pierre Basin in 1486. The Mass for St Donatian was endowed on behalf of the Bruges furrier Donaes de Moor in 1487.

[10] This seems to be the only extant antiphon for St John which fits both the music of the Kyrie and the rhythmic layout of the tenor of this movement at the same time. However, since one of the antiphons in the Mass for St John has not been identified (*Puer qui natus est*, in the Sanctus), there remains the slight possibility that the Kyrie was based on an antiphon unknown to us. In his edition of the Mass (see above, note 6), Nors Josephson – who was not aware of the relationship with Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* – used *Johannes vocabitur* to complete the Kyrie, and rhythmicized it in a form which closely resembles the reconstruction I was able to make on the basis of the rhythmic layout of Busnoys's Mass tenor (see Example 1).

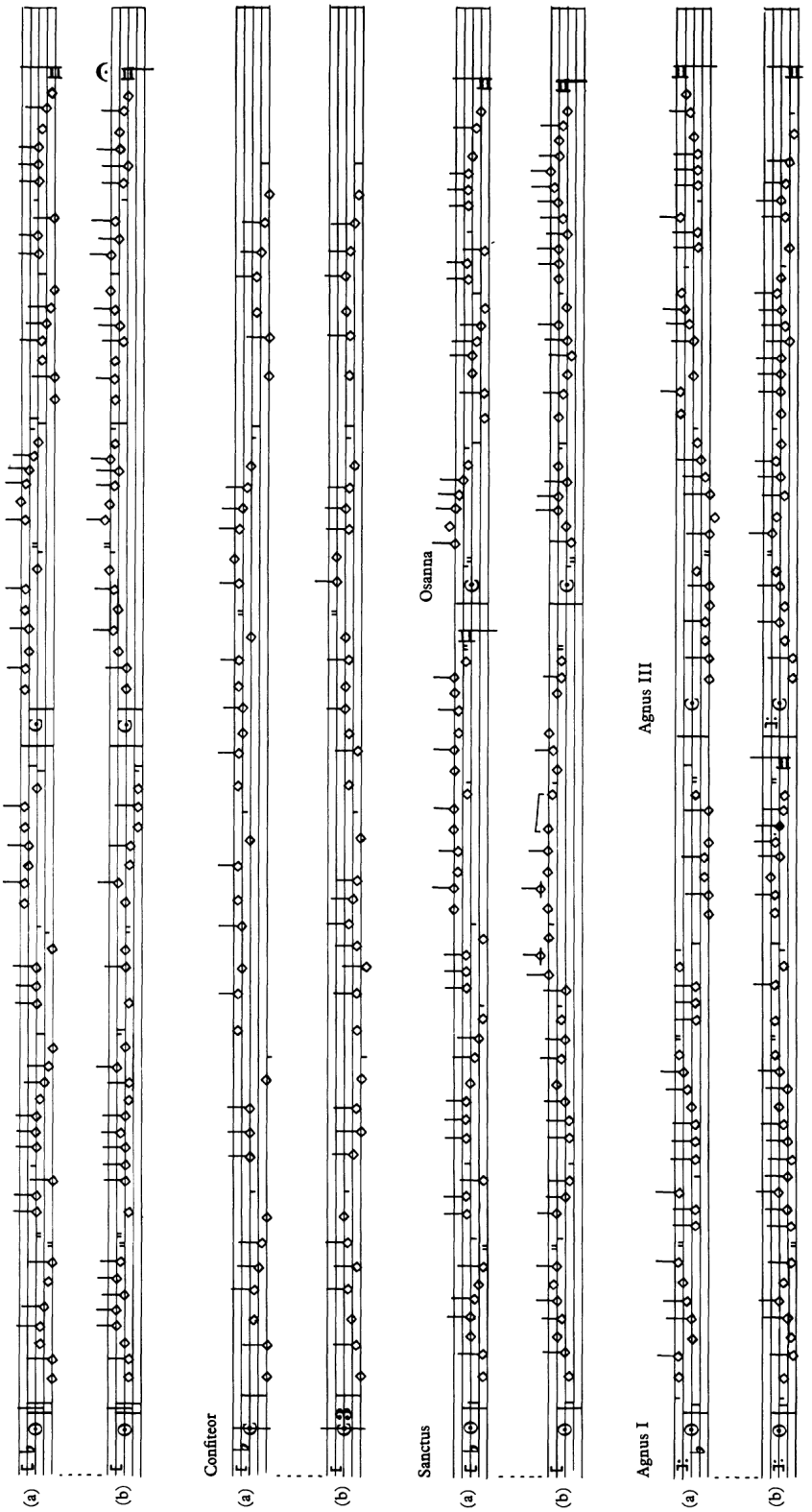
[11] This was kindly pointed out to me by Prof. Chris Maas.

[12] See Barton Hudson, 'Obrecht's Tribute to Ockeghem', *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis*, 37 (1987), 6–7.

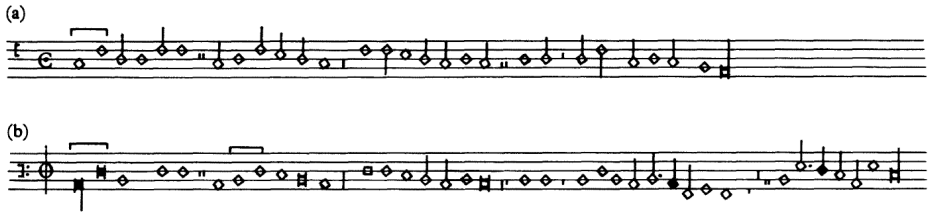


Example 1. Comparison of the cantus firmus layouts in the tenors of (a) Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* and (b) the anonymous (Obrecht?) *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*. The notation of (a) is taken from *Antonius Busnois: Missa super L'Homme armé*, ed. Laurence Feininger, Monumenta polyphoniae liturgicae Sanctae Ecclesiae Romanae, series 1, i/2 (Rome, 1948), that of (b) from the single source, VatS 160.

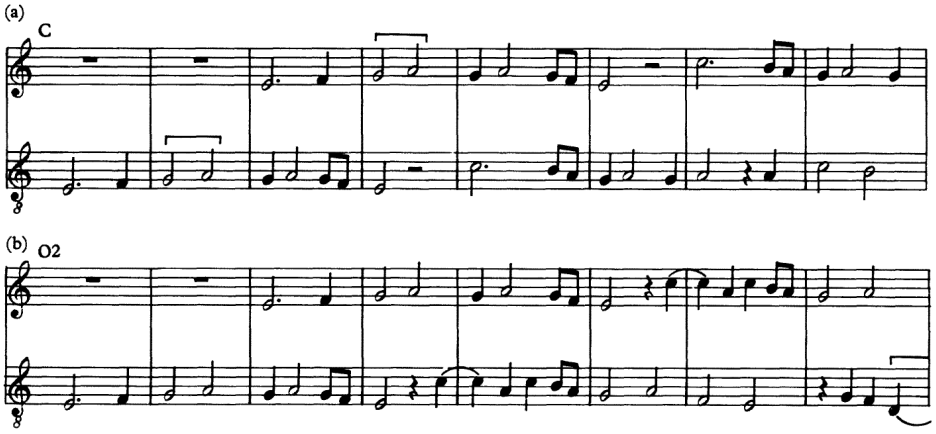
Example 1 (cont.)



Example 2. (a) Tenor and (b) 'Barricanoriza[ns]' of the second Kyrie of the anonymous (Obrecht?) *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*. Both state the melody of the antiphon *Inter natos mulierum* from the second Vespers of the Nativity of St John.



Example 3. (a) Bars 1–8 of the Christe of the anonymous (Obrecht?) *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*, and (b) bars 53–60 of the Gloria of Obrecht's *Missa L'Homme armé* (*New Obrecht Edition*, vi, ed. Thomas Noblitt (Utrecht, 1986), 7).



pages were cut out, presumably by an unscrupulous collector of manuscript illuminations.

From the stylistic point of view, there is nothing that argues against authorship by Obrecht. All the ingredients of his musical style are there: motivic repetitions and sequences, rapid ascending or descending scales, and extensive writing in parallel tenths between superius and bass. Although we cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that the Mass for St John was written by a student or epigone of Obrecht, there seems to be a good case for believing the Mass to be his.[13]

[13] The same tentative conclusion was reached independently by Mary Jennifer Bloxam on the basis of the provenance and selection of the chants for St John. See her dissertation, 'A Survey of Late Medieval Service Books from the Low Countries: Implications for Sacred Polyphony, 1460–1520' (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1987), 438–51. Bloxam writes: 'Among the available usages known to Obrecht, only that of Antwerp employed all eight antiphons in the *Missa De Sancto Johanne Baptista* on the *natale* of the saint. This fact, although it does not establish an incontrovertible link to this locale, does at least allow the possibility that the composer of the Mass drew upon this rite' (*ibid.*, 444–6). Unfortunately, no liturgical sources from Antwerp preserve the antiphon melodies for the feast of St John the Baptist. (I am indebted to Prof. Bloxam for generously sharing her material with me.)

The *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista* gives rise to a number of important questions, in particular: (1) What determined the composer's choices of pre-existent material (i.e. the chants of St John; the rhythmic structure of Busnoys's Mass tenor; the melody of Credo IV; and, if it was pre-existent, the passage from Obrecht's *Missa L'Homme armé*)?; and (2) Why did he combine this material as he did? Since we cannot be certain of the composer's identity or the purpose of his composition, answers to these questions must inevitably be a matter of interpretation, depending a great deal on assumptions and premises on our part. Any attempt to answer these two questions should include a discussion of the validity of these assumptions and premises.

The most influential current theory relevant to the present case is that of musical *imitatio*. It posits that borrowings of pre-existent polyphonic material are the musical equivalents of *imitatio* in Renaissance rhetoric. If applied to the Mass for St John, the theory would explain the relationship with Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* as a form of homage or emulation, and put it on a par with many other instances of borrowing of pre-existent polyphonic material in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although this may be correct, the theory raises a number of serious questions, particularly since its implications are so far-reaching. It seems therefore appropriate to discuss the theory of musical *imitatio* before attempting to offer an interpretation of the Mass for St John.[14]

The concept of *imitatio* is derived from the history of rhetoric. It was first introduced into Renaissance musicology by Howard Mayer Brown in 1982,[15] and has been seen to promise new and fruitful directions for research, some of which have since been pursued.[16] Yet it is perhaps worth keeping in mind the observation made by Roger Bowers at the Annual Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Music at Cambridge in 1979:[17]

> Musicology is a study of relatively recent origin, and it does not yet possess a complete critical vocabulary tailored to express its own particular needs. Many of the terms which are used to create a conceptual framework within which to organise appreciation of music history have been borrowed from other disciplines – in particular, from the history of art. Such borrowings have not always been conspicuously fortunate. In music history, for instance, the concept of a 'Renaissance' occurring in the first half of the fifteenth century has by now become so thoroughly absorbed into the collective musicological consciousness that it is difficult to imagine trying to explain the course of music

[14] This paper was originally written for the round table session '*Imitatio* and Compositional Process' at the Edinburgh Conference in 1988. In that context it seemed appropriate to include an extended critical discussion of *imitatio*. Since the issues are obviously of considerable importance to the interpretation of the *Missa de Sancto Johanne Baptista*, I have retained the discussion here in its original form.

[15] Howard M. Brown, 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 35 (1982), 1–48.

[16] See, for instance, Perkins, 'The *L'Homme armé* Masses'; J. Peter Burkholder, 'Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass of the Late Fifteenth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 38 (1985), 470–523; Mary Natvig, 'The Motets of Busnois and Josquin: Influence and *Imitatio*', paper read at the AMS National Convention, New Orleans, 16 October 1987.

[17] Roger Bowers, 'Obligation, Agency, and *Laissez-Faire*: The Promotion of Polyphonic Composition for the Church in Fifteenth-Century England', *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Iain Fenlon (Cambridge, 1981), 1–19 (p. 1).

> history at that time without recourse to it. Yet it could be argued that the concept of 'The Renaissance' in music obscures and distorts quite as much as it illuminates and explains, and that consequently we would be well advised to abandon it, or at least to use it only with circumspection.

There are good reasons for applying just such circumspection to the concept of *imitatio*. Is the concept really applicable to the period and the music we are dealing with, or could it, like other borrowings from related disciplines, turn out to be a mixed blessing, obscuring as much as it illuminates?

In Renaissance rhetorical theory, *imitatio* was defined as one of the three paths which led to mastery of the science of rhetoric: Theory, Imitation and Practice.[18] The original formulation of the concept sprang from the characteristic desire of medieval theorists to classify and name every possible activity of the rhetorician, including the learning process. Consequently, the concept denoted little more than the commonplace fact that every student of rhetoric (or for that matter of music) must learn his art partly by studying and imitating the works of established masters. It is true that the pedagogical concept of *imitatio* acquired a new and unprecedented significance in Renaissance literary circles. But it did so only in the specific humanistic sense of the imitation of *classical* literature. *Imitatio* in this latter sense seems applicable in music history only to the late sixteenth-century Florentine attempts to imitate classical Greek music in the monodic style. The concept is of less help if it is used to describe and interpret musical developments in the fifteenth century, and particularly to explain how these differed from those of other ages.

That is not to say that the musical procedures to which the term *imitatio* has come to be applied were an irrelevant aspect of musical life in the period under discussion. The Renaissance was an era exceptionally rich in musical quotations, borrowings, reworkings and imitations of all sorts. Yet to consider these procedures as musical counterparts of rhetorical *imitatio* is surely to run the risk of either creating semantic ambiguity or developing an unnecessarily distorted picture of Renaissance music history.

Let me elaborate on this point by giving two examples. The first concerns the danger of semantic ambiguity. There is perhaps some justification for regarding a Mass by one composer which is based on a chanson of another, older master as an example of *imitatio* in music. However, when a composer builds a Mass on one of his own chansons, the rhetorical concept of *imitatio* is no longer applicable, either in the pedagogical or in the humanistic sense. To use the word for both kinds of Mass, as Peter Burkholder has done in his study of Johannes Martini and the 'imitation Mass',[19] is to stretch its meaning dangerously. But an even greater semantic ambiguity is created when the word *imitatio* becomes associated with concepts which are foreign to its rhetorical meaning, such as competition, emulation and homage. Brown has carefully avoided implying such an association in his essay, but Burkholder speaks unhesitatingly of 'the

[18] Brown, 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage', 35–41.
[19] Burkholder, 'Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass'.

double-edged nature of *imitatio*, which involves aspects of both admiration and rivalry, homage and competition'.[20] These are certainly applicable to the history of Renaissance music, but they are better not associated with the rhetorical concept of *imitatio*. Needless to say, it is circular to consider *imitatio* as an example of rhetorical influence in music if the meaning of the word itself has been altered or expanded to make it suit certain musical developments.

The second example concerns the danger of historiographic distortion. Peter Burkholder has worked out a 'conceptual distinction' between Masses that exemplify musical *imitatio* and Masses that do not.[21] The difference rests on whether they make use of polyphonic models or are based on monophonic tunes. Now Leeman Perkins has observed that 'whatever the differences conceptually . . . between the use of a monophonic melody . . . and the adoption of a voice from a polyphonic work . . ., the end result stylistically could be very much the same'.[22] What Perkins quite understandably fears is that in a number of cases Burkholder's distinction – if we accept it – seems to exist in our minds rather than in the music. It may be argued that there still *is* an obvious difference between borrowing monophonic and borrowing polyphonic material. This cannot be denied. But to assert that this difference has the special significance of a *conceptual* distinction is tautological reasoning if the concept of *imitatio* has been defined beforehand as the borrowing of material from a polyphonic model. Any distinction becomes a conceptual one if the concept is defined in terms of the distinction. Needless to say, if superficial distinctions such as the one proposed by Burkholder are used to interpret developments in music history the results can be destructive – even to otherwise excellent scholarship.

I would therefore suggest that we first of all strive for terminological clarity, and define the concept of musical *imitatio* in strict accordance with its original meaning in rhetoric. I propose the following simple definition: musical *imitatio* is the practice of learning musical composition by studying and imitating the works of established masters. It may be objected that the concept of *imitatio* becomes practically useless to our purposes if it is defined in this way. But that is precisely the point. The rhetorical concept of *imitatio* is really of very limited applicability to the music history of the Renaissance, and if it is used without circumspection it can end up doing more harm than good. It is true that the musical procedures with which *imitatio* has become associated constitute a significant aspect of Renaissance musical culture, but they can be better studied without involving this concept.

A more fruitful approach may be the one adopted by Willem Elders in his book *Studien zur Symbolik in der Musik der alten Niederländer*, published in 1968.[23] According to Professor Elders, quotations, borrowings and reworkings can be seen as a means of creating a symbolic

[20] *Ibid.*, 474, n. 5, and 475.
[21] *Ibid.*, 474–5.
[22] Leeman L. Perkins, Letter to the Editor, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 40 (1987), 133.
[23] Utrechtse bijdragen tot de muziekwetenschap, 4 (Utrecht, 1968).

connection between the text or textual connotation of the pre-existent material and the text of the new composition.[24] A good example is Loyset Compère's motet *Omnium bonorum plena*, which is based on the tenor of Hayne van Ghizeghem's chanson *De tous biens plaine* and in addition quotes from the superius of the chanson in several places. According to Gustave Reese, 'the use of material from Hayne's love song in this motet is undoubtedly meant to have a symbolical significance'.[25] The motet was apparently not intended to emulate, or pay homage to, Hayne van Ghizeghem, for the latter composer is not mentioned in the 'Singer's Prayer' in the *secunda pars*.

Elders's proposition may perhaps be expanded by including the possibility of symbolic connections between pre-existent material and the purpose or occasion of the new composition – even if in many cases we can only speculate about what this purpose or occasion might have been. At least this offers the opportunity to explore the significance of pre-existent material when there is no *textual* correlation, for instance in Masses that were written for coronations, weddings, endowments, etc. In the case of Dufay's *Missa Ave regina caelorum*, for instance, which quotes literally from his four-voice motet, we cannot be certain about the extramusical context which the quotation was designed to illuminate. However, the textual connotation of the quoted passage, 'have mercy on thy beseeching Dufay', rules out any possible connection with competition, emulation, homage or *imitatio*.

Elders's interpretation has several virtues. It allows for the reused material to have extramusical meanings beyond those associated with *imitatio*. It takes account of both the identity of the material and the way in which it is treated in the new context. Finally, it makes no *a priori* distinction between compositions based on monophonic material and compositions based on polyphonic material.

Yet Elders's study is concerned only with symbolism. Renaissance music abounds in recurrences of musical material in different shapes, contexts, settings and forms, ranging from compositions with multiple cantus firmi, fraught with symbolic content, to unpretentious reworkings of songs such as *Fors seulement* or *De tous biens plaine*. To interpret all these categorically as examples of symbolism obviously erodes the word 'symbolism' itself, just as the word *imitatio* would be eroded if it were to be used as the common denominator. Thus, while many cases can be better described and interpreted in terms of symbolism rather than *imitatio*, there are many other cases in which neither term seems applicable.

Perhaps the concept of 'intertextuality', used in literary criticism, comes closest to being relevant.[26] Yet before this or any other term can be adopted, it should be asked whether all recurrences of musical material in

[24] *Ibid.*, 40.

[25] Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* (New York, 1954), 227. See also Edgar H. Sparks, *Cantus Firmus in Mass and Motet 1420–1520* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), 208, and Elders, *Studien zur Symbolik*, 53–4.

[26] See William Calin, 'Medieval Intertextuality: Lyrical Inserts and Narrative in Guillaume de Machaut', *The French Review*, 62 (1988), 1–10, and the literature cited there. The concept of intertextuality was suggested to me by David Fallows.

Renaissance music have enough in common (with respect to composers' attitudes, methods of treatment and possible extramusical meanings) to justify the use of one overarching concept at all. The answer to this question would require a systematic analysis of the relevant repertory; the virtue of the concept of *imitatio* has been that it has stimulated precisely such analysis. Hence, even if the musical phenomenon at issue here has outgrown the concept which brought about its recognition, this should not stop us from studying the phenomenon itself.

Returning now to the Mass for St John, it is surely better to interpret the combination of pre-existent material in this Mass as a form of symbolism than as an instance of musical *imitatio*. Presumably each of the materials had its own backgrounds and connotations, and their particular combination here must have carried an explicit meaning which was probably related to the purpose or the occasion of the Mass. If so, the musical text should offer clues that could lead towards identifying that purpose or occasion.

To begin with, it seems clear that the Mass for St John was written for a specific occasion, most likely in the Low Countries, particularly Bruges. First, the close similarities to Obrecht's Masses for St Donatian and St Martin indicate that the cycle was probably written for a private endowment which provided for a Mass to be sung on the Nativity of St John, 24 June. Second, since Obrecht's two Masses were almost certainly written in Bruges, it is likely that the St John Mass was written there as well, or at least within the musical sphere of influence of Bruges. Moreover, Busnoys himself was active in Bruges until his death in 1492, and the unique source for the St John Mass was probably copied in Mechlin. Finally, the quotation in the St John Mass of a passage from Obrecht's *Missa L'Homme armé* (or vice versa) suggests that the common dependence of these two cycles on Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme armé* was not coincidental. Busnoys's model and its two 'imitations' need to be considered and studied as an interrelated group.

It has not proved possible to trace a fifteenth-century endowment for which the St John Mass could have been written. Many churches in the Low Countries had chapels or altars of St John, including St James's Church in Bruges, where Obrecht's Mass for St Donatian was almost certainly endowed.[27] However, the relationship with Obrecht's *Missa L'Homme armé* may perhaps provide a clue. Since the two cycles are so closely matched, and even quote from each other, it would seem that the historical context of either one could tell us something about that of the other. Even if it seems certain that the two compositions were written for different occasions and purposes (though probably by the same composer), there must have been some connection between these occasions and purposes. This connection could possibly be provided by the person who endowed the Mass for St John. The donor himself might have stipulated that the endowed Mass be related to Busnoys's *L'Homme armé* cycle in a manner similar to the *L'Homme armé* Mass by Obrecht. Or perhaps

[27] Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, 56.

the composer of the St John Mass thought it appropriate to honour the donor by creating these relationships.

On the other hand, there is an important difference between the two 'imitations' of Busnoys's Mass. Whereas Obrecht's dependence on Busnoys's *L'Homme armé* Mass can be explained within the context of the *L'Homme armé* tradition (e.g. as a tribute to Busnoys's possible primacy in that tradition),[28] no such explanation can be offered for the St John Mass. By using different cantus firmi he removes the military symbolism and possible political overtones of the melody. There can be no doubt that this was done quite intentionally: St John the Baptist cannot possibly have been identified with 'the armed man' (like St Michael in the *L'Homme armé* Mass by Johannes Regis) since he is no warrior-saint. Moreover, the chants of St John are not combined with the *L'Homme armé* tune in a simultaneous statement, but rather are cast in the rhythmic layout of the tune, which itself is absent. This may perhaps give us another clue: by separating cantus firmus *treatment* from the cantus firmus itself, the anonymous composer indicated that Busnoys's setting had an extramusical significance of its own, independent from the *L'Homme armé* tune and its connotations. And it was probably just because of this extramusical significance that he decided to combine the rhythmic layout of Busnoys's tenor with the chants of St John.

This, of course, leads to a further question: what could have been the extramusical significance of Busnoys's *L'Homme armé* Mass, apart from the significance of the *L'Homme armé* melody? There are several possibilities here. It may have been the case that the *L'Homme armé* Mass was itself written for a special occasion: it has recently been argued, for instance, that the cycle had a connection with the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece.[29] This assumption, though promising, still lacks sufficient supporting evidence. But, whatever the occasion may have been, there is a strong probability that Busnoys referred to the occasion by means of musical symbolism, since his Mass has a striking (though not yet fully fathomed) durational structure.[30] It may also be that Busnoys's setting acquired an extramusical significance in the course of time: the Mass may have become associated, for instance, with a particular event or with a certain liturgical celebration. Or, finally, the *L'Homme armé* Mass may to contemporaries have come to represent the quintessence of Busnoys's style and musical personality, in which case the Mass tenor (or its rhythmic layout) was the obvious material to borrow for a tribute to the composer.

Whichever of these possible extramusical meanings was associated with Busnoys's setting remains a matter of speculation. However, if the Mass for St John was written for a private endowment, as is likely, the clues given here may bring us just a small step closer to a possible solution. For in the case of a private endowment we know at least that the web of musical interrelations in the St John Mass (the layout of Busnoys's Mass

[28] Richard Taruskin in particular argues that it was Busnoys's Mass which started the *L'Homme armé* tradition ('Antoine Busnoys', *passim*).

[29] Taruskin, 'Antoine Busnoys'.

[30] *Ibid.*, 269–73.

L'Homme armé, the passage from Obrecht's cycle, the close relationships with other Masses by Obrecht, and the chants for St John) must converge on one person, whose donation, if its clauses are still preserved, could put all the independent pieces of evidence into place. This person was probably associated with Bruges, may have had a relationship with Busnoys – or at least with his Mass *L'Homme armé* – and with Obrecht (if he was the composer of the St John Mass), and had a special devotion to St John the Baptist, to whom he must have made an endowment in the 1480s or 1490s. If he can be identified, or if a credible candidate can be put forward,[31] we are likely to obtain more certainty about the authorship and date of the Mass for St John. This in turn could shed new and important light on the fascinating but still problematic *Missa L'Homme armé* by Antoine Busnoys, and tell us more about its date, its significance and the circumstances surrounding its creation.

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[31] One credible candidate might perhaps be Antoine Busnoys himself. Endowments by musicians were not rare in the fifteenth century (see, for instance, note 9 above). On the other hand, there is no evidence of any special devotion to St John the Baptist on the part of Busnoys. One would sooner expect him to have made a donation to St Anthony, who seems to have had a personal significance for the composer (see Rob C. Wegman, 'Busnoys' "Anthoni usque limina" and the Order of St. Antoine-en-Barbefosse in Hainaut', *Studi musicali*, 16 (1988), 15–31.). Moreover, a fifteenth-century composer making a personal endowment would naturally have wanted to provide the polyphony himself. The Antwerp connection proposed by Mary Jennifer Bloxam (see note 13 above) seems promising. Three of the many private donations involving polyphony that were made in Antwerp Cathedral are mentioned in J. van den Nieuwenhuizen, 'De koralen, de zangers en de zangmeesters van de Antwerpse O.L.-Vrouwekerk tijdens de 15e eeuw', *Antwerps kathedraalkoor: Zes eeuwen koormuziek in de kathedraal te Antwerpen*, Gouden Jubileum Gedenkboek 1927/28–1977/78 (Antwerp, 1978), 50.