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JOHANNES TINCTORIS AND THE 'NEW ART'

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This article offers a re-examination of two of the best-known passages in the writings of Johannes Tinctoris: those concerned with the history of music during his own lifetime, roughly from the 1430s to 1470s. The two passages are found in the Prologues to the *Proportionale musices* (1472–3) and *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (1477), and have become cornerstones in the modern historiography of the musical Renaissance. It is here that Tinctoris made his famous claim that music had so vastly increased in scope since the 1430s that it seemed to have become a *new art*—an art that originated in England and was subsequently adopted by French composers. These developments are widely thought to have inaugurated the era of the Renaissance in music.

Tinctoris's testimony raises many questions, only one of which will concern me in this article: what was his philosophical outlook, his intellectual agenda, in writing about music history the way he did? Did he apply categories and models of historical analysis that could be said to reflect a considered interpretation of music history? If so, how did these categories and models shape his account, and to what extent can we distinguish clearly between the 'facts' he supplied and the interpretation in which he couched them?

At first sight these questions may seem merely secondary to others that have exercised scholars much longer, for instance, what the nature of the 'new art' was, or how we can recognize its distinctive features in surviving compositions. Yet the principal claim of this article is that the questions are not secondary at all—they are, or at least ought to be, primary. That is to say, before we enquire into the specific nature of the 'new art', or set out to identify it in individual works, it is critical to determine the status of this concept in Tinctoris's outlook as a whole. Should we take the 'new art' to be a matter of historical fact or a matter of historical interpretation? If the former, one may reasonably expect to find independent confirmation of its emergence in the 1430s: major changes in musical style, for example, or indications that the most recent music was being appreciated particularly for its novelty. However, if the 'new art' was a matter of historical interpretation, a concept devised by Tinctoris to impose order and sense on the musical past, the search for factual verification could well remain inconclusive.

As matters stand today, the search has in fact remained inconclusive. To this date there is little agreement as to what might have been distinctively new about the music of the 1430s, even that of English composers. All the more reason, therefore, to reopen the question of the 'new art' from a different angle, and to explore the sense it made within Tinctoris's historical vision.

The first of the two passages has already received so much commentary that it may not initially seem to warrant renewed scrutiny.[1] It appears in the Prologue to the *Liber*

I am grateful to Andrew Kirkman, Peter Jeffery, Bonnie Blackburn, and Leofranc Holford-Strevens for helpful comments and suggestions in response to an earlier version of this paper.

[1] For a perceptive analysis of Tinctoris's comments, see Reinhard Strohm, 'The Humanist Idea of a Common Revival of the Arts, and its Implications for Music History', in Maciej Jabłoński and Jan Steszęwski (eds.),

de arte contrapuncti, the longest and perhaps most important of Tinctoris's writings on music, completed at Naples in late 1477.[2] Before quoting the passage in full, it may be helpful to comment briefly on the context in which it occurs.

Although the art of counterpoint was well established and widely taught in the 1470s (the tradition as a whole can be traced back to about 1330),[3] Tinctoris offered much more in his treatise than merely a restatement of the received teachings. His specific aim in writing the *Liber de arte contrapuncti* was to devise a primer of counterpoint that would take account of the musical innovations of his own lifetime. This had important consequences for the way he set up his argument. In addition to expounding the established rules of counterpoint, he sought to promote a sensitive appreciation of the musical quality that contemporary composers, in his view, had brought to consummate perfection—consonant sweetness (*suavitas*, *dulcedo*).[4]

This quality apparently demanded a keenly attuned way of hearing. We can tell this from a requirement that features centrally in the treatise, but is not found in earlier writings on counterpoint: that of training or educating the ears (*eruditio aurium*).[5] Such training, Tinctoris felt, was required not just to tell consonance from dissonance (this was traditionally believed to be a matter of innate human ability rather than training), but rather, and especially, to discern the most delicate shades of consonant sonority. Herein, apparently, lay the key to the exquisite sweetness of contemporary music. It was probably for this reason that Tinctoris described the entire didactic enterprise of his treatise as *nostra eruditio*, 'our training', and that he regularly invoked the judgement of *aures eruditae*, 'trained ears', as well as of 'those who are trained', the *eruditi*—as opposed to the human ear in general.[6]

Despite the basic continuity in the pedagogy of counterpoint since the mid-fourteenth century, then, Tinctoris perceived that something about the art had

Interdisciplinary Studies in Musicology (Poznań, 1997), 7–25, and, more recently, id., 'Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a Rebirth of the Arts', in Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie J. Blackburn (eds.), *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages* (New Oxford History of Music, iii/1; Oxford, 2001), 346–405.

[2] Johannes Tinctoris, *Opera theoretica*, ed. Albert Seay, 2 vols. (Corpus scriptorum de musica, 22; Rome, 1975–8), ii. 11–157. References to treatises in this edition will be as follows: upper-case roman numerals refer to books, lower-case roman numerals to chapters, and arabic numerals to sentences. Individual treatises will be abbreviated as follows: *Tractatus alterationum* (*A*), *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (*C*), *Complexus effectum musices* (*E*), *Liber imperfectionum notarum* (*IN*), *Tractatus de notis et pausis* (*NP*), *Proportionale musices* (*P*), *Tractatus de regulari valore notarum* (*VN*), *Super punctis musicalibus* (*SPM*), *Liber de natura et proprietate tonorum* (*T*). For *De inventione et usu musicae*, see the edition by Karl Weinmann, *Johannes Tinctoris (1445–1511) und sein unbekannter Traktat 'De inventione et usu musicae'* (2nd corr. edn.; Tutzing, 1961), 27–46.

[3] The most comprehensive study of the medieval tradition of counterpoint is Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zum Terminus, zur Lehre und zu den Quellen* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, 13; Wiesbaden, 1974). For the teaching and popular dissemination of counterpoint in the 15th c., see Rob C. Wegman, 'From Maker to Composer: Improvisation and Musical Authorship in the Low Countries, 1450–1500', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 49 (1996), 409–79, esp. 413–39.

[4] For the appreciation of consonant sweetness as advocated by Tinctoris, see Rob C. Wegman, 'Sense and Sensibility in Late-Medieval Music: Reflections on Aesthetics and "Authenticity"', *Early Music*, 23 (1995), 298–312.

[5] The significance of Tinctoris's emphasis on aural training and education, and his reliance on the judgement of trained ears in general, is explored in a broader historical context by Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, 'Boethius and the Judgement of the Ears: A Hidden Challenge in Medieval and Renaissance Music', in Charles Burnett, Michael Fend, and Penelope Gouk (eds.), *The Second Sense: Studies in Hearing and Musical Judgement from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1991), 169–98, esp. 188–90. The notion may be Ciceronian; cf. *De re publica*, II. 69: 'With lyres or pipes, and with song and voices, a certain harmony (*concentus*) must be maintained between the different sounds, which trained ears (*aures eruditae*) cannot bear when it is disrupted or out of tune; and such harmony, consonant and blended, may be brought about by the regulation of even the most dissimilar voices.' (Tinctoris may have known this passage through St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, II. xxi. 1, although he quoted a very similar remark from Cicero's *De officiis* in *C* II. xxx. 8–9.)

[6] *C* I. ii. 33 ('nostra eruditio'); I. v. 5, x. 9, xv. 5 ('aures eruditae'); II. xxi. 7, III. xxx. 10 ('eruditi'). This may also explain why Tinctoris, in a bold controversion of the otherwise virtually unchallenged authority of Boethius, endorsed the determination of consonances 'in the manner of Aristoxenus' (*C* I. ii. 33), that is, by valorizing the sense of hearing. See Sachs, 'Boethius and the Judgement of the Ears', 173–5 and 189.

fundamentally changed. He situated that change forty years in the past, coinciding roughly (and perhaps not coincidentally) with his date of birth, around 1435. The Prologue was the appropriate place to comment on those developments, and it is here that Tinctoris made his oft-quoted remarks about the recent history of music (*C* Prologue 14–19):

And, if it be permitted to report on things seen and heard, I have held in my hands at one time or another several ancient songs of unknown authorship, which are called *apocrypha*,[7] that are so foolishly, so stupidly composed that they much sooner offended the ears than pleased them.[8] Nor (what cannot astonish me enough) does there exist anything that was composed more than forty years ago which is deemed, by those who are trained (*eruditi*), to be worthy of the hearing.[9]

At this very time, if I may pass over the countless singers who perform most beautifully, there flourish—whether due to the power of some heavenly influence or to a fervour of constant exercise[10]—infinitely many composers such as Joannes Okeghem, Joannes Regis, Anthonius Busnois, Firminus Caron, and Guillermus Faugues, who take pride in having had as teachers (*praeceptores*) in this divine art Joannes Dunstaple, Egidius Binchois, and Guillermus Dufay, [who have] recently passed from life.[11]

Almost all the works (*opera*) of all these men are redolent of such sweetness that in my opinion they are to be judged most worthy not only for men and demigods, but even for the immortal gods.[12] Certainly I never hear them, I never inspect them, without coming away more cheerful and more learned,[13] whence, just as Virgil took Homer as his model in that divine work, the Aeneid, so do I, indeed, make use of these as models in my little

[7] 'vetusta carmina ignotae auctoritatis quae apocrypha dicuntur': works of unknown authorship; cf. St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XV. xxiii. 4, on scriptures of questionable authority 'quae apocryphae nuncupantur'.

[8] It is hard to determine what were the 'ancient' compositions that Tinctoris had heard and seen, though surely they were older (probably much older) than forty years. They may have been the same works on which the theorist commented in *C* II. xxiii. 3: 'I will pass over the compositions of old musicians in which there were more dissonances than consonances.' Cf. Wegman, 'Sense and Sensibility', 303.

[9] Bonnie Blackburn has argued that the change in the mid-1430s may have reflected a new 'harmonic' conception of counterpoint, as apparently exhibited by Dufay's motet *Nuper rosarum flores* of 1436. See Blackburn, 'On Compositional Process in the Fifteenth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 40 (1987), 210–84, esp. 268–74. However, there may be room for discussion how literally one should take the term of forty years. If Tinctoris's comments can be said to refer to a major musical development in the 1430s, one might also consider 'der neue Stromrhythmus' identified by Heinrich Besseler in his *Bourdon und Fauxbourdon: Studien zum Ursprung der niederländischen Musik* (Leipzig, 1950; rev. edn., 1974), 109–24.

[10] 'vehementia assiduae exercitationis', a notion inspired by *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, II. 12 ('adsiduitatem exercitationis'), or more probably III. 40 ('in omni disciplina infirma est artis praeceptio sine summa adsiduitate exercitationis', a statement quoted by Tinctoris in *C* III. ix. 2).

[11] Paula Higgins has drawn attention to the historical significance of the word 'teachers' in this passage; see '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* (Warren, Mich., 1997), 169–86, esp. 172–3.

[12] Christopher Page has noted that the verb used by Tinctoris, *redolere* (to emit a scent), may reflect the literary device, and perhaps the actual experience, of synaesthesia, since it implies an analogy between auditory and olfactory sensations of sweetness. If so, this would constitute an interesting Neoplatonic strain in his musical thought. See Page, 'Reading and Reminiscence: Tinctoris on the Beauty of Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 49 (1996), 1–31. I would qualify Page's observations only to the extent that notated works (*opera*) are not manifest in sound, and cannot, by definition, produce musical effects. Hence it would have been difficult for Tinctoris to find a verb that would accurately describe how they can impress the reader or listener as sweet, which may be why he settled for the metaphorical expression *redolere*. When Nicholas of Cusa was faced with the same problem, in a description of the compositional process, he resorted to the verb *resplendere*: 'For the eternal spirit acts like a *musicus* who wants to make his inner conception (*conceptum*) perceptible. He takes the plurality of sounds and reduces this to a congruent proportion of harmony, in order that the harmonious sound may shine (*resplendeat*) sweetly and perfectly in that proportion, when it is there as in its proper place.' See Heinrich Hüschen, 'Nikolaus von Kues und sein Musikdenken', in Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel and Hubert Unverricht (eds.), *Symbolae Historiae Musicae: Hellmut Federhofer zum 60. Geburtstag* (Mainz, 1971), 47–67 at 56 n. 23.

[13] Leofranc Holford-Strevens has identified the allusion (probably by way of Terence, *Eunuchus*, IV. vii. 791, or perhaps Cicero, *De finibus*, V. 49) to Homer's *Odyssey*, xii. 186–8; see his 'Tinctoris on the Great Composers', *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, 5 (1996), 193–9.

works.[14] I have especially imitated (*imitatus sum*) their commendable style of composition with respect to the arrangement of consonances.

Can we discern a consistent historical vision in these comments? Arguably, yes. It is worth noting, first of all, that Tinctoris gives all the credit for the recent musical innovations to *composers*, and that he singles out their *works* as the testimony to those innovations. He consciously passes over the involvement of singers, no matter how beautifully they may perform. And the role of listeners (to the extent that he would have included these among the *eruditi*) is limited to judgements after the event, as to what music is worth hearing or not. In the first instance, then, Tinctoris's historical perspective is composer- and work-centred: music has progressed primarily because creative individuals have taken the initiative in advancing the art.[15] The recent history of music, essentially, is the history of their achievements. Performers and listeners, by contrast, are merely passive recipients.

Within this broad perspective, Tinctoris adopts a *generational* model of historical change. What astonishes him more than anything else is the efflorescence of the current generation of composers—men who can boast to have received their instruction from the previous generation. Presumably this latter point is not to be taken literally, as implying formal apprenticeship or education. It seems more probable, as Howard Mayer Brown has argued, that the learning process had been analogous to the literary practice of *imitatio*.[16] That is to say, composers would have carefully studied the arrangements of consonances in existing works, and might conceivably have borrowed individual sonorities or progressions in their compositions—just as Virgil had famously borrowed words and expressions from Homer.

Tinctoris's own experience, as reported in the same passage, exemplifies this learning process. As he goes on to explain, it was not just by *listening* to the works of other composers that he had acquired his skills in counterpoint, but by *reading* them as well. 'I never hear them, I never inspect them', he declares, 'without coming away more cheerful and more learned'.[17] This is a rare and to my knowledge unprecedented acknowledgement that polyphony—which by definition implies collective musical activity—could be and was read by single individuals.[18] The particular verb used by

[14] Howard Mayer Brown has explored the implications of this passage in his 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage: Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 35 (1982), 1–48, esp. 41–2.

[15] For the increasing cultural prominence and valuation of musical authorship in the late 15th c., see Wegman, 'From Maker to Composer'.

[16] Brown, 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage'. Conceivably this might have included borrowing, structural modelling, and quotation, as Brown and others have argued, though Tinctoris himself speaks only of imitating the *style* of composition, specifically 'with respect to the arrangement of consonances'. So far as we can tell from his remarks, therefore, he is more likely to have borrowed sonorities than melodic phrases or even entire voice parts.

[17] This parallels a remark earlier in the Prologue: 'Before I wrote down anything about music, I exerted myself to acquire an understanding of the diverse things pertaining to it, by hearing and reading (*audiendo, legendo*) with constant effort as best as I could' (C Prologus 5). Perhaps this was an allusion to Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, X. 1. 8: in the practice of *imitatio*, orators accumulate a store of judiciously selected words and expressions 'by reading and hearing the best things' (*optima legendo atque audiendo*).

[18] Interestingly, the only known portrait of Tinctoris (Valencia, Biblioteca Universitaria, MS 835, fo. 2ᵛ) shows him in the act of reading silently from a book of polyphony. On the manuscript and the illumination, see Tammaro de Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei re d'Aragona*, 4 vols. (Milan, 1947–52), i. 150–5; Johannes Tinctoris, *Opera theoretica*, i. 12–13; *The Mellon Chansonnier*, ed. Leeman L. Perkins and Howard Garey, 2 vols. (New Haven and London, 1979), i. 20–6; Thomas Haffner, *Die Bibliothek des Kardinals Giovanni d'Aragona (1456–1485): Illuminierte Handschriften und Inkunabeln für einen humanistischen Bibliophilen zwischen Neapel und Rom* (Wiesbaden, 1997), 107 and 315–19. On reading music in the sixteenth century, see Jessie Ann Owens, *Composers at Work: The Craft of Musical Composition 1450–1600* (New York and Oxford, 1997), 34–56, and Cristle Collins Judd, *Reading Renaissance Music Theory: Hearing with the Eyes* (Cambridge Studies in Music Theory and Analysis, 14; Cambridge and New York, 2000). An important study of the

Tinctoris, *considerare*, confirms that such reading was an essential part of the practice of *imitatio*. It translates literally as 'to inspect' or 'to examine', yet its particular significance for him is clarified by a passage in another treatise, the *Liber de natura et proprietate tonorum* of 1476. 'For what is it to eat a book', he asks there, 'if not to inspect (*considerare*) its contents with great care; and [what is it] to fill the bowels with [that book], if not to retain what is inspected in indelible memory?'[19] *Considerare*, then, denotes the act of attentive reading preliminary to memorization.[20] Yet for authors in particular, it also denotes the act of ruminating preliminary to writing. As the theorist continues in the same passage: 'both before and after I published this *Proportionale* [a treatise completed around 1472–3], I devoted myself most painstakingly to a contemplation (*consideratio*) of its contents'. It is surely no coincidence that Tinctoris applies the same word to the attentive reading of polyphony. In doing so, he provides an important clue to the way he had learnt and refined his own skills in cultivating consonant sweetness—namely, by reading, digesting, ruminating, and memorizing what he encountered in the works of others.

True, the digestive metaphor was virtually a commonplace in medieval reflections on the acts of reading and memorizing.[21] Yet it did have particular significance in connection with the practice of *imitatio*, since it implied the creative transformation of remembered materials, which might conceivably resurface in new compositions without the author even realizing it.[22] By reading compositions in the same way as he read books, Tinctoris had accumulated a store of musical ideas on which he could draw liberally in his treatise on counterpoint and, one assumes, in his own compositions.[23] In the same way (or so his comments imply), other composers could take pride 'in having had as teachers in this divine art' such men as Dunstable, Binchois, and Dufay. This, evidently, is how one generation could be said to follow in the footsteps of another.

The significance of the generational model is confirmed by another important point.

same issue in French lyric poetry of the 12th and 13th centuries is Dietmar Rieger, ' "Senes breu de parguamina"? Zum Problem des "gelesenen Lieds" im Mittelalter', *Romanische Forschungen*, 99 (1987), 1–18.

[19] *T* Prologus 17: 'Quid enim est comedere volumen quam quod continet ingenti cura considerare, ac eo viscera compleri, quam consideratum indelebili memoria retinere?' The comment is a gloss on Ezek. 3: 3 ('cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee'). *Considerare* was originally an astrological term: it was derived from the Latin *sidus* (star), and it meant to scrutinize something as attentively as one does the stars. For a synonym, see *P* I. ii. 5, where Tinctoris notes that one can determine the specific meaning of a proportional sign 'by examining the counterpoint' (*contrapunctum perspiciendo*).

[20] Tinctoris evidently assumed that readers of his treatises intended to memorize the teachings set forth there. See e.g. *M* v. 11 ('in order that you may commit [these] more steadfastly to memory'); *SPM* v. 3 ('hence the chief distinction is to be committed to memory'). His favourite expression for the reading of his treatises was *perlegere*, 'to read thoroughly'; cf. *M* Prologus 7; *VN* Prologus 3; *A* Prologus 6.

[21] See e.g. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990), esp. 164–69.

[22] See e.g. Thomas M. Greene, 'Petrarch and the Humanist Hermeneutic', in Giose Rimanelli and Kenneth John Atchity, *Italian Literature, Roots and Branches: Essays in Honor of Thomas Goddard Bergin* (New Haven, 1976), 201–24, esp. 215–17; and George W. Pigman III, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980), 1–32, esp. 5–8, 10, and 12–13.

[23] As Christopher Page observed: 'The writings of Tinctoris irresistibly evoke a mind that has been trained to make excerpts from texts and then to store them for future use' ('Reading and Reminiscence', 13–14). The theorist's *L'Homme armé* mass seems consistent with such a mindset; Edgar H. Sparks characterized the mass as 'the work of an eclectic, of a man who is aware of all the current developments and who is making a conscious attempt to combine them in his writing'. See Sparks, *Cantus Firmus in Mass and Motet, 1420–1520* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), 240–1. It is significant, in this context, that Tinctoris sometimes referred to compositions, and perhaps collections of compositions, as published texts. See, for instance, his parenthetical remark 'Libro teste regio' ('witness the Royal Book') in support of a comment about a Credo by Binchois (*P* III. ii. 21), which recalls similar remarks like 'teste Exodi XXXIIo capitulo' (*E* viii. 5) or 'teste Boethio' (*C* I. viii. 6). By identifying Binchois's Credo in terms of the book in which readers might expect to find it, Tinctoris implied the existence, and general availability, of a musical publication known under the title *Liber regius* (or perhaps *Livre royal*)—perhaps by analogy to the medical compendium of Haly Abbas entitled *Liber regius* in Latin translations.

In addition to reporting the recent developments in music history Tinctoris also ventures, in passing, to *explain* them. Yet it seems telling that the thing to be explained, for him, is not the actual creative choices made by composers, but rather the emergence of the current generation as a whole. What, he wonders, was the historical *cause* for that emergence? He suggests two possibilities: perhaps it was due to 'the power of some heavenly influence', or else to 'a fervour of constant exercise'. That is to say, either composers were somehow fulfilling their destinies as predisposed by the planets, or else they had worked persistently to advance the art of music, in which case their labour had clearly paid off. The latter possibility, constant exercise, seems consistent with the arduous learning process described above, involving careful reading and memorizing of the works of others.[24] It may be consistent also with Tinctoris's premiss that the ears must be rigorously *trained* if they are to appreciate the kind of musical sweetness he so admired—once again, one assumes, a matter of persistent exercise and practice. (The theorist himself took considerable pride in the hard work he had devoted to the art of music, and he constantly exhorted others to follow his example.[25])

So far, all of this seems plausible enough: the new generation of composers was distinguished for its untiring efforts to emulate the musical style of the previous generation. Still, if that was true, what are we to make of the other possibility raised by the theorist, 'the power of some heavenly influence'? There does seem to arise a contradiction here. For if heavenly bodies are ultimately responsible for the course of music history, as Tinctoris seems to suggest, to what extent could composers actually take the credit for their artistic achievements? Why in fact would 'constant exercise' (and indeed the example of previous composers) have been needed at all, if musicians could simply rely on the influence of the stars and planets?

Although the explanation does seem to contradict his other comments, I would argue that Tinctoris raised the possibility of heavenly influence quite consciously, and that he was fully aware of its broader implications. Apart from anything else, the astrological model of historical explanation was well established in the Middle Ages.[26] More importantly, one of his fellow humanists at the court of Naples, Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, had written a major treatise on heavenly influence in 1476—only a year before the completion of the *Liber de arte contrapuncti*.[27] Significantly, Pontano had postulated a direct connection between celestial variation and the variety encountered in the arts, especially those of painting and poetry. The achievements of great artists were to be ascribed 'not to ingrafting by parents (since the ancestors of these men were neither painters nor poets), but to the heavens and their stars, and their fermentations

[24] The particular expression used by Tinctoris, *assidua exercitatio*, was inspired by *Rhetorica ad Herennium*; see above, n. 10. Its importance to the practice of *imitatio* is confirmed in *C* Prologus 5, where Tinctoris declares that he acquired his knowledge of music by listening and reading *cum exercitatione continua*; see above, n. 17, and below, n. 25.

[25] See e.g. *C* Prologus 5 and *T* Prologus 3–4.

[26] See the classic study by Friedrich von Bezold, 'Astrologische Geschichtsconstruction im Mittelalter', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 8 (1892), 29–72; other studies include Martin Haeusler, *Das Ende der Geschichte in der mittelalterlichen Weltchronistik* (Cologne and Vienna, 1980), esp. 142–55, and Nicholas Campion, 'Astrological Historiography in the Renaissance', in Annabella Kitson (ed.), *History and Astrology: Clio and Urania Confer* (London, 1989), 89–136. The chief difference from Tinctoris and other writers, of course, is that astrological historiography typically focused on major world events rather than the birth of illustrious men.

[27] Charles Trinkaus, 'The Astrological Cosmos and Rhetorical Culture of Giovanni Gioviano Pontano', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), 446–72; for the next sentence, see ibid. 457–8. For medieval views on heavenly influence in general, see Edward Grant, 'Medieval and Renaissance Scholastic Conceptions of the Influence of the Celestial Region on the Terrestrial', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 17 (1987), 1–23; John David North, 'Medieval Concepts of Celestial Influence: A Survey', in Patrick Curry (ed.), *Astrology, Science and Society: Historical Essays* (Woodbridge and Wolfeboro, NH, 1987), 5–17.

and mixtures'.[28] If that was the view of experts in astrology at Naples, then Tinctoris was justified in suggesting that historical progress in music might be due, ultimately, to favorable planetary configurations. The critical question is what sort of influence heavenly bodies actually exerted, and to what extent they might have released composers from the burden of 'constant exercise'.

On this point the established view in the fifteenth century was clear. Whenever there appeared to be a conflict between the science of astrology and the Christian doctrine of free will—the power to determine and exercise one's thoughts and volitions—the conflict was resolved unilaterally in favour of the latter. The position sanctioned by the Church, and affirmed by authorities on the subject, was that heavenly bodies do not predetermine, but predispose. That is to say, they do not foreordain the actions of human beings, and they do not absolve them from their responsibility for those actions.[29] Rather, they cause humans to be endowed, at birth, with *dispositions* to act in certain ways, dispositions that they may, or may not, choose to follow. The important point for us is that those dispositions may include a talent or aptitude for music. And the question for Tinctoris, evidently, is why his time had seen the birth of such an unprecedented number of talented composers.

The supposition that musical talent is a disposition determined at birth by heavenly bodies was of course hardly a novel one. One is reminded, for example, of the *Liber introductorius* by Michael Scott (*c.*1175–1235), a compendium of astronomy written presumably in the early thirteenth century.[30] Scott observed that those born under constellations representing musical instruments were destined to become musicians. Someone born under Lyra, for instance, 'will be a tailor or a player of musical instruments, a person dealing with magic, a humorous and ingenious person, wise, a poor rather than rich man, and his fortune will be adverse and often deceptive'.[31] Likewise, someone conceived or born under the constellation *figura sonantis canoni* 'will lead a happy life . . . with the playing of his instruments, and he will be a poor rather than rich man, and yet he will go well dressed'.[32] These are examples of constellations outside the zodiac. However, according to the testimony of Claudius Ptolemy (*c.*100–78), in his authoritative treatise *Tetrabiblos*, the so-called mutable signs, Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius, and Pisces, tend to make souls fond of music as well.[33] And among the planets, Venus and Mercury in particular were distinguished for their powerful influence on musical ability, whether alone or in combination:[34]

[28] Trinkaus, 'The Astrological Cosmos and Rhetorical Culture', 457–8 n. 29.

[29] As St Augustine famously exclaimed in *The City of God* (V. i), 'what scope is left to the judgment of God, who is Lord of both stars and men, in relation to the deeds of man, if a celestial necessity is assigned to those deeds?' See Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), 188. For a summary of the medieval debate on astrology, see Laura Ackerman Smoller, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d'Ailly, 1350–1420* (Princeton, 1994), 25–42, and the literature cited ibid. 147 n. 1.

[30] For this and what follows, see F. Alberto Gallo, 'Astronomy and Music in the Middle Ages: The *Liber Introductorius* by Michael Scott', *Musica disciplina*, 27 (1973), 5–9 at 6.

[31] For a similar remark in a 15th-c. German treatise on astrology, see Albert P. de Mirimonde, *Astrologie et musique* (Geneva, 1977), 34. The connection between Lyra and musicianship is attested already by the grammarian Asclepiades of Myrleia (1st c. BC), and is undoubtedly of more ancient origin; see W. Gundel, 'Individualschicksal, Menschentypen und Berufe in der antiken Astrologie', *Jahrbuch der Charakterologie*, 4 (1927), 135–93 at 154.

[32] I am grateful to Leofranc Holford Strevens for pointing out to me that this constellation is discussed in more detail in Franz Boll, *Sphaera: Neue Griechische Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Sternbilder* (Leipzig, 1903), 273–5, 447, 506–7, 514–15, and 540–3. *Figura sonantis canoni* was made up of seventeen stars that are now part of the constellation Eridanus.

[33] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, ed. and trans. F. E. Robbins (Loeb Classical Library, 435; Cambridge, Mass., 1940), 335; see also Gundel, 'Individualschicksal, Menschentypen und Berufe', 162 regarding Gemini.

[34] Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 349–51, 357–9, and 387; for other classicial testimonies, see Gundel, 'Individualschicksal, Menschentypen und Berufe', 181, 184–5, and 188–91.

Again, when two planets are found to rule action, if Mercury and Venus take the rulership, they bring about action expressed by the arts of the Muses, musical instruments, melodies, or poems, and rhythm, particularly when they have exchanged places. For they produce workers in the theatre, actors, dealers in slaves, makers of musical instruments, members of the chorus, makers of strings, painters, dancers, weavers, and wax-moulders.

Still, there was more to all of this than an apparent correlation between walks of life and constellations or planets. Heavenly bodies were thought to determine specifically the humoral temperaments of people born under their influence, that is, the particular mixtures of bodily humours (phlegm, black bile, yellow bile, and blood) that defined their physical and mental constitution. For that very reason, the astrological view of history strongly favoured the idea that extraordinarily gifted humans are not just born to perform memorable deeds, but exhibit a distinctive humoral personality type.[35] It also encouraged composers to view their *métier* as a personal calling, and to value their works as the realizations or expressions of individual creative talent.[36] Far from denying them the credit for their artistic achievements, then, the idea of celestial influence was bound to enhance their sense of creative individuality and professional self-esteem.

In these respects the astrological view of history provided the foundation for the concept of musical genius, whose emergence Edward Lowinsky has traced in the years around 1500.[37] One can tell this, for example, from Pietro Aaron's well-known remark about musical talent, in his *Lucidario in musica* of 1545: 'good composers are born and cannot be made through study and long practice, but rather through heavenly influence (*per celeste influsso*) and inclination'.[38] In the sixteenth century such ideas were, of course, commonplace. Glarean made a similar point when he remarked, in his *Dodekachordon* of 1547, that men who invent plainchants or compose polyphonic settings do so 'through the power of talent (*ingenium*), and through a certain natural and inborn capacity, rather than through skill (*ars*)'.[39] Yet the same idea must be implicit in Tinctoris's comments as well. It could hardly be coincidence, after all, that he invoked the same conceptual opposition as Aaron: that between study and long practice (*assidua exercitatio*) on the one hand, and heavenly influence (*coelestis influxus*)

[35] On popular perceptions of the melancholy temperament associated with the creative talent of composers, see Rob C. Wegman, '"And Josquin Laughed . . .": Josquin and the Composer's Anecdote in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of Musicology*, 17 (1999), 319–57, esp. 338–57. For a broader study of such perceptions, especially in the visual arts, see 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).

[36] In art theory this gave rise to the idea that 'every painter paints himself'; see the excellent article by Frank Zöllner, '"Ogni Pittore Dipinge Sé": Leonardo da Vinci and "Automimesis"', in Matthias Winner (ed.), *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk* (Weinheim, 1992), 137–62. The notion of personal style is harder to trace in the history of music, though arguably it is implicit in Paolo Cortese's appraisal of the comparative strengths and weaknesses of Josquin, Obrecht, and Isaac (1510); see Nino Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies in 15th-Century Italy', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 19 (1966), 127–61 at 147–61. The notion appears fully developed by the late 16th c.; see James Haar, 'A Sixteenth-Century Attempt at Music Criticism', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 36 (1983), 191–209 at 194.

[37] Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Musical Genius—Evolution and Origins of a Concept', *Musical Quarterly*, 50 (1964), 321–40 and 476–95. In the 16th c., several writers on astrology undertook a systematic study of the horoscopes of illustrious men, including musicians. See Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols. (New York, 1923–58), vi. 100–1, 469–70, and esp. 597.

[38] 'i buoni compositori nascono, et non si fanno per studio, ne per molto praticare, ma si bene per celeste influsso, et inclinatione'; *Lucidario in musica* (Venice, 1545; repr. New York, 1978), sig. Dd iij'; cf. Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Musical Genius', 483. For the early history of this idea, see William Ringler, '*Poeta nascitur non fit*: Some Notes on the History of an Aphorism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 2 (1941), 497–504.

[39] Heinrich Glarean, *Dodekachordon* (Basle, 1547), 174; trans. after Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, trans. Clement A. Miller, 2 vols. (n.p., American Institute of Musicology, 1965), i. 205.

on the other.[40] Music ideally required both, and its recent efflorescence was to be attributed to a burgeoning of either.

Yet there is more to it even than this. For writers on astrology, including Pontano at Naples, the humoral temperament fixed at birth by the stars was known as *ingenium*.[41] This is a concept with a rich but complex significance. *Ingenium*, as used in the late Middle Ages, can be translated variously as natural constitution, talent, character, or mental power.[42] (It does not have the connotation of genius in the modern sense.) The concept is of particular interest to our enquiry, for although Tinctoris does not mention it explicitly in the passage, it is crucial to an understanding of his comments. If, as those comments seem to imply, heavenly influence had caused a large number of composers to be endowed with extraordinary *ingenium*, or talent, in the art of music, then several other issues can be seen to make coherent sense. The most important of those issues has to do with the concept of *imitatio*.

As every humanist knew, *imitatio* was not without its problems. True, the practice was indispensable for the acquisition of compositional skills, and it did ensure continuity in the art of music. Yet in the long run, it might also hold back aspiring composers in a mindless dependence on received models and examples. That was the chief problem: mere imitation does not advance an art. As Quintilian famously commented in his *Institutio oratoria*: 'nothing improves by imitation only'.[43] For this influential writer, in fact, it was positively dishonourable 'to rest satisfied with equalling that which we imitate'. The best orators, painters, and poets had never been guilty of such complacency. If one surveyed all the arts, Quintilian argued, it was easy to see that 'none of them has remained exactly as it was invented, nor has it stood still in its initial stage'. Tinctoris observed just this in the recent history of music. So if the astonishing developments of his time were due to the achievements of composers, as he argued, then those achievements ought to have amounted to more than imitation alone.

Tinctoris was hardly the first writer to be confronted with this potential for stagnation.[44] Humanists had stressed again and again that no poet could achieve a creative transformation of borrowed materials unless he was specially gifted. They identified the particular gift as *ingenium*.[45] The greatness of an author, for them, was

[40] Undoubtedly Tinctoris was thinking in terms of the conventional poetic requirements of *ars*, *exercitatio*, and *ingenium*, that is: skill, practice, and natural ability. Cf. Donald Lemen Clark, 'The Requirements of a Poet: A Note on the Sources of Ben Jonson's *Timber*, Paragraph 130', *Modern Philology*, 16 (1918–19), 413–29, esp. 414–19. See also Anthony J. Close, 'Commonplace Theories of Art and Nature in Classical Antiquity and in the Renaissance', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 30 (1969), 467–86 at 475–7.

[41] Trinkaus, 'The Astrological Cosmos and Rhetorical Culture', 460 and 467.

[42] None of these meanings is attested in Charles Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, 10 vols. (Niort, 1883–7; repr. Bologna, 1981–2), iv. 360–1, but the usage was well established in the Middle Ages. See e.g. the definitions by pseudo-Augustine ('Ingenium est vis ea animae, sive intentio, qua anima se extendit et exercet ad incognitorum cognitionem') and Honorius of Autun ('Ingenium est naturalis vis ad aliquid cito intelligendum') (Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–1903), xl. 787, clxxii. 247, and clxxvi. 771) and Hugh of St Victor ('Ingenium est vis quaedam naturaliter animo insita per se valens; ingenium a natura proficiscitur, usu juvatur, immoderato labore retunditur, et temperato acuitur exercitio') (*Hugonis de Sancto Victore Didascalicon de studio legendi*, ed. Charles Henry Buttimer (Washington, DC, 1939)). See also Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton, 1972), 94–104.

[43] For this and what follows, see Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, X. ii. 7–8: 'turpe etiam illud est, contentum esse id consequi quod imiteris . . . si omnia percenseas, nulla mansit ars qualis inventa est, nec intra initium stetit . . . nihil autem crescit sola imitatione'.

[44] On medieval and humanist notions of literary innovation and progress, see Ernstpeter Ruhe, 'Les Plumes du paon et le mouton assimilé: Zum Problem der Originalität im Mittelalter', in *Mittelalterbilder aus neuer Perspektive: Diskussionsanstöße zu* amour courtois*, Subjektivität in der Dichtung und Strategien des Erzählens* (Beiträge zur romanischen Philologie des Mittelalters, 14; Munich, 1985), 194–209, and Sarah Stever Gravelle, 'Humanist Attitudes to Convention and Innovation in the Fifteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 11 (1982), 193–209.

[45] See e.g. Eckhard Kessler, 'Geschichtsdenken und Geschichtsschreibung bei Francesco Petrarca', *Archiv für*

revealed precisely in the extent to which he demonstrated that gift, by improving on his models and thus advancing the art of poetry.[46] Such creative improvement was not a matter of training or imitation: only natural-born talent enabled the poet to surpass his teachers and models. For this reason *ingenium* was an indispensible requirement. That requirement, as Quintilian's remark confirms, was founded on the premiss that the arts must develop and advance: it implied a fundamentally *dynamic* conception of history.

Tinctoris embraced a similarly dynamic conception with regard to music. If the number of extraordinarily gifted musicians was determined, at any one time, by the power of some heavenly influence, then it was only to be expected that the art would undergo dramatic historical changes. (Not all of those changes need have been for the better, as we shall shortly see.)[47] Yet Tinctoris recognized the potential for change also in another respect. By positing the notion of *eruditio aurium*, the training of the ears, he acknowledged that musical judgement, especially in the art of counterpoint, was an acquired taste.[48] This represented a bold departure from the established medieval view, upheld on the authority of Boethius, that the sense of hearing can only corroborate the immutable truths discovered by reason, and has no potential for development beyond such corroboration. That view may strike us now as reductive, but it was nothing if not logical and consistent. After all, the mathematical basis of consonance, as discovered by reason, revealed God's creative purpose in designing the universe: what more could humans possibly want than to be able to hear and understand His purpose? Still, it is precisely this axiom that Tinctoris overturned. If the human ear can be trained to appreciate new sonorities, as he maintained, then it necessarily follows that aural judgement must be relative, open-ended, and capable of development.[49] This made for an unstable foundation for the art of counterpoint, as the theorist acknowledged,[50] yet it also allowed him to account for the historical differences between older and more recent styles of composition. More importantly, once aural judgement was acknowledged to be historically contingent, it became possible to envisage virtually unlimited scope for future development. No matter what style of counterpoint composers might choose to develop, the human ear would always be able, at least in principle, to adjust to it given sufficient training.[51]

Kulturgeschichte, 51 (1969), 109–36, esp. 114–19, and Peter Brockmeier, 'Imitatio und Ingenium in der Lyrik: Quellen und Variationen von Petrarcas Sonett *Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio*', *Arcadia*, 26 (1991), 33–49, esp. 33–6.

[46] For the fundamental requirement that poets and artists should improve on borrowed materials, see Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', and Gregor Vogt-Spira, 'Ars oder Ingenium? Homer und Vergil als literarische Paradigmata', *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch*, 55 (1994), 9–31, esp. 15–21 and 24–9.

[47] In the Middle Ages, scholars had generally been sceptical whether stellar and planetary influence necessarily caused the arts and sciences to progress; see A. George Molland, 'Medieval Ideas of Scientific Progress', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (1978), 561–77 at 573–6.

[48] It is perhaps no coincidence that the earliest known use of the metaphor 'taste' in connection with musical appreciation occurs in a letter written at Florence in 1468, where a trumpeter is deemed to be without peer 'sechondo il mio intelletto e ghusto'. See Frank A. D'Accone, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico e la musica', in Piero Gargiulo (ed.), *La musica a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Florence, 1993), 219–48 at 235 n. 38; also below, n. 51. For the concept of taste in Western aesthetics generally, see Giorgio Tonelli, 'Taste in the History of Aesthetics from the Renaissance to 1770', *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, 5 vols. (New York, 1973–4), iv. 353–7.

[49] As noted by Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, 'Boethius and the Judgement of the Ears', 188–9.

[50] As when he notes that the fourth was considered a consonance by the ancients, but is perceived as an 'intolerable dissonance' by *aures eruditae* (*C* I. v. 5), and that the sixth was once considered a dissonance, though it must now be ranked among the consonances (*C* I. vii. 6). Cf. Wegman, 'Sense and Sensibility', 304. On the inherently unstable nature of the medieval distinction between consonance and dissonance, see also David E. Cohen, 'Metaphysics, Ideology, Discipline: Consonance, Dissonance, and the Foundations of Western Polyphony', *Theoria: Historical Aspects of Music Theory*, 7 (1994), 1–86.

[51] For humanists, the view that aural judgement is changeable and inherently unstable received a significant impetus from the Ciceronian notion of satiety, the idea that there is a delicate line between intense sensory pleasure and disgust (cf. *De oratore*, III. 98–100). As applied to music, the notion of satiety could imply that the ear may cease to

Tinctoris's dynamic conception of music history was given a more explicit formulation in another well-known passage, from the Prologue to his *Proportionale musices* of *c.*1472–3. This passage has often been quoted, along with the one discussed before, in support of the contention that the 1430s marked the beginning of the musical Renaissance. It is indeed the closest we have, in Tinctoris's writings, to an account that is historical in conception. As is well known, the Prologue to the *Proportionale* is essentially a précis of music history, from ancient and biblical times up to the theorist's own time, condensed in a Latin narrative of less than 400 words. Most of the account deals with musicians and writers before living memory, yet the final section summarizes the developments of Tinctoris's own time. This section is worth quoting in full (*P* Prologus 9–14):

Lastly the most Christian princes, of all of whom, most pious King [Ferrante of Naples, the dedicatee of the *Proportionale*], you are by far the foremost in the gifts of soul, of body, and of fortune, desiring to augment the Divine Service, founded chapels in the manner of David, in which at extraordinary expense they appointed diverse singers to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant and comely,[52] with diverse (but not adverse) voices.[53] And since the singers of princes, if their masters are endowed with the generosity that makes men illustrious, are rewarded with honour, glory, and wealth, many are kindled with a most fervent zeal for this kind of study.[54]

At this time, consequently, the potential of our music has undergone such a marvellous increase[55] that it appears to be a new art, the wellspring of which new art, if I may so call it, is

take pleasure in consonant sonority even after a single performance, a possibility rarely contemplated before the late 15th c. We can recognize this implication, for example, in Paolo Cortese's remarks on Josquin, Obrecht, and Isaac in *De cardinalatu libri tres* (1510); see Pirrotta, 'Music and Cultural Tendencies', and Rob C. Wegman, ' "Musical Understanding" in the Fifteenth Century', *Early Music*, 30 (2002), 47–66. Yet the same implication can be found in a letter of the composer Antonio Le Basque to Lorenzo de' Medici, dated 1472, in which he offers his 'canzonette ridicule' as a remedy against the satiety caused by music of greater sweetness: 'Cossì farete di questi miei canti, havendo l'orechie satie di dolce et suave melodie, tornarete a questi canti, non perché vi dilectino mha [*sic*] sol per meglio gustar gl'altri, perché meglio se comprehende el dolce quando se gusta l'amaro.' See D'Accone, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico e la musica', 238. For a similar observation, see also Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth, 1967), 69: in music, 'it is very wrong to have two perfect consonances one after the other; for our sense of hearing abhors this, whereas it often likes a second or a seventh, which in itself is a harsh and unbearable discord. This is because to continue in perfect consonances produces satiety and offers a harmony which is too affected (*genera sazietà e dimostra una troppo affettata armonia*); but this disappears when imperfect consonances are introduced to establish the contrast which keeps the listener in a state of expectancy, waiting for and enjoying the perfect consonances more eagerly and delighting in the discord of the second or seventh, as in a display of nonchalance.' Tinctoris strongly disapproved of this line of reasoning in *C* II.xxx.

[52] Ps. 147: 1: 'Deo nostro sit iucunda decoraque laudatio.' This was a favourite verse of Tinctoris's; it is quoted in four of his treatises: *Inventione* (ed. Weinmann), 33; *E* ii.16; *C* Prologus 8; *P* Prologus 9, and features prominently in his authorial portrait (see above, n. 18). No other late medieval music theorist after Jacobus of Liège is known to have cited this verse, let alone so often.

[53] 'diversis vocibus, non adversis', an allusion to St Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, Ps. 150: 4: 'Habebunt enim etiam tunc sancti Dei differentias suas consonantes, non dissonantes, id est, consentientes, non dissentientes; sicut fit suavissimus concentus ex diversis quidem, sed non inter se adversis sonis'; St Augustine, *Opera*, 16 vols. (Turnhout, 1954–81), x/3. 2195–6.

[54] 'honore, gloria, divitiis afficiuntur, ad hoc genus studii ferventissime multi incenduntur', an allusion to Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, I. 4: 'honos alit artes, omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloria, iacentque ea semper, quae apud quosque improbantur'. This was a key text for Tinctoris's views on glory as attained by composers: see *E* xix. 4–5, where he alludes to the same passage in a discussion of music's potential to bring glory to those who are skilled in it. Martin Le Franc had also alluded to the verse in the Prologue of *Le Champion des dames*: 'Chascun a plaisir laboure et a gloire par laquelle, comme dist Tulle en ses questions tusculanes, tous sommes enflammez a diverses estudes.' See Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames*, ed. Robert Deschaux, 5 vols. (Paris, 1999), i. 6. (The same passage had also been quoted, with strong disapproval, by St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, V. xiv, whose critical views on the pursuit of glory Le Franc and Tinctoris evidently chose to ignore.)

[55] 'tam mirabile susceperit incrementum', perhaps a reminiscence from Seneca, *De beneficiis*, IV. v. 3, on the marvellous increase of rivers during summer as evidence of God's beneficence towards humankind: 'Flumina . . . ex quibus quaedam aestatis diebus mirabile incrementum trahunt'. The metaphor of a river would resonate with Tinctoris's notion of a *fons et origo*, 'wellspring', among the English.

held to be among the English, among whom Dunstable stood forth as the leader. Contemporary with him in France were Dufay and Binchois, to whom directly succeeded those of today, Ockeghem, Busnoys, Regis, and Caron, who are the foremost in composition of all I have heard. Nor can the English, who are popularly said to jubilate while the French sing,[56] bear comparison with them. For the French invent songs in the newest manner for the new times, while the English always use one and the same [manner of] composition, which is a sign of the poorest talent (*ingenium*).[57]

But alas! I am astonished not only at them but also at many other composers, for while they compose so ingeniously and with such refinement, and with incomprehensible sweetness, I have known them either to ignore musical proportions altogether, or to designate wrongly the few they did know.

It is not hard to see what Tinctoris understood to be the problem with English composers. His remark that they 'always use one and the same manner of composition' surely implies that the English were unable to move beyond imitation. That is why he explained the problem as due to lack of *ingenium*. That the problem did indeed have to do with imitation is confirmed by his allusion to a well-known treatise then thought to be by Boethius, *De doctrina scolarium*. 'For indeed', its author had written on the subject of *imitatio*, 'it is [the mark] of the poorest talent to use always things already invented, and never things yet to be invented.'[58] The poorest talent: evidently the power of heavenly influence had not favoured English composers after Dunstable as much as it had their French colleagues. The latter, as Tinctoris noted with pride, 'invent songs in the newest manner for the new times'.[59] He could hardly have provided a more unequivocal statement of his dynamic conception of music history.

Before reading too much into Tinctoris's words, however, it may be advisable to consider an interpretation of the *Proportionale* recently advanced by Ronald Woodley. He has argued that the final section from the Prologue, quoted above, was modelled directly on Cicero's *De oratore*, I. 13–17.[60] Given Tinctoris's well-known propensity to display his learning and erudition, a sustained allusion to an authoritative text would not be out of character.[61] Woodley pointed to several narrative parallels that seem to indicate an allusion of this kind. *De oratore* opens with a series of comments about the conditions in Rome that favoured a surge of interest in oratory (including generous

[56] This appears to be the earliest attestation of an expression that was widely known in the 16th c. See Bonnie J. Blackburn, 'Music and Festivities at the Court of Leo X: A Venetian View', *Early Music History*, 11 (1992), 209–20 at 14–16. For medieval characterizations of nations generally, see Paul Meyvaert, ''Rainaldus est malus scriptor Francigenus''—Voicing National Antipathy in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 66 (1991), 743–63, esp. 754.

[57] 'isti, quod miserrimi signum est ingenii, una semper et eadem compositione utuntur', an allusion to pseudo-Boethius, *De disciplina scolarium*, v. 3–4: 'quippe miserrimi est ingenii semper inventis uti et numquam inveniendis'. Pseudo-Boethius, *De disciplina scolarium: Édition critique, introduction et notes*, ed. Olga Weijers (Leiden and Cologne, 1976), 120–1. Tinctoris may well have known this passage through the compilation *Auctoritates Aristotelis*; cf. *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis: un florilège médiéval, étude historique et édition critique*, ed. Jacqueline Hamesse (Philosophes médiévaux, 17; Louvain and Paris, 1974), 296 no. 22.

[58] See above, n. 57. This, it seems, was one of those quotations that everybody knew: it is found also in a letter by Giovanni Spataro of 1532, and invoked by Gioseffo Zarlino in his *Dimostrationi harmoniche* of 1571. See *A Correspondence of Renaissance Musicians*, ed. Bonnie J. Blackburn, Edward E. Lowinsky, and Clement A. Miller (Oxford, 1991), 468. (I am grateful to Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens for bringing these quotations to my attention.) See also Hubert Silvestre, ''Quanto iuniores, tanto perspicaciores'': antécédents à la Querelle des anciens et des modernes', *Recueil commémoratif du X^e anniversaire de la faculté de philosophie et lettres* (Publications de l'Université Lovanium de Kinshasa, 22; Louvain and Paris, 1968), 231–55 at 244–45.

[59] Richard Glasser has argued that the concept of 'moving with the times' became influential in the French life and thought in the 15th c., though he stressed that this concept 'did not contain the present-day connotation of progress'; see his *Time in French Life and Thought*, trans. C. G. Pearson (Manchester, 1972), 101–2.

[60] For this and what follows, see Woodley, 'Renaissance Music Theory as Literature', 215–19.

[61] See e.g. Christopher Page's analysis of a passage in *De inventione et usu musicae* and its literary debt to St Augustine's *Confessions*; 'Reading and Reminiscence', 11–13.

rewards in fame and fortune), the ardent zeal for public speaking among the young, the example provided by Greek teachers, the current world leadership of Roman orators, and yet, in spite of all this, the need for further instruction. All of this seems broadly congruent with Tinctoris's remarks about English and French composers. The parallels led Woodley to conclude that we may be dealing with 'a sophisticated *imitatio* in the sense acknowledged, described and positively encouraged by many Renaissance writers and rhetoricians as a creative act in its own right'. This is a tantalizing perspective on the Prologue, yet it also raises a critical question: to what extent were Tinctoris's comments shaped by literary models, rather than a disinterested concern with objective historical truth?

Although Woodley's interpretation is of immediate relevance to our enquiry, as we shall see, it is not without its difficulties. For example, it is well known that *imitatio* was practised in order to collect a store of words and expressions (whether from the original texts or from florilegia), and that these were typically memorized and used as decontextualized excerpts.[62] It does not make the case more persuasive, therefore, that one cannot identify a single quotation from Cicero's *De oratore*, nor even a verbal resonance, in the final section of Tinctoris's Prologue.[63] All the parallels to which Woodley drew attention have to do only with the broad outline of Cicero's narrative, and none of these is especially compelling unless one already accepts the conclusion that Tinctoris followed that outline as a whole—a practice that is untypical of *imitatio* in any case.[64]

There is a methodological problem here as well. If narrative parallels, rather than quotations or verbal allusions, are sufficient to demonstrate an intertextual relationship, then one could make the same case for other texts whose argument is similar to that of *De oratore*. Particularly interesting in this regard is the opening of Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*, with which Tinctoris was well acquainted.[65] Not only does this text offer the very same parallels identified by Woodley in *De oratore*, but it adds several others. For example, Cicero claims here that Romans never borrowed anything from the Greeks without improving on it ('meum semper iudicium fuit . . . accepta ab illis fecisse meliora'; I. 1). This is exactly what French composers were believed to have done with the English musical legacy. The notion of improvement implies direct comparison, and such comparisons are in fact conspicuous in the opening of *Tusculanae disputationes*—much more so than in *De oratore*. Roman achievements, for Cicero, are beyond comparison with Greece or any other nation ('neque cum Graecia neque ulla cum gente sunt conferenda'; I. 2). This recalls Tinctoris's claim that English composers cannot bear comparison with the French ('haec eis Anglici nunc . . . veniunt conferendi'). Moreover, and unlike *De oratore*, music is included in the comparison. As Cicero observes, in a passage quoted by Tinctoris in the *Complexus effectuum musices* (*E* ix. 4–5), the Greeks thought that the highest education resided in the music of strings and voices: 'Hence musicians flourished in Greece, everybody learnt it, and any one ignorant of it was held not sufficiently educated' (*Tusc. disp.*, I. 4).

These parallels are worth citing not just to make a methodological point; they are in

[62] It was not until the 17th c. that writers began to object to the practice of comparing and evaluating major texts in terms of isolated excerpts; see Vogt-Spira, 'Ars oder Ingenium?' 20–1.

[63] Of course, Tinctoris had quoted *De oratore*, I. 10 earlier in the Prologue (*P* Prologus 3).

[64] In *De inventione et usu musicae* (above n. 61), the allusions to St Augustine identified by Christopher Page are either direct quotations or verbal resonances.

[65] See above, n. 54. For a perceptive analysis of the opening of *Tusculanae disputationes*, see Richard Harder, 'Das Prooemium von Cicero's Tusculanen (Die Antithese Rom – Griechenland)', in '*Ερμηνεια*: *Festchrift Otto Regenbogen zum 60. Geburtstag* (Heidelberg, 1952), 104–18.

fact unlikely to be coincidental. For among the actual allusions and quotations that can be identified in the final section of Tinctoris's Prologue, the only one involving Cicero happens to be precisely from *Tusculanae disputationes*, not *De oratore*.[66] This is not to suggest that Tinctoris modelled the Prologue directly on the former text, or that he took such modelling to be *imitatio*. For there are at least three other quotations in the final section, from the Book of Psalms, St Augustine, and pseudo-Boethius, and possibly yet another one from Seneca.[67] To the extent that Tinctoris can be shown to have applied the practice of *imitatio*, then, he actually wove together verbal allusions to several different texts—which is of course highly typical of that practice. At the same time, the narrative parallels with Cicero's *De oratore* and *Tusculanae disputationes* are quite striking, and surely not coincidental. How do we explain them?

The explanation, I believe, is to be found in a narrative topos that was well established in medieval historiography, and for which Cicero's two texts had provided the classic formulation. This is the topos of *translatio artium*, the notion that arts and sciences tend to move from one people or one civilization to another.[68] This notion was typically centred on the identification of two historical stages: the invention or discovery of an art (*inventio*), and its subsequent transferral to another nation (*translatio*). A recurring theme in the topos, articulated most prominently in Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes*, is the unrivalled excellence achieved in the second stage, the fact that the originators of an art cannot bear comparison with their inheritors.

Admittedly there would have been some difficulty in applying this model to the music history of Tinctoris's time. Apart from anything else, the English could hardly be claimed to have invented the art of music. The theorist followed conventional wisdom in attributing that invention to the biblical figure Jubal, who was 'the father of all such as handle the harp and organ' (Gen. 4: 21).[69] Nor could the English be said to have invented the art of counterpoint: Tinctoris may well have known the *Ars contrapuncti* ascribed to Johannes de Muris (d. after 1344), whom he had mentioned as a major authority on music earlier in the Prologue. So he faced an obvious problem: if recent music history was to be construed as a *translatio artis*, and if the English in particular were to be credited with an *inventio artis*, the inevitable question was, what sort of art?

Tinctoris solved the difficulty by positing the notion of a *new art*. This enabled him to speak of its recent invention, as he immediately proceeded to do: 'the wellspring of which new art, if I may so call it, is held to be among the English'. The notion of a new art was somewhat of an overstatement, as his own qualification 'if I may so call it' confirms. On the other hand, one could not actually posit a *translatio* unless French composers before Dufay were held to have been totally uncultured—just as the Romans had been before the arrival of Greek teachers in oratory. Why else would they have wanted to adopt anything from the English? That, too, was an overstatement. Yet once the historiographical model was in place, there was no particular reason to look for evidence that would contradict it.

[66] See above, n. 54.

[67] See above, nn. 52–3 and 55–7.

[68] See Franz Josef Worstbrock, 'Translatio artium: Über die Herkunft und Entwicklung einer kulturhistorischen Theorie', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 47 (1965), 1–22, esp. 9–11. This is a variant of the better-known historiographical topos of *translatio imperii et studii*, for which see Werner Goez, *Translatio Imperii: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1958).

[69] *P* Prologus 3. See James W. McKinnon, 'Jubal vel Pythagoras: Quis sit inventor musicae?', *Musical Quarterly*, 64 (1978), 1–28. For the late medieval interest in the inventors of the arts in general, see Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, *The Color of Melancholy: The Uses of Books in the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore and London, 1997), 100–22.

The most serious overstatement, however, was the charge that English music had failed to progress after Dunstable. That charge may have been consistent with the *translatio* topos (especially as articulated, for example, in *Tusculanae disputationes*), but it is at variance with the historical record. Not that Tinctoris would necessarily have been aware of this. If Italian musical sources from the 1470s are anything to go by, musicians on the Continent had virtually ceased performing English music by that time—with the obvious exception of such classics as the anonymous *Missa Caput*, or Walter Frye's *Ave regina celorum*, which had been known for at least two decades in any case. Did Tinctoris have any knowledge of current musical developments in England? His comments do not seem to suggest so. There is compelling evidence to indicate that the new and distinctive style of the Eton Choirbook (*c.*1490–1502) was well under way by the 1470s, perhaps even earlier.[70] And even if we disregard that evidence, the choirbook does confirm that English composers had, in fact, continued to invent music 'in the newest manner for the new times'—even if it was not quite the same manner as invented by the French. True, Tinctoris did acknowledge that the English 'are popularly said to jubilate', and it may be tempting to associate this term, *jubilare*, with the florid and melismatic counterpoint so typical of the Eton motets.[71] Yet the theorist reported this merely as a popular view, one that he may well not have shared, and on which he offered no comment in any case.

In the light of all this, one might wonder how reliable Tinctoris actually was as a historical witness. Yet this question is probably beside the point. The two Prologues did not tell his readers anything they did not already know. There was no need to remind them of the kinds of music they had been hearing, composing, and performing in the previous decades. What Tinctoris did offer was a new interpretation, one distinguished for its impressive intellectual underpinning and literary elaboration. It was an interpretation that could be hailed as truly authoritative, not because it recorded a wealth of accurate information, but because it invested the music of the recent past with momentous historical significance. In this regard Tinctoris was highly successful. He may not have persuaded many contemporary readers (some of whom reacted with outrage to the *Proportionale* as a whole),[72] but he certainly has managed to convince modern scholars.

Still, the interpretation was not unproblematic. After all, how *new* could the 'new art' be, how permanent and lasting its foundation, if the music of Dunstable had long been out of date by the 1470s, and if only persistent innovation could rescue subsequent composers from the charge of mindless repetition? Whatever the much-vaunted novelty had been, it was apparently liable to wear off very quickly. But then this only underlines a point I made earlier: namely, that the notion of a 'new art' was probably an artefact of the *translatio artium* topos, a construction imposed on Tinctoris by a pre-existing model of historical interpretation. It implied, implausibly, that early fifteenth-century composers had had no models worth imitating—indeed worth hearing—and that the English had somehow found it in themselves to invent a wholly

[70] See e.g. Margaret and Ian Bent, 'Dufay, Dunstable, Plummer: A New Source', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 22 (1969), 394–424, esp. 399–403 and 415–24, and Reinhard Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford, 1985), 126–7.

[71] *Jubilare* was conventionally understood to refer to the vocal musical expression of a religious joy that is beyond words; see Walter Wiora, 'Jubilare sine verbis', in *Historische und systematische Musikwissenschaft: Ausgewählte Aufsätze von Walter Wiora*, ed. Hellmut Kühn and Christoph-Hellmut Mahling (Tutzing, 1972), 130–54.

[72] *T* Prologus 6–7; see the translation of the full passage in Rob C. Wegman, 'Mensural Intertextuality in the Sacred Music of Antoine Busnoys', in Paula Higgins (ed.), *Antoine Busnoys: Method, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music* (Oxford, 1999), 175–214 at 177 n. 5.

new sound. Tinctoris may have genuinely believed this, though it seems more probable that he got a little carried away by his own rhetoric. In any case, those who had actual memories of French musical life in the 1410s and 1420s (Dufay, for one) would surely have smiled at his grandiose overstatements.

If Tinctoris is to be regarded as a reliable historical witness to anything, it is more probably to modes of thought that became influential only in the 1470s. The preoccupation with the past, the composer-centred perspective, the generational model, the power of heavenly influence, the requirement of individual creative talent, the notion of acquired taste, the dynamic conception of music history, the perception of music as a new art—these are ideas and concerns that would be articulated more often in the late fifteenth century, and became virtually commonplace in the sixteenth.[73] Tinctoris was the first writer to give them a comprehensive formulation, yet the modes of thought must already have been widely current, at least among literati in Italy, in the 1470s. Change was in the air: these were exciting times for young and ambitious musicians. For them, humanist scholarship was an empowering pursuit. It offered the means to make new claims for music, to extol it as a new art for the newest times, to review its history with the same pride Cicero had taken in Roman oratory. Yet the historical perspective that was to emerge from all this, as Tinctoris's Prologues confirm, served chiefly to glorify the present, not to commemorate the past. For the composers whose names he remembered in this way, that history may have borne only a superficial resemblance to their actual lives.

Why should this have been the case? The key, I suggest, lies in the aspect of glorification. The pursuit of history was important for Tinctoris because this alone could confer glory on the achievements of great composers. In this respect the new awareness of history, as articulated by him, dramatically raised the stakes for young composers. Unlike their predecessors, they were now writing for posterity as well as for their own time. There are several comments in Tinctoris's writings that seem to reflect this new outlook. In the *Proportionale*, for example, he commented that Binchois (who had died in 1460) 'has won an eternal name for himself through his most delightful composition'.[74] Likewise, in another treatise: 'I mention by name those who are in error [Domarto and Barbingant], lest the young, deceived on account of the immortal fame which they have won by composing most sweetly, imitate them in this, supposing everything they did to be perfect'. These were older composers whose work had virtually ceased to circulate by the 1470s. Whether they had truly won eternal names or immortal fame, or had consciously aspired to such ideals, is open to question. Yet that is not the issue here. Tinctoris's words reflect the ambitions of his own time, projected (as such ambitions typically are) onto figures of the past.[75] Those men, and the history of their achievements, were needed to define a standard of glory for the present. Once such a standard had been established, contemporary composers could aim to achieve even greater glory, by inventing 'songs in the newest manner for the new times'. These ambitions are most transparent in a well-known passage from

[73] See e.g. Jessie Ann Owens, 'Music Historiography and the Definition of "Renaissance" ', *Notes*, 47 (1990), 305–30.

[74] *P* III. ii. 20; for the following sentence, see *IN* I. iii. 57.

[75] One is reminded, for instance, of Claudio Monteverdi's identification of a 'seconda prattica', in 1605, whose invention and historical development was then retroactively ascribed, by his brother Giulio Cesare, to older composers: '[The] Second Practice, which was first renewed in our notation by Cipriano de Rore [d. 1565], was followed and amplified, not only by the gentlemen already mentioned, but by Ingegneri [d .1592], Marenzio [d. 1599], Giaches de Wert [d. 1596], Luzzasco [d. 1607], likewise by Jacopo Peri [d. 1633], Giulio Caccini [d. 1618], and finally by loftier spirits with a better understanding of true art'. After W. Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York, 1950), 408.

Tinctoris's *Complexus effectuum musices*, a treatise revised and enlarged *c*.1481–3 (*E* xix. 6–12):

In our time we have experienced how very many musicians have been endowed with glory. For who does not know Iohannes Dunstaple, Guillelmus Dufay, Egidius Binchois, Iohannes Okeghem, Anthonius Busnois, Iohannes Regis, Firminus Caron, Iacobus Carlerii, Robertus Morton, Iacobus Obrechts?[76] Who does not accord them the highest praises, whose compositions, spread throughout the whole world, fill God's churches, kings' palaces, and private men's houses, with the utmost sweetness? I say nothing of the very many distinguished musicians who have been presented with outstanding wealth and dignities, for although they have obtained honours from them, these are not at all to be compared with the immortal fame that the first composers have prolonged for themselves. The former belongs to fortune, but the latter to virtue. Whence Virgil, in the tenth book of the *Aeneid*, 'Each has his appointed day; short and irretrievable is the span of life for all; but to prolong fame by deeds—that is the task of virtue'.

Here, at least three generations of composers, both living and dead, are brought together in a pantheon of glory. The immortality and eternity ascribed to the names of Dunstable, Dufay, and Binchois is shared now by their successors, and even by a man at the beginning of his career, Jacob Obrecht. The names of the older men were needed, more so than their actual music, for the glory they could bring. The historical vision is a self-serving one—as such visions often are, our own not necessarily excepted. Yet it also reveals a deep insecurity. There is a sense here that the achievements of the present and recent past must be held on to, preserved in recorded history, remembered for ever—as if the 'utmost sweetness' heard in God's churches, kings' palaces, and private men's houses would have been utterly meaningless otherwise. Virtue, it seems, was no longer its own reward: its due reward, now, was immortal fame.

Such views seem to suggest diminished confidence in the fact that musical activities may have value in and of themselves, even if the music will never be heard or remembered again. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that it was precisely in the 1470s and 1480s that increasing value began to be ascribed to the musical work as a permanent record of creative achievement, and (within the work) to intelligible compositional content, as an immanent quality not contingent on performance.[77] Both these paradigms reflect a concern with what will survive the passing of time—as opposed to what will vanish with the performance, most notably 'the utmost sweetness'. The musical 'work', as defined and understood from the 1470s, reflected a fundamentally *historical* concern. The classic formulation in this regard was to be provided by Nikolaus Listenius (1537):[78]

Compositional [art] is that which is content neither with knowledge of the matter, nor only with practice, but leaves something behind after the effort of work—as when someone writes down music, or a musical song, the end result of which is an accomplished and finished work. It consists in making and crafting, that is, in effort of this kind, to leave behind afterwards, even after the maker has died, a perfect and finished work (*opus perfectum et absolutum*). Thus, a composer is someone engaged in his profession to leave something behind.

[76] Not everyone accepts this version of the passage in the *Complexus* as written by Tinctoris, since the names of Carlier (d. 1457–8), Morton, and Obrecht appear only in a manuscript from the early 16th c.

[77] See Wegman, 'From Maker to Composer', 439–44, and id., ' "Musical Understanding" in the Fifteenth Century'.

[78] For this text, and its debt to Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, see the excellent article by Peter Cahn, 'Zur Vorgeschichte des "Opus perfectum et absolutum" in der Musikauffassung um 1500', in Klaus Hortschansky (ed.), *Zeichen und Struktur in der Musik der Renaissance* (Kassel, 1989), 11–26. Also relevant here is Bettina Klein, '*Perfectus et absolutus*: Zum Begriff des Vollendeten in der Literatur der lateinischen Antike und Spätantike', *Linguistica e letteratura*, 19 (1994), 41–55.

It is the *historical* intention and ambition behind the musical work that made the writing of music history a logical and indeed necessary corollary—and vice versa. That, I suggest, is why Tinctoris was so concerned to appraise the achievements of his time in historical terms. That, too, is why it was he—not Dunstable, Dufay, or Binchois—who needed to claim the historical status of a 'new art' for those achievements, a status he then credited even to those who had been able to value their endeavours without it. In this respect, Tinctoris stood at the beginning of a new period in music history, a period in which the catchphrase *musica nova* would be heard again and again, and the 'new art' of his own time would soon be consigned to oblivion.

ABSTRACT

Two well-known passages from the treatises of Johannes Tinctoris have often been cited in support of the contention that the 1430s marked the beginning of the musical Renaissance. A review of the passages in question indicates that Tinctoris's claims about the recent musical past were so thoroughly shaped by contemporary models of historical interpretation that it is difficult to disentangle hard facts from his historical vision as a whole. Nothing in his testimony provides unambiguous support for the notion that a new period in music history had begun in the 1430s.