


Bearding Ritter von Köchel in His Lair*

NEAL ZASLAW

As editor of the next iteration of the Köchel Catalogue, I have to deal with the current (sixth) edition's Appendix C, devoted to "Doubtful and Misattributed Works."¹ My goal is to reduce the potentially vast dimensions of that appendix to only those works for which some connection to Mozart cannot be ruled out. In the decades since 1964, when the current edition of Köchel was published, many of the works listed in Appendix C have been convincingly attributed to other composers. Other works therein can confidently be dismissed as never having had any meaningful connection to Mozart. Yet even after removing the reattributed and trivially misattributed works from the appendix, we are left with a handful of works that may possibly have had something to do with Mozart, even if clear evidence one way or the other remains elusive. One must, of course, be cautious in removing questionable and doubtful works from the catalogue, as the present case-study will illustrate. The work under consideration, catalogued as K⁶ Anh. C 9.07, is an unaccompanied piece for three or four voices with the text "Venerabilis barba capucinatorum."

C 9.07 Humoristisches Männerterzett „Venerabilis barba capucinatorum“
 Verzeichnis: K.3 bei Anh. 236 erwähnt

2 Sopr. u. Baß



Abschriften: 4st. Fassung in Pilsen, Gerlach-Museum, 33333 (1836) – 3st. Fassung in Wien, Nat.Bibl., Mus.Hs. 5152; für 2 Soprane und Baß

Ausgaben: Magdeburg, Heinrichshofen, Album für Männergesang Nr. 23

Anmerkung: Max Friedlaender, *Humoristische Lieder* (Peters), Nr. 62, nennt als Autor Matth. Fischer und gibt 4 Stimmen: ebenso Böhm & Sohn in Augsburg, wo jedoch eine Bearbeitung von Polzer steht. Ein Scherzo a 2 voci mit diesem Text wurde schon Carissimi und Pergolesi zugeschrieben.

Figure 1 Ludwig von Köchel: *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amadè Mozarts* (6/1964), 851

* This article is reprinted from *Words about Mozart: Essays in Honour of Stanley Sadie*, ed. Dorothea Link with Judith Nagley (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), with the kind permission of the editors and publisher. It may not be reproduced without permission of the copyright holders.

¹ Concerning the new edition, see "Cataloguing Mozart," *Arts & Sciences Newsletter* 17/2 (Cornell University, 1996): 1-4; rev. as "Der neue Köchel" in the *Newsletter of the Mozart Society of America* 1 (Spring 1997): 4-5; repr. in *Australian Music Teacher* 6 (1998): 205-207; also <http://www.arts.cornell.edu/newsletr/spring96/zaslaw.htm>, and <http://www.mozartproject.org/essays/zaslaw.html>; Polish transl. in *Canor* (Jan. 2000); Italian trans. in *Contrappunti* 1/1 (May-June 2001):1-4.

As it appears in K⁶ (Figure 1), this item has all the hallmarks of a spurious work—for instance, it appears to be known only from very late sources, it has been attributed to other composers, and its style seems improbable for Mozart. Nor is the odd contradiction between the entry’s heading, which reads “Männerterzett,” and the incipit, which calls for two sopranos and bass, particularly reassuring.

Searching for “Venerabilis barba capucinatorum” by traditional bibliographical means and on the Internet, I have located some three dozen manuscripts from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a handful of nineteenth- and twentieth-century printed editions with the same or a similar Latin text, set to identical, similar or related music.² These interrelated versions of *Venerabilis* are attributed to some thirteen composers and, of course, to anonymous. References to standard composer catalogues follow in brackets:³

Giacomo Carissimi (1605-74) [Sartori and Mansuardi, p. 129]
 Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-87) [LWV 76/26]
 Giuseppe Tamburini da Bagnacavallo (fl. 1668-78)
 Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741) [FWV *deest*]
 Benedetto Marcello (1686-1729) [Selfridge-Field *deest*]
 Giovanni Battista Martini (1706-84)
 Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-36) [Paymer 452]
 Placidus von Camerloher (1718-82)
 Florian Leopold Gassmann (1729-74)
 Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) [HXXVb: G2]
 Michael Haydn (1737-1806) [MH *deest*]
 Matthäus Fischer (1763-1840)
 Wolfgang Amadè Mozart (1756-91) [K⁶ Anh. C 9.07]⁴

² The single most important source of information was *RISM Online, Series A/II: Music Manuscripts after 1600*. The fact that *RISM* provides only incipits, combined with the nature of the works’ transmission and dissemination as documented below, means that more variant versions exist than I have been able to elucidate here. The *Venerabilis* complex is briefly discussed in R. Haas, *Die Musik des Barocks*, Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft (Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1928); and H.J. Moser, *Corydon: Geschichte des mehrstimmigen Generalbassliedes und des Quodlibets im deutschen Barock* (Brunswick: Litolf, 1933; enlarged, Hildesheim: Olms, 1966).

³ C. Sartori and G.-M. Manusardi, *Giacomo Carissimi: Catalogo delle opere attribuite* (Milan: Istituto Finarte, 1975); H. Schneider, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis sämtlicher Werke von Jean-Baptiste Lully* (Tutzing: Schneider, 1981) [LWV]; L. von Köchel, *Johann Josef Fux* (Vienna: Hölder, 1872; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1974) [FWV]; E. Selfridge-Field, *The Music of Benedetto and Alessandro Marcello: A Thematic Catalogue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); M.E. Paymer, *Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, 1710–1736: A Thematic Catalogue of the Opera Omnia* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1977); A. van Hoboken, *Joseph Haydn: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Mainz: Schott, 1957–71) [H]; C.H. Sherman and T. Donley Thomas, *Johann Michael Haydn (1737–1806): A Chronological Thematic Catalogue* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1993) [MH].

⁴ Five settings of the same text that are musically unrelated to each other and to the complex of settings discussed in this article are by Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812) (Craw 216), José Antonio de Donostia (1886-1956), and anonymous (MSS in Dubrovnik, Zagreb, and Copenhagen). See H.A. Craw, *A Biography and Thematic Catalog of the Works of J.L. Dussek (1760-1812)* (diss., University of Southern California, 1964), 351.

I also discovered that the websites of half a dozen European choirs show *Venerabilis* in their repertoires, invariably attributed to Mozart and for four voices rather than three. The bibliographical reference works, websites, manuscripts, and editions call *Venerabilis* variously “motet,” “ironic motet,” “Capuziner Vesper,” “Kapuzinerbart,” “humoristisches Männerquartett,” “Plesanterie sur la barbe,” “Divertimento,” “Scherzo,” “Canzona,” and “Responsorio.” What kind of text and music are we reckoning with here, and what could Mozart’s connection to them have been?

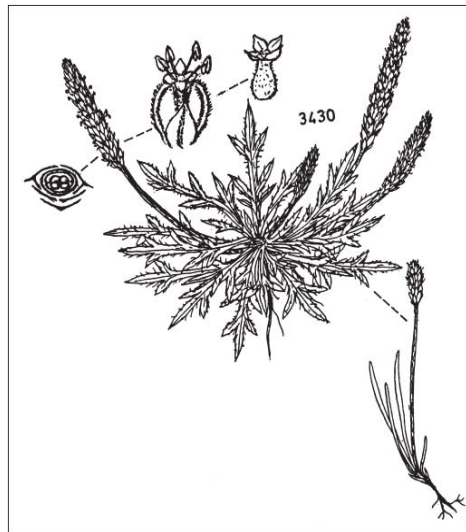


Figure 2 Drawing from S. Jávorka and V. Csapody, *Iconographia florae austro-orientalis europae centralis* (1929–43)

Beginning the investigation, I consulted Latin dictionaries, phrase-books and concordances. I also corresponded with a number of scholars with vast experience of Latin texts. This yielded absolutely nothing. But Bonnie Blackburn gave me a lead when she mentioned that in Italy she had been served salads with fine greens that looked a bit like chives and could also be cooked like spinach. She was told that these greens were called *barba di cappuccino* or simply *barba* (Figure 2). This plant, also known as *barbastella*, *erba stella* or simply *stella*, is called *Plantago coronopus* in Latin and “stag’s-horn plantain” in English. That discovery sent me to the large Italian dictionaries, consulting which I began to see that although the phrase “*Venerabilis barba capucinatorum*” is Latin, the thought behind it is purely Italian.⁵ Shifting from Latin to Italian reference works, I was soon able to add to Bonnie Blackburn’s salad greens four other linguistic connections: a fine pasta used in soups, which is also called *barba di cappuccino*; the hooded or bearded Capuchin monkeys of South and Central America; the Capuchin birds of South America and Indonesia; and finally the barber-shop version, the *barba alla cappuccino* proper (Figure 3). This botanical, gustatory, primatological,

⁵ P. Petrocchi, *Nòvo dizionàrio universale della lingua italiana* (Milan: Trèves, 1917); G. Devoto and G.C. Oli, *Nuovissimo vocabolario illustrato della lingua italiana* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1997), under “Barba,” “Cappuccino”; S. Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1961-), under “Barba,” “Cappuccino.”

ornithological, and tonsorial constellation reveals that we are in the presence of a persistent cultural *topos* based on bearded, hooded Capuchin monks.

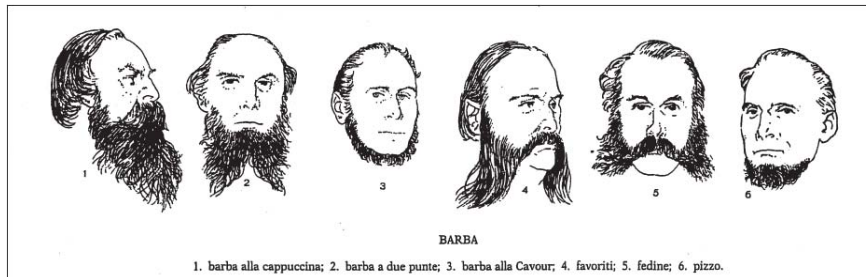


Figure 3 Illustration for the entry “Barba” in *Nuovissimo vocabolario illustrato della lingua italiana*, ed. G. Devoto and G.C. Oli (1997)

Arising out of the Counter-Reformation, the Friars Minor Capuchin are an order of mendicants founded in 1528 by Matteo da Bascio with the purpose of returning to strict observance of the Rule of St. Francis, seeking greater austerity than was then found in other branches of the Franciscan Order. Pope Clement VII expressly granted the order the privilege of wearing beards, while other orders were required to be clean shaven—hence *Venerabilis barba capucinatorum* (“the venerable beards of the Capuchin monks”). Capuchins took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Their asceticism was symbolized by the monks’ grooming and habits: they were disalced and wore robes with a hood, or *cappuccio*, which was how St. Francis had appeared in a vision to the order’s founder (Figure 4).⁶ The Capuchins specialized in spiritual ministry to, and in seeking financial relief for, the poor and oppressed, as well as in heroic care of lepers and of the sick during epidemics. They were also said to be particularly effective in reconverting Protestants in northern Europe and proselytizing for Catholicism outside Europe. However, the various musical settings of *Venerabilis* suggest that although Capuchin monks were presumably admired among the classes they sought to assist, they may have been objects of amusement and even ridicule among certain other classes of society. This perception arises from the mock-archaic style of music, from the obsessional repetition of the absurd, three-word text and, above all, from the stuttering imposed on the singers, which distorts the text’s ostensible meaning in disrespectful ways. As the *Catholic Encyclopedia* tells it:

Except the Jesuits, no religious order has, perhaps, been more vilely lampooned. In France, during the seventeenth century, book after book appeared defaming the friars; one of these was translated into English and published in London in 1671 under the title of *The Monk’s Hood pull’d off, or the Capuchin Fryar described*.

These anti-Capuchin tracts accused the monks of hypocrisy and pride, claiming that they secretly enjoyed luxuries while using their supposed austerities to assert moral superiority and lord it over other monks, priests and lay Catholics from their holier-than-thou posture. As for the stuttering, it may be a reference to a long-standing trope in

⁶ L. Bellosi, “La barba di San Francesco: nuove proposte per il ‘problema di Assisi,’” *Prospettive* (22 July 1980), 11-34; P. Magro, “Perchè San Francesco ‘imberbe’: S. Francesco nelle fonti incongruistiche,” *L’Italia francescana* (1986), Vol. 61, 205-14.

Christian exegesis that connects stuttering with spiritual immaturity and failure of faith; or it may be a commentary on the Capuchin emphasis on plain-spoken preaching, devoid of classical rhetoric and learning.



Figure 4 Anonymous mid-sixteenth-century wood-engraving, probably from the Veneto

A parallel to the musical satires may be seen in one in a series of early sixteenth-century visual riddles by Annibale or Agostino Carracci, which asks us to identify the figure shown here as Figure 5. The answer: a Capuchin asleep in his pulpit.⁷



Figure 5 Sketch after C.C. Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice: vite de pittori bolognesi* (1678)

The interrelated *Venerabilis* compositions, whether for two, three or four voices, contain white-note music, predominantly root-position chords, a generally homophonic texture with token points of imitation between the voices, and very little dissonance. I have identified five principal versions, but with the following proviso: the boundaries that group together variants of one version, or that distinguish between more-or-less independent versions, are blurred and to a certain extent arbitrary. Versions and sub-versions morph into one another in kaleidoscopic fashion, with familiar elements combining, recombining, appearing, disappearing, reappearing and changing in mysterious ways.

The earliest composer associated with the complex is Giacomo Carissimi (Example 1), an attribution that is accepted without demur in recent catalogues of his works.⁸ Nothing is known about the possible date or occasion of this work. The more-or-less identical composition is attributed to Lully in two manuscripts and, of course, to anonymous. This version of *Venerabilis* is fairly stable and identifiable.

Another version of *Venerabilis* that is fairly stable and identifiable is the one attributed to Pergolesi in some five manuscripts, none of them autographs (Example 2). It is said to have been written for the Capuchin monks of Pozzuoli, a former Roman town near Naples where Pergolesi died. This setting differs from all the others, for although it begins with the same type of white-note material, it continues (beyond Example 2) as if it were a canzona, with several sections in different meters. Furthermore, unlike all the other settings except some of those attributed to Padre Martini, the word “inculta” has been added, making it mean: “The venerable, unkempt beard of the Capuchin monks.” Although Pergolesi scholars are loathe to accept the authenticity of this attribution to their man,⁹ the citizens of Pozzuoli have no such doubts, as one can see from their website <http://www.comune.pozzuoli.na.it/Pozzalto/Porto.htm>. A more-or-less identical composition is attributed to Padre Martini in at least three manuscripts. However, there is also another setting of *Venerabilis* attributed to Martini in a few manuscripts, apparently a canon, which I have been unable to examine.

⁷ This joke survives. A related doodle is on the cover of Frank Zappa’s recording, *Ship Arriving Too Late To Save A Drowning Witch* (Zappa Records/Barking Pumpkin: CDZAP 42, 1982).

⁸ Sartori and Manusardi, *Carissimi: Catalogo*, 129; A.V. Jones, “Carissimi, Giacomo,” *New Grove 2*; G. Massenkeil, “Carissimi,” *MGG 2*.

⁹ Paymer, *Pergolesi*, 90. I thank Dale Monson for graciously allowing me to examine photocopies of the version attributed to Pergolesi.

Example 1 “V-e-ve-ve-ve-n-e-ne-,” attrib. Carissimi

V e ve ve ve, n e ne, ve - ne, i a ra, ve - ne - ra,
 b i bi, ve - ne - ra - bi, l i s, lis, ve - ne - ra - bi - lis, ve - - ne -
 ra - bi - lis, bar - ba ca, bar - ba ca, p u pu, bar - ba ca - pu, p u pu, bar -
 ba ca - pu, c i ci, bar - ba ca - pu - ci, n o no, bar - ba ca - pu - ci -
 no, r u m, rum, bar - ba ca - pu - ci - no - rum, ca - pu - ci - no - rum.
 Ve - ne - ra - bi - lis bar - ba, bar - ba, bar -
 ba ca - pu - ci - no - rum, bar - ba ca - pu - ci - no - rum.

The remaining versions, and variants on them, contain elements drawn from the two versions discussed above in a bewildering variety of combinations, permutations and variations. Four manuscripts contain versions of *Venerabilis* in which the melodic material has been flattened out, perhaps to suggest the reciting-note or tenor of a psalm tone (Example 3). It is one of these that bears the otherwise inexplicable title “Responorio.” These settings, which are not necessarily the same as one another, are attributed to Bagnacavallo, Martini, Mozart and, of course, anonymous.

One set of versions is linked by beginning with semibreves instead of minims (Example 4). Semibreve versions are attributed to Michael Haydn, Matthäus Fischer and, of course, anonymous. It does not take a great deal of imagination to see and hear that the semibreve incipits shown in Example 4 are “stretched” versions of the settings shown in Examples 1, 2 and 3, and Figure 6.

Finally, we come to a version that in various shapes is attributed in different manuscripts to Joseph Haydn, Camerloher, Carissimi (*sic!*), “Mozart nach B. Marcello,” and even to Mozart himself. The earliest composer whose name is associated with this

Venerabilis family is J.J. Fux, but the Fux manuscript, supposedly an autograph, seems to be lost and cannot be confirmed.¹⁰

Example 2 “V-e-ve-n-e-ne-ve-ne-,” attrib. Pergolesi

Example 3

(a) “Ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ne-ne,” flattened-out version, attrib. Mozart

(b) “Ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ne-ne,” flattened-out version, attrib. anonymous

(c) “Ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ne-ne,” flattened-out version, attrib. Bagnacavallo

(d) “Ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ve-ne-ne”/Responsorio, flattened-out version, attrib. Martini

¹⁰ The Fux “autograph” is reported in P. Kunibert (Cunibertus, O. Cap.), “Das Neueste vom ‘Venerabilis barba Capucinatorum,’” *Assisi-Glöcklein* [*Familiennachrichten der rheinisch-westfal. Kapuzinerprovinz*] (1927), 5. Thomas Hochradner, editor of the forthcoming *Fux Werke Verzeichnis*, informs me that the manuscript cannot be located (personal communication).

Example 4 ‘V-e-ve-ve-ve-’, attrib. in various MSS Matthäus Fischer, Michael Haydn and anonymous

In my exploration of sources of *Venerabilis*, one manuscript in particular caught my attention (Figure 6). Although the music of this manuscript bears neither a title nor a vocal text, it is unquestionably the composition under investigation and unmistakably written in Mozart’s hand.¹¹ Mozart’s autograph is for three voices, even though most of the manuscripts and editions that purport to purvey his version of *Venerabilis* have four voices. This autograph is not entirely unknown: it is listed in the watermark catalogue of the *NMA*, the Swedish collection in which it is housed has published a catalogue in which it is correctly identified, and Wolfgang Plath and Ulrich Konrad have each discussed it briefly.¹² The musical portion of the manuscript is entirely in Mozart’s fair-copy hand. The verbal inscriptions, however, are in other hands. Mozart’s name has been added in an unidentified hand. Maximilian Stadler, who helped Mozart’s widow and her soon-to-be second husband, Georg Nissen, sort out Mozart musical manuscripts in the late 1790s, has written “Übungen im Contrapunkt” at the head of the piece. On the verso, an authentication in the lower right is signed by Aloys Fuchs, the nineteenth-century collector of Mozartiana, whose title, “Hofkanzler,” refers to an Austrian chancellory position he held from 1838 to 1853. Fuchs had extensive dealings with the music and autograph collector, Gustav Petter, who, as the treasurer in Vienna for the province of

¹¹ I should like to thank Göran Grahn and Robert Holmin, curators of the Stiftelsen Musikkulturens Främjande in Stockholm, for providing me with photocopies of Mozart’s *Venerabilis* autograph.

¹² A. Tyson (ed.), *Wasserzeichen-Katalog*, NMA X: 33/2/i-ii (1992), 29; B. and E. Lomnäs, *Stiftelsen Musikkulturens Främjande (Ny Dahl Collection): Catalogue of Music Manuscripts* (Stockholm: Musikaliska Akademiens Bibliotek, 1995); W. Plath, “Zur Echtheitsfrage bei Mozart,” *Mozart-Jb 1971–2*, 19–36, repr. in *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, ed. G. Croll (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 432–61, and in *Wolfgang Plath: Mozarts Schriften: ausgewählte Aufsätze*, ed. M. Danckwardt (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1991), 179–96; U. Konrad, *Mozarts Schaffensweise: Studien zu den Werkautographen, Skizzen und Entwürfen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 212–13 [Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Klasse, iii/201]. Konrad suggested, plausibly, that Mozart’s *Venerabilis* manuscript now in Stockholm may be the unidentified autograph chronicled in K⁶. 626b/40 as: “Henrici, Aukt. 91 (25. Aug. 1924) Nr. 213. Übungen im Kontrapunkt, 1 1/2 S. Querformat.”

Upper Austria, was a fellow civil servant.¹³ Petter signed in the lower left of the verso, with the date “Vienna, 1 January 1851.”



¹³ R. Schall, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Wiener Musiksammlung von Aloys Fuchs* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1966), 49.



Figure 6 Mozart’s autograph of *Venerabilis*
 (Stockholm, Stiftelsen Musikkulturens Främjande, MMS 1005)

Mozart’s autograph uses a type of paper otherwise known from only one other leaf, which contains a portion of the last of a set of six German Dances, K536, entered into Mozart’s catalogue of his own works under the date January 1788. According to Plath, Mozart’s hand in the *Venerabilis* autograph is “aus der späteren Wiener Zeit”—that is, the late 1780s. Plath felt that the matter could be resolved by moving Mozart’s *Venerabilis* from Köchel’s Appendix C to Appendix A, devoted to other composers’ works that Mozart copied. And indeed, as we have seen, Mozart’s *Venerabilis* belongs to the family of settings that also bear attributions to Camerloher, Carissimi, Fux, J. Haydn and Marcello. But Plath’s sensible suggestion leaves aside the question of what exactly Mozart was copying and whether he reproduced his source literally or revised it as he went. And this last matter cannot be resolved until the ten or so manuscripts containing sub-versions of the *Venerabilis* found in Mozart’s autograph can be dated.

One can hardly miss the fact that the stuttering on the first and second syllables of “capucinatorum” in these compositions creates successions of *ca-ca* and *pu-pu*—children’s words for excrement in several European languages. And I am indebted to Francesco Degrada for pointing out to me that other portions of the stuttering create Italian words or phrases meaning “penis” and “bugger.” The scatology immediately reminds us of Mozart’s canons, several of which set texts that feature excrement. And, in one of his canons, *Difficile lectu mihi mars et jonicu*, K559, Mozart used a verbal trick parallel to

that found in *Venerabilis*: he wrote his own text in fake Latin which, when sung, is heard as an obscene phrase.¹⁴ The dating of this canon to 2 September 1788 and of Mozart's manuscript of *Venerabilis* to early 1788 opens for consideration the possibility that the latter inspired the former.

Music historians have labored mightily to document and re-imagine the contexts for Mozart's church music, for his theater music, for his public and private concerts. What context are we to imagine for Mozart's copy of *Venerabilis* and his scatological canons? Probably the same context for which he composed his "Musical Joke," for which he penned the little domestic scenes found in the *Bandeltermittelt* K441 and *Caro mio, Druck und Schluck* K¹ Anh. 5/571a, and for which he invented an aleatoric scheme for generating minuets¹⁵—that is to say, not for any public venue or aristocratic salon, but for the private entertainment of an inner circle.

In our current age of political correctness and with recent events creating a heightened awareness of the perils of not respecting the religious beliefs and practices of others, one must approach this peculiar set of pieces on *Venerabilis* with caution, trying to navigate between the Scylla of political correctness and the Charybdis of anachronistic projections onto the past. There can be little doubt, I think, that these pieces were meant as *lazzi* (as they were called in the *commedia dell'arte*), as longstanding jokes, as "Shtik" (as it used to be known in the "Borscht Belt" of the Catskills). That they make fun of Capuchin monks is clear. That this was meant, and was taken, as good-natured fun is far from clear. The anti-Capuchin tracts are vicious. But consider. The Capuchins of Pozzuoli were apparently the proud dedicatees of the version attributed to Pergolesi. Padres Bagnacavallo and Martini, who were not Capuchins, apparently thought it acceptable to indulge in this form of merriment at the expense of their Catholic brethren. Several of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century manuscripts preserving these pieces come from the libraries of Capuchin monasteries. And, finally, the latest composer to contribute to the genre was himself a Capuchin.¹⁶

A few eighteenth-century works from the category of "novelty" pieces have been investigated in great detail, but the genre as a whole has not been given a thorough-going critique. Such pieces were apparently extremely funny then, but are less so now. They fit badly into our notions of good taste or fine art. They often seem silly, banal, or in bad taste. Some are pretty awful as music. And I suspect that, as a group, they are more likely to have multiple versions and multiple attributions than works from most other genres. In instrumental music we have pieces like the "Sleighride," the "Toy Symphony" and the string quartet played only on open strings; all have several versions and several attributions. In vocal music we have a huge number of largely ignored songs, canons, part-songs, etc. with dialect texts, with racist, scatological or pornographic texts, with macaronic texts, with nonsense texts. Fake and fractured Latin fits in here with ease.

What was so entertaining about the stuttering, bearded, hooded, barefoot Capuchins? Perhaps there is something about the matter I have overlooked. But on the basis of what I have discovered so far, I can only conclude that we are in the presence of

¹⁴ When sung, it can be heard as the polyglot "Difficile leck du mich im Arsch et coglioni." Anyone familiar with the 1944 hit song, *Maresidoats and Doesidoats and Little Lambsidivy* will understand the basic principle.

¹⁵ See N. Zaslav, "Mozart's Modular Minuet Machine, K. 516f," *Festschrift for László Somfai*, ed. L. Vikárius (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 199–214.

¹⁶ The Basque P. José Antonio de Donostia (Tolosa: Graficas Laborde y Labayen [1949]).

one of the longest running gags in Western culture. Anyone who has ever watched a sitcom knows how a running gag works. Something absurd and completely improbable happens...and then happens again, and again, and again. Or a salient trait of an individual—for instance, stinginess or short temper or gullibility—is satirized by being exaggerated and shamelessly repeated in a variety of contexts.

Finally, how can the peculiar source situation best be explained? I have not been able yet to see all the sources or all the versions. But, on the basis of what can already be seen, I believe that the transmission of these interrelated pieces was in part written and in part oral, in part sincere if sometimes failed attempts to copy literally, in part attempts to edit, arrange and recompose. And always to amuse. What seems perhaps most surprising is that the charming if juvenile joke embodied in *Venerabilis* was sufficiently rich in cultural connotations that it remained in circulation generation after generation over several centuries.

Postscript

When this article was already in press I received an inquiry about it from Bernhold Schmid (Munich). Dr. Schmid was in the process of completing an article about a five-voice, two-part motet, *SU-su-PER-per* by Orlando di Lasso, the text-setting of which stutters in the same manner as in the various settings of *Venerabilis*.¹⁷ I had seen this composition mentioned by H.J. Moser as “the first classic of these alphabet jokes,”¹⁸ but having no idea that Lasso’s *SU-su-PER-per* might be connected to *Venerabilis*, I had never examined the piece. Lasso’s lacerated psalm setting was apparently well known and well liked, at least judging from the fact that it appeared in ten published anthologies between 1567 and 1619. Schmid has a fine tale to tell, and I will of course let him be the one to tell it.¹⁹ For present purposes it suffices to say that he shows Lasso’s stuttering piece to be the likely source not only of the general idea of *Venerabilis*, but also of its basic musical substance. Hence my description of the style of the *Venerabilis* complex of pieces as “mock-archaic” now proves truer than I could have imagined when I wrote it.

¹⁷ The unbowdlerized text is the incipit of Psalm 136,1 (Catholic, Orthodox = Psalm 135, Jewish, Protestant): “Super flumina Babylonis, illic sedimus, et flevimus.” The work is in *Orlando di Lasso: seine Werke in zeitgenössischen Drucken 1555–1687*, ed. H. Leuchtmann and B. Schmid (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), i, 194 [1567–10, 12]; and *O. de Lassus: Sämtliche Werke*, ed. F.X. Haberl and A. Sandberger (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1894–1926), ix, 133–36.

¹⁸ See n. 2.

¹⁹ B. Schmid, “Orlando di Lassos S u s u p e r per Super: Faktur, Deutung, Wirkung,” *Musik in Bayern* (forthcoming). [Author’s Postscript: The publication cited in this footnote has not yet appeared. The reason for this, Dr. Schmid informs me, is that he has discovered that the end of the first part of Lasso’s piece is a parody on a motet by Clemens non Papa and he is investigating the matter.]