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Who Was Josquin?

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You're called a genius by people, and
then your whole life you become the part.

Brian Wilson, 1980[1]

FOR all his legendary fame, Josquin des Prez remains a surprisingly elusive historical figure. Administrative records that refer to him with certainty are few, and give us no more than the sketchiest outline of a career, with little or no unusual detail to suggest a musician of unusual talent. Were it not for the quality of his music (whose distribution began in earnest in the 1490s), and for written evidence of the adoration of his contemporaries (surviving piecemeal for the 1510s, but proliferating rapidly thereafter), Josquin's documented career would hardly have seemed of special historical interest. As a result, we are left to see the composer largely through the admiring eyes of his later contemporaries. It is through their hands that his music has reached our time. It is their image of Josquin the creative artist, the human being, that complements the skeletal image that emerges from the documents.

Yet modern scholarship has learnt not to trust Josquin's contemporaries—at least not unconditionally. They appropriated his music enthusiastically, made it their own, and perpetuated his memory, yet it is unclear whether their image of the composer may not be more revealing of contemporary pressures and concerns than of the man himself. They reinterpreted his compositions, omitting or adding voice-parts, changing rhythmic and melodic details, retexting, rearranging, and revising them. They copied and printed alarming numbers of other works under his name, and many of his under those of others, or no name at all. They invoked his authority to lend credibility to theoretical and

[1] Chris Charlesworth (ed.), *The Beach Boys in their Own Words* (London, New York, and Sydney, 1994), 55.

philosophical claims about music. They told and retold anecdotes about him that are demonstrably untrue in every verifiable detail. Insofar as we know Josquin at all, it seems, our image is deeply impregnated by sixteenth-century interpretation. Unless more evidence of a matter-of-fact nature were to come to light, we might never be able to disentangle truth from fiction entirely.

This is what might be called the central problem of modern Josquin scholarship: can one isolate a 'real' Josquin from the Josquin perceived by his contemporaries? This problem crops up whenever the issue of historical truth is raised, in questions such as: did Josquin really write this work? Do we have it in the version as he intended it, in the original notation, with the original text placement? Is this anecdote, report, or recollection about him really true? Does the woodcut portrait give us Josquin's real likeness? Does this document really refer to him? What was he really like?

The existence of this problem has always been recognized. Yet in the pre- and post-war decades, when Josquin scholarship was still in its early stages, it simply seemed to reflect the fact that much basic research was yet to be carried out. There was every reason to expect that the discovery of more sources and documents would one day enable scholars to formulate reasonably confident answers—an expectation that has proved justified in the case of several other Renaissance composers.

In the last twenty-five years, however, further research has not diminished the problem. On the contrary, the harvest of new documents and firm attributions has proved disappointingly small, and doubts are currently undermining some of the securest convictions of those earlier years: doubts about the identity of singers thought to be the composer, and even about the authenticity of core works in the Josquin canon, never mind those on the fringes. If one of the chief scholarly concerns has been to separate truth from fiction, the startling discovery has been that less and less truth remained. To be sure, there still is a nucleus of firm attributions and biographical data left. Yet this nucleus no longer represents a foundation that we can confidently expect to broaden: it is too slender to serve as a basis for settling the numerous doubts that affect the other data, and may not itself be immune from doubt.

At the same time there is another nucleus of apparent certainty about Josquin, a nucleus of conviction. One might call it the received image, and it has proved surprisingly tenacious, not to say unassailable; it may be characterized by one word: genius. Yet its relationship to the nucleus of firm evidence has become increasingly strained, and scholars today are no longer undivided as to the strength of their convictions: too many central beliefs about Josquin have had to be abandoned for us to be confident about anything we might previously have taken for granted. And yet: if the received image itself is to be aban-

doned—a step that would seem tantamount to sacrilege to many—what image should come in its place?

The effect of all this has not been slow to dawn upon Renaissance musicologists. The question 'Who was Josquin?' has been heard repeatedly over the past few years, and behind it is a sense of genuine puzzlement that this question should arise for, of all people, the most famous composer of the Renaissance. Why is it so difficult to get to know the man whom, in many respects, we should like to know best? Who *was* Josquin?

The 'Force of Opinion'

Baldesar Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (Venice, 1528) presents one of the most vivid, if perhaps idealized, pictures of Italian court life in the early sixteenth century. Intended as a manual 'to make the perfect courtier through words', it is cast as a series of conversations at the court of Urbino on four successive evenings during March 1507. Although entirely fictionalized, the conversations are almost certainly based on recollections from Castiglione's own time at the court, 1504–16.

During the course of the second evening, we read that the young courtier Gaspare Pallavicino provokes the response of almost everyone present by asserting that women are irrational and jealous by nature.[2] Duchess Elisabetta Gonzaga immediately replies that 'the wicked things you are saying about women are so far from the truth that they reflect shame and discredit on the speaker rather than on women'. And the distinguished and learned diplomat Federico Fregoso adds that irrationality is in fact encountered just as frequently among men:

> You must not say that women are completely irrational, signor Gaspare, even if sometimes they fall in love more by someone else's judgement than by their own. For there are often noble and wise men who do the same, and, if the truth be told, you yourself and all of us frequently, and at this very moment, rely more on the opinions of others than on our own. And to prove this, consider that not so long ago, when certain verses were presented here as being by Sannazaro, everyone thought they were extremely fine and praised them to the skies; then when it was established that they were by someone else their reputation sank immediately and they seemed quite mediocre. Then again, when a motet was sung in the presence of the Duchess, it pleased no one and was considered worthless, until it became known that it had been composed by Josquin des Prez. What clearer proof do you want of the force of opinion?

[2] For what follows, see Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth, 1967), 144–5.

The force of opinion. At the court of Urbino by 1507, at least according to a later recollection, this force dictated that every motet by Josquin had to be of outstanding quality. Evidently, however, not all his motets were known even in this sophisticated cultural environment, and those that were might not always have been praised for their artistic merits unless courtiers relied on the opinions of others more than their own.

Unfortunately, Castiglione does not give us the title of the Josquin motet, and consequently we are not in a position to form our own judgement. Given the unfavourable initial reception of the work, it seems at least curious that no one at the court called the ascription into question. If the event had indeed taken place, one assumes that the courtiers had sent for the singers to ask who who had written that 'worthless' motet, and that these, although probably reluctant to displease their noble audience, had no choice but to read what it would have said in the manuscript: 'Josquin des Prez'. Yet unless Josquin himself could have been approached to settle the matter conclusively, there was no opportunity to verify the attribution. The motet might have been known and copied as Josquin's for years, but then it could just as easily have been one of the many works that were ascribed to other composers elsewhere—a possibility that was apparently not entertained at the court of Urbino.

What seems significant about Castiglione's anecdote is that authorship *mattered*, and that, given the force of prevailing opinion, it could make a difference to aesthetic evaluation. That, indeed, is its point. We can still recognize that phenomenon in our own time (it partly explains why modern scholars are so concerned about the authenticity of works ascribed to Josquin), yet for European musical culture around 1500 such concern about musical authorship was actually something of a novelty. There are few polyphonic sources from the fifteenth century that do not include a substantial number of anonymous works—suggesting that authorship may have been seen to matter far less than perceived intrinsic merit. It is true that some pieces must have been so famous and instantly recognizable as not to need an ascription in the first place, at least not above the music. Only this can explain why some of the most famous works of the fifteenth century survive anonymously in all extant sources, and why ascriptions to major composers are sometimes found only accidentally in treatises or archival documents. Also, whenever a polyphonic manuscript survives with an index, the latter almost invariably supplies more attributions than the main body: evidently ascriptions were needed for ready identification in listings (just as incipits were sometimes supplied for that purpose). However, even in those circumstances many other pieces remained anonymous, and yet others were transmitted under names so garbled and fanciful as to appear meaningless in any case.

Castiglione's anecdote about the force of musical opinion has a counterpart in another story, recounted by Gioseffo Zarlino in his music treatise *Istitutioni harmoniche* (1558), and situated in Rome during the last years of Josquin's life:[3]

> I remember what I have heard the most excellent Adrian Willaert tell many times, namely, that they used to sing that six-part motet *Verbum bonum et suave* under the name of Josquin at the papal chapel in Rome on nearly every feast day of Our Lady. It was ranked among the most excellent compositions that were sung in those days. Now Willaert had moved to Italy from Flanders during the pontificate of Leo X [1513–21], and, finding himself in the place where they sang that motet, he noticed that it was ascribed to Josquin. When he pointed out that it was in fact his own, as it indeed was, such was their malice, or rather (to put it more generously) their ignorance, that they never wanted to sing it again.

Taken together, the two anecdotes give us an insight into early sixteenth-century musical culture—at least in Italy—that is as fascinating as it seems troubling. Among professional singers as well as courtiers, Josquin's music was thought to represent the very pinnacle of musical perfection. Yet the composer himself had been capable of writing motets that no courtier could recognize as his, just as the young Willaert had written a motet that even the best singers were unable to tell from Josquin. This circumstance alone should make us wonder to what extent 'the force of opinion' was actually rooted in musical judgement—or, to put it differently, whether we may not be dealing with a phenomenon of mass psychology, belonging rather to the realm of social and cultural history. I shall return to that question later, but for the moment the most relevant issue is that of authorship.

Since modern scholarship is concerned to establish historical truth, the most disturbing element in both anecdotes is the way in which the force of opinion became a pressure that worked to suppress truth. The Zarlino story shows that there was a clear incentive for young and ambitious composers to write works that could be mistaken for Josquin's. Yet not even Willaert had realized that only an actual attribution to Josquin might ensure performance in the papal chapel, just as only an attribution could silence criticism at the court of Urbino. And while he was understandably concerned to receive the credit for his work, others might have been more ready to humour the force of opinion.

There are all kinds of possible contexts in which Willaert's *Verbum bonum et suave* could have travelled from Flanders to Rome with an erroneous ascription to Josquin. For any singer hoping to win a ruler's favour, one of the surest ways to ingratiate himself was to send fresh repertory with a flattering letter offering

[3] Gioseffo Zarlino, *Istitutioni harmoniche* (Venice, 1558), Pt. 4, ch. 36, p. 346. I am grateful to Bonnie Blackburn for supplying a copy of the relevant page.

service. Many such letters have survived, and sometimes we also learn about them indirectly. For instance, in 1501 Duke Ercole d'Este of Ferrara learned from his ambassador at Paris that 'Verbonnet is sending a new work to Your Excellency which he says [!] was made by Josquin, as you will see in his letter'.[4] Of course there is no reason to assume that the singer in question (who was actually a well-known composer himself) would have made up the attribution—although the ambassador seems careful not to become implicated if precisely that should prove to be the case. What matters more is the virtual certainty of a favourable reception, particularly with a Josquin piece—a circumstance that could easily have induced less scrupulous singers to send the latest work of an unknown composer under Josquin's name. In Willaert's case the culprit might well have been one of his erstwhile colleagues in Flanders, a man who clearly had not anticipated that the composer himself might one day have the opportunity to rectify the misattribution personally at Rome. In any case, Willaert had moved to Italy early enough, in 1515, to see to it (if the opportunity was available) that *Verbum bonum et suave* would be published under his name: it was printed as his by Ottaviano Petrucci in 1519.

When we come to speak of printed books, however, we touch on a second, and far more influential, source for misattributions. No activity was by definition more responsive to the force of opinion than commercial music printing. Starting at Venice in 1501, the trade quickly spread throughout Europe, with new publishing houses mushrooming in Italy, France, and the Low Countries. If one considers the substantial financial investments required for print runs of, say, 500 copies, the organizational problems involved in their distribution, and the risks of bankruptcy in an uncertain economic climate, it is not difficult to understand the importance for entrepreneurs to publish works by Josquin that were not available anywhere else. Sometimes they may have succeeded, but often their attributions are either patently implausible or expressly contradicted by many other sources. Certainly late prints for Josquin have achieved a notoriety in this regard: if we were to take all their attributions on trust, the composer would have seemed far more deeply involved in the stylistic trends of the Gombert–Willaert generation than he could have been historically. (A case in point is *Missa Da pacem*, long thought to be Josquin's on the basis of a German print of 1539, but now known to be by his much younger contemporary Noel Bauldewyn.[5]) No statement sums up the problem more succinctly than Georg Forster's, in the preface to his print *Selectissimarum mutetarum . . . tomus primus*

[4] Lewis Lockwood, *Music in Renaissance Ferrara, 1400–1505: The Creation of a Musical Centre in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1984), 202.

[5] Edgar H. Sparks, *The Music of Noel Bauldewyn* (New York, 1972).

(Nuremberg, 1540): 'I recall that a certain famous man said that Josquin wrote more compositions after his death than during his life.'[6]

It is hard to say how close Forster may have been to the truth. Of the more than 300 works attributed to Josquin in at least one manuscript or print, 42 per cent survives exclusively in sources produced after his death.[7] Not all of the latter percentage need be inauthentic, of course, but then the remaining 58 per cent need not be altogether authentic either. It is only fair to admit that we are completely at the mercy of random survivals. Willaert had the good fortune to visit the papal chapel just when his motet was being sung there (and *we* have the good fortune that his story was recorded by Zarlino), but what if this had never happened, and if the only surviving source for *Verbum bonum et suave* had been the choirbook of the papal singers, written some time before 1515? Of course: the motet would have been among the 58 per cent of 'Josquin' settings known to have been copied during his lifetime.

The problems described here can haunt Josquin scholarship in a bewildering variety of permutations. For instance, a piece may carry his name in one source and be anonymous in five others. What if the five anonymous copies date from within Josquin's lifetime, but the attribution comes in a much later print, say, in 1535? What if the reverse were the case? And if the piece was actually composed by Josquin, how could we have found out if the single ascribed copy had not survived? Then there is the complicating factor of conflicting attributions to other composers, not all of which can be resolved by assuming that the force of opinion would have worked in Josquin's favour. And then again there is the complicating factor of prints, which had the potential to spread misattributions in hundreds of copies, each of which, in turn, could become the exemplar for further manuscript copies.

In short, we seem to be dealing with a musical culture in which any ascription, whether correct or incorrect, could either spread like wildfire or hardly at all, and with patterns of survival that make it exceedingly hard to tell exactly what happened in every case. Whatever objective criteria we might propose to assess the reliability of individual attributions (some will be cited below), any isolated and superficially dubious ascription to Josquin might still be correct, and any overwhelmingly attested one might still be incorrect. More disturbingly, many genuine Josquin works might not bear his name at all in any surviving source, being either anonymous or ascribed to someone else.

It may be objected, at this point, that I must be vastly overstating the extent of the problem. After all, there has been substantial scholarly consensus over the Josquin canon for a long time. There is a complete edition, there are published

[6] Osthoff, *Josquin*, ii. 9.

[7] Willem Elders, 'Who Was Josquin?', in *Josquin Proceedings* (1986), 1–14 at 10.

work-lists, and many works are widely available on compact disc: surely suspicion could not be seriously entertained even for a small proportion of all this? Yet here we touch on the core of the Josquin problem, at least as far as authorship is concerned. Several recent developments have shown that the very foundations of the modern consensus are problematic, and that they involve a force of opinion that uncannily recalls the anecdotes of Castiglione and Zarlino.

Historically, Josquin scholarship has proceeded by taking all ascriptions on trust unless there were firm grounds for suspicion—usually either a conflicting attribution or patent incompatibility with what was perceived to be Josquin's musical style. The ruling presumption, in other words, was innocent until proven guilty. Following this principle Albert Smijers embarked on the first Josquin edition in 1921, beginning with the masses printed by Petrucci, and moving on to works surviving elsewhere, taking into account any new sources and concordances that came to light.[8] After Smijers's death in 1957 this approach was continued by his successors Myroslaw Antonowycz and Willem Elders.

That the approach might seem problematic today is hardly Smijers's fault. By the time the edition was completed, in 1969, it had taken into account a total of 182 manuscript sources (as well as numerous prints).[9] Today, however, more than twice as many manuscripts for music ascribed to Josquin are known: at least 374, making the problem of conflicting and dubious attributions far more obvious to us than it could have been to Smijers, particularly when he started in 1920. Partly for this reason, moreover, Josquin scholarship has begun to adopt critical methods of source evaluation in order to establish mutual relationships, dependencies, and (particularly) relative authority. Many of the most patent misattributions have thus been removed, and this process continues until the present day. Summarizing, one might say that the Josquin canon grew as more sources were discovered, but began to shrink again after an equally growing number of problems necessitated critical methods to deal with them.

This brings us back to what was said at the beginning: one of the chief scholarly concerns over the past twenty-five years has been to separate truth from fiction. Yet in the last few years this process has led to a realization that could not have been available previously, namely, that the problems are so all-pervading that it might be better to restart from the other end, following the presumption of guilty until proven innocent. The scholar who first called for this approach was Joshua Rifkin.[10] At a symposium devoted to the problem of conflicting attributions, at Utrecht in 1986, he urged colleagues

[8] *Werken* (1921–69). [9] For this and the following sentence, see Elders, 'Who Was Josquin?', 4.

[10] For the following quotations, see Joshua Rifkin, 'Problems of Authorship in Josquin: Some Impolitic Observations; with a Postscript on *Absalon, fili mi*', in *Josquin Proceedings* (1986), 45–52 at 46–7.

that we must, at the very least, subject our existing consensus to a far more intensive, critical examination than we have done to date. We have seen too many works once central to our understanding . . . fall by the wayside for us to go on thinking that nothing separates us from a truly solid Josquin canon but one or two small adjustments.

Such an examination, according to Rifkin, 'means, inevitably, redirecting our inquiries to the attribution of *all* the works known to us under Josquin's name—even the most obvious attributions of the most obvious works'.

How could the problem have become so all-pervading? The crucial aspect, discussed prominently in Rifkin's paper, is that of Josquin's style—or rather, the current perception of it. No musicologist would endorse an attribution to Josquin without at least considering its stylistic plausibility. Yet the modern notion of what is 'typical' or 'worthy' of Josquin must necessarily be based on works already accepted as his—or rather, which have not so far been called into question. Hence we are continuously in danger of accepting works on a stylistic basis that might itself have to come under review. For instance, we might decide to accept work X because of its stylistic similarity to works Y and Z, and might see no problem because the latter are central Josquin works, firmly backed by the received scholarly consensus. Yet our decision (which in turn might have led us to accept other works) would have to be reviewed as soon as Y and Z themselves came under suspicion.

Such a scenario is far from hypothetical. Two recent cases of de-attribution show, in complementary fashion, how the problem has begun to affect the very heart of the received consensus. To take the case of the motet *Absalon, fili mi*, this work has featured very prominently in the received picture of Josquin, and has even acquired some popularity in modern recordings. However, as Rifkin demonstrated in a postscript to the published version of his paper, its attestation is in fact alarmingly weak.[11]

The attribution to Josquin comes first in a late and peripheral source: a German print from 1540, compiled by an editor who is known to have been responsible for several unique but questionable Josquin ascriptions. All other attributions of *Absalon* are found in later copies that can be shown conclusively to be based ultimately on this print. Rifkin further argued that *Absalon*'s most distinctive musical and notational features have no parallel in the Josquin canon even at its most inclusive, and would seem to point more plausibly in the direction of Pierre de la Rue—in whose direct circle the earliest and most authoritative (if anonymous) copy was in fact written. His conclusion, which has since received independent support from Jaap van Benthem,[12] was that *Absalon*, as a

[11] For what follows, see ibid. 47–9.

[12] Jaap van Benthem, 'Lazarus Versus Absalon: About Fiction and Fact in the Netherlands Motet', *TVNM* 39 (1989), 54–82.

candidate for Josquin's authorship, 'starts with nothing substantive in its favor and more than a little against it'. And yet this very motet has been a cornerstone in the present-day perception of Josquin's musical genius.

If the case of *Absalon* recalls the story about Willaert and the papal singers (will the motet ever get recorded again as a 'merely' anonymous work?), the complementary case of the *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye* reminds one of the courtiers at Urbino: although firmly and unanimously attributed to Josquin, it seems to please no one. Before turning to its transmission, however, it is important to recall that Rifkin focused his attention principally on the only objective criterion that we possess: attestation. There are good grounds for this. No matter how serious the problems of authenticity may be, at the end of the day we can only start by taking *some* attributions on trust. And if we are to do so, we might as well establish whether sources deserve our trust, that is to say: what the strength of their attestation is. Among the relevant criteria are these: is the source early? Does it present a version of the work that is demonstrably close to the hypothetical original? Was it compiled in a region where the composer was active? Has it proved a reliable source for other Josquin attributions? The unique source for the *Absalon* ascription, as Rifkin demonstrated, satisfies none of these criteria. Yet by these same criteria, the *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye* must count as one of the most solidly attested in the Josquin canon.[13]

To begin with, the attribution comes very early: it is found in a German manuscript copied on paper dated 1496—at a time, in other words, when there is no evidence that Josquin was yet an international celebrity,[14] and hence no reason to assume the adverse pressure of the force of opinion. Next, the attribution is found in one of the earliest prints for Josquin's mass music, Petrucci's *Missarum Josquin liber secundus* (Venice, 1505), published in the very region where the composer himself had been active in the previous two years. Source analysis has revealed that the German manuscript and the Italian print share a number of apparent errors. If these are indeed scribal corruptions (which is by no means certain), we must postulate an even earlier common source that would have contained both these corruptions and the Josquin ascription. With this the ascription is pushed back even further in time, into the very years during which the earliest surviving sources for Josquin's mass music were copied: the early to mid-1490s. The third and final source for *Missa Une mousse* is a manuscript copied in Flanders probably in 1508–11: its version shows clear signs of being dependent on the Petrucci print, and hence its ascription to Josquin does not carry independent weight.

[13] For what follows, see especially Jaap van Benthem, 'Was "Une mousse de Biscaye" Really Appreciated by L'Ami Baudichon?', *Muziek & Wetenschap*, 1 (1991), 175–94.

[14] Rob C. Wegman, *Born for the Muses: The Life and Masses of Jacob Obrecht* (Oxford, 1994), 1–3.

Such, then, is the source situation, and it is quite the reverse of *Absalon*: early and unanimous attestation of his authorship, and wide (if possibly dependent) transmission entirely within the lifetime of the composer. Yet Josquin scholarship has long felt a deep unease about *Missa Une mousse*, since it shows the composer in an otherwise unfamiliar stylistic light. By the standards of what scholars have come to expect from Josquin, the work has seemed conspicuous for its 'lack of clarity and consistency' as well as its 'crudities of part-writing and dissonance treatment'.[15] A courageous attempt to confront this problem head-on was recently undertaken by Jaap van Benthem.[16] While acknowledging the firm attestation for the ascription, he drew attention to what could be perceived as compositional weaknesses (compared with already accepted Josquin masses), and pointed to possible stylistic parallels in the works of Gaspar van Weerbeke. Suggesting the likelihood of the latter's authorship, he decided that 'I simply refuse to dwell in fancies, presenting a Josquin dressed up temporarily in stylistic feathers of a successful contemporary [Weerbeke] who scarcely can stay in his shadow, neither as a craftsman nor with respect to imagination'.[17]

Yet with this decision, however reassuring it may be in terms of our preferred image of Josquin, we are bound to run into methodological problems. To begin with, if one can de-attribute one of the most firmly attested 'Josquin' masses, then this must in principle be possible for any other work of equally firm attestation—at least if it seems incompatible with the received image of Josquin's style. Yet this image can only be based on works we have already accepted as his. To preserve the image by rejecting *Missa Une mousse* is to overrule firm attestation in one case, and thus to undermine the only objective criterion that might support our image in others. What reason, then, is there *not* to overrule firm attestation in those cases, except that the works in question conform to the image which, in turn, is based on them? Without the objective control of attestation, in other words, any image can sustain itself in any circular way it chooses.

Yet the situation is not even as optimistic as sketched here. For the received image itself is hardly backed by such firm attestation as we possess for *Missa Une mousse*. One of the 'Josquin' masses with which the latter has been seen to compare unfavourably is *Missa L'ami Baudichon*. This work survives in seven manuscripts and one print. As it happens, the print is Petrucci's second book of Josquin masses—the very source whose attribution has been called into question in the case of *Missa Une mousse*. The only contemporary source to confirm Petrucci's attribution of *Missa L'ami Baudichon* is a Sistine Chapel choirbook from the 1510s (Vatican CS 23), whose version is, however, dependent on Petrucci, and hence of no independent authority. All other sources (several of

[15] Jeremy Noble, 'Josquin', *New Grove* ix. 724.
[16] 'Was "Une mousse de Biscaye" Really Appreciated'.
[17] Ibid. 188.

which are much older) transmit the work anonymously, except for one, copied in Bohemia some time around 1500 (Hradec Králové 7), whose index gives it to Johannes Tinctoris.

Josquin scholarship has hardly taken the latter ascription seriously: *Missa L'ami Baudichon* is still considered one of the central 'Josquin' works today. Yet Tinctoris (unlike Josquin) is not a composer's name that was likely to attract many misattributions—none, in fact, have otherwise been documented. In terms of textual criticism the ascription to him could be called a *difficilior lectio*: a reading that is more likely to be authentic because it is 'more difficult', there being no circumstances that could plausibly account for it as a scribal mistake. However, the earlier de-attribution of *Missa Une mousse* (if accepted) would provide a plausible context for Petrucci's ascription to Josquin being erroneous (the 'force of opinion' being another): if we do not trust Petrucci in one case, why should we necessarily in another? And yet, that very de-attribution presupposes that we have already accepted Josquin's authorship of *Missa L'ami Baudichon*, since it helps to define the stylistic norm from which *Missa Une mousse* is seen to depart:

> But [a] performance of Josquin's Kyrie settings 'super *L'ami Baudichon* and *L'homme armé*' may [make] you conscious of the miraculous balance between its very individual musical lines, gestures, and impulses, as well as of the dramatic potencies inherent in its structure. In *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye*, however, the various voices are subordinate to the 'line of marching', which—in four part writing—is set out in general by the outer voices, and prominently marked by cadences on regular distance.[18]

> Any attempt to regard this as mature richness of invention is contradicted by crudities of part-writing and dissonance treatment, that are more frequent here than in any of Josquin's other masses. If this mass is by him, it must be early; and if it is early it reveals a quite different aspect of his character from *L'ami Baudichon*.[19]

To sum up, a firmly attested ascription (of *Missa Une mousse*) is challenged at least partly on the basis of a weakly attested one (of *Missa L'ami Baudichon*)—for no other apparent reason than that the modern perception of Josquin's style favours the latter but not the former. With this we have become caught in a methodological circle, having no other beacon of certainty than the force of current opinion: Josquin's works *must*, in all circumstances, be seen to represent the pinnacle of musical achievement. Yet this opinion is no longer based on firmly attested works; on the contrary: it has become self-fulfilling in dictating which works we should accept and which we should reject.

It is precisely the force of modern opinion that has militated most strongly against Joshua Rifkin's counter-proposal to restart from the other end, that is,

[18] Van Benthem, 'Was "Une mousse de Biscaye" Really Appreciated', 188.
[19] Noble, 'Josquin', 724.

to proceed on the presumption of guilty until proven innocent. For if we begin with a clean slate, we are in fact admitting that there is virtually nothing about Josquin's musical style that we can know for certain. Who, in other words, was Josquin? And, having no preconceived conviction to interfere with the objective evaluation of source evidence, we would be bound to accept *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye* and to place a serious question mark after *Missa L'ami Baudichon*—exactly the opposite of what seems to be becoming the current scholarly consensus. Consequently, we would be constructing a very different image of the composer, one that would reveal the force of received opinion to be just that: a deeply-rooted but ultimately unsupported and subjective conviction.

The Creation of a Genius

Or is it? Was there not a virtually unanimous tradition in the sixteenth century according to which Josquin had been the supreme musical genius of his time? Do we not possess countless statements in which his creative powers are praised in the most flowery terms? And if this perception was so widespread, are we not justified in assuming that something about Josquin's music should account for that reputation? Why should we even tolerate works under Josquin's name that are manifestly lacking in genius, overly reliant on convention, audibly strained under technical exigencies, or even, as apparently in *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye*, heedless of them?

Consider the opinion of none other than Martin Luther, recorded in 1540: 'Josquin is the master of notes, who must do as he wills; the other choirmasters must do as the notes will.'[20] The comment suggests supreme effortlessness, and this view is also expressed in another statement, made by Luther some time before December 1531:

> Law and Gospel. What is law is not done voluntarily; what is gospel is done voluntarily. In this way God has preached the Gospel also in music, as can be seen in Josquin, from whom all composition flows gladly, willingly, mildly, not compelled and forced by rules, as in the song of the finch [or: the music of Heinrich Finck—the original, 'des Finken Gesang', allows both readings and appears to be a pun].

Can we associate a creative mind of this extraordinary reputation with a mass like *Une mousse de Biscaye*—a work typified, according to major Josquin scholars, by 'harmonic crudities', 'lack of clarity and consistency', 'crudities of part-writing and dissonance treatment', 'unsystematic, rather loose motivic interplay between the voices', and (in its longer melodic lines) 'lack of structure' as well as 'hesitation in their orientation towards a final'?

[20] For this and the following statement by Luther, see Osthoff, *Josquin*, i. 88–9.

And yet, to ask that question is surely to get matters back to front. As we have seen, *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye* was copied under Josquin's name in Germany as early as about 1496. The mass and its attribution were distributed throughout Europe in hundreds of copies printed by Petrucci in 1505. Three subsequent reprints made sure that the work would enter the hearts and minds of tens of thousands of European singers and music-lovers during the next few decades, everywhere with Josquin's name attached to it. We cannot question its authorship—contested in no extant source—on the basis of a reputation which it may in fact have helped shape, or at any rate did not prevent from becoming unqualified and universally accepted.

If one considers that the possibly inauthentic *Missa L'ami Baudichon* was widely distributed under Josquin's name in the same print (as well as in its subsequent reprints), we seem to be landing in a virtual chicken-and-egg situation. On the one hand, the force of opinion must have prompted misattributions from a relatively early date, perhaps already in Petrucci. On the other, the contemporary perception of Josquin can hardly have remained unaffected by such spurious repertory, and less so as it attracted more. Which, then, came first: the perception that prompted spurious repertory, or the repertory that presumably gave rise to the perception? If we express doubts about early but widely known ascriptions, why should we not entertain doubts about opinions that could well have presupposed them? If sixteenth-century writers did not know the 'real' Josquin in the way modern scholarship aims to do, why should we necessarily read their praises as if they concerned that 'real' Josquin—and not, say, the man who 'produced more motets after his death than during his life'? And if we cannot place unqualified trust in their praises, why should we insist that the historical Josquin lived up to them in every single work?

In this sixteenth-century chicken-and-egg situation we can recognize a direct counterpart of the circle that has begun to haunt Josquin scholarship. The one constant element, in both, is the unquestioning assumption of Josquin's musical genius. The uncertain element is the repertory that should presumably bear out that assumption: continuously expanding in the sixteenth century and shrinking today. How can it be that the two elements are so different?

Here we reach the heart of the problem. The modern image of Josquin has derived its force largely from the overwhelming number of sixteenth-century statements that elevate him to the status of musical genius. Every major history textbook will open its discussion of Josquin with a well-chosen selection from those statements, interlacing them with its own accolades. Holding fast to this image, Josquin scholarship has tried to trace the original man himself, always assuming that his original achievements fully and uniquely accounted for the later image. Yet in separating 'truth' from 'fiction', at least as far as authorship

was concerned, it increasingly faced the problem that the sixteenth-century image had been heavily based on the now discarded fiction, and, as the force of opinion, was partly responsible for its propagation. And if this is simply another way of saying that the image itself may be fiction—at least in part—a few things at last begin to add up.

To begin with, there are the Castiglione and Zarlino stories. I have already drawn attention to the element of mass psychology to which they seem to bear witness—although one might still be tempted to dismiss the stories as either apocryphal or anecdotal. Yet, ironically, the Josquin problem reveals them to be no more than typical. The sixteenth-century 'genius' image of Josquin, if accepted today, cannot be sustained without severe methodological difficulties. It has led scholars to overrule firm attestation when works do not appear to conform to it (as with *Missa Une mousse*), and has made them virtually oblivious of weak attestation when they do (as in the cases of *Missa L'ami Baudichon* and *Absalon, fili mi*). More seriously, insofar as works of weak attestation have been allowed to expel works of firm attestation, it has created ever-increasing circles within the Josquin canon. Finally, by necessitating the removal of works that do not seem good enough for Josquin (including many that were widely known as his), it has caused a shrinking of the very repertorial foundation on which the sixteenth-century image would have been based in the first place. In short, the image, if accepted as truth, will ultimately expose itself as fiction.

At this point it may be as well to return to the oft-quoted statement by Martin Luther, and to examine it more critically. Now of course, to say that 'the notes do as he wills; others do as the notes will' is merely to adopt a manner of speaking, one that pushes an evaluative comparison into an exaggerated antithesis. (A Shakespeare admirer might have said that 'the words do as he wills; others do as the words will': what does that mean?) What matters really is Luther's perception of effortlessness, a quality which he elsewhere identifies with the creative process itself: 'Josquin, from whom all composition flows gladly, willingly, mildly, not compelled and forced by rules'. Yet before we assume, as some scholars have, that this is an assertion of the composer's 'divine inspiration',[21] we might consider the following statement in Henricus Glareanus' *Dodekachordon* (Basle, 1547), which says exactly the opposite:

> Those who knew [Josquin] say that he published his works after much deliberation and with manifold corrections; neither did he release a song to the public unless he had kept it to himself for some years, the opposite of what Jacob Obrecht appears to have done . . .[22]

[21] Osthoff, *Josquin*, i. 89.

[22] Glareanus, *Dodekachordon* (Basle, 1547), bk. 3, ch. 24, p. 363; quoted here after Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, trans. Clement A. Miller (MSD 6; Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1965), 265.

It is Jacob Obrecht who, according to Glareanus, was distinguished for his 'fertility of invention' and his supreme effortlessness in musical composition: he was alleged to have written a mass in one night. Josquin, on the other hand, kept revising, rethinking, and correcting his compositions, struggling to make the notes do as he willed, and unwilling to let go of his work until he knew it was right. However, there has never seemed any real contradiction between Luther and Glareanus: whether they depict Josquin as a Mozartian prodigy or as a Beethovenesque titan, they still speak unanimously of a genius—the one constant element in Josquin reception, as said before.[23] Now at least Glareanus could claim to report the recollections of people who had known Josquin personally, and there is independent evidence to corroborate his statement (see below). It is Luther, of course, who committed the fallacy of assuming that the way a composition is perceived must reflect the way it was written. His statement tells us hardly anything about the 'real' Josquin (least of all his 'divine inspiration'), but all the more about what Luther believed he heard in what he believed to be Josquin.

I have dwelt on Luther's comments for longer than they perhaps deserve, yet the comparison with Glareanus does illustrate an important point. Josquin remained a powerful presence in sixteenth-century musical culture, yet his image and his canon never actually remained stable, and in fact must have drifted away quite considerably from the historical individual and his original output. At no time did the veneration of Josquin have quite the objective historical and repertorial basis that modern scholarship has sought to provide for it—not even at Urbino by 1507 or the papal chapel in the 1510s. To insist on such a basis as the only worthwhile goal of Josquin scholarship is to impose a distinction between truth and fiction that may have objective truth-value from one viewpoint, yet from another need not be historically significant or informative even for the composer's own lifetime.

A situation such as sketched here is not uncommon in the study of history: it is usually described more positively as a *tradition*. Traditions tend to have their ultimate origins in some core of historical 'truth' (an event, a tale, or an individual), yet typically acquire their own momentum subsequently—which often makes them more revealing of the societies that perpetuated them than of their origins. Nothing illustrates this better than the typical outcome of prolonged attempts to trace back traditions to their ultimate historical roots. In the case of a tradition as rich and culturally diverse as Christianity, it has led some scholars of the historical Jesus to deny his existence altogether, and others to conclude

[23] Nor has there ever seemed a contradiction with Obrecht, whose effortlessness in composition (although praised by Luther in Josquin) has sometimes been taken to point to a *Vielschreiber*.

that 'he withdraws from us being a complete stranger'.[24] In the case of the Josquin tradition, as we have seen, this kind of pursuit has led to an increasingly disillusioning defamiliarization—and ultimately to the question 'Who *was* Josquin?' This is not to suggest that such enquiries are not worthwhile. Yet one would probably have to make much more modest claims about the importance of their goals than rigid antinomies such as truth/fiction seem to imply. One recent scholar of the historical Jesus analysed and evaluated the historical situation that confronted him as follows:[25]

> The Jesus tradition . . . contains three major layers: one of retention, recording at least the essential core of words and deeds, events and happenings; another of development, applying such data to new situations, novel problems, and unforeseen circumstances; and a final one of creation, not only composing new sayings and new stories, but, above all, composing larger complexes that changed their contents by that very process . . . I have, by the way, no presumption whatsoever that those [later] layers are illicit, invalid, useless, or detrimental. I do not like to call that first layer 'authentic', as if the other two were inauthentic. I talk of original, developmental, and compositional layers, or of retention, development, and creation, but I reject absolutely any pejorative language for those latter processes. Jesus left behind him thinkers not memorizers, disciples not reciters, people not parrots.

And Josquin, we might add, left behind him music-lovers, not philologists. Seen from this broader perspective, the historically most significant point about Josquin is surely that, unlike any other composer before him, he made an enduring impact on subsequent generations in a living and growing tradition. More than leaving a core repertory, he became an abiding historical presence, the virtual embodiment of the aesthetic and artistic ideals of a musical epoch. Any attempt to reduce that tradition to its historical origins is inevitably to belittle this point, and to turn Josquin into a collection of archival references and an 'authentic' canon which, if held up as the standard of 'truth', might cause us to relegate much of the tradition to the realms of fiction, corruption, and misguided veneration. To sum up, then, in seeking to recover the 'objective' basis for the genius venerated in the sixteenth century, we end up with a much more impoverished and elusive figure than our witnesses ever told us to look for, and with a musical culture much less apparently trustworthy and faithful to that historical individual than its devotion to him has motivated us to be.

Now an important point to make about any tradition is that it rarely relates to its origins simply as a sequence of effects to a singular cause: usually the

[24] Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen, 1913), 642; trans. quoted after Wim van Dooren's excellent article 'General Problems of Authenticity in the Context of Renaissance Philosophy', in *Josquin Proceedings* (1986), 15–23 at 21.

[25] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. xxxi.

process is a far more complex and involved one. Certainly the historical Josquin cannot be seen as the 'prime mover' behind the entire Josquin tradition, generating and sustaining the whole process—otherwise misattributions and improbable anecdotes would not have circulated as widely as they did. On the contrary: the emergence and early growth of the tradition, in the years around 1500, could well have exercised a powerful effect on Josquin himself. No creative individual can be seen as totally distinct from the attitudes and perceptions of his contemporaries. When it comes to Josquin's perception of himself (and this is as 'real' a Josquin as one might ever hope to recover) he was, in a real sense, his own contemporary. If others could misremember things about him, if they could expect him to behave in certain ways, if they could revise, rearrange, or miscopy his works, and tell exaggerated but flattering anecdotes about him, then so, of course, could he. Surgically to remove such attitudes and perceptions in pursuit of the ultimate privacy of Josquin's creative mind is to divide the composer against his contemporaries, and ultimately against himself.

To illustrate this, let me turn to one of the best-known documents about Josquin, and possibly the earliest unequivocal evidence of the contemporary perception of him as a musical genius. This is the letter to Duke Ercole d'Este of Ferrara by his agent Gian de Artiganova, dated 2 September 1502, in which the relative merits of Josquin and Isaac are discussed with a view to hiring either for the court position of *maestro di cappella*:[26]

I must notify Your Lordship that Isaac the singer has been in Ferrara, and has made a motet on a fantasy entitled 'La mi la so la so la mi' which is very good, and he made it in two days. From this one can only judge that he is very rapid in the art of composition; besides, he is good-natured and easy to get along with, and it seems to me that he is the right man for Your Lordship. Signor Don Alphonso bade me ask him if he would like to join Your Lordship's service, and he replied that he would rather be in your service than in that of any other lord whom he knows, and that he does not reject your proposal . . . To me he seems well suited to serve Your Lordship, more so than Josquin, because he is of a better disposition among his companions, and he will compose new works more often. It is true that Josquin composes better, but he composes when he wants to, and not when one wants him to, and he is asking 200 ducats in salary while Isaac will come for 120—but Your Lordship will decide.

If we now repeat the question 'Who was Josquin?', what answer would this document give us? In his historical study of the concept of musical genius, published more than thirty years ago, Edward Lowinsky cited Artiganova's letter to demonstrate that Josquin exhibited the personality type of the musical genius, and suggested a connection between that personality type and a new expressive

[26] Trans. quoted after Lewis Lockwood, 'Josquin at Ferrara: New Documents and Letters', in *Josquin Proceedings* (1971), 103–37 at 132–3.

style in music. He concluded—also on the basis of a few posthumous anecdotes—that Josquin emerges as 'an altogether original character, endowed with a strong temperament and a deep sense of obligation to his genius, an individual utterly unwilling and unable to compromise in matters of his art'.[27] It appears from this that Lowinsky regarded 'genius' as an inborn quality that manifests itself invariably and irresistibly in all social intercourse and creative activity. And the letter seemed to confirm this for Josquin at least with respect to his social behaviour and professional attitude.

Yet of course the letter could equally well be seen to reflect the attitudes and expectations of its recipient, Ercole d'Este. As I have argued elsewhere,[28] the idea of hiring a musician as court composer—that is, as a servant who would produce new music on demand—was virtually unprecedented in 1502. The only composer known to have held such a post before that date was, as it happens, Heinrich Isaac (at the court of Maximilian I, since 1497), and not surprisingly he made sure to emphasize the very qualities that he knew it required. Artiganova recommended Isaac as productive, dependable, and amenable: he would make a good servant, and would produce good works whenever asked to.

However, the requirement to compose had never featured in the employment contract of any known Continental musician before Isaac—indeed the idea of composition as a duty or a commercial activity, responsive to employer's demands or market pressures, was virtually unknown before 1500. Late medieval composers could write new works whenever they wanted to, since no one actively tried to make them do so: it brought no extra rewards on top of the salary they could already earn as singers or choirmasters. Thus the 'creative freedom' that Josquin appears to have demanded in his negotiations with Ferrara had in fact always prevailed during the fifteenth century. The real novelty here was not his attitude to composition, but rather the evident expectation that he regularly utilize his creative skills for the court's exclusive use. This expectation may have conflicted with Josquin's creative habits, yet that does not necessarily make him more of a genius than earlier composers, since the latter had never been faced with such an expectation to begin with.

Moreover, it may not be entirely surprising that Josquin was considered a better composer than Isaac. For whereas Isaac was prepared to release a motet written in two days, and, since 1497, to produce new works on demand, Josquin had always exercised the traditional freedom to write compositions

[27] Edward E. Lowinsky, 'Musical Genius—Evolution and Origins of a Concept', *Musical Quarterly*, 50 (1964), 321–40 and 476–95 at 485.

[28] For this and the following paragraphs, see Rob C. Wegman, 'From Maker to Composer: Improvisation and Musical Authorship in the Low Countries, 1450-1500', *JAMS* 49 (1996), 409–79.

whenever it suited him, and (as Glareanus later reported) 'published his works after much deliberation and with manifold corrections', never releasing 'a song to the public unless he had kept it to himself for some years'. Hence his early reputation as a composer can only have rested on works written and polished with such care—not, like Isaac, on an ability to produce solidly composed music at a steady rate. Clearly Josquin was keen to safeguard that reputation, even in an appointment at Ferrara: it had made him worth 200 ducats per year, whereas Isaac would come for 120. Yet his unprecedented financial demands could only have been realistic in a musical job market as fiercely competitive as that of the north Italian courts—in a context, in other words, that required Josquin to employ his commercial instincts to full advantage, lest he weaken his reputation by underselling himself. Indeed, if he was already perceived as something of a genius, these very instincts would have dictated that he confirm the perception (perhaps even to himself), by making the demands and displaying the behaviour that befitted his status. Like every other Renaissance 'genius'—Leonardo, Raphael, Perugino, or Michelangelo—Josquin could hardly avoid becoming caught up in the process.

Yet this does not necessarily answer the question 'Who was Josquin?' For one could think of many other contexts in which such commercial instincts would not have been required at all. In northern European churches, for instance, the salaries of musicians were not at the discretion of their governing bodies, but fixed by the financial terms of endowments. Singers and composers were in a position to take or leave a salary offered to them, but not to negotiate, let alone make demands in the region of their Italian market value. At the same time, no composer would have needed to assert his right to write 'whenever he wants to', since northern churches hardly ever imposed the duty to compose to begin with. Difficulty in getting on with one's fellow-singers (and the only reports about Josquin's temperament do in fact concern fellow-singers) was hardly uncommon in northern churches, as references to clerical violence in their chapter acts repeatedly demonstrate. (Artiganova seems to have highlighted this aspect in Josquin mainly because it would make him less suitable as a court servant than Isaac.) Any letter written in these northern contexts would undoubtedly reveal Josquin to be a different man—not only adjusting himself to the limitations and opportunities of a different 'job market', but also being described in terms of different requirements and expectations.

It would appear, then, that the perception of Josquin as a musical genius was *created* in particular music-historical circumstances. Rather than being an inborn quality, objectively discernable in his behaviour independent of context, 'genius' was a value that emerged only in the interaction between Josquin and certain of his contemporaries, in particular historical contexts. To isolate the

composer from those contexts, to disregard the attitudes and expectations of his contemporaries when reading letters and anecdotes about him, is to lose that value. This is not to argue that the perception of Josquin as a genius was merely 'fiction'; on the contrary: it was as real as anything to many people in the Renaissance, perhaps even to Josquin himself. Rather, it is to argue that a rigid dividing line between 'truth' and 'fiction' may be historically inappropriate, and possibly an artefact of the very attempt to isolate Josquin from his contemporaries.

If Josquin's perceived genius does not have an objective basis in contemporary reports, it may not be objectively demonstrable in his music either. That, of course, is what the central Josquin problem amounts to. The deepest ambition of Josquin scholarship has been to distil the composer's musical genius in pure form in an 'authentic' canon, free from the corruptions and accretions of his contemporaries. And its deepest conviction has been that this musical genius is manifested in each of his compositions, and conspicuously absent in those of others—for which reason 'genius' was (and still is) applied as a criterion of authenticity, guaranteed to leave a core repertory that will confirm the conviction with the certitude of circularity. Yet Josquin's 'authentic' canon, as it appears on the shelves of our libraries today, is in fact a rigorous reduction, of a massive historical phenomenon to a mere core repertory. As such it does not look superficially different from the output of, say, a composer whose works have survived mainly in manuscripts copied during his lifetime in his direct vicinity (e.g., Pierre de la Rue). The phenomenon has been edited away, in other words, and only the unassailable conviction of Josquin scholarship might persuade us that we are looking at the same genius as was revered in the sixteenth century.

To sum up, a Josquin scholarship that is committed to objective method will inevitably end up exposing its most deep-seated conviction as subjective: 'genius' is not an immanent quality, either in Josquin's personality or in his music. It was a value that can only be grasped today if we allow Josquin to be restored to the musical culture that proclaimed him a genius—even if their perception of him was as fictional as their many misattributions. Whether mass psychology, fiction, or delusion, this was history as it really was, and Josquin himself must have been as fully caught up in it as anyone else.

Josquin Scholarship and the 'New Trends'

If the two previous sections have offered a sketchy analysis of a major problem in Josquin scholarship, my aim in this third and final section will be to carry that analysis to a more abstract level, in order to enable comparison with existing,

more wide-ranging analyses of modern scholarship. That such comparisons may be helpful was suggested already by the example of historical Jesus research, which illustrated the general model of the tradition as a possible alternative to the 'creative genius'/'passive reception' ideal: the model and the ideal are convenient abstractions that allow comparison between different historical situations. My contention here is that the Josquin problem, if considered on a level that enables such and other comparisons, will no longer be seen to characterize Josquin scholarship alone.

First, however, I should address some obvious and understandable objections that could be raised against the foregoing analysis. In arguing that Josquin's 'genius' is not an objective quality immanent in either his music or his personality, I seem intent on reducing Josquin to the lowly ranks of his lesser contemporaries, indeed to a mere craftsman 'who must do as the notes will'. Moreover, in questioning the dividing line between truth and fiction, I seem ready to accept all surviving evidence about Josquin indiscriminately as fiction. Finally, in questioning the attempt to isolate him from his contemporaries, I seem to deny that he is knowable as a distinctive individual at all. How could such nihilistic lines of reasoning possibly be in the interests of Josquin scholarship?

It is at precisely this point that analysis on a more abstract level may prove helpful. In the case of Josquin's genius, for instance, it enables us to move beyond the observation that a conviction has proved incompatible with objective method, and to assess, in addition, the mode of thought of which that conviction was expressive. The first thing to point out here is that the antithesis between 'genius' and 'craftsman' implies a fundamental contrast in creative abilities and priorities which allows a composer to be only either one or the other. However, even in the sixteenth century this contrast was never so obvious that it could prevent inauthentic works from circulating under Josquin's name, and the modern attempt to provide an objective basis for it has reduced the antithesis to virtual meaninglessness. Now if the antithesis has broken down in this way, Josquin is not thereby pushed to the opposite pole, of course, for that would imply that the antithesis was still somehow there. It has disappeared altogether, and this means nothing more iconoclastic than that we have one less set of terms to describe him vis-à-vis other composers. We are still free to rate Josquin as, say, more successful or less successful, as our evaluation of any particular work may give us reason to.

Is the change then merely semantic? No: for the antithesis does imply a truth claim about reality. (The perceived truth-value of that claim is illustrated by the fierce resistance to its abandonment.) It reflects a mode of thinking according to which certain composers belong to a special category, by virtue of a quality that

can be invoked as a criterion of authenticity. The antithesis may *seem* merely to describe reality (as in: 'Josquin was a genius'), but in fact it also tells us what to rate as 'real' to begin with (as in: 'this mediocre work cannot be by Josquin'). In this way it actually structures our perception of reality—at least so long as it does not clash with other antitheses that likewise tell us what to rate as real (e.g. truth/fiction, objective/subjective). Now to state that 'Josquin was a mere craftsman' is still to express the same mode of thinking, though obviously in inversion (it implies that he *could* have been a genius, but was simply not good enough), whereas to abandon the antithesis altogether is, in a sense, to change the spectacles through which we perceive a reality to begin with.

In terms of Josquin this means that a serious methodological obstacle may have been removed. Nothing stops us now from trusting again in the most objective evidence on authorship that we can obtain: attestation. We would have to accept, of course, that Josquin, like any other major Western composer, was capable of writing works that strike us as less successful, of changing his mind, of having creative identity crises and fallow periods, of taking unaccountable liberties, of pursuing inconsequential experiments, of lowering his artistic ambitions as genre or liturgical context dictated. (Notice, incidentally, how he is becoming more 'real' and human already.)

We would also have to accept that several of his contemporaries were capable of writing equally good, if not better works than many of his own. This, too, may be beneficial. One of the unfortunate consequences of the genius/craftsman antithesis has surely been that a major figure like Gaspar van Weerbeke—of whom scarcely a note of music has to date been recorded, analysed, or sensitively evaluated—can be dismissed out of hand as a man 'who can scarcely stay in [Josquin's] shadow, neither as a craftsman nor with respect to imagination'. If it seems nihilistic on my part to seem to reduce Josquin to the status of 'mere craftsman', then why is it not utterly nihilistic to have actually done this to many other composers in Josquin's name? From my own experience working on Obrecht I know how exasperating it can be to find his ranking below Josquin to be inbuilt in the very language of scholarship. Even if one's only aim is to show that he wrote some very fine masses that could be rated among the best of his time (something which has rarely even been attempted for Josquin), one is left with virtually no option but to claim the status of 'genius' or 'leading composer' for Obrecht as well—and thus to affirm the very same antithesis to the detriment of yet other composers.[29] Abandoning the antithesis, in short, may bring us closer to our scholarly aims on all fronts: more objective knowledge for

[29] See Wegman, *Born for the Muses*, 1–3; for responses from established Josquin scholarship, see the reviews by Willem Elders in *TVNM* 44 (1994), 155–61 at 156–60, and Patrick Macey in *ML* 76 (1995), 615–18.

Josquin, and less prejudiced assessment of musical quality, whether in his works or those of others. At the very least we might begin to understand why so many works by contemporaries enjoyed such successful careers under Josquin's name.

Let us now turn from analysis to comparison.[30] According to the currently dominant philosophy of language, poststructuralism, all language operates by means of antitheses exactly like that of genius/craftsman, the so-called binary oppositions. The two poles of every antithesis or opposition are defined more in terms of each other, by mutual exclusion, than by their actual correspondence to reality (that is: 'reality' as it is structured for us by other oppositions). This arbitrariness of correspondence may not always seem obvious, yet it inevitably becomes so when (as in Josquin's case) the opposition is increasingly hard to reconcile with our perception of reality, and ultimately becomes a serious obstacle to that perception: then it will seem a purely artificial polarity, without relevant meaning or application.

This illustrates a second point of the theory, namely that every linguistic opposition is bound sooner or later to exhaust its usefulness, break down, and be abandoned altogether. An opposition, in other words, is a tool that serves us for a while, but will inevitably be discarded and replaced by others. What sustains its usage while it lasts is very often a hierarchic positive/negative valuation that may be seen as relevant and useful: genius/craftsman, truth/fiction, objective/subjective, authentic/inauthentic. Persistent pursuit of the positive poles (say: 'the objective truth about the authentic works of a genius') is inevitably accompanied by neglect or suppression of the negative ones. For example, while there has been a proliferation of editions, recordings, analyses, and encomiums of Josquin's music, the attention given to, say, Weerbeke (who was a major figure in Josquin's time) comes close to the opposite: nothing. And while the *New Josquin Edition* promises us 'the collected works' of the composer, the first two volumes issued print only two-thirds and one-half, respectively, of the works mentioned on their contents pages—the 'spurious' works being suppressed as presumably unworthy of our attention, and irrelevant to Josquin even from any conceivable future angle.[31] Here one can see that the antithesis is not merely an analytic abstraction on my part, but actually *works* as an all-or-nothing opposition.

A third important point of the theory is that oppositions will tend to remain unnoticed so long as they match (or rather, structure) 'reality' to our satisfac-

[30] In what follows I have attempted to illustrate the relevance of poststructuralism and postmodernism to Josquin scholarship in language 'free of jargon', following the example of Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1983), of which pp. 127–50 may be consulted for a more extended introduction, and pp. 227–8 for further literature.

[31] *NJE*, vols. 9 and 27.

tion. Unless they break down after causing very obvious problems, one would have to apply some form of linguistic analysis to make their underlying modes of thought explicit, and particularly to assess whether what has been suppressed is not worth rehabilitating. This can be useful in the cases of Weerbeke and Obrecht, whose alleged inferiority to Josquin seems somehow inbuilt in the scholarly language itself. Rather than waiting for the genius/craftsman opposition to break down in Josquin scholarship itself, one might actively uncover and thereby challenge it. This kind of linguistic analysis (called deconstruction) need not be desirable when oppositions help us to articulate, however stereotypically, values that we may consider relevant or useful for the time being (say, freedom/oppression, good/bad, consonance/dissonance). Yet it may become urgent when our usage predetermines and prejudices the terms on which issues are discussed, and in doing so sustains the very problems that we may wish to resolve. In that case (as in that of Josquin), it might definitely be an improvement to have one less set of loaded terms to deal with those issues.

Deconstruction could thus be likened somewhat to psychoanalysis, in that it actively searches the collective unconscious of our usage, and seeks to uncover symptoms of a neurotic repression whose identification may well meet with fierce resistance from the conscious—precisely because they have been repressed. The only difference is that language cannot be 'cured', but only adjusted to new values, needs, and uses. For every opposition discarded as irrelevant, others are invested with new significance, and these latter oppositions tend to be so important in the new situation that we may not even consider it possible to write what we want to say without them.

However, if our perception of reality is structured by the particular selection of oppositions that happen to be seen as meaningful and relevant, 'reality' would seem to be a mere artefact of our values and interests—as poststructuralists would say: a construct. Yet this is not to imply that reality does not exist, or is merely a figment of our imagination. Josquin's status as a genius has been *real* to many scholars because it provided the most obvious explanation for the universal esteem in which he was held during the sixteenth century. That explanation may now seem problematic, yet we are in a position to say this only because of the massive amount of evidence that Josquin scholarship has unearthed and processed precisely on the assumption that it was true. From this we can see that our perception of reality is in fact a way of dealing with it, accounting for it, explaining it—and we do none of these things without a motive.

The necessary consequence of this is that our perception of reality, even though it may serve us well, cannot be held up as an absolute standard by which to assess the truth-value of other perceptions. Thus, no poststructuralist would say that the genius/craftsman opposition had simply been wrong, only that its

limitations have been reached, that it has exhausted its usefulness, that other values have come in its place. And this same tolerance (or rather, ideological indifference) is exercised towards more remote periods. It is not as if we can know 'the real Josquin' whereas his contemporaries did not. However they (and he himself) perceived him, that perception was *real* for them in that it reflected interests and concerns that they would probably not even trade for ours if they had the choice. For instance, Artiganova's particular interests and concerns, in writing his letter about Isaac and Josquin, were the requirements of the court position of *maestro di cappella* (and probably, as Lockwood has argued,[32] his personal rivalry with another court agent, Girolamo da Sestola). Within these terms he provided a character sketch of Josquin as 'realistic' as it needed to be. His sketch may tally with our own perception if we wish to regard Josquin as a musical genius, yet is not necessarily more 'fictional' than that perception if it does not.

On this issue poststructuralism closely coincides with another current analysis that has been applied to scholarship—that which discerns in contemporary Western culture a new condition or outlook called the postmodern. In this analysis, amongst many other things, the aspiration to know the past only insofar as it is 'real', 'true', or 'authentic' by present-day standards (and hence to reject whatever seems 'fictional' or 'inauthentic') is identified as *modernist*. Emphatically, the analysis does not imply an obligation for us to abandon or reject that aspiration. It simply observes that the aspiration has typically remained unfulfilled, and that scholars in many disciplines have begun to reconsider their premisses as a result. Their provisional answers have a number of things in common which have been identified as *postmodernist*. Most importantly, perhaps, any antithesis such as truth/fiction, objective/subjective, or authentic/inauthentic is rejected as historically insensitive if it is defined unilaterally in present-day terms. Thus a postmodern scholar would simply recognize that the 'true' Josquin and his 'authentic' canon (if they can be recovered) would reflect present-day interests, and may not remotely resemble sixteenth-century perceptions of the composer. Rather than rejecting these latter perceptions as fictional, inauthentic, or misguided, a postmodernist would seek to negotiate between them and the present-day perception, and particularly to identify the different interests and values that are at stake. The 'real' Josquin, therefore, is not knowable in any absolute sense: he is real only insofar as he is real to us, or to his contemporaries, or to himself.

It is often objected that postmodernism not only accepts but positively celebrates fictionality, subjectivity, and inauthenticity, almost as if they were goals in

[32] *Music in Renaissance Ferrara*, 200–5.

their own right. Bearing in mind what was said earlier about the genius/craftsman opposition, one might respond that such words imply oppositions which postmodernism has rejected to begin with. That is to say: the objections imply that truth, objectivity, and authenticity *could* be established, but that postmodernists wilfully refuse to do so. Within the context of Josquin scholarship, however, that response may not be the most appropriate one. After all, it would be shortsighted to reject oppositions whose usefulness may not yet have been exhausted, and positively blind to do so merely because it seems a postmodern thing to do. At the very least one would have to argue that truth, objectivity, and authenticity are either unattainable or, if pursued, will lead to results whose historical significance may be doubted.

To some extent I have tried to sketch a possible basis for such an argument in the previous two sections. And I have done it in the form of analysis chiefly to remain faithful to a crucial (if often overlooked) aspect of the concept of the postmodern: it has *itself* emerged from a historical analysis of what has already been taking place in the West, and hence is neither a self-validating ideology nor a programme whose implementation is somehow thrust upon us as a historical necessity. If postmodern approaches are to be applied in Josquin scholarship, they are not to be injected as an extraneous 'therapeutic', but must be shown to grow out of the particular problems that have arisen in that field. With this in mind I have tried to identify areas where there might be scope for postmodern approaches.

Still, the foregoing analysis has involved lines of reasoning that may seem unpalatable to many. Would postmodernism involve abandoning the quest for the 'authentic canon' altogether? Surely it cannot be denied that, historically, Josquin was the author of some of the works ascribed to him and not of others? And if this authentic/inauthentic distinction has historical truth-value, then why not attempt to establish it objectively in his ascribed output?

On the other hand, just because something can be postulated to have been historically true does not mean we have to value it as significant. One could think of many things that must have been true about Josquin whose discovery would hardly be ranked among the priorities of modern scholarship—say, his weight, or the state of his teeth. Naturally these examples are absurd, but why? First, because the authentic/inauthentic opposition seems 'self-evidently' more relevant—*not*, however, because what it may capture is more 'true'. From this it follows that the opposition principally expresses a bias, an unfounded but nevertheless meaningful criterion of significance, and that it will seem meaningful only so long as we happen to subscribe to its particular bias. Secondly, of course, there is no evidence to tell us anything about Josquin's weight or his teeth in any case. However, if mere possibility of discovery is to determine the

directions of enquiry, one wonders why Josquin scholarship has so long persisted in its search for the 'authentic canon', against virtually insurmountable odds. To repeat what was said before: any isolated and superficially dubious ascription to Josquin may still be true, any overwhelmingly attested one may still be false, and many genuine Josquin works may not bear his name in any surviving source, being either anonymous or ascribed to someone else. Is that a reason for giving up altogether? Not necessarily, just as one might still be interested in establishing whatever one can about Josquin's weight or his teeth. But clearly a *New Josquin Edition* that represses large chunks of the repertory it purports to render available makes much more definite claims about what is *possible* to establish (let alone what is historically true) than a fair assessment of the historical situation would seem to warrant. And it is hard to see any other reason for this than the bias implied in the authentic/inauthentic opposition, which this edition powerfully sustains. To question that opposition is not necessarily to celebrate inauthenticity, but rather to suggest (as I did earlier) that any pursuit of the 'real' Josquin would have to involve much more modest claims about the relevance and feasibility of its postulated goals than all-or-nothing presentations of this kind imply. To have one less set of loaded terms, in the case of the *New Josquin Edition*, would not be an admission of defeat: the editors could still be free to evaluate Josquin's works—*all* of them—according to their relative strength of attestation.

Still, it is undoubtedly true that postmodernism tends to be much less fearful of fictionality, subjectivity, and inauthenticity (to the extent, of course, that it recognizes these concepts) than scholarship traditionally has tended to be. As said before, it is perfectly prepared to have our current perception of reality called into question by that of another period and vice versa, without labelling either perception as necessarily 'fictional' or 'true'. What such a cross-historical 'dialogue' might elicit is a deeper enquiry into the values, interests, and concerns that are constitutive of the outlooks involved. For this reason postmodern historians tend, on the whole, to be much more interested in mentalities, sensibilities, and attitudes—our own as well as those of another culture—than in any postulated 'objective truths' that might transcend both cultures.

On two occasions in this chapter have I pointed to changing musical mentalities around 1500: first, the emergence of a concern about musical authorship that was intimately connected with judgements of taste (as illustrated in the Castiglione anecdote), and second, the appointment of musicians as court composers, which suggests a professionalization of the craft of composition (as illustrated in the Artiganova letter). These phenomena are probably not unrelated, and may be part of a much broader historical picture: the increasing social respect

and status of composers during the years 1470–1500.[33] Paradoxically, the concept of musical genius, though earlier discarded as not 'objectively' demonstrable, now returns as an exceedingly significant component in this picture, being a cultural and historical phenomenon that reveals a great deal about musical sensibilities and attitudes in the early sixteenth century. That phenomenon did not somehow emerge around Josquin as if he were a stable nucleus of creative individuality: in a sense it could be said to have made him who he became, and he, in turn, must have made a powerful contribution to its development after 1500.

In order to assess Josquin as part of this broader picture it is not necessary to agonize over the historical truth-value of reports and anecdotes about him, since these may still be 'true' (or rather, significant) in a broader cultural-historical sense. Even if the Josquin tradition involved a great deal of 'fiction', at least from a narrow biographical viewpoint, one could hardly maintain that his name was likely to attract just any old story. On the contrary: a thoughtful evaluation of just what kinds of anecdotes and attributions accrued around him would undoubtedly reveal Josquin's reputation to have been a sensitive register of contemporary attitudes, and his person an active shaper of them. However, precisely this kind of historical evaluation has been ruled out by the traditional priorities of Josquin scholarship, which has attempted to salvage the postulated eye of this cultural storm, an idealized point of absolute biographical and repertorial stillness. Its indiscrimate rejection of all 'fiction' could plausibly be argued to have been as nihilistic as the postmodern revaluation has been thought to be. For, when all is said and done, not even the historical Josquin is likely to have been 'true' enough by the exacting standards of Josquin scholarship: its reductive approaches have tended to eliminate him along with his contemporaries, and have ultimately provoked the perplexing question 'Who *was* Josquin?'

For me personally it would come as a relief if we allowed Josquin to remain a little bit more of the elusive, slippery historical phenomenon as he *really* emerges from sixteenth-century evidence—without projecting categorizations that may be neither historically appropriate nor objectively demonstrable, and are certain to alienate us in important ways from the composer's time. It might be liberating, once in a while, to let go of a question that generates more determination than any answer is ever likely to justify, and which sets a standard of success that virtually predestines Josquin scholarship to failure. It might be positively enlightening to navigate the Josquin tradition in a more circumspect and roundabout manner than dictated by such crude sorting criteria as truth/fiction or authentic/inauthentic, to explore the continuum between the composer and his contemporaries rather than to search for an absolute dividing line.

[33] A provisional sketch of this picture may be found in my 'From Maker to Composer'.

After several years of having witnessed Josquin scholarship become more and more defensive in the face of refractory methodological problems, and critiques confronting those problems,[34] I have become persuaded that such a change of direction is not just possible or worthwile, but unavoidable. It has become unavoidable because one cannot sustain an image such as the one Josquin scholarship propagates when it has ceased to account for evidence, and instead generates an ever-growing body of 'problematic evidence' that must rather be accounted for. This is the major reversal that has been taking place: the image has begun to require more in explaining-away than it yields in explanation. As I have attempted to show in this contribution, that reversal has led to a division between those who still wish to salvage the image by continuing to account for problematic evidence, and those who realize that this very process of 'accounting for' diminishes the explanatory power of the image even as it is being sustained. Quite how this division will work itself out in the coming years is hard to predict. For one thing, that mammoth project which 1970s scholarship has saddled us with, the *New Josquin Edition*, virtually guarantees that modernist approaches will remain high on the agenda for decades to come. For those of us who are concerned with critical reflection upon methodological issues, therefore, it may well become necessary soon to change the initiative in the discussion, and to move from the critique of such ideals and their implications to the formulation of alternative goals and strategies. It is encouraging to see that research in these directions is now rapidly gaining momentum.[35]

[34] Among reactions from Josquin scholars to an earlier version of this paper were two complaints that, first, critiques of this kind 'always come from outsiders like David Fallows, Joshua Rifkin, and yourself', and second, that they typically seize upon marginal rather than central works, thus misrepresenting the 'true' state of Josquin research. These are just two more examples of the circularities with which Josquin scholarship has been insulating itself. For, transparently, one is an 'outsider' by virtue of voicing criticism of Josquin scholarship, and such criticism is suspect on account of being voiced by outsiders—which reduces to the syllogism: criticism is suspect because it is criticism. Similarly, a composition is 'marginal' by virtue of having its authenticity called into question, and such a piece cannot be representative of the state of Josquin scholarship on account of being marginal—which reduces to the syllogism: problems are not representative because they are problems. See also above, n. 29.

[35] See, for instance, the doctoral research of Stephanie P. Schlagel, 'Josquin des Prez and his Motets: A Case Study in Sixteenth-Century Reception History' (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996); for other examples, chosen at random, see James Haar, 'Josquin As Interpreted by a Mid-Sixteenth-Century German Musician', in Stephan Hörner and Bernhold Schmid (eds.), *Festschrift für Horst Leuchtmann zum 65. Geburtstag* (Tutzing, 1993), 179–205, and Jessie Ann Owens, 'How Josquin Became Josquin: Reflections on Historiography and Reception', in Jessie Ann Owens and Anthony M. Cummings (eds.), *Music in Renaissance Cities and Courts: Studies in Honor of Lewis Lockwood* (Warren, Mich., 1997), 271–80.