

## **UC Davis**

### **UC Davis Previously Published Works**

#### **Title**

Aspects of Clerical Patronage and Musical Migration in the Renaissance

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6252411r>

#### **Author**

Reynolds, Christopher

#### **Publication Date**

1993

#### **DOI**

10.2307/4603685

Peer reviewed



---

Aspects of Clerical Patronage and Musical Migration in the Renaissance

Author(s): Christopher Reynolds

Source: *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 5 (1993), pp. 245-264

Published by: [University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of [Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4603685>

Accessed: 22-01-2016 05:09 UTC

## REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

[http://www.jstor.org/stable/4603685?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4603685?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents)

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies and University of Chicago Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

# ASPECTS OF CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION IN THE RENAISSANCE

CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS

I will say to the north: Give them up, and  
to the South: Do not hold them back  
*Isaiah 43,6*

To many who read this biblical verse on the walls of Santo Spirito in Sassia in late-fifteenth-century Rome, Isaiah's words were personally prophetic.<sup>1</sup> The journey from north to south, whether to Rome or some other Italian court, was made by innumerable northern job-seekers, pilgrims, and diplomats. But if the attractions of Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were irresistible for many, they only partially explain the persistent migration southward. Ecclesiastical benefices played an important role in luring northern clerics (of whom musicians were but a small minority) to Italy during this period, as is now well understood;<sup>2</sup> however, this lure is not by itself a sufficient explanation for the phenomenon. I wish here to examine this migration from a differ-

---

This study is a much revised and expanded version of my paper "Southern Pull or Northern Push?: Motives for Migration in the Renaissance", published in *Atti del XIV Congresso della Società internazionale di musicologia, Bologna 27 Agosto-1 settembre 1987*, Turin, 1990, III, pp. 155-161. The revisions began at the Villa I Tatti in 1988-1989 under the auspices of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

<sup>1</sup> E. D. HOWE, *The Hospital of Santo Spirito and Pope Sixtus IV*, New York, 1978, pp. 338-342; and B. PULLAN, *Orphans and Foundlings in Early Modern Europe*, University of Reading, 1989, pp. 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding benefices and musicians, see the following and the extensive bibliography cited within: P. STARR, *Music and Music Patronage at the Papal Court, 1447-1464*. (Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1987), and *idem*, "Rome as the Center of the Universe: Papal Grace and Music Patronage", *Early Music History*, XI, 1992, pp. 223-262; A. E. PLANCHART, "Guillaume Du Fay's Benefices and his Relationship to the Court of Burgundy", *Early Music History*, VIII, 1988, pp. 117-171; and C. REYNOLDS, "Musical Careers, Ecclesiastical Benefices, and the Example of Johannes Brunet", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXXVII, 1984, pp. 49-97, and *idem*, "Rome: City of Rich Contrast", in I. FENLON (ed.), *The Renaissance from the 1470s to the End of the 16th Century*, London, 1989, pp. 63-101.

ent angle: rather than focusing solely on the attractions Italy had for northern musicians, I will identify potential reasons they had for leaving the north in the first place. To ask why northern musicians traveled to Italy is not necessarily the same as asking why they left the north. In examining the latter issue, I would like as well to consider how the careers of musicians who came from Flanders compared to those of some non-musical immigrants.

Since the nineteenth century, it is common for historical and musicological accounts of the Italian Renaissance to isolate music from the other arts by virtue of Italy's prolonged dependence on foreign musical talent. This apparent isolation exists almost entirely on the basis of comparisons of music with art, architecture, and sculpture, fields in which the employment of Italians was never threatened. The comparative stability that Italian artists enjoyed in Italian courts is all the more noteworthy because it has become clear that Italian artists and their patrons greatly admired northern artists and that northern techniques with oil exerted an important influence. Yet figures such as Roger van der Weyden, Jan van Eyck, and Joos van Ghent, who probably or certainly worked in Italy, are very much the exceptions, despite their stature.<sup>3</sup> More typically, the young Dürer made the southward trip as a student while his musical compatriots did so as wage earners.

Regarding literature, an important, if relatively small, contingent of northerners did come to Italy, though without ever posing a threat to the careers of Italian writers. How and why the experience of writers differed from musicians has yet to be explained; northerners also ran the earliest printing presses in Italy, found frequent work as scribes, and filled many posts in the papal bureaucracy. More importantly, there is a telling parallel — as yet unnoticed — between music and the employment of numerous Flemish tapestry weavers in Italian courts. The first large contingents of weavers appeared about 1420, just as French and Flemish musicians returned southward in the entourage of Pope Martin V.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, on Van der Weyden: S. OSANO, "Roger van der Weyden e l'Italia: problemi, riflessioni e ipotesi", *Antichità viva*, XX, no. 4, 1981, pp. 14-21, and XX, no. 5, p. 514; and A. PADOA RIZZO, "Nota breve su Colantonio, Van der Weyden e l'Angelico", *Antichità viva*, XX, no. 5, pp. 15-17.

<sup>4</sup> W. G. THOMSON, *A History of Tapestry from the Earliest Times until the Present*

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

Musicians, humanists, and patrons of the time were well aware of the diverse cultural and artistic strengths of North and South. There can be no doubting the superior polyphonic skills of northern musicians. One Italian traveller to England commented in 1497 on the music he heard while passing through Bruges, where “this art is highly appreciated”, and in Antwerp: “everyone goes in for music, and they are so expert at it that they play even handbells so harmoniously and with such full tone that the handbells themselves seem to sing”.<sup>5</sup> Italians had plenty of opportunity to appreciate northerners in their own country. Still in 1516, long after Italian youths had begun studying with northern choirmasters, the Mantuan poet Teofilo Folengo singled out Flemish singers as “excellent in their art”.<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, praise from and for artists and humanists flowed in the opposite direction, north to south. Aside from the many northern artists who came to study and work in Italy, no less a patron than the King of France, Charles VIII, conveyed his astonishment at the quality of Italian art he encountered in 1495: “J’ai trouvé en ce pays des meilleurs peintres ... Les planchers de Beauce, de Lyon, et d’autres lieux de France ne sont riens approuchans de beaulté et richesse ceulx d’icy”.<sup>7</sup> And within years of when the music theorist Tinctoris praised the singer Philippe du Paissage as a southerner who had received his musical education in the north-

---

Day, 3rd ed. with revisions, Wakefield, 1973, pp. 131-134; and M. BATTISTINI, *La confrérie de Sainte-Barbe des Flamands à Florence. Documents relatifs aux tisserands et aux tapissiers*, Brussels, 1931, pp. 7-18. In Florence alone by 1471 there were forty-two Flemish and twenty-four German weavers.

<sup>5</sup> A. FRANCISCUS, *Two Italian Accounts of Tudor England*, ed. C. V. MALFATTI, Barcelona, 1953; as quoted in J. R. HALE, *The Travel Journal of Antonio de Beatis: Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, France and Italy, 1517-1518*, trans J. R. HALE-J. M. A. LINDON, J. R. HALE (ed.), London, 1979, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Nanie BRIDGMAN quoted this passage from Folengo’s *Macaronese* (1516), in J. A. WESTRUP-G. ABRAHAM (eds.), *The Age of Ockeghem and Josquin*, *New Oxford History of Music*, London, 1961, III, p. 252. A talent for polyphony (more especially, improvised polyphony) also is the likely explanation for the popularity of northern instrumentalists in fifteenth-century Italy, as Keith POLK surmises in “Civic Patronage and Instrumental Ensemble in Renaissance Florence”, *Augsburger Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 1986, Tutzing, 1986, pp. 51-66.

<sup>7</sup> C. DE FREDE, “‘Più simile a mostro che a uomo’: la bruttezza e l’incultura di Carlo VIII nella rappresentazione degli Italiani del Rinascimento”, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, XLIV, 1982, pp. 544-585, esp. p. 574.

CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS

ern region of Brabant, the Milanese poet Stephanus Surigonus attacked that very region for its backward literary tastes:<sup>8</sup>

And yet this land does not bring forth outstanding bards,  
Here Apollo remains hateful to man.

.....

Brabant knows not the care of pious poets,  
Who bear the whole of divine inspiration.

In the same vein Poggio Bracciolini wrote from Rome in 1451, complimenting the library owned by the dean of Utrecht Cathedral, "I marveled that a man so avid for eloquence and the liberal arts should be found so far away from Italy, the country to which such studies seem to be so natural".<sup>9</sup> It is impossible to imagine a Flemish singer writing to anyone in Rome with such condescension. Too many Flemish musicians had sought employment there for too many years.

Of the occupations just cited, Italian singers and composers had the greatest difficulty finding work outside their native lands. Italian humanists and, increasingly in the sixteenth century, Italian instrumentalists, all possessed skills that foreign patrons both valued and found in short supply in their own domains. Nevertheless, it is not enough to identify talented potential courtiers in one country and wealthy patrons in another, and assume that a patron's desire for a particular talent entirely explains why for a century-and-a-half so many talented men put up with the assorted pains and dangers of travel. Erasmus named several causes of the "incredible and almost unendurable discomfort" he encountered between Strasbourg and Louvain, including bad food, bad roads, conniving innkeepers and robbers.<sup>10</sup> And once in Italy, northern-

---

<sup>8</sup> TINCORIS, *De inventione et usu musicae*, ed. K. WEINMANN, Regensburg, 1917, p. 33. The quotation of Surigonus, written in 1472, is translated by L. Vadimski in J. IJSEWIJN, "The Coming of Humanism to the Low Countries", *Itinerarium italicum. The profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations*, ed. H. A. OBERMAN-T. BRADY, Jr., Leiden, 1975, p. 234: "Non tamen egregios hec nutrit terra poetas: / Pluribus invisus Phebus et ipse manet. / ... / Pascere non novit sacros Brabantia vates, / Totus inest quibus spiritus aethereus"!

<sup>9</sup> IJSEWIJN, *op. cit.* (see note 8), p. 212.

<sup>10</sup> J. HUIZINGA, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, London, 1952, pp. 223-228; this is also discussed by Hale in his remarks on "European travel and travel accounts", in *op. cit.* (see note 5), pp. 12-22, esp. p. 21.

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

ers faced the expected differences in customs, language, and weather; in some cases they also contended with professional jealousies from native practitioners that they displaced.<sup>11</sup> Then as now, some would have adapted more easily than others.

With the exception of the House of Aragon in Naples, the treasuries of Italian rulers were in fact inferior to those of most royal families outside of Italy. Therefore the traditional explanation of why northern musicians came with such willingness must stress the heightened artistic inclinations of Italian patrons, along with a spirit of competitive splendor among the many courts. Still, this provides no answers for why John Dunstaple and Leonel Power apparently never went to Italy, while Johannes Ciconia and Guillaume Du Fay did; or more broadly, why so few of the many well-trained English musicians ever sought employment from the pope, while singers from the dioceses of Liège and Cambrai habitually journeyed to Rome.

\* \* \*

Whatever the attractions of musical talent for a prince and of princely favor for a musician, we need to take account not only of motives for attraction, but also of motives for dispersion.<sup>12</sup> In other words, supplementing the various reasons why a patron would support a foreign musician or humanist, there are first of all circumstances which encouraged skilled individuals to leave their own lands. Among the obvious hardships are wars, plagues, violence, and political realignments; no less potent, though not always so

---

<sup>11</sup> Respect and admiration for the abilities of Flemish colleagues surely coexisted with tension over the unwanted competition for jobs; see, for example, G. CATTIN, "Church Patronage of Music in Fifteenth-Century Italy", in I. FENLON (ed.), *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources and Texts*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 29. Complaints about northern competition were heard even in the international milieu of Rome. Lapo da Castiglionchio railed against the predominance of northern cooks and the acclamation that these "barbarians" received at the expense of Italians: Italy should yield this praise "With as much equanimity as [the barbarians] long ago allowed themselves when deprived of their glory by us in war." This passage is from the edition by R. SCHOLZ, "Eine humanistische Schilderung der Kurie aus dem Jahre 1438", *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, XVI, 1914, p. 140. I am grateful to Wendell Clausen for his translation.

<sup>12</sup> The concept of a "motive for dispersion" I take from P. PARTNER, *Rome 1500-1559: A Portrait of a Society*, Berkeley, 1976, p. 33.

precipitous and consequently more difficult to trace, are the effects of religious reforms, economic troubles, and demographic pressures, by which I mean regional imbalances between the supply of a particular talent and the demand for it. The travels of the Du Fays and Josquins of the period, however characteristic, are less instructive in this regard, because individuals with genius and ambition in any age are more likely to exhibit a mobility in their careers. Rather, it is in the widespread movement of the talented, competent professional, attempting to find not fame and fortune but simply a life's wages, that motives for dispersion become meaningful.

Examples of moves caused by disasters are plentiful. Dislocations came as deaths of patrons forced households to scatter, and as catastrophes, both natural and man-made, encouraged whole cities to flee. To illustrate with an Italian tragedy, the Sack of Rome in 1527 at the hands of the Imperial army devastated the buildings and the populace. Plague, famine, and flood then prolonged the suffering for at least five years, long enough so that many who left Rome never returned. Some scholars credit the Sack with dispersing artists and architects throughout Italy who expounded a distinctively Roman style: Giulio Romano, Jacopo Sansovino, Polidoro da Caravaggio, among others. Disaster for Rome resulted in what has been called "a cultural bonus for Italy".<sup>13</sup>

Significantly, travels caused by military campaigns and the deaths of patrons are easier to detect in Italy than in the north. It is one thing to show a link in Milan between the assassination of Galeazzo Maria Sforza in 1476 and the subsequent exodus of many northern musicians, or to connect Michelangelo's departure from Florence to the 1494 expulsion of his Medici patrons; but it is harder to identify northerners who came to Italy because of similar problems in their homelands. A lengthy conflict such as the Hundred Years War undoubtedly contributed to the flow of money and talent away from Normandy and Picardy. The difficulty in evaluating its impact on the movements of Norman musicians between 1420 and 1453 has as much to do with the scarcity of archival data as with a basic difference in the nature of their departures. Several estab-

---

<sup>13</sup> PARTNER, *op. cit.* (see note 12), p. 33; and A. CHASTEL, *The Sack of Rome, 1527*, trans. B. ARCHER, Princeton, 1983.



## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

lished foreign singers leaving a single Italian court stand out in a way that young clerics setting out individually from separate Norman towns and churches do not. Successive wars of religion, revolution, and liberation took a far greater toll on the archival records of the rural areas of northern France and Flanders than in urban Italy. Yet the problems of detecting musical refugees from war conditions also exist in Flemish cities with an abundant archival record. In Liège, whose inhabitants traveled to Italy throughout the Renaissance, there is no discernible increase in traffic after Charles the Bold routed the city in 1467, nor when he returned the next year and his troops sacked and pillaged for three days.<sup>14</sup> It is true that the singer-diplomat Henricus Knoep chose this moment to seek refuge in Milan, but he is just one of a continuing line.

It therefore seems unlikely that northern wars significantly affected the southward flow of musicians; or that peace in Italy constituted a decisive attraction. In quattrocento Italy the period of greatest political stability coincided with one of the least advantageous periods for northern immigrants. Even though the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453 shocked Italy into two decades of relative peace, groups paid to sing polyphony made few advances. Soon after the 1454 Peace of Lodi between Milan and Venice, they and their allies Florence, Rome, and Naples, joined to form an Italian League, ambitiously designed to restrain each other for twenty-five years. Meanwhile, interest in supporting a polyphonic choir disappeared in Ferrara with the death of Leonello d'Este in 1450, remaining dormant during the twenty-one year reign of Borso; and in Florence at the Baptistery of San Giovanni and the Cathedral, whose musicians were sponsored by the Medici, there was no polyphonic chapel to speak of between 1458 and 1469. Milan, Naples, and Rome still patronized northern musicians, but in the 1460s the papal choir had only seven new openings. San Pietro looms as *the* major source of new jobs in these years, hiring approximately two dozen foreign singers between 1453 and 1469.

---

<sup>14</sup> C. DURY, "Les curialistes belges à Rome et l'histoire de la curie romaine, problème d'histoire de l'Église. L'exemple de Saint-Lambert à Liège", *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome*, L, 1980, pp. 131-160; and M. VAES, "Le curialistes belges à Rome aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles. I Lieggesi", *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à Charles Moeller*, 2 vols., Louvain-Paris, 1914, II, pp. 100-121.

Job prospects improved in the 1470s. Once again Florence and Ferrara become important polyphonic centers, and the papal chapel expanded from fourteen to twenty-four singers under Sixtus IV (1471-1484). Northerners came in substantial numbers, regardless of the political and military turbulence Sixtus and his power-hungry nephews incited. The failure of a tranquil Italy to attract foreign talent is dramatically more evident at the end of the sixteenth century, when religious wars made the Netherlands "the universal sepulchre of Europe" while Italy became virtually war-free after the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559.<sup>15</sup> The following decades witnessed the final decline of northern musicians at Italian courts.

Political realignments could quickly redirect the movements of musicians seeking patronage. When Charles the Bold died in 1477, the new allegiances of his Burgundian territories determined where clerics sought benefices. As an example, of some twenty-five singers known or likely to be from Bruges, those who sought employment in foreign choirs between 1452-1477 had different destinations from those who left in the following generation (1477-1502).<sup>16</sup> After Bruges had become part of the Empire, the number of musicians who left Bruges for San Pietro and the Cappella Sistina shrank from eight out of eleven to a mere three of fourteen. Johannes Margas relinquished his post in the papal chapel in 1483; that is, after the Peace of Arras (December 1482) had established which territories belonged to Archduke Maximilian. His colleague Johannes Raat departed in 1484. This drop in the number of musicians leaving Bruges for Rome is all the more telling because in just these years, between 1481 and 1492, the Low Countries suffered a succession of disasters: plague, rebellion, currency troubles.<sup>17</sup>

With the Peace of Arras the courts of Maximilian I and Philip the Fair in Vienna and Spain replaced Rome as the most promising

---

<sup>15</sup> These words of the Spanish writer Quevedo and the ruination of Flanders and Brabant during the religious wars are discussed by G. PARKER, "War and Economic Change: The Economic Costs of the Dutch Revolt", in V. BARBAGLI BAGNOLI (ed.), *Domanda e consumi. Livelli e strutture (nei secoli XIII-XVIII)*, Florence, 1978, pp. 429-443.

<sup>16</sup> For the identities, destinations, and precise years, see C. REYNOLDS, *Papal Patronage and the Music of St. Peter's, 1380-1513* (forthcoming from University of California Press).

<sup>17</sup> On these disasters and others, see W. BLOCKMANS, "Die Niederlande vor und nach 1400: eine Gesellschaft in der Krise?" in F. SEIBT-W. EBERHARD (eds.), *Europa 1400. Die Krise des Spätmittelalters*, Stuttgart, 1984, pp. 117-132.

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

foreign sources of patronage for Flemish musicians. After 1483 the only resident of Bruges admitted to the papal chapel was Frater Anthonius Waltherus; and his subsequent career shows how serious were the difficulties that papal singers had in gaining or holding benefices in Bruges. Despite identifying himself as a musician from Bruges on the tomb he left himself in the Roman church of S. Giuliano dei Fiamminghi, Anthonius evidently received no benefices in his native city. This is also the context for the well-known letters from Ercole I d'Este to Rome, vainly trying to get a benefice for Jacob Obrecht, apparently in or near Bruges. Ercole's ambassador in Rome promised to do his best, but after consulting with the Pope early in 1488, he concluded pessimistically: "Messer Jacomo should well understand that nothing any longer is absolutely certain, and that I would advise him to obtain it in person".<sup>18</sup> The phrase "any longer" best makes sense as a reference to the new political situation that had developed in the years since 1477. Then there is Gaspar van Weerbeke, another singer-composer with even stronger ties to Rome. He acquired his benefice in Bruges not during the 1480s or early 1500s when he sang in the Cappella Sistina, but in 1495, when he began his association with Philip the Fair, Archduke of Austria and Duke of Burgundy.

However, this sort of political change, momentous as it was, only served to redirect the journeys of wandering musicians and other benefice seekers. It did not noticeably increase or diminish their number. Whether they left for Rome or Madrid, Vienna or Prague, Flemish musicians still left Flanders. Recent investigations of economic conditions in the fifteenth century lead us to more basic and enduring motives for dispersion.

John Munro and others have portrayed Flanders not as the fiscally sound region it was once thought to be, but as an area suffering from economic and population contraction and the late-medieval 'Great Depression'.<sup>19</sup> Thanks in large measure to its textile indus-

---

<sup>18</sup> The letter is printed and translated in L. LOCKWOOD, "Music at Ferrara in the Period of Ercole I d'Este", *Studi Musicali*, I, 1972, pp. 128-129.

<sup>19</sup> For the following I depend on the writings of J. MUNRO, especially his "Economic Depression and the Arts in the Fifteenth-Century Low Countries", *Renaissance and Reformation*, *Industrial Change in the Late-Medieval Low Countries, 1335-1500*, in N. J. MAYHEW (ed.), *Coinage in the Low Countries (800-1500): Third Oxford Symposium on*

tries and trades, Flanders had become the richest and most urbanized commercial center north of the Alps by the end of the thirteenth century. A century of decline then followed, fed by guild conflicts, urban revolts, and wars with France. With new and steadily expanding competition from the English cloth trade from the 1360s, the textile industries of Flanders and Brabant retrenched. Able to capitalize on their superior expertise in finishing processes such as dyeing, they focused on the high-priced aristocratic market for luxury goods. But even this advantage declined severely and then disappeared altogether in the 1430s, when war between Burgundy and England cut the supply of wool, and Europe reached the worst decades of its commercial and agrarian depression. The English and to a lesser extent the Dutch cloth trade successfully took over much of the Flemish market. Then just as the economies in other parts of Europe began to recover during the 1460s, the hardships of Flanders and Brabant apparently intensified and continued until the end of the century. The decline of the Flemish textile industries spurred the emigration of significant numbers of Flemish tapestry weavers in the fourteenth century to England and, in the fifteenth, to Italy.<sup>20</sup>

This period of economic low paradoxically coincides with the decades in which Flemish music, art, and architecture reached what many have termed a Golden Age. Expanding on the thesis that “hard times and investment in culture” go hand-in-hand, Munro argues that the combination of depopulation and economic depression produced ever greater “concentrations of landed wealth amongst

---

*Coinage and Monetary History*, (British Archeological Reports, International Series, 54), Oxford, 1979, pp. 110-113, and *idem*, *Wool, Cloth, and Gold: The Struggle for Bullion in Anglo-Burgundian Trade, 1340-1478*, Brussels-Toronto, 1973. See also T. LLOYD, *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*, London, 1977; and R. VAN UYTEN, “La draperie brabançonne et malinoise du XII<sup>e</sup> au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: grandeur éphémère et décadence”, *Produzione, commercio e consumo dei panni de lana, Seconda Settimana di Studio “Francesco Datini” a Prato, aprile 1970*, Florence, 1976, pp. 56-97.

<sup>20</sup> J. A. VAN HOUTTE, *An Economic History of the Low Countries 800-1800*, London, 1977, p. 61; and THOMSON, *op. cit.* (see note 4). Of immigrants from the Low Countries living in England in the 1430s, those with jobs in the cloth trade made up the largest contingent, see the figures in M.-R. THIELEMANS, *Bourgogne et Angleterre. Relations politiques et économiques entre le Pays-Bas bourguignons et l’Angleterre 1435-1467*, Brussels, 1966, pp. 548-550 and 554-555; see also H. P. H. JANSEN, “Holland’s Advance”, *Acta Historiae Neerlandicae*, X, 1977, pp. 1-19.

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

the nobility and the Church ...".<sup>21</sup> He may or may not be correct to attribute the "costly dress and displays of opulence" to the needs of the nobility, upper bourgeoisie, and Church "to defend their privileged social status in such disordered times";<sup>22</sup> but whatever their motivations, the wealthy patronized music and art inside the church and out. Businessmen endowed polyphonic masses and chaplaincies, civic officials commissioned altar pieces, bankers founded chapels, and the upper classes kept themselves well-entertained.<sup>23</sup> As a result not only the arts prospered, but also any industry that contributed goods or services to the conspicuously ostentatious life-styles of the wealthy: printing and manuscript production, leather, fur, tapestry, embroidery, as well as others.

\* \* \*

But if the problems of the Flemish and Brabantine cloth industries provide a plausible impetus for the migration of tapestry weavers, demographic pressures are most likely to have provided musicians with a persistent inducement to travel. As a potential motive for dispersion, a regional surplus of talent applies as well in times of prosperity as in times of hardship, and to northern musicians and scribes as well as to Italian humanists and instrumentalists. The nature of the skill is not important, only that the area or nation which produces the leading practitioners lacks the means

---

<sup>21</sup> J. MUNRO, "Economic Depression", *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 238; R. S. LOPEZ, "Hard Times and Investment in Culture", in *The Renaissance: A Symposium*, ed. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1953; reprinted in *The Renaissance: Six Essays*, New York, 1962, pp. 29-54; see also H. MISKIMIN, *The Economy of Early Renaissance Europe, 1300-1460*, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1969. While the "depression thesis" of Lopez has received continued support among economic historians of the Low Countries, scholars of Renaissance Italy have steadily challenged the idea. R. GOLDTHWAITE, "The Economy of Renaissance Italy: The Preconditions for Luxury Consumption", *I Tatti Studies*, 2, 1987, pp. 15-39, argues recently for the opposite conclusion, that the greater spending on cultural activities resulted from a higher standard of living in the fifteenth century. For an insightful survey of the debate, see J. C. BROWN, "Prosperity or Hard Times in Renaissance Italy?", *Renaissance Quarterly*, XLII, 1989, pp. 761-780.

<sup>22</sup> J. MUNRO, "Economic Depression", *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 238.

<sup>23</sup> R. STROHM details the endowments and annuities which benefited music in Bruges in the 1480s; *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, Oxford, 1985, pp. 36-38.

to employ everyone trained. The Florentine historian Goro Dati first adumbrated this theory in the early 1400s to explain why so many sons of Florentine patricians were forced to pursue commercial careers outside of Tuscany:<sup>24</sup>

... for some time back it has been necessary for the Florentines, because they have multiplied in number, to seek their livelihood through enterprises. Therefore, they have departed from their territory to search through other lands, provinces and countries, where one or another has seen an opportunity to profit for a time, to make a fortune, and to return to Florence ... For some time now it has seemed that they were born for this, so large is the number (in accordance with what the generative air produces) of those who go through the world in their youth and make profit and acquire experience, daring (*virtù*), good manners and treasure. All of them together constitute a community of so large a number of valiant and wealthy men which has no equal in the world.

The obvious parallel between the career patterns of Florentine merchants and French and Flemish musicians is the cycle of emigration, work, and return. Other than its swing from south to north and back, the outline of Francesco Datini's career movements could be that of a singer from Cambrai. Born near Florence in 1335, Datini moved to Avignon in his teens as a business employee. At twenty-eight he founded a company – armaments for the Hundred Years War – made his fortune, and returned to Florence some thirty years after he left, an old man of forty-seven.<sup>25</sup> The careers of Du Fay and Josquin adhere to a similar timetable. Each left home before turning twenty and worked his way south to Italy. Du Fay returned temporarily to Cambrai about the age of forty, permanently as he approached sixty; and Josquin, apparently a few years into his sixties (but possibly somewhat younger), retired to Condé. It was this hope of retiring to his native land “When it

---

<sup>24</sup> The translation is from D. HERLIHY, “Three Patterns of Social Mobility in Medieval Society”, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, III, 1973, p. 645. Leon Battista Alberti described the dispersal of his own merchant family, with relatives acquiring “reputation, fame, and esteem”, in London, Bruges, Valencia, and Greece “far from their families”; ALBERTI, *The Alberti's of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's "Della Famiglia"*, ed. A. GUARINO, Lewisburg, Pa., 1971, p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> R. S. LOPEZ, “The Trade of Medieval Europe: the South”, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Cambridge, 1952, 2, p. 337.

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

is time to stop singing and leave youth” that led Johannes Balthazar, like countless others, to Rome in search of benefices.<sup>26</sup>

Dati blamed the competition for jobs in late-trecento Florence on the “generative [Tuscan] air”, what today we more prosaically would call “overpopulation”. Flemish musicians of the next centuries, born into one of the densest European populations of the time, clearly existed in sufficient numbers to meet local needs along with those of courts in Italy, France, Spain, and also Austria. On the one hand, wealthy citizens generously endowed numerous urban chapels and provided funds to support the singing of Masses for the dead;<sup>27</sup> on the other hand, the supply of boy choristers, adequate in the best of times because of the church’s traditional role as the provider for foundlings and illegitimate children, would have grown in the fifteenth century because of population shifts from rural to urban areas.<sup>28</sup> Between the censuses taken in Brabant in 1437 and 1496, for example, the population in rural areas and small towns declined in many cases by 25% and more. During the decades between 1437 and 1496, the number of individual hearths recorded in censuses for the four largest towns in the Duchy of Brabant (Brussels, ’s Hertogenbosch, Antwerp, and Leuven) actually grew by some 15%, “thanks undoubtedly to considerable immigration from the impoverished countryside”.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> F. D’ACCONTE, “The Singers of San Giovanni in Florence during the 15th Century”, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XIV, 1961, p. 345.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to the work of Reinhard Strohm cited above in note 23, see A. C. DUKE, “Building Heaven in Hell’s Despite: The Early History of the Reformation in the Towns of the Low Countries”, in A. C. DUKE-C. A. TAMSE (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands, VII: Church and State since the Reformation*, The Hague, 1981, pp. 45-75. He terms the fifteenth century “one of the greatest ages of church-building in the Low Countries. Much of the building was spurred on by the need to accommodate the numerous side-chapels, where ceaselessly multiplying services for the dead could be read” (pp. 154-155).

<sup>28</sup> Because musicians were educated in the church, music was a profession open to all, as opposed to arts and crafts (such as tapestry weaving) organized by guilds, in which membership was inherited. For a foundling a musical education thus offered a hope for upward mobility that would otherwise have been unattainable; see C. LYS-H. SOLY, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe*, trans. J. COONAN, Hassocks, 1979, pp. 35-37. Regarding the role of the church as a provider for orphans and foundlings, see M. MOLAT, *Les pauvres au Moyen Age. Étude sociale*, Hachette, 1978, pp. 11-29; 165-187, and 346-348; PULLAN, *op. cit.* (see note 1); and S. SHALAR, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, New York-London, 1990, pp. 155-161 and 183-208.

<sup>29</sup> J. MUNRO, “Economic Depression”, *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 244; he discusses

It now appears that young singers trained in northern cathedral or collegiate schools faced competition from two sources. A low-paying position in a church choir certainly could be found easily enough, but lucrative spots at chapels attached to royal courts were limited and much in demand. The King of France, the Duke of Burgundy, the Duke of Berry, and King René of Anjou, among others, had their pick of the local talent. While we will never know how many of the singers who found a patron in Italy did so after being rejected at one of these courts, the composer Jean Puylois may not be an uncommon example. Having failed his audition with the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, he resigned his job as *maître des enfants* at Antwerp and became an important member of the papal chapel in the middle of the fifteenth century, serving four popes during his tenure in Rome.

But in addition to the rivalry among singers for secular employment, northern musicians remaining within the church encountered a fierce, institutional competition for the better-paying ecclesiastical stipends. This competition was not solely with other musicians, but also with their clerical superiors, the older, wealthier canons who administered the church, or with non-resident clerics who had left to become bureaucrats in another city altogether. Thus before he became chapel-master in Ferrara, Antoine Brumel tried patiently to gain a benefice at Notre Dame in Paris where he was *maître des enfants*, ultimately resigning in frustration over the inflexibly slow promotions given out by the cathedral chapter. Similarly, had Du Fay remained in Cambrai he might never have been awarded the local canonry he desired, for even when Pope Eugenius IV provided him with this benefice in Rome, Du Fay still had to withstand the legal challenges of the recalcitrant Cambrai canons. And the situation recently documented by Barbara Hagg in fifteenth-

---

the population contraction on pp. 243-245. See also H. VAN DER WEE, *Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy, Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, 3 vols., The Hague, 1963, esp. 2, pp. 7-13, 31-40, 61-67; and W. BLOCKMANS, "Social and Economic Effects of the Plague in the Low Countries", *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, LVIII, 1980, pp. 833-863. Moves from the country and small towns to the large cities doubtless also contributed to the rising number of urban poor. Of the total number of hearths in Brussels in 1496, 17.1% were classified as poor hearths, up from 10.5% in 1437. In small Brabantine towns the number of poor hearths in 1480 was three times that recorded in 1437 (28% vs. 9%); MUNRO, "Economic Depression", *op. cit.* (see note 19), p. 245.



century Brussels is surely representative of most Flemish cities; there were two levels of singers, those in the ducal chapel who all had benefices in local churches, and then the singers in the local churches, who subsisted on their meager wages.<sup>30</sup>

The combined pressures of musical rivalry outside the church and ecclesiastical politics within provide a basis for understanding the motives of singers who left home in search of advancement. Where one exists without the other, the inducements to travel appear to have lessened considerably. That appears to be the case in England, whereas in France and Flanders a sound musical education for the young was readily available. However, English choirboys evidently had sufficient jobs in well-endowed churches, monasteries, and secular colleges, or in one of the several royal or aristocratic households. Because of the many options for work, the predicaments of Puylois and Brumel cited earlier were apparently less likely to occur in England. Competent instructors were much sought after and could, in Roger Bowers's words, "move easily from job to job up the promotion tree".<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, British musicians were documentably less likely to turn to the papacy for local benefices than were Flemish singers. A study of the musicians supported in fourteenth-century Avignon by popes, cardinals, and bishops, discusses the careers of 131 singers and composers. Remarkably, not one of them was British. And in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Rome, the numbers of British musicians – I should say *identifiably* British musicians – is very small, just one or two at San Pietro. None found a position in the chapels of popes from Martin V through Paul II.<sup>32</sup> Such a meager representation is in keeping with the comparatively small

---

<sup>30</sup> B. HAGGH, *Music, Liturgy, and Ceremony in Brussels, 1350-1500* (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana, 1988); and "De Muziek in Brussel tijdens de 15de Eeuw", *Tijdschrift voor brusselse Geschiedenis*, 3, 1986, pp. 38-64.

<sup>31</sup> R. BOWERS, *Choral Institutions within the English Church: Their Constitution and Development 1340-1500* (Ph. D. diss., University of East Anglia, 1975, p. 6080). See also D. HAY, "England and the Humanities in the Fifteenth Century", *Itinerarium italicum*, *op. cit.* (see note 8), pp. 342-345.

<sup>32</sup> Regarding Avignon, see A. TOMASELLO, *Musical Culture at Papal Avignon* (Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1982), pp. 405-482. For the fifteenth century there is STARR, *Music and Music Patronage*, *op. cit.* (see note 2), pp. 269-286; and I am grateful to Alejandro Planchart for information on the chapels of Martin V, Eugenius IV, and Nicholas V.

number of English clerics of any kind at the Roman curia. In comparison there was the consistent presence of musicians from the diocese of Liège, a diocese with exceptionally strong ties to Rome at all levels of the curia. Early in the Great Schism many singers with the Italian court held benefices there, as did the very last northern singer in the Cappella Sistina, Christian Ameyden, at the end of the sixteenth century. The situation with regard to clerics from Liège mirrors that of singers. Their presence also dwindled during the sixteenth century, but of all northern dioceses, Liège remained one of the best represented.<sup>33</sup>

In Italy the demand for Italian composers during the sixteenth century was strong enough to prevent them from traveling north to the same extent as did Italian instrumentalists and humanists. Palestrina declined the invitation of Emperor Maximilian II in 1567. Even a fantastic offer from the French court of Charles IX in the same year could not lure Alessandro Striggio from Florence. Charles and his mother, the Queen Regent Catherine de' Medici, promised Striggio a salary of 600 *scudi* per year along with an annual income of some 400 francs from the rent of an abbacy, plus food, lodging, a horse and servant. The contract also contained a provision that northern musicians in Italy would have envied: leave to visit his home for six months each year.<sup>34</sup>

To return to the situation in England, papal patronage was actually unsuitable for most British musicians. There are indications that British churches and collegiate chapels relied more on lay singers to staff their choirs than was the case in France and Flanders. A new class of professional church musician, the lay clerk, began to appear between 1390 and 1425. Lay clerks lived outside the church, they had the social advantage of being able to marry, and they were also free to take minor orders or not, as they pleased. Indeed, as Denys Hay has argued, by the end of the fourteenth century England was unusual in the extent to which it employed laity rather than clerics in the bureaucratic offices of its kings, dukes, and smaller lords.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> VAES, *op. cit.* (see note 14), II, p. 100.

<sup>34</sup> D. BUTCHART, "A Musical Journey of 1567; Alessandro Striggio in Vienna, Munich, Paris and London", *Music & Letters*, LXIII, 1982, pp. 1-16.

<sup>35</sup> HAY, *op. cit.* (see note 31), pp. 335-339.

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

This tendency is doubtless related to a series of laws passed in the British parliament over the last half of the fourteenth century, laws that restricted papal rights to grant and tax benefices in British churches. Beginning in the 1350s there were attempts to curtail papal patronage. Statutes of 1351 and 1365 limited papal provisions, and in 1388 Parliament made it illegal to leave England, or to send anyone else, for the purpose of procuring a benefice, without a special leave from the king. A temporary accord with Rome by Richard II in 1398 was soon revoked by Henry IV and again by Henry V. Scottish kings were no kinder, according to a complaint filed at the Council of Basel in 1434: "The king himself disposes of ecclesiastical benefices as he likes against the pope's decisions; many clerics and priests with papal letters have been killed in the kingdom; and those coming to the Roman court are being deprived of their goods ...".<sup>36</sup>

Because of these restrictions on papal patronage, there was less incentive for a British cleric to travel to Rome. It is not surprising, therefore, that British singers, scribes, and bureaucrats went to Avignon and Rome with considerably less frequency than their counterparts from Flanders. In England they had opportunities for advancement and numerous patrons. These advantages may have promoted insularity among English musicians by protecting them from the forces which encouraged their colleagues to travel. In contrast, English students journeyed to Italian universities in substantial numbers for a chance to study the classics, something they could not then acquire in England.

\* \* \*

This précis of reasons why certain musicians elected to emigrate is not meant to undervalue the very real attractions of working in Italy: the push of northern pressures only strengthened the pull of Italian patrons. But we should recognize that the strength of the pressures to leave varied from region to region, from time to time, and from profession to profession. Not only did few British singers seek employment in Rome, for reasons yet to be ex-

---

<sup>36</sup> D. E. R. WATT, "The Papacy and Scotland in the Fifteenth Century", in B. DOBSON (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth Century*, Gloucester-New York, 1984, pp. 115-132, esp. p. 122.

plained, Flemish musicians rarely appear to have crossed the channel to look for a post in one of the many British chapels.<sup>37</sup> In England and also in France, many prominent composers never left their own territories. Dunstaple did for a time live in France, but only while Normandy was under British administration. Once a singer decided to emigrate, he had to evaluate which patron, local or foreign, offered the most attractive advantages. Any musician-cleric from a diocese with substantive political links to the Roman curia would have had some motivation for seeking papal favor. In dioceses where papal influence was weak, singers and other clerics would have had correspondingly less to gain from a trip to Rome. Certainly any northerner in Italy would have been aware of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of service in Rome as opposed to service in any other Italian court. While a Flemish singer rewarded by the pope with a Flemish benefice could look forward to retiring to his native region, a Frenchman such as Antoine Brumel could enjoy his benefice in Ferrara only while employed in that city.

Northern singers had little incentive to go to Rome after the early 1560s. For Flemish musicians the need to leave Flanders outlasted the desire to go to Italy, despite the absence of war in Italy during this time. Instead, the migration of musicians persisted towards the patrons who could still deliver benefices in Flanders. Maximilian II and Rudolph II at the Imperial Court in Vienna and then Prague, and Philip II in Madrid, all had the requisite connections, and they continued to dispense benefices with the old liberality. Thus in the 1570s, like so many before him, Philippe de Monte received a benefice in Cambrai from a foreign ruler, only now the provider was not the pope in Rome, but Emperor Maximilian in Prague. Another musician in Prague, the organist Paul de Winde, received a benefice in Nivelles from Rudolph II in 1584, a benefice previously held in Madrid by a secretary of Philip II. They were two among many of the musicians, artists, and humanists fleeing religious wars and intolerance.<sup>38</sup> The new political and ec-

---

<sup>37</sup> THIELEMANS, *op. cit.* (see note 20), pp. 554-555, lists no Flemish musicians among those who identified their professions.

<sup>38</sup> E. VANDER STRAETEN, *La Musique au Pays-Bas avant le XIXe siècle: Documents inédits et annotés*, Brussels, 1887-88, IV, p. 55; and N. MOUT, "Political and Religious Ideas of Netherlanders at the Court in Prague", *Acta historiae neerlandicae*, IX, 1976, pp. 1-29.

## CLERICAL PATRONAGE AND MUSICAL MIGRATION

clesiastical realities created new patterns of migration. Thus while Flemings such as Philippe Rogier found Flemish benefices by going to Spain, many Spaniards went to Rome in search of Spanish provisions. In the wake of the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, not only Spanish musicians but also Spanish clerics flocked to the curia where they attained positions of power at all levels of the bureaucracy.<sup>39</sup>

The imperial advantage in using benefices to patronize clerical courtiers had begun to assert itself in the years after the Sack of Rome in 1527. Already in the early 1530s the resources and generosity of the Emperor had begun to attract attention in the *curia romana*. An Italian agent of the French and British, Gregorio Casale, reported that curial cardinals had begun to seek financial assistance from the Emperor, who “has more to give in one month than the pope has in a year”.<sup>40</sup> By about 1540 experienced benefice seekers in Rome had begun to complain. That is the year when the humanist Giovio extended his congratulations to someone who had reaped a “*vendemmia grassa*” of benefices “in these lean times”.<sup>41</sup> A benefice provided to the musician and mathematician Jean Taisnier, *maître des enfants* for Emperor Charles V, provides one indication of a declining papal access to some classes of benefices during these years. Charles V gave him a prebend at S. Pierre de Leuze in 1542, a benefice recently vacated by the death of the composer Pierre de Manchicourt in Rome.<sup>42</sup> In previous de-

---

<sup>39</sup> A. D. WRIGHT, “Relations between Church and State: Catholic Developments in Spanish-Ruled Italy of the Counter-Reformation”, *History of European Ideas*, IX, 1988, pp. 385-403. See also, REYNOLDS, *op. cit.* (see note 2), pp. 86-87.

<sup>40</sup> “... sono necessitati ad andare a merce de gli altri principi idest dell’Imperatore quale ha più da dare in un mese che non ha il papa in un anno” (7 March 1531); reported by D. S. CHAMBERS, “The Economic Predicament of Renaissance Cardinals”, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, III, 1966, pp. 289-313, p. 308, note 113. On the growing powers of Charles V over church property, see J. A. BORNEWASSER, “Relations between Church and State in Britain and the Netherlands: an Introductory Essay”, in *Britain and the Netherlands*, *op. cit.* (see note 27), VII, pp. 1-21.

<sup>41</sup> “Congratulatevi con messer Bino della vendemmia grassa in questi tempi magri”. This is in a letter to Carlo Gualteruzzi (6 February 1540) quoted in R. DE MAIO, *Michelangelo e la Controriforma*, 2nd ed., Rome, 1981, p. 354; see also M. BATAILLON, “La chasse aux bénéfices vue de Rome par Juan Páez de Castro”, in *Mélanges en l’honneur de Fernand Braudel* (Paris, 1973), I, pp. 81-93.

<sup>42</sup> VANDER STRAETEN, *op. cit.* (see note 38), IV, pp. 46-47.

cedes such benefices automatically reverted to the pope. The edicts of the Council of Trent regarding residency and the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis therefore were a culmination of several decades in which the popes had seen their powers to confer benefices decline.

It is just at this point that there is a split between the career patterns of Flemish musicians and Flemish tapestry weavers. Flemish tapestry weavers, who were of course not clerics, had never received benefices and were therefore unaffected by these reforms. They continued to come to Italy through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As before, their patrons gave them workshops, materials, salaries, and the freedom to accept commissions from other patrons. In Florence the succession of master weavers passed from Ebert Van Asselt (1622-1630) to Pierre Lefebvre (1630-1669); and in Rome in 1625, Cardinal Francesco Barberini returned from Paris with Jakob van den Vliete of Oudenaarde, who worked in Rome until his death in 1639. Flemish and French expertise reached beyond luxury tapestries into the wool industry as a whole.<sup>43</sup>

Northern musicians, as clerics, had access to an intricate and legalistic system of patronage. By studying the system it becomes easier to comprehend changes in the careers of individual musicians, as well as changes in the normative career patterns from one generation to the next. But the system of clerical patronage was not monolithic. Regional differences were significant in such basic matters as who provided the benefices, how much the benefices were worth, and how much competition there was for church patronage. By studying the careers of individuals we can begin to explain how these differences in the system affected the opportunities for employment. For the many musicians schooled in the wealthy church and collegiate chapels of the north, those opportunities often lay in the south.




---

<sup>43</sup> M. VIALE FERRERO, *Arazzi Italiani*, Milano, 1961, pp. 41-46; THOMSON, *op. cit.* (see note 4), pp. 409-412; and M. ABRATE, "Imprenditori e tecnici stranieri nell'industria laniera piemontese agli inizi del XVIII secolo", in M. SPALLANZANI (ed.), *Produzione commercio e consumo dei panni di lana (nei secoli XII-XVIII)*, Florence, 1976, pp. 115-125.