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PART I

Creative contexts and principles

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1 | Imitation, originality and authorship

On the last page of his revised edition of Playford’s *Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, published in 1694, Henry Purcell inserted a short paragraph on composing to a ground bass. It ends with an apparently throwaway remark advising students that ‘the best way to be acquainted with ’em, is to score much, and chuse the best Authors’.<sup>1</sup> At first sight Purcell’s brief instruction to learn the technique by copying out in score examples by good composers might seem to be a simple result of his having forgotten to include full instructions on composing ostinato movements earlier in the treatise, suggesting he lacked the space or inclination here to cover the topic thoroughly.<sup>2</sup> Yet in recommending this process Purcell was in fact aligning himself with generations of composition instructors before him who advocated the pedagogical principle of learning through example and imitation. Christopher Simpson, for instance, had given similar counsel in his *Compendium of Practical Musick* of 1667 when he wrote ‘I would advise you to procure some, of such kinds [of music] as you most affect; and Prick them down in Score, one Part under another, as the Examples are set in this Book: that they may serve you as a Pattern to imitate. But let them be of some of the best esteemed Composers in that kind of Musick.’<sup>3</sup> And in 1597 Thomas Morley had likewise noted that ‘vwho so will be excellent, must both spend much time in practise, and looke ouer the dooings of other men’.<sup>4</sup> Such advice, indeed, can be found almost ubiquitously in English theoretical writings on composition from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, learning through example was by no means unique to this period: it is, as Meconi points out, ‘a perennial technique of education’.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Playford, *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick . . . The Twelfth Edition*, 144.  
<sup>2</sup> The paragraph begins ‘One Thing that was forgot to be spoken of in its proper place, I think necessary to say a little of now’; *ibid*.  
<sup>3</sup> C. Simpson, *A Compendium of Practical Musick*, 117.  
<sup>4</sup> Morley, *A Plaine and Easie Introduction*, 115.  
<sup>5</sup> Other examples include Mace, *Musick’s Monument*, 138; R. North, *Roger North’s Cursory Notes of Musicke*, ed. Chan and Kassler, 205–6; Bedford, ‘Observations concerning Musick’, 13; and R. North, *Roger North’s The Musical Grammarian*, ed. Chan and Kassler, 172 (fol. 163r).  
<sup>6</sup> Meconi, ‘Does Imitatio Exist?’, 175.

However, when we consider Purcell's instruction alongside more detailed compositional approaches taught to seventeenth-century English musicians it becomes clear that the process of imitating examples by good composers he recommended was more than just general advice. Rather, it was intimately connected with a far-reaching set of specific creative principles that related to Renaissance rhetorical study and governed invention not only in music, but also in art, poetry and other literature in the period. Such links are, indeed, hinted at by Charles Butler in his *Principles of Musik* of 1636 who, when making the familiar exhortation 'heed[e]fully [to] examin, observ, and imitat[e] [th]e Artificial works of [th]e best Au[th]ors', drew a direct parallel with contemporary rhetorical techniques: 'For as in Oratori, so in Musik, ar[e] necessarily req[ui]red to perfection; 1 Natur[e], 2 Art, and 3 Exercitation according to Art and Examples.'<sup>7</sup> In order to investigate Restoration composers' fundamental approaches to musical invention, we need first, then, to understand the creative context in which they lived and worked.

## Principles of invention

The Renaissance rediscovery of texts by Cicero and Quintilian helped to spur a humanist interest in rhetoric that became central to education, intellectual life and culture during the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> As is well known, Cicero had outlined five divisions of rhetoric that were to be used in creating an oration: *inventio* (invention), *dispositio* (arrangement), *elocutio* (style), *memoria* (memory) and *pronuntiatio* (delivery). The first stage, *inventio*, which is the most relevant to us in this context, was defined by Thomas Wilson in his *Arte of Rhetorique* of 1553 as 'The findyng out of apte matter, . . . a searchyng out of thynges true, or thynges likely, the whiche maie reasonably sette furth a matter, and make it appere probable'.<sup>9</sup> In order to 'find out' or discover good ideas, an orator could draw on a range of tools, central among which was the technique of *imitatio*, the study, analysis and emulation of works by admired authors.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> C. Butler, *The Principles of Musik*, 92. As is well known, Butler used his own unique orthographical system in this book. In transcribing his writings here I have used square brackets primarily to replace his special characters denoting 'th' and the silent 'e'.

<sup>8</sup> See Mack, 'Humanist Rhetoric', 82–3, and also Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, 109–50.

<sup>9</sup> T. Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique*, fol. 3v, quoted in Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture*, 111.

<sup>10</sup> The other main tools were the 'topics of invention', which were also types of model, providing templates for handling the material of an oration.

*Imitatio* was widely recommended as a literary practice in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where it was adopted via Erasmus's *De ratione studii* of 1511.<sup>11</sup> As Pigman outlines, there was 'a vast and perplexing array of writings on the theory and practice of imitation',<sup>12</sup> but certain overriding principles can nevertheless be identified. Students were to study the works of acknowledged classic authors – at first comprising those from classical antiquity, but by the Elizabethan period including a canon of English poets and writers, such as Chaucer and even contemporary figures like Edmund Spenser;<sup>13</sup> there was much debate over whether a single model or multiple models should be used, and precisely which authors were included in the canon.<sup>14</sup> The learning process was facilitated by the collection of model passages of writing in commonplace books, which allowed students 'to store away phrases or ideas from their reading for re-use in their own compositions'.<sup>15</sup> Their own invention came about through seeking to vary and transform their models, a process that could include rewriting, commenting on and glossing their source materials,<sup>16</sup> but that ultimately resulted in *emulatio*, an attempt to improve on and surpass the model, so that it was no longer detectable. Thus a distinction was made between 'following' and 'emulating' in imitative practice: the follower, according to Erasmus, 'treads in someone else's footsteps and obeys rules', while the emulator 'endeavours to speak even better if he can'.<sup>17</sup> Although these principles of invention were most clearly articulated in pedagogical writings, they also formed the basis for all mature literary production in the period, and imitative principles can be seen in translations and commentaries, the

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of the literary use of *imitatio* in Italy and France as well as England, see Greene, *The Light in Troy*; see also McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation*.

<sup>12</sup> Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', 1.

<sup>13</sup> Loewenstein, 'Humanism and Seventeenth-Century English Literature', 279–80.

<sup>14</sup> A range of Greek and Latin authors was recommended by Erasmus; see Carroll, 'Humanism and English Literature', 249. On the advice to collect from multiple models, see Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', 5–9; on debates about classical authors, see Brown, 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage', 39–40; and on the 'battle of the ancients and moderns' in the late seventeenth century, see Loewenstein, 'Humanism and Seventeenth-Century English Literature', 287–9.

<sup>15</sup> Mack, 'Humanist Rhetoric', 90; see also Brown, 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage', 40–1.

<sup>16</sup> For a description of this process in Renaissance rhetorical teaching, see Mack, 'Humanist Rhetoric', 91–2.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Carroll, 'Humanism and English Literature', 256. See also Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation', 10–32, where it is noted (p. 24) that it was Erasmus who first made the technical distinction in literature between *imitatio* and *emulatio*.

modelling of play scripts on pre-existent stories and the transformation of poetic models.<sup>18</sup>

During the course of the seventeenth century, as we shall see, the precise nature of the practice of imitation became a matter of much debate,<sup>19</sup> but the emulative principle remained at the heart of literary invention from Shakespeare and Jonson to Donne, from Herrick and Milton to Dryden.<sup>20</sup> In his essay *Of Dramatick Poesie* of 1668, for example, Dryden remarked that ‘to imitate the Antients well, much labour and long study is required’ and complained: ‘which pains . . . our Poets would want encouragement to take, if yet they had ability to go through with it’.<sup>21</sup> Later he expressed admiration for Jonson’s mastery of *emulatio*:

He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latine, and he borrow’d boldly from them: . . . But he has done his Robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any Law. He invades Authors like a Monarch, and what would be theft in other Poets, is onely victory in him. With the spoils of these Writers he so represents old *Rome* to us, in its Rites, Ceremonies and Customs, that if one of their Poets had written either of his Tragedies, we had seen less of it then in him.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Renaissance concept of *imitatio* centred on literary activities, it also became hugely influential to other forms of invention. From the early sixteenth century, for example, it was the main creative principle used in art and architecture, where it signified both the Aristotelian imitation of nature and the imitation of existing models, which were used to aid attempts to represent nature as it should be, rather than as it really was.<sup>23</sup> There were many direct parallels between imitation in art and in literature, as this

<sup>18</sup> Analysis of these various types of imitation is given in Carroll, ‘Humanism and English Literature’, 250–8.

<sup>19</sup> See the section ‘Authorship and originality’ on p. 41. On moves to reform education in anti-humanistic ways, particularly the influence of Francis Bacon, see Loewenstein, ‘Humanism and Seventeenth-Century English Literature’, 283–5.

<sup>20</sup> For some examples of seventeenth-century literary imitation of ancient Greek models, see Loewenstein, ‘Humanism and Seventeenth-Century English Literature’, 280–3 and 286–7; on Dryden’s use of imitation, see Kramer, *The Imperial Dryden*, and Bimberg, ‘Poetry as Procreation’, 304–18; for a selection of quotations on Dryden’s recommendation of *imitatio*, see Bruns, ‘The Originality of Texts’, 112–19, and Shay, ‘“Naturalizing” Palestrina and Carissimi’, 386.

<sup>21</sup> Dryden, *Of Dramatick Poesie*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 49–50. Dryden’s use of the term ‘robberies’ might appear pejorative (as it was for Morley in the quotation cited below on p. 15), but he appears to be employing it artfully in order to address what others might consider plagiarism. I am grateful to Alan Howard for this observation.

<sup>23</sup> James Ackerman argues that modern tendencies to separate the two forms of *imitatio* are erroneous; see *Origins, Imitation, Conventions*, 127.

mid-sixteenth-century description of Raphael by the early art commentator Giorgio Vasari demonstrates:

[T]he most graceful of all was Raphael of Urbino, who studied the efforts of both ancient and modern masters, taking the best elements from them all; and, by assimilating them, he enriched the art of painting with the kind of complete perfection reflected in the ancient works of Apelles and Zeuxis and perhaps even surpassed them, if it were possible to claim that his work equalled theirs.<sup>24</sup>

That such inventive principles were still current in artistic circles throughout the seventeenth century is demonstrated by a series of debates held at the Académie royale de peinture in Paris from 1667, which were recorded and published in 1668 and 1680 and have been assessed by Paul Duro.<sup>25</sup> They include discussions over whether a single or multiple models should be used, and related arguments about the importance of avoiding slavish copying of models.<sup>26</sup> Later documents demonstrate that, by the end of the century, the range of ideal models had also been extended to include recent ('modern') Italian and French artists.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile Loh highlights the gathering of models and exemplars in sketchbooks by artists including van Dyck,<sup>28</sup> and gives examples parallel to those of Duro to illustrate contemporary comments about admired imitations of recognized models in seventeenth-century Italian art. She also notes the controversy surrounding examples considered by some to be too close to their sources – most famously the case of Domenichino's altarpiece 'The Last Communion of St Jerome' for the church of S. Girolamo della Carità in Rome, painted in 1614, which Lanfranco, who had been a fellow student with Domenichino, later accused him of plagiarizing from their master Carracci; although opinions were divided, on the whole Domenichino was praised for having created something new through his imitation.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly the *imitatio* principle was deeply ingrained into Renaissance society; it was, as Ackerman states, a concept 'that preoccupied makers in all disciplines . . . – writers, historians, artists, and others concerned with invention'.<sup>30</sup> We might therefore be surprised that musicologists have disagreed about whether such rhetorical concepts applied to composition

<sup>24</sup> Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, 280, from the 1568 second edition of Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori*, Preface to Part III; also quoted in a different translation in Ackerman, *Origins, Imitation, Conventions*, 133. Hope and McGrath note that Raphael was one of the first to model his work on classic exemplars; see 'Artists and Humanists', 162–5.

<sup>25</sup> Duro, 'The Surest Measure of Perfection', 366. <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 366–8. <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 381–2.

<sup>28</sup> Loh, 'New and Improved', 478–80.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 480–9 and 495–6. See also Cropper, *The Domenichino Affair*.

<sup>30</sup> Ackerman, *Origins, Imitation, Conventions*, 126.

techniques in the period – in particular whether the widespread use of melodic and structural borrowing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was a form of *imitatio*, a proposal first put forward by Howard Mayer Brown in 1982, following Lewis Lockwood's narrower application of the term to the so-called 'parody' mass of the sixteenth century.<sup>31</sup> While this is clearly not the place for a detailed account of the controversy, it is significant from our perspective that objections to the association of such compositional practices with *imitatio* – which have principally been expressed by Honey Meconi and Rob Wegman – have focused on the looseness with which the term *imitatio* has been applied to music and on problematic chronology. The increasingly broad equating of *imitatio* with virtually all composition using pre-existent material, especially as proposed by J. Peter Burkholder and Leeman Perkins,<sup>32</sup> is seen as flawed by Wegman and Meconi because the range of borrowing practices used by Renaissance musicians was clearly larger than the group of techniques described for literary *imitatio*. They point out a number of musical borrowing practices that were unlike *imitatio* as defined in rhetorical terms – particularly musical parody, which generally used a single model drawn from a genre other than that of the music being written, could include self-borrowing, and was just one of a number of possible inventive options open to composers, rather than the central compositional principle.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Meconi highlights the historical evidence indicating that links between *imitatio* and musical invention only began to be made both theoretically and in practice from the mid-sixteenth century, predominantly in northern Europe, a change she relates to the massive pedagogical influence of Erasmus.<sup>34</sup> Meconi argues therefore that the lengthy history of musical borrowings 'only links up with the term *imitatio* in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and then far from comprehensively'.<sup>35</sup> In other words, rhetorical practices were superimposed on already established musical techniques, rather than being their point of origination.

The pervasiveness of musical invention based on pre-existing material within early music is demonstrated by the vast literature on the subject, and

<sup>31</sup> Brown, 'Emulation, Competition, and Homage'; Lockwood, 'On "Parody" as Term and Concept'.

<sup>32</sup> Burkholder, 'Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass'; Perkins, 'The L'Homme Armé Masses of Busnoys and Okeghem', esp. 388.

<sup>33</sup> Wegman, 'Another "Imitation"', 197; Meconi, 'Does *imitatio* Exist?', 158–61 and 163.

<sup>34</sup> Meconi, 'Does *imitatio* Exist?', 170–1; see also 156, 158, 161–2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 176. Meconi's argument for a much broader approach to the concept of musical borrowings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is illustrated by her edited collection *Early Musical Borrowing*.



by the recent emergence of the study of musical borrowing as an identified field.<sup>36</sup> Clearly many compositional techniques that we might describe as imitative pre-date the resurgence of rhetoric – including modelling of isorhythmic motets on material by Philippe de Vitry in the fourteenth century,<sup>37</sup> and the links between fifteenth-century mass settings based on popular cantus-firmus melodies and other masses using the same melodies.<sup>38</sup> Equally, the range of borrowing practices up to and including the seventeenth century was vast, comprising a spectrum of relationships from those in which adaptation of a model was minimal (such as arrangement of material for different forces, or contrafactum settings), through conscious transformation of melodic, rhythmic and/or structural material (such as in paraphrase, variation or the use of common tropes like ground-bass patterns),<sup>39</sup> to ‘those forms of interrelationship between musical texts that . . . arise as a natural and inevitable product of a shared background, and the existence of an underpinning “grammar”’<sup>40</sup> – that is, unintentional similarities that occurred because composers used a common set of rules and procedures that could lead them to make similar decisions coincidentally.<sup>41</sup> It is easy to see why *imitatio* might be considered an inadequate term to express all these forms of interrelationship, and why other terms, such as ‘intertextuality’ have been considered as alternatives.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For a chronological overview of the field, see Burkholder, ‘Borrowing’; and for an ongoing bibliography of some 1,200 published materials and theses on the topic, see Burkholder, Giger and Birchler (eds.), ‘Musical Borrowing’.

<sup>37</sup> A network of relationships was suggested by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson in ‘Related Motets’.

<sup>38</sup> Burkholder, ‘Borrowing’, §5: Renaissance Mass Cycles’.

<sup>39</sup> Burkholder, ‘Borrowing’, §1: Types of Borrowing’.

<sup>40</sup> Milsom, “‘*Imitatio*”, “Intertextuality”, and Early Music’, 145. <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 148–9.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Intertextuality’ was first suggested by Wegman in ‘Another “Imitation”’, 199–200, and has subsequently been used by Michael Allsen, David Crook and Kevin Brownlee, as outlined by Milsom in “‘*Imitatio*”, “Intertextuality”, and Early Music’, 142–4, where the usefulness of the term is assessed. While the aim in adopting this word has been to avoid the connotations inherent in previous terminology (‘parody’ and ‘borrowing’ as well as *imitatio*), in fact Milsom points out that it has most frequently been used as a catch-all specifically limited to intentional correspondences. In this respect its musicological meaning has differed from its original literary connotations, which are associated with French philosophical literature on the ‘death of the author’ published in the 1960s and 1970s emphasizing the inevitable but *unintentional* nature of cross-references (see, for example, Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, 160, quoted in Milsom, “‘*Imitatio*”, “Intertextuality”, and Early Music’, 145–6). It seems to me that ‘intertextuality’, even if applied to intentional relationships, is problematical for music of the seventeenth century, because of the implication that it describes connections between musical *texts*; as will become clear in Chapter 6, the oral transmission of some genres of music in Restoration England, together with strong non-prescriptive characteristics in their notation, makes text-based concepts only partially appropriate for this repertory.

Nevertheless, the process of composing using pre-existent material did become explicitly connected with rhetorical concepts of *imitatio* once Erasmus's teachings had gained widespread acceptance. Indeed, Meconi herself concedes that 'the most promising time for a real confluence of rhetorical *imitatio* and musical borrowing is . . . the sixteenth century, especially as the century progresses'.<sup>43</sup> The term 'missa ad imitationem' was used in the titles of published compositions based on models in France from 1552 and in Germany from the 1560s;<sup>44</sup> theorists including Zarlino and Pietro Pontio, in his *Ragionamento* of 1588, began to describe the use of models in composition as 'imitatio';<sup>45</sup> and, while few in number, there are surviving notebooks containing excerpts copied for study from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that parallel the commonplace books used for poetic study.<sup>46</sup> Thus, although musical *imitatio* was in a sense grafted onto existing modes of invention based on borrowing, important parallels existed between Renaissance literary and artistic creative practices and those used by musicians, and the connections between these processes became much more explicit during this period.

Rhetoric remained fundamental in Europe in the seventeenth century and, because it was 'the one discipline . . . in which fundamental models of intellectual or artistic creation were successfully explored and perpetuated',<sup>47</sup> it was drawn upon by music theorists when they began to try to articulate ideas about composition. Joachim Burmeister's *Musica poetica* of 1606 is probably the best-known example in which links between rhetorical and musical invention were made. However, as Bettina Varwig has recently argued, Burmeister's treatise has in fact resulted in widespread misunderstanding of the nature of the relationship: because he used rhetorical terminology, many commentators have interpreted his writing as nothing more than a superficial attempt to connect music to textual meaning through the application of rhetorical figures.<sup>48</sup> Varwig demonstrates that it was not, in fact, the terms themselves that were significant: in writing one of the first treatises designed to explain how to put together a piece of music Burmeister simply 'reached to rhetoric as a convenient and widely known pool of terms that could be plausibly

<sup>43</sup> Meconi, 'Does *imitatio* Exist?', 177.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 158, following material in Lockwood, 'On "Parody" as Term and Concept'; see also Burkholder, 'Borrowing', §5: Renaissance Mass Cycles'.

<sup>45</sup> Burkholder, 'Borrowing', §5: Renaissance Mass Cycles'; Meconi, 'Does *imitatio* Exist?', 156.

<sup>46</sup> Meconi, 'Does *imitatio* Exist?', 162. Meconi cites here Jessie Ann Owens's much-discussed article 'The Milan Partbooks', 294–5, where Owens in fact primarily discusses Zacconi's reference (published in 1622) to writing music out in score for study purposes, and to examples of the practice of creating a personal anthology of such excerpts that Zacconi himself had seen.

<sup>47</sup> Varwig, 'Mutato semper habitu', 216. <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.