New Music for a World Grown Old:
Martin Le Franc and the "Contenance Angloise"

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For Andrew Kirkman

I.

The citizens of Paris had never heard of anything like it. The reports were sensational, and filled them with a mixture of astonishment, disbelief, even alarm. It was the first week of December 1445, and a strange visitor from Spain had become the talk of the day.[1] His name was Fernando of Cordoba. Scarcely beyond his teenage years, this amazing youth could already lay claim to the titles of master of arts, master of medicine, doctor of laws, doctor of decretals, and doctor of theology. He could read, write, and speak just about every known language—including Latin, Greek, French, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. He was able to memorize texts as quickly as he read them: when he was still a boy, he had committed Alexander de Villa Dei's *Doctrinale* to memory in a mere seven days. Now, at age twenty, he had at ready recall the entire Bible, the *Decretals* of Pope Gregory IX, the writings of such scholastic authorities as St Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Hales, St Bonaventure, Nicholas de Lyra, and John Duns Scotus, as well as selected books by Avicenna, Galen, and Hippocrates. His own writings were said to include a commentary on Ptolemy's *Almagest* (the most authoritative textbook on astronomy in the Middle Ages), and several commentaries on books of Scripture, notably the Apocalypse.

Being a knight-at-arms as well as a scholar, Fernando was expert also in the art of chivalrous combat, and he provided demonstrations of this at the court of King Charles VII of France. "He could wield a two-handed sword so amazingly skilfully," writes the chronicler known as the Bourgeois of Paris, "that no one could be compared to him: when he saw his opponent he never failed to leap forward upon him, twenty or twenty-four paces in a single bound."[2] The same writer adds as well that Fernando could paint and illuminate

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1 For this and what follows, see Julien Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue et l'université de Paris au xv^e siècle* (Paris: Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France, 1883); Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín and Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, *Fernando de Córdoba (¿1425-1486?) y los orígenes del Renacimento filosófico en España* (Madrid: Librería general de Victoriano Suárez, 1911); John Monfasani, *Fernando of Cordova: A Biographical and Intellectual Profile*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, lxxxii/2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992).

2 Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 9; quoted after Janet Shirley, trans., *A Parisian Journal 1405-1449, Translated from the Anonymous* Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 361.

manuscripts "better than any man in all Paris or anywhere else." A few years later, in 1447-48, the German King Frederick III would be so impressed by the young Spaniard that he commissioned him to paint his portrait, "and every time he entered Fernando's room he raised his cap as to Apollo's oracle."[3]

As if all this were not remarkable enough, Fernando of Cordoba was also an exceptionally skilled musician. The Bourgeois of Paris reports that "he could play all musical instruments, and sing and perform counterpoint (*chanter et deschanter*) better than anyone else."[4] In an anonymous letter written at Paris on 30 December 1445, we learn that Fernando "is skilled also in music, the art of singing and composition, and he can play not only on all instruments, and perform tunes on them, but he even knows how to manufacture them."[5] Another chronicler, Mathieu d'Escouchy, has a similar report: "he knew more about the art of music than anyone else, played so well on all instruments that no one could outdo him, and he declared the principles and procedures on how to make them."[6] As yet another contemporary writer summed it up: "Indeed, he is a *musicus*, and most expert in all the instruments of this art."[7]

A youth of such exceptional ability, who was distinguished besides for his handsome appearance, his pleasant manners, and his self-effacing modesty ("an unlearned child," is how he described himself[8]), may seem an unlikely candidate for the Antichrist—that evil beast of a man who had been prophesied to establish a reign of terror and persecution at the End of Time. Yet this possibility was seriously entertained by some of the most learned minds of Paris. How, they wondered, could anyone acquire so much knowledge and skill at such a young age—except by resorting to black magic, or by selling his soul to the devil? "Really, if a man could live for a hundred years without eating or drinking or sleeping," declared the Bourgeois of Paris, "he still could not learn all the knowledge that this man has by heart. I must say he alarmed us all very much, for he knows more than it is in human nature to know."[9]

Still, it proved difficult to charge Fernando with heresy, magic, or even fraud. In a formal disputation at the University of Paris, on 11 December, none of the assembled masters

3 Monfasani, *Fernando of Cordova*, 18. No paintings by Fernando of Cordoba appear to survive.

4 "et si savoit jouer de tous instrumens, chanter et deschanter mieulx que nul autre" (Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 9).

5 "Er chan auch musicam, die kunst des gesangs und seczung der don, und chan auch nicht alain auf allen saiten spilen und don spilen, sunder er chan si auch darzu machen" (Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 29).

6 "se congnoissoit en l'art de musique plus que nul aultre, jouoit de tous instrumens tant bien que nul ne l'en pooit passer, bailloit les raisons et instructions comment ilz se devoient faire" (Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 8).

7 "Musicus etenim est et omnium instrumentorum ipsius artis expertissimus" (Bonilla y San Martín and Menéndez y Pelayo, *Fernando de Córdoba*, 73 n.1).

8 "und nennet sich albeg ein ungelercz kind"; Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 29.

9 *A Parisian Journal*, 361.

and professors could expose any gaps or errors in his knowledge, or find fault with his religious orthodoxy. So Fernando left Paris a free man, heading north for the court of Burgundy, and thereafter (or so he intended) for the English royal court. Yet although his performance had been a brilliant success, it failed to allay the doubts and suspicions lingering in Paris. On 22 December an assembly of masters decided, after long discussion, that Fernando was indeed the Antichrist, or at least a disciple of the Antichrist, and resolved to send a missive to the Duke of Burgundy warning him not to believe this Spanish *doctor*.[10] Presumably it was just such a missive which prompted authorities in Cologne, a few months later, to arrest Fernando on charges of heresy and of keeping company with the devil—charges which carried the death penalty, and which led one contemporary writer to assume (incorrectly) that he had been burned at the stake. Fernando's prodigious learning, his phenomenal memory, his outstanding swordsmanship, and his superlative skills in music and painting, nearly cost him his life.

2.

Only three years before the appearance of this imputed Antichrist, the French poet Martin Le Franc had devoted a long digression in his *Le champion des dames* (1441-42), a poem in five books comprising more than 24,000 verses, to the question of the End of the World.[11] His discussion—actually a debate between two allegorical interlocutors—addresses several issues that might help us to explain the baffling reaction encountered by the young Spaniard. And the case of Fernando in turn offers a concrete perspective on Le Franc's argument, which might otherwise well appear to be a mere exercise in glossing old commonplaces. It suggests, at the very least, that the issues addressed in the poem were very much alive in the 1440s, and could indeed become a matter of life and death for those to whom they appeared to apply.

What were those issues? Le Franc's digression was centered on a premise which everyone at the time accepted as gospel: that the world is reaching the end of its natural lifespan. Like an old man crawling towards death, the world has lost the vigor, the vitality, and the virtues of its younger days. Signs of its decay are everywhere apparent. Indeed it will be only a matter of time before the Antichrist will throw the world into its final death agony:[12]

10 For this and the next sentence, see Monfasani, *Fernando of Cordova*, 13, Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 11, and Bonilla y San Martín and Menéndez y Pelayo, *Fernando de Córdoba*, 75 n.1.

11 Martin Le Franc, *Le champion des dames*, ed. Robert Deschaux, 5 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 4: 21-72 (ll. 15033-16392). In what follows, all references will be to this edition. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Phillippe Vendrix, who kindly presented this edition to me as a gift shortly after it had come out in 1999. For *Le champion des dames*, see also Gaston Paris, "Un poème inédit de Martin Le Franc," *Romania*, 16 (1887): 383-437, and Marc-René Jung, "Situation de Martin Le Franc," *Pratiques de la culture écrite en France au xv^e siècle*, eds. Monique Ornato and Nicole Pons (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération internationale des instituts d'études médiévales, 1995), 13-30, esp. 24-25.

> Others repeat that the Antichrist has already been born from a consecrated nun, and is coming everywhere to preach against Jesus Christ, and that the faith will be desecrated, and Christians persecuted: if the true God does not restore us, we will soon come to our end.

Still, the chief interlocutor, Franc Vouloir, admits that the evidence is not without apparent contradiction. Why is it, for example, that children in this corrupt age are so much more precocious, so much smarter, than they were at any other time in history—as the case of Fernando, a few years later, might have been thought to confirm?[13] Why has the present age witnessed such extraordinary progress in the disciplines of music, painting, military combat, physics, and theology—the very disciplines in which Fernando, coincidentally, excelled? How is one to reconcile such progress with the evident decline, degeneration, and certain demise of the world? How, in the concrete case of Fernando, could a man be thought capable of precipitating the world's end merely because he surpassed his contemporaries in talent and industry?

Such questions may seem of limited relevance to the music historian, yet they are in fact of cardinal importance. They bear directly on one of the most controversial issues in music historiography: the elusive beginnings of the musical Renaissance. For it is in the course of his digression, and specifically in the section concerned with the progress of arts and sciences, that Le Franc devoted six famous stanzas to the current state of music, in which high praise was lavished on Guillaume Dufay and Gilles Binchois (ll. 16249-96; see Example 1, p. 240).[14] His allegorical interlocutor, Franc Vouloir, credited these two composers with a "new practice" inspired by the music of John Dunstable—a practice whose apparent key feature he described metaphorically as *contenance angloise*.

The six stanzas have been the subject of intensive scrutiny by music historians, and although they are not without ambiguity, it has long been thought that they testify to the dawning of a new era, the Renaissance, in music.[15] There is much to be said for that interpretation. We know from other texts that Martin Le Franc was a man of impres-

12 "Aultres redient qu'Antecrist est ja né de nonnain sacree, et s'en vient contre Jhesuchrist preschier en chascune contree. Et sera la foy desancree et crestiens persecutez: se le vray Dieu ne nous recree tantost serons executez" (ll. 16073-80).

13 This is the topos of *puer senex* (the child wise beyond his years), one of the conventional signs, in medieval literature, of the world's old age. See James M. Dean, *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997), 57-58.

14 Cf. David Fallows, "The Contenance angloise: English Influence on Continental Composers of the Fifteenth Century," *Renaissance Studies*, 1 (1987): 189-208, esp. 205-8.

15 For recent qualifications of this view, see Jessie Ann Owens, "Music Historiography and the Definition of 'Renaissance'," *Notes*, 47 (1990): 305-30, at 309; Reinhard Strohm, "Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a 'Rebirth' of the Arts," in: Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie Blackburn, eds., *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages*, New Oxford History of Music, iii/1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 346-405, esp. 368-85. Strohm adduces a wealth of fifteenth-century humanist commentary on the question of a "rebirth" in the visual arts and letters, commentary whose direct relevance to Le Franc and Tinctoris he takes for granted from the beginning (p. 347) and presents as established fact at the end (p. 387), without demonstrating it convincingly anywhere in between. For readers unable to share

sive humanist credentials, and subscribed enthusiastically to the humanist cause.[16] Only a few years before compiling *Le champion des dames*, around 1439, he wrote an epistolary treatise on classical oratory in which he had likewise praised Dufay and Binchois, calling them equally worthy of imitation as Virgil, Livy, or Cicero.[17] And the six stanzas of *Le champion des dames*, as many scholars have noted, seem wonderfully consistent with the new spirit of confidence and optimism, the sense of renewal and rebirth, that have traditionally been associated with the Renaissance.

Yet there are also problems with the interpretation. Most worryingly, perhaps, it has been based wholly on the six stanzas themselves, with little or no consideration of the context in which they appear. Those stanzas, and one of them in particular (ll. 16265-72), have been read almost as if they constituted a poem about music in its own right. As such they have, inevitably, given the impression of celebrating musical innovation purely for its own sake, espousing an ideology of progress assumed to be indicative of the Renaissance spirit. Yet this is not an outlook that can be ascribed to *Le champion des dames*, no matter how pronounced Le Franc's humanist sympathies may have been. Not only are the six stanzas embedded in a more extended review of the world's history and destiny, but that review in turn takes its place in a longstanding literary tradition: that of comparing and constrasting ancients and moderns. Within this tradition, known as the "quarrel" of the *antiqui* and *moderni*, there had always been room—even in the Middle Ages—for the idea that modern times are superior to the past, especially with regard to human knowledge and invention.[18] True, such expressions of optimism were invariably tempered by deep misgivings about the general state of the world, and the proximity of its end. Yet this fundamentally pessimistic outlook was not unique to the Middle Ages: it continued to be articulated throughout the Renaissance, and beyond.[19] The truth is that

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Strohm's convictions in this regard it is hard to know what to do with his readings, except perhaps wonder what would be left of them if his convictions could have benefited from more rigorous self-criticism.

16 See Oskar Roth, "Martin Le Franc et les débuts de l'humanisme italien," in: *Il Petrarca ad Arquà*, eds. Giuseppe Billanovich and Giuseppe Frasso (Padua: Antenore, 1975), 241-55; Marc-René Jung, "Rhétorique contre philosophie? Un inédit de Martin Le Franc," in *Rhetoric Revalued: Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric*, ed. Brian Vickers, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, xix (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, 1982), 241-46; Strohm, "Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a 'Rebirth'," esp. 373-82 and 401-5.

17 "Also today, whoever makes his songs similar to the celestial harmonies of our most eminent and utterly modest musical practitioner G. du Fay, or to the surpassing sweet songs of Binchois, is said to be a leader in the art"; after Strohm, "Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a 'Rebirth'," 403-4.

18 George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948), 175-205; A. George Molland, "Medieval Ideas of Scientific Progress," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 39 (1978): 561-77; Robert Black, "Ancients and Moderns in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and History in: Accolti's *Dialogue on the Preeminence of Men of his Own Time*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 43 (1982): 3-32, esp. 5-7.

19 See, for example, Don Cameron Allen, "The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism," *Studies in Philology*, 35 (1938): 202-27, esp. 212-22; Herbert Weisinger, "Ideas of History during the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 6 (1945): 415-35, at 431-35; August Buck, *Das Geschichtsdenken der Renaissance* (Krefeld: Scherpe, 1957), 21-27.

both sides of the *antiqui* versus *moderni* issue—progress and decline—have been argued from Antiquity to the eighteenth century, with no apparent shift to greater optimism during the Renaissance. What changed over time was only the definition of ancient and modern times, not the balance between their perceived merits.[20] For this reason alone it would be reductive to ascribe particular significance (whether in Le Franc or in other authors) to the support of one side or the other, according to the point one hopes to prove. The pertinent question rather is what *significance* authors ascribed to human progress within the overall framework of world history.

On this latter point it would be safe to say that Le Franc's position was ambivalent. That may not be immediately apparent from his discussion of music, but it does emerge clearly once his interlocutor turns, almost in one breath, to the art of warfare (ll. 16305-36). Here, progress is measured by the efficiency which humans have achieved in the business of slaughtering one another. It may be true that music and warfare are two quite different enterprises, yet in terms of rhetorical strategy Le Franc appears to make no distinction at all. Just as the "new practice" of Dufay and Binchois is claimed to be superior to the art of ancient musicians like Jubal and Orpheus, so the warring nations of today have advanced well beyond the examples of Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Scipio Africanus, or Hannibal: "for if one only observes how the French and English are killing one another [in the Hundred Years' War], one will be greatly amazed at the way people are exerting themselves."[21]

This might be called "progress" from one point of view, yet from another it obviously spells decline.[22] Consider only the most obvious yardstick for decline in world history: the Golden Age of Saturn, that mythical era of happiness, charity, and natural bounty to which another of Le Franc's interlocutors had referred earlier on (ll. 15113-36). One of the key themes in classical and medieval reflections on this idealized former age was precisely the absence of war and bloodshed—as, for instance, in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*:[23]

> Then no shrill Trumpets did amate the minds of souldiers with their daunting sounds,
> Nor weapons were through deadly hate dy'd with the dreadful bloud of gaping wounds.
> For how could any furie draw the mind of man to stirre up warres in vaine,
> When nothing but fierce wounds he saw, and for his blood no recompence should gaine.
> O that the ancient manners would in these our latter happelesse times returne!

20 As argued, for instance, by Black, "Ancients and Moderns in the Renaissance," 29.

21 "Car qui avisera comment Franczois et Anglois s'entretuent, il s'esbahira grandement comment gens ainsy s'esvertuent" (ll. 16333-36).

22 Technical advances in the practice of warfare continued to be a controversial topic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as of course they still are today. See, for example, Roy S. Wolper, "The Rhetoric of Gunpowder and the Idea of Progress," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31 (1970): 589-98.

23 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy, in the Translation of I. T.*, ed. William Anderson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), 53. See also Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969).

The example of warfare suggests that material progress by itself was not necessarily considered either good or bad—it was morally ambiguous. The case of Fernando of Cordoba might be seen to confirm this. In one sense he was the living proof of Le Franc's thesis that the present age was, in certain respects, superior to the past. Could any previous age boast a youth of such exceptional ability as him? On the other hand, the allegations against Fernando suggest that the value of such ability was anything but self-evident. Indeed, one wonders to what extent music, painting, martial arts, science, and theology were held to be *intrinsically* positive, if unprecedented excellence in those disciplines could be a "mark of the beast" as potentially revealing as the number 666. What was the merit of such excellence, if it was apparently within the Devil's power to grant it to humans willing to trade their soul for its possession? That, after all, is what Fernando was to be accused of in Cologne: "that he had a devil with him who taught him everything he said."[24]

The upshot of all this is that Le Franc's comments on music cannot be isolated from the moral universe in which they were conceived. Artistic and scientific progress might be a tribute to human ingenuity and industry—that was never denied in the Middle Ages—yet if they were pursued for their own sake they could also bespeak, or promote, such evils as vainglory, pride, anger, greed, not to mention heresy. This is not the place to discuss whether this attitude of ambivalence was more typical of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Suffice it to say that its significance in Le Franc's argument has been obscured by modern attempts to turn him into a spokesman for the musical Renaissance.

This brings us to another problem. The six "musical" stanzas of Le Franc have been evaluated only for their compatibility with one particular interpretation, namely, that they celebrate a new style of composition which emerged in the 1430s, and express an awareness of artistic renewal consistent with the Renaissance spirit. This interpretation has become so firmly entrenched in the scholarly literature that it may seem almost wilful now to ask if Le Franc's poem might invite other possible readings. Yet one good reason for doing just that is the troubling discrepancy between his comments about music and what they have been taken to mean. For instance, it has been pointed out more than once that Le Franc's statements about Dufay and Binchois are more consistent with a change in performance practice than one in compositional style, since he praises them both in their capacity as performers.[25]

24 Havet, *Maître Fernand de Cordoue*, 11, and Bonilla y San Martín and Menéndez y Pelayo, *Fernando de Córdoba*, 59n. Throughout Western history there has also been a close perceived association between demonic possession and uncommon musical skill, especially on instruments; see, for instance, Reinhold Hammerstein, "Music as a Demonic Art," *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, 5 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973-74), 3: 264-67. In this light Fernando's reputed ability to play on all instruments could only have made matters worse for him.

25 Philip R. Kaye, *The "Contenance Angloise" In Perspective: A Study of Consonance and Dissonance in Continental Music, c. 1380-1440* (New York: Garland, 1989), 6-7; Fallows, "The contenance angloise," 201 n.45; Rob C. Wegman, "From Maker to Composer: Improvisation and Musical Authorship in the Low Countries,

Not only does his interlocutor invoke the testimony of "those who were with them" or "heard them" (and hence could bear witness to the "exquisite euphony" of the new practice), but he singles out three other contemporary musicians as equal or even superior to these two men—none of whom, significantly, is known to have been active as a composer.[26]

Attempts to establish the precise nature of the *contenance angloise* in compositions from the early fifteenth century have proved inconclusive at best.[27] Even in the period itself, the novelty for which it stood was apparently not clearly-defined enough to warrant sustained theoretical reflection. There is no contemporary manual on the "nouvelle pratique" that could be likened to humanist treatises on rhetoric, painting, or architecture. On the contrary: so far as we can tell the art of counterpoint continued to be formulated and taught along the same principles as it had been for a century or more—the chief principle being the distinction between perfect and imperfect consonance.[28] What little Le Franc gives away about the nature of the new practice, "frisque concordance" (l. 16266), does not suggest a departure from those principles, unless perhaps the novelty resided in the way consonant sound was performed. Yet whatever the poet may have meant, there is no indication in the 1430s that the premises of musical practice and theory were being fundamentally reconsidered, no evidence of a conceptual change in the realms of music philosophy and aesthetics—nothing, in short, that could be helpfully explained by positing the beginning of a new era in music history, let alone the advent of the Renaissance.[29]

Instead we appear to be dealing with a new musical fashion, or at least contemporary awareness of uncommon musical excellence. Even such awareness, however, does not necessarily point to a spirit of renewal typical of the Renaissance. There are similar

1450-1500," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 49 (1996): 409-79, at 425; Strohm, "Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a 'Rebirth' of the Arts," 370.

26 Two prints of Le Franc's poem have the reading "escouterent" rather than "hanterent" in l. 16263; see Fallows, "The contenance angloise," 206. For Verdelet (l. 16280), see Hygini Anglès, "Alfonso V d'Aragona mecenate della musica ed il suo ménestrel Jean Boisard," in *Scripta musicologica*, ed. Joseph López-Calo, 3 vols. (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1975-76), 2: 765-78, at 770-74. For the blind viol players Jehan de Cordoval and Jehan Ferrandes (ll. 16289-90), see Wegman, "From Maker to Composer," 422 n.31, and the literature cited there.

27 Kaye, *The "Contenance Angloise" In Perspective*, esp. 364-73.

28 Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, *Der Contrapunctus im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zum Terminus, zur Lehre und zu den Quellen*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, xiii (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1974).

29 To my knowledge there is only one piece of documentary evidence that could be seen to lend support to Le Franc's testimony. This is a Burgundian payment to Binchois, on 29 May 1438, for "ung livre qu'il avait fait et composé pour l'ordonnance de Mgr., des Passions *en nouvelles manieres*" (my italics). See Jeanne Marix, *Histoire de la musique et des musiciens de la cour de Bourgogne sous le règne de Philippe le Bon (1420-1467)*, Collection d'études musicologiques, xxviii (Strasburg: Heitz, 1939), 180. Unfortunately these Passion settings do not appear to have survived. I will discuss the concept of "maniere" below, section 6.

examples in the late Middle Ages, some of which are far more specific and compelling than Le Franc's testimony. Here is a little-known example of new musical fashions emerging in the Rhineland in the year 1360, as reported by a chronicler in the town of Limburg (Hessen) in the late fourteenth century:[30]

> Item, in this same year the styles and poems changed in German songs. Up to now songs had been sung long, with five or six measures [*Gesetzen*],[31] and the masters are [currently] making new songs with three measures. Things changed also with regard to trumpet and shawm playing, and music progressed [lit. ascended], and had never been as good as it has now started to become. For he who was known, five or six years ago, as a good shawm player throughout the whole country [the Rhineland, perhaps the Holy Roman Empire as whole], is not worth a fly now. Item, one sang the refrain: "Hope is keeping me alive: grief would torment me otherwise!"

There are striking similarities between Le Franc's stanzas and this chronicle entry, similarities which confirm that one did not have to be a humanist to celebrate innovation in vocal and instrumental practice, or to rejoice in "progress" and "renewal" in the art of music generally. Nor, for that matter, did music have to partake in a Renaissance "revival of the arts" in order for chroniclers to rave about new fashions as enthusiastically as Le Franc did.

Yet the differences are perhaps more informative than the parallels. Most importantly, the chronicler's comments are far more matter-of-fact and to the point than the rhetorical expositions of Martin Le Franc. Unlike the latter, he was not concerned to belabor a broader intellectual issue, but rather indicated, by the simple act of including the report in his chronicle, that the changes of 1360 were noteworthy in themselves, and deserved a place in the historical record because of their instrinsic significance. Also, his comments on music make up a self-contained report, one in a long list of similar reports chronicling all manner of unrelated events and occurrences in the Rhineland. Le Franc's stanzas, by contrast, are not self-contained at all. The very fact that they appear in the course of an allegorical debate suggests that there is an element of contention: who is making what point here?[32] And what is the significance of that point in the context

30 "Item in disem selben jare vurwandelten sich dictamina unde gedichte in Duschen lidern. Want man bit her lider lange gesongen hat mit funf oder ses gesetzen, da machent dy meister nu lider mit dren gesetzen. Auch hat ez sich also vurwandelt mit den pyffen unde pyffenspel unde hat uffgestegen in der museken, unde ny also gut waren bit her, als nu in ist anegegangen. Dan wer vur funf oder ses jaren eyn gut pyffer was geheißen in dem ganzen lande, der endauc itzunt nit eyne flyge. Item da sang man den widersang: 'Hoffen helt mir daz leben, truren dede mir anders we!'" (my trans.) Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen, *Die Limburger Chronik*, ed. Gottfried Zedler (Limburg an der Lahn: Limburger Vereinsdruckerei, 1930), 36. On the Limburg Chronicle as a source for the music history of the Rhineland and elsewhere, see Rob C. Wegman, "The Minstrel School in the Late Middle Ages," *Historic Brass Society Journal*, 14 (2002): 11-30.

31 For the translation of *Gesetzen* as "metric unit" or "measure" (rather than "strophe," which would make little sense here), see Gottfried Zedler, "Zur Erklärung und Textkritik der Limburger Chronik," *Münchener Museum für Philologie des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, 5 (1929): 210-50, at 243-50.

32 As Le Franc emphasizes in his prologue, "if one finds in this book any displeasing word, or one too frivolous, too strident, or too obscure, one must consider the character of the person who is speaking" (*Le champion des dames*, 1: 6).

of the poem as a whole—a poem which deals at length with political, historical, social, and moral issues?

Even if Le Franc's comments could be taken at face value, the question remains whether a change in musical fashion necessarily inaugurated a new era in music history. There is no answer to that question in *Le champion des dames* itself, and if this poem were our only source for the "new practice" of the 1430s there would be good reason to doubt it. Yet there is another contemporary witness who seems to dispel all doubt. That witness, of course, is Johannes Tinctoris. In two treatises written in the 1470s he corroborates Le Franc's report that Dufay and Binchois had been influenced by John Dunstable.[33] Yet for Tinctoris, writing several decades after the fact, this represented more than a change in musical fashion: in the meantime it had turned out to be nothing less than a watershed in music history. By the 1470s music seemed to have become a *nova ars*: a new art, a new discipline. Compositions older than forty years (that is, predating the mid-to-late 1430s) were not even considered worth hearing anymore. With this resounding testimony Tinctoris seems to resolve the problem in one stroke: the new practice to which Le Franc had testified did prove, several decades later, to have heralded the dawning of a new era in the history of music.

Still, even here it is possible to object that the texts by Le Franc and Tinctoris have been assessed principally in terms of their agreement with one another, and of their combined support for the "Renaissance" interpretation. The problem with this synoptic approach is that it does not encourage assessment of anything else these texts may have to reveal. Le Franc and Tinctoris had quite different literary agendas,[34] and these show little resemblance to the agenda of modern historians concerned to demonstrate a musical Renaissance. For instance, it is clear from a close reading of Tinctoris that his remarks raise numerous issues besides their apparent support of what Le Franc has been taken to argue—issues that call into question the very validity of a synoptic reading.[35] If the theorist's remarks were dependent on *Le champion* or on a common source, as some scholars have suggested,[36] the most we can say is that he reinterpreted the earlier testimony in an entirely different intellectual framework. This is especially true of the concept of a "new art," on which so much has come to depend. As I have argued else-

33 Johannes Tinctoris, *Opera theoretica*, ed. Albert Seay, 2 vols. Corpus scriptorum de musica, xxii (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1975-78), 2: 12-13 and 2a: 10.

34 As emphasized, for example, by Strohm, "Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a 'Rebirth' of the Arts," 371 and 383.

35 See Ronald Woodley, "Renaissance Music Theory as Literature: On Reading the Proportionale Musices of Iohannes Tinctoris," *Renaissance Studies*, 1 (1987): 209-220, and Rob C. Wegman, "Johannes Tinctoris and the 'New Art'," *Music & Letters*, 84 (2003): 171-88.

36 Fallows, "The contenance angloise," 198-99; Strohm, "Music, Humanism, and the Idea of a 'Rebirth' of the Arts," 371 and 383-84.

where, this concept had less to do with the facts of the case than with the Ciceronian model of history in which Tinctoris chose to interpret them.[37]

Meanwhile, the question of Le Franc's own intellectual framework, and that of his audience, remains wide open. It is true that he was a humanist, yet this need not mean that he seized every conceivable opportunity to advertise his humanist leanings—least of all in *Le champion des dames* (a poem in the late-medieval tradition of the *querelle des dames*),[38] let alone in the six stanzas that happen to be of interest to music historians. For all his humanist erudition, Le Franc's general outlook remained as steeped in tradition as one might expect from a churchman, administrator, and poet writing in France in the 1440s. One modern scholar, for instance, characterized his literary debt to Petrarch in *L'estrif de Fortune et Vertu* (1447-48) as follows:[39]

> [Le Franc's] traditionalist views prevented him from appreciating the signs which, in Petrarch, had already announced the new historical perspective of humanism. In fact, according to Le Franc the historical situation—characterized by the approach of the end of the world and, consequently, by the growing decrepitude of human nature—is not favorable to a new upsurge, to a "Renaissance" in literature.

As for Le Franc's audience, he dedicated *Le champion* to Philip the Good of Burgundy, and we learn from the prologue that it was meant to be read for the recreation (*esbatement*) of the duke and his court. Apart from anything else, then, the poet would have been well-advised to appeal to the interests and concerns of his hearers throughout the five books of his poem. It is true that Le Franc was independent-minded enough not to flatter his intended audience at every turn. One can only wonder, for example, how the fulsome eulogy of Jeanne d'Arc in Book IV (ll. 16809-17168) would have been received in Burgundian circles: Philip the Good himself had authorized his troops, in 1430, to deliver her to the English, who proceeded to have her condemned to the stake in a show trial that would remain one of the scandals of the century. Perhaps not surprisingly the poem received an unfavorable reception at the Burgundian court, as we learn from Le Franc's later *Complainte du livre du Champion des dames*.[40] Still, the poet made it quite clear even then that he stood by everything he had written.

On the other hand, it would surely be incautious to read *Le champion des dames* as a statement of Le Franc's personal views on every subject, irrespective of Burgundian sensibilities. It is unlikely to be coincidence, for example, that all the performers singled out for praise in the "musical" stanzas happened to be associated, at one time or another, with the court of Philip the Good: Verdelet was on the Burgundian payroll in 1436, Bin-

37 Wegman, "Johannes Tinctoris and the 'New Art'," 184-85.
38 See below, section 4.
39 Roth, "Martin Le Franc et les débuts de l'humanisme italien," 246 (my trans.).
40 Paris, "Un poème inédit de Martin Le Franc," 420-37.

chois from the late 1420s to 1453, Jehan de Cordoval and Jehan Ferrandes in the period 1433-56, and Guillaume Dufay was described in a document from 1440 as chaplain and member of the duke's household.[41] This may perhaps explain why Le Franc devoted six stanzas to praising these particular individuals—whereas the topic of contemporary music never elicited more than one passing comment in his other writings.[42] It may also explain why the stanzas employ a literary device that was commonly used in medieval eulogies of outstanding individuals: this is the rhetorical topos of "outdoing."[43] No matter how well ancient musicians might have played on soft and loud instruments, or so Le Franc's interlocutor maintained, now they were all outdone by the minstrel Verdelet. And just as Jubal, and after him Carmen, Tapissier, and Cesaris, had been outdone by Dufay and Binchois, so the latter in turn were outdone by the blind viol players Jehan de Cordoval and Jehan Ferrandes, performers of such unrivalled excellence that they outdid even Orpheus himself. One is reminded of the countless medieval authors who had similarly been claimed to have outdone Virgil, Horace, Ovid, or Lucan—and sometimes all of them together. Such hyperbolic comparisons between ancients and moderns do not necessarily reflect a Renaissance "revival of the arts": Le Franc is concerned less with the art of music than he is with outstanding musicians, and still less, arguably, than he is with the patron of those musicians, Philip the Good.

The truth of the matter, as I hope it may now be fair to suggest, is that the case for a musical Renaissance in the 1430s cannot be sustained without doing considerable violence to Le Franc's text. His six stanzas on music have been made to bear far more explanatory weight than they could realistically carry, and the poem in which they appear has been allowed to explain far less than the stanzas might be expected to require. The chief problem here seems to lie in the concept of a "Renaissance." Not that there is anything wrong with this concept per se. Periods are tools of historical interpretation, and like all such tools they have their potential use, provided they allow us to *explain* historical evidence, and do not require the evidence to be forced into agreement with them. The problem with a putative musical Renaissance in the 1430s, however, is that it does not explain anything—not even the testimonies by Le Franc and Tinctoris on which the assumption rests. I have argued this point for Tinctoris elsewhere,[44] and the same point can be made for Le Franc as well. Not only do his six stanzas fail to support the

41 Marix, *Histoire de la musique et des musiciens de la cour de Bourgogne*, 176-81 and 267-73; David Fallows, *Dufay* (London: Dent, 1982), 65. This was not the only passage of *Le champion des dames* in which Le Franc praised, obliquely or directly, the duke of Burgundy, his dynasty, and his household: a visit to the Castle of True Love, in Book One, offers the pretext for an extensive eulogy of the duke's relatives (ll. 1745-2104).

42 See above, n.17.

43 For this topos, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Bollingen Series, xxxvi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 162-66.

44 Wegman, "Johannes Tinctoris and the 'New Art'."

assumption that the 1430s marked a new epoch in the history of music, but the concept of a Renaissance, conversely, does not begin to explain why he wrote about music as he did. It is this latter question that I propose to address in the next section.

3.

Let us turn to another episode in the life of Fernando of Cordoba, and introduce a new character in the story. In the summer of 1444, more than a year before his fateful visit to Paris, the young Spaniard travelled to Naples, and met there one of the most prominent figures in the humanist movement, the philosopher, theologian, and philologist Lorenzo Valla.

It was a happy encounter. On 25 July Valla wrote a letter to his patron, King Alfonso of Aragon, and we can tell from his missive that he was ecstatic.[45] The humanist had witnessed Fernando during three days of disputation, and reported enthusiastically on the latter's command of the entire university curriculum in arts, law, medicine, and theology. There was no hint of suspicion, apprehension, or hostility in Valla's account. He confessed to being totally captivated by "the charm, the modesty, and the gentleness of [Fernando's] manners, speech, and demeanor." And certainly he did not believe, as the Bourgeois of Paris later would, that Fernando "knows more than it is in human nature to know." Far from it: if anything Valla felt that the young Spaniard should expand his knowledge even more—and for good measure he supplied a reading list which included such authors as Cato, Varro, Cornelius Celsus, Columella, Pliny the Elder, Vitruvius, Frontinus, Vegetius, and others. In the humanist's judgement, clearly, Fernando was not in danger of violating the order of nature just yet, whether through magic, demonic possession, or otherwise.

Valla's report contrasts as markedly with the reaction of the Parisian masters as his views on artistic progress contrasted with those expressed by Le Franc.[46] "I do not know," he famously observed in the prologue to his *Elegantiae linguae latinae* (1444),

> why the arts most closely approaching the liberal arts—painting, sculpture in stone and bronze, and architecture—had been in so long and so deep a decline (*degenauerint*) and almost died out (*demortuae fuerint*) together with literature itself; nor why they are being aroused and brought to life again (*excitentur, ac reuiuiscant*) in this age; nor why such a large harvest both of good artists and good writers is flourishing (*efflorescat*).

45 Edited in M. A. Morel-Fatio, "Maître Fernand de Cordoue et les humanistes italiens du xv[e] siècle," in: *Mélanges Julien Havet: Recueil de travaux d'érudition dédiés à la mémoire de Julien Havet (1853-1893)* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1895), 521-33, at 523-26.

46 For what follows, see Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1972), 16.

To compare these comments with Le Franc's stanzas on music, as I will do in the next few pages, is to bring home the almost total absence of humanist influence in the latter's historical perspective. Valla celebrated a revival in the fine arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, and especially, of course, in literature. Like many other Italian humanists writing on the subject of a revival, he was not in the first instance thinking of the disciplines Le Franc had singled out: music, tapestry, warfare, physics, or, least of all, scholastic theology. Indeed this would have been a strange list for an early humanist to produce. It is true that Le Franc had mentioned literature in his review of the arts (ll. 16353-76). Yet his interlocutor could not discern any evidence of progress, on the contrary: the approaching end of the world discouraged contemporary writers from aspiring to immortality in major literary enterprises (as the ancients had done), and instead they confined themselves to glossing existing books.[47] Such views may imply the desirability of a rebirth, but they do not suggest that one was particularly likely to happen. As Le Franc's interlocutor remarked with apparent resignation, "it's a sign that the world is imperfect" (l. 16358).

No less revealing is the difference in interpretive imagery. Valla's comments are rife with horticultural metaphors, with images of vegetative growth and decline. In his view literature and the fine arts were like plants or trees that had long withered, to the point of almost dying away altogether, but which had now suddenly produced new shoots.[48] It was not difficult to fit an exceptionally gifted youth like Fernando of Cordoba into such imagery. Valla welcomed him as a man who was certain to derive uncommon benefit from acquaintance with the classics: given proper humanist care and nurture, this budding young scholar would blossom before long. How could the Spaniard's learning possibly transgress or violate the order of nature? Valla's imagery suggested the opposite: it is no more than natural for plants, flowers, or fruits to grow and prosper in accordance with their nature.

Martin Le Franc's interlocutor, Franc Vouloir, spoke a very different language. His opponent in the allegorical debate had argued—and he did not deny—that the world was in decline, that human beings lived shorter lives and were shorter in stature than when the world was still young (ll. 15185-200). The whole human race, in fact, had been subject to progressive historical diminution: once there were giants who had lived hundreds of years (Gen. 5, 6: 4), but nowadays people were comparative dwarfs, with lifespans of

47 For the background of this late-medieval *Epigonenstimmung*, "the sadness when all has been said," see Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, *The Color of Melancholy: The Uses of Books in the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 52-64.

48 Jost Trier has emphasized that the Latin verb *renasci* was a metaphor taken from the realms of forestry and horticulture, and as such was closely related to the verbs *revirescere* ("to grow strong, young again"), *reviviscere* ("to revive"), and *reflorescere* ("to blossom again"). See his "Zur Vorgeschichte des Renaissance-Begriffs," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 33 (1950): 45-63.

four-score years at the most.[49] And yet, if Franc Vouloir acknowledged all this, how did he explain the fact that children were so much smarter nowadays than they had ever been before? Did this not indicate progress rather than decline? No—or at least, not necessarily. Franc Vouloir offered two explanations, neither of which contradicted the premise of the world's decline. First, he said, the Goddess Nature had taken pity on humans born in the world's old age, and decided to compensate them for the brevity of their lives by endowing them with greater acuity of wit:[50]

> She observes that we have short lives, and that we never stop for a moment, for which reason the wise lady wants to give us some leaven. Thus she sharpens the sense of man, and advances him forward suddenly, as if she were saying: "Let us act quickly: this one here won't live too long."

Second, if humans in modern times were able to accomplish more than the ancients, it was because they were like dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, to use a favorite medieval expression.[51] Here, Franc Vouloir invoked a medieval commonplace which had traditionally served, not as an endorsement of progress, but as a warning against pride and vainglory.[52] That is to say, the moderns should not pride themselves on their achievements, however great these might be, for they are merely building on the foundations laid by the ancients, and adding to the knowledge they have inherited—a point which Franc Vouloir expressed as follows:[53]

> And there is also another reason: for from the ancients we have received art, experience, and demonstration, and we find all things ready to adopt. It's no marvel, then, that we learn more, and more quickly, than they ever did, for we are still adding to the things they discovered.

It is important to note that these two explanations immediately precede the six stanzas on music. They were, in other words, the propositions which Franc Vouloir then proceeded to amplify, through the rhetorical principle of *copia*, with examples drawn from the realms of music and other arts. So if these examples were meant to demonstrate anything, it was this: progress may be witnessed even in this declining world, yet it is

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49 Lourt Entendement's argument here (including his citation of Pliny the Elder's *Historia naturalis* vii. 48) is based on St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, xv. 9 and 23, where the historical existence of giants is demonstrated at some length. Martin Le Franc was evidently familiar with St Augustine's discussion of giants, as we can tell from a passing remark in ll. 5753-54. I will have more to say on Le Franc's debt to *De civitate Dei* in section 5 below.

50 "Elle nous voit de briefve vie et que n'arrestons qu'ung moment, et pour ce la sage a envie de nous introduire forment. Si aguise le sentement d'omme et l'avance tout a cop, comme disant: 'Faisons briefment: cestui cy ne vivera trop" (ll. 16233-40).

51 For this idea, see Edouard Jeauneau, "Nani gigantum humeris insidentes: Essai d'interprétation de Bernard de Chartres," *Vivarium*, 5 (1967): 79-99; Robert K. Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript* (New York: Free Press, 1965); Dean, *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, 67-72. 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, xxii (Louvain and Paris: Nauwelaerts, 1968), 231-55.

52 As emphasized by Molland, "Medieval Ideas of Scientific Progress," 566.

53 "Et aussy aultre cause y treuve, car des anciens nous avons l'art, l'experience et l'espreuve, et les choses prestes trouvons. Si n'est merveille se sçavons plus tost ou plus qu'ilz ne sçavoient, car encores nous adjoustons beaucop aux choses qu'ilz trouvoient" (ll. 16241-48).

attributable not so much to human virtue or merit, but rather to the compassion of Nature as well as to the foundations laid by the ancients.

This, needless to say, is not a viewpoint that was likely to be inspired by a humanist sense of rebirth. Let us only consider what its implications would have been for a man like Fernando of Cordoba. The exceptional and unprecedented nature of his talents could only imply that humans were in greater need of Nature's compensating gifts than ever before, and hence that the progressive diminution of humankind had advanced still further towards the final end. Similarly, if Fernando's ability to memorize authoritative texts, and his skill in writing commentaries on Ptolemy and the scriptures, were not acquired through magic or demonic possession, then all they could really exemplify was the modern-day dependence on ancient achievements. The only thing there was left for writers to do, as Franc Vouloir had complained, was to gloss old texts.

Fernando of Cordoba may have seemed like a new bud of spring to Lorenzo Valla, but by Franc Vouloir's reasoning he could only have been an exponent of a generation of diminutives, a proverbial dwarf standing on the shoulders of the ancients. This, of course, is speculation in the Spaniard's case, but it is not in the case of those individuals who were actually mentioned in the text—including, most notably, Dufay and Binchois. Their musical accomplishments could not possibly herald the dawning of a new age, for in Franc Vouloir's view these signaled precisely the ending of an old one—the last of the six ages then recognized in the history of the world. It is this eschatological outlook which framed and conditioned his comments on contemporary music. The conclusion is hard to escape: of all places in *Le champion des dames* to make a case for a Renaissance in music, few could have been less suitable than a digression about the end of the world.

4.

Numerous questions remain. What was the allegorical debate in *Le champion des dames* actually about? What had been the argument of Franc Vouloir's opponent? What, specifically, were the points to which he responded with his digression about the end of the world? How can the various issues, topics, and rhetorical devices discussed so far be seen to make up a coherent literary narrative? What literary sources did the poet use in the digression? And how does all this affect our understanding of the six stanzas on music?

Answers to these questions are unlikely to be straightforward—this much becomes apparent when we consider the central theme of *Le champion des dames* as a whole: Le Franc's stated aim was to affirm the dignity, honor, and virtues of women. Within the narrative this task was assigned to the hero of his poem, the eponymous champion of ladies Franc Vouloir. His chief adversary was the slanderer of ladies, Malebouche,

identified in the text as Jean de Meung (*d.*1305), author of the *Romance of the Rose*. It is this latter text—an allegorical "manual" on the art of love begun by Guillaume de Lorris around 1230 and completed by De Meung some forty years later—to which *Le champion des dames* was intended as a response.

Martin Le Franc was not the first poet to engage critically with the *Rose* in this way. Throughout the early fifteenth century this influential text had been the subject of bitter controversy, chiefly because the part written by De Meung contained several passages that were regarded by many as hostile, offensive, and degrading to women. Two literary debates provide the direct background to Le Franc's poem.[54] The *Querelle de la rose* (1398-1402) was a dispute between critics and apologists of the *Rose*, centering on its misogyny and its deleterious influence on contemporary morality. The later *Querelle des femmes* was sparked by a poem of Alain Chartier, *La belle dame sans mercy* (1424), which portrayed the archetypal courtly lady as cold, disdainful, and, worst of all, cruel to her suitor. Both debates were concerned with issues of feminism and anti-feminism: Le Franc's aim was to settle them conclusively (and exhaustively) in favor of women. The five books of *Le champion des dames* present a series of formal debates between Franc Vouloir, on the one hand, and several advocates of Malebouche, on the other. As might be expected, the champion of ladies emerges, hands down, as the victor in all five debates.

What does all this have to do with the question of the end of the world? Let us consider the fourth book of *Le champion* more closely. The fourth debate centers on the contributions of women to the welfare and prosperity of humankind. Franc Vouloir's aim is to demonstrate that these contributions have been both significant and substantial. His opponent in the fourth book, Lourt Entendement, seeks to undermine and refute that argument at every turn. The digression that concerns us here begins in l. 15033: at this point Lourt Entendement interrupts Franc Vouloir in the midst of a survey of the earliest illustrious women on record—Ceres, the Roman goddess of agriculture, Isis, the Egyptian goddess of magic and medicine, and Ops, the wife of Saturn.[55] Franc Vouloir recognizes the interruption as a diversionary tactic, but he nevertheless agrees to answer his oppenent's objections. As a consequence he will not be able to continue with his survey until nearly 1,400 verses later.

54 There is extensive literature on these debates; for a recent study, see Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: California University Press, 1995), esp. 131-99.

55 Lines 14881-15032. This survey appears to be based on either Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (1361-62) or, more probably, Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la cité des dames* (1405). (I am grateful to François Rigolot for pointing out Pizan's text as a likely source for Franc Vouloir's discussion.) Eve had already been the subject of an extended debate in Book Two of *Le champion des dames* (ll. 4361-5080), and is not mentioned here.

Lourt Entendement's objections were threefold. First, he argued, it is against the Christian faith to praise pagan idols like Ceres, Isis, or Ops as outstanding examples of female virtue. These women should be regarded not as goddesses, but as she-devils, instruments in the hands of Satan, who used them in order to trick humans into idol-worship. Second, our knowledge of these pagan goddesses is based entirely on the writings of poets, which amount to nothing more than fictions, fables, and outright falsehoods and must therefore be disbelieved. Did not Plato propose to have the poets banned as liars from his ideal republic? Third, even if the three women had made the inventions and innovations which the poets claimed they had—in the realms of agriculture, pasture, trade, house construction, and writing—then all they had really done was open the gates to the numerous evils and abuses which had afflicted humankind ever since.

With this final objection Lourt Entendement touched on a well-known medieval idea, namely, that the arts and sciences had been the source of untold human misery and suffering, not to mention moral corruption, despite the material advances they had made possible.[56] This point was often made with reference to the inventors and discoverers mentioned in Genesis, 4: 20-22—including the inventor of music, Jubal.[57] Medieval commentators had traditionally regarded these innovators as wicked men, descendants of "the evil Cain" (as Franc Vouloir called him) who had justly perished in the Flood.[58] By the same token, or so Lourt Entendement seems to have reasoned, the three women inventors Ceres, Isis, and Ops must have brought nothing but misery with their discoveries and innovations. Once again we can recognize one of the central themes in this part of Le Franc's poem: the moral ambivalence of progress.

To amplify the third objection Lourt Entendement launched a long and bitter complaint against the times, in which he catalogued the innumerable evils and abuses which beset humankind.[59] In the course of this tirade he singled out gluttony as the most harmful of the seven deadly sins. It was gluttony, he argued, which had caused the human race to degenerate, to become physically enervated. Because of their over-indulgence, people nowadays lived shorter lives, and were shorter in stature, than when the world was still

56 See Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, 121-28.

57 On Jubal, see James W. McKinnon, 'Jubal vel Pythagoras: Quis sit inventor musicae?' *The Musical Quarterly*, 64 (1978), 1-28. For the late-medieval interest in the inventors of the arts in general, see Cerquiglini-Toulet, *The Color of Melancholy*, 100-22.

58 Dean, *The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature*, 127-42.

59 Lines 15105-556. The complaint against the times was a well-established literary genre in the late Middle Ages; see, for example, Joseph R. Keller, "The Triumph of Vice: A Formal Approach to the Medieval Complaint Against the Times," *Annuale Mediaevale*, 10 (1969): 120-37; Thomas J. Elliott, "Middle English Complaints Against the Times: To Condemn the World or To Reform It?" *Annuale Mediaevale*, 14 (1974): 22-34. For the typical construction "once...but nowadays" used by Lourt Entendement (see, for example, ll. 15129-36, 15417-24), see Joan D. W. Crowther, "'Now-Adaies': A Rhetorical *Topos*," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 48 (1978): 270-82.

young. All this was bound to provoke the wrath of God, and to bring about the end of the world. And for all this, just as surely, women were to blame.

What did Franc Vouloir argue in response? Oddly enough he passed over the first objection, that it is against the faith to praise the false goddesses of the pagans. Yet we can tell from his earlier comments that his position had been entirely orthodox. The pagan deification of these three women, however misguided from a Christian perspective, did not necessarily render their historical contributions any less real and beneficial.[60] As for the second objection, Franc Vouloir emphasized that poets should not all be tarred with the same brush. Plato's condemnation had been far from categorical, he said, for there were many different poets and ways of writing poetry.[61] Poets had often written from first-hand experience, and knew whereof they spoke. Indeed, if the truth be told, even Jesus himself could be regarded as a poet, given the superb literary skills he had demonstrated in his use of parables: were not these, strictly speaking, fictions—however morally edifying?[62]

This leaves us, finally, with the third objection. Here, Franc Vouloir faced several claims at once: that the world had been subject to decline, that it had become a cesspool of sin, and that it would sooner or later come to an end. It was clear that he could not challenge any of these claims, even had he wanted to, as they were among the established teachings of the church. What Franc Vouloir did challenge, however, were two further claims: that the arts and sciences were responsible for all this, and that women, ultimately, were to blame. His rhetorical strategy was simple: to untangle the various claims and then to comment upon them individually—which is the main reason why his digression ended up being as long as it is. Franc Vouloir's criticism, in other words, was that his opponent had jumbled together ideas and commonplaces without really understanding what they were about. This necessitated him to clarify and explain, patiently and reasonably, their true import.

Franc Vouloir began by praising the Creator for the innumerable gifts he had showered on the human race. Of all the creatures, he reminded his opponent, only humans were

60 Lines 15007-8 and 15017-24. This interpretation is known as Euhemerism; see John Daniel Cooke, "Euhemerism: A Mediaeval Interpretation of Classical Paganism," *Speculum*, 2 (1927): 396-410, and Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, Bollingen Series, xxxviii (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), 11-36.

61 His argument here appears to be based on Boccaccio, *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, xiv. 19; see Charles S. Osgood, trans., *Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's* Genealogia Deorum Gentilium *in an English Version with Introductory Essay* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1930), 87-94.

62 Lines 15593-632. On the medieval perception of Christ as a poet, see Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 556. In his *Quaestiones Evangeliorum*, ii. 51, St Augustine had defended Christ's parable of the prodigal son as a *figura*, a fiction which expresses profound truth, as opposed to a *mendacium*, a fiction which signifies nothing.

endowed with reason and understanding. They alone were created erect, with upright countenance, in order that they might contemplate the heavens. They alone were the lords of the earth, and for their sake alone had God made the world as rich and bountiful as it is. The corollary was obvious: if the Creator had done all this for the good of humankind, then surely He could not have wanted humans to live forever like the irrational beasts. It was entirely right and proper for them to improve their condition by inventing the arts and sciences (ll. 15657-768). These latter endeavors were not the cause of the evils and abuses of the world. Inventions and technological advances did not prevent anyone from living a righteous life: humans are endowed with reason, and they can and should resist temptation by exercising this faculty (ll. 15769-16008). It would be disingenuous to blame anything other than their own frailty for their transgressions.

As for the end of the world, it was not for humans to know, or even speculate, when it would happen. Nor was there anything they could do or could have done, by way of virtuous living, to delay or avert its arrival—as Lourt Entendement had implied. God had foreordained this cataclysmic event before all ages, and He alone knew when it would occur. All that could be said with certainty is that it was approaching fast (ll. 16041-104). And "fast" was indeed the operative term. As Franc Vouloir argued, invoking the example of a stone falling down after being thrown in the air, "every natural motion is more swift and rapid in the end than it was at the beginning". This explained why people nowadays lived shorter lives: it was not because of their indulgence in gluttony, however deplorable, but because the order of nature dictated that all processes—including the succession of generations—evolve more rapidly as they approach their destined end (ll. 16105-52). Franc Vouloir also provided a natural explanation for the diminishing size of the human race: the giants who once inhabited the earth were like the oldest branches on a tree—thick and strong, compared to the smaller branches and twigs that come after them (ll. 16153-84). To bring home his argument, he invoked the following influential passage from the Gospel Homilies of Pope Gregory I:[63]

> In youth the body is vigorous, the chest remains strong and healthy, the neck is straight, the arms muscular; in later years the body is bent, the neck scrawny and withered, the chest oppressed by difficult breathing, strength is failing, and speech is interrupted by wheezing... So too the world was strong in its early years, as in its youth: lusty in begetting offspring for the human race, green in its physical health, teeming with a wealth of resources. Now it is weighed down by its old age, and as troubles increase it is oppressed by the proximity of its demise.

Franc Vouloir summed up his rebuttal with a gloss on this passage (ll. 16185-216), yet he was not quite ready yet to rest his case. He added an appendix—a digression within a digression, one might say—to counter a powerful objection that might be raised by

63 After Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Dom David Hurst (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 18-19.

his opponent. The objection was this: if the current decrepitude of humankind was the result of a natural development, as St Gregory's metaphor implied, then surely the human race ought, by now, to be approaching a phase comparable to senile dementia in an old man. Whereas one could observe the opposite: children in the world's old age were smart beyond their years (ll. 16217-32). Was not this a violation of the order of nature, and a sure sign that the world was as perverted as Lourt Entendement had said it was? No, Franc Vouloir argued, and he went on to offer the two explanations that we have discussed in the previous section, amplifying these with his review of the arts.

This, then, is the path by which Martin Le Franc's interlocutors travelled all the way from three pagan goddesses to Dufay and Binchois. The path may seem a strangely tortuous one, at least when retraced in a brief synopsis like this. Yet the digression as a whole might well have been quite diverting when the poem was read aloud before a knowledgeable audience[64]—more so, at any rate, than if Franc Vouloir had been allowed to continue with his somewhat tedious catalogue of famous women. Yet however that may be, the message, ultimately, seems to be an uplifting one. There is nothing wrong with the arts and sciences per se, nor is there any reason why they should be harmful if humans live virtuous lives. The world is created good, and the human species is the crown of creation. Although the end of the world is approaching, the arts have reached unprecedented heights of excellence, because it is in the natural order of things for this to happen at the final stage in world history. There is, in short, nothing for which women could possibly be blamed. With this conclusion Franc Vouloir is ready at last to return to his survey, and to continue with the examples of Semiramis, Thamyris, Penthesilea, Thalestris, and many other famous women.

5.

Having now outlined the narrative framework for the six stanzas on music, it remains for us to address what is probably the critical question here: what sources were used for the digression? The question of sources is a critical one especially for an author like Martin Le Franc, who had demonstrably been exposed to humanist ideas, but nevertheless continued to engage in medieval literary debates. Did he keep the two spheres distinct in his writings? Or would he have expressed his humanist interests even in the context of those longstanding debates? There is no question that a discursive poem like *Le champion des dames* could have offered many opportunities for humanist asides, despite its central preoccupation with the issues raised by a medieval text, the *Romance of the*

64 *Le champion des dames* was almost certainly intended to be read aloud at the Burgundian court; cf. Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 119-22.

Rose. Yet if we are to read the digression in Book Four, and especially the six stanzas on music, as asides of this kind, it should be possible to show that they drew either on humanist sources or on classical sources that were known to be humanist favorites.[65] By the same token, if the digression was wholly traditional in spirit, as I have argued so far, it should be possible to show that it was based on sources that had already been widely known and commented upon during the Middle Ages.

On the face of it, the case for humanist influence in *Le champion des dames* does not seem very compelling. Martin Le Franc, as many scholars have agreed, was not an especially original thinker. In both his book-length French poems, he drew heavily on a wide range of ancient and Christian texts, yet these sources left their mark not so much in brief quotations or verbal allusions (as was the case in the practice of *imitatio*), but rather in general topics, commonplaces, and ideas. His typical practice was to paraphrase or reword these—with or without acknowledgement—in fresh poetic settings.[66] (In this sense, ironically, Le Franc only exemplified his interlocutor's complaint that modern writers did little more than gloss existing texts.) As Marc-René Jung observed in a recent essay:[67]

> Both *Le champion des dames* and *L'Estrif de fortune et de vertu* are texts studded with quotations and examples drawn from ancient authors. Yet... it is not the imitation of the ancients which is on Le Franc's agenda. The author has his readings, no doubt, but the flowers of his reading appear in his texts more in the form of topics, as if Le Franc kept a card file for the purpose of argumentation. I fear that if one were to dig more deeply, one would stumble merely on index cards, not on original thoughts.

This point is borne out by the digression in Book Four. As we have seen earlier, the central metaphor of the world as an old man was taken from the homilies of Pope Gregory I. Similarly, Franc Vouloir's survey of illustrious women, and his defence of poets as reliable sources for ancient mythology, were probably based on Pizan and Boccaccio—even though these authors are nowhere mentioned in the digression.[68] To these sources

65 It is possible to show this, for example, for the two prologues in which Tinctoris reflected on the history of music during his lifetime: it is inconceivable that these texts could have been written without intimate acquaintance with humanist sources and ideas. See Wegman, "Johannes Tinctoris and the 'New Art'." It may also be possible to discern a humanist element in the Prologue to *Le champion des dames*: here, Le Franc quotes a famous line from Cicero on the pursuit of honor and glory in the arts ("honos alit artes, omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloria"; *Tusculanae disputationes*, I. ii), despite the fact that one of his favorite authorities, St Augustine, had dismissed this as a "pestilential opinion" (*De civitate Dei*, V. 14).

66 It is well known that Martin Le Franc had a habit of using sources (and of copying their references to other books and authors) without acknowledgement; see, for example, Roth, "Martin Le Franc et les débuts de l'humanisme italien," 247-55; Martin Le Franc, *L'estrif de fortune et vertu*, ed. Peter F. Dembowski (Geneva: Droz, 1999), 293-352, nn. 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, 20, 23, 26, 28, 56, 89, 146, 204, 208, 289.

67 "Situation de Martin Le Franc," 28 (my trans.).

68 See above, nn. 55 and 61. For other references Le Franc may have relied on intermediate sources. For the idea that the world would end after exactly 6,000 years (ll. 16057-64), see Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones*, vii. 14 and 25. For the island "of the living" (ll. 16137-44), see Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages*, 169-70, where the myth is traced to Petrus Comestor and Gerald of Wales.

another one may be added, a text from which Le Franc borrowed so extensively, both in *Le champion des dames* and in *L'Estrif de Fortune et Vertu*, that he must have known it inside out: St Augustine's *De civitate Dei*.[69] In this massive treatise we find several close parallels to the arguments of Franc Vouloir and Lourt Entendement: an extended discussion of the giants who once inhabited the earth, the argument that material comforts and luxuries do not prevent humans from living a virtuous life, and the admonition not to speculate on the date of the world's end.[70]

Yet there is one chapter in *De civitate Dei* which is of particular interest to our enquiry, since it appears to have inspired Franc Vouloir's rebuttal of the third objection and, more importantly, his review of music and other arts. This is the chapter entitled: "Of the blessings with which the Creator has filled this life, even though it is subject to condemnation" (xxii. 24). Its influence can be felt almost immediately, when Franc Vouloir begins the rebuttal by praising the Creator for the gifts He has bestowed on humankind. St Augustine had written:[71]

> What discourse can adequately describe the beauty and utility of [Creation], which the divine bounty has bestowed upon man to behold and consume, even though he has been condemned and cast forth into the labors and miseries of our present condition? Consider the manifold and varied beauty of the sky and earth and sea; the plenteousness of light and its wondrous quality, in the sun, moon, and stars and in the shadows of the forests; the color and fragrance of flowers; the diversity and multitude of the birds with their songs and bright colors; the multiform species of living creatures of all kinds.

Franc Vouloir paraphrases:[72]

> When I reflect upon God's love, certainly I feel bereft of understanding, and I do not know what would express it well. For He has given us good things in such abundance that all of this entire world is ours—and yet we cannot appreciate it. He has made Angels full of intelligence, transparent, light, subtle, and serene; the starry heavens so resplendent; the inconstant elements all together; birds, fishes, sentient animals, scattered everywhere by his goodness. If we are open to recognizing it, [it is clear that] we possess good things of all kinds.

In the same chapter St Augustine praised the Creator for the gifts of reason, intelligence, and understanding—all of which were endowments unique to the human race. Animals live with their heads turned towards the earth, to which they will return, but humans walk with upright countenance, as a reminder of their ability to attain to spiritual truths:[73]

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69 In what follows, translations will be quoted after St Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

70 *De civitate Dei*, xii. 8, xv. 9 and 23, and xviii. 53; *The City of God*, trans. Dyson, 508-9, 649-51, 680-85, 903-4. See also n. 49 above.

71 *The City of God*, 1164.

72 "Quant je pense a la charité de nostre Dieu, certainement je suis de sens desherité, ne sçay que die bonnement. Tant nous a il habondamment de bien donné que nous avons tout cestui monde entierement, mais entendre ne le sçavons. Il a fait angles congnoissans, clers, legiers, soubtilz, impassibles, cieulx estoilez, resplendissans, elemens ensemble passibles, oisiaux, poissons, bestes sensibles, partout a sa bonté espars. Mais se ne sommes insensibles, les biens avons de toutes pars" (ll. 15657-72).

73 *The City of God*, 1161-63.

> It is God Who has given the human soul a mind. In the infant, reason and intelligence are in a sense dormant, and it is as if they were not present at all. But they are soon to be awakened and exercised as the years pass; and in this way the individual becomes capable of knowledge and learning, able to perceive the truth and love the good. This capacity enables the mind to drink in wisdom and to achieve those virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice by which a man is equipped to resist errors and the other vices implanted in him, and to conquer them by fixing his desires upon nothing but the Supreme and Immutable Good... We see that man has not been created like the animals which lack reason, whose faces are turned towards the ground. On the contrary, his bodily form is erect, facing towards heaven, to admonish him to dwell on things above.

Franc Vouloir, once again, paraphrases:[74]

> By natural endowment we are capable of understanding, and comparable to the Angels. Reason has made us aspire to God with devout assiduity, so that, if we be not remiss, we may rise beyond the Moon and the Sun, and may surmount with glory the pestilences of this world below. Hence we all have, as a token, a straight neck and an upright face, in order that we are always directed in a straight line to [the place] whence we came, and so that our restless understanding will not be held back in earthly tangles or in its [bodily] cage to the point where it may not fly back to heaven. [Every] other sentient creature has its head directed to where it returns.

It is true that Martin Le Franc could have borrowed these ideas from other sources. In particular, if he was familiar with Cicero's *De natura deorum*, ii. 56-64, he might well have recognized that St Augustine had drawn much of his inspiration for the chapter in *De civitate Dei* from this text—including, for instance, the observation that humans are created erect, with upright countenance, in order to contemplate the heavens.[75] Yet assuming that Le Franc knew both texts, on which author would he have relied here, Cicero or St Augustine? Any humanist would have preferred to imitate the former rather than to gloss the latter. Yet it is unlikely that Le Franc chose to do so, if indeed the choice was available to him. For there is a third apparent parallel with the same chapter of St Augustine, and in this case the poet borrowed several elements that were not contained in Cicero's text. The borrowings appear in the section that has been of greatest interest to music historians: Franc Vouloir's review of music and other arts. This review appears to be an extended paraphrase of the following passage from *De civitate Dei*, xxii. 24:[76]

> In addition, there are the many great arts invented and exercised by human ingenuity, some for necessary purposes and others for pleasure. The mind and reason of man shows great excellence in contriving such things, even though they may be superfluous, or even perilous and hurtful; and is not this excellence evidence of a great good which man has in his nature, whereby he is able to discover, learn, and exercise those arts?

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74 "Par engin sommes entendens, semblables aux Intelligences; Raison nous fait a Dieu tendans pas nos devotes diligences, que, se ne sont nos negligences, lune et soleil sourmonterons et des terrenes pestilences lassus en gloire monterons. Et pour ce porterons [?portons] tous en signe col droit et visage dressé, affin que tousjours droicte ligne l'ayons au retour adressé, et que l'entendement pressé ne soit du terrien troussel n'en sa cage si engressé qu'il ne puist revoler au cel. Aultre sensible creature a la teste ou elle retourne" (ll. 15657-72).

75 See Maurice Testard, "Note sur 'De civitate Dei', XXII, xxiv," *Augustinus Magister: Congrès international augustinien*, 3 vols. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1954-55), 1: 193-200.

76 *The City of God*, 1161-62.

> How wonderful, how astonishing, are the achievements of human industry in devising clothing and shelter! What progress man has made in agriculture and navigation! With what variety are his achievements in pottery, painting, and sculpture conceived and executed! What wonderful spectacles are displayed in the theatres, where things are done and shown which are incredible to those who see and hear them! What ingenious methods do we find employed in capturing, killing, or taming wild beasts!
>
> How many kinds of poisons, weapons, and machines have been devised for use against men? How many medicines and remedies do we find used to preserve or restore health? What of the great variety of seasonings which have been devised to whet the appetite and please the palate? What of the many and various means of communication and persuasion, among which speech and writing hold the chief place? What of the delight which the mind finds in the ornaments of oratory and in the abundant diversity of poetry? Or that which the ears find in musical instruments and the various kinds of melody which have been devised (*ad mulcendas aures, quot organa musica, quos cantilenae modos excogitaverit* [*industria humana*])?
>
> What of man's skill in measurement and number or his cleverness in studying the motions and order of the stars? How fully has he come to understand so many things of this world! Who can describe his knowledge, especially if one should wish to dwell upon particular aspects of it, instead of heaping it all together at once?

This is an extraordinary paean to human progress, especially for a book that dwells at exhaustive length on such depressing topics as the errors and abuses of the pagans, the workings of the devil, the fallen state of humankind, the justness of God's punishment, and the approaching end of the world. For once St Augustine allowed himself to wax lyrical over the amazing accomplishments of humankind, in what is a textbook example of *admiratio*, the sense of wonder which the orator must be able to instil in his audience. In his opinion, evidently, those accomplishments had been nothing less than astounding: no writer would be able to produce a full account of them—especially if one should choose to dwell on particular aspects, as Franc Vouloir did in his review of the arts.

However, it is not the sense of wonder and astonishment, however remarkable, which confirms Le Franc's debt to St Augustine. The influence of *De civitate Dei* goes well beyond the apparent optimism expressed here. Most importantly, there is the note of caution at the beginning of the passage, in which the church father emphasizes that many inventions had been "superfluous, or even perilous and hurtful." There is no parallel for this remark in Cicero, and its Christian orientation is unmistakable: no reader should infer from the lyrical effusions which follow that "progress" was unequivocally a good thing.[77] Human inventiveness had its destructive aspects, as St Augustine hinted with his comment about the poisons, weapons, and machines devised for use against humans—a comment that was to be paraphrased in the same spirit by Franc Vouloir in the stanzas about contemporary warfare (see above). In the corresponding section of Cicero's text, significantly, there is no reference whatsoever to war or bloodshed.

77 On St Augustine's ambivalence regarding human progress, see Theodor E. Mommsen, "St. Augustine and the Christian Idea of Progress: The Background to the *City of God*," *Journal of the History of the Ideas*, 12 (1951): 346-74.

Likewise, human invention had its immoral aspects, most notably in the spectacles in the theaters (the enjoyment of which filled St Augustine with shame in the *Confessions*), but also, potentially, in the art of music.[78] It is ironic, in this connection, that he invoked the delight "which the ears find in musical instruments," for the early Church strongly disapproved of instrumental music of every kind. (Franc Vouloir, on the other hand, devoted three of his six "musical" stanzas to outstanding minstrels and harp players.) The underlying theme in all of this, that of the ambivalence of progress, is one whose echoes we have heard repeatedly in *Le champion des dames*. Needless to add, this was not a theme which Italian humanists particularly cared to belabor in their own appraisals of the arts. Nor, for that matter, had Cicero expressed any such reservation in *De natura deorum*.

Finally, although it is true that St Augustine cited many of the same arts as Cicero had done in *De natura deorum*, ii. 56-64, the latter invoked these arts merely as examples, in a discussion otherwise devoted to the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Music, for example, was mentioned in connection with the human ear, and the tribute here was less to human achievement than to the beneficence of the gods and of Nature:[79]

> The ears, too, possess an admirable gift of nice perception: they can apprehend the differences and varieties of pitch and of timbre in the human voice and in the tones of flutes and lyres, as well as the many and diverse characteristics of the voice itself—which may be melodious or muffled, smooth or unpleasant, bass or treble, flexible or stiff. Only the ears of men can discriminate here.

St Augustine, by contrast, grouped all the arts together in a single, coherent statement about "the many great arts invented and exercised by human ingenuity." It is this central idea which Martin Le Franc paraphrased and updated in *Le champion des dames*. If his interlocutor's review of the arts and sciences appears to breathe a Ciceronian spirit, then, this is not because of the author's humanist leanings, but because that spirit had already been passed on to the Middle Ages in a Christian reinterpretation by St Augustine.

Let us sum up. If Le Franc's interlocutor was a spokesman for anything, it was not for the poet's personal views (whatever these might have been), but rather for ideas that were widely known and accepted in the late Middle Ages. Despite the length of his digression, he developed no viewpoints that were not already implicit in his sources. The three parallels signalled here, all with the same chapter of *De civitate Dei*, confirm that Le Franc composed his narratives by combining and elaborating topics found in authoritative

78 For this and the following sentence, see St Augustine, *Confessions*, ii. 2-4; Théodore Gérold, *Les pères de l'église et la musique* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1931), esp. 88-100; James McKinnon, "The Meaning of the Patristic Polemic Against Musical Instruments," *Current Musicology*, 1 (1965): 69-82.

79 Cicero, *De natura deorum*, ii. 58; translation quoted after Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus, On the Nature of the Gods, On Divination, On Duties*, trans. Hubert M. Poteat (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 283.

texts. His interlocutor's paraphrases do not exemplify the humanist practice of *imitatio* (which typically involved identifiable, if often unacknowledged, quotations and verbal allusions), but rather the working methods of the medieval glossator.[80] None of Franc Vouloir's arguments necessarily presuppose even a fleeting acquaintance with humanist texts. In the end, the champion of ladies remained as convinced of the moral ambiguity of progress, and of the world's imminent end, as St Augustine had been. This eschatological perspective had framed and conditioned the latter's tribute to human invention and progress, and it was adopted wholesale by his fifteenth-century glossator.

6.

It will be clear after the previous sections that if we scrutinize Martin Le Franc's poem for original thoughts or novel ideas, the results are likely to be disappointing. His poetic genius resided not in the force of his personal convictions, but rather in his ability to present traditional topics in fresh and engaging new ways. Like so many medieval writers, his aim was to offer instruction and delight, to edify and entertain his hearers, following the influential Horatian precept of *prodesse* and *delectare*.[81] As Marc-René Jung observed:[82]

> Le Franc's profundity resides in the surface. One must recite him with a loud voice. His creative power is to be felt less in concepts than in his language—dense, rich, difficult sometimes, because of his distinctive vocabulary, but at times also relaxed.

That Le Franc's language can be dense, rich, and difficult is certainly no news to musicologists. There are many questions about the six "musical" stanzas—especially the one describing the new practice of Dufay and Binchois—to which we still have no definitive answers.[83] What precisely did it mean for consonance to be *frisque*? What is the meaning of *fainte*, *pause*, and *muance*, which appear to denote specific aspects of the new practice? And, most intriguing of all, what did the poet mean by that strangely enigmatic term *contenance angloise*?

If it is on the poetic surface, in his words and expressions, that we may discern Le Franc's profundity and creative power, then these are the questions most likely to point us to the musical sensibilities of his own time. *Le champion des dames* remains unquestionably a key document for the history of fifteenth-century music. Even if it cannot be claimed to express a spirit of rebirth characteristic of the Renaissance, its author does testify to a new musical practice, and he does seem to indicate what was distinctive about that

80 For this distinction, see Wegman, "Johannes Tinctoris and the 'New Art'."

81 *Ars poetica*, 333; see Glending Olson, *Literature and Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 19-38.

82 "Situation de Martin Le Franc," 28 (my trans.).

83 For previous studies addressing the questions that follow, see Fallows, "The contenance angloise," 201-5, and Christopher Page, "Reading and Reminiscence: Tinctoris on the Beauty of Music," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 49 (1996): 1-31, at 2-4.

practice. So the question remains: what can we learn from his testimony, if we are prepared to read it outside the distorting framework of Renaissance historiography? Let us turn, finally, to the stanza that has been of greatest interest to music historians, the one in which Franc Vouloir describes what the new practice was all about (ll. 16265-72):

Car ilz ont nouvelle pratique
De faire frisque concordance
En haulte et en basse musique,
En fainte, en pause, et en muance.
Et ont prins de la contenance
Angloise et ensuÿ Dunstable,
Pour quoy merveilleuse plaisance
Rend leur chant joyeux et notable.

In reading these lines it is important to remember that Le Franc could not presume to tell his audience anything about Dufay and Binchois which they did not already know. *Le champion des dames* was dedicated to (of all people) the patron of these musicians, Philip the Good: surely there was no need, least of all for a poet living in far-off Savoy, to offer this prince a detailed technical account of the *nouvelle pratique* heard at his own court. All the duke really needed to be reminded of was this: that the practice was a marvel of human invention, the like of which had never been heard in history.

It is true that the fourth line of the stanza does seem to offer a technical account: the words *fainte*, *pause*, and *muance* can be heard as French translations of the musical terms *ficta*, *pausa*, and *mutatio*. Musicologists have generally preferred a technical reading of this line, perhaps because of their assumption that the new practice had to do principally with written music, which involves the notation of rests and presupposes the application of *ficta* and solmization on the part of performers.[84] Yet such a reading would not make a great deal of sense here: there is no other evidence to suggest that the distinctive nature of the new practice could be heard especially well in accidentals, rests, or hexachordal changes.[85] For this reason it might be worth considering whether the fourth line was perhaps to be heard as a play on words. For besides their purely

84 For example, Leeman Perkins has proposed the following translation as a more literal alternative to the famous rhymed translation of Gustave Reese: "For they have a new way of composing [*sic*] with lively consonance, in both loud and soft music, with accidentals, rests, and hexachordal changes"; Perkins, *Music in the Age of the Renaissance* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 221.

85 As emphasized by Fallows, "The contenance angloise," 201-3. A technical reading would make better sense in the case of Montaigne's line "leurs reprinses, leurs poses, et leurs muances" in his Apology for Raymond Sebond (*Essays*, ii. 12). Montaigne invokes here an anecdote from Plutarch (*Moralia*, 973) about a magpie capable of reproducing the sounds of trumpets down to the last musical detail, including "their repetitions, their rests, and their inflections." This is a paraphrase of Plutarch's αὐταῖς περιόδοις φθεγγομένη καὶ μεταβολὰς πάσας καὶ κρουμάτων διεξιοῦσα πάντας ῥυθμούς "reproduced with its exact sequences and every change of pitch and rhythm and tone." After Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Harold Cherniss and William C. Helmbold, 15 vols. (London: William Heinemann, and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 12: 404-5.

technical meanings, each of the terms *feinte, pause*, and *muance* can be seen to make musical sense on another level.

This is most obviously true of the word *pause*. This was the conventional French designation for a musical interlude in a theatrical play, known also as *silete* or *pausa* in Latin.[86] A *pause* (sometimes spelled *pose* or *poze*) usually marked a change of scene, but could also be played to accompany pantomimed stage action. *Pauses* appear to have been performed most often by instrumental ensembles, though they could also be played on the organ (in which case they were called *pauses d'orgues*), or occasionally sung by voices alone.[87] The word *pause*, then, was a designation of a musical genre, like *motet* or *chanson*. This is confirmed by the texts of fifteenth-century French plays, which frequently include such stage directions as: "one plays a *pause*" or "one sings a *silete*."[88] As a genre, the *pause* was defined not in terms of its musical characteristics, but rather in terms of its social setting and function. As Howard Mayer Brown observed:[89]

> Any definition of the term "pause" should be broad enough to take into account all [performance] possibilities... Apparently it did not have one specific meaning—nor is there any reason why it should. As an interlude or interruption to the stage action, a *pause* was most frequently instrumental, but it was not always even musical. And the term itself conveys nothing specific about the sort of music which was performed. A *pause* could be anything from the simplest to the most elaborate instrumental piece available, depending upon the exigencies of the text.

If the word *pause* suggests that Le Franc was describing the new practice in terms of the environments in which it could be heard, then this would tie in well with the previous line, *en haute et en basse musique*. *Haut* and *bas*, as is well known, referred to musical instruments: loud instruments that were used outdoors, such as trumpets, sackbuts, and drums, were classified as *haut*, whereas softer and more delicate indoor instruments, like the harp or lute, were referred to as *bas*.[90] Perhaps the poet's basic thought in composing these lines was: "outdoors, indoors, and in the theater," or, even more basically: "everywhere."

Obviously this depends on the meaning of the other two words in the fourth line, *fainte* and *muance*. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that both these words had the-

86 See Howard Mayer Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater, 1400-1550* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), esp. 47 and 140-56; see also *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage françois*, ed. M. de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, 10 vols. (Niort: L. Favre, and Paris: H. Champion, 1875-82), 8: 232.

87 For *pauses* performed on organ or by voices alone, see Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater*, 48 and 142.

88 Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater*, 42 ("jouer silete"), 48 ("on chante... ung silete, ou on jue des menestreux ou de quelques instruments, ou poze d'orgues"). This expression was also known in Middle Dutch; see *Het Spel van de V vroede ende van de V dwaeze Maegden*, ed. Marcel Hoebeke (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 135: "men speelt pause".

89 Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater*, 143.

90 See Edmund A. Bowles, "*Haut* and *bas*: The Grouping of Musical Instruments in the Middle Ages," *Musica Disciplina*, 8 (1954): 115-40.

atrical associations as well. *Fainte* was the term for stage machinery, but by extension could be applied to plays and theatrical productions as a whole: the general sense of the verb *feindre* has to do with illusion, fiction, and representation in general.[91] Likewise, the verb *muer* could apply to any kind of transmutation, including a change of scene in the theater.[92] So it might be possible to take the line *en fainte, en pause, et en muance* to mean broadly: "in plays, in interludes, and in changes of scene."

Yet perhaps consistency of meaning is less important here than the poet's evident delight in a vertiginous play on words, a practice typical of the French *rhétoriqueurs*. Should one prefer a more narrowly "musical" reading of the fourth line, one could also understand *fainte* to refer to unnotated music of any kind (especially the improvisation of *faintes voix*, as in *fauxbourdon*, faburden, or sights),[93] or perhaps as musical exercise in general, as in the expression *feindre la voix*: to exert the voice.[94] Likewise, *muance* could be taken to refer to music sung with *voces mutatae*, that is, adult men's voices, or perhaps to musical changes or variations in general.

The variety of possibilities may seem confusing, yet it is worth keeping in mind that these various readings have one crucial element in common: they all refer to *performance*, or to contexts for performance. This is consistent with the fact, noted earlier, that Le Franc praises Dufay and Binchois principally as performers, and credits them with a new *practice* of producing bright consonant *sound*. The poet does not specify whether Dufay and Binchois performed their own works or those of other musicians, or indeed whether they performed compositions at all, rather than improvised counterpoint. The only thing that seems to matter to him is the musical end result: the "exquisite euphony" that had been heard by "those who were with them" (ll. 16262-63). This apparent obliviousness to any distinction between composition, improvisation, and performance is of course typical of the decades before the 1470s—that is, before the time when the concepts of musical authorship, the musical work, and musical understanding began to transform European musical culture.[95]

Le Franc's notion of a *contenance angloise*, as we will see, is consistent with this pre-1470s mindset. The poet used the word *contenance* fourteen times in *Le champion des*

91 *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien langage françois*, 6: 149; *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, ed. Edmond Huguet, 7 vols. (Paris: E. Champion, 1925-1973), 4: 63. Some theatrical plays, indeed, carried the title "Feinte de..."; for concrete examples, see Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater*, 163.

92 *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IX^e^ au XV^e^ siècle*, ed. Frédéric Godefroy, 10 vols. (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1881-1902), 5: 441.

93 This seems to be the implication in Rondeau 404 of Charles of Orleans: "musique notée par fainte, avec faulx bourdon de maleur"; see Charles d'Orleans, *Poésies*, ed. Pierre Champion (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1924), 525.

94 *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, 4: 60.

95 Wegman, "From Maker to Composer," and id., "'Musical Understanding' in the Fifteenth Century," *Early Music*, 30 (2002): 46-66.

dames, but the only time he employed it in a metaphorical sense was in the stanza under discussion here. Before offering an interpretation of this metaphor, on which so much has come to depend, it may be helpful to clarify the literal meaning of the word *contenance*. In order not to weigh down the argument unduly, however, I will summarize its significance to Le Franc and other late-medieval poets in an excursus which readers may peruse or skip at their own discretion.

It is widely agreed that *contenance* should not be understood in the modern English sense of "countenance," that is, face or facial expression. This meaning is peculiar only to the English language, and does not appear to have developed even there before the sixteenth century.[96] In middle French the word *contenance* had a much broader range of meanings, and is best translated as demeanor, bearing, comportment, or attitude.[97] It was derived from the verb *se contenir*: to comport oneself, to adopt an attitude or appearance. The word necessarily implies a social context, the presence of others, and especially the awareness of being noticed. There would have been no need to assume a *contenance* in privacy and solitude. Yet as soon as one mingled in society, one's bearing and comportment became subject to public scrutiny. A good example of this may be found in Book One of *Le champion des dames*: at one point the poet (*l'acteur*) is invited to join the dining table in the Castle of Love, but he feels embarrassed and awkward before the other guests: "me hontoye et contenance ne sçavoye."[98]

As the latter example suggests, *contenance* was defined partly in terms of a private/public polarity. The word was often used in an implied opposition to *coeur*, that is, the heart as the seat of emotions and feelings.[99] *Contenance* could be the outward expression of one's inner disposition, as revealed in posture, gait, gesture, facial expression, or manner of speech. This, presumably, is how we should interpret the "tres joyeuse contenance" of Franc Vouloir when he is getting ready for the first debate in Book One (l. 935). On the other hand, the word was seldom associated with genuine spontaneity (such as one might see, for example, in children) or with involuntary physical reflexes. *Contenance* typically referred to the conduct and appearance appropriate to one's class and social position. For example, Martin Le Franc devotes a long passage in Book One to a description of the *contenance* of Amours, the God of Love, in order to impress his audience with the dignity of his appearance.[100]

The point here is that one could choose how to present oneself in public by adopting the proper *contenance*. This was often a matter of education.[101] To give another example from *Le champion des dames*, the art of love required the student to cultivate a *courtoise contenance* (l. 14226). The

96 See Jean Renson, *Les dénominations du visage en français et dans les autres langues romanes*, 2 vols. (Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres,' 1962), 2: 427-28, and Werner Habicht, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des englischen Wortes *contenance*," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 118 (1966): 32-51.

97 See Glyn S. Burgess, "Old French *contenance* and *contenant*," in: *Voices of Conscience: Essays on Medieval and Modern French Literature in Memory of James D. Powell and Rosemary Hodgins*, ed. Raymond J. Cormier (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), 21-41.

98 Lines 2132-33; for the expression *savoir sa contenance*, see *Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle*, 2: 477, and Roger Dubuis, *Lexique des* Cent nouvelles nouvelles, Matériaux pour le *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, iii (Paris: Klincksieck, 1996), 70.

99 For this and what follows, see Gaël Milin, "Coeur / Contenance / Regard: Du geste à l'analyse psychologique dans l'*Heptameron* de Marguerite de Navarre," in: *Mélanges de langue et littérature françaises du Moyen Âge et de la Renaissance offerts à Monsieur Charles Foulon*, 2 vols. (Rennes: Institut de français, Université de Haute-Bretagne, 1980-), 1: 259-65.

100 Lines 305-28; the word *contenance* is used in the heading between ll. 232 and 233. Similar examples in *Le champion des dames* are: "plain de contenance" (said of the herald of the God of Love; l. 173), and "disant en fiere contenance" (said of St Thomas Aquinas; l. 23284).

101 For example, the chronicler Jean Froissart reports that the Duchess of Brabant taught Isabeau of Bavaria, fiancée of King Charles VI of France, the conduct proper to a queen: "endoctrinoit... en manières et en contenances le jone fille de Baivière." See Jacqueline Picoche, *Le vocabulaire psychologique dans les chroniques de Froissart*, 2 vols. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976), 1: 94.

would-be lover was typically advised *de te contenir sagement*, "which is to govern your bearing (*maintien*), your eyes, and your mouth in such a way that Malebouche cannot tarnish the lady's honor in any way" (ll. 14196-200).

Yet dissimilation and deceit were also possible: one could deceive others with a feigned *contenance*.[102] Ovid, that influential theorist of the *amoureuses contenances*, the ways of lovers (l. 3966), had notoriously advised young men to use deception in order to attain their ends. In De Meung's part of the *Romance of the Rose*, similarly, the lover achieved his aim of seducing a girl only with the aid of Faus Semblant, False Seeming. (Among the many synonyms of *contenance*, it is worth noting, was the word *semblance*.) All this explains why it was possible to say, as Franc Vouloir did in Book Three, that lovers may possess some outstanding virtue "ou en contenance ou en fait," in appearance or in reality (l. 11477). Likewise, the debates in *Le champion des dames* frequently address the allegation that the *contenances* of women are full of dissimulation and deceit (ll. 7193-96 and 13097-104).

Contenance is one of several words denoting demeanor, bearing, or comportment in middle French. The large number of expressions synonymous with *contenance*—*maintien*, *port*, *façon*, *pose*, *allure*, *air*, *manière*, *semblance*, and others—is indicative of the intense medieval preoccupation with the question how people can and should conduct themselves in public.[103] Of these various expressions, the one closest to *contenance* was *manière*: these two words were interchangeable in many contexts. Not a few medieval writers, including Le Franc himself, spoke in one breath of *contenance* and *manière*, with the clear implication that they meant the same thing.[104]

The notion of demeanor, bearing or comportment could be transferred metaphorically to the realms of literature, music, and the visual arts, where it typically denoted the manner of execution, the procedure, performance, or idiom.[105] To the extent that the late Middle Ages had a concept analogous to our modern "style," it is to be found in words like *maniere* and *façon* in French, or *maniera* and *aria* in Italian.[106] In music, *maniere* could refer to the procedure of improvisation or composition. In the *Regles de la seconde*

102 See Mario Wandruszka, *Haltung und Gebärde der Romanen*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, xcvi (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1954), 15-17.

103 Wandruszka, *Haltung und Gebärde der Romanen*.

104 For examples, see above, n. 101; *Le champion des dames*, ll. 2326-26 and 23939-41; Machaut, *Amours doucement me tente* (Lai 7): "s'en pers maniere et contenance"; Jean Froissart, *Le joli buisson de Jonece*, l. 3821: "maniere et contenance avoir." For more examples from Machaut, see Georg Weise, *Die geistige Welt der Gotik und ihre Bedeutung für Italien* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1939), 424-29: "maintieng, maniere et contenance," "maniere et contenance," "en maniere ou en contenance." Yet more examples in Georg Weise, "*Maniera* und *pellegrino*: zwei Lieblingswörter der italienischen Literatur der Zeit des Manierismus," *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, 3 (1950): 321-403, at 323-25 and 329: "maniere et contenance" (Eustache Deschamps), "perdoye coulour, sens, maniere et contenance" (Christine de Pisan), "contenance et maniere de faire" (France, late fifteenth century), "sçavoir tenir contenance et manière de parler" and "ses manières et contenances" (Georges Chastellain).

105 This historical development is discussed in rich detail by Weise, "*Maniera* und *pellegrino*," esp. 322-32.

106 For well-known examples in the visual arts, see Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 26 and 110.

rhetorique (between 1411 and 1432) it was said of Philippe de Vitry that he "trouva la maniere des motès, et des balades, et des lais, et des simples rondeaux."[107] Likewise, in 1438 the treasury of the Burgundy recorded a payment to Binchois for a book "des Passions en nouvelles manieres."[108] Musical *manieres* were often perceived as peculiar to a particular nation or region. For instance, the executor's account of the estate of John Duke of Bedford (*d.*1435), lists a "livre de motetz en la maniere de France."[109] An expression like this, as used by English administrators, seems to imply that there existed a "maniere d'Angleterre" as well. There are numerous contemporary descriptions of musical events which suggest that music was often heard and recognized as being peculiar to a geographic area: for example, instrumentalists at the court of Portugal "jouans a la mode du pays" (late 1440s), choirboys in Vienna required "auf Brabantisch zu discantieren" (1498), Flemish singers at Barcelona performing "more romano" (1519), or choirboys in Rome singing "alla Inghlese" (1520).[110]

To return to Le Franc's stanza, it is obvious that *contenance angloise* must be a metaphorical expression, since *contenance* does not apply here to the personal appearance of Dufay and Binchois, but rather to the music they performed. The metaphor in question, MUSIC EXHIBITS A DEMEANOR OR ATTITUDE, did not originate with Le Franc himself, but had already been well-established in the French language. If it was possible to speak of a "maniere de France," and by implication of a "maniere d'Angleterre" or perhaps "maniere angloise," then by the same token one could refer to the latter as a "contenance angloise." Not that writers would normally have done this: the usual expression was *maniere*. What necessitated Le Franc to use *contenance* instead will be apparent from one look at the stanza in question: it rhymes with *concordance*, *muance*, and *plaisance*. Yet the meaning is the same. *Contenance angloise* means nothing more or less than *maniere angloise*.

The "English manner" of which Le Franc spoke was not some mysterious and indefinable quality—say, a continental interpretation or distillation of what was perceived to be characteristically English, or a sound quality with which continental music could somehow be imbued. Rather, it was a method, a procedure, a set of rules. Like every *maniere* or *contenance* (both literal and metaphorical), the English manner was teachable. The Italian theorist Guilielmus Monachus, active in the later fifteenth century, explained in his *De preceptis artis musice* how the reader might acquire "a true and perfect knowledge of the manner of the English" (*modus anglicorum*), as distinct from the "manner of the

107 See Ernest LANGLOIS, *Recueil d'arts de seconde rhétorique*, Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, lxxxiv (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), 12.
108 See above, n. 29.
109 Andrew WATHEY, "Dunstable in France," *Music & Letters*, 67 (1986): 1-36, at 12.
110 For these and other examples, see WEGMAN, "From Maker to Composer," 421-26.

French" (*modus francigenarum*).[111] He outlined the contrapuntal rules for two English manners in particular: *faburden* and *gymel*. These manners do indeed seem to have been taught and practiced on the continent. On 1 July 1448, for example, the chapter of the Cathedral of Troyes prohibited the singing of "ille cantus anglicus," *gymel*, in the daily performance of the psalms.[112] And the German composer Johann von Soest recalls in his rhymed autobiography how, some time in the mid 1460s, he resigned his position at the Court of Cleves and travelled to Bruges, in order to learn "contreyn und fauberdon" from two English singers.[113]

In the same way, I suggest, Dufay and Binchois must have learned the "English manner" by internalizing and practising its rules under the guidance of trained English singers. This, at any rate, is what Le Franc's remark "and they have taken on the English manner" would have been taken to mean by someone who heard the poem recited, and who had to construe it immediately in terms of what he or she knew about music already: what other way was there to learn a foreign manner of counterpoint? In terms of the practical rules and procedures that defined it, the English manner adopted by Dufay and Binchois must have remained a distinctive tradition, appreciably different from the French manners with which they had grown up. Or, to put it differently, any English manner—whether faburden, gymel, countering, or English discant—would have remained one of several contrapuntal idioms that French composers and performers had at their command. The distinction between these various manners had to do with their rules and procedures, not with consonance. All of them were idioms of counterpoint, after all, and there was no way to make counterpoint any more consonant than it had been for a hundred years. Martin Le Franc's "pratique de faire frisque concordance" is basically a poet's way of saying "counterpoint," and is equally applicable to contrapuntal rules taught in the 1330s as to those taught in the 1430s. Whatever was novel about the counterpoint of Dufay and Binchois, it could not have been consonant sound per se.[114]

111 For this and the next sentence, see Guilielmus Monachus, *De preceptis artis musice*, ed. Albert Seay, Corpus Scriptorum de Musica, xi ([Rome]: American Institute of Musicology, 1965), 29-30 and 38-41. Guilielmus's account of faburden does not agree in all particulars with the rules of faburden in England, nor need this be surprising: "manners" of improvised counterpoint are living traditions, and inevitably undergo change and modification as they are adopted in different countries.

112 See Arthur-Emile Prévost, *Histoire de la maîtrise de la cathédrale de Troyes* (Troyes, 1906; repr. Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), 155.

113 Johann Carl von Fichard, ed., "Johanns von Soest eigne Lebensbeschreibung," *Frankfurtisches Archiv für ältere deutsche Litteratur und Geschichte*, 1 (1811): 84-139, at 103-7. For the practice of countering, see Judson D. Maynard, " 'Heir Beginnis Countering'," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 20 (1967): 182-96.

114 This, to repeat, is the conclusion arrived at by Philip Kaye in *The "Contenance Angloise" In Perspective*, on the basis of a detailed analysis of continental repertories from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The most significant stylistic change in continental music of the 1430s may well have been the *neue Stromrhythmus* identified by Heinrich Besseler in his *Bourdon und Fauxbourdon: Studien zum Ursprung der niederländischen Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1950; rev. edn., 1974), 109-24.

The only scope there was for a fundamental reconceptualisation of counterpoint lay, ironically, in the *diminished* appreciation of consonant sound. This is what happened in the 1470s, and it opened the way for new aesthetic criteria to become influential: musical intelligibility, the concept of the work, the idea of composition as an art in itself, with its own principles of logic, formal planning, and design.[115] Yet Martin Le Franc is still innocent of such criteria: for him, the magic of contemporary music resides precisely in consonance as an irreducible object of sensuous delight. This is confirmed by his use of the adjective *frisque*. For a medieval Frenchman, as Christopher Page observed, "something, or someone, is 'frisque' if its aspect instantly gives pleasure to others without a moment's reflection required to establish what is being enjoyed and why."[116] Martin Le Franc used the words *frisque* and *frisquement* principally in connection with elegant, fashionable dress. In Book Four, Franc Vouloir advised lovers to ensure that their appearance and clothing would always be *gente*, *frisque*, and *nette* (ll. 14220; also 14356). But the usual connotation of the word was with vanity, decadence, and empty show (ll. 1109, 8570-76, 8638, 12177, 12554, 13133-34). There is a clear sense that something which is *frisque* is delightful and pleasing only on the surface, in its sensuous appearance, and should be cultivated and enjoyed only in appropriate contexts. Music, evidently, provided such a context. "Perhaps," Christopher Page suggested, "Martin Le Franc's 'frisque concordance' expresses an affective response to the surface sound of music by Dufay and Binchois".[117] This captures the musical sensibility of the early fifteenth century in a nutshell.

In the same way, Martin Le Franc's own poetry could be said to be *frisque*. His profundity resides in the surface. One must read him with a loud voice, savor the words and expressions, enjoy the subtle play with verbal sounds and meanings. We do his poetry little justice by supplying it with a heavy scholarly apparatus, however useful, instead of allowing it to *sing*, as it once did. Poetry, after all, was a kind of music, "une espece de musique," as several fifteenth-century writers on the art agreed.[118] In this literary and musical sense, Martin Le Franc was an exponent of the *contenance françoise* of the late Middle Ages. We could not have wished for a witness with a keener appreciation of the music of his time, and a more incisive way of capturing its spirit, than this intriguing and unjustly neglected poet.

115 See Wegman, "From Maker to Composer," and id., "'Musical Understanding' in the Fifteenth Century."
116 "Reading and Reminiscence," 3.
117 "Reading and Reminiscence," 4.
118 Langlois, *Recueil d'arts de seconde rhétorique*, 216 and 265.

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Abstract

The late-medieval French poet Martin Le Franc devoted six stanzas of his poem *Le champion des dames* (1441-42) to the state of music in his time. It has been widely assumed that these stanzas testify to an epochal change in music history, the beginning of the musical Renaissance, especially in their identification of a *nouvelle pratique* cultivated by Dufay and Binchois, and of a *contenance angloise* apparently exhibited by the music of Dunstable. However, a closer analysis of Le Franc's poem—focusing particularly on its intellectual debts, its rhetorical construction, literary sources, and poetic imagery—indicates that this assumption is highly problematic. Although Martin Le Franc was a humanist, his comments are expressive of French musical sensibilities typical of the late fourteenth

and early fifteenth centuries, and do not prefigure the fundamental changes in musical culture that were to take place in Europe after the 1470s.

Example 1.

The six stanzas concerning the current state of music in Martin Le Franc, *Le champion des dames* (1441-42). After Le Franc, *Le champion des dames*, ed. Robert Deschaux, 5 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 4: 67-69.

	Pour le temps du mauvais Caÿn,	During the times of the evil Cain, when
16250	Quant Jubal trouva la pratique	Jubal, hearing Tubalcain, discovered
	En escoutant Tubalcaÿn	the practice of harmonizing musical
	D'accorder les sons de musique,	sounds, the art was not so magisterial
	L'art ne fut pas si auctentique	as it is nowadays, neither were rhetoric
	Qu'elle est ou temps de maintenant,	or speech as yet so elegant.
16255	Aussy ne fut la rethorique	
	Ne le parler si avenant.	
	Tapissier, Carmen, Cesaris	Not long ago, Tapissier, Carmen,
	N'a pas long temps si bien chanterent	and Cesaris sang so well that they
	Qu'ilz esbahirent tout Paris	astonished all Paris, and all those who
16260	Et tous ceulx qui les frequenterent.	came to visit them. But never did they
	Mais onques jour ne deschanterent	sing discant of such exquisite euphony
	En melodie de tel chois,	(as those who were with them have
	Ce m'ont dit ceulx qui les hanterent,	told me) as G. Du Fay and Binchois.
	Que G. du Fay et Binchois.	
16265	Car ilz ont nouvelle pratique	For these have a new practice of
	De faire frisque concordance	making bright consonance, in music
	En haulte et en basse musique,	loud and soft, in *fainte*, in *pause*, and
	En fainte, en pause, et en muance.	in *muance*. And they have taken on
	Et ont prins de la contenance	the English manner, and have followed
16270	Angloise et ensuÿ Dunstable,	Dunstable, wherefore a marvelous
	Pour quoy merveilleuse plaisance	delight renders their singing joyous and
	Rend leur chant joyeux et notable.	distinguished.
	Des bas et des haults instrumens	In former times people have played—
	A on joué le temps passé,	no doubt very sweetly—on soft and
16275	Doubter n'en fault tres doulcement,	loud instruments, each according to his
	Chascun selon son pourpensé.	devising. But no one has ever had such
	Mais jamais on n'a compassé	control, either on the dulcian or on the
	N'en doulchaine n'en flajolet	flute, as did a man called Verdelet, who
	Ce qu'un nagueres trespassé	recently passed away.
16280	Faisoit, appellé Verdelet.	
	Ne face on mencion d'Orphee	Let us pass over Orpheus, of whom
	Dont les poetes tant escrivent,	the poets wrote so much, for that's
	Ce n'est qu'une droicte faffee[1]	a mere trifle compared to the harp
	Au regard des harpeurs qui vivent.	players alive today. These invigorate
16285	Que si parfaictement avivent	their chords and harmonies with such
	Leurs accors et leurs armonies,	perfection that it seems in truth as if
	Qu'il semble de fait qu'ilz estrivent	they were emulating the euphony of
	Aux angeliques melodies.	angels.

	Tu as les avugles ouÿ	You've heard the blind men play at
16290	Jouer a la court de Bourgongne.	the Court of Burgundy, haven't you?
	N'a pas? Certainement, ouÿ.	Surely yes. Was there ever such ado?
	Fust il jamais telle besongne?	I've seen Binchois feel shame and fall
	J'ay veu Binchois avoir vergongne	silent before their challenge, and Dufay
	Et soy taire emprez leur rebelle,	angered and frowning because he
16295	Et Dufay despité et frongne	cannot muster such lovely euphony.
	Qu'il n'a melodie si belle.	

1 For the meaning of *faffée* in Le Franc, see Paris, "Un poème inédit de Martin Le Franc," 423 n.1.