Medievalism in Contemporary Opera

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ii

Table of Contents iii

Abstract vii

List of Images viii

List of Musical Examples x

List of Tables xii

List of Manuscripts Cited (in order of appearance) xiii

List of Abbreviations (in order of appearance) xiii

Introduction 1

Chapter Overview 6

Methodology: Time Binds 11

Close Reading 15

Temporal Drag 18

Queer Time/Medieval Time 22

Literature Review: Medievalism Studies 28

The Inception of Medievalism Studies 29

The New Medievalism 31

Taxonomies 35

Medievalism Studies and Musicology 41

Chapter 1: Robert Saxton's *Caritas* and Affective Piety 51

1.1. Introduction 51

1.1a. The Music of Robert Saxton 54

1.1b. The Illegibility of Anchorites 62

1.2. *Caritas*'s Source-Texts 67

1.2a. Letters 67

1.2b. Liturgies 73

1.2c. *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group Prayers 88

1.3. Analysis: The Confrontation (Act I, scene iii) 102

1.4. Conclusion 117

Chapter 2: Julian Philips's *The Tale of Januarie* and the Fabliau 122

2.1. Introduction 122

2.1a. Chaucerian Medievalisms 122

2.1b. The Fabliau 125

2.2. The Music of Julian Philips 133

2.2a. Influences 133

2.2b. Pythagorean Tuning 144

2.2c. Equal Temperament 151

2.3. Analyses 156

2.3a. Winter: The Market (Act I, scene iii) 156

2.3b. Spring: The Wedding (Act I, scene vi) 178

2.3c. Summer: The Garden (Act IV, scene i) 190

2.4. Epilogue: Autumn (Act IV, scenes v-vi) 204

Chapter 3: Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin* and the Troubadour Lyric 209

3.1. Introduction 209

3.1a. Slow Modernism 211

3.2. Composing a Troubadour 216

3.2a. Concept and Libretto 216

3.2b. Compositional Approaches 224

3.2c. Analytical Approaches 232

3.3. Jaufre Rudel: Lover and Crusader 246

3.3a. The *Vida* 246

3.3b. Bernard of Clairvaux and the Second Crusade 254

3.3c. 'Lanquan li jorn' as Crusade Song 259

3.4. Analysis: Act II, tableau ii 270

3.5. Conclusion 284

Chapter 4: Harrison Birtwistle's *Gawain* and the Chivalric Romance 290

4.1. Introduction 290

4.1a. Plot Synopsis 291

4.1b. Performance History 293

4.2. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight 300

4.2a. The Romance 304

4.2b. Afterlives of the Romance 310

4.2c. The Pentangle 313

4.3. Analytical Approaches 323

4.3a. Birtwistle the Medievalist 323

4.3b. Birtwistle's Idea of Line 327

4.4. Analysis 335

4.4a. The Turning of the Seasons 335

4.4b. Summer 347

4.5. Conclusion: The Endless Knot 362

Conclusion: Spirituality 369

Bibliography 385

Primary Texts 385

Scores 387

Audiovisual 388

Secondary Sources 390

Appendix: An Incomplete List of Medievalist Operas, Post-1945 434

Abstract

This thesis discusses four operas, all written after 1990, that are based on medieval texts: *Caritas* (1991, by Robert Saxton and Arnold Wesker), *The Tale of Januarie* (2017, by Julian Philips and Stephen Plaice), *L'Amour de loin* (2000, by Kaija Saariaho and Amin Maalouf), and *Gawain* (1991, by Harrison Birtwistle and David Harsent). Each case study is approached as an adaptation of a different medieval literary genre: affective piety, the fabliau, the troubadour lyric, and the chivalric romance. This organizational method provides a point of access into the cultural, critical, and creative reception histories through which texts from the twelfth-to-fourteenth centuries are received by composers, librettists, performers, readers, and audiences today.

Through those literary-critical legacies, I approach medievalism in contemporary opera by enacting queer hermeneutics as described by Elizabeth Freeman in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Combining literary, theological, and music-theoretical modes of analysis, this thesis explores two overarching avenues for enquiry:

1. How can we account for the complexities of time in composite works that span several centuries, stage premodern temporalities for post-industrial audiences, and themselves operate within the ambiguities of narrative time?
2. What does it mean to perform and spectate upon medieval texts and lives in the twenty-first century? Can the ephemerality of song connect with the ephemerality of history to stimulate creative forms of historiography? In Freeman's terms, is this mode of historiography itself a form of 'close reading'?

Reflecting on the surprising prevalence of Cistercian influences surrounding each of these operas' source-texts, I suggest that medieval spirituality can provide powerful tools with which to approach questions of performance and temporality, as well as the intense modes of love and desire that these opera stage. With a particular emphasis on how medieval writers and queer theorists conceive of secrecy and revelation, I suggest that the way in which song transcends the boundaries between discrete bodies can create a vital link between pre- and postmodern modes of desire, that thrives in the temporal gaps created by historical alterity.

List of Images

Figure 1.1: Christine seen through the window of her cell in Act I. 54

Figure 1.2: The interior of Christine's cell.....54

Figure 1.3: *Batman* villain The Anchoress. 65

Figure 1.4: Wesker's list of reference books. 78

Figure 1.5: The Invocation to Christ from the Litany. 79

Figure 1.6: Wesker's photocopy of the *Veni, creator spiritus*. 79

Figure 1.7: A c.1330 depiction of the Lactation of St Bernard (Chantilly, Musée Condé. MS 27. fol. 178r). 101

Figure 1.8: *Tonnetze* of common pitches between permutations of set 3-8, in two mutually exclusive wholetone groups. 109

Figure 2.1: The fate of friars depicted in Pasolini's *I racconti di Canterbury* (1972). 127

Figure 2.2: February from the *Très riches heures du Duc de Berry* (Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, f.2v). 137

Figure 2.3: Dick Bird's set for *The Tale of Januarie*. 139

Figure 2.4: Vicki Mortimer's set for *Written on Skin* (2012). 139

Figure 2.5: A scribal hand in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975). 140

Figure 2.6: The manuscript from the prologue to *Shrek* (2001). 140

Figure 2.7: Philips's seasonal compositional schema. 143

Figure 2.8: Pythagorean perfect fifths creating a twelve-tone spiral. 146

Figure 2.9: Priapus. 153

Figure 2.10: The 'faculties' of medieval cognition (Cambridge University Library MS Gg.1.1, f. 490v). 151

Figure 2.11: Januarie's imagination, dir. Jonathan Myerson (1998). 161

Figure 2.12: Januarie watches through his mirror while Damyan attracts women. 165

Figure 2.13: The young man in bar 292. 173
Figure 2.14: The Marian procession (above) and Venus's refrain-dance (below). 187
Figure 2.15: Historiated 'O', Christ and the Church kiss. Cambridge, King's College MS. 19, f. 12v. 202
Figure 3.1: Michael Curry's set for *L'Amour de loin* at the Metropolitan Opera (2016)...214
Figure 3.2: Raphaële Kennedy singing through manuscript illuminations in Barrière's video for *Lonh*. 230
Figure 3.3: Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 844 (MS **W**), 189v. 235
Figure 3.4: Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 20050 (MS **X**), 81v. 239
Figure 3.5: Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 22543 (MS **R**), 63r-63v. 240
Figure 3.6: Frankish Routes during the Second Crusade. 252
Figure 3.7: Rudel's *vida* (written in red) followed by 'Lanquan li jorn' in *chansonnier* **I** (Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 854, f.121v). 262
Figure 3.8: Rudel's *vida* (written in red) followed by 'Lanquan li jorn' in *chansonnier* **K** (Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 12473, f.107v). 263
Figure 4.1: Morgan (Marie Angel) and Lady Hautdesert (Elizabeth Laurence) over Camelot. 295
Figure 4.2: 'The Hecklers' protest outside the Royal Opera House at the 1994 revival of *Gawain*. 301
Figure 4.3: The Green Knight holds up his head in the *Gawain* manuscript, f. 94v. 302
Figure 4.4: The pentangle. 315
Figure 4.5: A tonsured face in a historiated T, the *Gawain* manuscript, f. 103r. 315
Figure 4.6: Bertilak's house with a pentangle floor. 323
Figure 4.7: The positions of the sun and moon represented in the score. 337
Figure 4.8: July in the *Très riches heures*. 338

Figure 4.9: The autumn tableau. 339

Figure 4.10: Gawain, an icon of the Virgin Mary (right), and a Passion illustration. 366

Figure 5.1: Koestenbaum's Pre-Raphaelite Angels. 378

Figure 5.2: One of Koestenbaum's marginal flowers. 379

Figure 5.3: The Angel Records logo. 384

List of Musical Examples

Example 1.1: *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus.* 83

Example 1.2: The first word of *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus*, transcribed. 83

Example 1.3: *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus*, bars 1-5. 84

Example 1.4: The second half of Saxton's *Veni, creator spiritus*, bars 122-26. 85

Example 1.5: The confrontation scene, Act I, scene iii, bars 313-29. 104

Example 1.6: Harmonic reduction of Act I, scene iii, bars 313-29. 108

Example 1.7: Transformations of set 3-8 in Act I, scene iii, bars 313-29. 113

Example 2.1: Pythagorean fifths from G, with a 'wolf fifth' between C♯ and A♭. 146

Example 2.2: The refrain from the *Agincourt Carol.* 148

Example 2.3: The wassailing song, bars 17-24. 149

Example 2.4: Priapus's opening narration cued by F♮, bars 46-48. 152

Example 2.5: The *encomium* trio, bars 188-95. 156

Example 2.6: Market chorus, Act I, scene iii, bars 82-90. 163

Example 2.7: Placebo's semitonal haircut, bars 210-12. 165

Example 2.8: Hexachords reduced to chromatic pitch collections, bars 219-22. 168

Example 2.9: B and C at the centre of the octatonic harmony, bars 224-27. 168

Example 2.10: Damyan's market refrain, bars 231-47. 169

Example 2.11: The first customer’s hexachords missing D and chromatic figure missing A, bars 248-52. 171
Example 2.12: The second customer’s hexachord with the first half transposed down a semitone, bars 281-84. 172
Example 2.13: The third customer’s hexachord with the second half transposed up a semitone, bars 291-94. 172
Example 2.14: Damyan's second refrain, up a semitone, bars 261-70. 174
Example 2.15: The third refrain, up another semitone, with string harmonies around D major, bars 307-28. 175
Example 2.16: Transpositions of set 4-23 (relative to prime form) in bars 337-47. 178
Example 2.17: Semitonal voice-leading between transpositions of set 4-23. 179
Example 2.18: 'Crist was a man' and *Ave Maris Stella* in comparison..... 185
Example 2.19: The 'diabolic' refrain, bars 19-22. 219
Example 2.20: Voice-leading at the beginning of Act IV, scene I, bars 27-78. 196
Example 2.21: Climactic canon in Act IV, scene I, bars 100-12. 200
Example 3.1: Extract from *Lohn* (1996) alongside 'Lanquan li jorn' (as in MS **X**). 236
Example 3.2: First page of Werf’s edition of 'Lanquan li jorn'. 238
Example 3.3: The melody in **W**'s 'exotic' ending. 241
Example 3.4: The 'basic chord' in *L’Amour de loin.* 243
Example 3.5: The four ‘harmonic fields’ in *L’Amour de loin*. 244
Example 3.6: Werf’s transcription from *chansonnier* **W**. 266
Example 3.7: Melodic comparison of the Pilgrim’s stanzas in Act II, tableau ii. 274
Example 3.8: The Pilgrim sings stanza 5, bars 373-418. 278
Example 3.9: Chris Brown's piano reduction of bars 373-79. 280
Example 3.10: Low-string microtonal inflections in bars 373-83. 280

Example 3.11: The women’s chorus takes up the vielle topic, bars 458-64. 282

Example 3.12: The end of Clémence’s excerpt from stanza 5, bars 546-74. 284

Example 4.1: The first syllable of Pérotin's *Sederunt Principes* (ed. Ethel Thurston).....349

Example 4.2: The *Regina Coeli* motet (Universal Edition reduction). 350

Example 4.3: The beginning of the *Regina Coeli* with labelled interval classes. 356

Example 4.4: Tritone pairs colour coded. 358

Example 4.5: Tritones that return in the same voices and register are tied. 360

Example 4.6: Instances of set 4-22 in the first part of *Regina Coeli*. 361

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Tonal schema in *Caritas* according to Thomas's analysis.....56

Table 1.2: Anchoritic liturgical items in the Magdalen Pontifical and *Caritas*. 76

Table 2.1: Extracts from the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* in Act I, scene vi.....182

Table 2.2: Text from Act IV, scene i. 193

Table 4.1: Marian antiphons and corresponding liturgical/*Gawain* seasons. 340

Table 4.2: The structure of the text in the second winter tableau, figures 146-57. 342

Table 4.3: The structure of the text in the summer tableau, figures 123-35.....343

List of Manuscripts Cited (in order of appearance)

British Library MS Cotton Cleopatra C VI (*Ancrene Wisse*).

British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D XV (anchoritic enclosure liturgy).

Chantilly, Musée Condé. MS 27 (the Lactation of St Bernard).

Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.1.1 (cognition diagram).

Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65 (*Les Très riches heures du Duc de Berry*).

British Library MS 24098 (*The Golf Book*).

British Library MS Harley 1758 (*The Canterbury Tales*).

Cambridge, King's College MS. 19 (Bede's commentary on the Song of Songs).

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 844 (troubadour **W**, music notation).

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 20050 (troubadour **X**, music notation).

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 22543 (troubadour **R**, music notation).

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 854 (troubadour **I**, *vida*).

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 12473 (troubadour **K**, *vida*).

British Library, Cotton Nero A X (*Gawain*).

List of Abbreviations (in order of appearance)

AW: *Ancrene Wisse*

Wooing: *Þe Wohunge of ure Laured* ('The Wooing of Our Lord')

Most Excellent: *On wel swuðe god ureisun of God almihiti* ('A Most Excellent Prayer to God Almighty')

GSMD: Guildhall School of Music and Drama

Introduction

> I was riveted by Margery's life story, by what she'd done, the consequences of her queer behaviour, and how she'd made sure it was documented, leaving her mark on the world, with her 'recording', *The Book of Margery Kempe*. I thought that I wasn't unlike Margery, with her being called the 'Madwoman of God' and me being denounced by a Member of Parliament as a 'wrecker of civilization' …. I felt an affinity with her resilience, what drove her …. And that insatiable, quivering, restless energy that refuses to go unanswered.[1]

Fifteenth-century Christian mystic Margery Kempe has enjoyed an illustrious queer and feminist afterlife. Her status as the first English vernacular autobiographer, her noisily excessive and eccentric acts of public piety, and her repeated challenges to masculine authority have been depicted in Robert Glück's 1994 gay erotic novel *Margery Kempe* and Brian Inglis's 2009 chamber opera *Song of Margery Kempe*, and engendered comparison with such impious modern counterparts as performance artist Marina Abramović and reality television star Kim Kardashian.[2] In the above quotation, avant-garde musician Cosey Fanni Tutti reflects on what motivated her to introduce Kempe into *Re-sisters*, her memoir-biography of electronic music pioneer Delia Derbyshire. Between her own experience of smear campaigns in British parliament and media and Kempe's censure at the hands of certain religious authorities, Tutti finds a shared independence and defiance. She positions Kempe and herself as sexual outsiders: medieval married celibate alongside modern sex worker who incorporates pornographic elements into her artistic installations,

[1] Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Re-sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti* (London: Faber & Faber, 2022), 29-30.

[2] See, for example Sarah Salih, 'Writing Performed Lives: Margery Kempe Meets Marina Abramovic', in Laura Kalas and Laura Varnam (eds.), *Encountering The Book of Margery Kempe* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2021), 259-77; Alicia Spencer-Hall, *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens: Divine Visions as Cinematic Experience* (Knowledge Communities; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 173-87; Sheila Christie, '"Thei stodyn upon stoyls for to beheldyn hir": Margery Kempe and the Power of Performance', *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia: International Review of English Studies,* 38 (2002), 95-103; Angela Jane Weisl, 'Confession, Contrition, and the Rhetoric of Tears: Medievalism and Reality Television', in Gail Ashton and Daniel T. Kline (eds.), *Medieval Afterlives in Popular Culture* (First editon. edn.; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 129-44; Fiona Tolhurst, 'Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe as Contemporary Cult Figures', in Gail Ashton (ed.), *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 187-99; Margaret Sheble, 'Queer Eye for God: Reading Margery Kempe as Female Masculine', *Magistra,* 24/1 (2018), 39-61.

both striving against establishment denunciation.[3] While Tutti self-consciously struggles to reconcile Kempe's Christianity with her own atheism, she finds with the mystic a common fascination in the hinge between pleasure and pain.[4]

Tutti's pertinence to this thesis is, at first glance, tangential: she is a contemporary musician, but her relationship with opera does not extend far beyond her punning Mozartian name, and none of her output aside from *Re-sisters* has been particularly medievalist. But three facets of Tutti's affinity with Kempe touch on central theoretical principles of the study of medievalism in opera. Firstly, she connects her and Kempe's desires to 'record' their lives in ways which persist after death, via *The Book of Margery Kempe* (late 1440s) and Tutti's artistic output (including her 2017 memoir *Art Sex Music*).[5] Secondly, she receives Kempe not only as an author, but as a fellow performer, discussing her 'queer behaviour', conspicuous religious dress, and 'loud and exhibitionistic' public weeping in tandem with the extravagance and spectacle of the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play.[6] Finally, Tutti finds in common with Kempe an 'insatiable, quivering, restless energy that refuses to go unanswered' which she frames as transgressive resilience: 'living the

[3] Later in the book, she reflects on her and Kempe's shared experiences of rape. See Tutti, *Re-sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti*, 97.
[4] As I discuss in the conclusion to this thesis, William E. Burgwinkle and Cary Howie have written about the kinship between modern porn stars and medieval saints. See *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); see also Susannah Mary Chewning, *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture: The Word Made Flesh* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
[5] Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (Early English Text Society; London: Oxford University Press, 1940); Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Art Sex Music* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017).
[6] Tutti, *Re-sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti*, 14; for a discussion of Kempe and sound, see Tekla Bude, *Sonic Bodies: Text, Music, and Silence in Late Medieval England* (Sound in History; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 61-90.

best we can, maintaining our presence and strength of will, handling all the bad things thrown our way'.[7]

In this thesis, I explore the ways in which performance, and perhaps especially opera, can channel this 'insatiable, quivering, restless energy' that Tutti describes, forging profound and mysterious connections across several centuries of time. Exceeding mere endurance, this restlessness animates an intense desire to go beyond the present moment, to transcend isolation and reach into both the past and the future. At the same time, its 'quivering', vibrating quality suggests a drastic rootedness in the present moment. For both Kempe and Tutti, that energy—pulsing in the now, restive in the potential for connection—has manifested in sexual transgression. Kempe fostered an unusually overtly embodied devotional style, overcome by the desire to touch Christ's body, insisting upon wearing white (despite being married and not a virgin), and loudly experiencing intense, multisensory visions of the Passion. Always referring to herself in the third person as 'þis creatur' ('this creature'), Kempe recalls her dramatic reaction to one such vision:

> she turned herself first on one side and then on the other, with great sobbing, unable to keep herself stable because of the unquenchable fire of love burning in her soul. Then many people wondered at her, asking her what ailed her, to whom she, as a creature all wounded with love and as one whose reason had failed her, cried with a loud voice, 'the Passion of Christ slays me'.[8]

While Kempe's unbridled devotions and proclamations brought her dangerously close to being tried for heresy, Tutti's work was the target of conservative censure throughout the

[7] Tutti, *Re-sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti*, 16.

[8] "Sche turnyd hir fyrst on þe o syde & sithyn on þeoper wyth gret sobbyng, vn-mythy to kepyn hir-selfe in stabilnes for þe vnqwenchabyl fyer of lofe whech brent ful sor in hir sowle. þan meche pepyl wonderyd up-on hir, askyng hir what sche eyled, to whom sche as a creatur al wowndyd wyth lofe & as reson had fayled, cryed wyth lowde voys, 'þe passyon of Crist sleth me'". Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, 98-99. Cited in Kathy Lavezzo, 'Sobs and Sighs Between Women: The Homoerotics of Compassion in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in Louise O. Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (eds.), *Premodern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 175-98, 181.

1970s. Her 'Prostitution' exhibition at London's Institute of Contemporary Art (October 1976), to give just one example, featured framed pages from porn magazines, props used with her art collective COUM Transmissions (used tampons, meat cleavers, anal syringes, chains, and Vaseline), and a performance by a stripper.[9]

The ways in which Kempe and Tutti lay themselves bare, exposing their interiors, surpass simple social transgression. They elevate the body from mundane gendered existence into more ambiguous and powerful modes of being, breached by ecstatic visions or sexual paraphernalia, overflowing with excessive tears or brusque eroticism and—either through extravagant tears or industrial noise music—emitting unapologetically gratuitous sounds that explode the verge between pain and pleasure.[10] In these excessive processes, at once deeply embodied and extramundane, sexual and spiritual modes of transcendence are rendered inseparable. The combination of theology and sexuality may seem like a deliberate provocation, but they permeate each of the medieval texts explored in this thesis's chapters: mystical desire for the body of Christ in Chapter 1, perverse references to the Song of Songs in Chapter 2, crusade-inflected modes of desire in Chapter 3, and chivalric Marianism in Chapter 4.

As my overview of chapters in the following subsection demonstrates, the operas in this thesis are all based on medieval literature; the spiritual-sexual themes that I identify in each are, in every case, sites for lively discussion among those medieval texts' scholars in the present day. In the conclusion to the thesis, theoretical issues surrounding the

[9] Kathy Battista, *Renegotiating the Body* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 52-54.
[10] See Melle Jan Kromhout, '"Over the Ruined Factory There's a Funny Noise": Throbbing Gristle and the Mediatized Roots of Noise in/as Music', *Popular Music and Society*, 34/1 (2011), 23-34, 26-27.

connection between spirituality and sexuality form the primary lens through which I look back across these operas, drawing on such works of medievalist cultural criticism as William E. Burgwinkle and Cary Howie's *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture* (an exploration of ecstatic modes of spectating on both medieval saints and postmodern porn stars).[11] Strikingly similar to the Tutti-Kempe comparison with which I open this thesis, texts like Burgwinkle and Howie's highlight how spirituality and sexuality are not only intertwined in so many medieval texts, but can form the basis of a medieval*ist* way of approaching them. Medievalism by its very nature melds medieval and modern cultures, and in doing so may highlight similarities and connections between distant time periods. On the other hand, sexual mores can constitute the most confronting and ethically uncomfortable differences between the Middle Ages and modernity.[12] Moreover, arguably one of the most salient differences between the medieval and modern periods is the epistemic shift brought about by the advent of atheism. Within the geographical realms that the medieval texts in this thesis cover, faith in the God of Abraham was virtually hegemonic.[13] Today widely considered to be just one among many available beliefs to be assessed, accepted, or rejected, God in medieval Europe was a fundamental (albeit mysterious) truth. Medievalism is a site for radical alterity, as well as for connection.

This thesis focuses on four operas: *Caritas* (1991) by Robert Saxton and Arnold Wesker, *The Tale of Januarie* (2017) by Julian Philips and Stephen Plaice, *L'Amour de loin* (2000) by Kaija Saariaho and Amin Maalouf, and *Gawain* (1991) by Harrison Birtwistle and David Harsent. There are many other works that could have been included, and the

[11] William E. Burgwinkle and Cary Howie, *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).
[12] See Carissa M. Harris, *Obscene Pedagogies: Transgressive Talk and Sexual Education in Late Medieval Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).
[13] I refer to the God of Abraham to encompass Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

extensive list of post-1945 medievalist operas appended to this thesis is by no means exhaustive. Echoes of the Middle Ages abound in musical compositions of the twenty-first century, from the chant transformations in Julia Holter's 2022 live soundtrack for 1928 silent film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* to Jennifer Walshe's AI-generated renditions of medieval song in her 2021 album *A Late Anthology of Early Music Vol. 1: Ancient to Renaissance*. Once, while speaking to me after a concert at London performance venue Café OTO, composer Oliver Leith rolled back his sleeve to reveal a tattoo of a miniature from folio 11r of the *Roman de Fauvel*. I give a more fine-grained overview of how the operas in this thesis speak to one another (and indeed to various avenues of scholarship) in the following chapter overview. When taken together, what they illustrate with particular efficacy is that the sexual and the spiritual, while being sites for great incongruity between medieval and modern sensibilities, can also be the very sites in which medievalist texts are at their most vibrant, most thrilling, most suffused with that 'insatiable, quivering, restless energy' which Tutti describes.[14]

Chapter Overview

The operas discussed in this thesis were chosen from relatively strict criteria: all were written after 1990; each libretto is based on a specific text written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries; and each of those texts represents a different literary genre. These genres are flexibly defined and often contentious, but they provide critical purchase on the rich legacies of scholarly literature that have shaped these source-texts' receptions in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. The emphasis on literary scholarship also enables me to enact the methodology of close reading that I discuss after this chapter overview. While

[14] Tutti, *Re-sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti*, 16.

this interpretative methodology remains constant across each of the case studies, the way in which I have approached individual composers, their sketches, and their opinions varies between chapters. The reasons for this are partly circumstantial: the Covid-19 pandemic prevented me from travelling to Saariaho's archive at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, where her sketches are held. Moreover, both Saariaho and Birtwistle suffered from ill health and, sadly, died before the completion of this thesis. On the other hand, the emphasis of my research is overwhelmingly interpretative rather than archival. When doing interpretative work, maintaining a certain amount of critical distance from authors-figures can serve as a productive reminder that the words of living people require as much careful scrutiny as those of people who have been dead for centuries. Moreover, many published interviews with Birtwistle, Saariaho, and Saxton exist, along with (in some cases extensive) analyses of their respective operas, and in each case I have engaged closely with these bodies of secondary literature. In Philips's case, on the other hand, virtually no secondary literature existed; it was necessary for me to conduct archival research myself.

Chapter 1 discusses Robert Saxton and Arnold Wesker's chamber opera *Caritas* (1991) and its use of imagery from the Middle English anchoritic texts known as the Wooing Group, especially the tract *Ancrene Wisse*. I treat *Ancrene Wisse* as an example of affective piety (not a genre *per se*, but rather a devotional style found across the various genres of religious writing that the Wooing Group spans).[15] I also treat it a major legacy of Cistercian spirituality and introduce the work of Bernard of Clairvaux, whose influence is felt across all the medieval texts referenced in this thesis.[16] Anchorites like Christine

[15] Bella Millett, 'The Genre of Ancrene Wisse', in Yoko Wada (ed.), *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 29-44.
[16] Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul, 'Introduction', in Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul (eds.), *Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 1-18, 2.

Carpenter—the real person on whose life *Caritas* is based—vowed to live their entire lives in a single room as religious recluses. After discussing the relative illegibility of their vocation to modern audiences, I examine the dramatic tension between the ostensible solitude of anchoritic devotion and the emphatically public performance of an on-stage, singing character. Focusing on a confrontation scene between Christine and her ex-fiancé, my musical analysis asks how Saxton's setting moves between harmonic structures to articulate the fold between the inside of Christine's cell, the outside world, and the ways in which anchoritic spirituality transcends that division.

In Chapter 2, I approach Geoffrey Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* as a fabliau, adapted by Julian Philips and Stephen Plaice in *The Tale of Januarie* (2017). A genre of comical short story, the fabliau tends to use coarse humour, sexual escapades, and bodily functions to play with class and gender imbalances. More unusually for a fabliau, the *Merchant's Tale* includes classical figures (Pluto, Proserpina, and Priapus) and debate passages about marriage and sexual politics. Through a series of shorter analyses of *The Tale of Januarie*, I discuss how Philips uses different intonation systems to express characters' states of mortality, and combines the fifteenth-century Agincourt Carol and Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue* to create an intertextual marriage debate. Through the lens of Bernard of Clairvaux's affective sermons, I also discuss Philips and Plaice's sensual setting of Chaucer's quotations from the Song of Songs. Foremost, this chapter explores the way in *The Tale of Januarie* maps its narrative and characters onto the four seasons, enfolding its fabliau-politics into a sexually and spiritually charged temporal landscape.

Chapter 3 focuses on the twelfth-century troubadour lyric in Kaija Saariaho and Amin Maalouf's *L'Amour de loin* (2000), specifically its treatment of the song 'Lanquan li jorn' by Jaufre Rudel. I focus on the way in which diegetic song operates within the 'slow modernist' musical landscape of Saariaho's score, and use the concept of *mouvance* to discuss how song can be a form of historiography, travelling across time and space via various forms of embodiment. Confronting the fact that the historical person of Jaufre Rudel likely fought in the Second Crusade, I also interrogate Bernard of Clairvaux's instrumental role in promoting that war, and consider the deeper, racialized connections between medieval romance, spirituality, and violence. In my analysis of a verse of 'Lanquan li jorn' sung by the go-between Pilgrim character in Act II, tableau ii, I reflect on how Saariaho's settings of Rudel's song are also particular loci of musical orientalism. While Saariaho and Maalouf's opera obscures Rudel's connection to the Second Crusade, I suggest that a close reading of the modes of desire across distances that troubadour song can articulate a Cistercian nexus between spirituality, eroticism, and violence.

Chapter 4 discusses the Middle English chivalric romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in Harrison Birtwistle and David Harsent's *Gawain* (1991). The Cistercian influence in this poem manifests in the way in which the poet glosses Gawain's heraldry: the emblem of the five-pointed star. This 'pentangle', or 'endless knot', is mapped onto both the body of the knight and the body of Christ through the poet's invocations of the five senses and the five wounds at calvary. In Geraldine Heng's reading, the magic green girdle that Gawain receives partway through the poem (and which ultimately causes his downfall) is understood as a feminine analogue to the pentangle, deriving its power from its flexibility and humanizing what would otherwise be a rather intransigent narrative. I use these two structural 'knots' as a hermeneutic device for approaching Birtwistle's

compositional medievalism, which is often expressed in terms of musical 'line'. In my musical analysis, I discuss the large, five-part ritual at the end of Act I during which Gawain receives the pentangle and compare the pentangle's symbolism to this fivefold approach to musical time. I then focus on one of Birtwistle's 'motets' within the ritual—a modernist pastiche of fourteenth-century *organum purum*—and examine how ambiguity within large structures can be understood in terms of mutual dependency. Like the girdle and the pentangle, I suggest that this conceptual dialectic reframes heroic chivalry as a performance of productive theological vulnerability.

In the conclusion, I draw the temporal and performative concerns of this thesis into a broader conception of voice, embodiment, and transcendence. With an emphasis on queer theory's recourses to angel song, I reflect on how each of these four operas in this thesis alight upon a common emphasis on intense modes of love and desire, broadly connected by the (sometimes surprising) influence of Cistercian spirituality. By directing the theoretical complexities of temporality and performance towards a critical understanding of spirituality, I suggest that song can be a vital link between pre- and postmodern modes of desire, that thrives in the gaps created by historical alterity. In the conclusion to this thesis, I explore this paradox between alterity and connection as a form of transcendence, and suggest that the medium of opera itself invites discussion in such excessive terms. The task of this introduction now is to examine what it is that medievalism in contemporary opera transcends. Once again taking cues from Tutti and Kempe, I do so by examining what it transgresses. Namely: normative approaches to sexuality and time.

Methodology: Time Binds

Medievalism in contemporary opera disrupts time on at least two levels. It does so:

> 1. historically, by performing centuries-old events and narratives in the here-and-now; and
>
> 2. narratively, within the peculiar modes of time within which musical ontology and sung drama operate.

The first point is the fundamental alterity between the medieval and modern from which other alterities (like sexuality and spirituality) flow. Medievalist texts freely and creatively elide the hundreds of years of intervening history between the Middle Ages and the present. The second point encompasses more than just the narrative universe within which an opera's events unfold. It encompasses the sometimes profoundly unrealistic pace at which characters might narrate or reflect on situation or interact with one another, as well as the elusive phenomenology of how the experience of song can cause time to ebb, flow, or proverbially 'stand still' for performers and spectators.[17] As Férdia J. Stone-Davis suggests, the modern musical text is 'simultaneously universal and particular (in some sense eternal and temporal)'; it exists at once as the reified text (a score, for example), within the clock-time of scheduled performances, within the temporal ambiguities of listening perception ('a movement within the space of its own'), and is itself some more ambiguous composite of all of the above and more.[18] How can musicology account for the vast differences between medieval time and modern time on one hand, and the elusive trappings of musical stage-time on the other?

[17] See especially Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Linda Fisher, 'Feminist Phenomenological Voices', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 43/1 (2010), 83-95.
[18] Férdia J. Stone-Davis, 'Music and Transcendence', (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 27.

Throughout this thesis, I approach these temporal disruptions through a methodology of close reading, foremost inspired by Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*.[19] In Freeman's model of close reading, the presentness of live performance (what Carolyn Abbate describes as its 'drastic' quality) becomes a space in which history is an active force, freed from the normative strictures of clock-time, chronology, and other conceptions of time usually taken for granted in everyday life.[20] Freeman uses the term 'chrononormativity' to describe how manipulations of time are indispensable to power structures.[21] Time binds human life into 'seemingly ordinary' routines of wage labour, childrearing, the accumulation of wealth, and its distribution among lines of family inheritance after death; the normalness of these strictures derives from the ways in which modernity organizes value and meaning around them.[22] Via this technique, 'institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts' rather than what they are: historical contingencies.[23] As Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out, the modern institution of history itself is bound in a 'belief that *everything* can be historicized' in the 'naturally existing, continuous flow of historical time', which is entirely linear and secular.[24] The operas in this thesis interrupt that 'continuous flow', and do so by staging aspects of medieval spirituality that further transgress this post-enlightenment secularity.

Under capitalism, chrononormativity is a means of economic expansion, and Freeman points out that industrialization 'entailed a violent retemporalization of bodies once tuned

[19] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Perverse Modernities; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
[20] Carolyn Abbate, 'Music—Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30/3 (2004), 505-36.
[21] Ibid., 3.
[22] Ibid., 3-4.
[23] Ibid., 3.
[24] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Time of History and the Times of Gods', in Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (eds.), *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 35-60, 36-37.

to the seasonal rhythms of agricultural labour'.[25] Pastoral tropes, arcadianism, and technological anxieties are defining characteristics of Pre-Raphaelite medievalism (especially pronounced in the utopian socialism of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*).[26] As I discuss in Chapters 2 and 4, these tropes persist in medievalism partly because, while labour conditions in medieval Europe were neither monolithic nor especially desirable, the rhythms of medieval life inevitably and essentially do differ from those of modern life.[27] Certain seasonal patterns of work persist (in agricultural and tourist industries, for example) and the liturgical calendar still makes its presence felt during (economically productive) public holidays, but the temporal patterns by which the Middle Ages were organized have now been subsumed into the generation of surplus wealth. Perhaps, then, it is unsurprising that seasonal rhythms are key structural forces in *The Tale of Januarie* and *Gawain*: they were already structural elements in the medieval texts on which they are based, and the alterity of that premodern seasonal dependence is just graspable enough to be dramatically enticing.

Freeman also points out how chrononormativity binds the time of individual human lives into narrative teleologies of 'personal history', to the extent that state documentation of such 'socioeconomically "productive" moments' of birth, citizenship, marriage, employment, and death is, in modernity, 'what it means to have a life at all'.[28] Since at least the nineteenth century (and arguably earlier), these narratives have also manifested as

[25] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 3.
[26] John M. Ganim, 'Flesh and Stone: William Morris's *News from Nowhere* and Chaucer's Dream Visions', *Contemporary Chaucer Across the Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).
[27] For a discussion of medieval structures of time, see Aron Yakovlevich Gurevich, 'What is Time?', *Categories of Medieval Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 93-154.
[28] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 5.

what Julia Kristeva terms 'woman's time'.[29] Through the effacement of domestic labour, women and the home symbolize an 'imagined plenitude of "timeless" time'; a highly bounded realm of maternal love to which 'history can return and regroup'.[30] Much of Cosey Fanni Tutti's identification with Margery Kempe hinges around Kempe's spectacular rejection of domesticity, disavowing sex with her husband in the pursuit of her far less containable divine love of Jesus. The most historically direct parallel with Kempe's domestic transgression explored in this thesis is that of Christine Carpenter, and Saxton and Wesker make much of Carpenter's friction with her former betrothed and family members as they rail against her decision to become a religious recluse (see Chapter 1).

It is worth noting the two operas in this thesis that narrativize the lives of named historical figures—*Caritas* and *L'Amour de loin*—both end with the death of the male lover, while the female lover (via an extended aria) breaches into new spiritual and psychosexual realms. Meanwhile, May in the *Tale of Januarie* is narratively (and silently) folded back into the structures of mercantile wealth inheritance, while Morgan and Lady Hautdesert in *Gawain* maintain their status as powerful adversaries of the Arthurian court. These particularities are, as each of my chapters explores, partly contingent on the genres of their source-texts. The forms in which modern readers receive the lives of historical figures like the troubadour Jaufre Rudel (*L'Amour de loin*) and the anchorite Christine Carpenter (*Caritas*) are already highly fragmentary and (in Jaufre's case especially) unavoidably literary. But the less-than-entirely fictional nature of the genres they represent means that

[29] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 187-213; cited in Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 5-6.
[30] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 6.

history enfolds their narratives not into the stable 'timelessness' of domesticity, but into a collectively imagined timelessness simultaneously more real and more insane. They emerge for twenty-first-century audiences as figures 'split', in Freeman's terms, 'by prior violence and future possibility'.[31] Their openness is not a void of lost knowledge, but instead presents so many 'wounds' in time through which, Freeman suggests, queer theory can 'propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, of living historically'.[32]

Close Reading

That Freeman should conceive of temporal disruption as a 'wound' is salutary for this thesis, in which wounds are surprisingly prominent. Chapter 1 in particular explores the importance of the wound in Christ's side in anchoritic literature, and the image returns in Origen's reading of the Song of Songs in Chapter 2, Bernard of Clairvaux's violent preaching in Chapter 3, and the *Gawain* poet's parallelism between the five wounds of Christ and five points of the pentangle in Chapter 4. In Chapter 1 especially, I discuss how Christ's wounds on the cross have profound implications for time in medieval Christian hermeneutics, representing both the end of the Messiah's life on earth and the beginning of a new era of salvation from sin.[33] Freeman does not invoke the wound in Christological terms. But like Christ's wounds, history's wounds invite us to treat it as a living, human thing; 'prior violence' creates the wound just as the wound itself creates a full space that demand careful examination and interpretation. Just as Christ's wounds invited close

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 9-12; xxii.
[33] This temporal structure, codified in both the Julian and Gregorian *Anno Domini* calendars, persists in the modern, secular 'Common Era' dating system.

readings from medieval authors, Freeman argues that history's wounds invite close reading from queer theorists.

For Freeman, historiography itself is a method of close reading:

> reading closely means fixating on that which resists any easy translation into present-tense terms, any 'progressive' program for the turning of art into a cultural/historical magic bullet or toxin. To close read is to linger, to dally, to take pleasure in tarrying, and to hold out that these activities can allow us to look both hard and askance at the norm …. close reading is a way into history, not a way out of it, and itself a form of historiography and historical analysis.[34]

I read Freeman's critique of the 'magic bullet' as a hesitation to find progressive ideas expressed in art to have direct liberatory consequences. A queer medievalist example might be Charlie Josephine's play *I, Joan* (performed at Shakespeare's Globe in 2022), in which Joan of Arc is explicitly non-binary. By sympathetic reviewers, it was described as 'a refined lesson in the trans experience' but 'timid about depicting Joan as either a killer or a Catholic', suggesting that their 'success in battle came as a result of progressive values and general fabulousness'.[35] Reactionary detractors notwithstanding (and there were many), *I, Joan*'s didactic monologues and playful euphoria are highly legible in present-tense terms, where queerness is (Freeman writes) reduced to 'just one of many possible "lifestyles"; … feminism morphed into a commodified "Girl Power" and "queer" into the premise for cable TV shows'.[36] Only a sufficiently palatable transness passes as useful, and the 'lesson' of how to live it relies on the expurgation of spirituality and violence.

[34] Ibid., xvi.
[35] Anya Ryan, '*I, Joan* review: Non-binary Joan of Arc Proves a Rousing Protest Piece', *The Guardian,* 2 September 2022; Andrzej Lukowski, '*I, Joan* review', *TimeOut,* 1 September 2022.
[36] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories,* xv.

In the literature review at the end of this introduction, I identify a tendency in the field of medievalism studies to construct large compilations or taxonomies of discrete case studies. There are of course many exceptions to that tendency, and I set my methodology alongside those exceptions by following Freeman's 'decision to unfold, slowly, a small number of imaginative texts rather than amass a weighty archive of or around texts'.[37] She writes that 'to treat … texts and their formal work as theories of their own, interventions upon both critical theory and historiography'.[38] To treat texts as 'theories of their own' involves ascribing them a certain amount of agency, a musicological practice influentially criticized by Joseph Kerman for obscuring the analyst's ideological preconceptions and divorcing the text from its cultural realities.[39] As I discuss in the following subsection, the ontology of live performance belies the possibility of musical texts accruing agency independent of their spectators. These constraints are productive: Freeman's analytical method (and my own) to a great extent emphasizes hermeneutics, a practice which she suggests 'indirectly feeds the making of new social forms across space and time'.[40] In other words, rather than seeking to uncover meaning within texts, close reading seeks to generate new meanings that, far from being bound within that text, stretch across history.

My objects of close reading in this thesis are not always obviously or explicitly queer texts, in the sense that they do not depict anything unambiguously identifiable as, say, a gay relationship. My privileging of queer theory in this thesis instead stems from the uncanny resemblances between Freeman's project and my own, both in her resistance to

[37] Ibid., xvii.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Joseph Kerman, 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out', *Critical Inquiry*, 7/2 (1980), 311-31; for a rebuttal of Kerman, see Kofi Agawu, 'How We Got Out of Analysis, and How to Get Back in Again', *Music Analysis*, 23/2-3 (2004), 267-86.
[40] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xix.

time's normative strictures and in this shared methodology of close reading. Nevertheless, each of the operas in this thesis invite queer intervention. *Caritas* presents the anchoritic vocation as one of radical celibacy, in which Christine (and other women like her) reject normative married life. In *The Tale of Januarie,* I read the pleasure garden through the lens of Leo Bersani's hermeneutics of cruising. *L'Amour de loin*, with its ambiguously gendered Pilgrim-character, has already been approached as a queer text by Sanna Iitti especially.[41] Finally, the violent homosociality of *Gawain,* whose fourteenth-century source-poem has inspired several queer interpretations, is further destabilized by the emphasis on ambiguity I explore though pentangle and girdle symbolism. [42] Freeman describes close reading as her 'queerest commitment', and these flashes of explicit modes of queer theory in this thesis (and its fuller resurgence in the conclusion) are surface manifestations of a longer, underlying 'queer commitment' to close reading.[43]

Temporal Drag

Almost all of Freeman's case studies are drawn from what she terms 'time arts', including film, video, and installation.[44] Citing Philip Rosen, she suggests that 'photographic media, like works of historiography, inevitably posit "a different *when* from that of the spectator"', confronting audiences with a negotiation between past and present 'in a cultural terrain of historicity'.[45] Again citing Rosen, she adds that film 'creates a historically specific shared temporality, setting limits on how long the spectator can dwell

[41] Sanna Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', *Journal of the IAWM,* 8 (2002), 9-14.
[42] Gail Ashton, 'The Perverse Dynamics of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Arthuriana,* 15/3 (2005), 51-74, 52; Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 51-54; Carolyn Dinshaw, 'Getting Medieval: *Pulp Fiction, Gawain,* Foucault', in Dolores Frese, O'Brien Warwick, and Katherine O'Keeffe (eds.), *The Book and The Body* (Notre Dame; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 116-64.
[43] Ibid., xvii.
[44] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories,* xviii.
[45] Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 20; 178; cited in Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories,* xviii.

on any one object or experience any one story, and thus socializing (or, we might say, binding) the gaze'.[46] To a great extent, the same could be said for opera. While the gaze of the spectator is perhaps less bound by the stage than by the selection of camera angles and distances available to filmmakers (and, for that matter, videographers who capture opera performances on film), Rosen's core emphasis on audiences dwelling on a story within a controlled space of time posits spectatorship as a mode of communal historiography.

The historiographical practice of medievalism in time arts could be productively interpreted as what Freeman terms 'temporal drag'—a pun on the queer tendency towards lateness: 'to trail behind actually existing social possibilities' and 'to be interested in the tail end of things, willing to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless'.[47] Freeman defines temporal drag as

> the act of plastering the body with outdated rather than just cross-gendered accessories, whose resurrection seems to exceed the axis of gender and begins to talk about, indeed talk back to, history.[48]

Medievalism may seem to stretch the definition of 'outdatedness' to an almost humorous extent, but this invocation of drag speaks aptly to the excess, lewdness, and strangeness that often characterizes stage medievalisms (and indeed opera). It is precisely via this excessive practice of 'resurrection' that Freeman suggests her case studies in *Time Binds* 'talk back' to history and do their historiographical work.

Helen Dell's theorization of time in medievalist texts frames the 'different *whens*' of history in grammatical terms. Read alongside Freeman's work, her dynamic understanding of the historical work of medievalism posits a similar method of 'talking back'. Locating

[46] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xviii.
[47] Ibid., viii.
[48] Ibid., xxi.

medievalism within Jacques Lacan's theorization of history as the 'future anterior' (or future perfect) tense, Dell writes that,

> what is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.[49]

Lacan's understanding of history presents the past, present, and future as mutually dependant and constantly changing processes. All medievalist texts—from the most fantastical modern novel to the most rigorously documented transcription of a fifteenth-century eyewitness account—can be read as approaching history through this generative dynamic. For example, what will the life of Margery Kempe have been for what the *Book of Margery Kempe* is still, for its readers, in the process of becoming? Or, what will the Middle Ages have been for J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as it continues to be read, re-read, adapted, and critiqued? Texts are inscriptions not *of* the past but a means *for* the ever-shifting future to maintain the past as a presence.

Dell's use of the future anterior is a medievalist's response to a medieval conundrum, which in Carolyn Dinshaw's words 'dogged all theorists of time and history in the Western tradition, starting perhaps with Aristotle and certainly including Saint Augustine': the fact that 'the *now* is never purely there at all: it is a transition, always divided between no longer and not yet'.[50] Freeman's 'different *whens*' map very effectively onto this dynamic, elusive understanding of 'now'. Augustine wrote, in a conception strikingly similar to Lacan's, that 'it might be correct to say that there are three times: a present of past things,

[49] Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', in Alan Sheridan (ed.), *Écrits: A Selection* (London: Routledge, 2001), 30-113, 86; cited in Helen Dell, 'Past, Present, Future Perfect: Paradigms of History in Medievalism Studies', *Parergon*, 25/2 (2008), 58-79, 60.
[50] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 2.

a present of present things, and a present of future things'.[51] In creation, everything is present. Dinshaw argues that 'to claim the possibility of a fuller, denser, more crowded now …. means fostering temporalities other than the narrowly sequential', and that 'this means taking seriously lives lived in other kinds of time'.[52] Augustine's 'stunningly *now*-oriented' understanding of time not only invites history into our presence, but classes it as an indelible part *of* the present.[53]

What might it mean to take seriously these 'lives lived in other kinds of times' that Dinshaw invites into the fullness of the now? In Chakrabarty's critique of the secularized, linear timeline that I cite above, the past is only deemed present for modern institutions as a profitable inheritance.[54] Rather than extracting from and ordering the past, a practice of close reading that treats medievalism as a form of historiography also involves taking medieval forms of epistemology seriously, and considering how they might speak to the now. In Augustinian terms, such a hermeneutics thickens the 'present of past things' by seeking out less modern and linear ways of reading.[55] To, as Freeman puts it, 'look both hard and askance at the norm' in this instance means to attempt to read more medievally.[56] In the following subsection, I consider how medieval and queer scholarship have conceived of time and sexuality in ways that deeply resonate with one another, and invite these practices of close reading which form the foundation of my methodology in this thesis.

[51] Augustine, Confessions 11.14.15, 11.16.21, cited in ibid., 13.
[52] Ibid., 4.
[53] Ibid., 14. Emphasis in original.
[54] Chakrabarty, 'The Time of History and the Times of Gods', 36-37.
[55] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*, 13.
[56] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xv-xvi.

Queer Time/Medieval Time

At the start of this chapter, I remark upon Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti's shared interest in recording themselves, each 'leaving her mark on the world'.[57] In the act of recording, the past and present are enfolded into texts, which are projected towards and contingent on future audiences, interpreters, and (in Kempe's case) scribes. In a rhetorical device that almost inverts Tutti's musical wordplay, the introduction to Dinshaw's *How Soon is Now?* expresses a medieval question via postmodern music. Specifically, the question is the nature of 'now' as espoused by Augustine, and the music in question is 'How Soon is Now?' (1984) by The Smiths. Reflecting on the track's Manchester gay bar tropes of sonic desire, Dinshaw writes:

> the sound reinforces the strangely evanescent, vanishing quality of the present …. Because of these formidable—and completely analogue—technicalities, the song was rarely performed live by The Smiths, which seems entirely appropriate to its problematization of when *now* is.[58]

Ironically, the song's very methods of record production ephemeralize its possibilities for performance. Dinshaw's musical reflections on the queerness of time are not confined to modernity; she also refers to Augustine's own account in his *Confessions* of singing a psalm, experiencing his situation in comparison with God's timelessness as a painful 'distension of faculties'.[59]

That a scholar of medieval literature such as Dinshaw, (and, for that matter, a fifth-century theologian such as Saint Augustine) should turn to music to grapple with time's fugitive qualities says much about music's own enmeshment in these questions; its object capacity to lay them bare. But musicologists have, in their turn, sought help from the Middle Ages in pursuit of ways of understanding musical texts unburdened by post-enlightenment

[57] Tutti, *Re-sisters: The Lives and Recordings of Delia Derbyshire, Margery Kempe and Cosey Fanni Tutti*, 14.
[58] Ibid., 3. Emphasis in original.
[59] Augustine, Confessions, 11.29.39, cited in ibid., 14-15.

fixity. J. Martin Daughtry, for example, uses palimpsests (at first medieval manuscripts, but later other musical recording technologies, among them records minted from recycled medical X-rays) as a methodological impetus for hearing a historical 'thickness' of 'co-present texts' in the musical moment.[60] Daughtry's model of 'palimpsestuous listening' emphasizes the physical proximity of 'layers'—on, for example, magnetic tape that has been imperfectly recorded over years after the original recording—to 'encourage a politics of listening that embraces complexity, values history, and draws attention to the hidden dialectics of inscription and erasure that lie beneath all musical moments'.[61] The parallels with Freeman's model of close reading are striking.

Dinshaw's reflections on musical performance postdate *Time Binds* by two years, but the project of connecting medieval and modern sensibilities is one that Dinshaw most notably enacts in in *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*.[62] Freeman's engagement with the Middle Ages in *Time Binds* stems almost entirely from *Getting Medieval*. She refers to Dinshaw's conception of the 'touch across time', itself part of a wider turn towards affective history in postmodern medieval scholarship.[63] Roughly

[60] J. Martin Daughtry, 'Acoustic Palimpsests and the Politics of Listening', *Music and Politics,* 7 (1). As Daughtry relays, other musicologists have found productive metaphors for intertextuality in the palimpsest; see especially Richard D. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Donald Greig, 'Ars Subtilior Repertory as Performance Palimpsest', *Early Music,* 31/2 (2003), 197-209.
[61] Daughtry, 'Acoustic Palimpsests and the Politics of Listening'.
[62] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1999).
[63] Freeman also mentions the influence of Louise O. Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); cited in Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 178, fn. 38; Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*; cited in Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 114. Dinshaw connects 'affective history' to Homi K. Bhaba's use of the phrase 'affective writing', see Homi K. Bhaba, 'Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 56-68, 55-56; cited in Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*, 20-21; Freeman remarks that, 'looking backward, I can see how the crisscrossing energies of postcolonial studies, studies in medieval ... and critical race theory made the questions of time's sexual politics ... already asked', Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xxiv.

coeval with this affective turn is the ‘performative turn’, which for musicology was particularly active in the field of opera studies, signalling a shift away from score- and libretto-based close reading towards phenomenological appraisals of the singing voice in relation to audiences in particular.[64] Michelle Duncan suggests that the immediacy of performers’ bodies on the operatic stage ‘calls for a negotiation of discursive systems that fall outside the realm of textuality’, because ‘a preoccupation with reading as the legitimate mode of analysis’ overlooks ‘how a resonant voice *acts* and how it participates in the creation, disruption or dissolution of registers of meaning independent of linguistic signification’.[65] As I discuss in the conclusion to this thesis, the enactment this mode of close *listening* (as opposed to reading) has tended to involve writing in intensely intersubjective, participatory terms that emphasize excess, embodiment, desire, and pleasure; registers of writing familiar to feminism and queer theory.[66]

One nexus of these strands of affective queer theory, musicology, and medievalism lies in the reception of Roland Barthes’s *S/Z* (1970), a structural analysis of Honoré de Balzac’s novella *Sarrasine* (1831). Barthes’s theorizations of the voice in *The Grain of the Voice* and the *Pleasure of the Text*, where he locates meaning in 'the body in the voice as it sings’, have rendered his work influential within musicological theorizations of the

[64] See Abbate, 'Music—Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30/3 (2004); Clemens Risi, 'Opera in Performance: “Regietheater” and the Performative Turn', *The Opera Quarterly*, 35/1-2 (2019), 7-19.
[65] Michelle Duncan, 'The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity', *OPR*, 16/3 (2004), 283-306.
[66] Freya Jarman-Ivens, 'Identification: We Go to the Opera to Eat Voice', *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (1st edn.; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 25-58; Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', in Ruth A. Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 225-58; Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire* (London: GMP, 1993); Michel Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Fisher, 'Feminist Phenomenological Voices'; Mitchell Morris, 'Reading as an Opera Queen', in Ruth A. Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 184-200.

performing body.[67] In ‘Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato’, Joke Dame uses Barthes’s representation of the castrato Zambinella in *S/Z* To demonstrate how the voice eludes sexual dimorphism, and elevates gendered ambiguity into a plane of simultaneous sexual fullness and desire.[68] The ramifications for opera studies amount to a reappraisal of ‘earwitness’ accounts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century castrati’s sex appeal, and an attendant case for the Barthesian ‘homoerotic *jouissance de l’écoute*’ [ecstasy of listening] of women sopranos singing castrato roles in modern productions.[69]

Barthes’s one passing reference to the medieval *trivium* of grammar, logic, and rhetoric as a ‘ludic’ dialogue in *S/Z* belies what Bruce Holsinger describes as a ‘deep-seated yet occluded medievalism’.[70] Citing Raymond Jean’s 1970 review, which praised Barthes’s ‘medieval hermeneutic practice’ of assuming the roles of *auctor* (author), *compilator* (compiler), *scriptor* (scribe), and *commentator* (critic) in relation to Balzac’s text, Holsinger argues that Barthes was working within an intellectual milieu deeply invested in medievalist biblical hermeneutics (emblematized by Henri de Lubac’s *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*).[71] Holsinger also suggests that Barthes’s medievalism extends into his musical metaphors, where biblical exegesis is ‘an incompletely scored performance in which readerly desire sings the *cantus firmus* to the celestial harmonies

[67] Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977), 179-89, 188; Roland Barthes, 'Voice', *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 66-67; Jonathan Dunsby, 'Roland Barthes and the Grain of Panzéra's Voice', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 134/1 (2009), 113-32; Barbara Engh, 'Loving It: Music and Criticism in Roland Barthes', in Ruth A. Solie (ed.), *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 66-82; Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', 232-34.
[68] Joke Dame, 'Unveiled Voices: Sexual Difference and the Castrato', in Philip Brett, Gary C. Thomas, and Elizabeth Wood (eds.), *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139-53, 144-45.
[69] Ibid., 147-48; 49-50.
[70] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 154; see Bruce W. Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 178-79; 58.
[71] Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, 4.

resonating from the sacred words of scripture'.[72] To 'listen' to the text in a Barthesian sense, Holsinger writes, is to imagine it as 'a kind of carefully staged musical performance' via 'a literalization of the *vox* in the text, the deployment of "voice" that lends writing …, its iridescence, its glitter, its gaps, shifts, and instabilities'.[73]

If, within this queer-operatic-medieval nexus that *S/Z* represents, Barthes's analysis requires him to musicalize the written word into an imagined performance, how could such a readerly desire operate in relation to an already-musical text? The fullness of live performance will always be partially fugitive from recording, be it on film or in the score. But if Barthes's queer-medieval exegesis can provide the imaginative impetus for a 'carefully staged' performance, perhaps the same can be said for a Freeman-esque hermeneutics of the detritus of no-longer-useful things (abandoned sketches, unreleased press photographs, grainy archive recordings, unrevived productions, and other archival sundries that surface in this thesis) that past operatic performances leave behind. Surrounded by such temporal-drag-artefacts, the musical score is one impetus for re-imagining a past performance. Another layer of historiography and another future anterior: what the performance will have been for what it is in the process of becoming.

Citing Bruno Latour's essay, 'We Have Never Been Modern', Marilyn Desmond and Noah D. Guynn describe how the Middle Ages have always provided us with such knowledge practices:

> what if we were to put Modern life on a new footing by examining medieval modes of existence as they are marked by boundless forms of translation and transformation and as they continue to inflect our

[72] Ibid., 189.
[73] Ibid., 188.

> experience today? .... If we have never been Modern, we have also always been medieval.[74]

The texts in this thesis share themes of love, desire, and violence—commonplaces in much of operatic history, but presented here with particular and equal potency for twenty-first-century audiences and late-medieval readers alike.[75] They confront their audiences with medieval sexual politics, via a time-art medium which is itself deeply immersive and sexually charged. Beyond the singularly complex interpretative demands of medievalist opera, I believe these intense 'forms of translation and transformation' in contemporary to be, ultimately, spiritual. Not in the colloquial sense of being 'in the spirit' of the Middle Ages, but in ways at once more deeply embodied and confessionally ambiguous, that only gain their specificities via the imaginative work of close reading. As I suggest in the conclusion to this thesis, the fuller implications of spirituality and transcendence as medievalist contemporary opera might reveal them emerge, as they do in Barthes's exegesis, like the voice: 'incompletely scored' and for that reason 'iridescent'.[76]

For the remainder of this introduction, I survey the field of medievalism studies. Since the field's inception in the 1970s, the critical issues with which it has engaged have been as diverse as its objects of study. It is a comparatively small field—especially in musicology—but it is apt that is should be so sprawling; medievalism itself is a motley, eccentric, heterodox phenomenon. As I discuss in more detail below, there is a tendency in medievalism studies (albeit with many notable exceptions) to theorize its phenomena through taxonomies and amass large collections of case studies, which Freeman might

[74] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 68; cited in Marilynn Desmond and Noah D. Guynn, 'We Have Always Been Medieval: Bruno Latour and Double Click, Metaphysics and Modernity', *Romanic Review*, 111 (2020), 1-7, 6.
[75] Suzanne G. Cusick and Monica A. Hershberger, 'Sexual Violence in Opera: Scholarship, Pedagogy, and Production as Resistance', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 71/1 (2018), 213-53.
[76] Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, 188.

describe as 'weighty archives'.[77] My methodological insistence on close reading—and queer attempt to 'read medievally' through historical, theological, queer and literary criticism—offers just one potential alternative approach to the theoretical challenges that medievalism poses.

Literature Review: Medievalism Studies

Perhaps more than any other period of Western history, the Middle Ages have been othered: conceived in post-Enlightenment thought as the 'grotesque forebear' of modernity and relegated to the status of a transitory middle-ground between the Ancient and Modern.[78] The conceptual vagueness of that centuries-long, culturally heterogeneous middle-ground has been borne out in such diverse cultural representations of the Middle Ages that the term 'medievalism' is itself resistant to firm definition. The Oxford English Dictionary provides not one, but four:

1. Beliefs and practices (regarded as) characteristic of the Middle Ages; medieval thought, religion, art, etc.
2. Also: the adoption of, adherence to, or interest in medieval ideals, styles, or usages.
3. Occasionally: an instance of this.
4. (*depreciative*) reactionary thinking or behaviour; opposition to reform and enlightenment.[79]

A study of medievalism in contemporary opera might seem to concern itself only with definitions 2 and 3. Yet this terminological ambiguity, which as much conveys the very thing which medievalism mimics (1) as it does an insult (4), underlines the fact that, in

[77] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xvii.
[78] Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1948), cited in; David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), 21.
[79] 'medievalism, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115639?redirectedFrom=medievalism>, accessed 12 February 2020.

Stephanie Trigg's words, 'the potential for messy critical thinking here is immense'.[80] The term 'medievalism' as much connotes the things that we 'regard' to be characteristic of the Middle Ages as their afterlives and recreations. In this literature review I therefore explore how scholars of medievalism studies have seized upon its epistemological slipperiness, from the field's inception in the 1970s to the rise of the New Medievalism in the late 1990s.

The Inception of Medievalism Studies

'Medievalism' as a term of academic enquiry first appeared in Alice Chandler's *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (1970).[81] The following year, independent scholar Leslie J. Workman began organizing sessions on medievalism at the Kalamazoo Medieval Congress, and then launched the journal *Studies in Medievalism* in 1979, later co-edited with (amongst others) Kathleen Verduin.[82] Virtually simultaneously, German-speaking scholars began to use the term *Mittelalter-Rezeption*, and Paul Zumthor introduced the French term *médiévisme* in *Parler du Moyen Age* (1980).[83] Richard Utz has discussed the similarities and differences between the English- and German-speaking schools in particular, as well as their relative slowness to communicate with one another during these nascent years.[84]

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[80] Stephanie Trigg, 'Once and Future Medievalism', *AntiThesis*, /3 (2005).
[81] Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970).
[82] For an overview of Workman's work alongside Kathleen Verduin, see Elizabeth Emery and Richard J. Utz, *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms* (Medievalism; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), 1-10.
[83] Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages*, trans. Sarah White (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).
[84] See Jürgen Voss, *Das Mittelalter im historischen Denken Frankreichs: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalterbegriffes und der Mittelalterbewertung von der zweiten Hälfte des 16. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Veröffentlichungen des Historischen Instituts der Universität Mannheim; München: W. Fink, 1972); Richard Utz, 'Resistance to (The New) Medievalism? Comparative Deliberations on (National) Philology, *Mediävalismus*, and *Mittelalter-Rezeption* in Germany and North America', in Roger Dahood (ed.), *The Future of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Problems, Trends, and Opportunities for Research* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 151-70.

One consequence of these linguistically divided scholarly efforts was that early work in the field tended to associate specific types of medievalism with specific nation-states. *Studies in Medievalism* took up Chandler's work on English Romanticism from the outset, and Volume I was titled *Medievalism in England*.[85] The journal largely continued (with exceptions) in this nation-based focus, with *Medievalism in America* (1982-83), *Medievalism in France 1500-1700* (1987), *German Medievalism* (1991), and a further two on *Medievalism in England* (1991, 1996). This nation-by-nation focus in medievalism also took cues from its parent discipline of medieval studies. As Jan M. Ziolkowski has detailed, the nineteenth-century study of medieval literature sprung up around state-sponsored nationalistic efforts to uncover the history of European vernacular languages.[86] 'It is not coincidental', writes David Matthews, 'that Germany and France had fought [the Franco-Prussian] war just five years before the [1875] establishment of the *Société des anciens textes français* (SATF) and re-founding of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (MGH).[87] This is not to suggest that *Studies in Medievalism* promoted a nationalistic agenda in the late twentieth century, but that its terms of debate were set by the disciplinary foci of its contributors.

Workman continued to edit *Studies in Medievalism* until 1998, by which time he had also founded the annual International Conference on Medievalism in 1986, publishing the proceedings as *The Year's Work in Medievalism*.[88] In several of his editorial prefaces from 1997 onwards, he defines medievalism as 'the continuing *process* of creating the Middle

[85] Leslie J. Workman, *Medievalism in England* (Studies in Medievalism, 1.1; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989).
[86] Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur* (The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity, 4; Cambridge: Open Book, 2018b), 12.
[87] Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History*, 4.
[88] See also Richard J. Utz, T. A. Shippey, and Leslie J. Workman, *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie J. Workman* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1998).

Ages' and 'the study not of the Middle Ages themselves but of the scholars, artists, and writers who ... constructed the idea of the Middle Ages that we inherited'.[89] Workman's use of tense is revealing. If medievalism is at once the study of 'those who constructed' what we inherited from the past, and itself comprised of we who continue 'the process' of creating the Middle Ages, then it effectively others the Medieval, consigning it to an unknowability that it does not extend to, for example, the nineteenth century.

The New Medievalism

Workman's definition of medievalism as a continuing process is characteristic of the 'New Medievalism' (or 'New Philology') first attributed to Bernard Cerquiglini's 1989 *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie*.[90] Cerquiglini's is a thoroughly medievalist text in its framing of the medieval as postmodernity's 'homecoming', in which the computer screen is the new illuminated manuscript, and the central, postmodern thesis of the New Medievalism (like Workman's) is that all medieval enquiry is a form of medievalism.[91] Norman F. Cantor accepts this premise in *Inventing the Middle Ages* (1991), which 'the political contexts in which scholars are inevitably bound up'.[92] From the banal consequences of working in the shadow of a particularly influential mentor to the horrific consequences of working (as Percy Ernst Schramm did) for Hitler, writes Cantor, 'we cannot interpret medieval culture or any historical culture except through the prism of

[89] Leslie J. Workman and Kathleen Verduin, 'Editorial', *Medievalism in England II* (7; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996). Emphasis in original; Utz, Shippey, and Workman, *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie J. Workman*, 5.; Utz, 'Speaking of Medievalism: An Interview with Leslie J. Workman', in ibid., 439.
[90] See Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Parallax; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
[91] Ibid., 81; See Keith Busby, *Towards a Synthesis?: Essays on the New Philology* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993); Stephen G. Nichols, 'The New Philology', *Speculum*, 65/1 (1990); R. Howard Bloch, Alison Calhoun, Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet et al., *Rethinking the New Medievalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).
[92] Trigg, 'Once and Future Medievalism'.

the dominant concepts of our own thought worlds'.[93] As I discuss in relation to mode in Chapter 1 and counterpoint in Chapter 4, music theory is as susceptible to these hidden medievalisms as any other field of enquiry. As Clare Simmons puts it, 'one generation's medieval studies was the next generation's medievalism'.[94]

What makes Cantor's argument compelling is his synthesis of New Medievalist criticism with the insistence that much about the medieval period was learned, re-examined, and reframed over the course the twentieth century.[95] Ideology aside, 'the Victorians simply didn't know much about the Middle Ages'.[96] Pertinently to my project, Cantor invokes operatic singing to illustrate his position, expressing medieval history as a fundamentally creative, interpretative endeavour:

> anyone can sing an operatic aria …. [but] we pay good money to go to a major opera house and listen to the master singers. Their interpretations ... sometimes radically differ. So it is with scholars when they try to construct for us an image of the past .... the libretto and score they are working from—the data of historical fact—are the same. The truth, therefore, is ultimately not in the textual details but in the interpretations.[97]

The thrust of this argument is reminiscent of the musicological debates surrounding authenticity in the late twentieth century mentioned above, which saw scholars and practitioners of early music debating the constraints and ideological motivations of historically informed performance.[98] The 'data of historic fact' seem to stem, for Cantor, from a stable and fundamental truth. The problems of the analogy are not limited to the

[93] Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 37.
[94] Clare A. Simmons, *Medievalism and the Quest for the 'Real' Middle Ages* (London: F. Cass, 2001), 12.
[95] Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*, 36.
[96] Ibid., 37.
[97] Ibid., 45.
[98] See Helen Dell, '"[A] Single, True, Certain Authenticity": The Authenticity Wars in English Twentieth-Century Folk and Medieval Music Revivals', *postmedieval*, 10/4 (2019), 439-51; Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance*.

appeal to authenticity; the coded elitism of Cantor's Wagnerian invocation of 'the master singer' and the commodifying overtones of 'paying good money' lend credence to Utz's call in *Medievalism: A Manifesto* for more open-access scholarship.[99]

Nevertheless, this line of enquiry emphasizes the hours of specialized labour which scholarship demands. The increasing casualization of the neoliberal academy renders such arguments valuable. Amidst the dark side of postmodern relativism's appeals to 'alternative facts', replete with antisemitism and white-supremacist crusading rhetoric, Utz's and Trigg's calls for medievalists to 'embrace amateurism' begin to ring hollow.[100] Open access blogs including Paul B. Sturtevant's *The Public Medievalist*, Eleanor Janega's *Going Medieval*, Leah Haught and Utz's review journal *Medievally Speaking*, and Sandra Alvarez and Peter Konieczny's *Medievalists.net* critically address and debunk racist and misogynistic misappropriations of medievalism to wide readerships; each written by medievalists equipped with the expertise to render nuanced, cross-historical arguments.[101] All of these blogs draw audiences via references to medievalism in popular culture—see, for instance, Janega's 'Considering bad motherfuckers: Hildegard of Bingen and Janelle Monáe'—as well as addressing online discourse by drawing upon feminist, queer, and postcolonial arguments inflected by the New Medievalism.[102] In these manifestations, the study of medievalism manifestly goes beyond offering students a 'gateway drug' for more

[99] Richard J. Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto* (Past Imperfect; Kalamazoo: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), 83; Stephanie Trigg, 'Medievalism and Convergence Culture: Researching the Middle Ages for Fiction and Film', *Parergon*, 25/2 (2008), 99-118, 102.
[100] Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013), 143-44; Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto*, 21-22.
[101] See especially Paul B. Sturtevant, Amy S. Kaufman, Andrew B. R. Elliott et al., 'Series: Race, Racism and the Middle Ages', *The Public Medievalist* <https://www.publicmedievalist.com/race-racism-middle-ages-toc/>, accessed 10 February 2020; and Brantley L. Bryant, *Geoffrey Chaucer Hath a Blog: Medieval Studies and New Media* (The New Middle Ages; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[102] Eleanor Janega, 'Considering Bad Motherfuckers: Hildegard of Bingen and Janelle Monáe', *Going Medieval* <https://going-medieval.com/2018/06/05/considering-bad-motherfuckers-hildegard-of-bingen-and-janelle-monae/>, accessed 5 June 2018.

'serious' study and, in its own right, offers very pressing responses to contemporary ethical problems.[103]

Among the New Medievalism's most distinctive qualities is its lyrical engagement both with its historical sources and with the subjectivity of the researcher. The New Medievalism's most prolific journal, *postmedieval* (founded in 2010 and co-edited by Eileen A. Joy, Myra Seaman, and Lara Farina), thematically interleaves medievalism studies with New Medievalist approaches to medieval texts, figures, and events. In 'Facing Up to the History of Emotions', for instance, D'Arcens's essay on mirth in Umberto Eco's 1980 novel *The Name of the Rose* is preceded by Mary C. Flannery's on shame in the poetry of John Gower (1330-1408), and followed by Kim M. Philips's on medieval conceptions of ethnic difference in facial expressions.[104] This lyricism opens up a fresh ambiguity for medievalism, wherein scholarship expresses deliberate creativity and itself begins to be read—more explicitly than ever—as medievalism.

What *postmedieval* embraces is a productive critical relationship between medieval and present worlds; a sentiment as much expressed by Cantor writing that 'the medieval world [seems] much closer to our own than was even dimly imagined a century ago' as by Michael Camille crying 'we're living it!' as he visits Medieval Times Dinner Theatre on a 1996 episode of *This American Life*.[105] This critical turn is explored by Holsinger in *The*

[103] Louise D'Arcens, *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 6.
[104] Stephanie Downes and Stephanie Trigg, 'Facing Up to the History of Emotions', *postmedieval*, 8/1 (2017), 3-11.
[105] Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century*, 27; Ira Glass and Michael Camille, 'Episode 38: Simulated Worlds', *This American Life* (USA: WBEZ Radio Chicago, 1996). <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/38/transcript>, accessed 2 January 2018.

Premodern Condition, in which he takes stock of 'the medieval fragments' inspiring the critical work of *avant-garde* theorists: 'productive sacraments of creative ingenuity … with a transformative capacity in the critical present' when unshackled from post-Enlightenment positivism.[106] Holsinger's invocation of the sacramental is especially pertinent to this history of pre- and postmodern convergence in light of the Radical Orthodoxy movement in theology, which runs parallel to medievalism studies, albeit rarely interacting with it. Its core proponents (John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward) bring the work of medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo to bear on postmodern philosophy, with the aim of stimulating an emphatically doctrinal and sacramental (usually Anglo-catholic) Christian faith in the twenty-first century.[107]

Taxonomies

Because the term 'medievalism' has been so flexibly applied (a condition that Utz positively frames as 'productive uncertainty'), its definitions are often expressed as lists.[108] D'Arcens's ('the reception, interpretation or recreation of the European Middle Ages in post-medieval cultures') and Utz's ('the ongoing and broad cultural phenomenon of reinventing, remembering, recreating, and re-enacting the middle ages'), for example, both express a general multivalence.[109] Most influential is Umberto Eco's 'Ten Little Middle Ages'.[110] They can be summarized as:

1. a 'mythological stage on which to place contemporary characters' (Eco specifically invokes opera);

[106] Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, 5.
[107] See, for example, Gerard Loughlin, 'Erotics: God's Sex', in John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (eds.), *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999), 127-43.
[108] Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto*, 85.
[109] D'Arcens, *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, 1. Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto*, 81.
[110] Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (London: Pan Books, 1987).

2. ‘ironical revisitation’, as seen in the ‘neomedievalism’ of fantasy film;
3. a barbaric age, ‘and Wagner’s Ring itself belongs to this dramatic sunset of reason’;
4. romanticism, ‘with [its] stormy castles and [its] ghosts’;
5. neo-Thomism;
6. nationalism;
7. decadentism, including the Pre-Raphaelites;
8. philological reconstruction;
9. occultism and conspiracy theories;
10. millenarianism, because ‘sometimes it is not so medieval to think that perhaps the end is coming’.[111]

While Eco’s list is somewhat tongue-in-cheek, he adds that ‘we have the moral and cultural duty of spelling out what kind of Middle Ages we are talking about’ in case ‘we are supporting, perhaps without realizing it, some new reactionary plot’—precisely the kind of ‘reactionary plot’ that blogs like Janega’s use presentist medieval comparisons to counteract.[112] Eco’s list is also a presentist one, concerned not with past medievalisms as they were at the time of their inceptions, but as they exist as artefacts of discourses today. Pre-Raphaelitism may be a Victorian movement, for example, but it still exists; these are ‘the Middle Ages we *are* talking about’.[113] Medievalism is cumulative. Eco derives his humour from this presentism, which he makes explicit when he writes under (2) that the characters of Monty Python ‘do not believe in the grotesque period they inhabit’.[114] Predating the New Medievalism, Eco’s faith in philology’s truth-telling is also less tainted than that of later commentators. His coinage of the term ‘neomedievalism’ has been controversial for precisely this reason, and scholars of high fantasy have at turns rejected it

[111] Ibid., 61-72.
[112] Ibid., 72.
[113] Ibid. 72, emphasis my own.
[114] Ibid., 69.

as pejorative and embraced it as an opportunity to foreground the imagination at work in roleplay gaming, world-building, and fandom.

Nancy F. Partner has described how presentism's 'forceful' cross-historical alignments 'enjoy a feeling of daring and slight perversity whose freshness doesn't stale'.[115] The novelty of medievalism and its status in popular culture in this sense relies on its presentism; as D'Arcens writes, medievalism 'discloses as much, or indeed in many cases more, about the time and place in which it has been produced as it does about medieval Europe'.[116] Utz even goes as far as to use 'pastism' pejoratively in reference to scholars who 'still prefer to see an insurmountable otherness in medieval culture'.[117] He proffers his own Eco-style 'Six (not so) Little Middle Ages' in the form of a presentist 'manifesto', addressing such issues as academic hierarchy (3), public engagement (4), and the 'masculinist' scientific rhetoric of some philology (6).[118] Ironically, it is presentism to which Holsinger attributes the 'casualty' of the academy's capacity to acknowledge the impact of medievalism on postmodern theory—a paucity of critical theory's students looking further back than the nineteenth century.[119] The risk of presentism is the devaluation of the desire, however thwarted, to gain intimacy with the Middle Ages, and that the voices of the past are moulded uncritically into the very 'reactionary plots' against which Eco warns.

[115] Nancy F. Partner, 'Foreword: Medieval Presentism Before the Present', in Eileen A. Joy et al. (eds.), *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), xi.
[116] D'Arcens, *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, 6.
[117] Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto*, 82.
[118] Ibid., 83.
[119] Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*, 3.

In contrast with Eco's playful and Utz's passionate presentist taxonomies, Trigg's suggests that the Medieval offers 'a range of possibilities' reminiscent of Cantor's appeal to creative interpretation.[120] She prompts the critical reader to consider 'what it is that is being revived, or revised, or repressed, or simply left out'.[121] In this framing, Trigg's three-part list creates room for queer, feminist, and postcolonial interventions:

1. Traditional medievalism, 'that takes for granted its self-evident truth …. through an unbroken lineage of embodied or ritualistic connection'.[122] This discourse would include, for example, the British monarchy.
2. Modernist medievalism, 'appealing to historiography, empiricism' and (perhaps controversially) the New Medievalism in its 'quasi-scientific ideological analysis'.[123]
3. Postmodern medievalism, 'as ironical reference or as romanticizing pastiche' in cultural media, but also medievalism studies 'when that writing reflects not only on the medieval phenomena under discussion, but also the shaping cultural forces that mediate the medieval past for us in this way'.[124]

Implicit in Trigg's inclusion of the New Medievalism in the second category is that, while much of might aspire for the third, not all of it is sufficiently reflexive.

One essay which neatly turns Trigg's concept on its head is Jeff Massey and Brian Cogan's illustration of a shift from modernist medievalism to postmodern medievalism between *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) and its stage musical adaptation *Spamalot* (2004).[125] All of the self-conscious elements which Trigg attributes to postmodernity are evidenced in the *Holy Grail*, which is replete with *avant garde*, surrealist ruptures in narrative and cinematic norms, references to radical politics, ironic

[120] Trigg, 'Once and Future Medievalism'.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Jeff Massey and Brian Cogan, '*Spamalot*: Lovingly Ripping Off/Ripping on the Establishment', in Gail Ashton (ed.), *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 11-22.

critiques of traditional Arthuriana, and a distinctly anticlimactic ending. *Spamalot*, on the other hand, never transgresses the boundaries of the jukebox musical, appeals to presentism in its superficial presentation of a gay relationship, and ends with an unironic rendition of 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life'—divorced from its originally jarring context of crucifixion in *The Life of Brian* (1979) and transplanted into a show-stopping wedding finale.[126] At least within the confines of this example, postmodernism and progressivism are not synonymous.

As this abundance of competing Little Middle Ages has illustrated, and as Matthews writes, 'the problems inherent in creating a workable taxonomy for medievalism are intractable'.[127] Matthews still offers a cautious taxonomy of his own, though, framing medievalism as 'a discourse which can appear to greater or lesser degrees in cultural works'.[128] His Five Little Middle Ages come in two groups. The first three concern authenticity, not as an ideal but as a gesture:

1. The Middle Ages 'as it was', depicted *as if* realistically (in the liturgical performance of plainchant);
2. The Middle Ages 'as it might have been', depicted *through or as* legend and self-consciously to some degree a fantasy (in Arthuriana);
3. The Middle Ages 'as it never was', depicted in high fantasy in a world that radically differs from the real.

The final two are less easily pinned down, and concern the degree to which historical influences are discernible:

4. A cultural production based largely on medieval elements, such as the Hilliard Ensemble's 1994 album *Officium*, 'to a great extent scholarly ... but anachronistically threaded through with [Jan] Barbarek's modern jazz saxophone';

[126] Ibid.
[127] Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History*, 37.
[128] Ibid., 37.

5. A cultural production essentially of its own time that looks back to the Middle Ages, such as 1944 film *A Canterbury Tale*, set at the time it was made.[129]

The strength of Matthews's taxonomy lies in its fastidious avoidance of authenticity ideals. Still, it falls short of acknowledging medievalism's audiences, whose perceptions of the Medieval inevitably vary. Once the audience enters the frame, reception history becomes a vortex of outwardly spiralling discourses: audience receptions of creative reworkings of scholarly impressions of the medieval past. Even this conception loses traction with the rejoinder that a person may—while, for instance, playing *Dungeons and Dragons*—experience some tenacious intimacy with the Middle Ages unavailable to a seasoned philologist further up the chain of production, and that such intimacy is not inherently less valuable.

The challenge of medievalism's taxonomical elasticity is methodological. Medievalism studies hosts an abundance of journals, conference proceedings, and edited volumes full of case studies that bear nuanced witness to the influence of the Middle Ages in seemingly every imaginable quarter of post-medieval culture but, writes Matthews, 'have done little to establish a discipline'.[130] Elizabeth Emery and Utz seek to address this theoretical 'lacuna' in their encyclopaedia-styled *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms* (2014), and—aside from Matthews—few others have undertaken such a disciplinary overview.[131] Utz's 'manifesto' provides some useful insights into the field of research, as do the authors of several prefaces to volumes and journals, among them D'Arcens, Trigg, and Partner.[132]

[129] Ibid., 37-38.
[130] Ibid., 10.
[131] Emery and Utz, *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*, 9.
[132] Utz, *Medievalism: A Manifesto*; D'Arcens, *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*; Trigg, 'Once and Future Medievalism'; Partner, 'Foreword: Medieval Presentism Before the Present'; Emery and Utz, *Medievalism: Key Critical Terms*.

Ziolkowski, an outlier, demonstrates an unusual methodology by tracking the reception history of the 'Juggler of Our Lady' story over the course of six volumes.[133] Several of these critical overviews draw from musical examples to illustrate their arguments (especially Ziolkowski's fourth volume, which discusses Jules Massenet's 1902 opera *Le jongleur de Notre-Dame*).[134] The final subsection of this literature review will survey how musicologists have approached the challenges of medievalism.

Medievalism Studies and Musicology

When modern works quote from medieval musical sources, stage diegetic music-making within medieval settings, or otherwise engage in musical medievalism, the study of their performance accrues a further legacy of scholarship relating to historically informed performance and its debates surrounding the existence, achievability, and desirability of 'authenticity'.[135] While medievalism in itself implies a creative distance from the question of authenticity, recordings and performances influenced by these scholarly debates have inflected how composers, performers, and audiences across myriad genres have aurally conceived of the Middle Ages.[136] A full account of the debates surrounding musical authenticity is beyond the scope of this chapter, and few of the scholars within those debates would describe themselves as students of medievalism. Nevertheless, these issues have been discussed in terms of medievalism in Dell's summary of the musicological

[133] Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity* (6 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Open Book, 2018a).
[134] Ziolkowski, *Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur*.
[135] See Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[136] See Kirsten Yri, 'Medieval Uncloistered: Uses of Medieval Music in Late Twentieth-Century Culture', in Joseph Auner (ed.), (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2004).

'authenticity wars' and Karl Fugelso's *Studies in Medievalism* volume 'Authenticity, Medievalism, Music' (2018).[137]

Short critical overviews of musical medievalism can be found in James Cook, Alexander Kolassa, and Adam Whittaker's edited volume *Recomposing the Past: Representations of Early Music on Stage and Screen* (2018), Kirsten Yri and Stephen C. Meyer's *Oxford Handbook Music and Medievalism* (2020), Lisa Colton and Martin Iddon's special issue of *Contemporary Music Review* comprising papers from the 2009 conference 'Nothing New? Understanding Newness in Medieval and Contemporary Music' at the University of Huddersfield, and Annette Kreutziger-Herr's *Grove* entry.[138] The advancement of ludomusicology in particular has resulted in much medievalist scholarship in video game music, as seen in the work of Karen M. Cook, James Cook, and Meyer.[139] One scholar whose output encapsulates the shifting emphases of medievalism studies over the past two decades (especially as described in Trigg's schema) is John Haines, whose 2004 monograph *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères* outlines a repertoire's long-term reception history, while his *Music in Films on the Middle Ages* (2014) represents a departure towards more fantasy-inflected neomedievalisms.[140] The latter proffers yet

[137] Dell, '"[A] Single, True, Certain Authenticity": The Authenticity Wars in English Twentieth-Century Folk and Medieval Music Revivals'; Karl Fugelso, *Authenticity, Medievalism, Music* (Studies in Medievalism, 27; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2018).
[138] James Cook, Alexander Kolassa, and Adam Whittaker (eds.), *Recomposing the Past: Early Music on Stage and Screen* (Ashgate Screen Music Series, London: Routledge, 2018); Stephen C. Meyer and Kirsten Yri (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Lisa Colton and Martin Iddon, 'Introduction: Recycling and Innovation in Contemporary Music', *Contemporary Music Review* 29/3 (2010), 229–30; Annette Kreutziger-Herr (2014), 'Medievalism', *Grove Music Online*. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0002261008>, accessed 10 March 2020.
[139] Karen M. Cook, 'Medievalism and Emotions in Video Game Music', *postmedieval,* 10/4 (2020), 482-97.
[140] John Haines, *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères: The Changing Identity of Medieval Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); John Haines, *Music in Films on the Middle Ages: Authenticity vs. Fantasy* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

another taxonomy of six 'moods' in medievalist film music: the Bell, the Horn Call and the Trumpet Fanfare, Court and Dance Music, The Singing Minstrel, Chant, and The Riding Warrior. Within the genre-specific context of Haines's survey, these moods function in semiotic terms similar to those used by proponents of topic theory in musical analysis.[141]

Because of their far-reaching influence on Western literature and music, Richard Wagner's operas are mentioned in virtually all discussions of Romantic medievalism, including works by Carole M. Cusak, Volker Mertens, and Barbara Eichner.[142] J. P.E. Harper-Scott's analysis of interlace structures in Wagner's *Ring* and Elgar's Second Symphony provides a particularly useful model for approaching opera analysis via medieval textual structures.[143] While studies of pre-Wagnerian medievalist operas are more sparse, Haines lists a handful from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, discussing Lully's *Armide* (1686) at length.[144] Ken McLeod and Andrea Trocha-Van Nort have both written on the ideology of English exceptionalism in Purcell's *King Arthur* (1691), and Nils Holger Petersen has published on medievalism in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* (1829).[145]

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[141] Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006).
[142] Carole M. Cusack, 'Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*: Medieval, Pagan, Modern', *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception*, 3/2 (2013), 329-52; Volker Mertens, 'Wagner's Middle Ages', in Ulrich Müller, Peter Wapnewski, and John Deathridge (eds.), *Wagner Handbook* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Barbara Eichner, 'Richard Wagner's Medieval Visions', in Stephen C. Meyer and Kirsten Yri (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 176-95.
[143] J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Medieval Romance and Wagner's Musical Narrative in *The Ring*', *19th-Century Music*, 32/3 (2009), 211-34; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, 'Elgar's Deconstruction of the Belle époque: Interlace Structures and the Second Symphony', in J. P. E. Harper-Scott and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Elgar Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 172-219.
[144] Haines, *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères: The Changing Identity of Medieval Music*, 98.
[145] Ken McLeod, 'Ideology and Racial Myth in Purcell's *King Arthur* and Arne's *Alfred*', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700*, 34/1 (2010), 83-102; Andrea Trocha-Van Nort, 'Purcell and Dryden's *King Arthur* and the Myth of the Golden Age', *Revue LISA*, 6/2 (2008), 91-100; Nils Holger Petersen, 'Freedom, Oppression, and Celebration: Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*', *The Year's Work in Medievalism*, 16 (2001), 21-36.

Aside from a small number of chapters and articles (most of them on George Benjamin and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin*), medievalism in contemporary opera has so far received little attention.[146] Alexander Kolassa's chapter 'Presentness and the Past in Contemporary British Opera' discusses the influence of the early music revival on Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner* (1970) and Alaxander Goehr's *Arianna*.[147] While neither of these operas are strictly set during the Middle Ages (Taverner lived in the sixteenth century, while *Arianna* is based on Ottavio Rinuccini's seventeenth-century Ovidian libretto for Claudio Monteverdi), Kolassa demonstrates the multifaceted and far-reaching impact of medievalist trends on post-war modernist creativity. Lisa Colton (whose research on medievalism also spans ambient and film music) has written of how James MacMillan adapts medieval liturgical drama for the modernist stage in *Visitatio Sepulchri* (1992-93).[148]

As I discuss at greater length in the conclusion to this thesis, Emma Dillon's work on *Written on Skin*—both her engagement with its manuscript sources and her use of parchment as a means for theorizing the voice—provides an important point of reference

[146] Robert S. Sturges, 'Medievalisms in Contemporary Opera', in Gail Ashton (ed.), *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 22-31; Maria Ryan, 'Angels in the Archive: Animating the Past in *Written on Skin*', in James Cook, Alexander Kolassa, and Adam Whittaker (eds.), *Recomposing the Past: Early Music on Stage and Screen* (London: Routledge, 2018), 174-87.
[147] Alexander Kolassa, 'Presentness and the Past in Contemporary British Opera', in James Cook, Alexander Kolassa, and Adam Whittaker (eds.), *Recomposing the Past: Early Music on Stage and Screen* (London: Routledge, 2018), 155-73.
[148] Lisa Colton, 'Channelling the Ecstasy of Hildegard von Bingen: "O Euchari" Remixed', in Monty Adkins and Simon Cummings (eds.), *Music Beyond Airports: Appraising Ambient Music* (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press, 2019), 147-75; Lisa Colton, 'Medievalism, Music, and Agency in *The Wicker Man* (1973)', in James Cook, Alexander Kolassa, and Adam Whittaker (eds.), *Recomposing the Past: Early Music on Stage and Screen* (Ashgate Screen Music Series, London: Routledge, 2018), 213-28; Lisa Colton, 'Containing Chaos? Aspects of Medieval Liturgy in James MacMillan's *Visitatio Sepulchri*', in George Parsons and Robert Sholl (eds.), *James MacMillan Studies* (Cambridge Composer Studies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 200-16. As Colton suggests, *Visitatio Sepulchri* is more 'representational liturgy' than opera. Ibid., 202.

for my approach to the repertoire in this thesis, combining philological and critical-theoretical perspectives.[149] Similarly, Anne Stone and Judith A. Peraino's accounts of 'postmodern troubadours' in *Written on Skin* and *L'Amour de loin* both use the palimpsest as a metaphor for musical analysis, an image I employ via Daughtry's theory of 'palimpsestuous listening' in Chapters 2 and 3.[150] Important precursors to my emphasis on mysticism throughout this thesis include Siglind Bruhn's overview of depictions of saints in post-1945 opera in *Saints in the Limelight* (2003), and the growing theological-musicological discourse surrounding Oliver Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* (1983).[151]

Most recently at the time of writing, Sarah Kay's 2022 monograph *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera* enacts a sustained comparison between the multisensory qualities of medieval song (especially in narrative dit manuscripts) and the extravagancies of the operatic stage.[152] As well as discussing *Written on Skin* and *L'Amour de loin* in her introduction, Kay describes how medieval singers are reimagined in Verdi's *Il trovatore* (1853) and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (1868).[153] Invoking a dynamic that I unpack further in the conclusion to this thesis, she particularly emphasises how the

[149] Emma Dillon, 'Vocal Philologies: *Written on Skin* and the Troubadours', *The Opera Quarterly*, 33/3-4 (2017a), 207-48; Emma Dillon, 'Medieval Sources for George Benjamin's and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin* (2012): Cansos, Vidas, Razos, and Songbooks of Guillem de Cabestaing', *The Opera Quarterly*, 33/3 (2017b), 319-36.
[150] Anne Stone, 'The Postmodern Troubadour', in Stephen C. Meyer, Kirsten Yri, and Anne Stone (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism* (1 edn.: Oxford University Press, 2020); J. Martin Daughtry, 'Acoustic Palimpsests and the Politics of Listening', *Music and Politics*, 7/1 (2014); Judith A. Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', *Paragraph*, 41/1 (2018), 26-41.
[151] Siglind Bruhn, *Saints in the Limelight: Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Operatic Stage* (Dimension & Diversity; Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003); Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera* (Dimension & Diversity; Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008); Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love* (Studies in Contemporary Music and Culture; New York: Garland, 1998); Sander van Maas, *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen's Breakthrough Toward the Beyond* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); Catherine Pickstock, 'Messiaen and Deleuze: The Musico-theological Critique of Modernism and Postmodernism', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25/7-8 (2008), 173-99; Camille Crunelle Hill, 'Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Theme of Truth in Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*', in Siglind Bruhn (ed.), *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love* (New York: Garland, 1998), 143-68; Nils Holger Petersen, 'Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* and Franciscan Spirituality', in Siglind Bruhn (ed.), *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love* (New York: Garland, 1998), 169-94.
[152] Sarah Kay, *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022).
[153] Ibid., 13-16; 234-43; 151ff.

distance of historical alterity renders medieval song an object of desire for audiences today.

In their *History of Opera*, Carloyn Abbate and Roger Parker write of opera as a 'museum' in which centuries-old works are constantly revived, and privileged over the new.[154] In their discussion of *L'Amour de loin*, *Written on Skin*, and Thomas Adès and Meredith Oakes's *The Tempest* (2004), they remark upon how so many of the most frequently revived contemporary operas 'embrace an ambience at some considerable distance from our own'.[155] They suggest that the 'timelessness' of long-past settings is 'alluring because there remains some pervasive uneasiness about opera's fragile position in contemporary culture'.[156] The prevalence of medievalism in television, videogames, and cinema is not usually considered a sign of the fragility of screen media, and I am more optimistic about the future of contemporary opera (albeit with some caveats, discussed towards the end of this introduction). Since 2000, Aix-en-Provence festival has focussed far more of its resources on opera commissioning than it did in its first fifty years, and met particular success in the work of Benjamin and Saariaho. In 2022, all of the Royal Opera House's world premiere productions—Oliver Leith and Matt Copson's *Last Days*, Laura Bowler and Laura Lomas's *The Blue Woman*, and Tom Coult and Alice Birch's *Violet*—sold out. As the Appendix to the thesis witnesses, moreover, an energetic subculture of contemporary opera-making exists beyond the major opera houses, at festivals, places of worship, universities, and fringe theatres.

[154] Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 581ff.
[155] Ibid., 606.
[156] Ibid., 606-07.

A distinct, institutional instability of contemporary opera lies not in its past performances but in those of its future. Decades of neoliberal marketization and systematic underfunding of the arts, in the UK and abroad, have made the financially safest repertoire (canonical works, familiar to the patrons most likely to fill the more expensive seats) increasingly attractive to opera programmers. While myriad new operas are premiered every year, in major as well as fringe venues, the majority will never receive second performances. Two of the operas in this thesis have only been performed once; there is no reliable way of predicting when any of the four will be performed again. As I argue at the end of my literature review, these conditions do not foreclose hope, and opera need not be considered a 'dead' art form. Yet such present-day illegibility reveals contemporary opera (with or without medievalism) to be, as Freeman puts it, 'bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless', or 'recalcitrant', or 'dowdy … embarrassingly belated'.[157] These loving epithets could not be further from conservatism; on the contrary, like Freeman's case studies: 'by changing tempos, by remixing memory and desire, by recapturing excess' and 'through the work they do with time and history', they 'might be knowledge practices'.[158]

This thesis was written between 2019 and 2023, years in which medievalist phenomena became unusually present in public discourse. The Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to comparisons (both popular and academic) with the Black Death in the fourteenth century.[159] In a gesture akin to her AIDS-era *Plague Mass* (1991), Diamanda Galás composed sound installation *Broken Gargoyles* in late 2020 to be performed in the ruins of

[157] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xiii; xvi; 92.
[158] Ibid., 173.
[159] Alfred Thomas, *Writing Plague: Language and Violence from the Black Death to COVID-19* (The New Middle Ages; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

St Nicholas's Chapel in Hanover, Germany (believed to be a former plague hospital). Teaching Guillaume de Machaut's *Le jugement du roi de Navarre*, I found that my students had a new-found empathy for the narrator's opening *quarantaine* to avoid the Black Death. These are by no means the most significant consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in this thesis, I hope to operate at a level at once deeper and broader than the presentist timeliness of twenty-first-century events that can ultimately only superficially resemble medieval ones (however uncannily).

In Holsinger's proposed 'musicology of empathy', he points out that,

> if loss, and reparation, have shaped the desire of many twentieth-century medievalists', as Fradenburg puts it, so, too, have historical persons, writings, musics, and experiences acquired much of their authority and authenticity insofar as they are, 'in some profound way, *lost* to us by [their] very pastness.[160]

Holsinger and Fradenburg are writing of the pastness of medieval lives. Holsinger writes of the 'loss and reparation' of medieval musicology; how early music performance is a 'merging and blending the musical cultures of our time and the musical cultures of the dead'.[161] Medievalist opera also takes part in this intermundane blending, albeit from a more explicitly fictional (but no less real) angle. Turning from an emphasis on what is lost to what survives, Holsinger's 'musicology of empathy' is also 'about musical regeneration and survival'.[162] Death and regeneration are preoccupations in voice studies.[163] As both Abbate and Michal Grover-Friedlander have pointed out, while nineteenth-century opera

[160] Louise O. Fradenburg, '"Voice Memorial": Loss and Reparation in Chaucer's Poetry', *Exemplaria*, 2/1 (1990), 169-202, 173; cited in Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 346. Emphasis in original.
[161] Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer*, 348.
[162] Ibid., 346.
[163] Another queer-medieval-operatic nexus exists here in relation to the Orpheus myth, Claudio Monteverdi's early opera *L'Orfeo* (1607), and medieval Christianizations of the Orpheus myth. See Carolyn Abbate, *In Search of Opera* (Princeton Studies in Opera; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1ff; Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer*, 295ff.

tends to kill its female protagonists, their voices 'take over musical sound' and, through contact with the audience, 'acquire their own forms of aliveness and indestructibility'.[164] In opera analysis, the imaginative reconstruction of past performance is, I argue, a type of medievalist empathy for a 'dead' performance. But, as I argue in the conclusion to this thesis, it is in this ambiguous space between living and death that song paradoxically draws its breath.

Medievalist contemporary operas are texts that reach across history, tampering with the historical record in an aspect of brazen creativity to animate people, places, and times which (especially in the cases of *Caritas* and *L'Amour de loin*) really existed. In its communities of scholars, creatives, and enthusiasts, opera is widely understood to be an immersive, moving, and extravagant collaborative endeavour. Musicological methods of approaching opera's intertextual fray of score, libretto, production and performance can involve a combination of score analysis, hermeneutic, and philosophical examinations of the musical event. Each these methodologies is indispensable to this thesis and its argument. What medievalist operas present is the opportunity to introduce to opera studies the richness of medieval studies: the distinctive modes of musicological, literary, and theological understanding which its sources inspire in us. Beyond creating an interdisciplinary dialogue, I treat these operas as if they are simultaneously contemporary and medieval texts. In a sense, I treat the act of spectating on them as a modest form of time travel.

[164] Michal Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), 16-19; Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', 253-58.

Chapter 1: Robert Saxton's *Caritas* and Affective Piety

1.1. Introduction

Robert Saxton's *Caritas* (1991) is an eighty-minute chamber opera based on Arnold Wesker's 1980 play of the same name. Adapted by Wesker, the libretto draws from the scant surviving records of the fourteenth-century anchorite Christine Carpenter.[165] Anchorites were solitary religious recluses, recorded throughout medieval Christendom and dating back to the third-century Desert Fathers of Egypt, but most prevalent in England between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries.[166] Unlike hermits, they committed themselves to living their entire lives in a cell, usually attached to a parish church, and the majority of them in the mid-to-late Middle Ages were women.[167] Carpenter was the subject of ecclesiastical scandal when, in 1332, she left her cell in Surrey and appeared before the papal court in Avignon (possibly in-person, but maybe by proxy).[168] In order to embroil *Caritas*'s narrative in the Peasants' Uprising, Wesker shifts the setting to Norfolk, and the time to 1377. He also alters certain details of Carpenter's life, portraying her as trapped within the cell and begging to leave, rather than (as the historical record suggests) escaping and then petitioning to be let back in. This historical re-assemblage of a libretto explores themes of gender, class, agency, devotion, and violence in the Middle Ages, weaving them through a double-narrative of revolutionary and religious fervour.

[165] In this chapter, I refer to the historical person of Christine Carpenter as 'Carpenter', and to the character in *Caritas* as 'Christine'.
[166] E. A. Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England, 1200-1550: Selected Sources* (Manchester Medieval Sources; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 1.
[167] Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 20.
[168] Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Carpenter, Christina (fl. 1329–1332), Religious Recluse', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-105610>, accessed 1 February 2020.

Caritas is divided into two uninterrupted acts. It opens with Christine's immurement rite, at the end of which the door to her cell is bricked up. The following eleven scenes that comprise Act I span five years, and the audience watches from outside of the cell (see Figure 1.1) as Christine interacts with her parents, neighbours, priest, and heartbroken ex-fiancé Robert. Her behaviour in each interaction becomes increasingly erratic, as her isolation and desperation to receive a divine vision cause her to lose her grip on reality. The Bishop denies her parents' petition for her release, and Robert dies in the Peasants' Uprising. During the *entr'acte*, a transitional orchestral ricercar, the set slowly revolves to reveal the interior of Christine's cell (Figure 1.2). Fully visible for the first time since her immurement, she is unkempt and terrified, 'as her eyes take in what she realizes is to be her cell forever'.[169] Finally, Act II comprises an extended monologic passacaglia in which Christine embodies a modernist articulation of the nineteenth-century operatic mad-woman trope.[170] The opera ends with her biting the hand of a child who taunts her through the window. She then paces her cell in growing darkness, muttering, unaccompanied: 'this is a wall… and this is a wall… and this is a wall…'.[171]

[169] Act I, bars 1128-47, Robert Saxton and Arnold Wesker, *Caritas: An Opera in Two Acts, Without Interval* (London: Chester Music, 1992).
[170] For a discussion of the connection between the operatic mad-scene trope and nineteenth-century medievalism, see Stephen Ace Willier, 'Early Nineteenth-Century Opera and the Impact of the Gothic', PhD (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1987), 414ff.
[171] Act II, bars 369-37.



Figure 1.1: Christine seen through the window of her cell in Act I.[172]



Figure 1.2: The interior of Christine's cell.[173]

[172] Designed by Joe Vaněk, Wakefield Opera House, 1991
[173] Ibid.

This chapter explores how the life of a real anchorite can be both excavated and reimagined in sung drama. I begin with a brief survey of Saxton's music and the critical climate in which *Caritas* was received. Following Freeman's espousal of close reading that involves 'fixating on that which resists any easy translation into present-tense terms' (discussed in the introduction to this thesis), I then discuss why the lives of anchorites can be difficult to understand, or even shocking, for modern audiences.[174] Through a detailed examination of the medieval source-texts through which Saxton and Wesker construct Christine's narrative—and with a particular emphasis on manifestations of affective piety in anchoritic literature quoted in the libretto (primarily *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group prayers)—I begin to construct a medievalist hermeneutic method through which anchoritic literature and *Caritas* can be read together.[175] Finally, I apply this hermeneutic via a musical analysis of the confrontation between Christine and Robert in Act I, scene iii. By bringing medieval and operatic hermeneutics together, this chapter asks how the musical composition and sung performance of anchoritism can animate certain distinctive qualities of affective piety, how the more peculiar aspects of extreme asceticism might be rendered (partially) legible for modern audiences, and how an understanding of their theological and historical underpinnings can inform a reading of *Caritas*.

1.1a. The Music of Robert Saxton

Caritas was commissioned jointly by Opera North and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, and premiered at Wakefield Opera House in 1991.[176] Its intimate scale, partly

[174] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xvi.
[175] For a discussion of hermeneutics, see ibid., xix; all references to and translations of *Ancrene Wisse* are from Robert J. Hasenfratz, *Ancrene Wisse* (electronic edn., TEAMS Middle English Texts Series; Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000). Hereafter abbreviated as *AW*.
[176] Birtwistle's *Gawain's Journey*, discussed in Chapter 4, premiered at Huddersfield Festival in the same year. See David Power, 'Huddersfield 1991: Saxton and Others', *Tempo*, 180 (1992), 21-22, 21.

attributable to the relatively small size of Wakefield Opera House, manifests in its chamber orchestration (single woodwind, two brass, string quintet, and percussion) and absence of a chorus.[177] Its two uninterrupted acts are largely through-composed, with occasional arias sung by Christine, soliloquys in which a local woman Matilde relays the stories of various saints' lives and a travelling priest delivers a (spoken) sermon, and a trio at the end of Act I when Christine's family petition the Bishop for her release. There is also children's chorus, in the form of a playful, taunting canon that recurs five times throughout the opera, usually at times when Christine expresses her frustration. The only reference to medieval music occurs at the very opening of the opera, when the congregation sings diegetic plainchant for Christine's immurement liturgy (discussed in section 1.3b), accompanied by a pedal E from which Saxton establishes a large-scale harmonic schema (as identified by Wyndham Thomas, see Table 1.1).[178] Recurring melodies and motifs connect the through-composed drama across Act I in particular, while the more formalistic ricercar (*entr'acte*) and passacaglia (all of Act II) gesture away from naturalistic sung dialogue and suggest distended passages of narrative time.[179]

Table 1.1: Tonal schema in Caritas *according to Thomas's analysis.*[180]

Scene	**i**	**ii**	**iii**	**iv**	**v**	**vi**	**vii**	**viii**	**ix**	**x**	**xi**	**xii**	**xiii**
Main tonalities	E	A♭	B/F	A	F♯/C	B♭	G	E	B	G	A♭	A♭	D
	E♭									C/F♯		A	
	A											D/A♭	
	D												E

[177] Wyndham Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas* (Landmarks in Music Since 1950; Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 38.
[178] Ibid., 54.
[179] Ibid., 57-104.
[180] Ibid., 54.

While *Caritas* is Saxton's first completed opera, he had been considering writing *The Wandering Jew* (based on Stefan Heym's novel and premiered as a radio opera in 2010) as early as 1984.[181] Based on the thirteenth-century myth of a Jewish man condemned to a nomadic eternity after refusing Christ succour on the road to the crucifixion, *The Wandering Jew* is also somewhat medievalist. Unlike *Caritas*, however, it is not set exclusively in the Middle Ages, instead opening during the Holocaust and shifting backwards and forwards through time. In his book-length study of *Caritas*, Thomas situates *The Wandering Jew* within a wider tendency in Saxton's music to thematize 'journeying towards light and the Divine Presence', including *The Ring of Eternity* (1983, after Henry Vaughan), *Concerto for Orchestra* (1984, in its evocation of Kabbalah), *The Circles of Light* (1985-86, after Dante), *In the Beginning* (1987, after the Book of Genesis), and *Music to Celebrate the Resurrection of Christ* (1988-89).[182] Thomas initially situates *Caritas* outside of this trend, however, citing Christine's 'despairing loss of faith' in contrast with the transcendent trajectories of *The Wandering Jew* in particular.[183]

Aesthetically, Saxton's post-tonal idiom can be broadly situated alongside that of many second-generation post-war British modernists; he is perceptibly influenced by his teachers Elisabeth Lutyens, Robin Holloway, Robert Sherlaw Johnson, and Benjamin Britten (Anthony Burton has also likened his use of 'long-range chord progressions' to the music of Witold Lutosławski).[184] Several of Saxton's works have been compared to Britten's stlye, but perhaps none so much as *Caritas*.[185] Saxton began to receive compositional

[181] Thomas Hyde and Robert Saxton, 'My New Music: Robert Saxton', *Musical Opinion,* 133 (2010), 20, 20.
[182] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 1; see also Paul Griffiths, 'A Little Light on Robert Saxton', *The Musical Times*, 127/1717 (1986), 145-47, 145.
[183] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 2; see also David Wright, 'Robert Saxton in the 1990s', *Tempo,* 3/215 (2001), 2-6.
[184] Anthony Burton, 'Proms 87: Ever-Increasing Circles', *Listener*, 118/3027 (1987), 35.
[185] Griffiths, 'A Little Light on Robert Saxton', 145.

guidance from Britten when he was ten years old, around the time that Britten was working on *Curlew River* (1964). *Caritas*'s chamber orchestration and atmospheric ecclesiastical setting (specifically relocated to East Anglia, a shared regional attachment between Saxton and Britten) invite comparison with Britten's 'parables for church performance', all of which, Thomas points out, open with chant processionals.[186] *Curlew River* is the first of Britten's three church parables, based on the fifteenth-century *Noh* drama *Sumidagawa* ('Sumida River') by Kanze Jūrō, and one of many compositions by Britten which could be considered medievalist.[187] Alongside the other two church parables *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966) and *The Prodigal Son* (1968), further examples of Britten's medievalism include *A Ceremony of Carols* (1942, which also opens with processional chant and sets medieval texts), *Noye's Fludde*, and *Abraham and Isaac* (1958 and 1952, an opera and a canticle, both based on Chester mystery plays), and *Sacred and Profane* (1975, a collection of 'eight medieval lyrics'.

The critical commentary surrounding *Caritas* has either pointed out similarities with Britten in a complimentary tone or gone to revealing lengths to deny any similarity. Malcolm Hayes and Michael Kennedy both remark upon the way in which Saxton's approach is expedient for drama, enabling him to 'move swiftly from climax to climax' and truncate transitions between scenes, 'intelligently taking a leaf out of Britten's book'.[188] David Wright, conversely, is at such pains to show that '*Caritas* does not sound

[186] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 6; Gilles Couderc, 'Ritual and Parable in Britten's *Curlew River*', *Miranda*, 14/14 (2017).
[187] See Peter Happé, 'Benjamin Britten and Medieval Drama at Chester: From *Abraham and Isaac* to "The Nativity"', in Kate Kennedy (ed.), *Literary Britten: Words and Music in Benjamin Britten's Vocal Works* (13: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 340-55.
[188] Michael Kennedy (1991) 'All Walled up with Somewhere to Go', *Sunday Telegraph*, 24 November; Malcolm Hayes (1991) 'Playing safe', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 November, cited in Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 105-06.

like Britten' that he inadvertently lists several reasons why it does.[189] As Thomas suggests, the main difference between *Caritas* and *Curlew River* lies in the former's more naturalistic dramaturgy (the latter framed by its 'pseudo-monastic' storytellers and abstracted through the use of masks).[190] But while Britten's *Noh*-inspired orchestration in two groups in separate tempi stands apart from Saxton's more straightforward accompaniment, much of Britten's other post-tonal dramatic music applies similar textures, harmonic restraints, and approaches to through-composition to those found in *Caritas*. Considering these two composer's stylistic similarities, my analytical methodology in this chapter borrows somewhat from that of scholars of Britten, among them Heather Wiebe, Arnold Whittall, Philip Rupprecht, and J. P. E. Harper-Scott.[191] Such a methodology includes attention to whole-tonal harmonies, tonal centres amid sustained chromaticism, and the occasional reference to set theory on one hand; on the other, sensitivity to the interplay between surface motifs and background structures, how that relationship might be manipulated within the course of the drama, and what that interplay might signify.[192]

Thomas's monograph is the only sustained study of *Caritas* to date, and it presents a comparative study of the differences between Wesker's play and libretto, a detailed analytical commentary on Saxton's setting, and particulars of the opera's performance and reception. Having published various editions of twelfth- and thirteenth-century music and

[189] Wright, 'Robert Saxton in the 1990s', 3.
[190] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 6-7.
[191] Heather Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction* (Music Since 1900; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes and Techniques* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); See Philip Ernst Rupprecht, *Rethinking Britten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Ideology in Britten's Operas* (Music Since 1900; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[192] See Philip Ernst Rupprecht, *Britten's Musical Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

liturgical drama himself, Thomas grapples with Wesker's apparently negative conception of the Middle Ages, citing Wesker's preface to the 1990 edition of the play:

> *Caritas* is about the pursuit of the ideal through dogmas which lead to the destruction of things human.[193]

From this assertion, Thomas concludes that Wesker's 'main intention was to weave a narrative that contrived to prove an ideological proposition'.[194] Wesker's statement is a somewhat universalist one; he writes of 'ideal' and 'dogma' in terms which can be applied transhistorically, later comparing the 'parable' of *Caritas* to one of a twentieth-century Chinese woman so dogmatically Maoist that she attempted suicide after being offered the indulgence of a watermelon.[195] Thomas compares Wesker's 'ideological' universalism unfavourably with the more spiritual universalism that he perceives in Saxton's setting, characterized as 'a musical language that has enabled him to blend medieval themes and locations with universal concerns of love, faith, disillusionment and redemption'.[196] He proposes that these spiritual tendencies in turn afford Christine 'a metaphorical crucifixion and resurrection'.[197]

Thomas bolsters his redemptive reading of Saxton's score by referring to the broader theme of 'darkness moving into light' in Saxton's output, now including *Caritas* within that trend (rather than contrasting with it, as he suggests earlier). In particular, he suggests that the return of the tonal centre of E at the end of the opera, along with a recapitulation of Christine's pious song from scene i in the final oboe solo, 'could be viewed as a renewal—a fresh start'.[198] By reading Saxton's score as a rehabilitation of Wesker's libretto, Thomas

[193] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 14.
[194] Ibid., 14-15.
[195] Ibid., 26-27.
[196] Ibid., xiv.
[197] Ibid., 46.
[198] Ibid.

somewhat obscures Christine's final, unaccompanied repetitive muttering at the end of the opera. Compelling evidence against Thomas's distinction between Wesker's ideological and Saxton's spiritual perspectives emerged in Saxton's 2002 composer's note:

> With its progression from light to darkness by means of a straightforward 'external' narrative which transforms into an 'inner' psychological state, the opera, I hope, acts as a warning that, three hundred years after the century which saw the 'light' in the guise of (late) Shakespeare, Donne, Cervantes, Galileo, Kepler, Leibniz, Newton, Spinoza, Locke, Hobbes, Milton, Purcell, Monteverdi and Wren, we ignore such advances in thought and reason at our peril.[199]

These explicit invocations of the Enlightenment suggest that, contrary to Thomas's reading, Saxton and Wesker in fact share very similar liberal-humanist perspectives on the polarization of blind dogma on one hand, and enlightened, teleological reason on the other.

While Thomas reads Wesker's 1990 remarks in particular as an ideological agenda superfluous to *Caritas*, Wesker's reflections on his own personal 'dogmas' and how they relate to Jewish identity suggest a more complex and historically nuanced approach to the creation of medievalist fiction. In his autobiography, Wesker first discusses his own humanism, self-consciously, in paradoxically religious terms:

> through books in general I discovered … the plethora of contradictory truths which must live side-by-side …. The flaw in this edifice of edification … is that the discovery came to me as God comes to sinners, of Catholicism to the convert …. In discovering that books, the best of them, were a defence against ignorance—which left people vulnerable to the seductive certitudes of dogma—I paradoxically elevated their glories to a dogma.[200]

He then frames the pursuit of education as both an ethical and an affective response to Jewish history, and a facet of his own identity:

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[199] Robert Saxton, '*Caritas* (1991): Composer's Note', *Wise Music Classical* <https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/11700/>, accessed 31 January 2020.
[200] Arnold Wesker, *As Much as I Dare: An Autobiography (1932-1959)* (London: Century, 1994), 127.

> Like most Jews I'm manic about the need for education and the value of knowledge. We fear ignorance as a cesspit breeding inferiority complexes out of which creeps mob hatred of what is unknown.[201]

The history of antisemitism in Medieval England—Blood Libel and host desecration myths, pogroms, Edward I's 1290 Edict of Expulsion—has been established by several scholars as a corollary to modern antisemitism and the Holocaust.[202] While Wright has remarked upon how Christine's 'isolation within community' might have carried 'an obvious Jewish cultural resonance' for Wesker and Saxton, the historical resonances of medieval antisemitism are further explored by Saxton in *The Wandering Jew* and Wesker in his 1991 play *Blood Libel*, and manifestly run deeper than simple literary *topoi*.[203]

The duality of light and darkness invoked in Saxton's composer's note recurs throughout Thomas's study as part of a wider 'theme of opposites' (interior and exterior, black and white, sacred and secular), which he suggests 'dominates' *Caritas*.[204] The points at which such imagery occurs in the libretto are usually references to *Ancrene Wisse*. However, as I discuss below, affective piety always angles such dualisms towards something further—a more ambiguous and powerful third perspective—not least because all differences pale in comparison to the difference between God and humanity, which Christ yet still managed to live out.[205] During my discussion of *Caritas*'s source-texts below, I will introduce the more flexible hermeneutic framework that a closer engagement with affective piety can provide. First, however, the following section further explores why the life of Carpenter in

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[201] Ibid., 128.
[202] Kathy Lavezzo, *The Accommodated Jew* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Hannah Johnson and Nina Caputo, 'The Middle Ages and the Holocaust: Medieval Anti-Judaism in the Crucible of Modern Thought', *postmedieval*, 5/3 (2014), 270-77.
[203] Wright, 'Robert Saxton in the 1990s', 3; Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 136-37; Eric Alexander G. Binnie, 'The Norwich Blood Libel Mounted Once Again: A Pedagogy for Tolerance in Arnold Wesker's *Blood Libel* (1991)', in Miriamne Ara Krummel and Tison Pugh (eds.), *Jews in Medieval England: Teaching Representations of the Other* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 171-90.
[204] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 24.
[205] See Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 296.

particular, and anchoritism in general, function for Wesker, Saxton, and their audiences as potent symbols of medieval alterity.

1.1b. The Illegibility of Anchorites

While the surviving letters that bear witness to Carpenter's life are not explicitly referred to in *Caritas*, the presence of these source-texts underpins the opera with the at-times uncomfortable intimation that its disturbing events are (however loosely) based on truth. While there are several historical examples of anchorites apparently having lived rewarding lives and exercised considerable power and influence (Julian of Norwich being the most famous), their vocation was an extreme one, and Carpenter's went wrong.[206] Her life is also portrayed in Chris Newby's film *Anchoress* (1993) and Paul L. Moorcraft's novel *Anchoress of Shere* (2000), and both depictions are bleak.

Fictional anchorites are almost exclusively depicted as downtrodden and insane, a notable example being Sister Gudule in Victor Hugo's 1831 novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Hugo's narrator invites the reader to gaze through the window of Gudule's cell:

> It was one of those spectres, half light, half shadow, such as one beholds in dreams …. neither a woman, nor a man, nor a living being, nor a definite form …. The little of human form of which one caught a sight beneath this envelope of mourning caused a shudder.[207]

Driven mad by the loss of her baby daughter, Gudule is presented as something other than human, perceptible only as an 'envelope' (a countenance which includes her cell) of less-than-feminine grief. Almost two centuries later, the trope of the grieving anchorite re-appears in DC Comics' *Batman* franchise. In *Batman*, 'The Anchoress' (Figure 1.3) has

[206] For detail on the influence of Julian of Norwich and Margaret Kirby, for example, see Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992).
[207] Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, trans. J. Carroll Beckwith (London: Collins, 1953), 384-5.

voluntarily committed herself to Arkham Asylum after accidentally killing her parents in a lab accident. She becomes a supervillain when she captures Batman and uses superpowers to trap him in a 'cage' of his own memories. Such gothic and neo-gothic responses to anchoritism have their musical manifestations: there are two separate metal bands called 'Anchorite', whose tracks include 'Alone with the Horrors' (*Further from Eternity*, 2020), and 'Goodbye Sunshine' and 'Repentance' (*Anchorite*, 2021).[208] Notably, both of these tracks feature on albums released since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, during which time several articles, blog posts, and opinion pieces drew specific parallels between anchoritism and life during lockdown.[209]

[208] A notable exception to this gothic aesthetic is singer-songwriter Catherine Anne Davies, whose stage name is The Anchoress.

[209] For example, Godelinde Gertrude Perk (2020), 'Coronavirus: advice from the Middle Ages for how to cope with self-isolation', *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-advice-from-the-middle-ages-for-how-to-cope-with-self-isolation-134585>, accessed 24 May 2022.

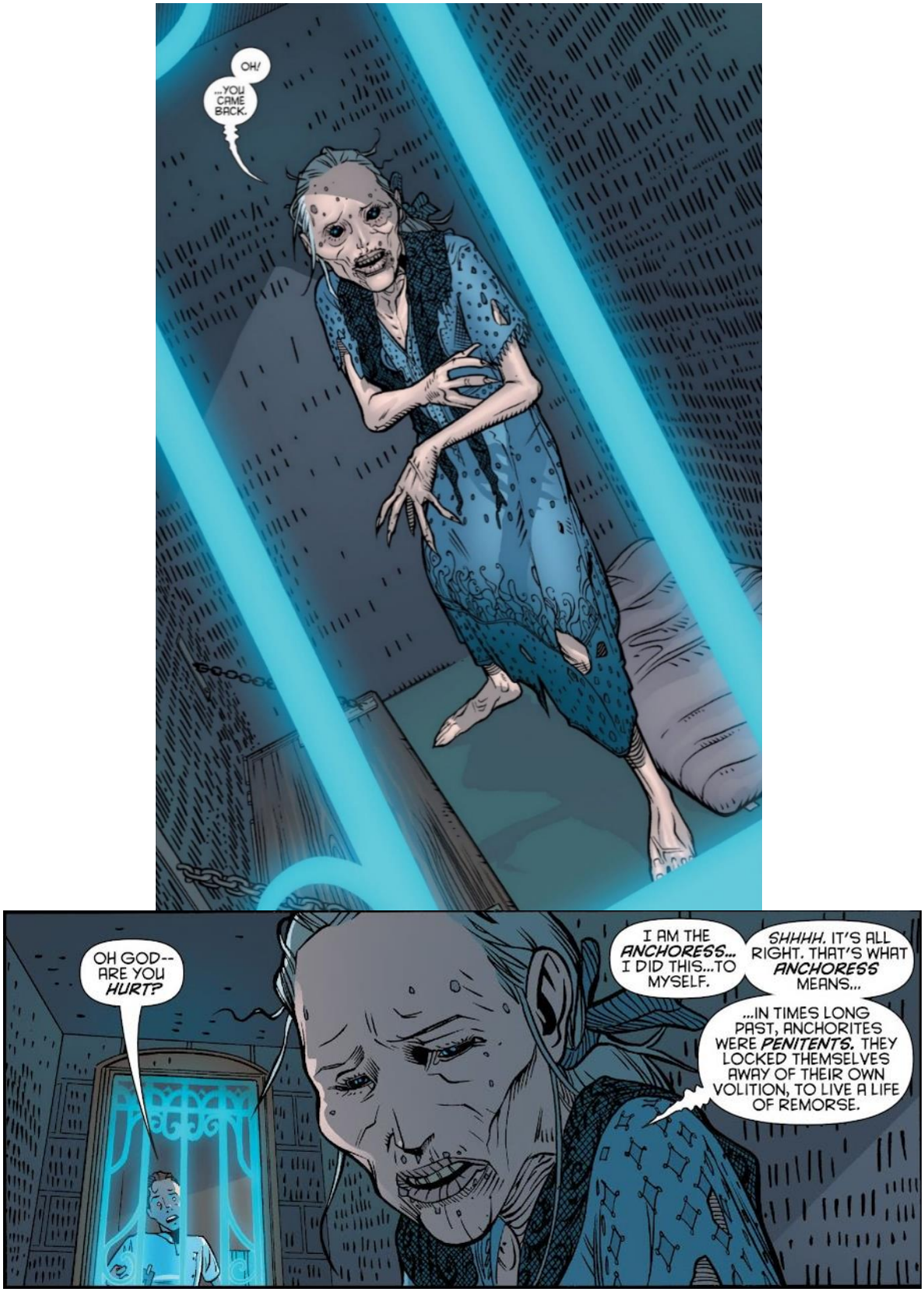


Figure 1.3: Batman *villain The Anchoress.*[210]

[210] Marguerite Bennett, Scott Snyder, Wes Craig et al., 'Cages', in Bobbie Chase, Mike Marts, and Katie Kubert (eds.), *Batman Annual* (2 #2: DC Comics, 2013), 14-15.

As Liz Herbet McAvoy has shown in her work on Katharine de Audley, the historical record of an anchorite's life can often be obscured by her posthumous reception in local legend, hagiography, and antiquarian romanticization.[211] But the aesthetic gap between celebratory depictions of anchorites like Julian of Norwich and the subhuman fictional anchorites listed above betrays something of what Elaine Treharne (riffing on Robert Hughes's modern art documentary series *The Shock of the New*) terms the 'shock of the old'.[212] As Michel Foucault and others have observed, the nature of incarceration has changed profoundly since the eighteenth century, when arenas of punishment shifted from being primarily public (the stocks, the gallows, banishment, excommunication) to private (exclusion, incarceration).[213] Solitary confinement was not a widespread practice until the early nineteenth century; while the medieval 'cell' is arguably as likely to invoke the monastery or sanctuary as the gaol, the modern cell is intrinsically linked to criminality.[214] In spite of the handful of religious solitaries alive today (such as Sr Rachel Overton in North Lincolnshire), the anchoritic vocation is largely illegible in the modern popular imagination.[215]

[211] Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Uncovering the "Saintly Anchoress": Myths of Medieval Anchoritism and the Reclusion of Katharine de Audley', *Women's History Review*, 22/5 (2013), 801-19.
[212] Elaine Treharne, 'The Shock of the Old: Early English and its Modern Re-Tellings', *The Heroic Age: A Journal of Early Medieval and Northwestern Europe*, 14 (2010).
[213] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); see also Albrecht Classen and Connie Scarborough, *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age* (Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, 11; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 6; Robert Mills contests Foucault's chronology from both directions, pointing out realities of medieval incarceration and torture in the modern West. He does not fundamentally challenge Foucault's public/private dialectic, however. See Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), 12-13.
[214] Randall McGowen, 'The Well-Ordered Prison: England, 1780-1865', in Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (eds.), *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 79-, 72-89.
[215] See Sr Rachel Overton, 'The Anchorhold', <https://www.anchorhold.co.uk/>, accessed 20 May 2023.

It would be easy to dismiss modern-day fictional representations of anchorites as simply inaccurate. But in my reading of *Caritas*—and how Wesker and Saxton portray Christine, specifically—I find in theatrical suffering an invitation to read against the grain of Carpenter's very real trials by using the precise tools with which real-life anchorites consoled themselves. These tools include the literary modes of prayer and contemplation that broadly constitute affective piety, a spiritual mode and 'incarnational poetic' that encourages private, interior devotion to Christ's humanity, with an emphasis on the Passion.[216] Among its early exponents were twelfth-century Cistercians Bernard of Clairvaux and Aelred of Rievaulx (on whom more later), but, as Barbara Zimbalist suggests, perhaps affective piety's best-known manifestation was in the spirituality of medieval women ascetics like the anchorites.[217]

Caritas's most prevalent source-text is *Ancrene Wisse*, from which Wesker lifts various images, textual motifs, and theological approaches. Wesker's libretto also draws from a variety of other medieval source-texts, of which Hugh of Floreffe's *vita* of the Belgian anchoress Yvette of Huy, Middle English poem *Þe Wohunge of ure Laured* ('The Wooing of Our Lord'), and an anonymous rhyming chronicle of the English hermit *Robert of Knaresborough* can also be described as manifestations of affective piety. The liturgies for the enclosure of an anchorite that inform the opening scene of *Caritas*, while manifesting codified public worship rather than private devotion, also bear witness to the Church

[216] Barbara Zimbalist, 'Medieval Affective Piety and Christological Devotion: Juliana of Mont Cornillon and the Feast of Corpus Christi', in Jane Beal (ed.), *Illuminating Jesus in the Middle Ages* (Boston: Brill, 2019), 203-18, 203.
[217] Bartlett and Bestul, 'Introduction', 2; Zimbalist, 'Medieval Affective Piety and Christological Devotion: Juliana of Mont Cornillon and the Feast of Corpus Christi', 203.

climate within which affective piety was practised, and incorporate important rhetorical devices from anchoritic spirituality.[218]

The following section of this chapter discusses these texts in more detail, focusing in turn on the letters which bear witness to the life of Carpenter, the surviving liturgies for the enclosure of an anchorite, and—with a particular emphasis on *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group prayers—the affective piety of anchoritic literature. The solitary religious life makes for seemingly unlikely operatic subject matter; no evidence survives of anchorites singing after their immurement, and their literature places great emphasis upon silent contemplation, humility, and modesty. The extreme nature of their vocation, the conspicuous location of their cells in both the geographical and the spiritual centre of parish communities, and the vivid sensuality that characterizes affective piety, however, lends anchorites a certain spectacular quality appropriate to the operatic stage. The hermeneutic methods explored in the following section will therefore inform my musical analyses of *Caritas*.

1.2. *Caritas*'s Source-Texts

1.2a. Letters

Carpenter's case, while unusual, was no means unprecedented in monastic communities. In the words of F. Donald Logan, there were 'two elements which were to remain consistent in the long history of monasticism: (1) the runaway who had committed a grave

[218] *Caritas* also quotes directly from John Ball's 1381 Blackheath sermon in its setting of the Peasants' Uprising, which is beyond the scope of this chapter.

misdeed by his flight and (2) the insistence that he be received back'.[219] What sets Carpenter apart from runaway monks and nuns is her status (like most anchorites) as a layperson, and her comparative isolation to, for example, a novice nun being reinstated into a religious community. Three letters pertaining to Carpenter's life survive, all from Bishop John de Stratford of Winchester.[220] Because of the adjustments of time and place in *Caritas*, however, Wesker replaces Stratford with Bishop Henry le Dispenser of Norwich. Given that Henry is sometimes referred to as the 'fighting bishop', both for his role in the suppression of the Peasants' Revolt and his violent intolerance of Lollardy, this substitution is expedient for Wesker's depiction of an inflexible and controlling church.[221] Fittingly, McAvoy's study of Carpenter also identifies Stratford as 'arguably the most powerful man in fourteenth-century England' who would have proven 'a formidable adversary to the young lay anchoress'.[222] The substitution of Henry for John does not particularly alter his character type.

Miri Rubin describes the first two of Stratford's letters as 'typical examples' of the kind of episcopal scrutiny an anchorite would undergo, especially given that they were not beholden to a codified rule or mother superior (as a nun would be).[223] In the first,

[219] F. Donald Logan, *Runaway Religious in Medieval England, c.1240-1540* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.
[220] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 16-17. The translations to which Thomas refers are from the October 1972 issue of the Shere Parish Magazine and reprinted in the DVD booklet of Newby's *Anchoress* (discussed above). The translator is unnamed and some of the dates contradict those given by McAvoy's account of Stratford's episcopal register (which references the external microfilm collection of Borthwick Institute for Archives, York). See McAvoy, 'Carpenter, Christina (fl. 1329–1332), Religious Recluse'. McAvoy's English translations are at Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Appendix: The Letters Concerning the Enclosure of Christina Carpenter', in Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body Within the Discourses of Enclosure* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008b), 221-24.
[221] Richard Allington-Smith, *Henry Despenser: The Fighting Bishop* (Dereham: Larks Press, 2003), 107.
[222] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 120.
[223] Miri Rubin, 'An English Anchorite: The Making, Unmaking and Remaking of Christine Carpenter', in Rosemary Horrox, Sarah Rees Jones, and R. B. Dobson (eds.), *Pragmatic Utopias: Ideals and Communities, 1200-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 204-23, 207.

addressed to 'the Officials of the Archdeacon of Surrey', Stratford acknowledges Carpenter's application to be an anchorite, which appears to have been made some time before 21 June 1329.[224] As McAvoy writes,

> there is much use made of active verb-form: Christina is a subject who actively desires ('cupiens') the anchoritic lifestyle; rather than be passively enclosed, she will 'cause herself to be enclosed' ('facet se includi') …. The bishop stresses on several occasions that Christina's new abode, whilst being physically 'in a narrow place' ('in arto loco') ... is also representationally an expansive realm where she may live a more fruitful, spiritual life ('frugam melioris vite').[225]

Carpenter is presented as an actively enthusiastic applicant. Stratford instructs the archdeaconry to assess her vocation, to ensure that she is an unmarried virgin, and to seek the opinion of her parish rector Matthew de Redeman and her father William (both of whose names Wesker retains in *Caritas*), as well as 'a range of ecclesiastics and other churchmen who may have an interest in the matter ("interesse potest in hac parte")'.[226] As Marsha Frakes Waggoner has emphasized, the decision to become an anchorite was 'not one that could be made lightly, or even alone'.[227] The relatively unsupervised nature of the vocation motivated potential anchorites, their confessors, and bishops to practise stringent discernment processes before an anchorite was finally enclosed, both in the interest of the Church's reputation and out of genuine pastoral concern for the applicant. At the same time, the scrutiny of the 'community of men' who 'revolve' around her, McAvoy suggests, encloses Carpenter 'just as readily as the walls of her anchorhold will enclose — but fail to contain— her'.[228] In *Caritas*, the audience is implicated in this 'specular activity',

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[224] Register of Bishop John Stratford (1323-33), Hampshire Record Office, Winchester (21M65/A1/5), cited in McAvoy, 'Carpenter, Christina (fl. 1329–1332), Religious Recluse'; see also McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 120.
[225] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 120-21.
[226] Ibid., 121.
[227] Marsha Frakes Waggoner, 'Dismembered Virgins and Incarcerated Brides: Embodiment and Sanctity in the Katherine Group', PhD (University of Arizona, 2005), 77.
[228] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 121.

especially when the rotating stage allows them to spectate upon Christine's breakdown in Act II.[229]

Stratford's second letter, dated 11 July 1329, refers to Carpenter as 'devota Christina' ('the pious Christine'), and confirms that she has been vetted to the bishop's satisfaction.[230] He grants permission for her to be enclosed in the vicinity of St James's Church, Shere, in an early fourteenth-century cell that may have been purpose-built for her.[231] McAvoy observes that his discussion of the cell's narrowness 'cedes to an expansion of its more metaphorical and figurative qualities', wherein she '(now in the passive voice) "might be enabled" to serve God more freely ("servire deum valeat liberius")'.[232] McAvoy's reading consequently finds Carpenter's agency in Stratford's rhetoric 'waning at the very moment of enclosure'.[233]

The rest of the correspondence takes place approximately three years later, during which time Carpenter, for unexplained reasons and by unknown means, left her cell. In this third letter, dated 10 November 1332 and addressed to the Dean of Guildford, Stratford states that Carpenter visited him on 8 October with a letter from Brother John of Wrotham, Primarius of the Lord Pope. He then quotes the letter (dated 6 August 1332) in full.[234] In it, Wrotham informs Stratford that Carpenter has confessed to the papal office at Avignon

[229] For a discussion of the masculine gaze surrounding a mad woman can be codified musically, see the discussion of Monteverdi's *Lamento della Ninfa* in Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 86-91.
[230] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 121; McAvoy, 'Carpenter, Christina (fl. 1329–1332), Religious Recluse'; McAvoy, 'Appendix: The Letters Concerning the Enclosure of Christina Carpenter'.
[231] McAvoy, 'Carpenter, Christina (fl. 1329–1332), Religious Recluse'.
[232] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 121.
[233] Ibid.
[234] McAvoy, 'Appendix: The Letters Concerning the Enclosure of Christina Carpenter', 223-24.

that she 'lightly left her anchorhold and has gone back to the world', but now wishes to be re-enclosed.[235] He adds that she has 'made a humble petition to us that she may be treated mercifully' and that she has been granted absolution from excommunication (the usual penalty for breaking a solemn vow) by the Pope's authority.[236] Wrotham encourages Stratford to treat Carpenter 'in the manner of a good father … marvelling at the recovery of a lost sheep' and allow her to be re-enclosed in the same place as before.[237] However, Wrotham also states that, 'if she will not be secure there', she should be re-enclosed elsewhere, 'lest, by gadding about … she be exposed to the bites of the rapacious wolf and—heaven forbid—her blood be required at [Stratford's] hands'.[238] Wrotham seems to mean 'secure' in the sense of Christine being unable to escape again, the latter part of this quotation implying capital punishment for any further transgression. Having quoted this correspondence from Wrotham, Stratford commands that Carpenter be 'thrust down ("detrudetor")' into her anchorhold and offer up to God 'the praiseworthy wounds ("stigmata") of her earlier inquisition with us', implying that she has been branded with hot iron.[239]

In *Caritas*, Christine's cell door is bricked up; unlike her historical counterpart, she is physically incapable of leaving. By keeping Christine within her cell, begging to be released from the inside, Wesker engineers a harrowing climax at the start of Act II, where, according to the stage directions:

[235] Ibid., 223.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid.
[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid.; McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 126, fn57.

> The cell wall revolves slowly. We see the inside of the cell. Backed against the wall is CHRISTINE. The sight of her is shocking. She is dirty, unkempt and terrified as her eyes take in what she now realizes is to be her cell for ever.[240]

In spite of the difference between *Caritas*'s plot and the historical record, the (literally) pivotal nature of this moment in the opera is perhaps analogous to McAvoy's attention to the flux of Christine's agency in Stratford's letter. In a dramatic sense, letter and opera alike present a protagonist rooted in one place, yet with a radically shifting relationship with that place, which at some point transforms her from a desiring agent to a prisoner. As McAvoy puts it, the cell is 'translated from place of intellectual and spiritual freedom into narrow, ecclesiastic penitentiary'.[241]

Even though Carpenter's case is, to borrow from McAvoy's title, a 'strange' one, her incarcerated state renders her far more legible to modern audiences—for whom the idea of the cell as a locus of freedom is harder to imagine—than most anchorites. Perhaps, then, it is unsurprising that her life has been the subject of so many modern adaptations. Caroline Walker Bynum draws attention to the 'acute' problem of perspective in most of our information on late-medieval women coming from male authors: 'some of the stories men loved to tell about women reflected not so much what women did as what men admired or abhorred'.[242] By reading these adaptations with the knowledge of how the surviving discourse of Carpenter's life was constructed by the men around her, we could in turn question to what extent her fictional counterparts are admired or abhorred. What can be read of Carpenter's voice between the lines of male-authored texts depends in part on what

[240] Arnold Wesker, *Caritas: A Play in Two Acts* (London: J. Cape, 1981), 46.
[241] McAvoy, 'Gender, Rhetoric and Space in the *Speculum Inclusorum*, *Letter to a Bury Recluse* and the Strange Case of Christina Carpenter', 122.
[242] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 28.

attention is paid to these questions of agency, which in turn have the power to inflect—perhaps drastically—how she is heard via the stage.

1.2b. Liturgies

If the Carpenter of Stratford's first letter is a resolute woman who desires, against the grain of social expectation, the independence of the anchorhold and its attendant faithful and intellectual freedom, the audience of *Caritas* get a glimpse of her in Act I, scene i. The duration of this scene (the longest in Act I) is given over to Christine's immurement rite, from the opening processional chant, to her bricking-up in the cell. In a note at the beginning of the 1981 edition of the play, Wesker writes:

> what follows is based upon the recorded ceremony for enclosing anchoresses. Poetic licence is taken. But scene i must be performed in full, as a real church service, so that an audience is saturated in an intense religious atmosphere and feels itself witness to the ceremony of immurement.[243]

Alongside the stage direction, 'a strong smell of incense is in the air', these designations not only suggest that the audience be engaged sensorially through changes in smell, light, and sound (as the singing procession moves), but that they somehow feel part of a more affective 'atmosphere'—that the theatre be the site of a 'real church service'.[244] Some more specific musico-dramatic strategies at work in this scene will be analysed below. But the underlying drive for cross-historical enactment in Wesker's appeal to some form of authenticity seems primarily engaged with multisensory experience. Wesker and Saxton both draw from medieval sources in their construction of this scene. A brief overview of those source in the context of what Saxton and Wesker did *not* use, however, may also reveal something about the curatorial strategies at work in the construction of *Caritas*'s

[243] Wesker, *Caritas: A Play in Two Acts*, 11.
[244] Ibid., 12. See lighting directions, Act I, bars 6-13.

medievalism: what kind of portrayal of the anchoritic vocation that it presents to an audience with little prior knowledge of it, and to what end that presentation might be skewed.

Thomas has demonstrated that Wesker draws primarily from Rotha Mary Clay's translation of 'The Office for the Enclosing of Anchorites (according to the use of Sarum)' in Appendix A of her 1914 monograph *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*.[245] As Table 1.2 shows, several of this liturgy's elements are represented in *Caritas*, albeit not necessarily in the same order. Wesker's archive also corroborates Thomas's conclusion: a handwritten list titled 'ANCHORESS – REF. BOOKS' lists Clay's book as its first item (as well as nineteenth-century antiquarian Thomas Morton's edition of *Ancrene Wisse* further down, see Figure 1.4). Also among Wesker's papers are photocopied pages of Clay's edition of the liturgy, and chant from Invocation to Christ from the Great Litany (marked 'into the cell', see Figure 1.5) and the hymn *Veni, creator spiritus* (possibly Nick Sandon's edition, see Figure 1.6).[246] There are also some handwritten chant passages: the *Gloria* in Latin and English, *Veni, creator spiritus* in English, and Psalms 6 and 131.[247] Through collecting these chant sources in particular, Wesker seems to have taken an interest in how the opening scene of his play could be sung in performance; while the script of the play contains no musical notation, there are several indications that members

[245] Clay's translation is of a twelfth-century liturgy found in Cotton MS Vespasian D.XV, ff. 61r-65r, which appears in H. A. Wilson, *The Pontifical of Magdalen College, with an Appendix of Extracts from Ether English MSs. of the Twelfth Century* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1910), 243-44. Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914), 193-98.
[246] Walter H. Frere, *The Use of Sarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898-1901).
[247] Psalm 131 appears in most surviving anchoritic liturgies. However, the Latin Vulgate bible (translated from the Greek Septuagint) uses a slightly different Psalm numbering system to most modern versions (usually translated from the Hebrew Masoretic texts). Consequently, the psalm sung in medieval enclosure liturgies, *Memento, domine David* (Lord, remember David) is commonly referred to as Psalm 132 today, and is a different text to the one Wesker collected during his research.

of the cast should ‘intone’, ‘chant’, and ‘sing’, and the Latin words of the *Veni, creator spiritus* are appended.[248]

Table 1.2: Anchoritic liturgical items in the Magdalen Pontifical and Caritas.

Liturgical item (Magdalen Pontifical)	**Counterpart in *Caritas***
	bb. 1-28, *Allelluia. Te martyrum candidatus…* (Alleluia. To thee, Lord, the white robed host of martyrs give glory).
Prostate candidate awaits start of service.	b. 27, *Christine prostrates herself.*
Recitation of litany.	bb. 32-45, Bishop: ‘O God who dost cleanse the wicked…’ (style of a collect)
Sprinkling and giving of tapers.	b. 30, *Mathew sprinkles her three times with holy water, then three times with incense.*
Readings: **Isaiah 26:20**-27:3 (‘go my people’) Luke 10:38-42.	bb. 157-65, Bishop: ‘Go my people’
Procession to altar and offering of tapers: hymn *Veni creator spiritus* Candidate says Psalm 118:116 *Suscipe me domine* (‘receive me, Lord’).	b. 46, *Christine moves forward, places her candles on the table*. bb. 52-60, Christine: ‘I, sister Christine, offer and present myself…’ (vows). bb. 117-133, *Veni creator spiritus* and g*loria*.
(Later versions of the rite include a blessing of vestments here).	b. 63 *Christine is helped on with her rough habit*.

[248] Wesker, *Caritas: A Play in Two Acts*, 11-19; 59-60.

Collects.	bb. 63-71 Bishop: 'May God put off from thee the old woman, and may God clothe thee with the new...'
Sermon.	
Mass of the Holy Spirit.	
Procession to anchorhold: Antiphon *In paradisium deducant te angeli*. Psalm 117 at the door. Candidate sings antiphon *Ingrediar in locum tabernaculi admirabilis usque ad domum Dei*. Choir responds with Psalm 41.	b. 133, *Christine rises. Mathew hands her a taper. A procession forms and moves through the family*. bb. 149-157, Responsory: 'the kingdom of the world, and all the glory of it I have despised'.
All enter anchorhold: Antiphon: *Ingressus Raphael.* Commendations.	b. 157, *Christine enters the cell*.
Candidate enters anchorhold. She sings antiphon *Hec requies mea in seculum seculi: hic habitabo quoniam elagi eam* (here shall be my repose for ever and ever: here shall I dwell for I have chosen it'). Choir responds with Psalm 131.	
Sprinkling with dust: Psalm 138 and antiphon *De terra plasmati me.*	
All leave the anchorhold except the celebrant, who offers private exhortations to the anchorite.	
Blocking of the door: prayers *Temeritatis quidem* and *Deus vite dator*.	bb. 160-165, Bishop: '*In nomine patris*…' bb. 164-173: *Allelluia* recapitulation. b. 173, *The cell is walled up*.
(Later sources include Mass for the Dead here).	
All depart quietly (*omnes in pace discedunt*).	

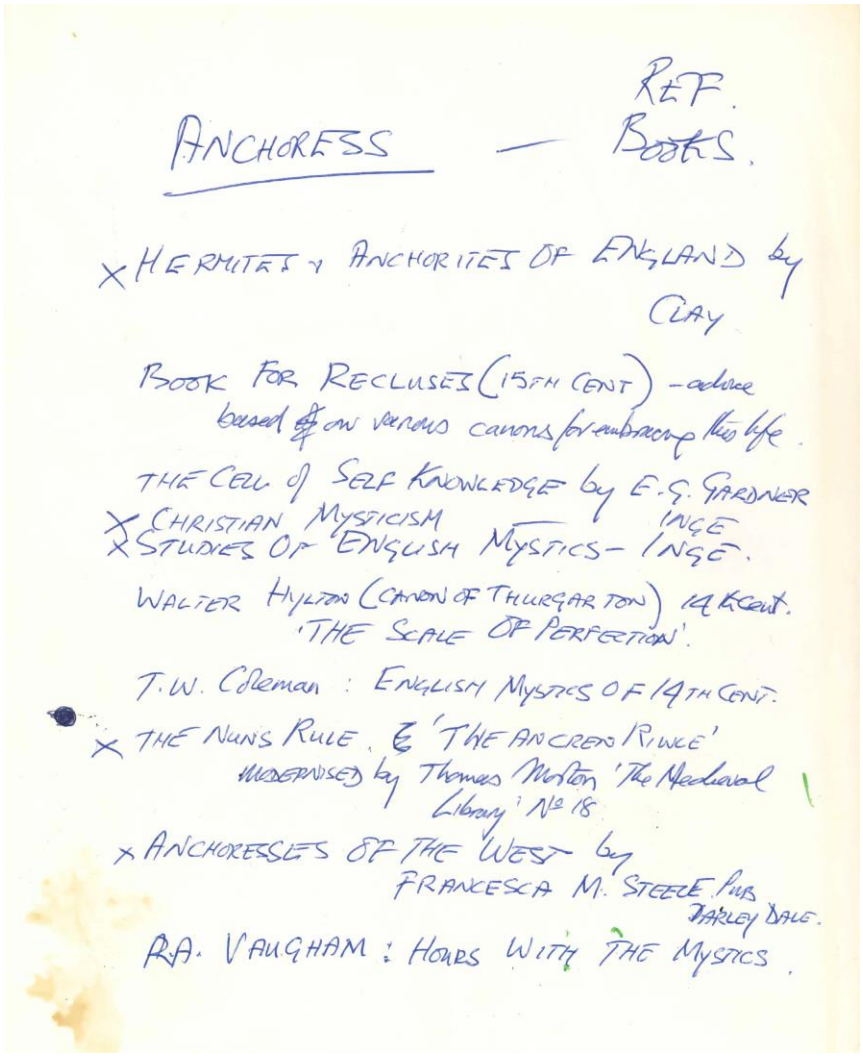


Figure 1.4: Wesker's list of reference books.[249]

[249] Wesker Papers, Harry Ransom Archive, box 21.7.

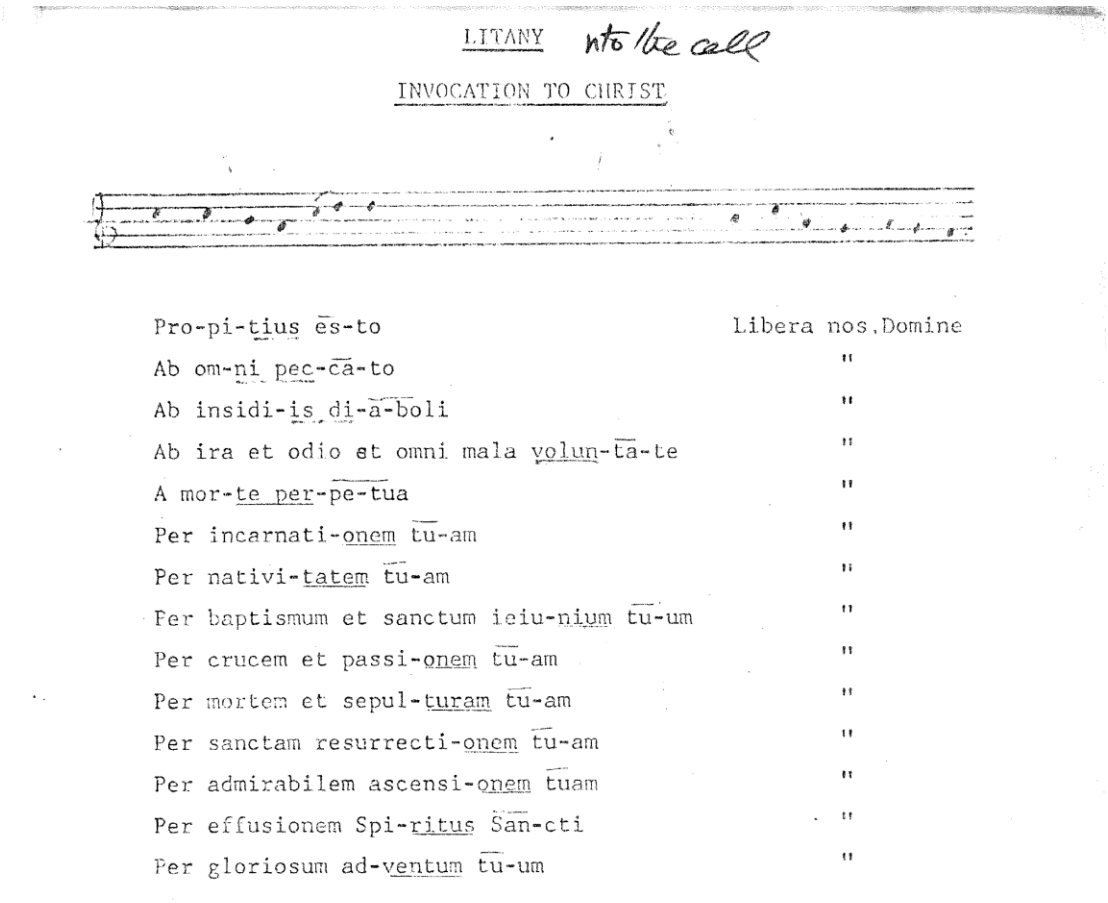


Figure 1.5: The Invocation to Christ from the Litany.[250]

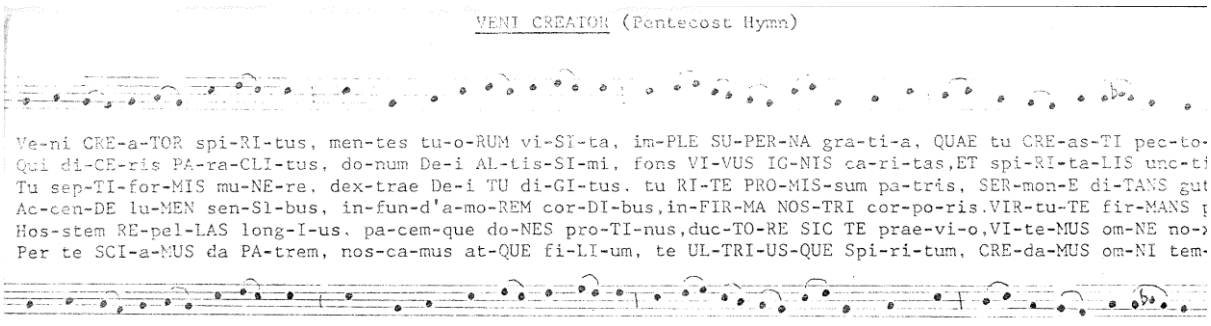


Figure 1.6: Wesker's photocopy of the Veni, creator spiritus.[251]

[250] Wesker Papers, Harry Ransom Archive, box 21.7. Source unknown.
[251] Wesker Papers, Harry Ransom Archive, box 21.7. Possible source Nick Sandon, *The Use of Salisbury: The Masses and Ceremonies of Holy Week* (4; Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot: Antico Edition, 1996), 67.

There are several other surviving versions of the liturgy for enclosing an anchorite: E. A. Jones has found pontificals containing fourteen different surviving examples in English and Welsh libraries, dating from the twelfth century to the fifteenth.[252] Comparing versions over time, Jones emphasizes that most congregants would probably only see an anchorite enclosed once or twice in a lifetime, the peculiar event rendered more legible to congregants through 'intertextual iteration and citation' of more familiar liturgical forms.[253] Through references to rites of ordination or monastic profession, the vocational and life-changing nature of the service is emphasized, while references to rites of burial and extreme unction signify the end of the anchorite's life in the world outside and configure the cell as a sort of tomb (an important image in *Ancrene Wisse*, further discussed below).[254]

This dual resonance of death and initiation was sung out in various psalms and antiphons, and enacted through physical gestures: the candidate lying prostrate before the altar (like a monastic candidate), but also lying in a pre-dug grave, being sprinkled with earth as if being buried, and in some cases receiving extreme unction and hearing her own requiem Mass.[255] Archaeologist Roberta Gilchrist describes an anchorhold at St Anne's Church, Lewes in which the squint (a small, internal window) is so positioned that the anchorite would have to kneel in her own grave to see the high altar.[256] Jones describes these moments in theatrical terms, as 'rhetorically powerful and dramatically impressive' pieces

[252] E. A. Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', in Liz Herbert McAvoy (ed.), *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), 34-46, 35-36.
[253] Ibid., 37; for the number of anchorites recorded in England, Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*, 20.
[254] Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', 37-38; E. A. Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure: The English Ordines for the Enclosing of Anchorites, S. XII–S. XVI', *Traditio,* 67 (2012), 145-234, 157-60.
[255] Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure: The English Ordines for the Enclosing of Anchorites, S. XII–S. XVI', 174.
[256] Roberta Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 190-92.

of ‘liturgical performance’; Francis Swift Darwin even invokes the operatic, describing the anointing of the candidate as ‘a scene worthy of Shakespeare or Wagner’, whose author ‘must have been blessed with a double portion of a highly developed dramatic sense’.[257]

In a sense, this process of intertextual citation also constitutes Wesker’s method for constructing Christine’s liturgy. However, for an audience to whom the entire concept of anchoritism is unfamiliar, the process of signification in this scene is even less straightforward. One liturgical element included in both the medieval rites and Christine’s enclosure ceremony in *Caritas* is a reading from Isaiah 26:20. This passage features in the earliest surviving rite of enclosure, a twelfth-century interpolation in BL MS Cotton Vespasian D.XV, the core elements of which appear to have remained in use until the fifteenth century.[258] It would have formed part of the Liturgy of the Word before the Mass (in the church, before the procession to the anchorhold). In the opera, the Bishop pronounces it as Christine enters her cell:

> Go my people, enter into thy chamber, shut thy doors upon thee, hide thyself a little for a moment until the indignation pass away.[259]

At the analogous point in the Vespasian rite, the bishop pronounces an ‘enjoinder of perpetual obedience’ (‘surgat et in oboedientia reliquum uite finiat’) before the bricking-up of the door.[260] The reference to ‘indignation’ in the Isaiah verse is translated in modern editions of the bible as ‘wrath’ and—Jones suggests—‘speaks the language of refuge and punishment’, framing the enclosure as ‘withdrawal from the negatives of the world’.[261]

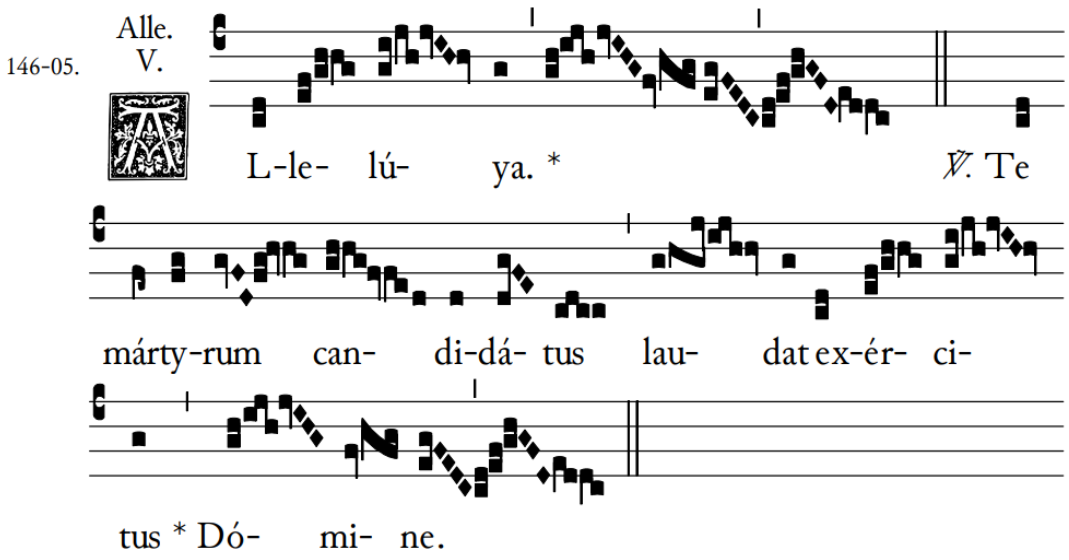
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[257] Francis Darwin Swift, *The English Mediaeval Recluse* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944), 77.
[258] See Jones, *Hermits and Anchorites in England, 1200-1550: Selected Sources*, 36-39; Jones, 'Rites of Enclosure: The English Ordines for the Enclosing of Anchorites, S. XII–S. XVI', 159.
[259] Translation from the Douay-Rheims Bible. In the play, this reading appears at the same point as Vespasian, after the anchorite has been handed the lit tapers and before the gospel reading.
[260] 'Rise up and remain in obedience until the end’. Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', 41.
[261] See, for example, the New Revised Standard Version. Ibid., 39.

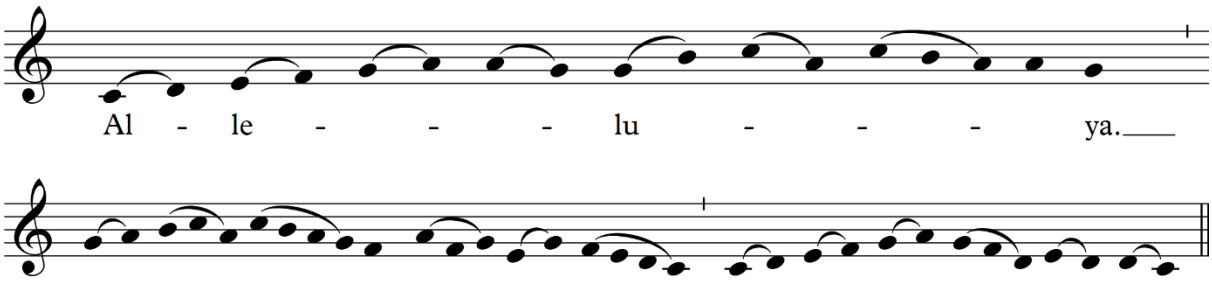
The blocking of the door in the Sarum liturgy, by contrast, features a collect for the candidate's protection and 'everlasting joy'; the balance between initiation and burial resonances varies significantly across the centuries in which this rite was in use.[262]

Wesker and Saxton incorporate two musical elements of medieval liturgy into *Caritas*, forming the only direct instances of musical medievalism in the opera: the *Veni, creator spiritus* ('Come, creator spirit', a hymn sung at the feast of Pentecost and during rites of ordination or monastic initiation, see Figure 1.6) and the processional *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus* ('Alleluia. To thee, Lord, the white robed host of martyrs give glory'). These two pieces of chant bookend the enclosure scene in *Caritas*, with the latter beginning the entire opera. In church mode 5 with no hexachordal B *molle*, the Sarum setting of *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus* (see Example 1.1) can be transcribed in the modern major mode without alteration (Example 1.2). Saxton transposes the melody into E major from bar 1 (see Example 1.3) and A major at its recapitulation in bar 165, scoring it for initially unaccompanied voices (tenors and basses in the recording of the original production).[263] He accompanies the chant with a low E pedal in the bassoon, cello, timpani, and double bass, immediately establishing its prominence within the opera's harmonic schema (see Table 1.1).

[262] Ibid., 37.
[263] Robert Saxton, Arnold Wesker, Diego Masson et al., 'Caritas (CD release)', (England: Collins Classics, 1992).

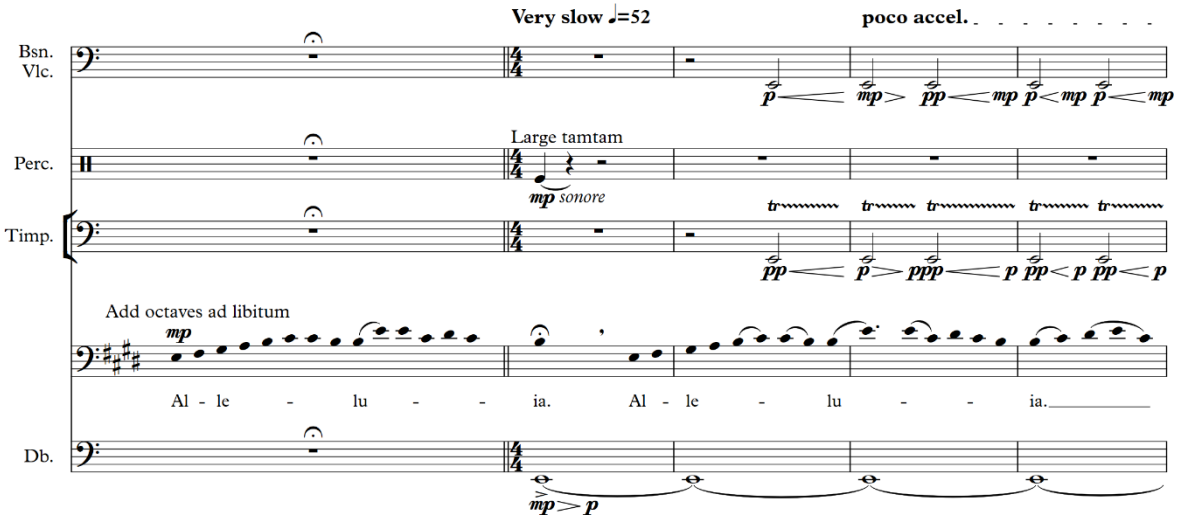


Example 1.1: Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus.[264]
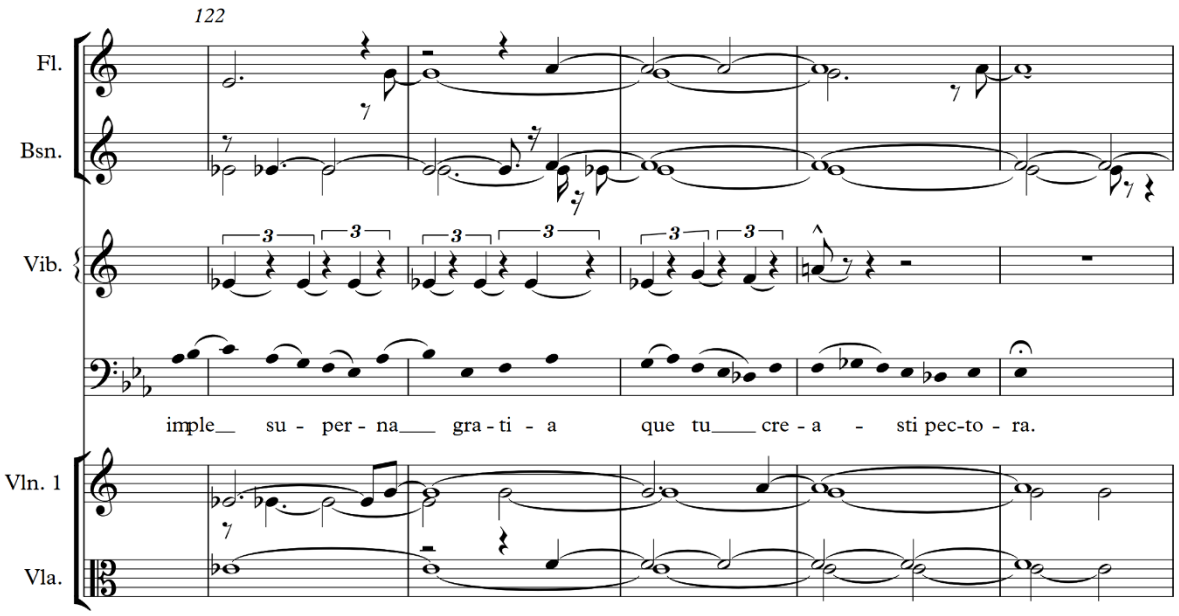


Example 1.2: The first word of Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus, *transcribed*.

[264] William Renwick, *The Sarum Rite: Latin Noted Missal* (C-01; Hamilton ON: The Gregorian Institute of Canada, 2019), 80.



Example 1.3: Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus, *bars 1-5*.

Saxton's approach to transcribing chant hinges around his treatment of it as harmonically stable, and accordingly its ability to bolster structural harmony. Notably, the only instances of key signatures in the entire opera occur with these settings of diegetic chant. Because *Alleluia Te martyrum candidatus* transfers so directly into the modern major mode, its E-major key signature in *Caritas* (Example 1.3) allows Saxton to avoid notating accidentals. When the congregation sings the *Veni, creator spiritus* with an E♭ key signature in bars 117-22 (underpinned by an internal E♭ pedal, see Example 1.4), however, the chant's mode 8 melody requires Saxton to flatten the seventh degree (D♭). Saxton also directly alters the chant melody by flattening the third degree (G♭) to create an E♭-minor inflection in bar 125. This darkening alteration of a relatively well-known melody (the *Veni, creator spiritus* is still frequently sung in twenty-first-century Roman Catholic and Anglican services) coincides with the introduction of a destabilising A♮ tritone against the E♭ pedal and signifies the beginning of Christine's procession to the anchorhold. In this context, Saxton's use of a key signature suggests a more pronounced compositional intervention in his source material.



Example 1.4: The second half of Saxton's Veni, creator spiritus, *bars 122-26.*

Before I continue to unpack Wesker and Saxton's adaptation of anchoritic liturgies, it is important to acknowledge how these incorporations of chant into a modernist operatic landscape—and the terminology with which they can be discussed—present significant methodological considerations for the analysis of musical medievalism. Thomas describes Saxton's setting of *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus* as 'transposed into E major from the original Ionian mode (on C)'.[265] The application of Greek mode names like 'Ionian' varied complexly over the course of the Middle Ages. Boethius's use in *De institutione musica* of seven Greek mode names synthesized from Hellenistic sources (Hypodorian, Hypophrygian, Hypolydian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian and Mixolydian) refer not to collections of intervals, but to note names as devices for transposition.[266] The anonymous ninth-century treatise *Alia musica* then applied those terms to octave species and integrated

[265] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 55.
[266] Harold S. Powers and Frans Wiering, 'Medieval Mode', in Harold S. Powers et al. (eds.), *Mode* (Grove Music Online; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001b). <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043718>, accessed 7 February 2023.

them into a schema with the eight church modes (assigning mode 8 'Hypomixolydian').[267] The Ionian mode is not named until Glarean's *Dodecachordon* in the sixteenth century, applied not to chant but to renaissance polyphony, and several music theorists in the nineteenth century believed the diatonic major and minor modes to derive from the Ionian and Aeolian modes in Glarean's system.[268]

In the later nineteenth century, modal theories espoused by folksong collectors like Cecil Sharp and the Folk Song Society continued to use what Sharp termed 'pseudo-Greek' names which, as Harold S. Powers and James Cowdery observe,

> accorded well with the Romantic idea of a living survival of some older and purer pre-Raphaelite music in what was left of the as-yet uncorrupted rural countryside, and … quaintly antique peasant modalism.[269]

As such, Greek mode names are a commonplace—yet unspoken—medievalism in music analysis, especially frequently employed by scholars of twentieth-century music that uses folk-inflected scales as a compositional resource.[270] The fact that the modern understanding of Greek-named modes rests on them all sharing the same set (7-35) introduces further potential for obfuscation in set-theoretical analysis, especially given that, as Saxton's key signatures attest, the major scale is a permutation of set 7-35 too. Beset from one side with a Pre-Raphaelite, arcadian connection between folk practices and the Middle Ages, from the other with the complexity of medieval and renaissance modal theories and their attendant invocations of Ancient Greece, the Greek modal names assume

[267] Ibid.
[268] Harold S. Powers and Frans Wiering, 'Modal Theories and Polyphonic Music', in Powers et al., *Mode*; James Porter, 'Modal Scales and Traditional Music', in Powers et al., *Mode*.
[269] Harold S. Powers and James Cowdery, 'Modal Scales and Melody Types in Anglo-American Folksong', in Powers et al., *Mode*.
[270] There also existed a strand of primitivist ethnomusicological thought which believed that African music might evidence for the development of medieval modes, see Anna Maria Busse Berger, *The Search for Medieval Music in Africa and Germany, 1891-1961: Scholars, Singers, Missionaries* (New Material Histories of Music; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

a remarkably ideologically thick vagueness if applied to medievalist modernist music. The most stable way of describing mode in medieval chant (which I employ in this chapter) is to draw on the system described in Guido d'Arezzo's eleventh-century *Micrologus*. Guido clarifies the practical application of modal theory, using Latin letter note names, referring to church modes by their eight ascribed numbers, and determining the mode of a chant from its range (*ambitus*) and final.[271]

The *Veni, creator spiritus* is sung before the anchorite's procession to the cell in both Vespasian and *Caritas.*[272] Its function as an initiation hymn, calling upon the Holy Spirit, leads the candidate to the threshold of the cell. The subsequent visual drama in the opera of the bricking-up of Christine's door (from bar 176) confronts the audience with her transition from laywoman to recluse. Wesker's stage directions (in bar 13) emphasize the cell doorway, centring it in the audience's first visual impression of Christine's world:

> light slowly touches the opening in the wall. This is the first thing we see. Huge stones alongside, waiting to be put into place.

The visual prominence of the aperture and the inevitability of its closure mark Christine's immurement as a point of no return; Saxton sets its revelation to a sudden, sforzando A-major triad across the entire orchestra. Ann K. Warren has pointed out that the bricking-up of an anchorite's cell was often symbolic and temporary, and that a door sometimes remained for the passage of clergy, servants, and visitors.[273] There are also examples of anchorites (including Christine) who were able to leave their cells, some being surrounded by courts and gardens. As Clay puts it, immurement was 'a matter of conscience rather than [door]keys'.[274] Entirely bricked-up anchorholds did exist, and some were incredibly

[271] Powers and Wiering, 'Medieval Mode'.
[272] Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', 38.
[273] Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*, 123.
[274] Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*, 142.

small: one excavated in Leatherhead, Surrey was only eight square feet.[275] While Jones warns that historians should 'resist the temptation' to read any aspect of these liturgies 'too dramatically', opera-makers need not, and the high drama of this opening 'burial' scene and its counterfoil when the cell rotates at the start of Act II is yet another dramatically expedient consequence of Wesker's decision to alter Christine's history and confine her to the cell.[276]

Saxton ends Christine's liturgy with a recapitulation of *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus*, now with an A-major key signature, as the clergy process away. *Alleluia. Te martyrum candidatus* is not part of any extant enclosure liturgy, and derives from the Sarum Mass for the Common of Two or More Martyrs.[277] Thomas suggests that the decision to use it re-focuses the entire ceremony 'towards the concept of eventual martyrdom rather than the prospect of sanctification', positioning Christine from the outset of the opera as a 'broken victim of the dogmatic ecclesiastical regime'.[278] But within the context of the much more explicitly macabre allusions found in extant anchoritic liturgies—Masses for the dead, extreme unction, mock burials, and funeral antiphons—it is important to note that 'eventual martyrdom' and death to the world are not so easily parsed in anchoritic spirituality. As I explore in the following section, many examples of affective piety in general and anchoritic literature in particular have a far less straightforward relationship with death.

[275] Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*, 32.
[276] Jones, 'Ceremonies of Enclosure: Rite, Rhetoric and Reality', 44.
[277] Nick Sandon, *The Use of Salisbury: The Proper of the Mass in Advent* (2; Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot: Antico Edition, 1986), 68; cited in Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 55.
[278] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 33; 19.

1.2c. *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group Prayers

By virtue of their solitude, anchorites were laypeople, and did not normally belong to an order.[279] This distinction is borne out in the funereal resonances in the enclosure liturgies discussed above; initiation rites for nuns, for example, are more nuptial than funereal.[280] Also unlike a religious order, anchorites did not adhere to an established rule, but instead had access to a variety of guidance literature, *vitae* (the lives of saints), and devotional poetry. Of this guidance literature, the most widely circulated at the time and well-known today is *Ancrene Wisse* (also known as *Ancrene Riwle* or *Guide for Anchoresses*), although at least twelve other texts survive.[281] *Ancrene Wisse* is believed to have been written in the early thirteenth century by an anonymous male author (almost certainly a monk) and addressed to three sisters.[282] As such, it predates the life of Carpenter by about a century (and therefore the events of *Caritas* by a century and a half). However, extant manuscripts of *Ancrene Wisse* (and its translations into Latin and French) display evidence of having been in active use for several generations.[283] For example, Robert William Ackerman and Roger Dahood observe 'heavy emendation in four hands of varying dates appearing especially on a very high proportion' of MS Cotton Cleopatra C.VI (into which *Ancrene Wisse* was interpolated between the second half of the thirteenth century and the second half of the fourteenth century).[284]

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[279] There are some examples of nuns and monks living as solitaries within cloisters after joining a community, but the literature referred to in this chapter all applies to anchorites living in parish communities. See Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*, 20.
[280] Elizabeth Robertson, 'Savouring Scientia: The Medieval Anchoress Reads *Ancrene Wisse*', in Yoko Wada (ed.), *A Companion to Ancrene Wisse* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003a), 113-41, 138.
[281] Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*, 294-98.
[282] Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991); for a summary of the entire text, see Robert William Ackerman and Roger Dahood, *Ancrene Riwle: Introduction and Part 1* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1984), 17-28.
[283] Catherine Innes-Parker, '*Ancrene Wisse* and *Þe Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*', in Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (eds.), *Women, the Book and the Godly: Selected Proceedings of the St. Hilda's Conference, 1993* (1; Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1998), 137-48.
[284] Ackerman and Dahood, *Ancrene Riwle: Introduction and Part 1*; for information of its dissemination alongside the Wooing Group, see Catherine Innes-Parker, '*Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* and the Tradition of

The language of *Ancrene Wisse*'s earliest extant versions places its composition in the West Midlands, associated with two groups of contemporary texts in what J. R. R. Tolkien dubbed the 'AB dialect' of Middle English: the Katherine Group and the Wooing Group.[285] While not directly cited like *Ancrene Wisse*, both groups of texts are relevant to *Caritas*, insofar as they represent the two other genres of anchoritic literature (*vitae* and affective poetry) that both touch the narrative in some way over the course of the opera. They also provide a (literally, I will argue) more fleshed-out impression of the spiritual milieu in which anchorites lived and worshiped.

The ascription of a 'theme of opposites' to *Ancrene Wisse* from Thomas's study of *Caritas* that I cite in section 1.1a is not unfounded: the author of *Ancrene Wisse* explicitly divides its eight sections ('eahte leasse bokes') into an 'Inner Rule' ('innre riwle', parts ii-vii) and an 'Outer Rule' ('uttre riwle', parts i and viii), with the latter enveloping the former in an Outer-Inner-Outer structure, like a textual anchorhold.[286] As Christopher Cannon points out, the 'very fact that a text can be built to conform to such a shape is itself enough to show … that it is not given, but imagined'.[287] The structure of *Ancrene Wisse* is both a rhetorical tool with which to make accessible more complex, nuanced, and ambiguous ideas, and a practical expression of how an anchorite is simultaneously supposed to

Affective Devotion: Rethinking Text and Audience', in Susannah Mary Chewning (ed.), *The Milieu and Context of the Wooing Group* (Religion & Culture in the Middle Ages; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 96-122.

[285] The 'AB' nomenclature refers to MS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 402, containing *Ancrene Wisse* ('A'), and MS Bodley 34 in Bodleian Library, Oxford ('B'), see J. R. R. Tolkien, *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle* (MS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 402; London: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bella Millett, 'The Ancrene Wisse Group', in A. S. G. Edwards (ed.), *A Companion to Middle English Prose* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 1-18.

[286] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 24; see Janet Grayson, *Structure and Imagery in 'Ancrene Wisse'* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1974), 13.

[287] Christopher Cannon, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, eds Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 112.

withdraw from temptations and vanquish them.[288] The differentiation between 'outer' and inner' broadly maps onto behaviours and practices *versus* spiritual contemplation:

Introduction

Outer Rule ('uttre riwle')

i. On your [divine] service ('of ower servise')

Inner Rule ('inre riwle')

ii. On the five senses ('of ower fif wittes')
iii. On a certain kind of bird … and how the nature of those birds resembles that of anchorites (of anes cunnes fuheles … ant hu the cunde of the ilke fuheles beoth ancren i-liche')
iv. On fleshly and spiritual temptations ('of fleschliche fondunges ant gasteliche bathe')
v. On confession ('of schrift')
vi. On penance ('of penitence')
vii. On cleanliness of heart … and why one must love Jesus Christ ('of schir heorte … ant hwi me schal Jesu Crist luvien)

Outer Rule

viii. On food and drink ('of mete ant of drunch') …, what things you may own ('hwet thinges ye mahen witen other habben') …, clothes ('clathes') …, hair-cutting and bloodletting ('doddunge ant of blod-letunge') …, and your servant's rule, lastly how you must teach them lovingly 'ower meidnes riwle, aleast hu ye ham schulen leofliche learen'.[289]

Of these sections, the most relevant to *Caritas* are the devotions in section i (which appear in various guises in Christine's dialogue, and in her mother Agnes's description of her behaviour in Act I, scene viii), the invocations of 'black and white' throughout sections i, ii, and viii (found in Act I, scene iii, discussed further below), and the bestiary of temptation in part iv (which feature in Act I, scene vi and Act II).[290]

[288] Anne Savage, 'The Solitary Heroine: Aspects of Meditation and Mysticism in *Ancrene Wisse*, the Katherine Group, and the Wooing Group', in William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (eds.), *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 63-83, 77.
[289] *AW*, lines 131-51.
[290] For a discussion of the bestiary, which shares imagery with Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* (discussed in Chapter 2), see Lucinda Rumsey, 'The scorpion of lechery and 'Ancrene Wisse.'', *Medium Aevum*, 60/1 (1992), 48.

Caritas derives its title from the opening of *Ancrene Wisse*, where the author writes that 'there are many kinds of rules' of which he discusses two (quoting in Latin from the First Epistle to Timothy in both instances). The first 'rules the heart …. And this is the *caritas* [love] which the Apostle describes: "from pure heart and good conscience and unfeigned faith"' (1 Timothy 1:5).[291] The second 'teaches thoroughly how a person must behave externally' and 'is like the rule of correct mechanics, which is contained within correct geometry' (1 Timothy 4:8).[292] This rule exists only to 'serve' the loving rule of *caritas* as a servant serves her lady; everything done by the outer rule is 'only to rule the heart within'.[293] The inner and outer rules in *Ancrene Wisse* are not opposites, but two sides of the same, enclosing fold. In this respect, writes Jocelyn Wogan Price, 'the anchoritic house holds the line between inner and outer, world and spirit, at its window'; the anchorite herself exists as 'the visible instituting of a boundary-line between flesh and spirit'.[294]

The fold between inner and outer in *Ancrene Wisse* is probably lifted from Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum* ('The Rule of Life for a Recluse'), an earlier (c.1161) guidebook for anchorites written for Aelred's sister.[295] As Robert J. Hasenfratz

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[291] 'Monie cunne riwlen beoth, ah twa beoth bimong alle thet ich chulle speoken of thurh ower bone, with Godes grace. The an riwleth the heorte …. Et hec est caritas, quam describit Apostulus: de corde puro et consciencia bona et fide non ficta' (*AW*, introduction, lines 9-14).

[292] 'The other riwle is al withuten ant riwleth the licome ant licomliche deden, the teacheth al hu me schal beoren him withuten …. Et hec est … quasi regula recti mechanici quod geometri[c]o recto continetur' (*AW*, introduction, lines 23-26).

[293] 'Ant theos riwle nis nawt bute for-te servi the other: the other is as leafdi, theos as hire thuften. For al thet me eaver deth of the other withuten nis bute for-te riwlin the heorte withinnen' (*AW*, introduction, lines 27-29).

[294] Jocelyn Wogan Price, 'Inner and Outer: Conceptualizing Body in *Ancrene Wisse* and Ælred's *De institutione Inclusarum*', in G. H. Russell, G. C. Kratzmann, and James Simpson (eds.), *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), 192-208, 192; 95; other possible influences include the *Augustinian Rule* and *Institutes of Prémontré*, Dominican constitutions, the *Rule of Grimlac of Metz*, Goscelin's *Liber Confortatorius*, the letters of Anselm of Canterbury, and *Consuitudines* of Guigo, see Alexandra Barratt, 'Anchoritic Aspects of *Ancrene Wisse*', *Medium Aevum*, 49/1 (1980), 32-56; 'Introduction' in Hasenfratz, *Ancrene Wisse*.

[295] Aelred of Rievaulx, *Aelred of Rievaulx's De institutione inclusarum* (Early English Text Society; London: Oxford University Press, 1984).

observes, there are several refences to Aelred in *Ancrene Wisse*, especially in the introduction and parts ii, vi, and viii.[296] Aelred (like Bernard of Clairvaux) was a Cistercian, and one of several authors (including Anselm of Canterbury) to whom the post-twelfth-century rise of private devotion, self-examination, and emotional meditation on the human life of Christ that characterize affective piety has been attributed.[297] As Bynum suggests, this narrative tends to obscure the importance of women's spirituality in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (including the Beguines and, in fifteenth-century England, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe).[298] As male-authored works about women's spiritual practice, texts like *Ancrene Wisse* and *De Institutione Inclusarum* complexly synthesize these gendered approaches. Just as Carpenter's narrative is filtered in Stratford's letters through the voices of men, much of the evidence for English women's spiritual practices in this period is preserved in men's writing. English anchoritic literature is replete with highly gendered elaborations of the *sponsa Christ* (bride of Christ) motif, which in this manifestation applies courtly-romantic imagery to Christ as the ultimate lover whom the anchorite should adore.[299] The inner-outer fold in *Ancrene Wisse* forms the bedrock of this practical expression of affective piety: the 'correct mechanics' that function because of the 'correct geometry' that the *Wisse* author derives from Timothy, and the faithful servant who upholds the lady of *caritas*. These allegories both constitute mutual, loving dependency of *sponsa Christi*.

[296] Hasenfratz, *Ancrene Wisse*.
[297] R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1953), 221-27; Bartlett and Bestul, 'Introduction', 2.
[298] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Publications of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 4.
[299] Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 3; Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 25-57.

As I mention at the start of this subsection, nuns are liturgically married to Christ when they take their vows.[300] Figurations of Christ as 'the bridegroom' appear throughout the Gospels (Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19, Luke 5:34, and John 3:29), and the Epistles occasionally suggest that the Church (the corporate 'body' of which all Christians are members) should be like a bride to him (Romans 7, Ephesians 5:22–33, 2 Cor. 11:2-4). The application of *sponsa Christi* in *Ancrene Wisse*, however, derives closely from Bernard's twelfth-century sermons on the Song of Songs.[301] After its incipit, *Ancrene Wisse* opens with a quotation in Latin which explicitly weaves the Song of Songs into the outer-inner structure:

> 'the righteous love you' (in the Song of Songs [1:3], the bride to the bridegroom). There is a right grammar, a right geometry, a right theology. There are different rules for each discipline. Our topic is right theology, which has two rules: one concerning the direction of the heart. The other is occupied with the ordering or rectification of outer things. 'The righteous love you'.[302]

The author then emphasizes that the anchorite, as one of the righteous, must love her spouse Jesus.

A particularly distinctive manifestation of *sponsa Christi* in *Ancrene Wisse* occurs in part vii, in a passage that has been described as the 'royal wooing'.[303] Here, the anchorite figures as a 'lady besieged by her enemies … inside an earthen castle'.[304] Christ is then

[300] Parousia Clemens, 'Gertrude, Spouse of Christ: Espousal with Christ Through Liturgies of Entrance into the Monastic Life in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Gertrude of Helfta', *Magistra*, 27/2 (2021), 53-72.
[301] Geoffrey Shepherd, *Ancrene Wisse: Parts Six and Seven* (revised edn., Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies; Exeter: University of Exeter, 1985), xviii-li; for the wider significance of the Song of Songs in the Middle Ages, see Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 136ff.
[302] '"Recti diligunt te (in Canticis, sponsa ad sponsum)" Est rectum gramaticum, rectum geometricum, rectum theologicum. Et sunt differencie totidem regularum. De recto theologico sermo nobis est, cuius regule due sunt: una circa cordis directionem. Altera versatur circa exteriorum rectificationem. Recti diligunt te' (*AW*, introduction, lines 2-6).
[303] There are later examples of this motif in sermons and in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, but *Ancrene Wisse* is the earliest known example, see Catherine Innes-Parker, 'The Lady and the King: *Ancrene Wisse*'s Parable of the Royal Wooing Re-examined', *English Studies*, 75/6 (1994), 509-22, 1; Rosemary Woolf, 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature', *The Review of English Studies*, 13/49 (1962), 1-16.
[304] 'A leafdi wes mid hire fan biset … in-with an eorthene castel' (*AW*, part vi, lines 59-60).

described as ‘a mighty king’ whose love for her is ‘immeasurably strong’: he is ‘the fairest of all men to look on’ and speaks ‘so very sweetly’.[305] Showing himself willing to die for her, he:

> like a noble wooer … came to prove His love and showed through chivalry that He was worthy of her love … put Himself in the tournament and for the love of His beloved as a bold knight in the fight had His shield pierced on every side. His shield, which covered His Godhead, was His beloved body which was stretched on the Cross.[306]

By depicting Christ’s love as a chivalric battle in which his figurative body is ‘pierced on every side’, the royal wooing enfolds *sponsa Christi* into a Passion meditation in which the anchorite herself must battle to embrace the ‘beloved body’ outstretched on the cross for her.[307] Catherine Innes-Parker suggests that ‘emphasis on emotional relationship with Christ’ in this passage ‘derives not primarily from the romance tradition, but from the affective mysticism of Bernard himself’ (although, as I discuss in Chapter 3, this distinction becomes somewhat troubled by the time of the Second Crusade).[308]

Rosemary Woolf traces the carnal aspects of *sponsa Christi* to Bernard’s twentieth sermon, with its suggestion that ‘the heart’s love is carnal’ because ‘it is directed mainly to the humanity of Christ and the things that he did … in the flesh’.[309] This emphasis on Christ’s body as flesh and the reciprocal fleshiness of human love itself is borne out even more intensely than in *Ancrene Wisse* in the Wooing Group texts. With erotic overtones, these

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[305] ‘A mihti kinges luve wes thah biturnd upon hire swa unimete swithe’ (*AW*, part vi, lines 60-61); ‘the wes of alle men feherest to bihalden, spec se swithe swoteliche’ (*AW*, part vi, lines 65-67).
[306] ‘As noble wohere … com to pruvien his luve ant schawde thurh cnihtschipe thet he wes luve-wurthe … dude him i turneiment ant hefde for his leoves luve his scheld i feht as kene cniht on euche half i-thurlet. His scheld, the wreah his Godd-head, wes his leove licome thet wes i-spread o rode’ (*AW*, part vi, lines 83-87).
[307] See also Woolf, 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature'; Anne Spear, 'Affecting Affective Meditation: Visionary Experience and Practice in the Late Middle Ages', PhD (University of Mississippi, 2020), 45-47; Dennis Rygiel, 'The Allegory of Christ the Lover-Knight in *Ancrene Wisse*: An Experiment in Stylistic Analysis', *Studies in Philology*, 73/4 (1976), 343-64.
[308] Innes-Parker, 'The Lady and the King: *Ancrene Wisse*'s Parable of the Royal Wooing Re-examined', 511.
[309] Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 58-59; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Saint Bernard on the Song of Songs: Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, trans. a religious of C.S.M.V. (London: A. R. Mowbray; Morehouse-Gorham, 1952), 53.

four devotional meditations again combine courtly-love imagery of Christ as the ultimate lover-knight with graphic descriptions of the Passion.[310] Jesus is referred to in sensual terms of endearment like 'my honey drop' ('mi huniter', *Wooing,* line 6 and *Most Excellent,* line 14), and the group's eponymous poem *Þe Wohunge of ure Laured* ('The Wooing of our Lord') describes him with 'flesh white under clothing' ('flesch hwit under shrud', line 14), 'immeasurably lovely and delectable to look upon' ('unimete lufsum ant lusti on te loken', line 35), and a 'blissful, bloody body' ('blisfule blodi bodi', lines 247 and 325).[311] Male-authored but (unlike *Ancrene Wisse*) female-voiced, these texts embody a conflation of suffering and eroticism distinctive to anchoritic mysticism.[312] They contain frequent directives for the anchorite, beholding Christ's Passion, to both be aroused in the love of *sponsa Christi* and suffer his pain herself in *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ). While *Wooing* instructs the reader to 'imagine that he hangs beside you, bloody upon the cross', and addresses Christ adoringly:

> you claimed me with your body, and made me, a wretch, your lover and spouse. You have brought me from the world to the bower of your birth, enclosed me in a chamber. There I may so sweetly kiss and embrace you and of your love have spiritual delight'.[313]

*On wel swuð*e *god ureisun of God almihiti* ('A Most Excellent Prayer to God Almighty') similarly asks:

> Why do I not behold how you stretched yourself out for me on the cross? Why do I not throw myself between those same arms, spread

[310] Michelle M. Sauer, 'Wooing Group', in Robert T. Lambdin and Laura C. Lambdin (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature* (London: Greenwood Press, 2000); Susannah Mary Chewning, *The Milieu and Context of the Wooing Group* (Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009).
[311] All references and translations are from Catherine Innes-Parker, *The Wooing of Our Lord and the Wooing Group Prayers* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2015), 81, 173, 81, 97, 03. *The Wooing of Our Lord* is hereafter abbreviated as *Wooing* and *A Most Excellent Prayer to God Almighty* as *Most Excellent.*
[312] Spear, 'Affecting Affective Meditation: Visionary Experience and Practice in the Late Middle Ages', 24-69.
[313]Þenc as tah he heng biside þe blodi up o rode' (*Wooing,* lines 434-45); 'Þu me derennedes wið like, and makedes of me wreche Þi leofman and spuse. Broht tu maues me fra þe world to bur of þi burðe, steked me I chaumbre. I mai þer þe swa sweteli kissen and cluppen, and of þi luue haue gastli likinge' (*Wooing,* lines 383-88). Innes-Parker, '*Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd* and the Tradition of Affective Devotion: Rethinking Text and Audience', 111; 09.

> out so very wide and opened as a mother does her arms to embrace her beloved child?[314]

Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson point out that the 'kiss of Christ's mouth' is a motif which appears frequently in Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs (particularly sermons 1-8).[315] However, the motif of the passionate embrace in the Wooing Group combines the kiss with a maternal embrace, seamlessly moving between maternal and erotic imagery to figure Christ as both spouse and mother.

As Bynum has observed, the 'Jesus as Mother' trope was far-reaching in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, not least in the writings of Bernard (and, later, Julian).[316] But its manifestation in anchoritic thought is distinctive insofar as the enclosed condition of anchorites within the inner-outer fold adds a potent symbolic dimension to the enclosure of the loving embrace. As I discuss in section 1.2b, anchoritic liturgies had potent funereal resonances, which the *Ancrene Wisse* author incorporates into a devotional practice with the injunction that anchorites who take pride in the whiteness of their hands 'should scrape each day the earth up from their grave that they will rot in'.[317] In part vi, he develops the theme of the grave by likening Mary's womb, Christ's cradle, and his tomb to both the anchorhold and to the grave:

> Those [things] which one suffers for His love are coming to anoint our Lord, who stretches Himself toward us as a thing which is anointed, and makes Himself tender and soft to touch. And was he not himself a recluse in Mary's womb? … Are you bound within four large walls?—

[314] 'Hwi ne worpe ich me bitweonen þeo ilke ermes so swiðe wiðe to spredde, ant i openeð so þe moder deð hir armes hire leoue child for to bi cluppen?' (*Most Excellent*, lines 92-95). Innes-Parker, *The Wooing of Our Lord and the Wooing Group Prayers*, 177.
[315] Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, 401, fn32.
[316] Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, 131, fn72.
[317] 'Ha schulden schrapien euche dei the eorthe up of hare put thet ha schulen rotien in' (*AW*, part ii, lines 815-16). Maybelle Leung, "'Ha schulden schrapien euche dei the eorthe": Reading Flesh in *Ancrene Wisse*', *Magistra*, 25/1 (2019), 3-16; Elizabeth Robertson, '"This Living Hand": Thirteenth-Century Female Literacy, Materialist Immanence, and the Reader of the *Ancrene Wisse*', *Speculum*, 78/1 (2003b), 1-36, 36.

> and He in a narrow cradle, nailed on the Cross, enclosed tightly in a stone tomb! Mary's womb and this tomb were his anchor-houses.[318]

Significantly, these allegories of gestation, life, and death are reached via both the 'soft' touch of love from Christ ('who stretches Himself toward us') and the hardness of the nails on the cross.

A similar hard-soft simultaneity appears in part iii, where the anchorhold becomes a bird's nest (in turn reminiscent of Christ's crown of thorns), to concentrically surround the enclosure of the anchorite's lips upon the wounds in Christ's side:

> [the anchorite should] have in the nest of her anchor-house His likeness—that is, the Crucifix, in the nest of her monastery, and contemplate it often, and kiss the places of the wounds, in sweet remembrance of the real wounds which he meekly suffered on the real cross.[319]

Finally, part iv invites the anchorite to crawl inside Christ's wounds, which he offers a living anchorhold, a hiding place simultaneously enclosing and 'completely open':

> lift up therefore with true and courageous faith your three fingers, and with the holy Crucifix … flee to His wounds. He loved us much who let such holes be made in Himself in order to hide us in. Creep into them in your thought—are they not completely open? And with His precious blood, bloody your heart. 'Enter into the rock', says the Prophet, 'and hide yourself in the dug earth'—that is, into the wounds of our Lord's flesh, who was as if dug into with the dull nails'.[320]

The anchorhold is once again both hard and soft, a cleft in both rock and flesh. As Kristen McQuinn has observed, adoration of Christ's wounded sides is yet another devotional

---

[318] 'Theo beoth cuminde to smirien ure Laverd, the me tholeth for his luve, the strecheth him toward us as thing thet i-smired is, ant maketh him nesche ant softe to hondlin. Ant nes he him-seolf reclus i Maries wombe? … Beo ye i-bunden in-with fowr large wahes? - ant he in a nearow cader, i-neilet o rode, i stanene thruh bicluset hete-feste! Marie wombe ant this thruh weren his ancre-huses' (*AW*, part vi, lines 361-65).

[319] 'Lanhure i the nest of hire ancre-hus habbe his i-liche - thet is, the crucifix. Bihalde ofte th'ron ant cusse the wunde-studen i swote munegunge of the sothe wunden the he o the sothe rode thuldeliche tholede' (*AW*, part iii, lines 202-03).

[320] 'Hef for-thi with treowe ant hardi bileave up thine threo fingres, ant with the hali rode-steaf … flih to his wunden. Muchel he luvede us the lette makien swucche thurles in him for-te huden us in. Creop in ham with thi thoht - ne beoth ha al opene? Ant with his deore- wurthe blod biblodge thin heorte. Muchel he luvede us the lette makien swucche thurles in him for-te huden us in. Creop in ham with thi thoht - ne beoth ha al opene? Ant with his deore-wurthe blod biblodge thin heorte. Ingredere in petram, abscondere fossa humo. "Ga into the stan", seith the prophete, "ant hud te i the dolven eorthe" - thet is, i the wunden of ure Laverdes flesch, the wes as i-dolven with the dulle neiles' (*AW*, part iv, lines 1383-91).

practice popularized by Bernard's sermons.[321] But in this feminized configuration of the body of Christ—from which pours the blood which birthed the church and nourishes the anchorite as his child, mother, and lover—it is the feminized anchoritic reader who penetrates the apertures.[322]

At the core of anchoritic literature's heady imagery are two paradoxes: an emphasis on the permeability of the supposedly untouchable body and dwelling-place of the recluse, and a remarkable vitality demanded of a reader supposedly dead to the world.[323] When contextualized within the tradition of anchoritic devotion, much of Christine's dialogue in *Caritas* is revealed to be far less outlandish than it might initially seem. While her vision of 'two gods' in Act II is unambiguously heretical, both the theology and the tone of Wesker's 'mad-scene' writing are congruent with anchoritic affective piety. Christines's cry of 'put nails through me!/ pierce my hands, pierce my feet!' in bars 276-82, for example, is a clear example of *imitatio Christi* that bears striking resemblance to the Passion descriptions of the Wooing Group ('ah, now they strip my love naked! … Ah, how they drive iron nails through your fair hands').[324]

[321] Kristen McQuinn, '"Crepe into that blessed syde": Enclosure Imagery in Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*', in Liz Herbert McAvoy and Mari Hughes-Edwards (eds.), *Anchorites, Wombs and Tombs: Intersections of Gender and Enclosure in the Middle Ages* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2005), 95-102, 96; Karma Lochrie, 'Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies', in Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (eds.), *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 180-200.
[322] McQuinn, '"Crepe into that blessed syde": Enclosure Imagery in Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*'.
[323] Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture; New York: Routledge, 2010), 95; 113.
[324] 'A nu nacnes mon mi lef …a hu þat ha nu driuen irnene neiles þurh þine feire hondes' (*Wooing*, lines 342-46). Innes-Parker, *The Wooing of Our Lord and the Wooing Group Prayers*, 105.

Furthermore, the lullaby passage in bars 232-41 when Christine appears to breastfeed the crucifix is a kind of inversion of Jesus-as-mother, reminiscent in turn both of the maternal love in *A Most Excellent Prayer* and of the story of the 'Lactation of Bernard', in which the saint is said to have sucked milk from the breast of a statue of the Virgin Mary (Figure 1.7).[325] The gesture also resembles the instructions in *Ancrene Wisse* to kiss and fondle the wounds on the crucifix in part iii of *Ancrene Wisse*, cited above:

> I've loved him from cradle-time.
> No smile like my baby's.
> They humiliate him now. I can't comfort him,
> No cry like my baby's.
> There are thorns on his head.
> I can't comfort him.
> The smell of oil upon his skin; the trust in his eyes
> as I wrapped him warm.
> They give his poor body a cross to bear.
> I can't comfort him.
> They nail him now.
> My own, my flesh and blood.
> Did I feed and watch and guard you for this?
> Did we look at blue skies, the mare mating, the lamb sucking, sun setting, the rivers run—for this?

Christine's vivid, eyewitness-style accounts of the passion, her invocation of her 'flesh and blood' in the Christ-child can be read as yet more manifestations of both *imitatio* and *sponsa Christi*. Between Bernard's invocation of the 'fleshly' love of the heart and *Ancrene Wisse*'s 'precious blood' with which to 'bloody your heart', pain and suffering constitute states of bliss, becoming objects of desire themselves.[326]

[325] (*Most Excellent*, lines 92-95). Ibid., 177; Melanie Holcomb, 'The Hungry Monk: Bernard of Clairvaux in a Trans-Corporeal Landscape', *postmedieval*, 11/1 (2020), 80-90.
[326] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Saint Bernard on the Song of Songs: Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, trans. a religious of C.S.M.V. (London: A. R. Mowbray; Morehouse-Gorham, 1952), 53; (*AW*, part iv, lines 1383-91).



Figure 1.7: A c.1330 depiction of the Lactation of St Bernard (Chantilly, Musée Condé. MS 27. fol. 178r).[327]

Christine's final sung words in *Caritas* are her most explicit expressions of both *sponsa Christi* and *imitatio Christi*. Stretching out her arms 'as though welcoming an embrace', she effects the *Most Excellent Prayer*'s drive, discussed about, to 'throw myself between those same arms, spread out so very wide' upon the cross.[328] Implicitly thinking of Christ erotically, she sympathetically experiences the agony of crucifixion and declares her body 'open to the sky':

> I see Him on the cross.
> I see that sweet face suffering,
> I see that poor body hanging limp on its nails.
>
> She stretches out her arms as though welcoming an embrace.
>
> I close my eyes and cry out:
> 'Lord Jesus, sweet Lord, I'm with you, I feel the pain…'
>
> She stands, legs apart, arms outstretched.
>
> Oh, forgive me, Father!
> I think new thoughts. So sweet, so sweet. I'm naked
> My body open to the sky. …
> The spring, Father, the spring!
> I am crucified upon the Spring!

[327] Jutta Sperling, 'Squeezing, Squirting, Spilling Milk: The Lactation of Saint Bernard and the Flemish Madonna Lactans (ca. 1430–1530)', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 71/3 (2018), 868-918.
[328] (*Most Excellent*, lines 92-95). Innes-Parker, *The Wooing of Our Lord and the Wooing Group Prayers*, 177.

Once more reminiscent of the Passion meditations of the Wooing Group ('you, my lovely love, you hang there with outstretched arms on the cross! … Ah, that lovely body, that hangs so pitifully, so bloody'), Christine's final exclamation enfolds the defining inner-outer, open-closedness that characterizes the violence and eroticism of affective piety.[329]

As I argue in both the introduction and conclusion to this thesis, this complex, intersubjective flow of eroticism and desire at work when the anchorite spectates on the passion has a certain kinship with the extravagant terms in which queer voice studies fixates upon the full, noisy spaces between singing and spectating bodies. In the following analysis, I further consider how Christine articulates the inner-outer fold in *Caritas*, with a particular emphasis on the way in which it constructs boundaries which (like the walls of the anchorhold, or indeed the flesh of Christ) are simultaneously enclosing and permeable. As Linda Georgianna writes, 'the anchoress cannot shut the world out altogether without also shutting out the possibility of loving Christ, who was, after all, a man'.[330] The permeability of the anchorhold stems from its ultimate purpose: proximity to Christ. This permeability is not a weakness in the structure of the anchorhold, but what animates the 'dynamic process' of 'inner and outer realities, spiritual and carnal desires' that 'defines the anchoress's spirituality'.[331] In the remainder of this chapter, I consider how such a dynamic process might manifest musically, and what hermeneutic windows anchoritic literature might open onto the musical-dramatic processes of *Caritas*.

[329] Þu mi luueliche lef þer þu wið strahte earmes henges o rode …. A þat luuelike bodi þat henges swa rewli swa blodi ant swa kalde? (*Wooing*, lines 356; 361). Ibid., 105.
[330] Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self: Individuality in the Ancrene Wisse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 50.
[331] Ibid.
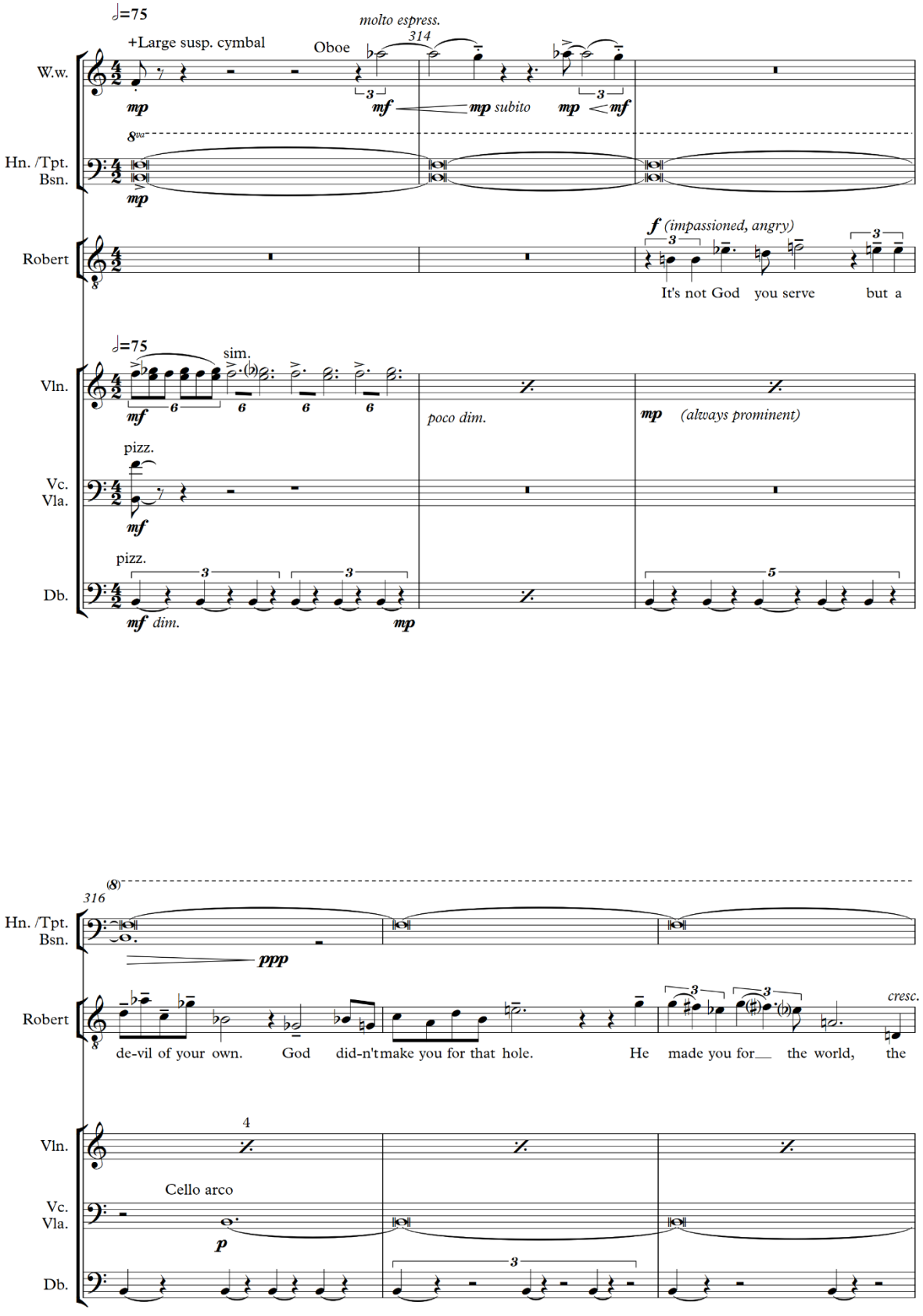
1.3. Analysis: The Confrontation (Act I, scene iii)

Wesker not only draws his impression of life within the anchorhold from *Ancrene Wisse*, but that of life outside it, too: in Act I, scenes i and iii, Christine's ex-fiancé Robert describes her life before immurement, specifically mentioning examples of pleasures warned against in *Ancrene Wisse* (like dancing at fairs and watching wrestling matches).[332] Christine's and Robert's dual perception of the anchorhold, from either side of its enclosing walls, is most explicit during their argument in Act I, scene iii. As well as being one of the points at which *Caritas* most explicitly draws imagery from *Ancrene Wisse*, the confrontational nature of the scene forces Christine to defend—and therefore explain—her vocation. This short passage is just one of many points in the opera at which some of the hermeneutic practices of affective piety I discuss above could form an interpretative framework for an analysis of Saxton's music.
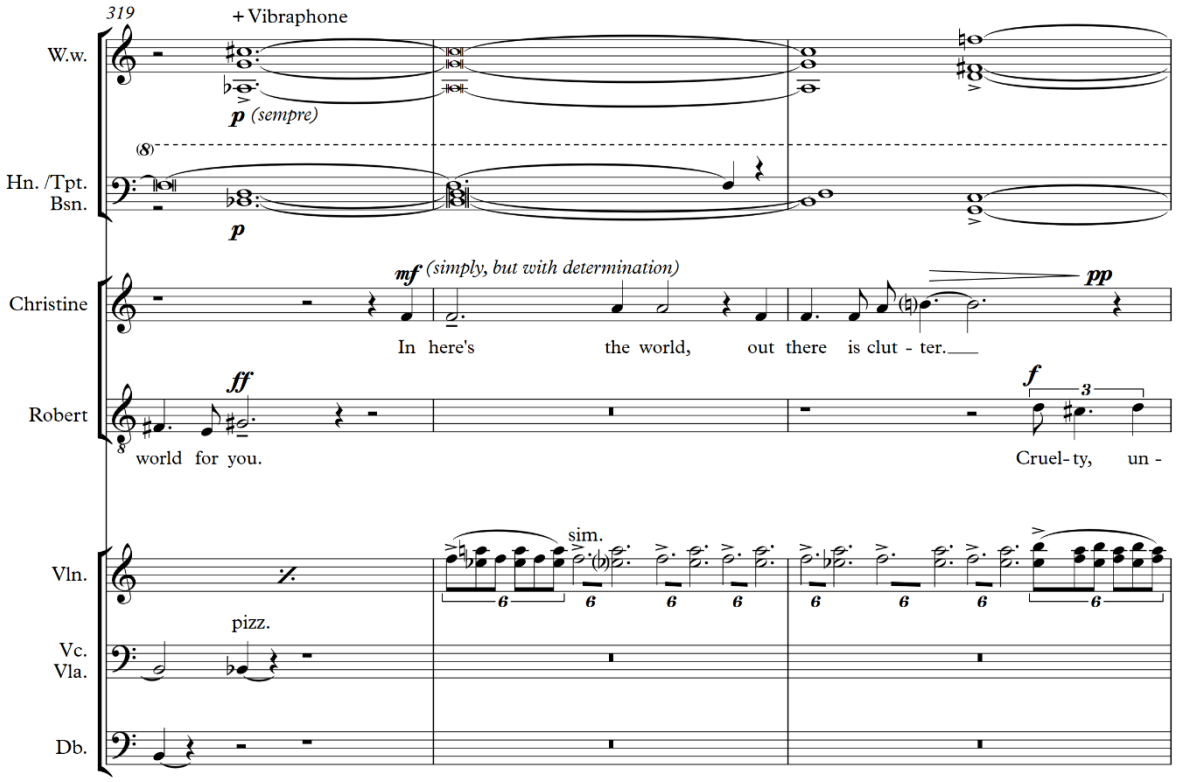
Saxton accompanies the start of the confrontation with a frantic texture of continuous violin sextuplets, which oscillate between F and an E-G♭ dyad (see Example 1.5). The contrasting semitonal solo oboe figure from bar 313 is gesturally reminiscent of the oboe obligato during Christine's scene i arioso ('I will forsake all that I see', bars 180-86), which returns transposed up a tone as an oboe solo at the very end of the opera (bars 366-70).[333] While this oboe motif is broadly reflective of Christine's faith and fortitude, the texture's underlying frantic string oscillations are more sympathetic to Robert's confusion and anger.

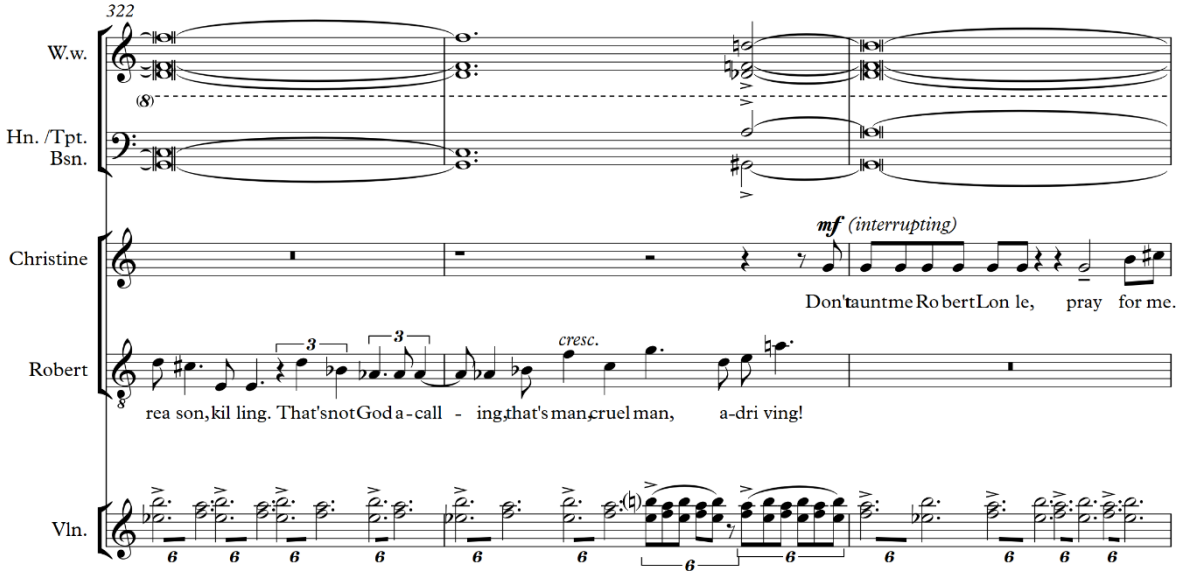
[332] For discussion of how *Ancrene Wisse* depicts and theologizes parish culture outside of the anchorhold, see Joshua R. Eyler, 'The Rhetorical Significance of Wrestling in Ancrene Wisse', *The Mediaeval Journal*, 2/1 (2012), 1-13; Denis Renevey, 'Ancrene Wisse and the Book of Hours', in Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (eds.), *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 21-42.

[333] Christine's 'I will forsake all that I see' arioso is a quotation from the anonymous *Metrical Life of St. Robert of Knaresborough* that Wesker probably read in Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England*, 108.
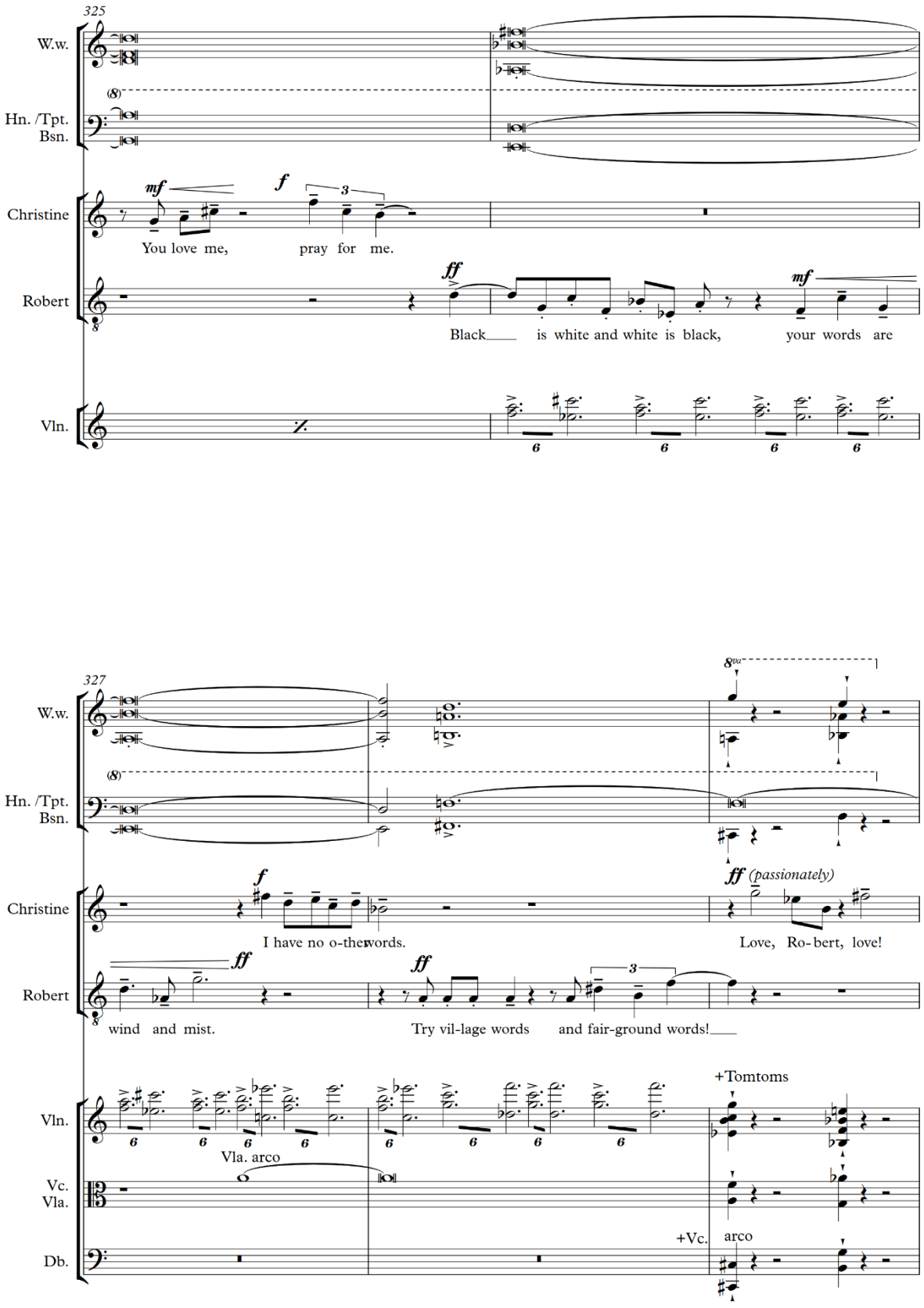


Example 1.5: The confrontation scene, Act I, scene iii, bars 313-29.
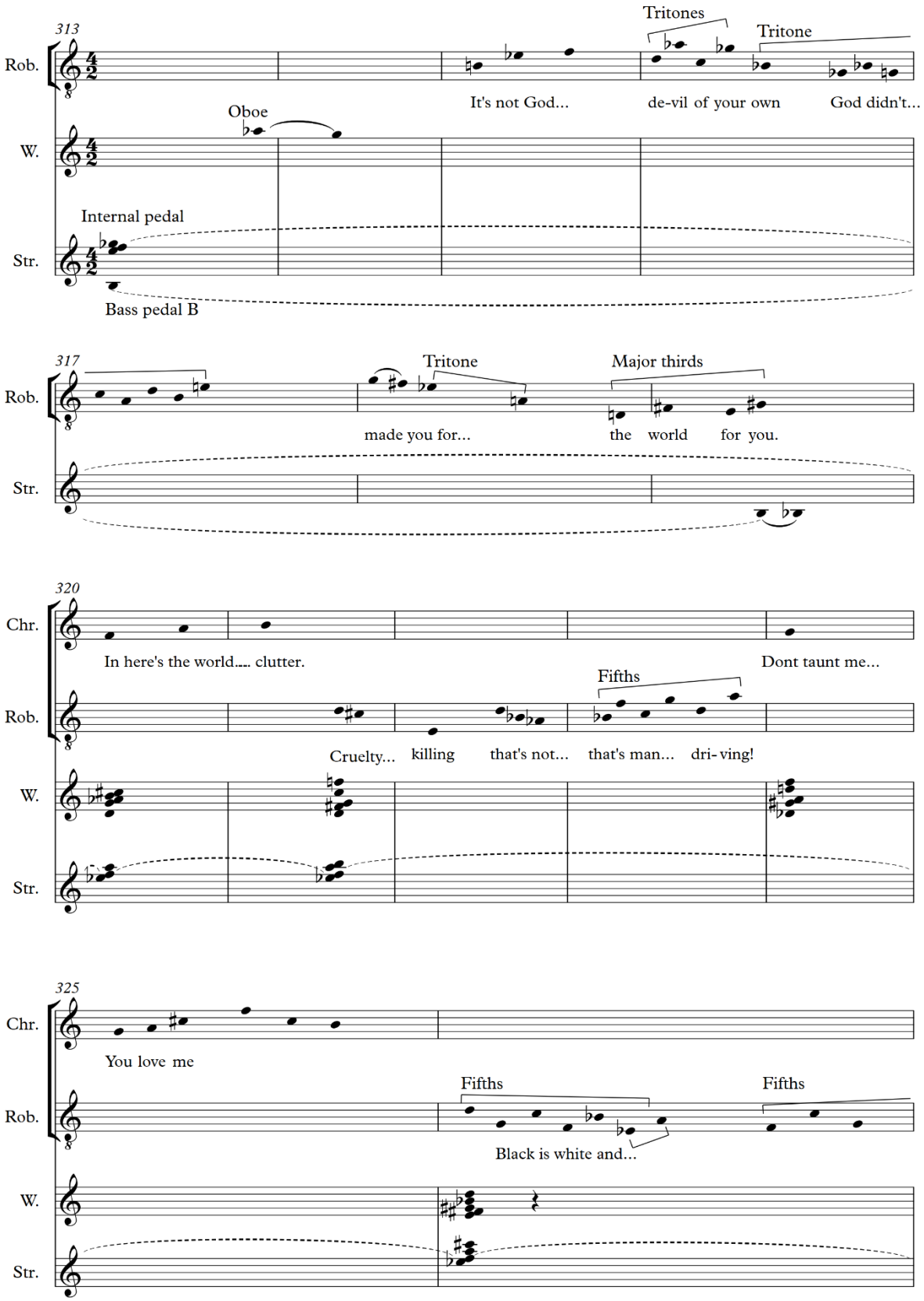




(Example 1.5 continued).



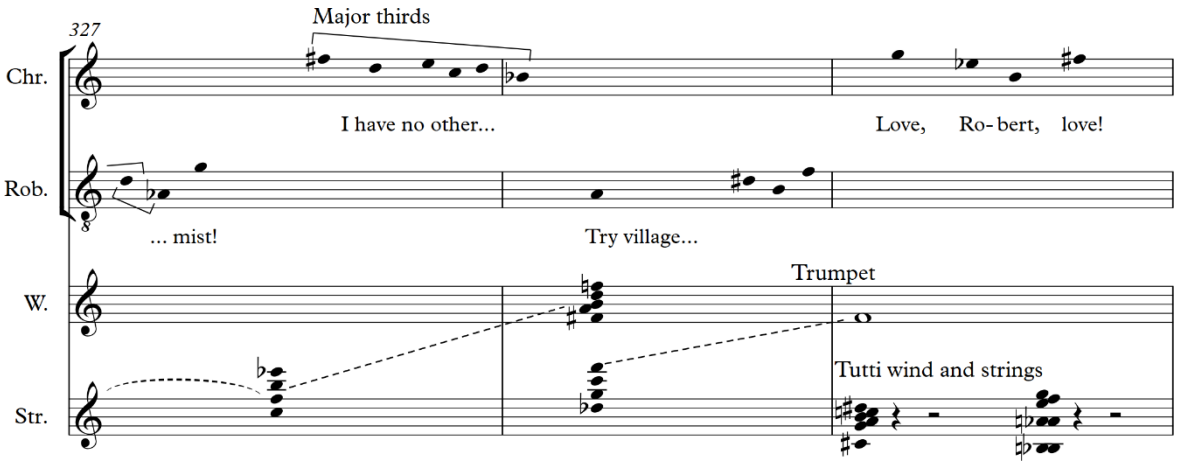
(Example 1.5 continued).

The string texture establishes a tritone axis between an internal pedal F and a pizzicato bass pedal B beneath it, which creates increasingly widely spaced cross-rhythms (bars 313-19). From bar 319, a series of wind and upper brass hexachords introduces another timbral dimension. Example 1.6 shows a harmonic reduction that divides the wind, strings, and voices into three separate strata. The harmony shifts each time either Robert or Christine interjects, further emphasising the scene's argumentative tone. Furthermore, as Thomas has established, several characters in *Caritas* use distinctive intervallic patterns in their vocal lines.[334] Christine often sings strings of major thirds when she is being particularly pious, for example (see bar 327, 'I have no other words), whereas Robert inclines towards cycles of fifths (see bar 326). Both Christine and Robert use prominent tritones, with a particularly extreme example in bar 316 when Robert sings, 'but a devil of your own' to a chain of tritones and minor sixths. The trope of the tritone as 'the devil's interval' or *diabolus in musica* ('the devil in music') is often colloquially connected to medieval music theory.[335] However, as Nils Holger Peterson points out, actual medieval music treatises handle augmented fourths as dissonances on mathematical rather than religious grounds; while many composers between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries set tritones 'in direct connection with a biblical understanding of evil', the expression *diabolus in musica* appears to be an early eighteenth-century medievalism popularized by Andreas Werckmeister and Johann Joseph Fux, who retroactively attributed it to medieval music theory.[336]

[334] Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 65.
[335] F. J. Smith, 'Some Aspects of the Tritone and the Semitritone in the *Speculum Musicae*: The Non-emergence of the diabolus in musica', *The Journal of Musicological Research*, 3/1-2 (1979), 63-74.
[336] Nils Holger Petersen (2012), 'Diabolus in musica', *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ebr.diabolusinmusica>, accessed 12 December 2019; Reinhold Hammerstein, *Diabolus in musica: Studien zur Ikonographie der Musik im Mittelalter* (Neue Heidelberger Studien zur Musikwissenschaft; Bern: Francke, 1974).



Example 1.6: Harmonic reduction of Act I, scene iii, bars 313-29.



(Example 1.6 continued).

The B♭ to which Robert sings 'own' in bar 316 creates a larger tritone relation with the E at the end of the chain of minor thirds in the following bar, where he sings 'God didn't make you for that hole'. While the *diabolus in musica* trope may be appropriate to Robert's explicit invocation of a 'devil' here, the overemphasis of historical definitions of dissonance is potentially misleading in post-tonal analysis. The maximal abundance of tritones in whole-tone pitch collections and the way in which it bisects the octave render it a useful interval for composers who work with symmetrical harmonies, for example. In this case, Robert's tritone-sixth pattern in bar 316 represents two interlocking iterations of set 3-8—the same set to which he sings the first words of the scene ('it's not God you serve') in bar 315—and this set dominates the harmony throughout the confrontation.[337]

Set 3-8 spans a tritone, via a wholetone and a major third. As the *Tonnetze* in Figure 1.8 show, each pitch class can appear in six of its 24 permutations. Because set 3-8 has an interval vector of <0,1,0,1,0,1> (that is, always contains one whole-tone/minor seventh,

[337] Sets are named with Forte numbers. Transpositions and inversions are labelled according to the system in Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory* (3rd edn.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005).

one major third/minor sixth, and one tritone), it is a subset of the whole-tone hexachord, so its permutations are divided into two semitonally adjacent groups which cannot share common pitches between one another. The symmetry between these two distinct groups conjures a harmonic landscape which, like the imagery in *Ancrene Wisse*, offers the reader two ‘sides’ of vantage.

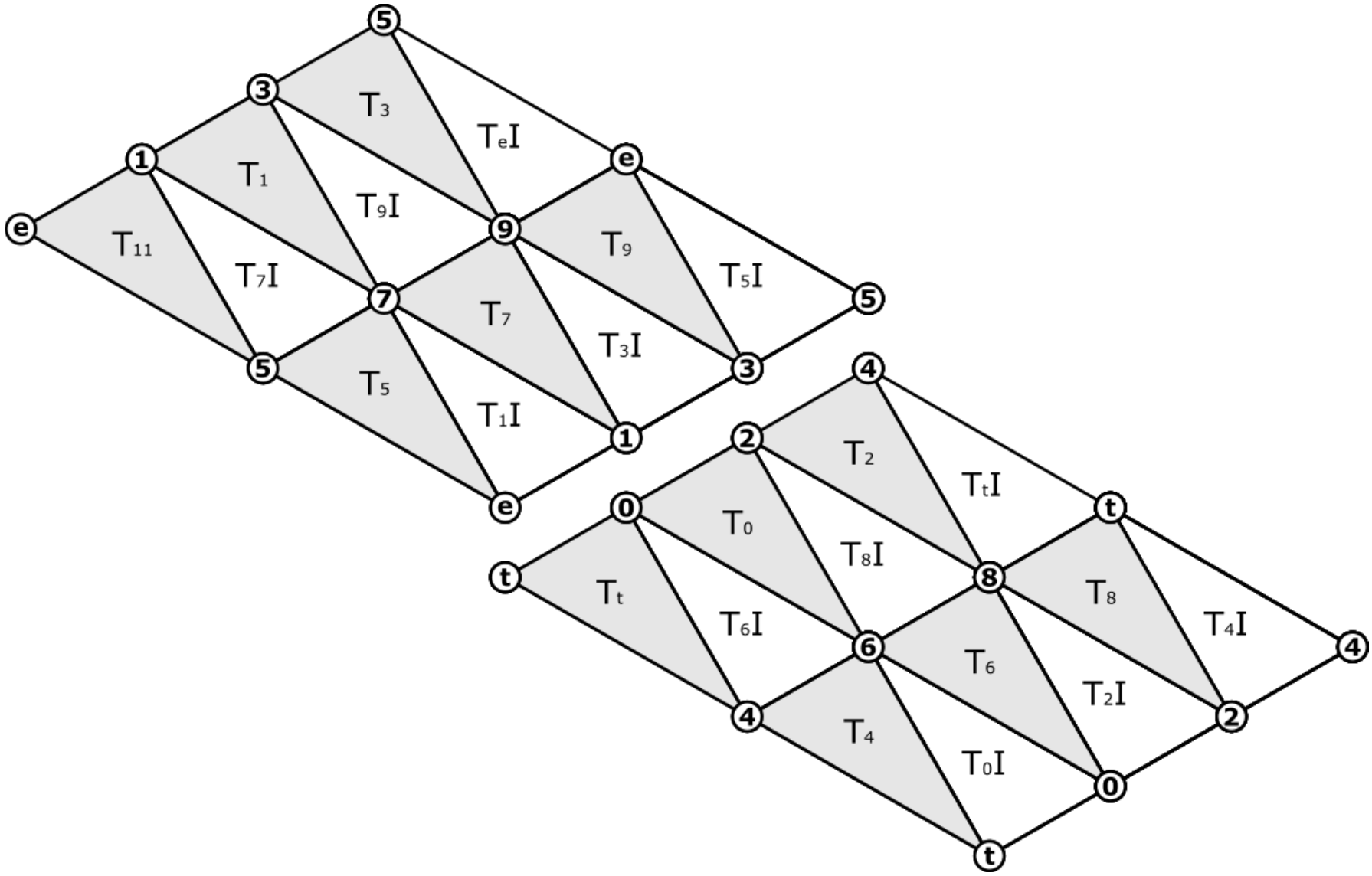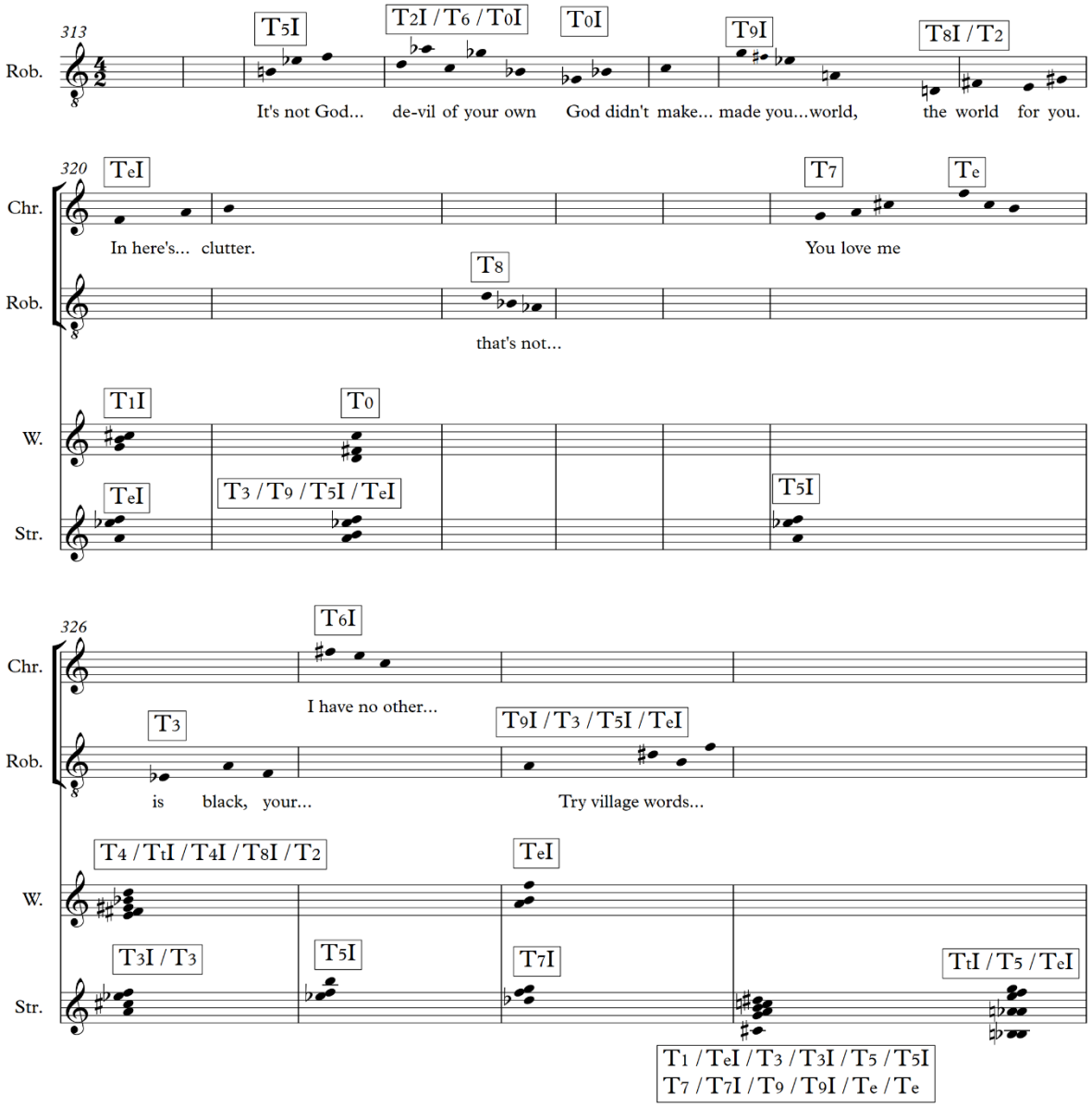


Figure 1.8: Tonnetze *of common pitches between permutations of set 3-8, in two mutually exclusive wholetone groups.*

Even without accounting for harmonization between the three textural strata of strings, wind, and singers, set 3-8 is almost ubiquitous in the confrontation, appearing in every possible transposition and inversion of the set except $\mathbf{T}_t$ (B, C, E♭).[338] Example 1.7 shows a further reduction of scene iii, with each transposition and inversion of set 3-8 labelled. In several instances, tetrachords and pentachords present supersets rich in permutations of 3-8: the strings' A-B-E♭-F harmony in bar 321 contains four permutations of 3-8, for example. Robert's first utterance of B, E♭, F (or $\mathbf{T}_5$I) in bar 315 establishes this set as significant and congruent with the accompaniment's B-F tritone pedal. His subsequent chain of tritones and sixths then presents three interlocking iterations of 3-8 ($\mathbf{T}_2$I, $\mathbf{T}_6$, and $\mathbf{T}_0$I) that pivot around a shared C (see 0 on the even-numbered *Tonnetz*).

[338] In my application of set theory, lower-case 't' and 'e' denote pitch and interval classes 10 (B♭) and 11 (B♮). See David Walters, 'PC Set Calculator', *Mount Allison University* <https://www.mta.ca/pc-set/calculator/pc_calculate.html>, accessed 20 January 2020.



Example 1.7: Transformations of set 3-8 in Act I, scene iii, bars 313-29.

Almost all of Robert's opening dialogue until Christine's interjection in bar 320 continues to emphasize 3-8's distinctive intervals. In bar 316 ('God didn't make you for that hole') he sings a chain of major thirds reminiscent of Christine's arioso in scene I, reiterating **T**$_0$I from the end of his previous phrase. He concludes with an E♭-A tritone followed by yet more major thirds, singing, 'He made you for the world, the world for you'. The first part of the phrase in bar 318 repeats a sensuous semitonal G-F♯ triplet figure (foreshadowed by the oboe's introductory solo figure in bars 313-14), as if Robert is trying to seduce Christine

into returning to the world of temptations. Throughout this passage, Robert's proclamations cross between the odd- and even-numbered wholetone groups of set 3-8 transpositions in an odd-even-odd-even pattern. Saxton's score suggests that Christine's response from bar 320 be sung, 'simply, with determination': 'in here's the world. Out there is clutter'. The pitches to which her resolve is set are similarly orderly. Turning Robert's even-sided conclusion back to the odd-numbered wholetone side, she neatly outlines $\mathbf{T}_{e}$I (F, A, B), supported by common tones distributed between the strings' $\mathbf{T}_{5}$I (E♭, **F**, **A**) and the winds' $\mathbf{T}_{1}$I (G, **B**, C♯). When plotted onto the *Tonnetz,* it is as if she has constructed a three-dimensional harmonic anchorhold with which to surround herself.

While the surface of the frantic string texture seems to make Robert's perspective dominate Christine's, she verbally and harmonically meets him on his own terms, and the accompaniment's harmony (initially) agrees with her far more frequently than him. Set 3-8's wholetone quality is moreover disrupted by Robert's frequent recourse to fifths and semitones. His vocal line resumes bar 318's seductively slurred semitone as he sings of 'cruelty' and 'unreason' in bar 321, before resuming $\mathbf{T}_{8}$ in bar 322 to pronounce, 'that's not God'. Similarly, when Robert sings, 'that's man, cruel man, a-driving' to a stridently rising cycle of fifths from B♭ to A in bar 323 (see Example 1.5), he destabilizes 3-8's tritone symmetry, and interlopes with a series of intervals that derive their very dynamism from their asymmetry. The symbolic use of tritone-rich harmony versus diatonic inflections is reminiscent of Jochanaan's C-major triadic music in Strauss's *Salome*, not least in light of the prophet's extreme piety and out-of-sight immurement.[339] In *Caritas,* however, that model is turned on its head; it is Robert who is the worldly seducer, and Christine who is

[339] Lawrence Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 2/3 (1990), 269-94, 290-93.

static and pious. The symbolism lies not in surface harmonies divorced from each operatic context, but in the relative motion and stasis afforded those harmonies within the aesthetic worlds of each opera. Where Salome's music is decadent and fluidly chromatic, Jochanaan's is declamatory and static; where Christine's tritones are resolute and seemingly immovable, Robert's fifths and semitones are distressed and restless.

Christine remains unmoved by Robert's show of vitality, singing, 'don't taunt me, Robert Lonle' to repeated Gs in bar 324, then, 'you love me, pray for me' to $\mathbf{T}_7$ and $\mathbf{T}_{11}$ in bar 325, remaining within the odd-number wholetone side. Robert's retort in bar 326 is harmonically saturated: supersets of seven different permutations of 3-8 (from the odd wholetone side in the strings and the even in the wind) accompany him ranting through another cycle of fifths. First down from D to B♭ and then upwards from F back to D, he sings, 'black is white and white is black, your words are wind and mist'. While accompanied by another string iteration of $\mathbf{T}_5$I (see bar 321), Christine crosses into the even-numbered wholetone group for the first time when she sings another chain of major thirds in bar 327 ('I have no other words') to $\mathbf{T}_6$I. When she finally bursts out, 'Love, Robert, love! I can't say more' in bar 329, the stratified harmonic texture abruptly breaks off with two tutti, staccatissimo orchestral chords. The first contains every pitch of the odd-number wholetone side, while the second interlocks $\mathbf{T}_t$I, $\mathbf{T}_5$, and **Te**I as she sings the second 'love' to an F sharp following a B. In other words, she finally crosses into WT-0, and she gets there first via the insistence that she has 'no other words', and then via the relationship of a fifth from Robert's name. Christine harmonically paces her cell's walls, but it is the invocation of ambiguity, ineffability, and love which gives her cause to transcend them.

If Robert's campaign of cycles of fifths is what galvanizes Christine into such an outburst, it is significant that his longest series of fifths in bar 226-27 is one of the opera's most explicit references to *Ancrene Wisse*. It is not a direct quotation, but when he sings, 'Black is white and white is black, your words are wind and mist', Robert captures a crucial aspect of anchoritic spirituality: its relationship between the vivid and the ambiguous. The contrast between black and white appears twice in *Ancrene Wisse*. In the first instance, the author instructs an anchorite on how to address an 'unwise' person who insists upon asking which order she belongs to (and therefore whether she should wear a black or a white habit):

> 'I am black and yet white', she says—ugly on the outside, beautiful within. In this way answer to the askers about your order, whether white or black— say that you are both through the grace of God.[340]

The second instance concerns how an anchorite should adorn her windows:

> Let the cloth in them be twofold: the cloth black, the cross white within and without. The black cloth symbolizes that you are black and worthless to the world outside …. The white relates rightly to white virginity and to chastity.[341]

This ideal of a dark outer and bright inner countenance is another symbolic iteration of *Ancrene Wisse*'s organising principle. In describing the cloth for the windows, the author casts virginity as both 'within and without'; an active and ongoing signification to the outside world that generates an inner constancy.

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[340] '"Ant hwether hwite other blake?" as unwise ow easkith, the weneth thet ordre sitte i the curtel. Godd wat, no-the-les ha weren wel bathe, nawt tah onont clathes, ah as Godes spuse singeth bi hire-seolven, Nigra sum set formosa. "Ich am blac ant tah hwit", ha seith - unseowlich withuten, schene withinnen. O this wise ondswerieth to the easkeres of ower ordre, whether hwite other blake - seggeth ye beoth ba twa, thurh the grace of Godd' (*AW*, introduction, lines 102-07).

[341] 'The clath in ham beo twa-fald: blac thet clath, the cros hwit withinnen ant withuten. Thet blake clath bitacneth thet ye beoth blake ant unwurth to the world withuten …. The hwite limpeth ariht to hwit meidenhad ant to cleannesse' (*AW*, part ii, lines 17-24).

A Cord J. Whitaker writes, the modern racial subjugation of blackness that solidified at the beginning of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the late fifteenth century had myriad medieval roots, not just in New-World exploration narratives like *The Book of John Mandeville* and crusading rhetoric (which I discuss further in Chapter 3), but in theological metaphors where blackness and whiteness equate to sin and innocence.[342] As Whitaker discusses, however, these metaphors were far from straightforward. While blackness and whiteness 'masquerade as contradictories … at every turn, medieval sign systems belie the appearance of contradiction'.[343] Citing Aquinas's Aristotelian statement that 'contraries are most unlike each other, but of the same genus', Whitaker suggests that in medieval natural philosophy, blackness and whiteness mutually constructed one another, emanating from one unified mode of being.[344] As I discuss in the conclusion to this thesis, sin and salvation—like the black-and-white qualities of the anchorite—are mutually dependant qualities which medieval Christendom considered to be inherent in all people. The anchorite is *both* black *and* white in her habit 'through the grace of God'.[345] The image of 'white hands' being used to 'scrape' up the earth of the anchorite's grave where they will eventually 'rot' is of a part of this exalted simultaneity of dark and light, living and death. Robert's perception of Christine's ambiguous black-and-whiteness is correct; what frustrates him is that he cannot predict or control whether she is of the world or of the cell, because she refuses to separate the two.

[342] Cord J. Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking* (1st edn.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).
[343] Ibid., 84.
[344] Ibid.
[345] (*AW*, introduction, line 107).

1.4. Conclusion

Savage and Watson describe the anchoritic vocation as one which relentlessly overrides binaries. The decision to enter the cell is not a retreat into privacy but 'highly physical and public' and 'a daring act of self-exposure'.[346] The anchorite must 'by turns be abject, ambitious, fearful, and joyful … cower before the anger of God, and turn toward him with the naive assurance of the child, or the erotic confidence of the beloved'.[347] 'How', they ask 'are we to characterize a way of life which is presented as having all these overlapping meanings—which is cautious yet so deeply ambitious, ascetic yet so frankly sensual in its mysticism?'.[348] In spite of the at-times overwhelmingly affective, ambiguous, and paradoxical elements of anchoritism, Savage and Watson conclude that 'above all else it seems *pragmatic* in its approach to spiritual reality'.[349] Several scholars attribute this pragmatism to the essential freedom afforded anchorites, wherein the finality of their enclosure afforded them a realm untouchable by men: Elizabeth Robertson likens the privacy, autonomy, and intellectual freedom of the anchorhold to Virginia Woolf's 'room of one's own', while Waggoner (paying particular attention to *Hali Meiðhad* in the Katherine Group) notes that the anchorite 'chose her own Bridegroom' for whom 'she need not cook or clean … or bear children' and from whom she receives 'his impressive estate: the entire world'.[350] Kari Kalve takes this point slightly further, suggesting that the anchorite's spiritual and intellectual freedom existed 'in the mere act of containment'.[351]

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[346] Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality: Ancrene Wisse and Associated Works*, 16; 19.
[347] Ibid., 27.
[348] Ibid., 26.
[349] Ibid. Emphasis in original.
[350] Elizabeth Ann Robertson, 'An Anchorhold of Her Own: Female Anchoritic Literature in Thirteenth-Century England', in Julia Bolton Holloway, Constance S. Wright, and Joan Bechtold (eds.), *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 170-83, 171; Waggoner, 'Dismembered Virgins and Incarcerated Brides: Embodiment and Sanctity in the Katherine Group', 73.
[351] Kari Kalve, 'A Virtuous Mouth: Reading and Speaking in the Ancrene Wisse', *Essays in Medieval Studies, Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association,* 14 (1997), 39.

As such, she writes, anchorites are ‘a wonderful example of the limitation of [the] binary’ of ‘women and bodies’ being either ‘subversive of or contained by’ the Church.[352]

If the anchorhold serves as a reminder that the body is neither fully contained nor fully subversive, Kalve argues, it also articulates the inseparability of body and soul.[353] Hylomorphism—an Aristotelian idea primarily received in Medieval Christendom via the work of Thomas Aquinas—holds that all beings (‘ousia’) are composites of matter and action, body and soul, with the latter being the physical manifestation of the former. Hasenfratz points out that *Ancrene Wisse*, in likening ‘the apertures of the body’ onto the windows of the anchorhold and casting the five senses as the ‘heart’s guardians’, formulates both body and anchorhold as permeable and open to the world.[354] The anchorhold becomes what Sarah Kay describes as a ‘place of thought’, rendering itself intelligible by locating the body in the physical world of life and motion (as opposed to an unintelligible void).[355] Aristotle writes in the *Physics* that place is not itself a body but ‘the boundary of the containing body at which it is in contact with that contained body’, and Kay figures this contact, in the form of sensory perception, as the bridge between Aristotelean and medieval thought.[356] Where Christian medieval thought departs from its classical inheritance, Santha Bhattacharji suggests, is in ‘man’s fallen nature’, which means that ‘the whole man, both body and mind, needs to repent and be converted’.[357] The division in postlapsarian human being is not that of an impure body harbouring a pure

[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Robert J. Hasenfratz, 'The Anchorhold as Symbolic Space in *Ancrene Wisse*', *Philological Quarterly*, 84/1 (2005), 1, 1; 16. ‘The heorte wardeins beoth the fif wittes’ (*AW*, part ii, line 5).
[355] Sarah Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 8; 13.
[356] Ibid., 6-13.
[357] Santha Bhattacharji, 'Medieval Contemplation and Mystical Experience', in Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis (eds.), *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 51-59, 52.

soul, but rather the brokenness of a personhood unable to comprehend fully the greater oneness of God.[358] 'In the blinding light of the ultimate dichotomy between God and humanity', writes Bynum, 'all other dichotomies faded', and if 'the person is his body, not just a soul using a body', then 'the resurrection of the body thus became … not merely theologically but also philosophically necessary'.[359]

In its emphasis on the humanness of the body of Christ, affective piety is in turn a potent expression of the whole-body salvation of humanity. In Grace M. Jantzen's words,

> spirituality does not mean leaving part of the self behind, but bringing the whole of the self, sensuality included, into the unity of the love of God …. affirming that *all* people have two natures, just as Christ did, and that it is precisely because of this that the incarnation is effectual for human salvation.[360]

To be not bifurcated but twofold—'both and' rather than 'either or'—is a subjectivity repeatedly expressed in *Ancrene Wisse*. It is the paradoxical rule of life for those dead to the world. What is crucial about first the windows and then the body of the anchorite being the locus of this black-and-whiteness is that these are the points at which the walls are breached. They are the apertures through which sound and light leak—prying eyes peer in and ears eavesdrop, while curious eyes and ears reach out. As Michael Camille has described, it was at the margins of the medieval world—its marginalia, gargoyled doorways and literary hybrids—where the power of its imagination dwelt.[361] As the praying 'anchor' of the parish, the anchorite brings those imaginative margins to the centre of her community and herself becomes, in Wogan Price's words, 'a location, a site of

[358] Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry*, 9.
[359] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 296; 54.
[360] Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 149-50.
[361] See Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992).

communal identity construction, and a private space where Jesus may enter and dwell'.[362] By 'making the body itself the vehicle of redemption', as Innes-Parker writes, anchoritic spirituality transforms a site of imprisonment into a spectacular place of divine love.[363]

In reanimating the immurement of Christine Carpenter, *Caritas* not only confronts its audiences with a way of life virtually unimaginable in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but its worst-case scenario. The violence experienced by Carpenter is not negated by the the vivacity of anchoritic literature. But for the plot to function, the frank presence of the anchorhold on stage and the necessity for Christine to defend and explain her vocation rely upon glimmerings of anchoritism becoming legible. These glimmerings—the simultaneously funereal and life-giving enclosure liturgy, the erotic fragments of *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group prayers, Christine's relentless outpourings of love for Christ, and the blunt fact of Carpenter having been a real person—force those who spectate on her operatic avatar to appreciate that, however oblique or ungraspable it may feel now, anchoritism existed for certain reasons. And while, as Wesker and Saxton imagine it, her life descends into torture and pain, Christine persists in imparting something of anchoritism's penetrating insight, inseparable from the suffering that they embraced. As the Wooing Group author expresses it:

> Truly, there is no joy in any outward thing
> that is not too bitterly bought;
> whose honey
> is not licked off thorns.[364]

[362] Michelle M. Sauer, "'Prei for me mi leue suster": The Paradox of the Anchoritic "Community" in Late Medieval England', *Prose studies*, 26/1-2 (2003), 153-75, 169.
[363] Catherine Ann Innes Parker, 'Virgin, Bride and Lover: A Study of the Relationship Between Sexuality and Spirituality in Anchoritic Literature', PhD (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992), 305-06.
[364] 'Nis no blisse soðes iþinge ðet is wtewið; ðet ne beo to bitter abowt, ðet tet uni ðer inne, ne beo ilicked of þornes'. (*Most Excellent*, lines 66-69). Innes-Parker, *The Wooing of Our Lord and the Wooing Group Prayers*, 175.

Chapter 2: Julian Philips's *The Tale of Januarie* and the Fabliau

2.1. Introduction

2.1a. Chaucerian Medievalisms

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of twenty-four verse prologues and stories told from the perspective of a band of pilgrims. Written between 1387 and 1400, the tales have since been adapted hundreds of times, and across a range of media. When composer Julian Philips and librettist Stephen Plaice began to adapt the *Merchant's Tale* into *The Tale of Januarie*, they did so against a backdrop of adaptations that take as read Chaucer's canonical status in English literature (which arguably dates back to Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate's laudatory writing about him in the fifteenth century).[365] I begin this chapter with an incomplete, motley list of Chaucerian medievalisms, not only to demonstrate how present Chaucer's work has been in contemporary English-speaking culture, but also to emphasize the political and aesthetic diversity of its adaptations.[366]

The Canterbury Tales has been adapted into several stage plays and poetry anthologies, as well as a waxwork 'experience' in Canterbury city centre (which permanently closed during the COVID-19 pandemic).[367] In television, Jonathan Myerson's animated anthology *The Canterbury Tales* (1998-2000) follows Chaucer's text relatively closely, whereas two further BBC series are modern retellings: *Canterbury Tales* (2003, a direct modernization) and *Trinity Tales* (1975, which follows a bus of rugby fans travelling to Wembley

[365] Sebastian J. Langdell, *Thomas Hoccleve: Religious Reform, Transnational Poetics, and the Invention of Chaucer* (Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies; Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018).
[366] Kathleen Coyne Kelly, Tison Pugh, and Terry Jones, *Chaucer on Screen: Absence, Presence, and Adapting the Canterbury Tales* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016).
[367] See Sarah Peverley, 'Staging Chaucer: Mike Poulton and the Royal Shakespeare Company's Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales', in Gail Ashton (ed.), *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 48-57.

Stadium).[368] In cinema, Hypatia Lee's feature-length pornographic flick *The Ribald Tales of Canterbury* (1985) uses the anthological format to organize its sex scenes and directly references several of Chaucer's titles.[369] Pier Paolo Pasolini's confronting adaptation *I racconti di Canterbury* (1972, on which more later) conversely obscures its own episodic form, moving from tale to tale without recourse to the pilgrim-narrators (or any other structural indication). Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's wartime mystery *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) meanwhile uses Chaucer more as a pretext, framing its characters as modern-day pilgrims but dispensing with the storytelling dimension.[370]

There have been several musical adaptations of Chaucer's tales. Plaice himself wrote another Chaucerian libretto for Luís Tinoco's opera *Paint Me* (2010), in which passengers on a train to Canterbury privately imagine stories to themselves, interacting minimally. Erik Chisholm, while residing in the turreted medievalist architecture of the University of Cape Town, set the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Pardoner's Tale*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* as a three-act opera with a Middle English libretto (1961-62). Larry Sitsky's *Fiery Tales* (which premiered at Adelaide Festival in 1976) is a modern English operatic adaptation of the *Miller's Tale*. Also in Modern English are Reginald De Koven's the *Canterbury Pilgrims* (premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1917—a comedic operetta featuring some of Chaucer's pilgrims) and George Dyson's cantata *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1931), presents a series of tableaux based on Chaucer's character descriptions. Finally, 1968 saw the premiere of a risqué (and comercially successful) musical theatre

[368] See Kathleen Coyne Kelly, 'The BBC *Canterbury Tales* (2003)', in Gail Ashton (ed.), *Medieval Afterlives in Contemporary Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 134-46.
[369] See George Shuffelton, '"Sorry, Chaucer": Mixed Feelings and Hypatia Lee's *Ribald Tales of Canterbury*', in Kathleen Coyne Kelly, Tison Pugh, and Terry Jones (eds.), *Chaucer on Screen: Absence, Presence, and Adapting the Canterbury Tales* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2016), 149-66.
[370] See Scott Freer, 'The Mythical Method: Eliot's "The Waste Land" and *A Canterbury Tale* (1944)', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 27/3 (2007), 357-70.

adaptation with lyrics by Martin Starkie and Nevill Coghill, and music by Richard Hill and John Hawkins. Both Philips and Plaice report having studied the *Merchant's Tale* at school, and the latter reminisces about being 'enchanted by the sound of Chaucerian Middle English as committed to vinyl' by the same Coghill (who also translated the 1951 Penguin Modern English edition).[371]

These adaptations vary widely in their approaches to *The Canterbury Tales*, and only some of them contain versions of the *Merchant's Tale*. Within the framing device of the pilgrimage, Chaucer's tales themselves span (and subvert) multiple genres, including chivalric romance (the *Knight's*, *Wife of Bath's*, and *Squire's* tales), *vita* (the *Prioress's* and *Second Nun's* tales), sermon (the *Parson's* and *Pardoner's* tales), moral exemplum (the *Friar's*, *Man of Law's*, *Clerk's*, and *Monk's* tales), beast fable (the *Nun's Priest's* and *Manciple's* tales), and fabliau (the *Miller's*, *Merchant's*, *Reeve's*, *Cook's*, *Shipman's*, and *Summoner's* tales).[372] Many of these generic assignments are debatable, including that of the *Merchant's Tale*, but in this chapter I largely take as read that the *Merchant's Tale* is a fabliau. In the following subsection, I introduce the genre of the fabliau and Philips and Plaice's adaptational approach to Chaucer's text. Section 2.2 then elaborates on Philips's compositional method (specifically the way in which he uses different tuning systems), to provide a framework for analysing four passages in the opera. These analyses follow the opera's thematic organization into the four seasons. Each of these passages simultaneously invites interpretation based on the wealth of existing feminist readings of the *Merchant's*

[371] David Wallace, '*The Tale of Januarie*: Translingualism and Anxietie, Sexuality and Time', *Global Chaucers* (2020, 2017). <https://globalchaucers.wordpress.com/tag/the-tale-of-januarie/>, accessed 4 May 2020.
[372] Irma Taavitsainen, 'Narrative Patterns of Affect in Four Genres of the *Canterbury Tales*', *The Chaucer Review*, 30/2 (1995), 191-210, 192-94.

Tale, and amplifies the ways in which the tale's debates and classical-allegorical *personae* extend the tale's sexual politics beyond the usual remit of the fabliau.

2.1b. The Fabliau

The fabliau is a short, humorous literary genre that first flourished among twelfth-century *trouvères*, broadly characterized by 'unabashedly bawdy humour focusing mainly on the body and its functions'.[373] Charles Muscatine conceives of it in terms of 'hedonistic materialism', wherein cleverness is prized as a 'powerful instrument in the procurement of goods and pleasure'.[374] Fabliau wit plays with class and gender imbalances and opens 'the prospect of pleasure to whoever can manage it'.[375] The fabliau punishes naivety, and its protagonists tend to be wily servants, women, and poor scholars.[376] Muscatine suggests that this somewhat individualistic value system relies on humour and irony to 'hedge against' its cynicism and apparent lack of interest in traditional morality.[377] These are important emphases in the *Merchant's Tale*, which will figure prominently in my analysis.

Just as a significant proportion of Chaucer's tales can be considered fabliaux, a significant proportion of modern Chaucerian adaptations delight in their scatological, erotic, and slapstick exploits. Frank and explicit sex abounds in Pasolini's film, for example, which culminates in hundreds of corrupt friars being ejected from Satan's anus (based on the *Summoner's Prologue*, Figure 2.1). The 1968 *Canterbury Tales* stage musical was able to use Chaucer's canonical status to get an unusual amount of smut past the censorship rules

[373] H. Crocker, A. Preminger, and R. L. Harrison, 'Fabliau', *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (4 edn.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 477-78, 477.
[374] Charles Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 153-54.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid., 93.
[377] Ibid., 154.

of Lord Chamberlain's Office: one of its numbers is called 'I Have a Noble Cock', and the show's performing license stipulated (only after censorial action) that the fart noises in the *Miller's Tale* be implied by a low bassoon note, rather than blasted through loudspeakers.[378] Subversive fabliau adaptations, moreover, extend beyond Chaucerian medievalism: the fabliaux in Bocaccio's *Decameron* have influenced various modernist literary tropes of cuckoldry, and been the subject of several films, including another Pasolini adaptation (1971) and Jeff Baena's comedy *The Little Hours* (2017).[379] Texts like these have simultaneously thrived upon and helped to sustain a postmodern trope of pleasurable medieval vulgarity.[380]



Figure 2.1: The fate of friars depicted in Pasolini's I racconti di Canterbury *(1972).*[381]

[378] Jeanne Sheehan, 'From Books to Broadway: The Musicalization of Literature', PhD (Northern Illinois University, 2008), 154-55.
[379] Agnès Blandeau, *Pasolini, Chaucer and Boccaccio: Two Medieval Texts and Their Translation to Film* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 39, 53, 135-36; Patrick Rumble, *Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini's Trilogy of Life* (Toronto Italian Studies; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
[380] Tison Pugh, 'Chaucerian Fabliaux, Cinematic Fabliau: Pier Paolo Pasolini's "I racconti di Canterbury"', *Literature Film Quarterly*, 32/3 (2004), 199-206.
[381] Pier Paolo Pasolini, *I racconti di Canterbury* (Italy: Les Productions Artistes Associés; Produzioni Europee Associate, 1972).

While less flatulent than the *Summoner's Prologue* or the *Miller's Tale*, the *Merchant's Tale* is unabashedly lewd. An elderly, lecherous knight named Januarie decides to marry a young, beautiful woman named May, and he constructs an ornate walled garden in which to have sex with her. When Januarie is struck blind, May seizes the opportunity to bring an attractive young servant named Damyan into the garden, with whom she has sex in a pear tree while the oblivious Januarie waits below. When the Roman god Pluto intervenes and restores Januarie's sight, May and Damyan are caught *in flagrante delicto*. The goddess Proserpina—who in Roman mythology was abducted and raped by Pluto before being forced to marry him—retaliates by granting May the ability to explain everything away. She convinces Januarie that his eyes must have been confused by their newly restored sight, and he remains blissfully ignorant of the affair to the end of his life. *The Tale of Januarie* follows this plot very closely, and much of its libretto (like Chisholm's opera) is drawn directly from Chaucer's Middle English. Unlike Chisholm, however, Plaice inserts some Middle English text of his own creation into the libretto. Principal differences between Chaucer's text and *The Tale of Januarie* include added chorus scenes, enhanced dialogue for Proserpina and May, and a less ambiguous ending in which May is explicitly pregnant with Damyan's child.

Since at least the 1930s, a disproportionate amount of scholarship on the *Merchant's Tale* has been devoted to the question of whether it should be read as a cynical story about the infidelity of women from the mouth of Chaucer's misogynistic Merchant, or as a playful and ironic fabliau.[382] The tale is significantly longer and more complex than the early

[382] Donald R. Benson, 'The Marriage "Encomium" in the *Merchant's Tale*: A Chaucerian Crux', *The Chaucer Review*, 14/1 (1979), 48-60, 59; for the cynical reading, see Norman T. Harrington, 'Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*: Another Swing of the Pendulum', *PMLA*, 86/1 (1971), 25-31; J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', *Modern Philology*, 33/4 (1936), 367-81; E. Talbot Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* (London: University of London; Athlone Press, 1970); or more recently J. M. Fyler, 'Hateful Contraries in "The

French fabliaux, and exhibits a certain amount of generic hybridity. Specifically, the symbolically laden description of the wedding scene, the mythological apparitions of Proserpina and Pluto, and the opening *encomium* discussing the merits and disadvantages of married life (all discussed further below) are more commonly found in romance and debate genres.[383] The stakes in the *Merchant's Tale* are also somewhat higher than those in many fabliaux: as well as punishing Januarie's naivety, its denouement has further-reaching consequences for the inheritance of his wealth.[384] As Amanda Walling argues, this emphasis on personal estate is a feature of the *speculum principis* genre ('mirror for princes', which provides didactic *exempla* for powerful men to either imitate or avoid).[385] while Helen Cooper suggests that the ability Proserpina endows in May to explain any situation references the folktale tradition of the *porquoi* ('origin story').[386] As Marion Turner writes, this generic hybridity is a feature of *The Canterbury Tales*:

> [Chaucer] moved *across* ideas and styles, not through them, as he eschewed social and poetic hierarchies …. More than this, he intertwined these juxtapositions to demonstrate that romance is not so different from fabliau, and each can be found in the other.[387]

In Tison Pugh's reading of the *Merchant's Tale*, Chaucer genders these cross-genre juxtapositions to position the garden scene as a victory of feminine wisdom over

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Merchant's Tale"', *Critical Survey*, 30/2 (2018), 20-50; for the fabliau reading, see C. David Benson, *Chaucer's Drama of Style: Poetic Variety and Contrast in The Canterbury Tales* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); R. Jacob McDonie, '"Ye gete namoore of me": Narrative, Textual, and Linguistic Desires in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', *Exemplaria*, 24/4 (2012), 313-41; see also Emerson Brown, 'Chaucer, the Merchant, and Their Tale: Getting Beyond Old Controversies: Part 1', *The Chaucer Review*, 13/2 (1978), 141-56.

[383] Natalie Hanna, '"To take a wyf" Marriage, Status, and Moral Conduct in "The Merchant's Tale"', *Historical Reflections*, 42/1 (2016), 61; John Finlayson, '*The Merchant's Tale*: Literary Contexts, the Play of Genres, and Institutionalized Sexual Relations', *Anglia Zeitschrift für englische Philologie*, 121/4 (2004), 557-80.

[384] Robert W. Epstein, *Chaucer's Gifts: Exchange and Value in the Canterbury Tales* (New Century Chaucer; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 95-96.

[385] Amanda Walling, 'Placebo Effects: Flattery and Antifeminism in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* and the *Tale of Melibee*', *Studies in Philology*, 115/1 (2018), 1-24, 2, 6

[386] Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* (2nd edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 203.

[387] Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 364. Emphasis in original.

logocentric masculine debate.[388] Dealing emphatically in fabliau tropes—with Januarie cast as the stock figure of the *senex amans* (old-man lover) in a sexual subterfuge—the fabliau-garden becomes an arena for a new kind of rhetoric.[389]

The *Merchant's Tale* is part of a broad and complex 'marriage debate' that takes place throughout *The Canterbury Tales*, which also includes the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Franklin's Tale*, and the *Clerk's Tale*.[390] Within this broad context, another reason for not reading the *Merchant's Tale* as a straightforward fabliau rests on the misogynistic anti-marriage framing of the *Merchant's Prologue* and *Epilogue*. He opens the prologue by detailing the 'weeping and wailing, grief and other sorrow' he experiences because of the 'high malice' of his wife, whom he describes as 'a shrew in every way'.[391] In response to his tirade, the host invites him to tell a story about marriage, exclaiming, 'since you know so much of that art/ full heartily I pray you tell us part'.[392] However, as Martin Stevens points out, Chaucer's repositioning of the tale and its surrounding elements (as well as later scribal additions) suggest that there is no scholarly imperative only to read the *Merchant's Tale* as a direct extension of that pilgrim's misogynistic diatribe.[393] And 'once

[388] Tison Pugh, 'Gender, Vulgarity, and the Phantom Debates of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale', *Studies in Philology*, 114/3 (2017), 473-96, esp. 478.
[389] Ibid., 479. Pugh suggests that Januarie's status as a knight is not standard fabliau characterization. However, several fabliaux feature nobility, including 'The Knight who Could Make Cunts and Arseholes Speak', 'The Knight who Heard his Lady's Confession', 'The Knight who Recovered the Love of his Lady', 'The Priest and the Knight', 'The Old Woman Who Anointed the Palm of the Knight', 'The Old Woman Who Paid the Knight for Favours', and 'Bérangier of the Long Arse'.
[390] Coined in G. L. Kittredge, 'Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage', *Modern Philology*, 9/4 (1912), 435-67; see also Glenn Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation* (Medieval Cultures; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 43-49; Clifford P. Lyons, 'The Marriage Debate in the *Canterbury Tales*', *ELH*, 2/3 (1935), 252-62.
[391] 'Wepyng and waylyng, care and oother sorwe' (line 1213); 'hye malice … she is a shrewe at al' (line 1222). Line numbers are as in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, eds Larry D. Benson, F. N. Robinson, and Christopher Cannon (3 edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Plaice has modernized some of the spellings (eg. 'flesshe' to 'fleshe'), presumably to ease the singers' reading. All translations my own unless otherwise indicated.
[392] 'Syn ye so muchel knowen of that art/ Ful hertely I pray yow telle us part' (lines 1241-42).
[393] Martin Stevens, '"And Venus Laugheth": An Interpretation of the *Merchant's Tale*', *The Chaucer Review*, 7/2 (1972), 117.

we remove the person of the narrator from his fiction', Stevens writes, 'we are free to regard the *Merchant's Tale* as the supreme example of … the fabliau turning on the *senex amans* as its butt'; after all, it is not Januarie's wit and libido that drives the plot, but May's.[394] By Muscatine's definition of the fabliau—and in spite of Chaucer's Merchant's misogynistic framing—she is the protagonist.[395]

Stevens illustrates his position with reference to the 1968 musical-theatre adaptation of the *Canterbury Tales* mentioned above (then only a few years old) citing its 'sheer exuberance' and noting that 'the parts of the Merchant and Januarie, unlike those of the Wife of Bath and the old woman [in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*], were assumed by different actors'.[396] As its title suggests, *The Tale of Januarie* does not feature or even name the Merchant and his prologue, and the Roman god Priapus (on whom more later) acts as narrator in his stead. Many of the readings which successfully get past this tenacious sticking point in Chaucerian criticism, like Stevens, take May's 'exuberant' sexual agency seriously while still acknowledging the pathos of Januarie's gullibility.[397] These readings thrive on their emphasis of May's wit and vibrancy in contrast with Januarie's objectification of her, and connect the dynamic between them to the roles of Pluto and Proserpina amid the changing seasons. I suggest that this is a spirit of interpretation far more congruent with *The Tale of Januarie* and its premiere production at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (hereafter GSMD) than the more moralizing readings that

[394] Ibid., 126-27.
[395] Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux*, 93.
[396] Stevens, '"And Venus Laugheth": An Interpretation of the *Merchant's Tale*', 128.
[397] See especially Amy S. Kaufman, 'Erotic (Subject) Positions in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', in Amanda Hopkins, Robert Allen Rouse, and Cory Rushton (eds.), *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), 27-38; Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Chaucer Studies; Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2002); Elizabeth Simmons-O'Neill, 'Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 51/3 (1990), 389-407; Jane Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

emphasize victimhood and cynicism. It is also one which opens more possibilities to appreciate the vibrancy of sung drama itself.

Beyond press reviews, the only sustained piece of writing on *The Tale of Januarie* to date is a blog post by medieval literary historian David Wallace for Jonathan Hsy's 'Global Chaucers' project.[398] Wallace frames the opera very explicitly in terms of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's 'Cross-Language Dynamics' project that funded its development at the GSMD, and links that project's remit to larger contemporary themes in UK and US politics. Wallace reads *The Tale of Januarie* as the product of a liberal university working in an enlightened genre, where the Frenchified and Germanic qualities of Middle English are enjoyed by audiences 'well attuned to hearing languages they do not speak'.[399] In emphasising the international heritage of the English language, he suggests that the libretto also provides a tonic to the UK's current 'Brexit-horror'.[400] The national referendum of June 2016 (eight months before *Januarie* premiered) that found 52% of voters in favour of leaving the European Union was received with widespread shock among British academics, many of whom considered the result an affront to political and economic expertise and a forthright expression of xenophobia—a reaction that Wallace manifestly shares.[401] Further large-scale demographic divisions of class within the referendum result map directly onto the educated, cosmopolitan, and middle-class image of the opera-goer which Wallace's framing tacitly projects.[402] Wallace also emphasizes the

[398] Wallace, '*The Tale of Januarie*: Translingualism and Anxietie, Sexuality and Time'.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Only 9% of British academics were in favour of leaving the EU, see Brian Salter, 'When Intellectuals Fail? Brexit and Hegemonic Challenge', *Competition & Change*, 22/5 (2018), 467-87.
[402] For social-scientific approaches to this perception in the twenty-first century, see Dragan Klaić, *Resetting the Stage: Public Theatre Between the Market and Democracy* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 63-68; for a historical analysis of this perception, see Alexandra Wilson, 'Killing Time: Contemporary Representations of Opera in British Culture', *OPR*, 19/3 (2007), 249-70. See also her forthcoming Leverhulme Major Research project on the 'opera and elitism stereotype'.

multicultural aspect of his reading by finding resonances between Januarie's garden wall and Donald Trump's proposed wall at the US-Mexican border, and finally implicates the UK university in this political milieu by drawing a parallel between campus sexual assault and Januarie's marital rape of May.[403]

While Wallace's presentist reading of *Januarie* compellingly relates surface plot elements to these 2017 talking points, my close reading in this chapter suggests that existing queer, feminist, and class-conscious readings of the *Merchant's Tale* (and of the fabliau genre) have been providing rich hermeneutic approaches to Chaucerian texts and their adaptations for decades. Responding to the ways in which *The Tale of Januarie* differs from its source-text, my analyses concur with Wallace's emphasis on women's sexual agency and ideologies of community and belonging. In the pursuit of a more nuanced interpretation of *The Tale of Januarie* and its implications for the sexual politics of its twenty-first-century audiences, however, I expand my interpretative framework into a cross-historical one that reads medieval and postmodern sexualities in tandem. By reading *The Tale of Januarie* through the lens of feminist Chaucerian scholarship, I suggest that medieval and twenty-first-century sexual politics can speak productively in dialogue.

[403] For an example of research on campus sexual assault contemporary to the premiere of *The Tale of Januarie*, see S. J. Camp, A. C. Sherlock-Smith, and E. L. Davies, 'Awareness and Support: Students' Views about the Prevention of Sexual Assault on UK Campuses', *Health Education*, 118/5 (2018), 431-46; for an example of how postmodern understandings of rape culture can inform readings of medieval literature, see Harris, *Obscene Pedagogies*.

2.2. The Music of Julian Philips

2.2a. Influences

In September 2020, Philips gave me access to a Dropbox folder containing some of his sketches, notes, and correspondences pertaining to *Januarie*. I also interviewed him via Zoom videocall on 18 February 2021. Philips's Dropbox contains pragmatic notes about rehearsals and libretto revisions, and some scores: the anonymous fifteenth-century *Agincourt Carol*; John Dunstaple's *Ave Maris Stella*, *O Rosa Bella* and *Quam Pulcra Es*; Friedrich Ludwig's edition of Guillaume de Machaut's ballades; and Leo Schrade's edition of Machaut's *Messe de Nostre Dame*. The lives of both Machaut (1300-1377) and Dunstaple (1390-1453) overlap with either end of Chaucer's (1343-1400), but the carol postdates his death (the Battle of Agincourt was in 1415). Bother Turner and James I. Wimsatt have described the influence of French verse on Chaucer's poetry with particular reference to Machaut, who was 43 years Chaucer's senior and exercised discernible influence over the younger poet's use of debate genres, garden settings, narrative personae, invocations of courtly patronage, and approach to form within long narrative poems.[404] Machaut's music has also been an object of transcription and reimagination for several post-war composers, among them Harrison Birtwistle, György Kurtág, and Michael Finnissy.[405] As I will discuss in relation to Act I, scene vi, Philips quotes extensively from Dunstaple in *Januarie*, but the direct influence of Machaut is less discernible.

[404] James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life*, 17; 62-63; 73-93; 129-36; 295; 343-50.
[405] See Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (London: Cornell University Press, 2011), 60; Lawrence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1995), 69-72.

Philips's folder also contains a screenshot from Christopher Page's *Grove* entry on Chaucer.[406] Page details the few references to music in Chaucer's writing, many of which are jokes from *The Canterbury Tales*: the punning 'quinible' (a hyperbolically high imaginary fifth voice in a motet) to describe a squeaky voice in the *Miller's Tale*, and a backhanded reference to Boethius's treatise *De institutione musica* in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*.[407] Page presents two pieces of evidence that Chaucer's poetry was set to music during his lifetime. The first is the rondeau 'Now welcome, somer' in *The Parliament of Fowls*, which Chaucer claimed had a French 'note' [melody]. The second is Chaucer's passing reference in the *Retraction* at the end of *The Canterbury Tales* to having written 'many a song and many a leccherous lay'. As Juliana Chapman has observed, music is central to the narratives of both the *Knight's Tale* and the *Miller's Tale*, and Mary Jane Hand notes the prevalence of descriptions of musical prowess in Chaucer's prologues.[408] *The Canterbury Tales* is a text that takes pleasure in music, as Chaucer and his milieu very likely did, but there is little evidence that the poet took much of an active role in musical culture.[409] This lack of notated music directly related to the poet (similar to the case of Guillem de Cabestaing in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*) frees Philips from being expected to derive influences from any specific songs or pieces.[410]

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[406] Christopher Page (2001), 'Chaucer, Geoffrey', *Grove Music Online*. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005486>, accessed 9 May 2020.
[407] More subtle musical episodes in the *Knight's Tale* are identified in Juliana Marie Chapman, 'Melodye and Noyse: An Aesthetic of *Musica* in *The Knight's Tale* and *The Miller's Tale*', *Studies in Philology*, 112/4 (2015), 633-55.
[408] Ibid.; Mary Jane Hand, 'Musical Aspects of *The Canterbury Tales*', PhD (Florida Atlantic University, 1991).
[409] Nigel Wilkins, *Music in the Age of Chaucer* (Chaucer Studies; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 111-24; Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer*, 137-87; 259-92.
[410] Dillon, 'Medieval Sources for George Benjamin's and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin* (2012): Cansos, Vidas, Razos, and Songbooks of Guillem de Cabestaing', 335-36.

Also in Philips's Dropbox are four images, all of which postdate Chaucer's death in 1400: the February page from the *Très riches heures du Duc de Berry* (circa 1412-16, Figure 2.2), a winter scene from the *Golf Book* (a Book of Hours from the early 1540s, British Library MS 24098), Hendrick Avercamp's oil painting 'Winter Landscape with Ice Skaters' (circa 1608), and a Charlie Hankin New Yorker cartoon in which a secretary informs an editor that Chaucer is 'on lyne thrie' (2015). I draw attention to these anachronisms not to discredit Philips, but on the contrary to emphasize the living and changing archives of influence available to him as an opera-maker. Michael Camille suggests that the *Très riches heures* in particular has 'not lost but rather gained "aura" in the age of its mechanical reproducibility' as a particularly rich site for idealized imaginings of the Middle Ages.[411] Described by Umberto Eco as 'a cinematic document', it is by extension not just a book, but part of the postmodern simulacrum of the Middle Ages which he describes in *Travels in Hyperreality*, where 'the relationship between illuminated manuscript and cathedral is the same as that between MOMA and Hollywood'.[412] The collection of influences in Philips's Dropbox is testament to the 'mad taste for collecting, lists, assemblage, amassing of disparate things' which Eco sees in our medievalist society: the 'flotsam of a previous world'.[413]

[411] Michael Camille, 'The "Très riches heures": An Illuminated Manuscript in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Critical Inquiry*, 17/1 (1990), 72, 7.
[412] Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 97.
[413] Ibid., 83.



Figure 2.2: February from the Très riches heures du Duc de Berry *(Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 65, f.2v)*.

The *Très riches heures* is directly referenced in Dick Bird's set for *Januarie*. Demarcated calendar months in red and blue script run along the top of the stage like the manuscript's astrological chart, and line the edges of the stage like margin borders (Figure 2.3). The flattening, page-like perspectives offered by these three concentric margin-arches generate fore- middle- and background textures which mortal and immortal characters can pass between. The technique of representing a stage as a manuscript page is not without precedent: Vicki Mortimer's set for Katie Mitchell's production of George Benjamin and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin* (2012) is divided into cells, as if the rooms in which the action takes place are illuminations, with the chorus of angels in modern dress inhabiting the edges like marginalia (Figure 2.4). The manuscript-as-framing-device is also a popular cinematic trope, seen in *The Sword in the Stone* (1963), *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975, Figure 2.5), and *Shrek* (2001, Figure 2.6).[414] The loveliness of Bird's design manifests in its translation from *mise-en-page* (the ordering and layout of interacting elements on the page of a book) to *mise-en-scène*, where the dynamism of the already active and populous manuscript illuminations of the *Très riches heures* are literally brought to life; literally illuminated by the stage lights.[415]

[414] Richard Burt, *Medieval and Early Modern Film and Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 51-56.

[415] For a discussion of *mise-en-page* in Chaucer manuscripts, see Aditi Nafde, 'Deciphering the Manuscript Page: The *Mise-en-Page* of Chaucer, Gower, and Hoccleve Manuscripts', PhD (University of Oxford, 2012), 27-117; for a discussion of the medieval page as a dramatic space, see Kyle A. Thomas, 'The Medieval Space: Early Medieval Documents as Stages', *Theatre Survey*, 59/1 (2018), 4-22; for an example of how film theory can be applied to ideas of medieval vision (specifically that of women mystics), see Spencer-Hall, *Medieval Saints and Modern Screens: Divine Visions as Cinematic Experience*.



Figure 2.3: Dick Bird's set for The Tale of Januarie.[416]



Figure 2.4: Vicki Mortimer's set for Written on Skin *(2012).*[417]

[416] Julian Philips, B. A. Windeatt, Dominic Wheeler et al., 'The Tale of Januarie (archive recording)', (London: Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2017).
[417] George Benjamin, Martin Crimp, and Katie Mitchell, *Written on Skin* (DVD release), (UK: Royal Opera House, 2014).



Figure 2.5: A scribal hand in Monty Python and the Holy Grail *(1975).*[418]



Figure 2.6: The manuscript from the prologue to Shrek *(2001).*[419]

[418] Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (DVD release), (UK: Monty Python Pictures; EMI Films, 1975).
[419] Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, *Shrek* (DVD release), (USA: DreamWorks Animation, 2001).

When read alongside the archive of Philips's medieval influences, Bird's manuscript-based set design invites a practice of Daughtry's 'palimpsestuous' listening (discussed in the introduction to this thesis). According to Daughtry,

> unlike the music philologist peering through editorial layers in search of the musical urtext, the 'palimpsestuous' scholar is enthralled equally by each layer and each accretion, and by the gestalt effect of layeredness as well.[420]

The musicological study of medieval music partakes of this thrall to a great extent today, working at junctures between material manuscripts, digitizations, editions, transcriptions, and translations on one level; intertextuality, citation between musical texts, and contrafacta on another; and experiments in organology and performance practices on yet another. An operatic text's palimpsestuous layeredness is visual and sensual as well as audible, its accretions subject to drastic change from production to production. When I watch the video of Januarie in the GSMD's online archive, the images and scores in Philips's smaller archive not only coexist with the finished operatic text, but penetrate its surfaces with the rich histories of reception and interpretation which preoccupy writers like Camille and Eco.[421]

Like the miniatures in the *Très riches heures*, Bird's set changes in step with the passing of the seasons in *The Tale of Januarie*. Philips's folder contains a schema attributing symbolism and metaphors to each season, as well as instrumental techniques, instrumentations, and pitch intervals (Figure 2.7). The only modern score in Philips's Dropbox is Alexander Glasunov's ballet *The Seasons*, opus 64. Glazunov's romantic orchestral writing is replete with seasonal tropes from which Philips may have drawn, but *The Tale of Januarie*'s seasonal schema was drafted early in the compositional process,

[420] Daughtry, 'Acoustic Palimpsests and the Politics of Listening'.
[421] Philips et al., 'The Tale of Januarie (archive recording)'.

and differs from the final score in certain respects (especially wind and brass orchestrations). The pear tree is on-stage for the duration of the opera in Bird's set—bare and wintry during the opening when Januarie is introduced, blossoming copiously at the wedding, and bearing ripe fruit for the summer garden tryst before dropping its autumnal leaves at the end, when Januarie dies. In place of the sun, an enormous pendulum passes gradually over the stage.

THE TALE OF JANUARIE: *Wind/brass textures*

WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN
Woodwind Piccolo (maybe a pair?) High oboe pedals *No clarinets* Contra-bassoon *(no bassoons)*	**Woodwind** Flutes Oboes Clarinets Bassoons } each added as solos	**Woodwind** Flute Oboes Clarinets (add Eb clarinet?) Bassoons (with contra)	**Woodwind** Alto flute (solo) Cor Anglais (solo) *Maybe just Bass Clarinet* Bassoons (solo)
Brass *No horns (maybe one offstage)* Trumpets (straight mutes) Trombones (straight mutes) Tuba (solo – fog!)	**Brass** Horns (*mostly just a pair*) Trumpets (solo) Trombones (*silent for Spring music, but gradually joining*) Tuba (*silent for Spring music, but gradually joining*)	**Brass** Horns (*four horns – priapic*) Trumpets Trombones Tuba	**Brass** Horns (*a pair – one offstage*) *No Trumpets* Trombones (straight mutes?) Tuba (autumn fog?)
Percussion Glockenspiel Sleigh bells! Pots and pans (wassailing) Tam-tam Bass-drum Sticks Timpani	**Percussion** Woodblocks Tambourine Bird whistles? Triangle Snare drum (gentle rolls) **On-stage band** *Either* Medieval wind instruments *Or* Cacophonous band: Trombones, tuba Soprano saxophones?	**Percussion** Tree branches Cymbals Timpani (tied to four horns) Vibraphone	**Percussion** Marimba or xylophone Guiro Wooden shaker Tenor drum Bass-drum Tam-tam Wind machine? Timpani (dampened?)

THE TALE OF JANUARIE: *Materials*

WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN
Interval Quarter tones (+ inversions) opening out into Minor 2nds (+ inversions)	**Interval** Major 2nds (+ inversions) opening out into Minor 3rds (+ inversions) just in the final bedroom scene (informed by Pythagorean 5ths of Pluto/Proserpina who arrive in Spring)	**Interval** *Contenance Angloise* Minor 3rds (+ inversions) opening out into Major 3rds (+ inversions) (informed by Pythagorean 5ths of Pluto/Proserpina)	**Interval** Fourths/tritones Tritone is the opera's final interval OR tritone resolving to a Pythagorean 5th (informed by Pythagorean 5ths of Pluto/Proserpina) (Wolf 5th?)

Figure 2.7: Philips's seasonal compositional schema.

In the *Merchant's Tale*, the seasons are personified in the young, 'freshhe May' whom Chaucer explicitly describes as 'like the bright May morning/ filled with beauty and *plesaunce*', and Januarie, who is 'grey and old … on the brink of the grave'.[422] The

[422] 'Lyk the brighte morwe of May/ fulfild of alle beautee and plesaunce' (lines 1748-49); 'hoor and oold … on [his] pittes brynke' (lines 1400-01). Jessica Cooke has emphasized that the characters are named according to the calendar contemporary to Chaucer, where the year began in March (meaning that January

description of May as filled with ‘plesaunce’ carries connotations of both beauty and sexual gratification that are difficult to convey in modern English, while the Middle English ‘hoor’ for ‘grey’ retains connotations of both old age and frosty weather in the modern word ‘hoary’. The foregrounding of the passage of time, both in this production and in the *Merchant’s Tale*, is as dramatically important as it is metaphorical and evocative. As I discuss in section 2.1b, Januarie embodies the fabliau trope of the *senex amans*, and much of the plot revolves around his old age: the pressing urgency to marry before he falls into dotage, his obsession with his intact libido, and his jealously possessive attitude towards May.

Because of the structural and thematic importance of the seasons in *The Tale of Januarie*, I divide the following analyses along the same lines. With a particular emphasis on diegetic music, I discuss Damyan’s hurdy-gurdy serenade in the winter market scene, and the spring wedding processional (based on Dunstaple’s *Ave Maris Stella*, with text from the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*). Reintroducing the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux (discussed in the introduction and Chapter 1), I then turn to the setting of the Song of Songs in Januarie’s summer garden, followed by a short discussion of the autumn epilogue at the opera’s close. For the remainder of this introductory section, I will begin to describe how, via a hermeneutically loaded combination of Pythagorean tuning and equal temperament, Philips’s music negotiates the fabliau sexual politics of the *Merchant’s Tale*.

was towards the end the year, just as Januarie is towards the end of his life). See Jessica Cooke, 'Januarie and May in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', *English Studies*, 78/5 (1997), 407-16.

2.2b. Pythagorean Tuning

Two dominant compositional features of *The Tale of Januarie* are introduced in its opening scenes. The first is Philips's use of defined musical numbers, many of which are diegetic, inflected by triadic harmonies, and feature on-stage instruments in Pythagorean tuning. The second, by contrast, is the highly chromatic style of Januarie's sung dialogue, which is in equal temperament. The Pythagorean music usually falls at points at which the text has been written entirely by Plaice, and is often accompanied by two different stage bands: the human characters sing with bagpipes, recorders, handheld percussion, and fiddle; the gods and nymphs sing with flute, viola, and harp. In his notes from the rehearsal process (labelled 'for Oliver'), Philips expresses concern that the cast and chorus rehearse carefully with midi files or a digital piano with a Pythagorean setting: 'what I need to avoid is that no one takes it seriously and everything slips back into standard tuning'.[423]

In Pythagorean tuning, pitch intervals are calculated in terms of pure string-length ratios (octave = 2:1, fifth = 3:2, fourth = 4:3, etc.), resulting in distinctively large major sixths and thirds, and narrow minor seconds and thirds. In contrast with equal temperament's cycle of fifths, which spans twelve symmetrical semitones, Pythagorean tuning constructs its twelve-tone temperament by stacking slightly larger pure fifths outwards from a central pitch (Figure 2.8). With these ratios untempered and therefore not divisible into twelve equal semitone intervals, enharmonic spelling significantly influences intonation. The G-based tuning Philips favours for human stage bands, for example, applies the ratio 3:2 six times up and six times down from G (Example 2.1). To accommodate a fully chromatic

[423] 'Pythagorean tuning notes for Oliver.docx' in Dropbox folder. Accessed 1 October 2020. The addressee is composer Oliver Leith, who advised Philips on some extended intonation techniques and assisted with the rehearsal process.

system across octaves, the distance between C♯ and A♭ is a 'wolf fifth', about a quartertone smaller than the pure fifth. There is evidence of this system being in use by about 1340, and the repertory of the Robertsbridge Codex was probably written for a chromatic keyboard with tuning based on this premise.[424] In our 2021 interview, Philips spoke lyrically about Pythagorean tuning: 'once you destabilize equal temperament it's like a doorway into another world'. Notably, this 'doorway' is not a time-travel conceit, but pertinent to the dramatic structure of *The Tale of Januarie*; when Januarie dies, the wolf fifth is 'like a portal for him to walk through' into the afterlife.

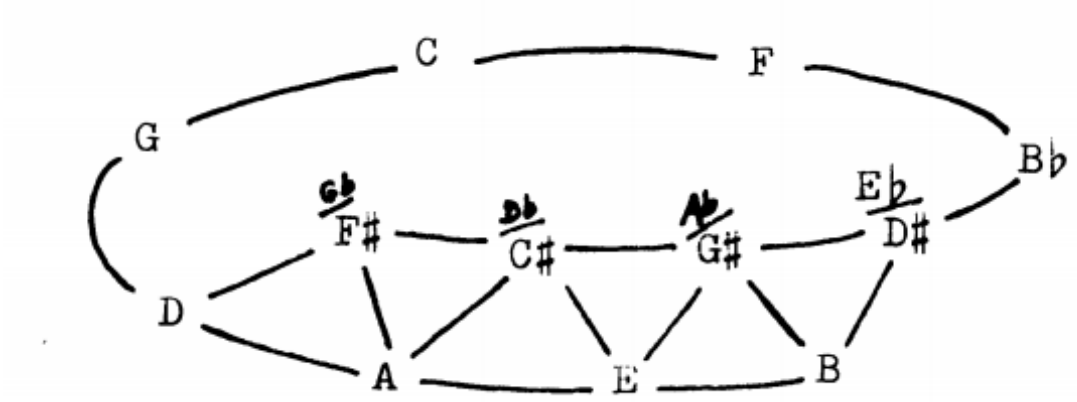
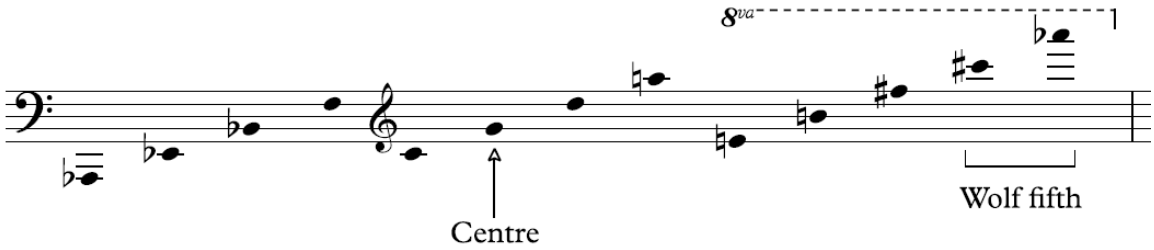


Figure 2.8: Pythagorean perfect fifths creating a twelve-tone spiral.[425]



Example 2.1: Pythagorean fifths from G, with a 'wolf fifth' between C♯ and A♭.

[424] Mark Lindley (2015), 'Pythagorean Intonation', *Grove Music Online*. <https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22604>.
[425] Mark Lindley, 'Pythagorean Intonation and the Rise of the Triad', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 16/1 (1980), 4-61, 16.
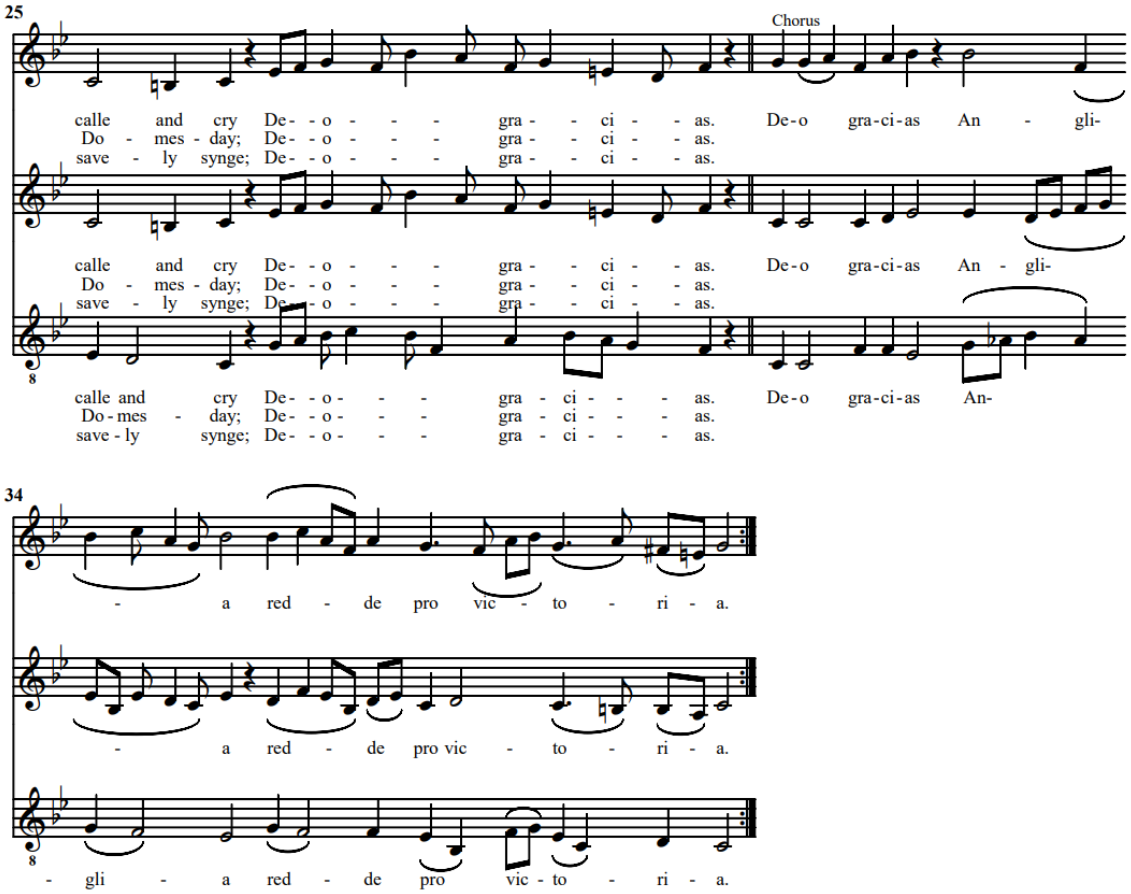
Pythagorean tuning is not Philips's only allusion to medieval compositional practices. *The Tale of Januarie* opens with a wassailing chorus sung by the tenors and basses, banging sticks and tankards at cross-rhythms as they process around the wintry pear tree (Example 2.3). This chorus is probably influenced by the similarly three-voiced *Agincourt Carol*: both feature iambic and dotted rhythms within a triple meter, and an exclamatory Latin refrain. While carols carry Christmassy connotations for modern listeners, it should be noted that the medieval carols found along with *Agincourt* on the *Trinity Carol Roll* are based on texts for a variety of occasions (the Battle of Agincourt took place in October) and they represent a form distinct from the *carole* circular dance.[426] Plaice's text for the wassailing song is original, and (like many of the *Trinity* carols) macaronic, ending with a Latin exclamation:

Wassail, wassail! Badde spirits be gon, no logge for thee, Wassail to the pyrie, most blessed tree.	Wassail, wassail! Bad spirits be gone, no lodging for thee, Wassail to the pear, most blessed tree.
Send forth blosmen, sukle the bee, Bringe forth ronde peres to press' in the key.	Send forth blossoms, suckle the bee, Bring forth round pears to press in the key.
We'll make of thee perie to bring companie, We'll raise a cuppe to honour thee. *Vivat! Crescat! Floreat!*	We'll make of thee perry to bring company, We'll raise a cup to honour thee. Live long! Increase! Flourish!

Philips's carol gestures towards the counterpoint of these late-medieval songs via implied directed progressions. The directed progression, as defined by Sarah Fuller, involves two adjacent sonorities: an imperfect interval (in late-medieval polyphony, a third or a sixth) progressing to a perfect interval (an octave, unison, or open fifth) with at least one voice
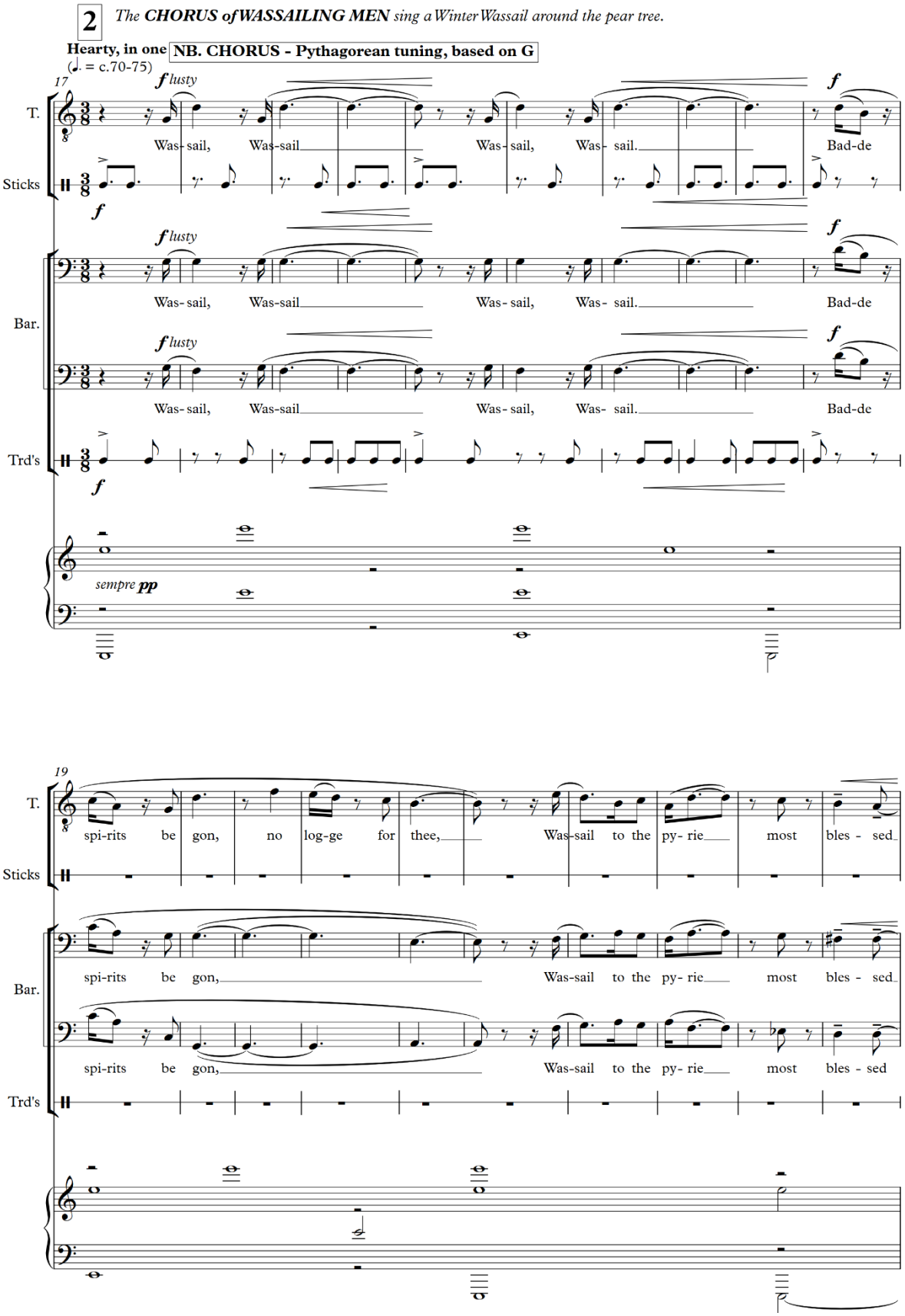
[426] Helen Deeming, 'The Sources and Origin of the "Agincourt Carol"', *Early Music*, 35/1 (2007), 23-38.

moving by step.[427] As Elizabeth Eva Leach describes it, this small interval 'effectively makes one sonority actively "seek" another' in a manner analogous (but not reducible) to a leading-note cadence in modern functional diatonicism.[428] The motion from D to the C final (with G fifth) at the end of *Agincourt*, for example constitutes a directed progression (Example 2.2). Philips uses this quality of thirds moving towards open fifths via step to evoke fourteenth-century counterpoint in the Wassailing Chorus. For instance, the shift at the end of the first verse from D-F♯-A to an open C-G fifth is stepwise in both lower voices (Example 2.3).
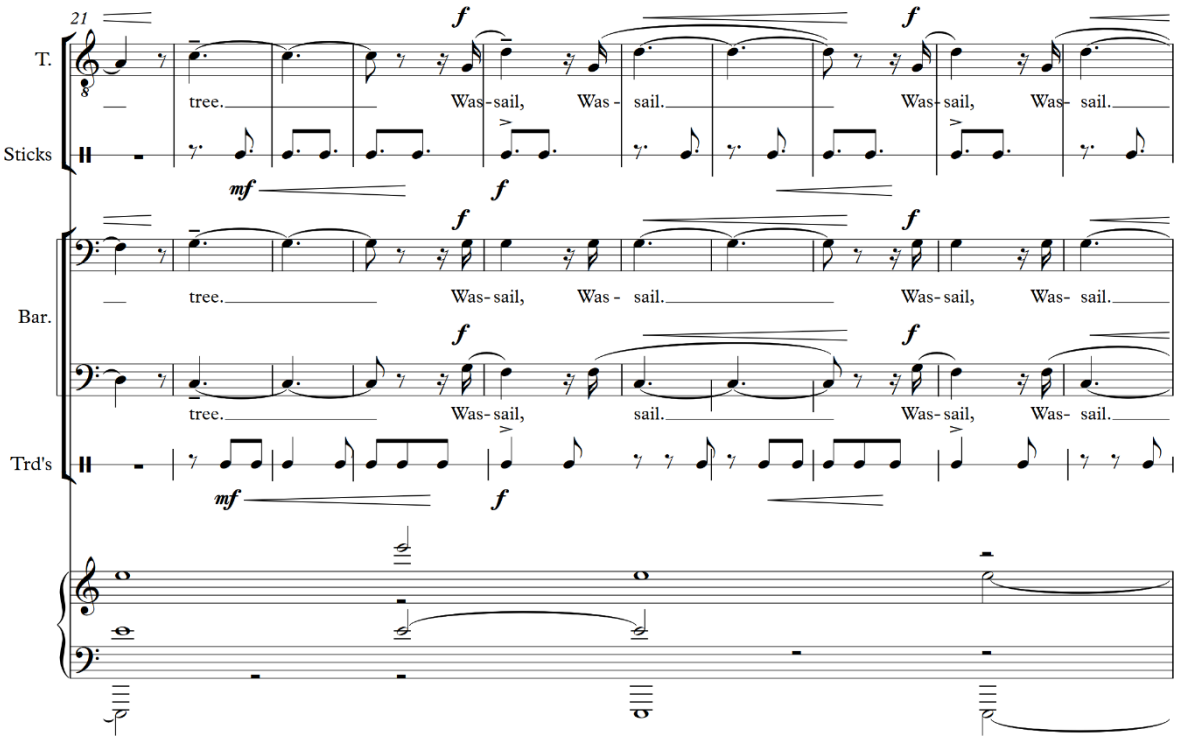


Example 2.2: The refrain from the Agincourt Carol.[429]

[427] Sarah Fuller, 'Tendencies and Resolutions: The Directed Progression in "Ars Nova" Music', *Journal of Music Theory*, 36/2 (1992), 229-58, 231-32.
[428] Elizabeth Eva Leach, 'Gendering the Semitone, Sexing the Leading Tone: Fourteenth-Century Music Theory and the Directed Progression', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 28/1 (2006), 1-21, 9.
[429] Public-domain edition as found in Philips's Dropbox.



Example 2.3: The wassailing song, bars 17-24.[430]

[430] All musical examples hereafter from Julian Philips and Stephen Plaice, *The Tale of Januarie* (London: Edition Peters, 2017). Incorrect bar numbers are as in the score.



(Example 2.3 continued).

The implied C final of this progression notwithstanding, the prevalence of open G-D fifths and F♯ leading tones reinforce G as a tonal centre within this post-twentieth-century idiom. The Pythagorean tuning is centred on G, and an E pedal sustained by string harmonics across several octaves throughout the song maintains an ambiguous tertiary middle-ground between C and G, as well as emphasising the Pythagorean tuning by way of its distinctively spaced thirds. The energy of the wassailers' 3/8 cross-rhythms and hemiola approaches to cadences manifest the Pythagorean fifth's 3:2 ratio on a rhythmic level. The E pedal also slightly blurs the implied directed progression, with occasional E♭s creating a false relation.

By opening with the wassailing chorus, Philips and Plaice establish a folkish, rustic landscape of lush natural imagery and community activity that borrows, at least in spirit, from Chaucer's General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*:

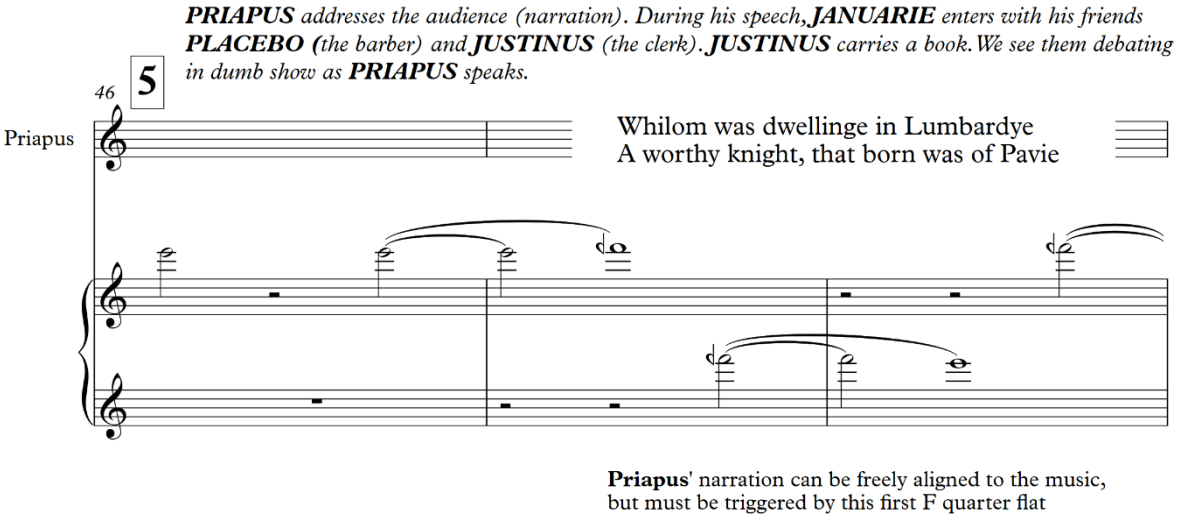
Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote, The droghte of March hath perced to the roote, And bathed every veyne in swich licóur Of which vertú engendred is the flour; …. Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.	When April with its sweet showers Has pierced the drought of March to the root, And bathed every vein in such liquid By which power the flower is created; …. Then folk long to go on pilgrimage.[431]

Wassailing, an English folk ritual for Twelfth Night still practised today, is an apt vehicle for translating the General Prologue to the stage.[432] Where Chaucer's prologue celebrates the 'sweet' April showers giving life to the flowers, Plaice's desires for the wintry tree to 'send forth blossoms'. And where's Chaucer's establishes a band of spring pilgrims for his ensemble, Plaice's establishes a community of winter townspeople who spiritually ('most blessed'), socially ('bring companie'), and sexually ('ronde peres to press' in the key') live beneath the boughs of the fruiting tree. To observe that orchard wassailing is anachronistic for a Chaucer adaptation (especially given that the *Merchant's Tale* is set in Lombardy) is not to cast an aspersion.[433] The suspension of disbelief is not as self-evident here as if might be for fantasy medievalisms with wizards and dragons, but the practice of world-building remains crucial to establishing a coherent medievalist present for an audience. There is a nostalgia in the folkish connection with the land, heightened in these parts of the libretto written by Plaice. The moments where the score sounds most 'medieval' do so by revelling in artifice.

[431] Lines 1-2.
[432] Ronald Hutton finds widespread documentation of orchard wassailing in southern England from the late sixteenth century onwards and suggests that 'they may quite easily have descended directly from pagan practices', see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 42-53.
[433] Simpson Jacqueline and Roud Steve (2003), 'Wassailing', *A Dictionary of English Folklore*. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198607663.001.0001/acref-9780198607663-e-1100.>, accessed 3 August 2021.

2.2c. Equal Temperament

Philips bridges the gap between Pythagorean tuning and equal temperament by shifting the sustained pedal E that accompanied the Wassailing Chorus up a quartertone to F𝄲. This is Priapus's cue to begin his spoken introduction, which is a direct rendition of the opening lines of the *Merchant's Tale*: 'whilom ther was dwellynge in Lumbardye/ A worthy knyght, that born was of Pavye' (Example 2.4).[434] Being a fertility god, Priapus is usually depicted with a huge penis, and his appearance in Bird's production is no exception: he has to carry it in a wheelbarrow (see Figure 2.9).[435] Priapus in particular led Wallace to write that 'presentation of sexuality in this production is notably, egregiously, penis-driven'.[436]



Example 2.4: Priapus's opening narration cued by F𝄲, bars 46-48.

[434] 'Once there lived in Lombardy/ a wealthy knight who was born in Pavia' (lines 1245-46).
[435] He is also mentioned in passing in Chaucer's Parlement of Foules, see Emerson Brown, '*Hortus Inconclusus*: The Significance of Priapus and Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Merchant's Tale*', *The Chaucer Review*, 4/1 (1969), 31-40, 38-40.
[436] Wallace, '*The Tale of Januarie*: Translingualism and Anxietie, Sexuality and Time'.



Figure 2.9: Priapus.

Priapus's phallic cameo in *The Tale of Januarie* is an extrapolation from a passing mention in Chaucer's description of Januarie's garden (which is, in turn, an allusion to Ovid's *Fasti*).[437] This is also the point at which Chaucer introduces Proserpina and Pluto:

… he that wroot the romance of the rose	…he who wrote *The Romance of the Rose*
Ne koude of it the beautee wel devyse;	Could not properly describe the beauty of it;
Ne Priapus ne myghte nat suffise,	Nor might Priapus suffice,
Though he be God of gardyns, for to telle	Though he is god of gardens, to tell
The beautee of the gardyn and the welle,	The beauty of the garden and the well.[438]

The garden's beauty is such that that neither the authors of *The Romance of the Rose* (which Chaucer himself translated into Middle English), nor Priapus the god of gardens could adequately describe it. Chaucer does not frame Priapus in terms of his fertility or physical endowment, but as an expert on natural beauty on the same level as human poets
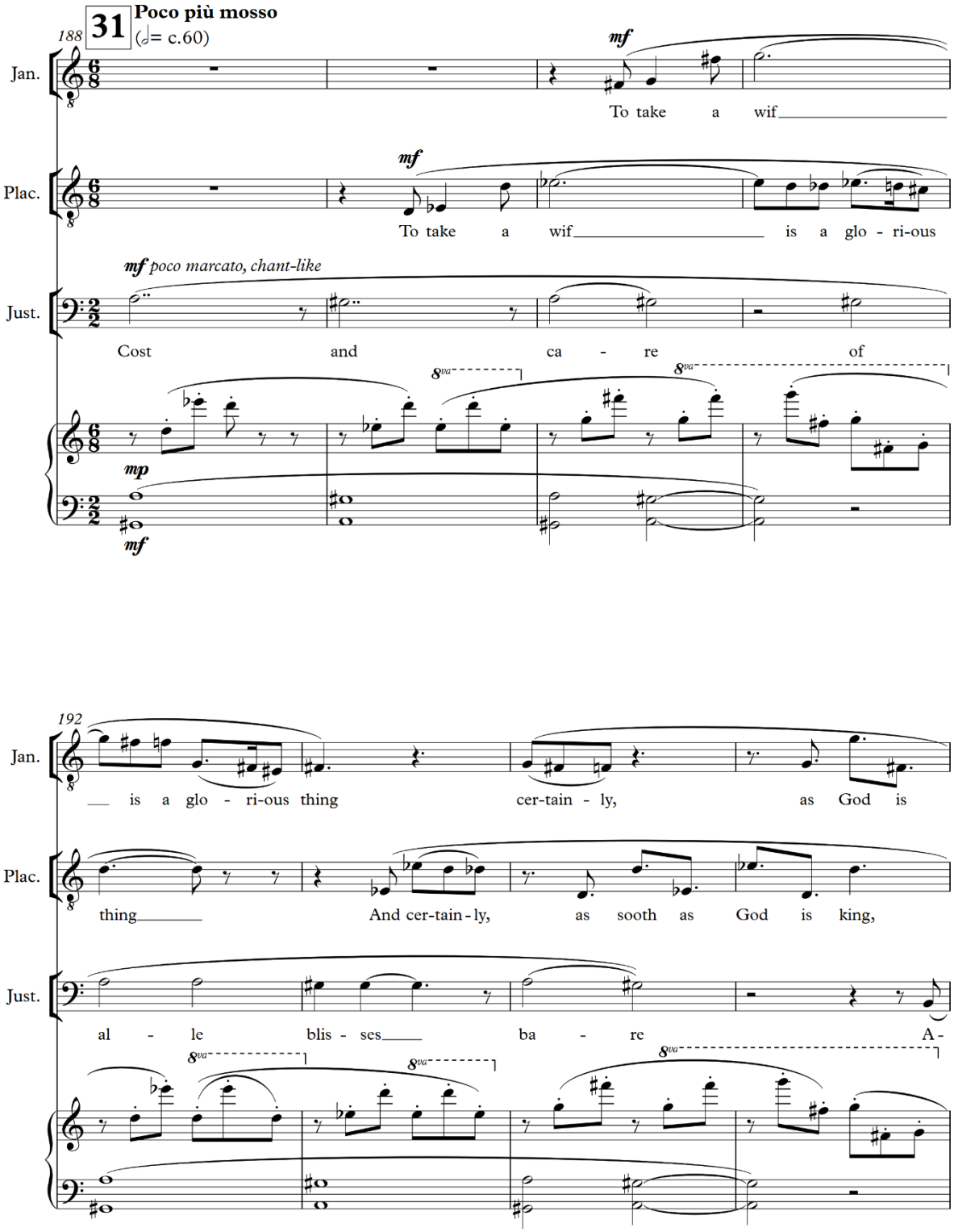
[437] Richard L. Hoffman, *Ovid and the Canterbury Tales* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 156.
[438] Lines 2032-36.

and, John Finlayson observes, a reminder that this garden is gentile in appearance only.[439] Priapus's ribald physique is, Emerson Brown points out, an externalization of Januarie's comically undignified lust, but does not exclude him from the company of nymphs and satyrs.[440] By casting him as narrator, mediating between stage and audience and entering between tuning systems, Plaice and Philips take advantage of his twofold nature as well as his descriptive prowess. The gods in *The Tale of Januarie* may have the power to meddle in human affairs, but they also share in the discursive limitations of human speech.

Earthly and flawed, the gods in *The Tale of Januarie* only partake of Pythagorean music in as the humans do; it is not incidental that the first character to appear at the introduction of equal temperament's artifice is not a mortal. This fluid relationship between tuning systems and characters has one notable exception: Januarie never sings in Pythagorean tuning. His musical *idée fixe* almost exclusively consists of semitones, compound semitones, and their inversions, giving his vocalizations a nagging quality (Example 2.5). The encomium scene is the first of many instances of Philips creating a sustained, grotesquely comedic texture for sung dialogue out of a small selection of pitches. Its sharp contrast with the preceding wassailing song rests in part on its jagged and varied timbres, textures, and rhythms. But it is its emphasis on semitonal motion that sets it apart from the Pythagorean sections as conceptually different. Its singers are literally of another temper, they are 'tuned in' to an approach to the world that prioritizes expediency over ideals of perfection and beauty. The final page of Philips's early schema of seasonal metaphors mentioned above (Figure 2.7, section 2.2a) constitutes a plan for thematic groups of

[439] Finlayson, '*The Merchant's Tale*: Literary Contexts, the Play of Genres, and Institutionalized Sexual Relations', 573.
[440] Brown, '*Hortus Inconclusus*: The Significance of Priapus and Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Merchant's Tale*', 33.

intervals, ‘opening out’ from the quartertone into gradually larger intervals as the opera progresses. What exactly Philips means when he writes ‘informed by Pythagorean 5ths’ in the latter three columns will be an important crux of my analysis, because the way in which Philips composes with different intonations is closely linked to different characters’ ‘temperaments’. Crucially, Januarie’s vocal lines do not develop and ‘open out’ along with the rest of the opera’s expanding pitch relations in this schema; he does not grow or change but, even to the extent that many of his melodies are palindromic, remains set in his ways.



Example 2.5: The encomium *trio, bars 188-95.*

Donaldson writes of the *Merchant's Tale* as a 'juxtaposition of the seemingly, or potentially beautiful with the unmistakably ugly', which he suggests is 'not static but dynamic, for the ugly constantly casts its shadow over the beautiful or, conversely, the seemingly beautiful ultimately reveals itself to be as ugly, in its own way'.[441] Perhaps this dynamism between the lovely and the unlovely can nuance Muscatine's description of the fabliau's 'hedonistic materialism'; its extreme commitment to humour and pleasure, and their direct acquisition via cunning and cleverness. *Pace* Donaldson, Januarie's wailing music could fairly be described as 'unmistakably ugly'. But *contra* Donaldson, whose reading sees everything immutably infected with the cynicism of this pipeline between cunning and pleasure, I aim to open more space for ambiguity in this reading, specifically around the value and ethics of pleasure itself. In this sexually charged Chaucerian fantasy, rich in crass humour, pleasure, and romantic and courtly imagery, what does it mean to be alive?

2.3. Analyses

2.3a. Winter: The Market (Act I, scene iii)

At the end of the marriage encomium in the *Merchant's Tale*, the three men 'rise suddenly': Januarie has resolved to find a wife.[442] The structure of the imagery at this point in Chaucer's poem is significant:

Heigh fantasye and curious bisynesse	Wild fantasies and constant thought
Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse	From day to day became fixed in the soul
Of Januarie aboute his mariage.	Of Januarie, concerning his marriage.
Many fair shap and many a fair visage	Many a fair shape and many a fair face
Ther passeth thurgh his herte nyght by nyght,	There passes through his heart night after night,
As whoso tooke a mirour, polished bright,	As if someone had taken a mirror, polished bright,

[441] Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer*, 34.
[442] 'With that word they rysen sodeynly' (line 1574).

And sette it in a commune market-place,	And set it in a common market-place,
Thanne sholde he se ful many a figure pace	In order to see many a figure pace
By his mirour; and in the same wyse	By his mirror; and in the same way
Gan Januarie inwith his thought devyse	Did Januarie within his thoughts think
Of maydens whiche that dwelten hym bisyde.	About maidens who dwelt nearby.[443]

As Martha Dana Rust writes, medieval theories of cognition after Avicenna (980-1037) located imagination in a 'discreet cell-like area of the brain' upon which images and other phenomena impressed themselves (Figure 2.10).[444] The 'many fair shapes' and 'fair faces' of Januarie's 'fantasy' are not images that pass not before his eyes, but phantasma that pass 'through his heart' and impress upon his 'soul'. In this imaginary process, he sizes up the local eligible women as if window-shopping at the market, before deciding that May is the most virtuous. Chaucer spends several lines listing the qualities that Januarie considers, emphasising 'her fresh beauty and her tender age' and reporting May's assent as the result of a brokered agreement, the 'sly and wise negotiation' of Justinus and Placebo.[445] The reader is not privy to this negotiation and Chaucer deliberately glosses over the details (discussed further in the following section), but the inference is that May materially has much to gain from the marriage. The narrative then skips ahead to a sumptuous description of the wedding day (discussed in the following subsection).[446]

[443] Lines 1577-87.
[444] Martha Dana Rust, *Imaginary Worlds in Medieval Books: Exploring the Manuscript Matrix* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 4-13. see also Simon Kemp and J. O. Fletcher Garth, 'The Medieval Theory of the Inner Senses', *American Journal of Psychology*, 106/4 (1993), 559-76, 563-65.
[445] 'Hir fresshe beautee and hir age tendre' (line 1601); 'sly and wys tretee' (line 1692).
[446] Pugh describes these glossed negotiations as 'phantom debates', see 'Gender, Vulgarity, and the Phantom Debates of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale', 487.

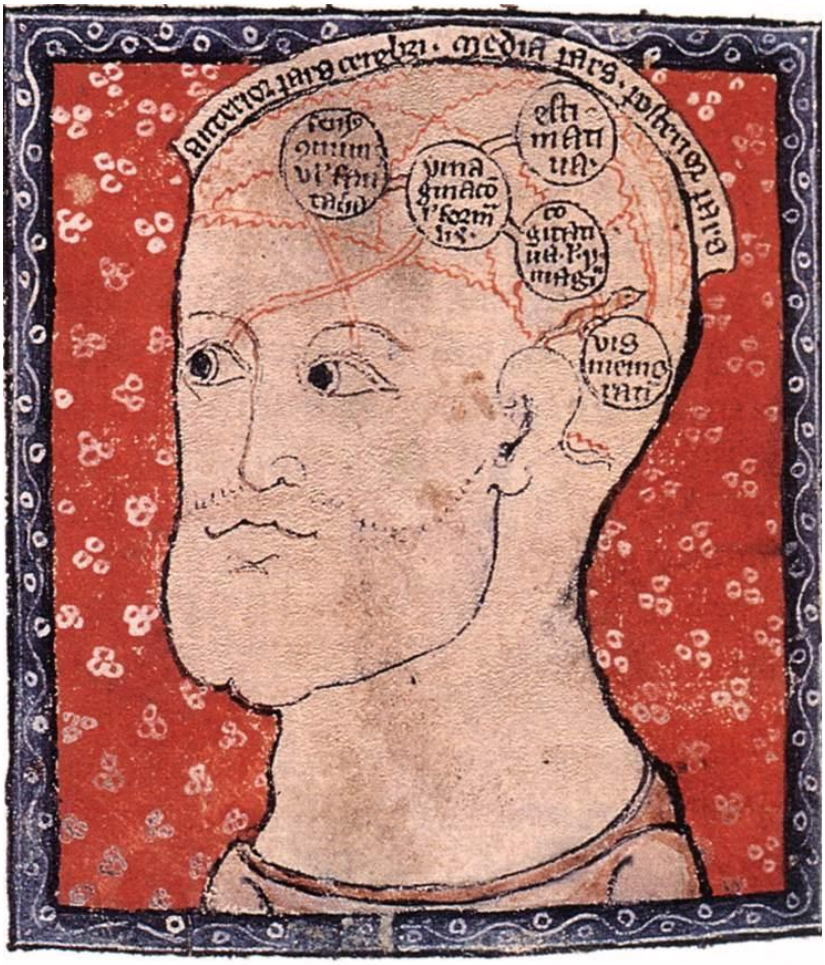


Figure 2.10: The 'faculties' of medieval cognition (Cambridge University Library MS Gg.1.1, f. 490v).

This rather rapidly narrated turn of events in which May voicelessly enters the poem presents something of an adaptational challenge. As Elaine Tuttle Hansen points out, May does not enter as a fleshed-out person, but as a figment manifested in Januarie's imagination.[447] Pugh theorizes this feminine voicelessness as a narrative device, wherein an excess of unsatisfactory male debate itself creates the need for women to correct them through alternate means fabliau instruction.[448] In Pasolini's version, Januarie stares lecherously down a crowded street, licking his lips as a child lifts May's dress to expose her buttocks. He immediately announces his intention to marry her, and the film (like the

[447] Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and The Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 250.
[448] Pugh, 'Gender, Vulgarity, and the Phantom Debates of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale', 483.

poem) cuts straight to the wedding feast. Myerson's animated version (1998-2000) on the other hand, aided by the merchant's narration, illustrates Januarie's thoughts 'inwith'. A cross-section of his skull—strikingly similar to medieval depictions of the brain like that in Figure 2.10—reveals a wheel of women spinning around inside his head, then twirling around him in a dark, abstract chamber (Figure 2.11). Philips and Plaice, by contrast, seize upon Januarie's imagined crowded marketplace as a literal scene. This decision not only enables more stage-time for the chorus but mean that May can introduce herself.[449]

[449] Choruses are relatively unusual in operas written in the twenty-first century. In most instances they function as a Greek chorus, either in classical adaptations such as Birtwistle's *The Minotaur* (2008) or in more post-Brechtian works such as Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Anna Nicole* (2011). In the case of *The Tale of Januarie*, which was written for conservatoire students, a chorus may have been desirable partially as a means of involving as many singers in the production as possible.
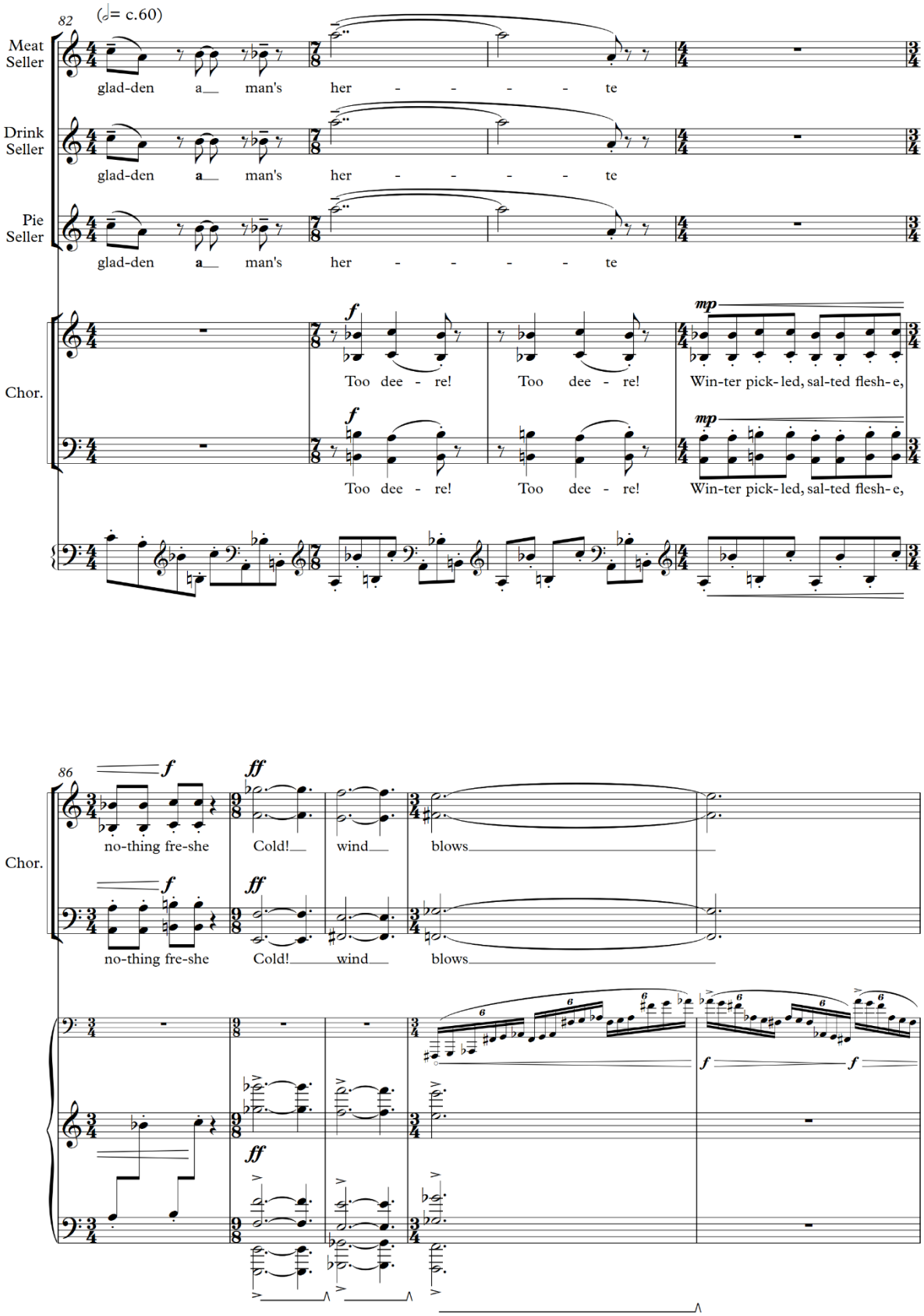


Figure 2.11: Januarie's imagination, dir. Jonathan Myerson (1998).[450]

[450] Jonathan Myerson, 'Episode 2: The Merchant's Tale', *The Canterbury Tales (TV series)* (Swansea: Sianel 4 Cymru, 1998).

The chorus enters in Act I, scene iii, commenting on the winter season. The townspeople's cries of 'nothinge lievre to gladden a man's herte' and 'salted fleshe, nothing freshe' are, like the encomium, accompanied by a spikey texture constructed almost entirely of semitones and compound semitones.[451] Most pronounced are their homophonic descending parallel-semitone interjections of 'cold winde blows' (Example 2.6). The same community that gathered to wassail in Pythagorean fifths now align themselves with Januarie's narrow, ugly semitones as they arrange their market stalls, haggle, and bicker. While Januarie is technically a nobleman, several commentators have remarked upon his mercantile worldview, manifest in his base desire for a woman who meets his premeditated requirements.[452] As Patricia Eberle points out, fabliau characters 'are usually very closely involved in the world of getting and spending', in part to emphasize their separation from 'traditional courtly values'.[453] The Act I market scene foregrounds this materialistic impulse in Januarie and brings his entire community along with him: the townsfolk are not simply idealized wassailers, but part of the fabric of Januarie's bourgeois life. This is a tale, writes Winthrop Wetherbee, in which 'the effect of the commercial outlook on sexual love … is explored in shockingly literal terms'.[454]

[451] 'Nothing living to gladden a man's heart'; 'salted meats, nothing fresh'.
[452] See Christian Sheridan, 'May in the Marketplace: Commodification and Textuality in the Merchant's Tale', *Studies in Philology,* 102/1 (2005), 27-44, 29.
[453] Patricia J. Eberle, 'Commercial Language and the Commercial Outlook in the "General Prologue"', *The Chaucer Review*, 18/2 (1983), 161-74, 165.
[454] Winthrop Wetherbee, *Geoffrey Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 63.



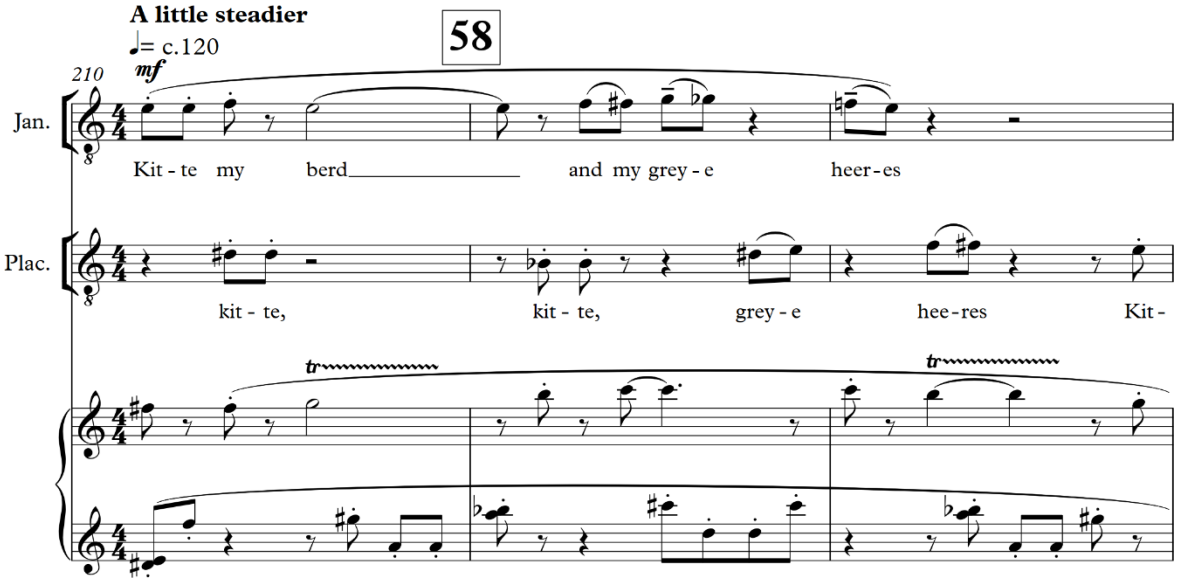
Example 2.6: Market chorus, Act I, scene iii, bars 82-90.

By way of pretext for his window-shopping, Januarie sits for a haircut from Placebo. Strategically placing his mirror, he employs Damyan to play the hurdy-gurdy and sell ribbons to lure beautiful women into his line of sight (Figure 2.12).[455] Januarie's once-imposing semitone figures are subsumed into the trite, onomatopoetic 'kitte kitte' ('snip snip') semitone pairs chirruped by Placebo in bars 203-09 (Example 2.7), accompanied by trilling piccolos and pizzicato upper strings that mostly use the pitches sung by the market chorus (F♯/G, D♯/E). Above, in conjunct rather than octave-displaced semitones, Januarie whines, 'make my looks yonger by ten yeres'.[456] His presence after this ostentatious manner is egregious enough in itself, and Angela M. Lucas points out that mirrors in Chaucer's time were not only expensive, luxury items, but also distrusted.[457] This was in part because of the metaphor in the First Letter to the Corinthians to invoke humanity's imperfect understanding, 'through a glass, darkly' (now best-known in this King James version, probably known to Chaucer in the Latin Vulgate or Wycliffite Middle English translations).[458]

[455] During our interview, Philips reported that it was recorder player Emily Baines, a GSMD doctoral student at the time, who suggested the incorporation of a symphonie (box hurdy-gurdy) in this scene. She also coached the bagpipe players for this production.
[456] 'Make me look ten years younger'.
[457] Angela M. Lucas, 'The Mirror in the Marketplace: Januarie Through the Looking Glass', *The Chaucer Review*, 33/2 (1998), 123-45, 126-27.
[458] For Chaucer's treatment of mirrors via Dante and Bernard of Clairvaux, see Edward Peter Nolan, *Now Through a Glass Darkly: Specular Images of Being and Knowing from Virgil to Chaucer* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 193-218.



Figure 2.12: Januarie watches through his mirror while Damyan attracts women.



Example 2.7: Placebo's semitonal haircut, bars 210-12.

As Lucas summarizes, mirrors need a source of light (read: spiritual life and insight) external to themselves; they tell 'a truth, yet not the whole truth' in 'two dimensions only', showing 'externals only' in a reduced size, fixed perspective, and reversing the polarities of left and right.[459] The mirror could only be generative in medieval thought in forms inaccessible to humans. For example, in Bernardus Sylvestris's twelfth-century prosimetrum allegory *Cosmographia*, the personification of Noys (Divine Providence) gives the muse Urania the Mirror of Divine Providence, which has 'boundless breadth, its surface extending forever'.[460] Holding it up to Endelechia (the 'World Soul' and bride of Mundus [the World]), she must find the image of man in its 'smallness and frailty' in the midst of the entire cosmos in order to create a human person.[461]

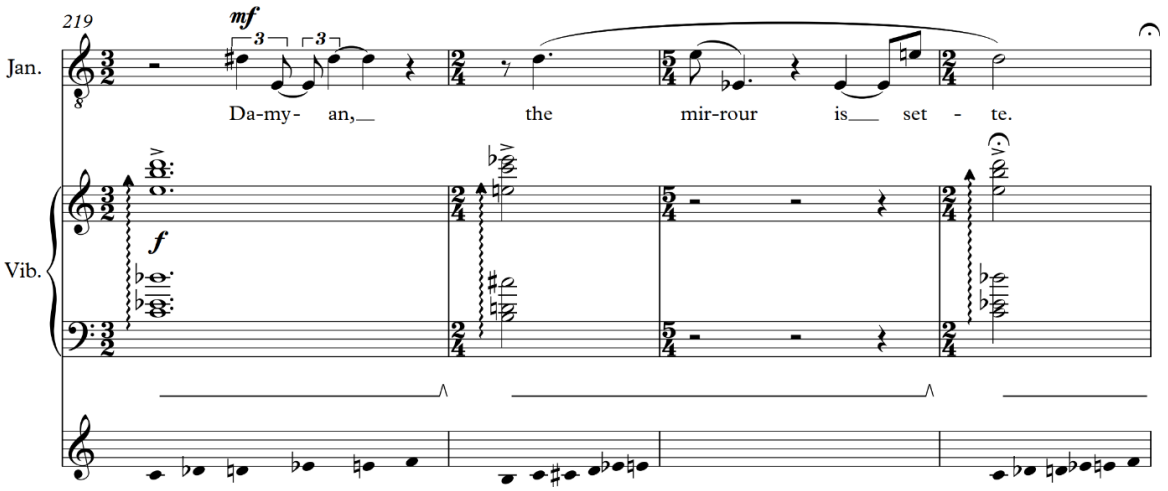
For Neoplatonists like Silvestris (and, much earlier, Martianus Capella in *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*), Plato's description in *Timaeus* of the world as a living being with a soul is embodied in the nuptial relationship. Humanity already exists humbly within creation, and a person receives the spark of life via Providence's infinite mirror-image of that idealized union between life and matter. As I discuss in Chapter 1, the mirror functions as an analogical device in guidance literature like *Speculum Inclusorum* ('A *Mirror* for Recluses') as a means of transcending mundane earthly marriage and obtaining a perfect union with Christ.[462] While Januarie's mirror, too, is held up in the desire to create a marriage and a new life (in the form of progeny), his is the static, imperfect, and

[459] Lucas, 'The Mirror in the Marketplace: Januarie Through the Looking Glass', 126-27.
[460] Chaucer cites Cosmographia the the beginning of the Man of Law's Tale, see Douglas Gray, 'Bernardus Silvestris', *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); see also Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Silvester* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 12; Bernard Silvestris, *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris*, trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 114-15.
[461] Winthrop Wetherbee, 'Introduction', *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 1-67, 46; Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Bernard Silvester*.
[462] Emphasis my own.
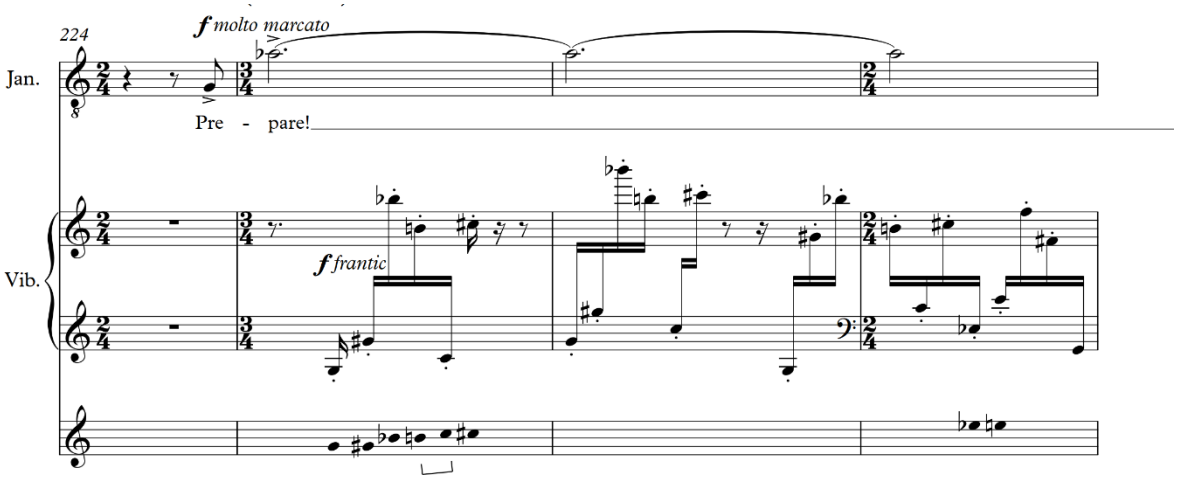
distorting mirror of avaricious vanity devoid of spiritual investment. Finally, and most pertinently to *The Tale of Januarie* in light of the numerous references to *The Romance of the Rose* in the *Merchant's Tale*, is 'the perilous mirror of Narcissus', which Jean de Meun describes as 'an imperfect and incomplete glass of love' that reflects the desire of the beholder.[463] As Christian Sheridan frames it, Januarie's window-shopping through a mirror not only reveals his commodification of women, but the extent of his self-deluding narcissism.[464]

When Placebo's haircut music has been established, Januarie resumes his usual compound semitone figures at bar 219 to sing, 'Damyan, the mirrour is sette', with arpeggiated vibraphone hexachords generating a mock baroque recitative accompaniment. While their wide octave-spacing makes them more palatable, these chords are built from yet more semitones: one chromatically ascending from C to F, the other from B to E (Example 2.8). Between them, in parallel motion, they manifest Januarie's semitonal motif on a deeper level. The prominent C and B at the bottom of each respective chord go on to form the symmetrical centre of the octatonic harmony in the following 'subito presto' section as Januarie sings 'prepare!' (Example 2.9). As the symmetrical harmony suggests, these chords evoke the mirror's reflective capacity; they return in some guise each time a potential suitor appears on its surface.

[463] George D. Economou, 'Januarie's Sin against Nature: The Merchant's Tale and the Roman de la Rose', *Comparative Literature,* 17/3 (1965), 251-57, 254; see also Joan Baker and Susan Signe Morrison, 'The Luxury of Gender: *Piers Plowman* and *The Merchant's Tale*', *The Yearbook of Langland Studies,* /12 (1998), 31-63, 50.
[464] Sheridan, 'May in the Marketplace: Commodification and Textuality in the Merchant's Tale'; for a discussion of women's double-bind within this mercantile economy, see Deborah S. Ellis, 'The Merchant's Wife's Tale: Language, Sex, and Commerce in Margery Kempe and in Chaucer', *Exemplaria,* 2/2 (2013), 595-626.



Example 2.8: Hexachords reduced to chromatic pitch collections, bars 219-22.[465]



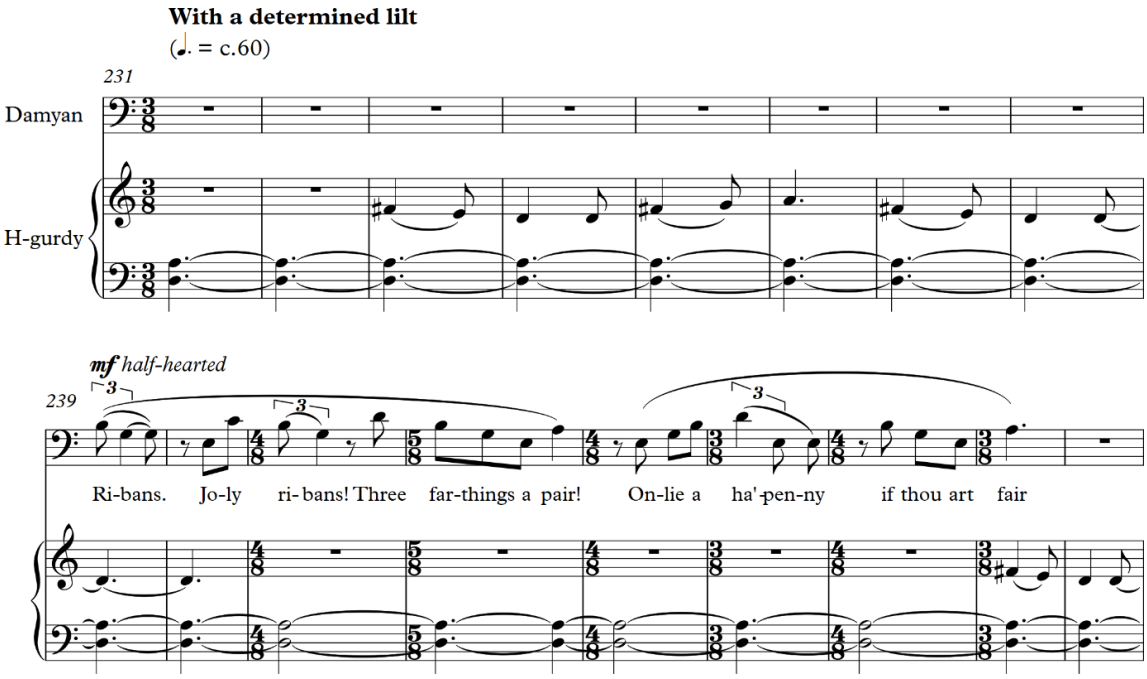
Example 2.9: B and C at the centre of the octatonic harmony, bars 224-27.

With the mirror strategically aligned, Damyan stands on the other side of the stage adorned in bright ribbons and playing his hurdy-gurdy. In a bid to lure women into Januarie's line of sight, he sings:

Ribans, joly ribans!	Ribbons, jolly ribbons!
Three farthings a pair!	Three farthings a pair!
Onlie a ha'penny if thou art fair.	Only a halfpenny if you are fair.
Ribans for bonets,	Ribbons for bonnets,
Ribans for hair,	Ribbons for hair,
Onlie a ha'penny if thou art fair.	Only a halfpenny if you are fair.

[465] All reductions hereafter in normal form.

The hurdy-gurdy plays a D-A drone under a simple stepwise figure between D, F♯ and A, implying D major (Example 2.10). His melody mostly consists of descending thirds and rising sixths. It furnishes the D-major accompaniment with some tonal ambiguity by avoiding the mediant (F♯) and flattening the seventh (C♮), arguably implying E natural minor or perhaps cycling between ii^{7} and an unresolved V$^{6}_{4}$ in D. Whether heard as Britten-esque bitonality or unresolved flattened harmony, the gesture is bucolic and wistful.



Example 2.10: Damyan's market refrain, bars 231-47.

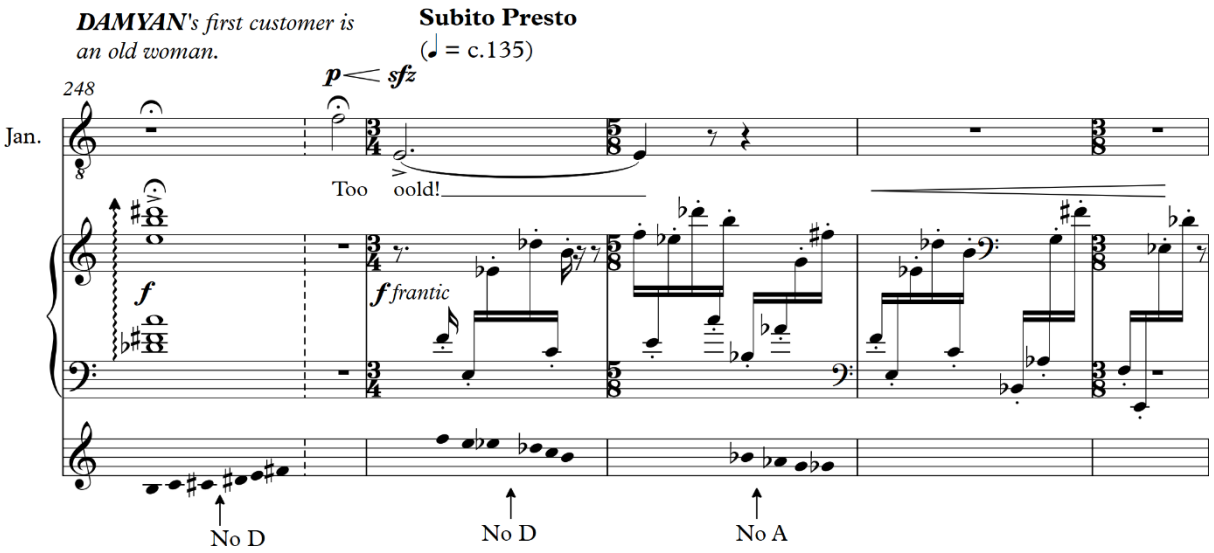
Plaice's text for this refrain represents one of the points at which he has deliberately written shorter lines than those typically found in Chaucer.[466] Diegetic musical numbers such as this function similarly to medieval 'lyric insertions', which interpolate thirteenth-

[466] Wallace, '*The Tale of Januarie*: Translingualism and Anxietie, Sexuality and Time'.

to fifteenth-century French narrative texts across a variety of genres.[467] As Maureen Barry McCann Boulton points out, lyric insertions are often quotations from other authors and always stand out from the text that surrounds them; they interrupt the succession of 'long and complex sentences' in prose romances, or cut the flow of octosyllabic rhymes in narrative poems.[468] In Januarie, this paradigm is ironically reversed; Plaice's lyrical insertions are among the parts of the libretto least likely to be quotations, whereas he quotes the decasyllabic couplets of the *Merchant's Tale* most directly not in song, but in Priapus's spoken narration.[469] Within Plaice's adaptational practice the lyric insertion functions less as citational flourish and more as a textual cue for diegetic music.

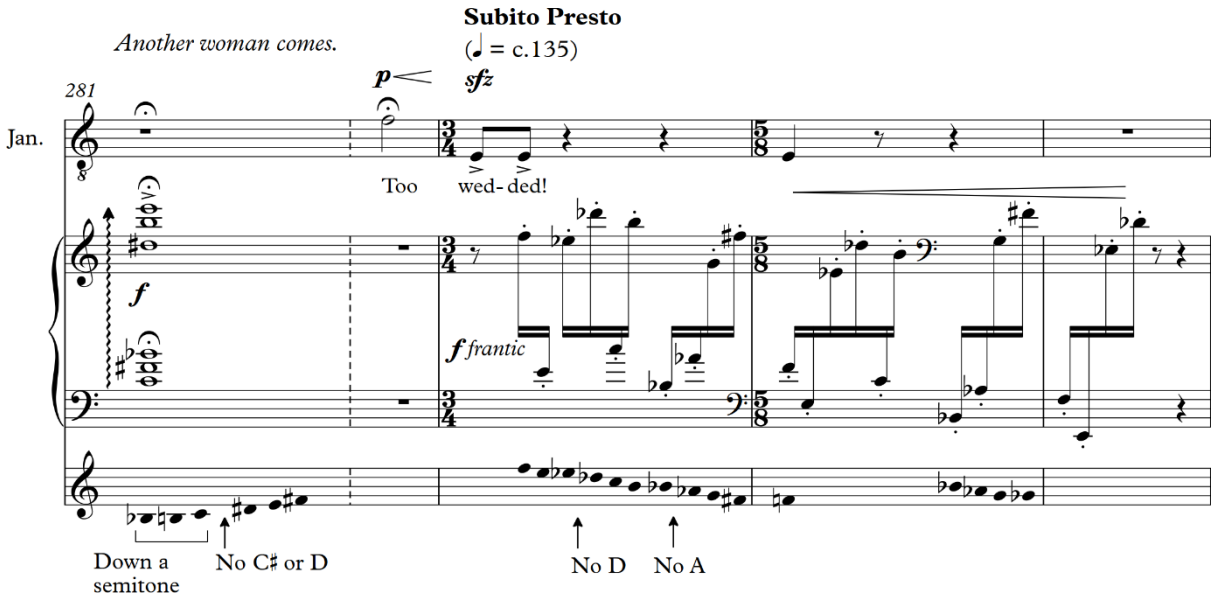
The simplicity of Damyan's market refrain also leaves space for playful humour. The audience audibly chuckles on the GSMD recording as the young man reluctantly cranks his instrument's handle, holding it suggestively in front of his hips. When Damyan presents his first customer, spinning her around to face Januarie, he abruptly stops playing. During an arpeggiated vibraphone hexachord (a gesture akin to an orchestrational question mark, see Example 2.11, bar 248), she is revealed to be an old woman. Unlike the two fully semitonal hexachords at the beginning of the recitative section (Example 2.8), this hexachord is missing an internal D, so spans a tritone. When Januarie declares the woman 'too oold' in bar 250, the scurrying 'subito presto' texture (first heard in bar 224, Example 2.9) now descends chromatically, first following the pitches of the hexachord without D, then extending further to omit its perfect-fifth relation A (Example 2.11, bar 250).

[467] Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in The Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200-1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), xiii. For an explicit comparison between opera and interpolated lyrics, see Kay, *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera*, 19-20.
[468] Boulton, *The Song in The Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200-1400*, 4-5.
[469] During a 2021 Zoom interview with me, Plaice also said that he tried to include as much of the direct speech from Chaucer's tale as he could.

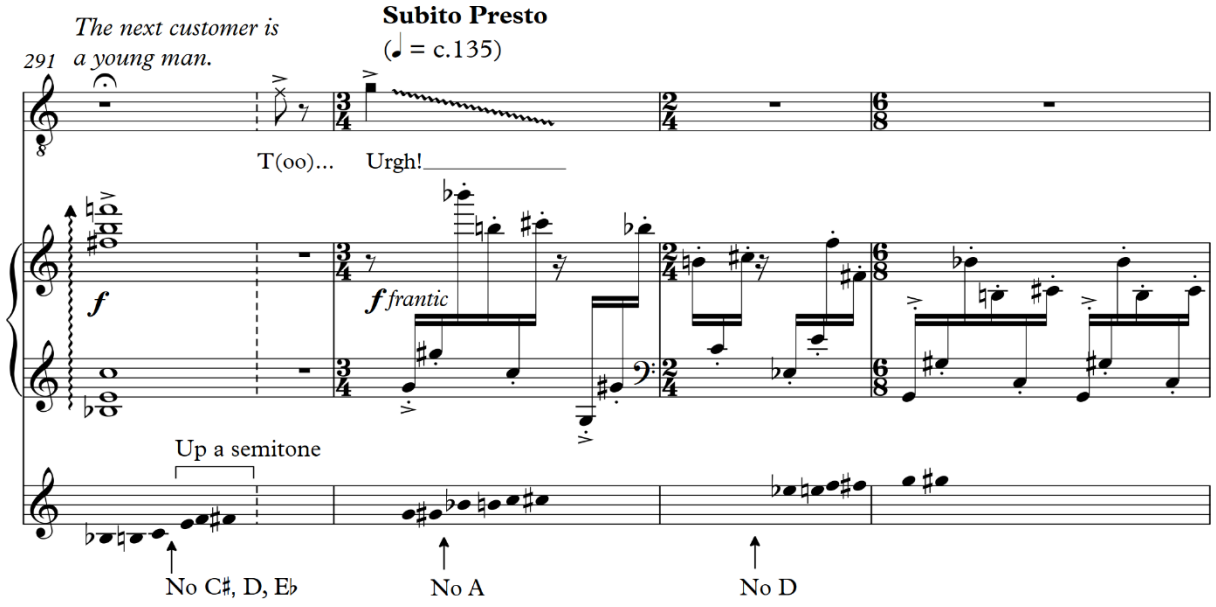


Example 2.11: The first customer's hexachords missing D and chromatic figure missing A, bars 248-52.

The second woman (who is heavily pregnant) is spun around in bar 283 to another vibraphone hexachord, now with its first three pitches a semitone lower (Example 2.12). As Januarie declares her 'too wedded', however, the descending figure is identical to the old woman's, still omitting D and A. The third person who comes to see Damyan's ribbons is not a woman but a twinky young man, who eyes Januarie flirtatiously (Figure 2.13). His chord is wider still, with the latter three pitches transposed up a semitone to create a gap of a major third between C and E (Example 2.13). Unlike the previous two, the young man's semiquaver pitch collection rises, directly continuing from his hexachord's G. Still, like the previous two iterations, it omits D and A. Perhaps, in another invocation of the mirror, this inverted figure could be read as a play on his sexual alterity in relation to Januarie's mercantile, procreational masculinity.



Example 2.12: The second customer's hexachord with the first half transposed down a semitone, bars 281-84.



Example 2.13: The third customer's hexachord with the second half transposed up a semitone, bars 291-94.
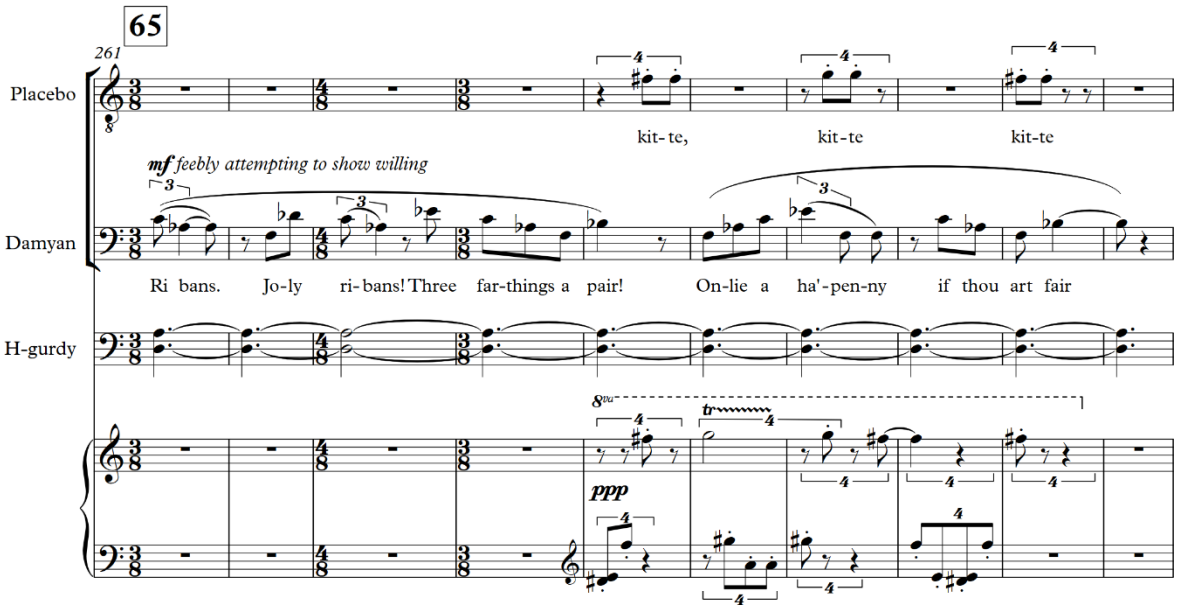


Figure 2.13: The young man in bar 292.
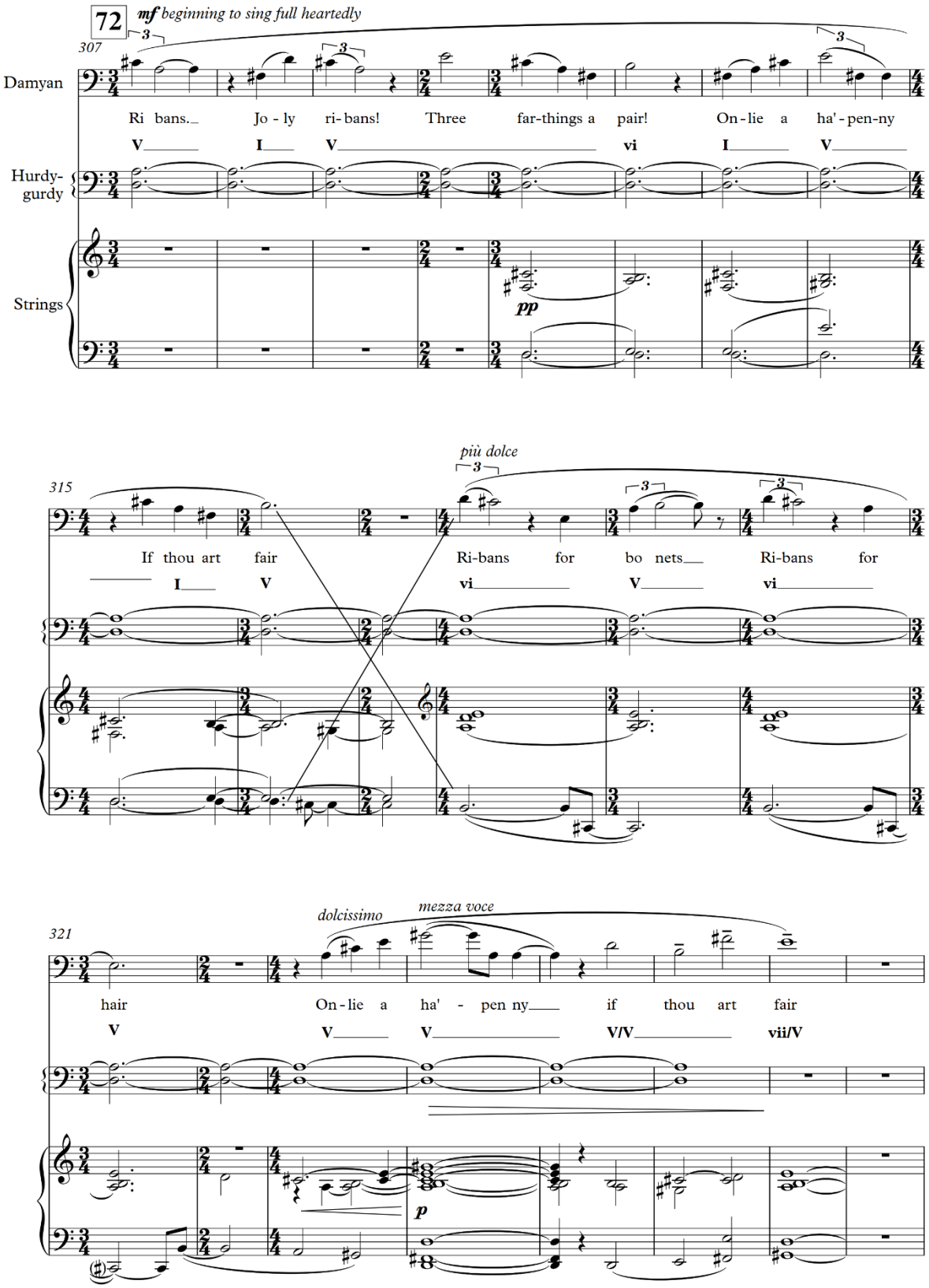
By omitting D and A, the hurdy-gurdy's drone pitches, the chromatic pitch collections for these three unwitting suitors imply their incompatibility with Damyan's song. Alternatively, if these gradually transforming hexachords (with each sharing at least three common pitches with its predecessor) are read as musical manifestations of Januarie's gaze, they could imply that by gazing through his distorting mirror, he is 'missing something' that Damyan's attractive music possesses. The hexachords' internal gaps, gradually expanding to a third, could both consequently be read as a microcosm of the 'opening out' from small intervals on Philips's opera-wide schema (Figure 2.7, section 2.2a) and also as an indication that Januarie's consumerist logic and attendant distorting worldview are malleable under the virile influence of Damyan's third-infused melody; Januarie's relentless chromaticism is pulled apart to generate another third.

Damyan's three hurdy-gurdy strophes always retain the D-A drone. His melody, however, changes between iterations. After the first suitor (from bar 261), he transposes his melody

up a semitone, generating tritone/semitone tensions against the drone via A♭ (Example 2.14). The transposition reflects the semitonal transformations of the hexachords, implying an increased investment in Januarie's chromatic scheme (further reinforced by interruptions of Placebo's semitonal haircut motif). The hurdy-gurdy interlude between the pregnant woman and the young man is truncated to just five bars of F♯-E filigree, probably to maintain the pace of the scene. Damyan's third and final sung refrain (from bar 307) marks the entrance of May. Transposed up a further semitone and now replete with C♯s, F♯s and As, his song finally embraces the D-major harmony of his drone. As Example 2.15 shows, it is possible to ascribe a skeleton of functional harmony to this refrain, mainly revolving around extended dominant and submediant sonorities.



Example 2.14: Damyan's second refrain, up a semitone, bars 261-70.



Example 2.15: The third refrain, up another semitone, with string harmonies around D major, bars 307-28.

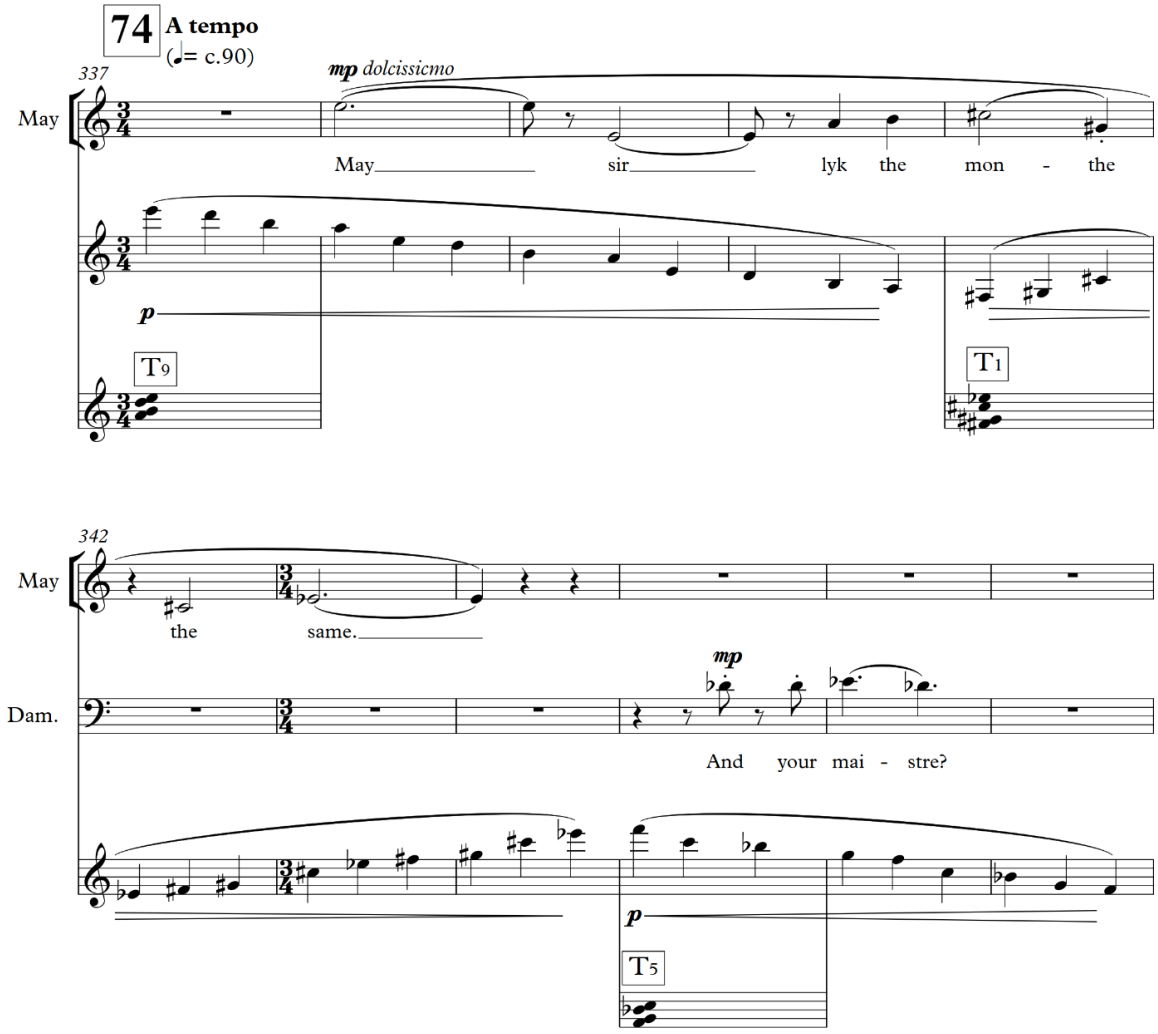
The Bs to which Damyan sings the couplet ‘pair/fair’ assume a wistful supertonic quality as a luscious string accompaniment enters in bar 311. Its smooth voice leading marks a departure from virtually all the opera’s preceding music, while the introduction of the strings signals a shift away from diegetic representation of the hurdy-gurdy towards a more stylized accompanimental register. Perhaps some of Januarie’s semitonal ugliness lurks beneath the surface in bar 316, with its D/A and C♯/G♯ descending parallel fifth. But the C♯ moves down to B as if a passing note in a prolonged voice exchange between the bass and Damyan (shown in Example 2.15 with crossed lines), and the G♯ resolves up to A, reaching towards the dominant. In this refrain, the thirds and sixths of Damyan’s melody become the basis for heady triadic harmonies with the power to envelop semitonal motion into colourful harmonic extensions. Even the high G♯ of Damyan’s climax in bar 324, a tritone away from the D root beneath it, is simply part of a heptachord containing every pitch of the A major (dominant) scale spaced into thirds. The G♯ locally resolves up to an (octave-displaced) A, but Damyan’s final F♯-E descent in bars 326-27 remains in its register, leading it into a yearning, unresolved secondary dominant sonority.

At the start of this subsection, I suggested that Plaice and Philips’s adaptation of this scene is distinctive in its introduction of May as a full person, rather than the mute object of Januarie’s mercantile impulses. So far, this has only been the case to the extent that she is introduced through Damyan’s eyes rather than Januarie’s. The gaze is still male, but Damyan’s class difference (servant rather than noble) positions his sexual motivations differently: he has no estate to secure, and while his libidinal investment may harbour destructive potential, he sets out with no specific agenda. His class position is moreover an advantage within the logic of the fabliau, where servants are imbued with the power to engineer their social superiors’ falling from grace. The third-verse harmonization for May

overspills Damyan's refrain's previous boundaries of instrumentation, vocal tessitura, diegesis, and implied tonal function. Its excess of thirds generates a new tonal space, simultaneously more fluid than the fifth-governed Pythagorean music and more spacious than Januarie's domineering semitones, in which two lovers can meet.

May and Damyan's ensuing recitative is the opera's first example of genuine sung dialogue.[470] As the final string chord of Dayman's ribbon song fades in bars 328-29, the two lovers fashion a wistful diminished harmony out of the pitches of Damyan's refrain: he begins by singing the word 'beautiful' to yet another falling third (A-F♯) and she meets him in kind, singing ''ow much?' to E♭-C. These being the same pitches to which Damyan sang 'ribans' in his second refrain (see bar 261, Example 2.14) carries the implication that she has been paying covert attention to him for some time. In an inversion of the strings' non-diegetic entry in the third refrain, Damyan's D-A hurdy-gurdy drone resumes, off-stage and disembodied, in bars 329-37. This exchange of accompanimental-narrative framing with instruments moving freely across the divide between diegetic and non-diegetic casts the relationship between May and Damyan—and not the relationship between May and Januarie—at the centre of the opera's musical-dramatic development. As she introduces herself ('May sir, lyk the monthe the same') in long lyrical phrases accompanied by octave-descending pairs of vibraphone wholetones a minor third apart, supported by sustained upper string harmonics, forming set 4-23 (see Example 2.16).[471] Decentred by its three perfect fifths and lack of semitones, the set has a free-floating quality.

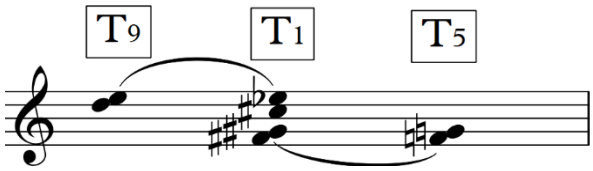
[470] Earlier sections of recitative are either subsumed into the encomium trio's debate or simply constitute brief passages of Januarie barking orders.
[471] 'May sir, like the month, the same', bars 338-44.



Example 2.16: Transpositions of set 4-23 (relative to prime form) in bars 337-47.

Transposing set 4-23 by a major third each time, Philips cycles through all twelve pitch classes without using any common tones; one pair of pitches in each transposition is a semitone away from a pair in the next (see Example 2.17). This smooth chain of interconnected semitones ties the two lovers' dialogue into a threefold ring, connected by the relationships between internal fifths and organising semitones, in a sustained flow of desire. In its freedom and sustainability, it contrasts significantly with Januarie's urgent, demanding surface semitones. Before Januarie has even managed to see May, the audience encounters her as a woman with a life outside of marriage, and in this flowing harmonic landscape is invited to imagine that her extramarital life will continue—at least sexually—

for the rest of the drama. The music that she and Damyan share transgresses the opera's schema of Pythagorean harmonies exemplified by Pluto and Proserpina's marriage on one hand, and the equally tempered semitones exemplified by Januarie's prenuptial scheming on the other.



Example 2.17: Semitonal voice-leading between transpositions of set 4-23.

2.3b. Spring: The Wedding (Act I, scene vi)

The market-place scene concludes with Januarie resolving to marry May and is followed by a transition from winter into spring. In Bird's set, Priapus stands erect by the tree as the pendulum-cum-sun climbs higher in the reddening sky. A canopy of pale blossom is lowered onto the tree's boughs, and the three nymphs perform a circle dance to hail the new season (scene v). Their song is accompanied by the Pythagorean stage band—the musical entourage of Pluto and Proserpina, who arrive on earth later in scene v. Their first dialogue segues directly into the wedding procession. The gods' presence before the wedding is another deviation from the *Merchant's Tale*, where Chaucer inserts a second discussion between Placebo and Justinus after the invocation of the mirror, followed by the glossed financial negotiations between Placebo, Justinus, and May discussed above:

They wroghten so, by sly and wys tretee,	They wrangled it so, by sly and clever negotiation,
That she, this mayden which that Mayus highte,	That she, this maiden called May,
As hastily as evere that she myghte	As hastily as possible
Shal wedded be unto this Januarie	Should be wedded to Januarie.
I trowe it were to longe yow to tarie	I would keep you too long
If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond	If I told you of every document and bond
By which that she was feffed in his lond	which endowed her with his land
Or for to herken of hir riche array.	Or had you hear about her fine clothing.
But finally ycomen is the day	But finally comes the day
That to the chirche bothe be they went	That they both are off to church
For to recyve the hooly sacrament.	To receive the holy sacrament.[472]

Elizabeth Simmons-O'Neill has described Januarie's mercantile sexual politics as 'life-denying'.[473] For Januarie, life itself is structured around the preservation of possessions enclosed (like Januarie's garden) within patrial lineage.[474] Transcendence from the material family circle into a more emphatically spiritual, imaginative, or far-reaching afterlife is foreclosed.[475] Given that Simmons-O'Neill suggests that this libidinal inertia is embodied in the *Merchant's Tale* by Pluto and Proserpina, their arrival in the opera at the point where the source-text discusses inheritance negotiations is significant.

In Roman mythology, Pluto forces marriage on Proserpina after raping her on Mount Etna; in *The Tale of Januarie*, she sings 'on Etna thou stole myn maydenhede aweye' ('you stole my virginity'), in scene v, bars 116-21. The versions of Proserpina's myth found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* state that, because she ate a pomegranate from the garden of Hades, she may only return from the underworld each Spring.[476] The fruit in this 'pagan fall', albeit with a twist of male culpability, bears parallels with the fruit of Januarie's

[472] Lines 1692-1702.
[473] Simmons-O'Neill, 'Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 393.
[474] Epstein, *Chaucer's Gifts: Exchange and Value in the Canterbury Tales*, 93-94.
[475] Simmons-O'Neill, 'Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 391.
[476] On her rape, Chaucer writes, 'in Claudyan ye may the stories rede' ('in Claudian you may read the stories', line 2232), refencing the incomplete epic *De Raptu Proserpinae* by late Roman poet Claudian.

garden and ultimately conjures a narrative world in which the seasons' turn is an unbreakable cycle of sorrow and hope.[477] Time itself becomes embroiled in the perpetual captivity of marital rape, which women can only alter via small transgressions. The world is 'trapped in the results of its own actions'.[478] As Barbara Feichtinger has discussed, classical anti-marriage sentiments are often cited in medieval misogamist writing.[479] Proserpina's myth is a somewhat oblique example of this practice, in part because it presents Pluto as the aggressor when most medieval anti-marriage texts (like the *Merchant's Prologue*) present women as duplicitous, nagging, and cruel. In Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, the husband Jankin's reference to Saint Jerome's pro-celibacy treatise *Against Jovinianus* is a prime, albeit complexly satirical example.[480]

Glenn Burger suggests that the Wife's unabashed fulfilment of misogynistic tropes in the violent and lustful anecdotes from her own past allies her what Jack Halberstam terms 'female masculinity': she is a foil for the 'unbridled desire and self-gratification' exhibited by Januarie.[481] In turn, according to contemporary medical understanding, his excessive sexual indulgence would have drained his already frail and ageing body of his hot, dry masculine humours, producing in him a 'male effeminacy' in an inversion of the Wife's masculinity.[482] I discuss humoral models of medieval gender later in this section, but this parallel between Januarie and the Wife of Bath is pertinent to *Januarie* because Plaice's

[477] Simmons-O'Neill, 'Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 397.
[478] Ibid., 394.
[479] Barbara Feichtinger, 'Change and Continuity in Pagan and Christian (Invective) Thought on Women and Marriage from Antiquity to the Middle Ages', in Warren S. Smith (ed.), *Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage: From Plautus to Chaucer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 182-209.
[480] Ibid., 188; see also Warren S. Smith, 'Satiric Advice: Serious or Not?', in Warren S. Smith (ed.), *Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage: from Plautus to Chaucer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 1-25, 22-23.
[481] Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation*, 103. G. L. Kittredge describes Januarie's encomium as 'a sequel to the Clerk's mock *encomium* about the Wife of Bath's life, see Kittredge, 'Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage', 452.
[482] Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation*, 103-05.

libretto draws upon her prologue for May's wedding procession. Table 2.1 shows the extracts alongside their line number in Chaucer's poem to illustrate how Plaice extracts and reorders couplets. The italicized lines act as a refrain in Philips's setting.

Table 2.1: Extracts from the Wife of Bath's Prologue *in Act I, scene vi.*

Libretto	Modern English	Line in Prologue
Crist was a mayde and shapen as a man and many a saint since the world began. Virginitee is greet perfeccion and continence eek with devocion.	Christ was a virgin and shaped like a man And many a saint since the world began. Virginity is great perfection, And temperance, too, with devotion.	139- 140 105- 106
But if I be daungerous, *God yeve me sorwe!* *Myn housbonde shall it have* *both eve and morwe!*	*But if I'm demanding,* *God give me sorrow!* *My husband shall get it* *Both evening and morrow!*	151- 152
Upon his fleshe while that I am his wyf I have the power duryng' al my lyf. In wyfhood I use my instrument as freely as my Maker hath it sent.	Upon his flesh while I am his wife I have the power for all my life. In wifehood I will use my instrument as freely as God intended.	157- 158 149- 150

The passage in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* from which these lines are lifted is a sustained argument in favour of her sexual proclivity. Christ may have been a perfect virgin, she says, and chastity is admirable, but it is for people capable of living perfectly and 'lads, if you please, that I am not'.[483] She makes several references to her 'instrument' and 'member', asking why God made genitals so perfectly if they were only meant for urinating, and suggesting that if sex was only procreative and not pleasurable then nobody would care about chastity. She couches her desire to 'use' her sexual body 'freely' in almost vocational terms—as an immutable part of her God-given self. 'Let [virgins] be bread of pure wheat-seed', she says, 'and let us wives be called barley-bread …. [with

[483] 'Lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I' (line 112).

which] Jesus refreshed many a man'.[484] This nourishing, near-Eucharistic analogy of bread-as-body exists in tension with the analogy of sex as an 'instrument' of manipulation within a marital economy. In the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, the text Plaice uses for the procession refrain is followed by the Wife describing her husband as 'both my debtor and my slave'; 'I have the power … over his body', she states, 'and not he'.[485] Plaice softens her rhetoric by not including these lines where her similarity with Januarie most plainly resides, but the invocations of instrumentalism and power remain. Wife and wedding chorus alike express marriage as a means of procuring regular sex, and subscribe to it without the intention of compromising personal sovereignty.

Burger suggests that by embracing her imperfect 'barley-bread' nature as a mode of argument, the Wife foregrounds feminine experience rather than masculine clericalism as a legitimate hermeneutic.[486] She is transparent about this polemic in the opening words of her prologue: 'experience, while no [written] authority … is good enough for me'.[487] Carolyn Dinshaw's reading of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* as a fabliau riposte to masculinist debate is striking in its similarity to Pugh's reading of the *Merchant's Tale*.[488] The Wife of Bath presents 'a renovated patriarchal hermeneutic' through which she 'opposes her tale to the "lerned men's" lore': her 'joly body' is couched 'against their oppressive teaching and glossing'.[489] The duality of this mode of argument, which folds theological reasoning into unruly personal anecdote, plays out between the strophes and

[484] 'Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,/ And lat us wyves hoten barly-breed;/ And yet with barly-breed, Mark telle kan,/ Oure Lord Jhesu refresshed many a man' (lines 143-46).
[485] 'Bothe my dettour and my thral' (line 155); 'I have the power duryng al my lyf/ upon his propre body, and noght he' (lines 158-59).
[486] Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation*, 79.
[487] 'Experience, though noon auctoritee/ Were in this world, is right ynogh for me' (lines 1-2).
[488] Pugh, 'Gender, Vulgarity, and the Phantom Debates of Chaucer's Merchant's Tale'.
[489] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 25; 113.
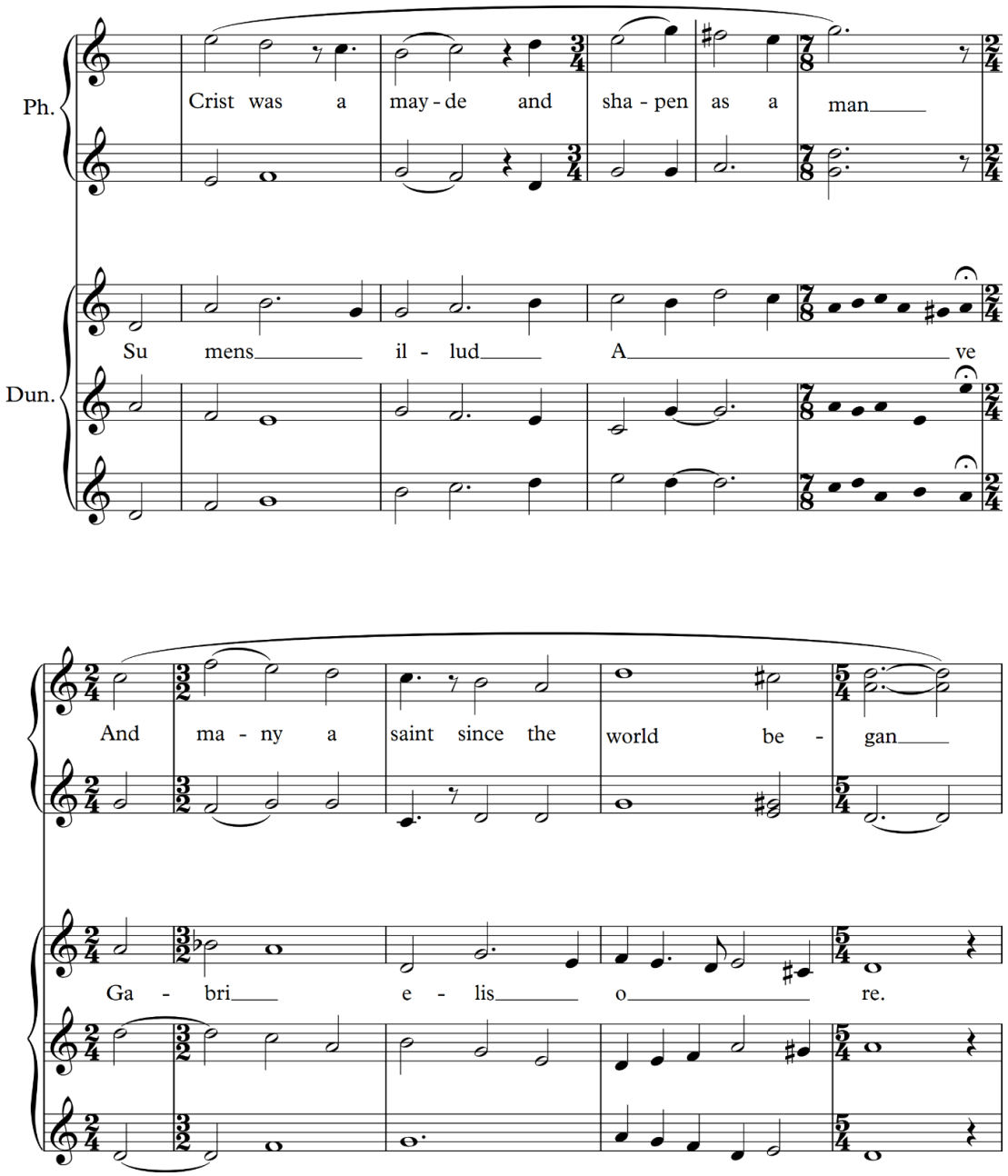
chorus in Philips's setting and is heightened in Lloyd-Evans's GSMD production. The women's chorus processes slowly onto the stage accompanied by a Pythagorean stage band of two recorders, a fiddle, a small drum, and a tambourine. They carry a robed statue of what seems to be Mary and sing a solemn, homophonic setting of the first verse in two voices.

Some of the verse's striking similarities with Dunstaple's *Ave maris stella* are illustrated side-by-side in Example 2.18: the identical B-C/G-F motion to the lower two voices in the Dunstaple in bar 2, the trochaic rhythm leading to the *ouvert* in bar 7, the stepwise falling figure in Dunstaple's inner voice and Philips's upper from bar 7 and the almost identical (apart from Philips's octave-displaced upper voice) E-G♯-C♯ to D-A. The Marian text of the Dunstaple moreover complements the chorus's references to virginity, constancy, and devotion. The second stanza positions Mary explicitly against Eve as a rehabilitation of fallen womanhood:

Sumens illud Ave	Receiving that Ave
Gabrielis ore,	From the mouth of Gabriel,
funda nos in pace,	Establish us in peace,
mutans Evæ nomen.	Transforming the name of Eve.
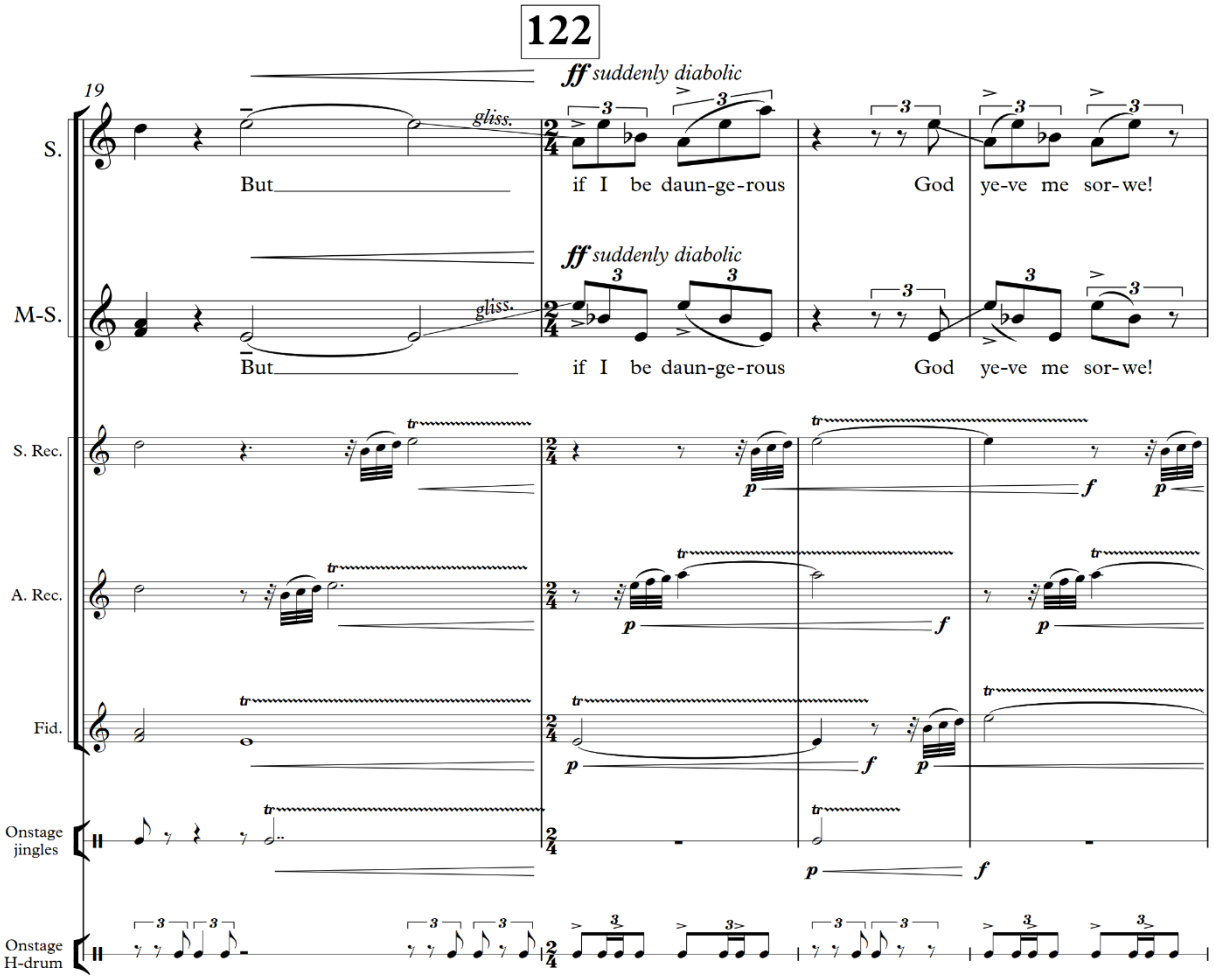
The virgin-whore dichotomy is integral to the Wife of Bath's barley-bread analogy, and driven home in the procession's refrain. The performance direction 'angelic' changes in bar 20 to 'suddenly diabolic', and via sustained contrary-motion glissandi the singers slide into a frantic, disjunct triplet dance accompanied by trills and flourishes (Example 2.19). Their counterpoint moves freely between open fifths and tritones and the sopranos' culminating top As jump out of the texture like whoops of pleasure. They dance with stamping feet and thrusting hips. The robe is withdrawn from the statue to reveal not Mary, but Venus, nude with flowing hair and braced, after the manner of Botticelli's painting, in

a scallop shell (Figure 2.14). The dance stops abruptly in bar 28 with a silent pause in bar 29 to make way for another solemn verse. In the GSMD recording, the audience laughs at the abruptly subdued mood as one of the dancers hastily covers the statue again.



Example 2.18: 'Crist was a man' and Ave Maris Stella *in comparison.*[490]

[490] The *ouvert* of the Dunstaple has been rhythmically condensed to fit alongside Philips's 7/8 bar but is otherwise unchanged.



Example 2.19: The 'diabolic' refrain, bars 19-22.



Figure 2.14: The Marian procession (above) and Venus's refrain-dance (below).

The allusion to Venus is driven home by Pluto's lecherous remark upon seeing May in bars 59-64: 'by Venus queynte, ther is a pere ripe for the plukken' ('by Venus's cunt, there's a pear ripe for the plucking'). These lines were written by Plaice, in part as an opportunity for Proserpina to look upon the male chorus's procession with Januarie and register her disapproval at the match between May and 'this olde wight' ('this old thing'). As Chance points out, Venus features alongside Bacchus and Pluto in Capella's *De nuptiis*

Philologiae et Mercurii.[491] The former two are present in Chaucer's description of the sumptuous wedding feast:

Al ful of joye and blisse is the paleys,	All full of joy and bliss is the palace,
And ful of instrumentz and of vitaille,	And full of instruments and of foods,
The mooste deyntevous of al Ytaille.	The most delicious of all Italy.
Biforn hem stoode instrumentz of swich soun	Before them stood instruments of such sound
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun,	That [neither] Orpheus nor Amphioun of Thebes,
Ne maden nevere swich a melodye.	Made ever such a melody.
At every cours thanne cam loud mynstralcye	At every course then came loud minstrelsy
…	…
Bacus the wyn hem shynketh al aboute,	Bacchus pours the wine all around,
And Venus laugheth upon every wight,	And Venus laughs upon every person,
For Januarie was bicome hir knight	For Januarie had become her [Venus's] knight
And wolde bothe assayen his corage	And would test his spirit both
In libertee, and eek in mariage;	In liberty, and also in marriage;
And with hire fyrbrond in hire hand aboute	And with her torch abroad in her hand
Daunceth biforn the bryde and al the route.	Dances before the bride and all the company.[492]

This hyperbolic account, with music-making surpassing the skill of Orpheus and wine supplied by Bacchus himself, reads more as a party specifically organized on behalf of Venus than anybody else.[493] Dancing in May's procession with a firebrand in her hand, she celebrates the acquisition of Januarie as 'her knight' (and not May's) and relishes the opportunity to 'test' his aging spirit. As Chance observes, the emphasis on mythical music-making recalls the 'extraordinary and supernatural skill' of 'taming wild beasts, in the case of Orpheus, or in bringing life to stiffly cold bodies, animating mountains, and making

[491] Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics*, 233.
[492] Lines 1712-28.
[493] As Christina Normore has observed, late-medieval descriptions of feasting, fiction and reportage alike, very often underemphasize food and elaborate on details of the guests and entertainment, see Christina Normore, *A Feast for the Eyes: Art, Performance, and the Late Medieval Banquet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 14-18.

rocks feel, in the case of Amphion'.[494] Alongside Chaucer's references to Januarie taking aphrodisiacs in preparation for the night to come, the implication is that these supernaturally lively musicians and gods are necessary to provide him with the liveliness that he lacks.

On one level, Januarie's use of aphrodisiacs is yet another occasion for fabliau humour at the expense of the impotent *senex amans*. However, with particular reference to Constantinus Africanus's *De coitu* ('On Sexual Intercourse', which the *Merchant's Tale* references calling the author 'the cursed monk'), Paul Delany has situated Januarie within a corpus of medical teachings on libido which were popular in the fourteenth century.[495] Aristotle, Avicenna, Constantinus, and Haly Abbas all subscribed to the Galenic humoral idea that men's bodies were ideally hot and dry, while women's were cold and wet.[496] In the act of sex, men lost some of their heat and dryness, jeopardising their masculinity. 'The vital spirit also leaves with the semen through the arteries', wrote Constantinus, and 'many have died this way'.[497] Januarie's aphrodisiacs of 'mulled wine, claret, and strong white wine … hot spices to increase his spirit'—and Venus's burning torch, which will in turn ignite the heart of Damyan—are expressly intended to stimulate his dry humours in preparation for sex with May.[498] Carol A. Everest suggests that, to a medieval audience, Januarie's sudden blindness in the *Merchant's Tale* would have been attributable to such a

[494] Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics*, 236-37.
[495] Paul Delany, 'Constantinus Africanus and Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale"', *Philological Quarterly*, 46/4 (1967), 560, 560-61.
[496] Carol A. Everest, 'Sight and Sexual Performance in the *Merchant's Tale*', in Peter G. Beidler (ed.), *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the "Canterbury Tales" and "Troilus and Criseyde"* (Chaucer studies; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 91-103; see also Vern L. Bullough, 'On Being a Male in the Middle Ages', in Clare A. Lees, Thelma S. Fenster, and Jo Ann McNamara (eds.), *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
[497] Paul Delany, 'Constantinus Africanus's "De Coitu": a Translation', *The Chaucer Review*, 4/1 (1969), 55, 61.
[498] 'Ypocras, clarree, and vernage… spices hoote t'encreessen his corage' (lines 1807-08).

drainage of his humours, citing Albert the Great's account of a monk who 'made love sixty-six times before the matins bell' then collapsed and died, his brain having 'shrunk to the size of a pomegranate'.[499]

On the relationship between the brain and the eyes specifically, Aristotle observed that, 'there are no other moist, cold parts in the head except the brain and the cool, moist eyes'.[500] According to these texts, widely disseminated among the literate medieval laity, masculinity and the male gaze are literally, physically fragile.[501] That overindulgence is the cause of Januarie's blindness is implicit in Chaucer's text:

Allas, this noble Januarie free,	Alas, this noble generous Januarie,
Amydde his lust and his prosperitee,	Amid his lust and his prosperity,
Is woxen blynd, and that al sodeynly.	Is grown blind, all suddenly.[502]

Like Januarie's imagined mirror, this sudden turn of events would be difficult to stage convincingly. With the supernatural elements of Proserpina and Pluto already active in the drama, Plaice's adaptation instead stages the blindness as a punishment for Januarie's voyeurism, exacted by Proserpina in the finale of Act II.[503] In the poem, it is in the wake of this outrage (and not earlier, like in the opera) that May returns Damyan's advances in the garden.

[499] Everest, 'Sight and Sexual Performance in the *Merchant's Tale*', 97.
[500] Ibid., 98.
[501] Danielle Jacquart, Claude Thomasset, and Matthew Adamson, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988), 38.
[502] Lines 2069-71.
[503] This episode of voyeurism also takes place in the *Merchant's Tale*, but four days after the wedding and about 100 lines before Januarie is struck blind (lines 1956-54).

2.3c. Summer: The Garden (Act IV, scene i)

A. S. G. Edwards traces a critical discomfort with sexuality all the way back to Chaucer's fifteenth-century scribes, whose copies at turns omit sexual details and elaborate on them.[504] A striking example of elaboration appears MS Harley 1758, where the scribe inserted eight lines at the point when May and Damyan have sex:

A great tent a thrifty and a longe	A great erection, vigorous and long.
She said it was the meryest fytte	She said it was the best fit
That euer in her lif she was at yet	That she ever took in her life.
My lordes that tent serveth me nothyng thus	My lords, mine doesn't serve me in that way,
It foldeth twifolde by swete Jhesus.	Sweet Jesus, it fails me on both counts.
He may nat swyue worth a leek	He might be useless in bed
And yet he is full gentyll and full meek	But he is truly noble and gentle;
This is leuer to me than an euynsong	This is dearer to me than evensong.[505]

Edwards points out the emphasis on May's pleasure in several of these scribal additions, suggesting that they gained scholarly attention in the 1960s because of the sexually progressive critical climate among that decade's 'flower children' (although perhaps this is an overstatement of the extent to which hippie culture penetrated academe).[506] The impulse to capture May's sexuality in a comfortable reading, he suggests, manifests in attempts to reconcile the tale's genre-mixing, combined pagan and Christian imagery and shifting registers, and to obfuscate the 'moral realities the tale seeks to represent'.[507] Morality and realism both seem like rather lofty charges for the fabliau—a genre that features such titles as 'The Knight Who Could Make Cunts and Arseholes Speak' and 'The Maiden Who

[504] A. S. G. Edwards, 'The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer', *Modern Language Quarterly,* 51/3 (1990), 409-26, 412.
[505] The verb *folden* can also literally mean to flop or bend; *twifolde* here refers to both size and ability to maintain an erection; the overall effect is punning.
[506] Edwards, 'The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer', 412.
[507] Ibid., 418.

Couldn't Hear Fuck Without Having Heartburn'—but Edwards's central concern that the tale's contradictions retain their roughness in interpretation is a trenchant one.[508]

One of the *Merchant's Tale's* most notorious moments of tonal admixture has been yet another point of scribal intervention. When the now-blind Januarie asks May to lead him into the walled garden, he attempts foreplay by quoting at length from the Song of Songs, which the narrator describes as, 'such old, lewd words'.[509] This comment is absent from several earlier manuscripts, including Corpus Christi College MS 198, Lansdowne MS 851, and Petworth 486026, and the potential blasphemy of describing holy scripture as 'lewd' is a likely explanation for the omission.[510] As Edwards suggests, this is one of the moments when the tale's tone and meaning become contingent and polyvalent; the 'lewdness' can be read either as a slight upon Januarie or upon the Bible itself.[511] Extracts from the Song of Songs also appear in the *Miller's Tale*, and situating the 'the distressingly concrete and homely deflation of biblical language' is part of Chaucer's fabliau method.[512] In Fyler's reading, these are moments of holy lowness, which remind readers of their carnality after the manner of the Augustinian aphorism that we are 'born between urine and faeces'.[513] In a sense, all words are 'lewd' in fallen, human mouths.

[508] Nathaniel Dubin, *The Fabliaux: A New Verse Translation* (New York; London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013).
[509] 'Swiche olde lewed wordes' (line 2149). Although poetry of the Song of Songs is erotic, it is worth noting that, in the fourteenth century, 'lewd' was a less sexualized word than it is now, and meant something closer to 'vulgar'.
[510] Edwards, 'The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer', 410.
[511] Ibid., 420; for an example of the anti-Januarie reading, see Derek Pearsall, 'The Canterbury Tales II: Comedy', in Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003b), 160-77, 172; for an example of the blasphemy reading, see Fyler, 'Hateful Contraries in "The Merchant's Tale"', 27.
[512] Edwards, 'The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer', 420.
[513] Fyler, 'Hateful Contraries in "The Merchant's Tale"', 40.

At the point in the narrative when Januarie uses these ‘old lewd words’, Damyan and May have stolen the key his private garden and—in an ironic inversion of Januarie’s fantasy during the encomium that a young wife can be shaped like ‘warm wax’—have copied the key by making a wax impression of it. The following morning, Januarie asks May to walk with him to the garden, unaware of the young lovers’ planned tryst. Philips and Plaice’s adaptation further complicates the interpretation of this moment by putting Januarie’s *Song of Songs* quotation into the mouths of the chorus. Table 2.2 gives the full text alongside its corresponding line numbers from the *Merchant’s Tale* and Bible verses, with the couplet Philips sets as a refrain italicized. In almost every case, they have been embellished by Chaucer to generate rhyming couplets, and Plaice reorders and truncates Chaucer’s lines, sometimes switching lines within couplets.

Table 2.2: Text from Act IV, scene i.

Januarie	Line in Chaucer	Modern English	Verse
The turtles vois is herd, my dowve sweete	2139-40	The turtledove’s voice is heard, my sweet dove,	2:12
The wynter is goon with alle his reynes weete.		The winter is gone with all its wet rains.	2:11
I chees thee for my wyf(/love) and my confort.	2148	*I choose you for my wife(/love) and my comfort,*	~4:8
Com forth, lat us taken oure disport.	2147	*Come forth, let us take our pleasure*.	~2:13
Com forth now, with thyne eyen columbyn!	2141-42	Come forth now, with your dovelike eyes!	4:1
How fairer been thy brestes than is wyn!		How much fairer are your breasts than wine!	4:10
Com forth, my white spouse! Out of doute	2144	Come forth, my white spouse! Without doubt	5:10
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute;	2143	The garden is enclosed all about;	4:12
"Rys up, my wyf, my love, my lady free!	2138	Rise up, my wife, my love, my lady free!	2:10

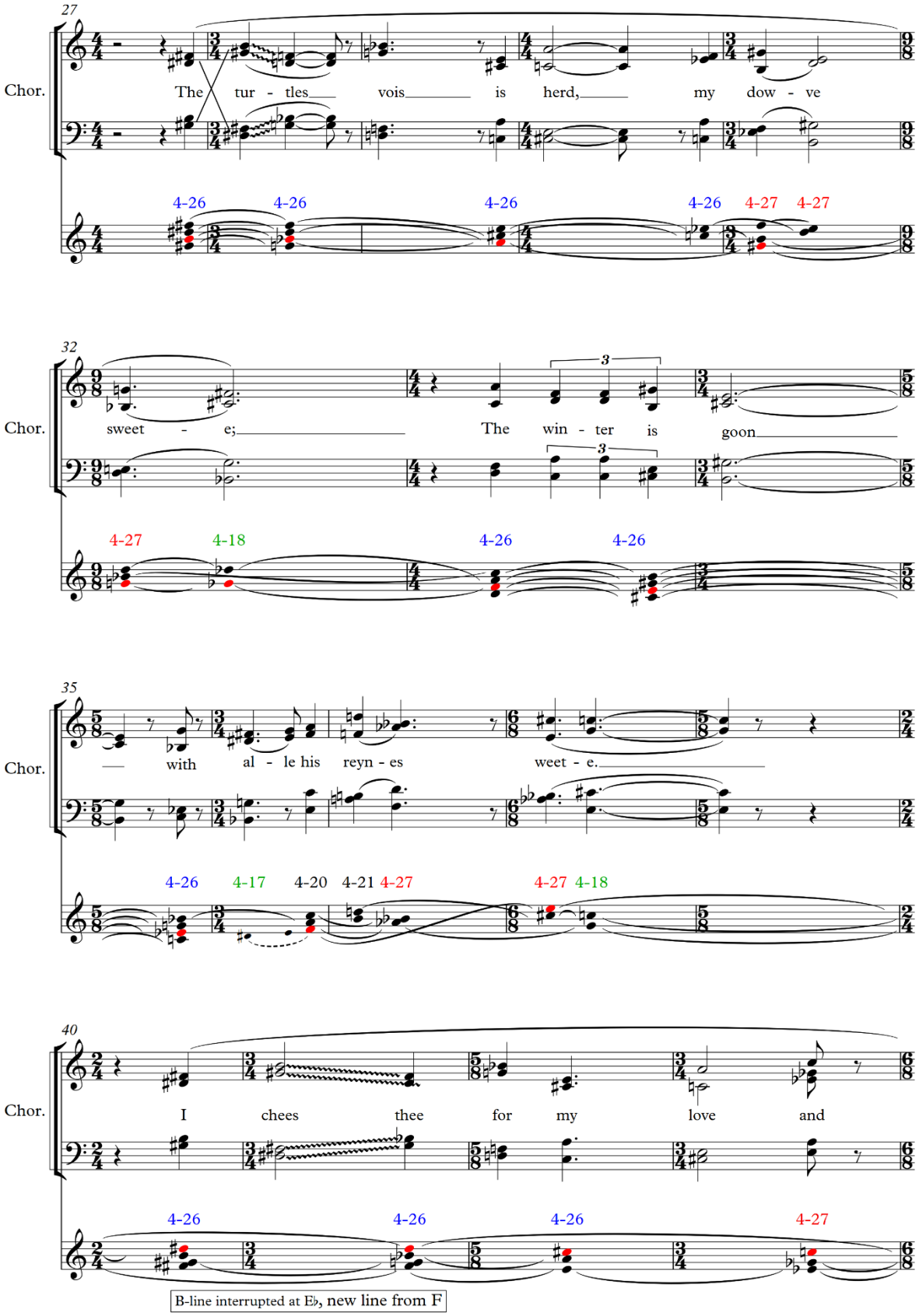
Philips's compositional schema (Figure 2.7, section 2.2a) assigns 'minor 3rds (+ inversions) opening out into Major 3rds (+ inversions)' and 'Contenance Angloise' [sic] to Act IV's wider harmonic landscape. Generally used to describe an 'English manner' of composition adopted from Dunstaple by Burgundian composers such as Du Fay and Binchois, *contenance angloise* has been understood to refer to a 'preference for counterpoint based on sixths and thirds' (although Margaret Bent has more recently suggested that the term has been imperfectly understood).[514] The third-based harmonic textures of Act IV, scene i are marked 'languid and sultry'. Legato strings (and, later, low brass) underscore the singers' harmony while two flutes (one in the wings, one in the orchestra pit) exchange trilling, mostly octatonic flourishes between the chorus' phrases (see Example 2.21, discussed below).

This passage's texture is reminiscent of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) and Debussy's symphonic poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), both of which exhibit similar orchestrations and erotic, pastoral subtexts.[515] Philips's third-based harmonies also bear more than a passing similarity to these early twentieth-century French harmonic palettes of extended, functionally ambiguous triads. Most of the harmonies in this scene are tetrachordal and, as Example 2.20 shows, sets 4-26 and 4-27 dominate (labelled in blue and red, respectively). Occasional instances of sets 4-17 and 4-18 also feature (labelled in green). In the first half of the scene, these sets form a loose pattern of chains of set 4-26

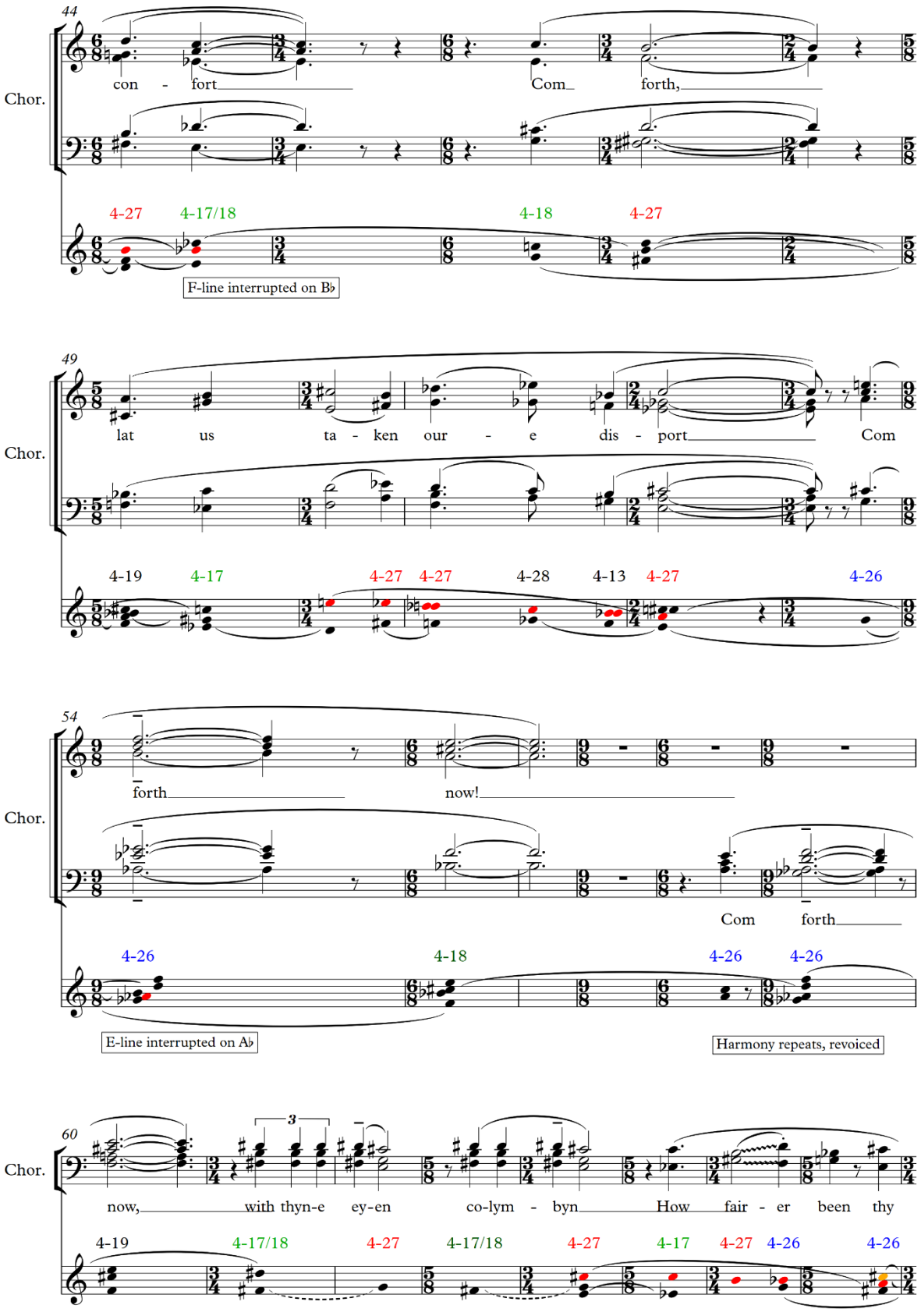
[514] Richard Freedman, '*contenance angloise*', in Robert E. Bjork (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Margaret Bent, 'The Musical Stanzas in Martin Le Franc's *Le Champion des Dames*', in John Haines, Randall Rosenfeld, and Andrew Hughes (eds.), *Music and Medieval Manuscripts: Paleography and Performance: Essays Dedicated to Andrew Hughes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 91-127, 99-100.

[515] For a discussion of these symbolist tropes, see David J. Code, 'Hearing Debussy Reading Mallarmé: Music après Wagner in the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 54/3 (2001), 493-554; Rachana Vajjhala, 'Telling Time: Statues and Stasis, Daphnis et Chloé and *L'après-midi d'un faune*', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 141/2 (2016), 303-33.

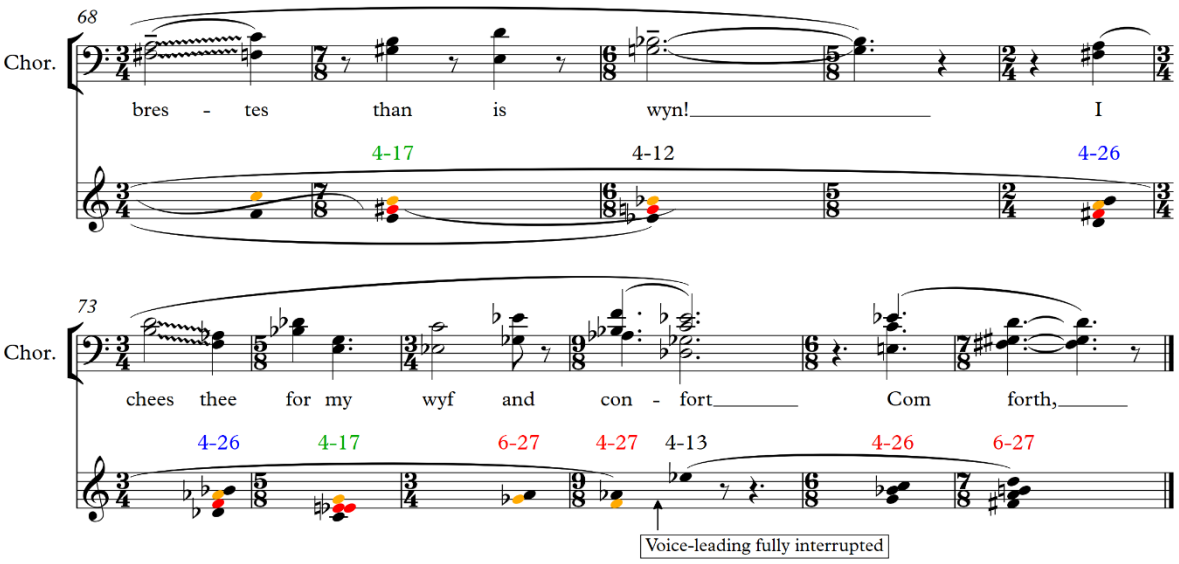
opening each line of poetry, followed by a chain of 4-27 (which contains an intensifying tritone), then one transposition of 4-17 or 4-18 to close the line. Unlike 4-26 and 4-27, these latter two chords both contain a semitone, which punctuates the open, ambiguous third harmonies as if pinching them together.



Example 2.20: Voice-leading at the beginning of Act IV, scene I, bars 27-78.



(Example 2.20 continued).
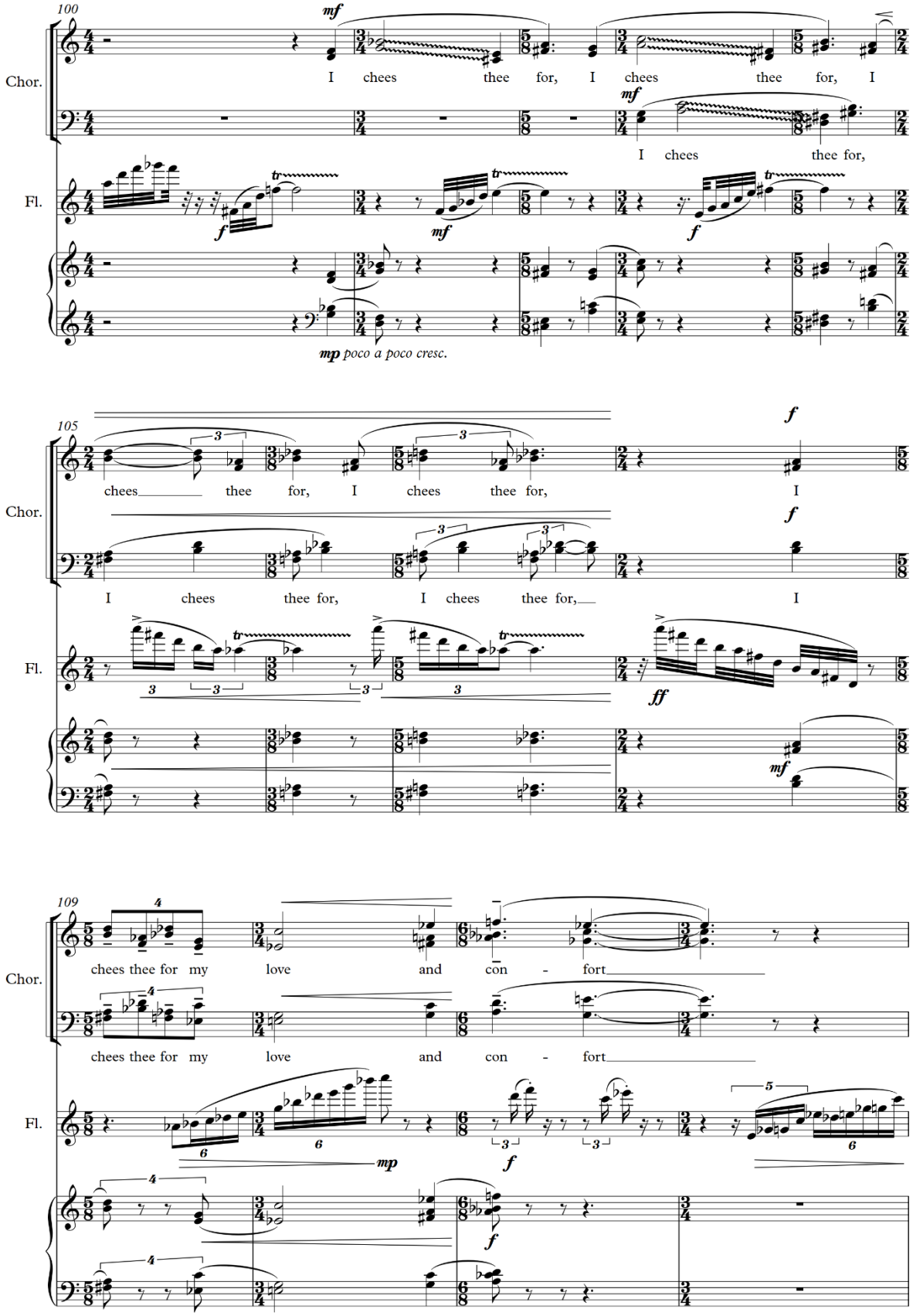


(Example 2.20 continued).

Set 4-26 (C, E♭, F, A♭ in prime form) might be labelled a minor seventh chord in more diatonic contexts, while 4-27 (C, D, F, A♭ or C, E♭, G♭, A♭, depending on the orders of the intervals) could be described either as a diminished seventh or a dominant seventh (in this case, of D♭). Aside from 4-27's tritone, they share very similar interval vectors: both chords contain one tone, two minor thirds, and one major third. These intervals are emphasized by Philips's voicing decisions. For example, the first two transpositions of set 4-26 in bars 27-28 begin as four stacked thirds, then the sopranos and altos exchange voices with the tenors and basses. The result is a sensuous interplay of sixths and thirds where high and low voices envelop and embrace one another.

The voice-leading in this scene is extremely parsimonious: the slurs in Example 2.20 show a dramatic semitonal descent pattern, with many instances of the entire chord transposing down a semitone (see bars 27-29, 40-42, and 50-52). The downward motion is only partially obscured by the chords' constant revoicing, and the deeper level of voice exchange between transpositions in turn intensifies the scene's lithe harmonic interplay.

The red noteheads show long, chromatically descending lines running through the harmonic motion: the B in bar 27 chromatically descends a minor sixth to E♭ before being interrupted by the 4-17 close on '*all* his raines'. A new line then emerges from the E amid the anomalous 4-20 and 4-21 harmonies, descending a tritone before being interrupted, once again, by 4-17. These background lines cut across couplets and stanzas, tying the scene into one, perpetual, descending motion.

After the final refrain, a canon between the women's and men's voices builds to a passionate climax, high in tessitura (Example 2.21). At bar 120, the stage direction reads, 'the couples are disappointed to find they are now debarred from their favourite courting place'. Gardens, by definition, have boundaries. These could take the form of walls, moats, hedges, or some other demarcation of the land. In Genesis, the walls of the Garden of Eden contain (and ultimately obstruct) paradise. In the *Merchant's Tale*, this trope of the *hortus conclusus* translates into a very literal garden—more literal than the constantly shifting cities, bedrooms and gardens of the Song of Songs.



Example 2.21: Climactic canon in Act IV, scene I, bars 100-12.

As Cynthia Kraman writes, the lovers in the Song of Songs are 'colossal figures moving in perpetual time and space', attached to the landscape in shifting ways that extend far beyond the enclosed garden of the woman's body.[516] But the garden's simultaneously sexual and prelapsarian connotations have lent it to several distinct forms of allegory. The Mishradic interpretation, discussed at length by Julia Kristeva, is that the Song of Songs tells of the love between Yahweh and Israel: a superlative gift that Rabbi Akiba defended in the first century as scripture's 'Holy of Holies', forbidding its use as a suggestive drinking song.[517] Kristeva also cites Saadia's tenth-century gloss, in which the Song of Songs is simultaneously holy, enticing, and impenetrable: a 'chest whose keys have been lost'.[518] The image of the key here is not one of a repeatable, mundane object (like the key to Januarie's garden, which can be copied from an imprint), but a simple truth, once grasped but now lost irretrievably. These exegeses emphasize God's inherent mysteriousness, albeit in registers still concerned with intimacy, where the enclosure of mystery itself is part of the holiness.

In anagogical Christian thought, the love-song between Yahweh and his chosen people is transformed into Christ and his love for the Church in a vivid elaboration of Paul's assertion in Ephesians 5:25: 'husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her'. Ann E. Mutter illustrates her discussion of this motif with a twelfth-century historiated 'O' for *osculetur* ('kiss') from Bede's commentary (Song of Songs 1:1). The O is a gaping mouth in which 'Christ and the Church sit locked in a kiss'

[516] Cynthia Kraman, 'Communities of Otherness in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', in Diane Watt (ed.), *Medieval Women in Their Communities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 138-54, 143.
[517] Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 86-87; Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), 118ff cited in ibid, 88n13; Kraman, 'Communities of Otherness in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 142.
[518] Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 86.

(Figure 2.15).[519] Once again, the body and the enclosure are rendered inseparable. As I explore in relation to *Caritas* in the previous chapter, this *sponsa Christi* motif ('bride of Christ') remained a pervasive idea in Christian mysticism for several centuries, arguably most influentially transmitted in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs. As *Ancrene Wisse* cites in several places Bernard writes of 'the dove in the cleft of the rock' (Song of Songs 2:14) as the soul's sanctuary, 'not just in the "rock of Christ", as Origen had it, but specifically in Christ's gaping wounds'.[520]



Figure 2.15: Historiated 'O', Christ and the Church kiss. Cambridge, King's College MS. 19, f. 12v.

[519] E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 138.
[520] See Susannah Mary Chewning, 'Intersections of Courtly Romance and the Anchoritic Tradition: *Chevelere Assigne* and *Ancrene Wisse*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 42/1 (2016), 79-101, 137; Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, 102.

Transferred from a man's voice (either the male lover in the Song of Songs or Januarie in the *Merchant's Tale*) to several women's voices, the line, 'the garden is enclosed all about' gains a radically different resonance in *The Tale of Januarie*—especially given its new position following the invitation 'come forth'. In the voice of the male lover, it implicates the chastity of the woman. For example, the man in the Song of Songs describes the woman as 'a garden locked, a fountain sealed' (NRSV 4:4) and she responds, 'let my beloved come to his garden,/ and eat its choicest fruits' (4:16). She has previously been sexually unavailable, but now opens herself to him in implicitly nuptial and exclusive union. The garden, 'enclosed all about', is a source of privacy and a pretext for intimacy. In *The Tale of Januarie*, this 'old, lewd' passage of holy obscenity in the choral, collective mouths of women conversely embraces sex as a public act.

My reading of the role of the women's chorus in this scene, and of the erotic connotations of the medieval garden more generally, bears more than a passing resemblance to Leo Bersani's descriptions of gay cruising. For Bersani, cruising is a fundamentally ascetic practice, in which the anonymity of the enclosed public sphere (the bathhouse, the cemetery, the public toilet) strips away everything that constructs the bourgeois individual, transforming them from an atomized psychological subject into an aesthetic subject to be appreciated.[521] This is, by nature, precarious:

> the danger associated with cruising is not that it reduces relations to promiscuous sex, but rather that the promiscuity may stop. Few things are more difficult than to block our interest in others, to prevent our connection to them from degenerating into a 'relationship'.[522]

[521] Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 69-70.
[522] Ibid., 57.

This generation and preservation of promiscuity is, I argue, highly applicable to May's sophisticated sexual ethics. In *The Tale of Januarie*, the choral women's voices relay the sincere eroticism of its corresponding biblical verse, but they still do not enter the garden proper. And the inaccessibility of the enclosed garden is the defining element of the *hortus conclusus*'s most famous vernacular manifestation, the *Romance of the Rose*.[523] As Kraman writes of Guillaume de Loris's earlier half of the poem, the dreamer finds the Rose 'utterly out of reach', but 'unfortunately … still available to sight and smell'.[524] Kraman suggests that the Song of Songs resists this paradigm at every turn, instead offering a body-world of uncontainable and inescapable human love. Kristeva differs, but not irreconcilably:

> through the very flight that is assumed by both protagonists—lovers who do not merge but are in love with the other's absence—no uncertainty affects the *existence* of the one who is loved and loves: 'let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth'.[525]

For Kristeva, the separation of the lovers animates their motions of desire, in 'combination of received *jouissance* and taboo'.[526] In light of Kristeva's reading, it is apt that Kraman ultimately understands the medieval Christian relationship with the *Song of Songs* (as a foundationally Jewish text) in terms of abjection: 'the expulsion of the Jews was only a symptom of difficulties inherent in appropriating the book of a group both hated as presence and revered as absence'.[527] A text simultaneously authoritative and stemming from an outlawed community, it pulls from both the centre and the margins.

Sensually perceivable, ultimately ungraspable, and the object of obsession, it is difficult to imagine a closer modern, secular parallel to this dynamic of desire than Wayne

[523] The *hortus conclusus* is also seen in the work of Chaucer's contemporaries, including Machaut (in the *Remede de Fortune*) and the *Gawain* poet (in *Pearl*). See Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life*, 352.
[524] Kraman, 'Communities of Otherness in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 141.
[525] Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 89.
[526] Ibid., 90.
[527] Kraman, 'Communities of Otherness in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 139.

Koestenbaum's relentlessly auto-erotic lyricism on the voice of the operatic diva.[528] What is the curtain if not a boundary, and what is the stage if not the unbreachable realm to host the loving audience's fixation? Does opera not beckon its spectators into the dynamic of its 'colossal' lovers as they roam through imaginary landscapes? Perhaps Bersani's cruising, Koestenbaum's listening, and May and Damyan's promiscuity all share the same peril in the face of fixity: they live and thrive for as long as the objects of their desire are undomesticated. If Bersani's cruising subject is an ascetic practice for the aesthetic subject, it is achieved through an infinitely fragile, absolute commitment to infidelity.

2.4. Epilogue: Autumn (Act IV, scenes v-vi)

Januarie bears little resemblance to Christ, May bears little resemblance to Mary, and the garden is described from the outset as the domain of phallic, pagan nymphs. In Wimsatt's reading (attested to by the scribal omissions Edwards refers to) Chaucer pushes secular uses of the Song of Songs to the absolute limit of acceptability, both in the *Merchant's Tale* and in the *Miller's Tale*.[529] But it is the enclosed garden in its far-reaching interpretative potential that, for Simmons-O'Neill, 'brings the courtly, classical and biblical traditions together in a single image'.[530] The final envelopment of pagan imagery into the already crowded *hortus conclusus* lends itself to a still-more integrated reading of Proserpina (trapped in Hades by the pomegranate even as May liberates herself in the pear tree). It also affords a ripe operatic parallelism in the form of Chance's Orphic description of Januarie's ultimate loss. After Pluto, outraged by May's infidelity, restores Januarie's

[528] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*.
[529] James I. Wimsatt, 'Chaucer and the Canticle of Canticles', in Jerome Mitchell and William Provost (eds.), *Chaucer the Love Poet* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973), 66-90, 90; for a discussion of The Miller's Tale, see Robert E. Kaske, 'The "Canticum Canticorum" in the "Miller's Tale"', *Studies in Philology*, 59/3 (1962), 479; Edwards, 'The *Merchant's Tale* and Moral Chaucer'.
[530] Simmons-O'Neill, 'Love in Hell: The Role of Pluto and Proserpine in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*', 401.

sight to reveal the young couple in the pear tree, Proserpina grants May the ability to talk her way out of it. She insists to Januarie that the best cure for blindness is to see someone 'struggle with a man up a tree'.[531] When he quibbles that what he saw looked like more than struggling, she tells him that his vision has only just returned and his eyes must still be confused.

Chance suggests that the 'fretful and insecure love' of Orpheus is mirrored in Januarie.[532] Both men lose their wives, for a second time, to an irrepressible desire to see what they believe to be perfection. Over the confrontation of truth, Januarie chooses 'the fictions of harmony'.[533] Where Orpheus is ripped apart by Bacchantes, Januarie is eternally cuckolded by priapic youth, which he himself enables by trusting the rational word of debate over the intuitive, self-evident experience of fabliau humiliation. 'In Augustinian/Pauline terms', writes Fyler, 'he chooses the killing letter instead of the spirit that gives life'.[534] The *Merchant's Tale* ends on this ambivalent note:

This Januarie, who is glad but he?	This Januarie, who is as glad as he?
He kisseth hire and clippeth hire ful ofte,	He kisses her, and hugs her often,
And on hire wombe he stroketh hire ful softe,	And on her womb he strokes her softly
And to his palays hoom he hath hire lad.	And he has her led to his palace home.
Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.	Now, good men, I pray you to be glad.
Thus endeth heere my tale of Januarie;	Thus, here ends my tale of Januarie;
God blesse us, and his mooder Seinte Marie!	God bless us, and his mother Saint Mary![535]

[531] 'Was no thyng bet, to make yow to see,/ Than strugle with a man upon a tree' (lines 2373-74).
[532] Chance, *The Mythographic Chaucer: The Fabulation of Sexual Politics*, 237.
[533] Ibid., 241.
[534] Fyler, 'Hateful Contraries in "The Merchant's Tale"', 36.
[535] Lines 2412-18.

The implication that May is pregnant comes in part from her pretext for climbing the tree to pick its fruit. The reader is left to speculate about the potential for her to have conceived by Damyan, and how much longer Januarie is for the world.

Unlike the *Merchant's Tale*, *The Tale of Januarie* extends beyond summer and into autumn. In Act IV, scene iv, the chorus sings a new harvest chorus based on their opening wassail; all the text from this point onwards was written by Plaice. Their Pythagorean tuning is now centred on D rather than G, and they give thanks to Demeter, 'greet Harvest queene' ('great harvest queen'). Over a sustained G♯-E♭ dyad, Januarie and Pluto meet face-to-face for the first time. Januarie slowly realizes that he has died, and must follow Pluto to the underworld. As Pluto stares back at May, who is now heavily pregnant, he interrupts Proserpina's attempt to inform Januarie that he has no 'blood heir', singing, 'the leaping of the living in their bed is not a matter for the dead'.[536] The octatonic flute flourishes from Act IV, scene i re-emerge throughout this static, ghostly sung dialogue, as if some sultry, pagan residue from the stamping and singing of the chorus has followed Priapus through the intermundane divide.

After a short farewell roundel performed by the Nymphs, Priapus speaks his final epilogue:

Ther is ordre that the erthe itself impose	There is order that the earth itself imposes
So that all is nat stoon, but living flowes	So that all is not stone, but living flows,
And sholde this ordre be throwne upon its back	And should this order be thrown upon its back,
The worlde will right itself like a catte.	The world will right itself like a cat.
Noon moote the season's wheel brake	No-one may brake the season's wheel,

[536] 'The lypings of the living in ther bedde/ nis nat a matier' of the dede', bars 88-91.

Nor time stinte, nor younger wake.	Nor time stint, nor younger wake.
The pere hah ripen on its tree.	The pear has ripened on its tree.
Thus endeth here the Tale of Januarie.	Here ends the Tale of Januarie.

In giving Priapus the final word, Plaice and Philips underline the ultimate, sexual energy that simultaneously drives the fabliau-drama of the opera and locks it into its cyclical rhythms. The blossoming, fruiting tree sheds so it can fruit again, Pluto and Proserpina leave and return, there is a natural 'order'. But that order is 'not stone'; each leaf is new and unlike the last, the gods have their own interior lives, and the earth grows older with each passing day.

If *The Tale of Januarie* is about how everything is 'living' and 'flows', the fact of its being written in Middle English—a dead language—could speak profoundly to the depth of semi-cyclic fictional and historical furrows in which medievalist drama can run. Chaucer's tale is already intertextual to excess, with its own centuries-old tropes and spiritualization of perverted fabliau games. The connection between the medieval courtly audience of the *Canterbury Tales* and the twenty-first-century audience of *The Tale of Januarie* will always be mostly imaginary; like Kristeva's lovers, or Bersani's cruisers, or Koestenbaum's opera queens, the medievalist listener is in love with the past's absence. In Kristeva's words, 'no uncertainty affects the *existence* of the one who is loved and loves: "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"'.[537] Like the garden, the past is 'enclosed all about' but promiscuous, elusive, and 'nat stoon'.

[537] Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 89. Emphasis in original.

Chapter 3: Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin* and the Troubadour Lyric

3.1. Introduction

L'Amour de loin ('Love from Afar', 2000) is the first operatic collaboration between composer Kaija Saariaho and librettist Amin Maalouf. The narrative is based on the *vida* of twelfth-century troubadour Jaufre Rudel. In Elizabeth Wilson Poe's words, the *vida* is a short prose narrative genre that 'attempt[s] to formulate in the span of a few sentences the essence of a troubadour's whole life', imaginatively embellishing historical and literary details to provide 'a vital link between the world in which the poet lived and the world in which [s]he created'.[538] Rudel's *vida* dramatizes a recurring theme in his poetry of 'love from afar'—the poet-musician's fervent adoration of a woman he has never spoken to or seen. Saariaho and Maalouf's adaptation is in five acts, and scored for three characters, chorus, large orchestra, and electronics.

L'Amour de loin opens with Jaufré (a baritone) at his castle in Blaye, Aquitaine, yearning for an ideal woman somewhere far away.[539] A Pilgrim (a male character sung by a mezzo-soprano) tells him that he has seen such a woman in Tripoli, namely Clémence (a soprano), who is exiled and longs for her childhood home in Toulouse. The Pilgrim acts as a go-between, singing one of Jaufré's songs to Clémence, who then sings it back herself. Jaufré eventually decides to sail with the Pilgrim to meet Clémence but becomes so sick with anguish during the voyage that, when the ship berths, he is close to death. The couple declare their love for one another, and Jaufré dies in Clémence's arms. Distraught, she sings a long final aria in which she rages against God and against her own beauty, and

[538] Elizabeth Wilson Poe, *From Poetry to Prose in Old Provençal: The Emergence of the Vidas, the Razos, and the Razos de trobar* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1984), 17.
[539] I refer to the historical person of Jaufre Rudel in the anglicized spelling, and hereafter as 'Rudel'. Throughout this chapter, I style 'Jaufré' the operatic character with an accent, as Maalouf does in his libretto.

decides to enter a convent. Her final words are ambiguous: she seemingly addresses both God and Jaufré as she sings, 'Lord, it's you, my love… from afar' ('seigneur, c'est toi l'amour.… de loin').[540]

What sets *L'Amour de loin* apart from many other medievalist contemporary operas is its explicit quotation of medieval song texts. While George Benjamin and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin* (another prominent medievalist opera influenced by Messiaen) is also based on a troubadour *vida* (Guillem de Cabestaing's), no melodies survive for Guillem's music, and Crimp recasts him as a painter. Julian Philips draws upon fifteenth-century songs like the 'Agincourt Carol' for non-diegetic 'numbers' in *The Tale of Januarie*, but more as a medievally coded starting-point for composition than explicit, historically situated quotation. And while Saxton does use plainchant diegetically in *Caritas*, he does not develop it musically, and the opera is confected from a greater diversity of extra-musical sources than Saariaho and Maalouf's more direct adaptation.[541]

In *L'Amour de loin*, conversely, several stanzas from Rudel's 'Lanquan li jorn son lonc e may' ('During May, when the days are long') are quoted in French and Occitan, and framed very explicitly as diegetic song. In this chapter, I explore the dramatic implications of this peculiarly diegetic musical medievalism. Through Saariaho's treatment of 'Lanquan li jorn', I ask how opera can mediate troubadour song and further complicate the genre's

[540] Kaija Saariaho and Amin Maalouf, *L'Amour de loin: Opera in Five Acts*, (Vocal score; London: Chester Music, 2010), 375. Trans. Richard Stokes and George Hall.
[541] While Wyndham Thomas suggests that Saxton incorporates 'the modal characteristics of medieval chant' into leitmotifs in *Caritas*, my reading of mode and liturgical context in Chapter 1 of this thesis is more cautious, see Thomas, *Robert Saxton: Caritas*, 105.

already fraught sexual politics, and how those fraught sexual politics might in turn speak back to twenty-first-century audiences. Within the context of Rudel's eroticized descriptions of the East and involvement in the Second Crusade, *L'Amour de loin* also provides an opportunity to consider intertwined stimuli of romantic, imperial, and Christian desire in the twelfth century, and how these might manifest or even become amplified on the operatic stage today.

3.1a. Slow Modernism

Saariaho has stated that, until she saw Peter Sellars's 1992 production of Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* (1983), she had not considered her music to contain sufficient 'dramatic turns' for her to write an opera.[542] Implicitly, Saariaho saw a certain kinship between her own work and the slow pace, deliberately plot-light tableau-based structure, and long stretches of choral and orchestral writing in Messiaen's four-hour staging of Franciscan spirituality. Reflecting on her compositional process ten years after *L'Amour de loin*'s premiere, Saariaho acknowledges the 'lack of dramatic density' in Rudel's *vida*, but places great emphasis on the structural importance of characters' relationships. [543] Once again, she understands her practice in relation to Messiaen's:

> I often compared my vague motivations to the ones that guided Messiaen to choose St. Francis of Assissi: he was a Catholic, he was an ornithologist… what other subject could have been more appropriate for his own opera? …. Yet while writing the opera, I realized that each of the three characters corresponded to me in some way: the troubadour Jaufré was the musician; Clémence was the nostalgic woman living far from her birthplace; and the Pilgrim wanted to bring these two states together.[544]

[542] Anders Beyer and Jean Christensen, *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time* (London: Routledge, 2019), 311.
[543] Kaija Saariaho, 'Five Acts in the Life of an Opera Composer (2010)', trans. Jeffrey Zuckerman, *Music & Literature*, 5 (2014), 29-47, 31.
[544] Ibid., 34.

In a sense, the relationships between the characters as compose one larger character, a cipher for Saariaho herself. Joy H. Calico suggests that *L'Amour de loin* is 'frequently grouped' with *Saint François d'Assise* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* because they 'comprise a body of *spiritual* operas' in which dramatic stasis serves to privilege characters' 'psychological states' over 'the external action of more conventional plots'.[545] The action of *L'Amour de loin* is, in part, this relational melding of the 'psychological states' of its three characters. I discuss the ramifications of this 'psychological' approach to drama in section 3.2a, but for the present discussion it is worth noting that Messiaen's depiction of the thirteenth-century saint and Debussy's adaptation of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolism (with its the vaguer gothic imagery of submerged crowns, forests, fountains, and castles) could justifiably be described as medievalist; Parker and Abbate describe *L'Amour de loin* as 'French symbolist theatre for a new century'.[546]

Following the work of Calico, I approach the primary dramaturgical similarity between *Saint François d'Assise* and *L'Amour de loin*—a 'process-driven and timbre-oriented idiom'—as an example of 'slow modernism'.[547] *L'Amour de loin*'s gradually unfolding neo-spectral harmonies and introspective arias could productively be contrasted with, for

[545] Pirkko Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho* (Women Composers; Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 100; cited in Joy H. Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', in Richard Begam and Matthew Wilson Smith (eds.), *Modernism and Opera* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 341-59, 349.
[546] Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', 348-49; Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years*, 603; for discussion of medievalism in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, see Ziolkowski, *Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur*, 89, 361 fn8; Paul Gorceix, 'Maurice Maeterlinck, la mystique médiévale et le symbole', *La Licorne*, 6 (1982), 51-64, 51-64; Carole J. Lambert, *The Empty Cross: Medieval Hopes, Modern Futility in the Theater of Maurice Maeterlinck, Paul Claudel, August Strindberg, and Georg Kaiser* (New York: Garland, 1990), 20-101; Gertrude Schwartzman, 'Claude Debussy's Opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*: Secrecy, Mystery and Ambiguity in Debussy's Life and Art', *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 25/1 (2016), 31-39, 35; Maxwell Ramage, 'Repetitive Variety and Other Balancing Acts: Debussy's Transcendental Oscillations', *Music Theory and Analysis*, 7/2 (2020), 287-320, 307; Arnaud Rykner, 'Le Drame symboliste', in S. Bernard-Griffiths, Pierre Glaudes, and Bertrand Vibert (eds.), *La Fabrique du Moyen Âge au XIXe siècle: représentations du Moyen Âge dans la culture et la littérature françaises du XIXe siècle* (94; Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006), 1061–68.
[547] Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', 344.

example, the speech rhythms and shorter, more dialogue-driven scenes of *Caritas*'s pacier dramaturgy. In tandem with the set design of various productions throughout its performance history—perhaps especially Michael Curry's at the Metropolitan Opera, New York in 2016, with its matt-black stage covered in a sea composed of tens of thousands of LED lights (Figure 3.1)—*L'Amour de loin*'s electroacoustic soundscapes are also imbued with a stylized, hyper-real quality.[548] In a visual medieval metaphor, Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker call this sound-world an 'acoustic tapestry'.[549] They describe it as 'spectral', both in the technical tense (instrumentational and harmonic techniques informed by computer analyses of timbre) and in a metaphorical sense; the troubadour songs are 'spectral' revenants of the medieval past, 'perpetually heard through a filter of distance'.[550]

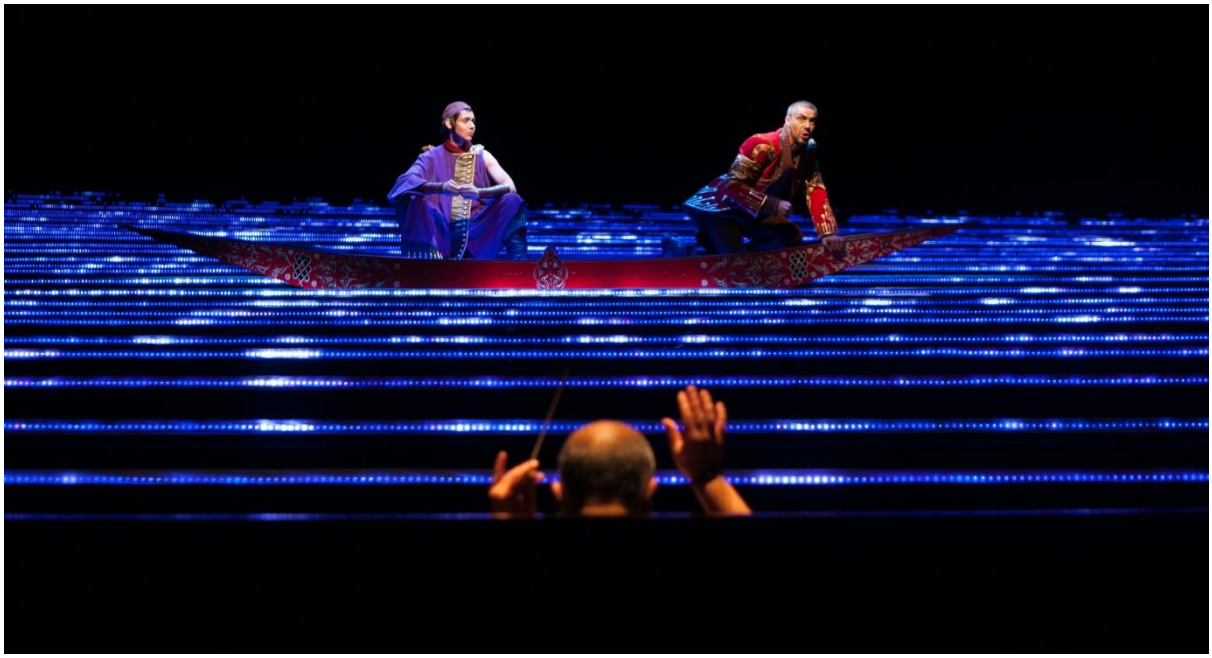


Figure 3.1: Michael Curry's set for L'Amour de loin *at the Metropolitan Opera (2016).*[551]

[548] For relections on hyper-reality and medievalism, see Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, 14.
[549] Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years*, 603.
[550] Ibid.
[551] Jaufré's red coat may be a reference to a depiction of Rudel in chansonnier **K** (see figure 3.8).

Coined by Lutz Koepnick, 'slow modernism' runs counter to normative modernism's emphasis on 'speed and flux, shock and rupture', instead valuing an aesthetic of 'sensory experimentation, ongoing movement, change, and indeterminacy' via deliberately gradual transformation.[552] Koepnick finds slow musical modernism in the noise-music experiments of Luigi Russolo, various uses of Wagner in video-art installations, Janet Cardiff's sound installations, and John Cage's *Organ^2/ASLSP* (1987).[553] While Wagner's medievalism tends not to be foregrounded in the examples Koepnick refers to (*Last Riot* [2007] by Moscow-based collective AES+F and *Tristan Project* by Bill Viola and Peter Sellars), Koepnick's discussion of the work of Cardiff and Cage can help elucidate how 'slow modernism' encapsulates some of the aesthetic registers in which *L'Amour de loin*'s medievalism functions.

Ayla Lepine, for example, describes the 2013 installation of Cardiff's *Forty Part Motet* (2001) at the Cloisters in New York in both medievalist and slow modernist terms. An ambiguous secular sanctification of an already-medievalist architectural space, Cardiff's continuously looped, immersive forty-speaker amplification of Thomas Tallis's forty-part *Spem in Alium* brings listeners 'tenderly close to the human voice across layers of time and culture'.[554] *Forty Part Motet* enacts the motet's etymological hinge between *movere* (Latin) and *mot* (Old French) by inviting audiences to 'move' slowly within the words of Tallis's Matins response setting; 'the recto' to the 'verso' of the genre of the audio walk, the inevitable slowness of audiences' both-active-and-passive motion around the sculpture creates a living space for the 'aesthetic displacement' between early music and modern

[552] Lutz P. Koepnick, *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 28.
[553] Ibid., 18.
[554] Ayla Lepine, 'The Forty Part Motet (Janet Cardiff)', *Art and Christianity*, 76 (2013), 8, 8.

subjectivity.[555] As I discuss in the introduction to this thesis, this intimate and pleasurable coexistence of past and present, when treated as a form of knowledge creation, constitutes what Elizabeth Freeman might describe as 'erotohistoriography'.[556]

Like the New York Cloisters installation of *Forty Part Motet*, the medievalism of Cage's *Organ²/ASLSP* is, to a certain extent, situational. Its current performance at St Burchardi's Chapel, Halberstadt (a former Cistercian convent built in the fourteenth century) began in 2001. Following Cage's instruction that his eight-page score be played 'as slowly a possible', the performance is due to end in 2640. This timespan parallels the 639 years between the installation of one of the first examples of the 12-note keyboard on an organ built for St Burchardi's Chapel in 1361, and the beginning of the new millennium in 2000.[557] The seeming stasis of this continuous music (its longest chord lasted from 5 October 2013 to 5 September 2020) only further emphasizes its ephemerality. It is at once a frank presentation of the enduring presence of medieval places and technologies in the twenty-first century, and a somewhat dizzying project of the present moment into an equidistant future.

Opera's narrative dimension, at least in this context, sets it apart from the specific conceptual preoccupations of composers like Cage.[558] The 'drama' of Cage and Cardiff's work explored by Koepnick lies in its performance histories—precisely where, through the

[555] Koepnick, *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary*, 261-63; for a discussion of the Latin text in *Forty Part Motet*, see Lepine, 'The Forty Part Motet (Janet Cardiff)', 8-9.
[556] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 95.
[557] Jeffery Byrd and John Fritch, 'Forever Ephemeral: John Cage's *ASLSP*', *Performance Research*, 17/5 (2012), 5-8, 6.
[558] For a discussion of Cage's conceptual treatment of opera, see David Metzer, 'Musical Decay: Luciano Berio's Rendering and John Cage's Europera 5', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 125/1 (2000), 93-114.

Cloisters and St Burchardi's Chapel, its medievalism also lies. As I discuss in the introduction to this thesis, however, the drama of narrative and the drama of performance itself are not always so easily parsed. Opera relies on performance for its drama to be sung into existence. Koepnick writes that:

> modernist slowness approaches the now—without necessarily abiding critical awareness—as an open meeting ground of various streams of time, a space too complete in its temporal layering simply to be negated as a whole.[559]

The tenacious recurrence of medieval(ist) themes and places in these 'streams of time' in slow modernism could be read as part of the 'fuller, denser, more crowded now' I cite from Carolyn Dinshaw in the introduction to this thesis.[560] Perhaps slow modernism's capacity to hold various 'streams of time' in the present—its abundance of time as opposed to cliches of timelessness—that in turn enables Debussy, Messaien, Saariaho (and, arguably, George Benjamin) to occupy a relatively distinctive canon of operatic medievalism that spans a century. By dramatizing this 'temporal layering', almost as a condition of its medievalism, the sense in which *L'Amour de loin* can be considered 'spiritual' lies in this profound temporal fullness.

3.2. Composing a Troubadour

3.2a. Concept and Libretto

Maalouf's libretto for *L'Amour de loin* is (like Messiaen's for *Saint François d'Assise*) is divided into tableaux that tend to revolve around stylized prose conversations. For example, Act I, tableau i, in a 'small medieval castle in the south-west of France', largely consists of a dialogue between Jaufré and a chorus of 'companions' (tenors and basses)

[559] Koepnick, *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary*, 54.
[560] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*, 4.

while he composes on ‘a vielle or Arabic lute’.[561] Unseen in most productions, the chorus functions like an imaginary interlocutor inside Jaufré’s head, giving voice to insecurities (‘Jaufré, you are so changed, you’ve lost your sense of joy’) that he repeats and interpolates into his song-composition.[562] These musical dialogues are a central feature of Maalouf’s libretto, especially in the erotically charged sequences in which the Pilgrim delivers Jaufré’s love-song to Clémence. In parallel with Jaufré’s castle setting, Clémence’s tableaux usually take place in a ‘garden at the heart of the Citadel’ in Tripoli.[563] Her chorus (sopranos and altos) mirrors Jaufré’s, again with text more closely resembling internal musings than realist dialogue (‘just look at how she is captured by the tricks of this troubadour … what good can come of such a distant love?’).[564]

These oblique, chorally mediated dialogues are the fabric of the ‘psychological states’ to which Calico refers in her discussion of *L’Amour de loin*’s ‘slow modernism’.[565] But the ‘psychology’ at work in Maalouf’s libretto, I argue, lies not in the solipsistic inward gaze of individual characters, but in the more elusive, deeper motion of the opera’s dramatic flow. Following the heady dream sequences of Jaufré and the Pilgrim’s maritime voyage in Act IV, the three named characters are finally united in Act V, tableau ii. In my analysis below, I suggest that the subsequent death of Jaufré and Clémence’s ecstatic love-aria in the final tableaux frame the entire drama as a complex psychosexual crusading allegory, where specifically Christian erotic and violent projections are musically mediated.

[561] Saariaho and Maalouf, *L'Amour de loin*, vocal score, 356. All libretto translations by Richard Stokes and George Hall.
[562] Ibid. Saariaho’s most recent opera at the time of writing, *Innocence* (2021, libretto by Sofi Oksanen), employs this off-stage chorus internal commentary device even more overtly.
[563] Ibid., 359.
[564] 'Voilà qu'elle se laisse prendre aux pilets de ce troubadour .... quel fruit peut porter lámour de loin?'. Ibid., 366.
[565] Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', 349.

Maalouf was born in Beirut and migrated to France as a young journalist in 1976, during the Lebanese Civil War. In interviews, he often calls attention to his being Arab and Saariaho being European, speaking of the value of collaboration between dual perspectives.[566] As Hamid Bahri and Francesca Canadé Sautman point out, Maalouf's critical positionality as a diasporic writer profoundly influences his approach to the Medieval as an ontological category. With particular reference to the work of Abdallah Laroui, they point out that historians of Islam often use systems of periodization that differ from the ancient-medieval-modern schema normative in the West.[567] Maalouf is Christian (his mother was Maronite and his father was Melkite) and he received a Catholic education, first at a French Jesuit school, then at the Université Saint-Joseph. Nevertheless, Bahri and Sautman frame Maalouf's 'uncompromising celebration of Muslim victory' in the *Crusades through Arab Eyes* as a rhetorical strategy that presents 'a Muslim world contemporary with the Western Middle Ages' whose legacy today is more tangible (and celebrated) than modern Western thought tends to allow the Middle Ages to be.[568] This reframing of crusade history is not, Bahri and Sautman emphasize, 'tantamount to "remaining medieval" and "refusing" modernity, as many Westerners claim', but rather one explanation for the fact that 'Arab/Muslim commentators seldom bemoan today's problems as "medieval" and tend to see them as distinctly modern'.[569]

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[566] Opening interview with Saairaho and Maaluf in Susanna Mälkki, Robert Lepage, Kaija Saariaho et al., 'L'Amour de loin (video stream)', *Met Opera on Demand* (USA: The Metropolitan Opera, 2016). <https://www.metopera.org/Season/On-Demand/opera/?upc=811357018828>, accessed 2 September 2021.
[567] Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); cited in Hamid Bahri and Francesca Canadé Sautman, 'Crossing History, Dis-orienting the Orient: Amin Maalouf's Uses of the "Medieval"', in Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul (eds.), *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of "the Middle Ages" Outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 174-205, 182-84.
[568] Bahri and Canadé Sautman, 'Crossing History, Dis-orienting the Orient: Amin Maalouf's Uses of the "Medieval"', 185.
[569] Ibid., 175; for a critical examination of the former cliché, see ibid, 178-81 and Bruce W. Holsinger, *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror* (Paradigm; Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2007).

Maalouf's historical interest in war and religion spans his output as a novelist: *Leo Africanus* (1986) is a memoir-style retelling of the life of the sixteenth-century diplomat; *The Gardens of Light* (1991) is a biopic of Mani (the third-century founder of Manichaeism); *The Rock of Tanios* (1993) is set during the nineteenth-century Egyptian-Ottoman war; *Ports of Call* (1996) follows a Muslim-Jewish married couple who become separated after the Second World War; and *Balthasar's Odyssey* (2000) is about a seventeenth-century Genoese librarian searching for a book that contains a secret name for God.[570] Bahri and Sautman's Arab-diasporic historiographical method is key to their analyses of Maalouf's medievalist work within this corpus; Maalouf's conception of the distant past as inherently hybrid and 'antithetic to stable origins or rigid timeframes' resists simple conflations between orientalism and medievalism.[571] In *L'Amour de loin* specifically, Bahri and Sautman describe the 'contradiction of belonging and wishing to be autonomous' in both Clémence and Jaufré's 'unrealizable wish to be elsewhere' as a direct expression of Maalouf's translocal historiography.[572]

Bahri and Sautman write of *L'Amour de loin* as a nomadic 'coda and postscript' to Maalouf's historical fiction.[573] But Maalouf wrote three further libretti for Saariaho, all of which feature women protagonists and deal with historical themes of war, religion, and sexual politics. In *Adriana Mater* (2003), a mother and her child born of rape are caught in an unnamed present-day civil war. *La Passion de Simone* (2006) is a passion play-style oratorio based on the life and writing of twentieth-century Catholic mystic Simone Weil.

[570] For a discussion of Maalouf's approach to Mediterranean history in particular, see Neil Doshi, 'Materiality, Modernity and the Dialectics of Reading in Amin Maalouf's Mediterranean', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 16/1/2 (2013), 73-89.
[571] Bahri and Canadé Sautman, 'Crossing History, Dis-orienting the Orient: Amin Maalouf's Uses of the "Medieval"', 198.
[572] Ibid., 194.
[573] Ibid.

Finally, *Émilie* (2010) is a monodrama on the life of eighteenth-century French intellectual Émilie du Châtelet. These spiritual and historiographical themes seem not only to interest Maalouf, but embody concerns that he and Saariaho share.

Topical overlaps with *L'Amour de loin* notwithstanding, none of the works by Maalouf that I have listed so far are strictly medievalist. However, one of Maalouf's most celebrated historical novels is *Samarkand* (1988), which revolves around the poetry attributed to twelfth-century Persian polymath Omar Khayyam (an approximate contemporary of Rudel's). There are legacies of medievalism attached to both Khayyam and Rudel: Edward FitzGerald's 1859 English translation of quatrains attributed to Khayyam became a highly influential text in nineteenth-century medievalism, appealing to the orientalist preoccupations of the Pre-Raphaelites.[574] Rudel's love for an exoticized, distant woman meanwhile enjoyed a similar reception among Romantic poets, several of whom were captivated his *vida*'s tragic ending. Nick Riddle has collected an anthology of such Romantic works pertaining to Rudel, including the play *La Princess lointaine* (1895) by Edmond Rostand and poems 'Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli' (1842) by Robert Browning, 'Geoffrey Rudel und Melisande von Tripoli' (1851) by Heinrich Heine, and 'The Triumph of Time' (1866) and 'The Death of Rudel' (1858) by Charles Algernon Swinburn.[575] While neither Saariaho nor Maalouf ever refer to these nineteenth-century legacies of their subject *per se*, the parallel reception histories of Khayyam and Rudel converge in both of their outputs in the nineteenth-century-codified spheres of the novel

[574] Esmail Z. Behtash, 'The Reception of FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of 'Umar Khayyám* by the Victorians', in Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (ed.), *The Great 'Umar Khayyam: A Global Reception of the Rubáiyát* (Amsterdam: Leiden University Press, 2012), 203-14, 205-07.
[575] Nick Riddle and Marcus Sedgwick, *Outremer: Jaufré Rudel and Melisande of Tripoli, a Legend of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Fisher King Press, 1994); Riddle keeps a blog, active at the time of writing, and claims to be a descendant of Rudel, see 'The Afterlife of Jaufré Rudle', <http://jaufre-outremer.blogspot.com>, accessed 27 July 2021.

(*Samarkand*), opera house (*L'Amour de loin*), and concert hall (Saariaho's *Oltra Mar*, on which more in the following subsection).

The holdings of the *Kaija Saariaho Stiftung* at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel reveal much about the conceptual, aesthetic, and historical considerations that contributed to the composition of *L'Amour de loin*. The collection contains manuscripts, sketches, correspondences, programme booklets and reviews, as well as a body of research material in a folder marked 'Werkkonzepte' ('ideas for the piece'), as outlined in Calico's research.[576] The 'Werkkonzepte' folder contains a concept book dated April 1996, which details the original librettist Jacques Roubaud's retelling of Rudel's *vida* from his book *La fleur inverse: essai sur l'art formel des troubadours* ('The Inverse Flower: Essays on the Formal Art of the Troubadours', 1986).[577] Roubaud has also published an anthology of troubadour poetry (*Les troubadours: anthologie bilingue* [1980]), the Arthurian novel *Graal fiction* (1978), and, in collaboration with Florence Delay, the Arthurian play cycle *Graal théâtre* (1977–1981).[578] The latter lends its title to Saariaho's 1994 violin concerto, which was composed two years before the concept book was compiled and, Pirkko Moisala suggests, enabled Saariaho to experiment with more a dramatic mode of composition in which she had to hold a solo melodic voice in balance with a large orchestra.[579] While Roubaud eventually withdrew from *L'Amour* to be replaced by Maalouf, these connections between his medievalist work and that of Saariaho in the 1990s are far-reaching. Roubaud's modern French translation of 'Lanquan li jorn' and

[576] Joy H. Calico, 'Composing Clémence in *L'Amour de loin*', *Contemporary Music Review*, 38/3-4 (2019), 389-417, 391. I am grateful to Calico for sharing her research notes when the Covid-19 pandemic prevented me from visiting the archive myself.
[577] Ibid.
[578] Delay also played Joan of Arc in Robert Bresson's film *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* ('The Trial of Joan of Arc', 1962).
[579] Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 40.

recordings of him reading the poem in Occitan can be heard on the electronic track in *Lonh* (1996). As I discuss in section 3.2b, this would become an important piece both in *L'Amour de loin*'s inception and Saariaho's wider output.[580]

Saariaho's 1996 concept book names a second collaborator who would not feature in the final production of *L'Amour de loin*: artist and stage designer Raija Malka. The cover of the book shows a reproduction of her painting 'Les Jardins séparés' (1992-93), and she is named as the designer on other documents in the 'Werkkonzepte' folder.[581] Among Malka's frequent collaborations with Saariaho (the most recent of which at the time of writing was in 2021) are more several projects inspired by late-medieval Flemish art: her 1993 exhibition 'La Dame à la licorne' at the Institut Finlandais, Paris, named after the early sixteenth-century tapestry series for which Saariaho composed 'sonic atmospheres'; and her 2000 staging of Saariaho's chamber work *From the Grammar of Dreams* (1988) at the Kiasma Theatre, Helsinki, which took as its starting point Hubert and Jan van Eyck's mid-fifteenth-century *Ghent Altarpiece*.[582] Saariaho's work alongside Roubaud and Malka, two collaborators ultimately not involved in *L'Amour de loin*, is a window onto the prevalence of medievalist work in Saariaho's artistic milieu.

Roubaud's writing appears to have formed the foundation of Saariaho's historical research for *L'Amour de loin*, and Calico lists several citations from his writing in the archival sheaf

[580] Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', 9.
[581] Calico, 'Composing Clémence in *L'Amour de loin*', 391.
[582] Jean-Baptiste Barrière and Aleksi Barrière, 'When Music Unfolds into Image: Conceiving Visual Concerts for Kaija Saariaho's Works', in Yael Kaduri (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music, Sound, and Image in the Fine Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 83-106, 86; Kaija Saariaho, Raija Malka, Jean-Baptiste Barrière et al., 'Prisma (interactive recording)', *Private Garden* (Austria: Montaigne, 1999).

marked ‘Notes and Annexes’.[583] The only other historical texts cited in Saariaho’s notes are an extract from Michel Pastoureau’s *L'échiquier de Charlemagne, un jeu pour ne pas jouer* (‘Charlemagne’s Chessboard: A Game Not to Play’ [1990], which uses chess as a metaphor for conflict between East and West), and notes on pilgrimage from the French translation of Daniel Boorstin’s *The Discoverers: A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself* (1983).[584] The latter is perhaps a surprising addition, not simply because it has attracted criticism for perpetuating the myth that the Middle Ages were unscientific (A. George Molland described it as ‘oversimplified, prejudiced, and distorting’), but because its conspicuously conservative narrative of Western progress runs directly counter to the non-fiction work of Maalouf.[585] This is true not only of Maalouf’s *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*; it remains the case in his work since *L’Amour de loin*, especially *Le Dérèglement du monde* (‘Disordered World’, 2009), in which he frames twenty-first-century East-West tensions in terms of exhaustion and disillusionment on both sides, a situation in part brought about by the West’s betrayal of its own enlightenment values as it spreads ‘democracy by force’.[586] Crusade historiography will because a central focus of my discussion of *L’Amour de loin* and the historical person of Jaufre Rudel in this chapter. The presence of Pastoureau’s and Boorstin’s work in Saariaho’s collection suggests that she researched medieval history through the lens of East-West conflict, and from perspectives that sometimes diverge from Maalouf’s broadly progressive ideological position.

[583] Calico, personal email correspondence, 28 June 2021.
[584] Calico, 'Composing Clémence in *L'Amour de loin*', 393.
[585] Louise M. Bishop, 'The Myth of the Flat Earth', in Stephen J. Harris and Bryon Lee Grigsby (eds.), *Misconceptions About the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 97-101, 97; A. George Molland, 'Daniel Boorstin's *The Discoverers* (Book Review)', *Isis*, 76/2 (1985), 224-27; see also Peter Buck, 'Daniel J. Boorstin. *The Discoverers* (Book Review)', *The American Historical Review*, 90 (1985), 103-04, 104.
[586] Maalouf has in turn been criticized for reinscribing some of the homogenizing narratives which he aimed to resist, see Carine Bourget, 'The Rewriting of History in Amin Maalouf's "The Crusades Through Arab Eyes"', *Studies in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature*, 30/2 (2006), 263.

3.2b. Compositional Approaches

Saariaho wrote three other pieces while working on *L'Amour de loin*: *Oltra Mar* (1998-99, for large orchestra and choir), *Château de l'âme* (1995, a song cycle for soprano, women's choir, and orchestra), and *Lonh* (1996, for soprano and electronics). *Oltra Mar* draws from a variety of texts, including an extract from Maalouf's *Samarkand*. It is divided into seven clearly delineated sections, which explore several of *L'Amour de loin*'s major themes, among them voyaging, the sea, love, time, and death.[587] *Oltra Mar*'s title may refer to a reference to Rudel in the *envoi* of a lyric by one of his contemporaries, Marcabru. In the tornada of 'Cortesamen vuoill comensar', Marcabru writes:

> I want to send the verse and the melody
> to Sir Jaufre Rudel in Outremer.[588]

The 'Outremer' in this instance refers specifically to the Christian-controlled Crusader States in the Middle East, which will become important in my discussion of Rudel's life in section 3.3. Here, Saariaho's usage invokes the more neutral translation of 'outremer' to mean, literally, 'across the sea'.[589] Saariaho draws heavily upon some of the music from *Oltra Mar* in transitional sections of *L'Amour de loin*, which she states she always intended to do.[590]

Saariaho's two other compositions conceived in tandem with *L'Amour de loin* were both written for the soprano Dawn Upshaw, for whom the role of Clémence was also written. Upshaw is a prolific interpreter of contemporary music, having premiered Henri

[587] For the love section, Saariaho uses texts by another eleventh-century Persian, the Sufi poet Abu Sa'eed.
[588] 'Lo vers e·l son voill enviar/ a·n Jaufre Rudel oltramar,/ e voill que l'aion li Frances/ per lor coratges alegrar,/ que Dieus lor o pot perdonar,/ o sia peccaz o merces' ('I want to send the vers and the melody/ to Sir Jaufre Rudel, in Outremer,/ and I want the French to have it,/ to cheer their hearts,/ for God can allow them this,/ whether it is a sin or a good deed'). Simon Gaunt, Ruth E. Harvey, and Linda M. Paterson, *Marcabru: A Critical Edition* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 204-05.
[589] Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', 28.
[590] Beyer and Christensen, *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time*, 309.

Dutilleux's song-cycle *Correspondances* (2002-02), John Adams's oratorio *El Niño* (2000), as well as the title role in Saariaho and Maalouf's *La Passion de Simone*. She also performed the role of the Angel in the production *Saint François d'Assise* that Saariaho cites as having prompted her to write an opera. *Château de l'âme*, a five-movement song cycle, was Saariaho's first piece for a solo voice with choir and orchestra, and it explores modes of interchange between Upshaw's voice and a chorus of sopranos and altos. Saariaho would later develop such interchanges throughout *L'Amour de loin*, most prominently in Clémence's final aria. It was following the premiere of this song cycle at the Salzburger Festspiele that Gerard Mortier, the festival director, commissioned *L'Amour de loin* and introduced Saariaho to Maalouf. *Château de l'âme* may well have prompted Maalouf to write into his libretto the distinctive soloist-chorus dialogues which I detail in the previous subsection.

Château de l'âme sets Hindu texts from the *Artharva Veda* as well as Ancient Egyptian spells concerning love, birth and death. Its title is derived from sixteenth-century Carmelite mystic St Theresa of Avilá's seminal work *The Interior Castle*, which presents a vision of the soul as a castle-shaped diamond containing seven mansions. As Moisala describes it, *Château de l'âme* is an extended meditation on feminine spirituality, expressed through women's voices, via deliberately cross-temporal and inter-cultural themes of nature and motherhood.[591] In this respect, it is perhaps too universalising to be interpreted as a character study for Clémence. Its relationship with *L'Amour de loin* could instead be articulated as a deeper inquiry into the potential for women's voices to express these ambiguous concepts in interplay with a large orchestra. Its sustained engagement with

[591] Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 41-42.

postmedieval Christian mysticism arguably renders it a precursor for *La Passion de Simone*, also written for Upshaw, the premiere of which Sellars would also direct.[592]

Saariaho's other piece for Upshaw is *Lonh* ('Afar', 1996), a 'collage' accompanied by electronics and small ensemble. This piece is the most pertinent to my approach to *L'Amour de loin* because of its use of direct transcriptions of 'Lanquan li jorn'; the first instance of Saariaho enfolding medieval song into her compositional practice and, as part of the fabric of Jaufre Rudel's afterlife in song, one which predates his on-stage embodiment in the character Jaufré. As I mention in section 3.2a, the electronic track in *Lohn* includes fragments of Rudel's text read in Occitan by Roubaud (as well as by Julie Parsillé, a French child). Extracts from Roubaud's Modern French translation of the poem are read by Jean-Baptiste Barrière (Saariaho's husband and frequent collaborator), alongside some lines in English translation read by Upshaw. To accompany these polyglot and mixed-gender voicings of Rudel's song, Saariaho developed the tape using a variety of IRCAM programmes, mixed with naturalistic concrete sounds relating to the spring topics at work in Rudel's poem (birdsong, wind, and rain).

Moisala employs medievalist imagery when she writes of *Lohn*'s three-dimensional electronic soundscape 'enveloping' the listener in a 'virtual garden'.[593] Just as the chorus in *The Tale of Januarie* (see Chapter 2) and Clémence in *L'Amour de loin* invite audiences into the walled gardens of their 'places of thought', the electronic accompaniment in *Lonh*

[592] Although Pia Freund sang the role of the Narrator in the world premiere, Upshaw sang in several subsequent performances.
[593] Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 43.

forms the fabric of this surrounding admixture of natural and synthesized sound.[594] This immersive quality is one aspect of the piece: Judy Lochhead's analysis further emphasizes how the words of the text 'recede from presence' as *Lonh* progresses, creating increasing distances of semantic meaning between the trilingual text and the listener's comprehension of them.[595] All the while, Lochhead suggests that the 'radiant' qualities of *Lonh* rely heavily on late twentieth-century digital technologies—an electronic mediation which she suggests Saariaho goes to great lengths to 'mask' in order to project 'a premodern sense of longing' for 'a Jaufré embodied in the present through the female voice'.[596]

Conversely, Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam's Irigarayan reading focuses on Saariaho's use of amplification methods, which either '[send] the voice far away with a long reverb' or effect a close-microphone 'near-focusing' on the 'spoken/whispered voice'.[597] These techniques create a trajectory across the piece whereby the voices begin at the point of intimacy with the listener and then move gradually apart, extending the realization of desire across temporal as well as spatial distances. Sivuoia-Gunaratnam also invokes Gérard Genette's concept of the palimpsest to articulate the hypotextual relationship between old and new song.[598] This is an appropriately medievalist conception, insofar as hypotextuality is most frequently invoked in terms of the afterlives of premodern texts. Genette introduces the term, for example, via the *Aeneid* and *Ulysses* as 'hypertexts (among others) of the same hypotext: the *Odyssey*'.[599] Moreover, as I discuss in relation to

[594] Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry*.
[595] Judy Lochhead, *Reconceiving Structure in Contemporary Music: New Tools in Music Theory and Analysis* (Routledge Studies in Music Theory; New York; London: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 117.
[596] Ibid., 121.
[597] Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, 'Desire and Distance in Kaija Saariaho's *Lonh*', *Organised Sound*, 8/1 (2003), 71-84, 79-83.
[598] Ibid., 75; see also Daughtry, 'Acoustic Palimpsests and the Politics of Listening'.
[599] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Stages; Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5; for a journal issue dedicated to

Daughtry's model of 'palimpsestuous listening' in the introduction to this thesis, the term palimpsest is borrowed from the study of underwriting in manuscripts (both medieval and ancient). I discuss Saariaho's musical engagement with medieval *chansonnier* manuscripts in the following subsection, but manuscript imagery is an important dimension of Barrière's video for *Lonh*, which features footage of soprano Raphaële Kennedy singing through filtered manuscript miniatures (Figure 3.2).[600]

Genette's relationship to medieval studies, see Isabelle Arseneau, Véronique Dominguez-Guillaume, Sébastien Douchet et al., 'Les études médiévales face à Gérard Genette', *Perspectives médiévales*, 42 (2021).

[600] Barrière and Barrière, 'When Music Unfolds into Image: Conceiving Visual Concerts for Kaija Saariaho's Works', 95; Jean-Baptiste Barrière, Kaija Saariaho, and Raphaële Kennedy, 'Lonh', *ekstasis* (Paris: Cyrpres Records, 2019). <https://vimeo.com/324857613>, accessed 28 July 2021.

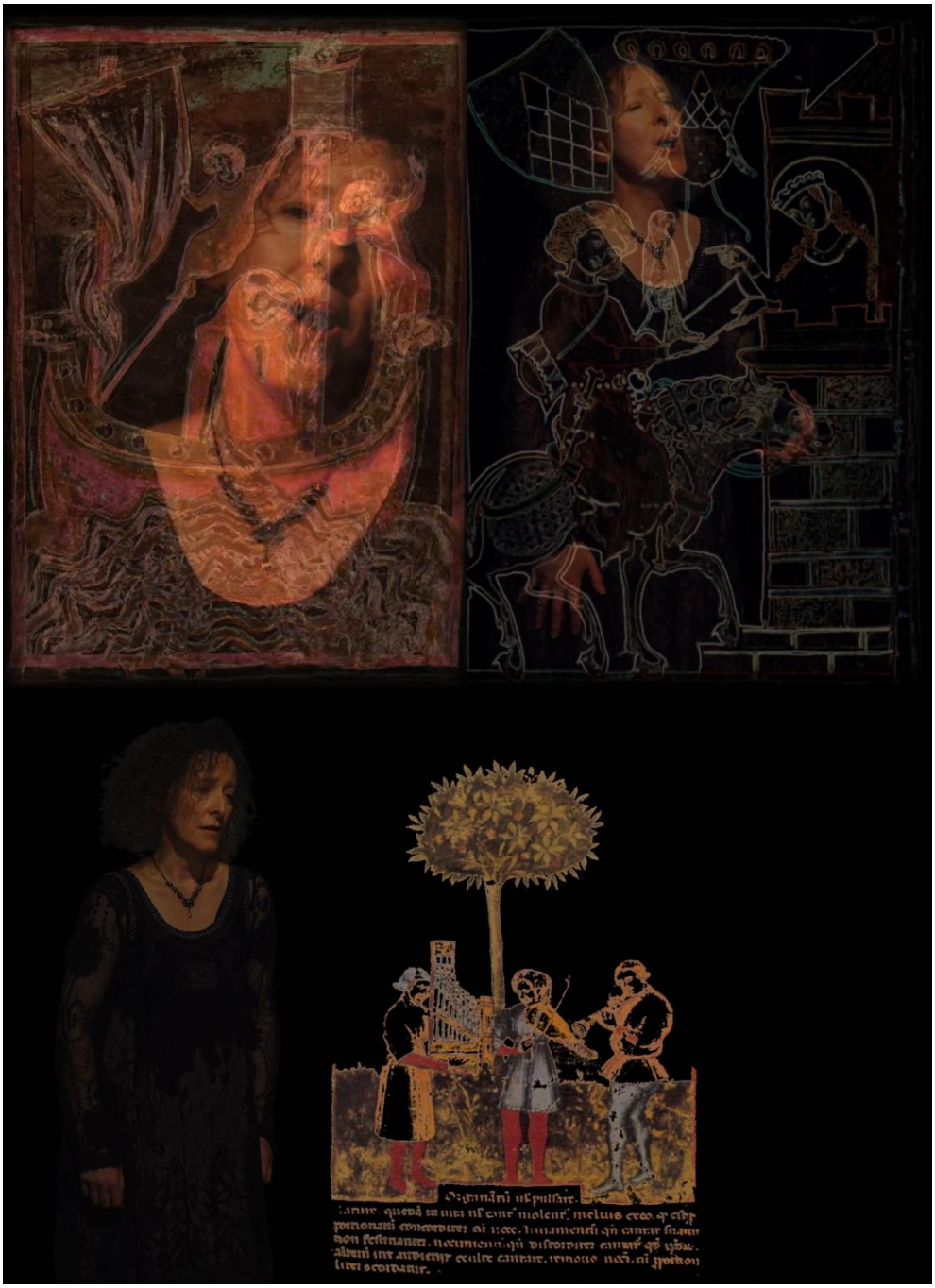


Figure 3.2: Raphaële Kennedy singing through manuscript illuminations in Barrière's video for Lonh.

While *Lonh* is an influential piece of live acousmatic music and fascinating example of musical medievalism in its own right, as Sanna Iitti writes, composing *Lonh* was a crucial preparatory process for Saariaho and 'symbolically established the prologue for the

opera'.[601] As a first transformation of 'Lanquan li jorn', *Lonh* connects Saariaho's initial interaction with Rudel's song in manuscript form with the three recompositions of it that she would go on to work into the plot of the opera. For the soprano line in *Lonh*, Saariaho uses a relatively close transcription of one of the *chansonnier* versions of 'Lanquan li jorn'—far closer, in fact, than any of the melodies she uses in *L'Amour de loin*. There are seven stanzas plus a *tornada* in 'Lanquan li jorn', which I reproduce and discuss in greater detail in section 3.3c.[602] To summarize the poetry: the male-voiced first-person narrator describes how the sound of distant birdsong in May reminds him of 'a love far away'. He expresses the desire to go to see his lady in 'the Saracen's realm' as a 'pilgrim', asks God to give him strength to make the journey, and laments that his godfather prevents him from travelling to her.[603]

While *Lonh* sets all seven stanzas of Rudel's poetry (albeit in increasingly fragmented and obscured ways), the iterations of 'Lanquan li jorn' in the opera only draw from stanzas 2, 5, and 7. These recompositions of troubadour song occur in three places:

1. Act II, tableau ii, where the Pilgrim sings stanzas 5 (bars 373-419), 2 (423-63), and 7 (472-510) in Modern French;
2. Act II, tableau ii, where Clémence elaborates on stanza 5 in Occitan (bars 536-72);
3. Act III, tableau ii, where Clémence sings stanzas 2 (bars 426-59) and 7 (bars 464-525) in Occitan.[604]

[601] Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', 10.
[602] George Wolf and Roy Rosenstein, *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel* (New York: Garland, 1983), 146-50.
[603] Ibid., 107.
[604] The ordering of the stanzas varies between manuscript sources, see André Burger, '*Lanquand li jorn son lonc en mai*: une chanson d'amour et de croisade', in Pierre Gallais, René Crozet, and Yves Jean Rion (eds.), *Melanges offerts a Rene Crozet à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire par ses amis, ses collègues, ses élèves et les membres du C.É.S.C.M* (Poitiers: Société d'Études Médiévales, 1966), 777-80; here I refer to the order in Wolf and Rosenstein, *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, 146-50.

Conspicuously, none of these versions of 'Lanquan' are sung by Jaufré, even though he appears at the opening of Act I holding his instrument, and even though the Pilgrim credits him as the song composer in his introduction to the its first iteration in Act II, tableau ii: 'il y a cependant une chanson qui dit à peu près ceci'. While Richard Stoke and George Hall translate this passage as 'there is one of his songs that speaks his love like this', a more literal translation of Maalouf's libretto might read, 'but there is a song that goes *something* like this'. The Pilgrim only ever claims to approximate the song, and even appears to extemporize two stanzas of his own. In every instance, the song is radically disembodied from Rudel; sent via envoy, it is carried via another body and another voice (in this case an ambiguously gendered one), via whom it enters Clémence and in turn becomes hers to embellish, and sing again.

As Calico has detailed, the role of Clémence was substantially recomposed to better suit Upshaw's *Fach* following the Salzburg premiere.[605] Both the original and revised versions have been commercially recorded; I will refer to the revised, low-tessitura version throughout this chapter not because it is necessarily more authoritative than the original, but for the more material reason that the low version was published by Chester Music and is the most readily available.[606] Like Sivuoia-Gunaratnam, Calico invokes the palimpsestic in her discussion of the revision, both in connection with Saariaho's recompositional practice and with the entire genre of opera as a collaborative endeavour:

> because composers have always written for specific performers, an opera score can be read as a palimpsest. The timbre, agility, power, sweet spots, tessituras, strengths and weaknesses of those singers, many of whom are now lost to history, determined the shape and style

[605] Calico, 'Composing Clémence in *L'Amour de loin*', 399.
[606] Kaija Saariaho and Amin Maalouf, *L'Amour de loin: Opera in Five Acts*, (Full score; London: Chester Music, 2002).

> of vocal lines within parameters of style and convention, thereby defining those characters.[607]

Saariaho's recompositions of Rudel's song are palimpsests that reach across several centuries. Through the collaborative intervention of Upshaw and Saariaho, they gain yet another layer. But, as Calico implies (and Daughtry would agree), the interpretative processes of performers and the live phenomena at work in their interactions with audiences lends a certain palimpsestic quality to all operatic texts. In the following section, I will discuss how these palimpsests of 'Lanquan li jorn' can be approached analytically. I will then discuss how the afterlife of the song can be examined alongside the afterlife of Jaufre Rudel, and what this might mean for a medievalist, operatic hermeneutic.

3.2c. Analytical Approaches

Almost without exception, musicological commentary on *L'Amour de loin* suggests that Saariaho quotes extensively from 'Lanquan li jorn' in passages usually referred to as 'troubadour songs'.[608] As I discuss in greater detail below, Saariaho does quote extensively from Rudel's melody in *Lonh*. In the opera, however, Saariaho's melodies for Rudel's poetry are new. Her engagement with medieval musical source material is much more ambiguous than, for example, Philips's use of the counterpoint from the 'Agincourt Carol' in *The Tale of Januarie*. Saariaho has in fact expressed ambivalence at the prospect of composing with pre-existing music, stating, 'I find it so boring, somehow …. That's often the issue in post-modernism where people make collages. I just don't understand the

[607] Calico, 'Composing Clémence in *L'Amour de loin*', 408.
[608] See Yayoi Uno Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', in Michael Leslie Klein and Nicholas W. Reyland (eds.), *Music and Narrative Since 1900* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 329-45, 330; Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', 351.

idea'.[609] In the same interview, however, she recalls seeing a manuscript containing Rudel's music:

> when I heard about [Rudel's] life-story, I wanted to see some of his texts. I got permission to go and see some of them in the national library in Paris, and I especially liked this text, which then became *Lonh*. I have a photo of that page of the manuscript …. I couldn't exactly read the music, because it's written in four-line staves, so I just interpreted it my own way. Since then, I've seen more accurate transcriptions of it, but it was just a starting point for me. I didn't want to use his music, but my interpretation served as basic material'.[610]

Calico describes 'a photocopy of the song of Jaufré in medieval notation from *Cantigas de Santa Maria*' in her account of Saariaho's archive in Basel, which is probably the photo to which Saariaho refers.[611] It must have been mis-labelled at some point, because none of the manuscripts of the *Cantigas* contains poetry or music by Rudel; they represent a separate genre of a different geographical and historical providence.

Most surviving songs and poems by the troubadours (and the trouvères, their Northern French counterparts) are preserved in *chansonniers*: large manuscripts compiled in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. 'Lanquan li jorn' appears with notation in three *chansonniers*, known (by their troubadour sigla) as **R**, **W**, and **X**. Of these, **W** (Figure 3.3) has sustained a large rip, which Judith A. Peraino describes as a 'gape that has eaten into the song itself', possibly from somebody cutting out an appealing illumination.[612] Because such a stark visual feature would be memorable enough to merit comment, this is probably not the version Saariaho saw. Spencer N. Lambright writes that it is 'abundantly clear which version she looked at: the first five syllables in the version from manuscript **X** are

[609] Beyer and Christensen, *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time*, 309.
[610] Ibid., 310.
[611] Calico, 'Composing Clémence in *L'Amour de loin*', 393.
[612] Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', 32.

almost identical to the setting of the same text in *Lohn*'.[613] Example 3.1 shows an excerpt from the beginning of stanza 1 in *Lonh* alongside the version of 'Lanquan li jorn' found in **X**, illustrating his conclusion.

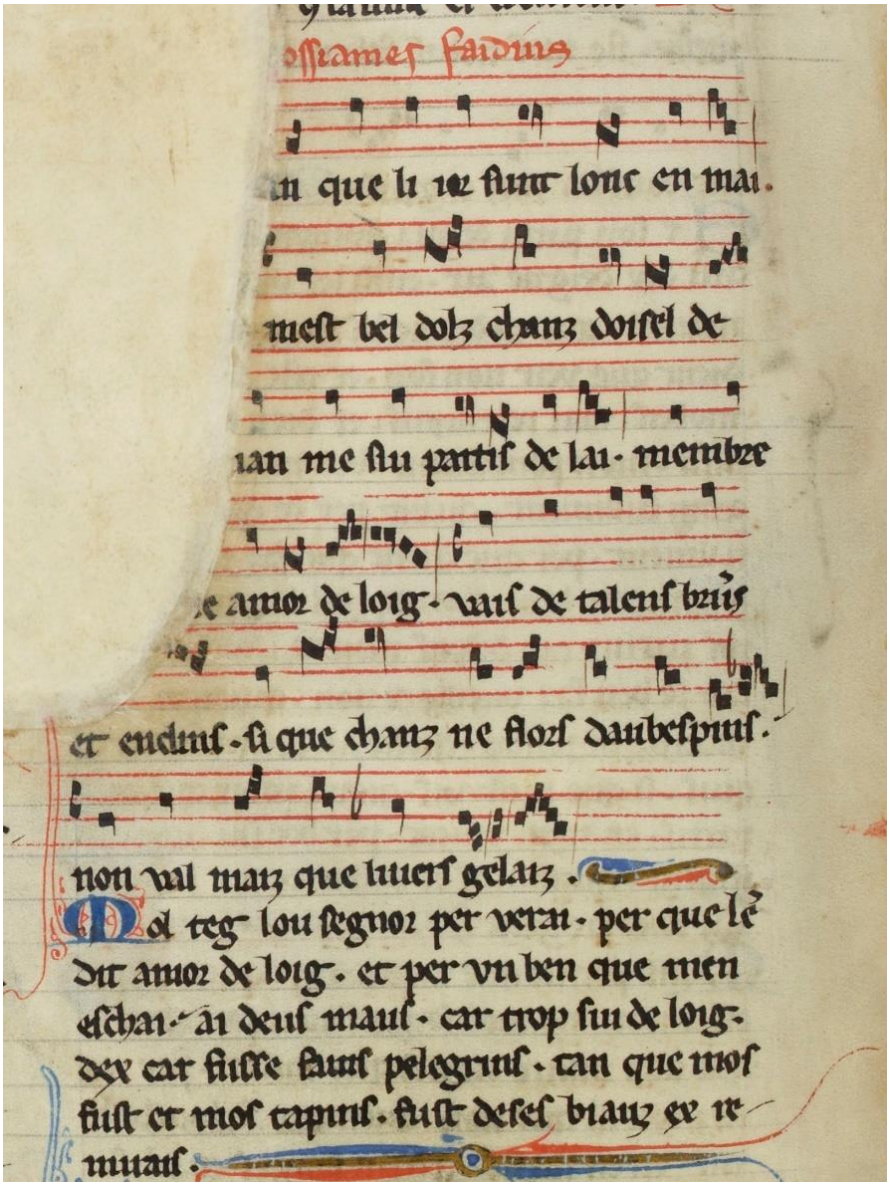
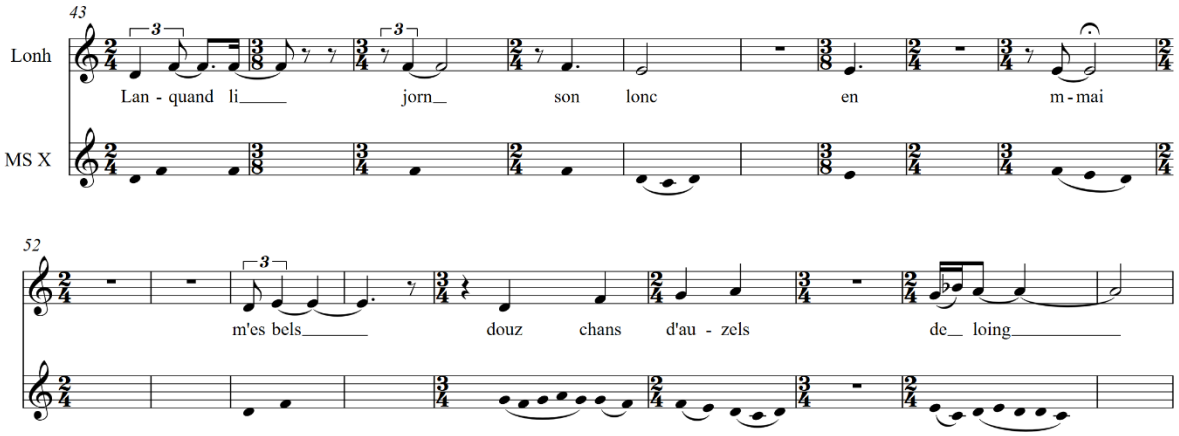


Figure 3.3: Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 844 (MS W), 189v.

[613] Spencer N. Lambright, 'L'Amour de loin and the Vocal Works of Kaija Saariaho', DMA (Cornell University, 2008), 57.
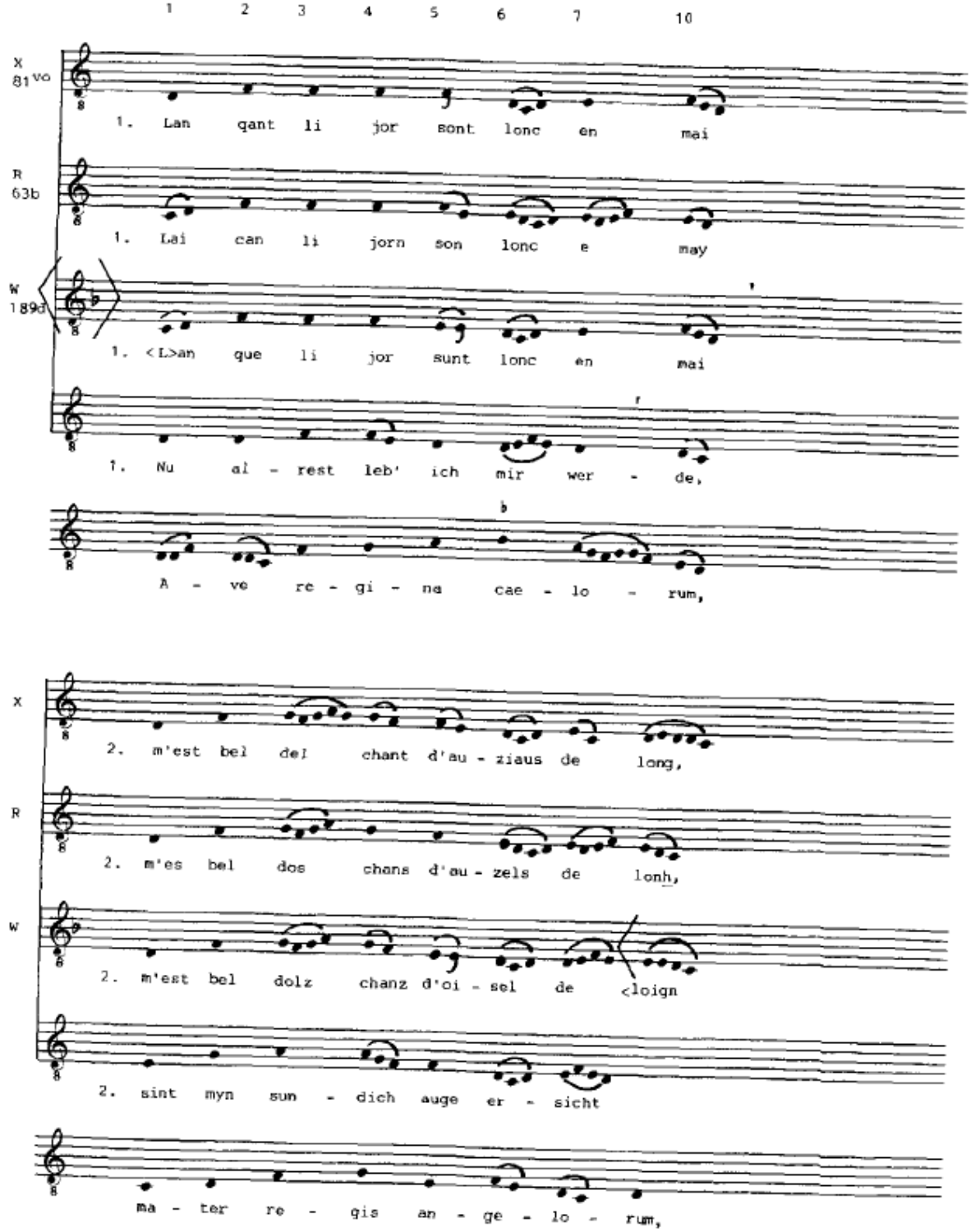


Example 3.1: Extract from Lohn *(1996) alongside 'Lanquan li jorn' (as in MS* ***X****).*

One potential problem with Lambright's reading is that he bases his conclusion not on the manuscripts themselves but on Hendrik van der Werf's side-by-side transcription of the three *chansonniers'* melodies (Example 3.2). Saariaho claims to have been unable to read the Messine neumes and to have 'interpreted it [her] own way', almost as if reading a graphic score.[614] However, as Lambright points out, the opening syllables in **X** and *Lonh* are almost identical, and Saariaho accurately reproduces the D final; perhaps she took note of the F clef and then worked out the intervals (Figure 3.4), or perhaps she consulted a modern edition more than she suggests. Saariaho's incorporation of B♭ in the *Lonh* melody also strengthens Lambright's case, because, almost without exception, the only accidental Saariaho notates during the Rudel quotations in *L'Amour de loin* is also B♭.[615] Saariaho probably would have noticed the hexachordal B *molle* signs in **X**, which are not notated in **R** (Figure 3.5). While the question of which manuscript Saariaho owns a photo of can only be answered conclusively by further archival research, it seems likely that she did consult transcriptions more than she implies in interviews. While her recompositions of the 'Lanquan li jorn' melody for *L'Amour de loin* ultimately differ so much from the melody

[614] Beyer and Christensen, *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time*, 310.
[615] Lambright, 'L'Amour de loin and the Vocal Works of Kaija Saariaho', 64.

in *Lonh*, however, the envoy-song tableaux in *L'Amour de loin* remain creatively enmeshed with Rudel's music. They are another layer in the palimpsestic history of 'Lanquan li jorn'.



Example 3.2: First page of Werf's edition of 'Lanquan li jorn'.[616]

[616] Hendrik van der Werf, *The Extant Troubadour Melodies: Transcriptions and Essays for Performers and Scholars* (Rochester, NY: published by the author, 1984), 215.

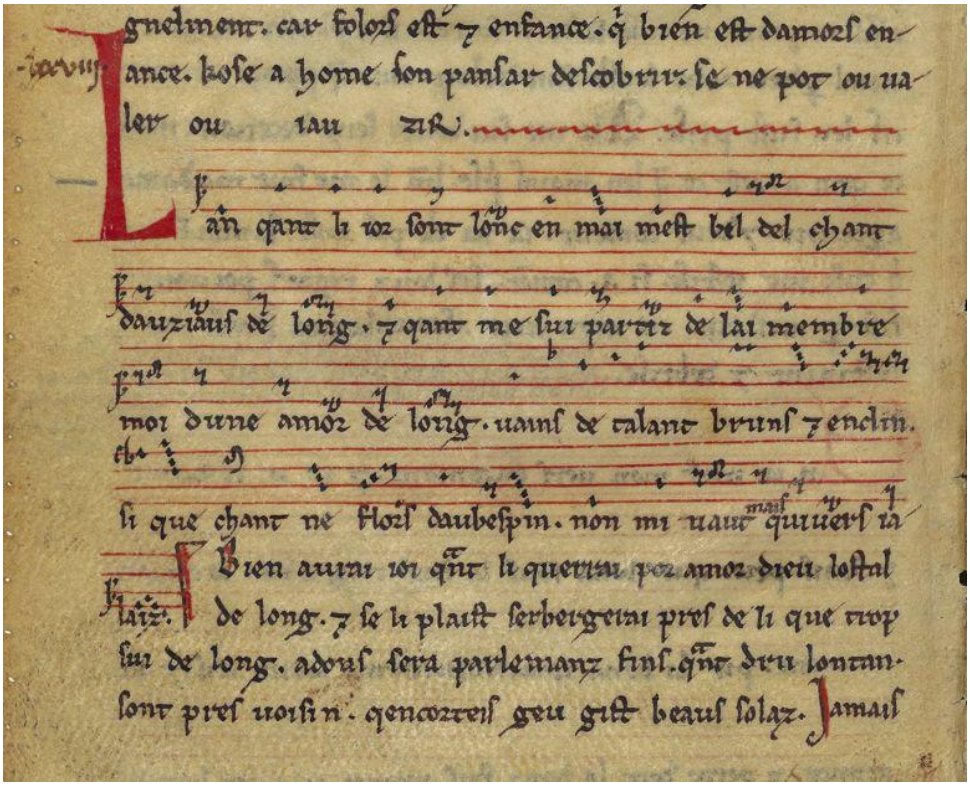


*Figure 3.4: Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 20050 (MS **X**), 81v.*
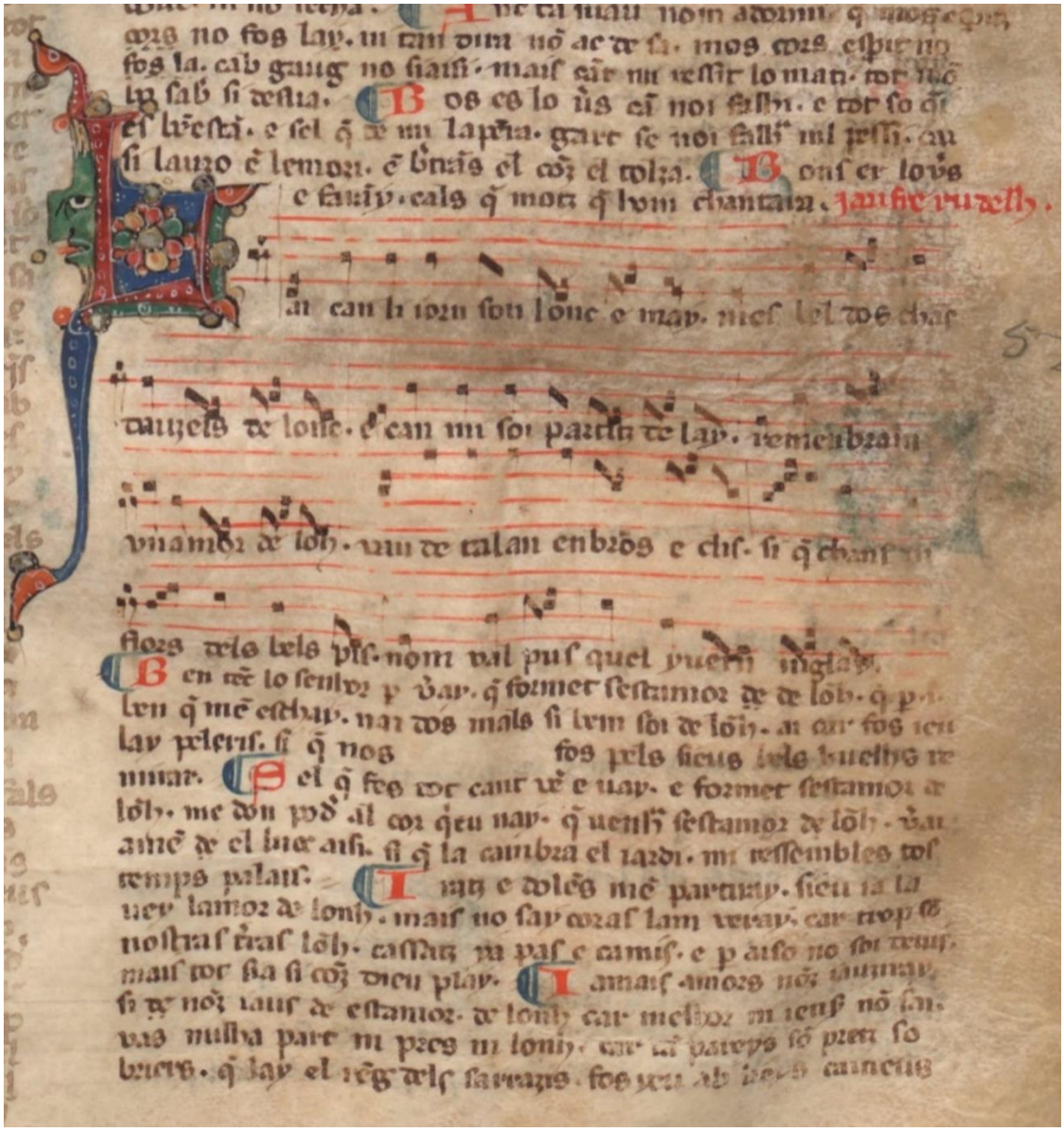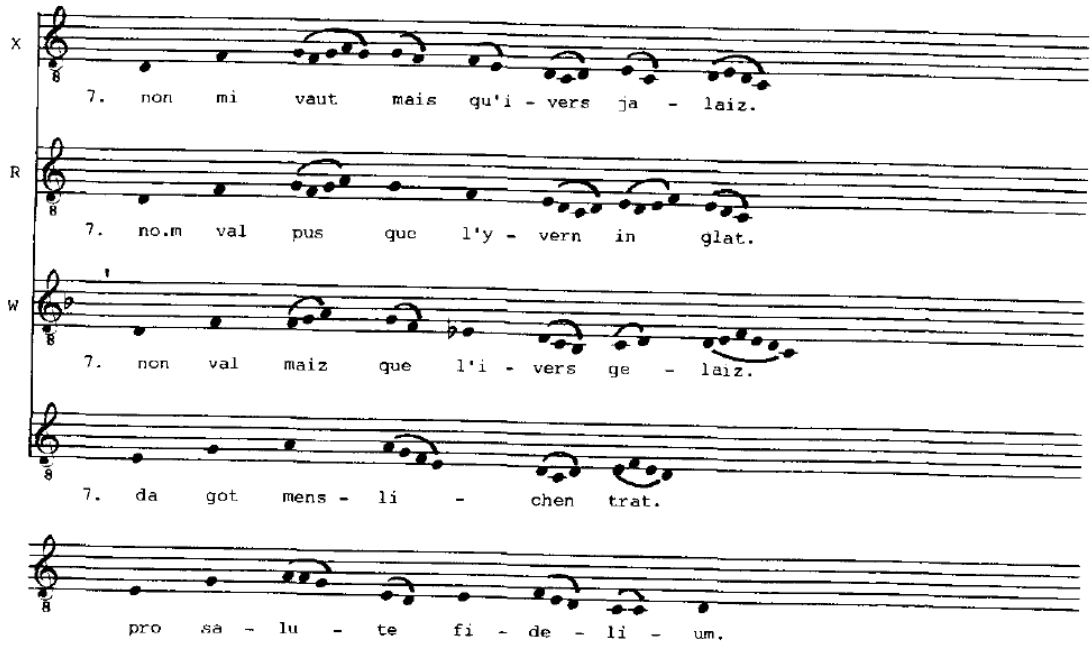


*Figure 3.5: Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 22543 (MS **R**), 63r-63v.*



Example 3.3: The melody in ***W****'s 'exotic' ending.*[617]

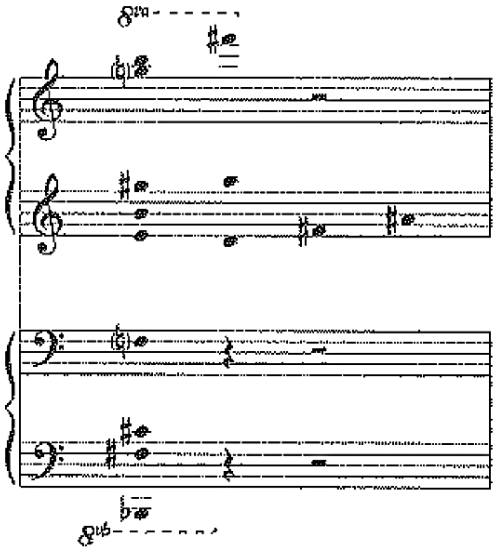
Among the *chansonnier* versions of 'Lanquan li jorn', Peraino suggests that **W** is 'the melody of choice for most singers in the modern era' because of its 'unique expressive ending that introduces a gratuitous, exotic-sounding B♭', which 'sounds like a note from afar' (Example 3.3).[618] Apropos of the exoticization of the distant lady in Rudel's *vida* and poetry (which I discuss in more detail in the following section), several music theorists from the eleventh century onwards associated the semitone, and more specifically B♭, with femininity and exoticism, following its association by Guido d'Arezzo with a citation from Virgil about cross-dressing 'Phrygian men'.[619] Saariaho has not said whether she listened to any recordings of 'Lanquan li jorn', and Peraino suggests that the importance of B♭ in *L'Amour de loin*'s harmonic organization is probably a 'sonic coincidence'.[620] But perhaps

[617] Notated down a fifth from its manuscript version by Werf for ease of comparison with the other two versions. Ibid., 219.
[618] Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', 32-33.
[619] Leach, 'Gendering the Semitone, Sexing the Leading Tone: Fourteenth-Century Music Theory and the Directed Progression'; Bonnie J. Blackburn, 'The Lascivious Career of B-Flat', in Bonnie J. Blackburn and Laurie Stras (eds.), *Eroticism in Early Modern Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 19-42, 26-28; Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician*, 2-4.
[620] Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', 38.

the importance of B♭ rather than, for example, G♭ in this opera's diegetic sections specifically could be read as a facet of Saariaho's medievalism: studiously avoiding *musica ficta* and—as I discus in section 3.4, accompanied with cultivated simplicity by open-string sonorities.[621]

B♭ is a significant pitch in *L'Amour de loin*'s wider structure; the opera begins and ends with what Saariaho refers as a 'basic chord' built around B♭, C♯, D, E, F, F♯, G, and B (Example 3.4).[622] Calico points out that the central trichord of this basic chord is D-E-F, which are also the opening pitches of 'Lanquan li jorn'.[623] While these pitches are not especially prominent in *L'Amour de loin*'s Rudel settings, Jaufré and Clémence are each characterized by a set of distinctive sonorities derived from the basic chord, and the Pilgrim's musical material adapts to each of their harmonic worlds as he moves between them.[624] In Yayoi Uno Everett's analysis, she describes how melodic gestures and tropes of desire—sighing, falling semitones and a cyclically ascending four-note motif—similarly transform as the Pilgrim travels between the two lovers.[625]

[621] Calico suggests that the interplay between B♭ and B♮ could be read as an allusion to *musica ficta*. However, both B♭ and B♮ are part of *musica recta*, because B♭ is solmized as *fa* in the *hexachordum molle* ('soft hexachord' from F) and B♮ as *mi* in the *hexachordum durum* ('hard hexachord' from G). For an explanation of *musica ficta* and medieval solmization, see Margaret Bent and Alexander Silbiger (2001), 'Musica ficta', *Grove Music Online*. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000019406>, accessed 14 April 2023.
[622] Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', 351.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', 10.
[625] Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', 335-37; in her topic-theory analysis of *L'Amour de loin*, Liisamaija Hautsalo suggests that Saariaho deliberately adopts these tropes as 'traditional ... devices' from the operatic canon, see 'Whispers from the Past: Musical Topics in Saariaho's Operas', in Tim Howell, Jon Hargreaves, and Michael Rofe (eds.), *Kaija Saariaho: Visions, Narratives, Dialogues* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 107-29.



Example 3.4: The 'basic chord' in L'Amour de loin.[626]

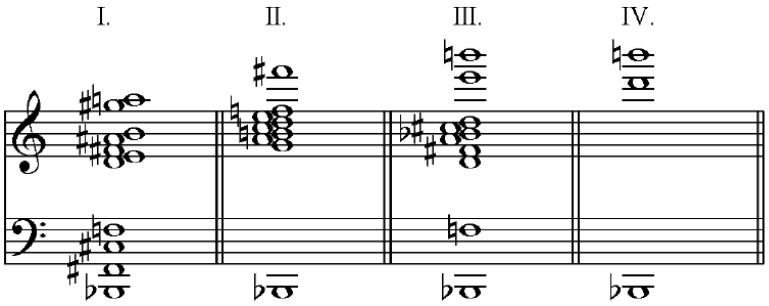
Lambright's analysis is structured around four 'harmonic fields' from Saariaho's basic chord (Example 3.5). Almost all the live electronic cues in the opera are filtered through one of these sonorities. Everett summarizes them as:

> Field I (the beginning of Act I): the main chordal complex the contains the open-fifth sonority of F♯-C♯;
>
> Field II (bar 422 in Act II): F♯ switched to highest register, while the intervening voices support the troubadour melody in the Aeolian mode;
>
> Field III (bars 234-46 in Act IV): the climax of the orchestral interlude, whose intervallic constitution resembles the overtone series most closely; and
>
> Field IV (bar 773 in Act V): the end of the opera … [where] the harmonic fields expand in register, while density of the chord thins down to three notes.[627]

Lambright's is not the only analysis to describe Saariaho's troubadour-song passages as 'Aeolian': Everett writes that they are 'primarily Aeolian, although the occasional use of

[626] Calico, 'Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin*: Modernist Opera in the Twenty-First Century', 351.
[627] Lambright, 'L'Amour de loin and the Vocal Works of Kaija Saariaho', 65. As I discuss in section 3.4 of this chapter, field II and foreshadowings of field IV could be identified slightly earlier than Lambright suggests, at the first instance of 'Lanquan li jorn' from bar 373 of Act II; Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', 353.

B♭ infuses it with a Phrygian inflection', while Moisala writes simply of 'allusions to medieval modality' and Liisamaija Hautsalo of a 'distinctly diatonic, modal flavour to the sonorous identity of Jaufré's material'.[628] As I discuss in Chapter 1, modality can be a particularly obfuscating concept to apply to medievalist music, primarily because the Greek mode names used in modern music theory do not align with their various premodern uses. Most scholarship on troubadour song discusses its melodies in terms of the 'final' pitch, and the relationships between pitches in the impetus leading up to that final.[629] In the case of *L'Amour de loin*—particularly in light of its large-scale motion from the opening chordal complex of field I to its sparser respelling in field IV—perhaps analytical approaches to Rudel's and Saariaho's music alike can share a fundamental sensitivity to intervallic relations and their approach to a final destination. In Lambright's words, the opera's harmonic landscape embodies a 'careful motion and gradual transformation of musical materials that creates an unmistakable impression of inevitability'.[630]



Example 3.5: The four 'harmonic fields' in L'Amour de loin.[631]

[628] Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', 339; Moisala, *Kaija Saariaho*, 99-100; Hautsalo, 'Whispers from the Past: Musical Topics in Saairaho's Operas', 114.
[629] For a discussion of voice-leading in the approach to the final (albeit in later repertoire), see Fuller, 'Tendencies and Resolutions: The Directed Progression in "Ars Nova" Music'; for a discussion of melodic mode in 'Lanquan li jorn', see Hans Tischler, 'Rhythm, Meter, and Melodic Organization in Medieval Songs', *Revue Belge de Musicologie*, 28/30 (1974), 5-23, 16-17.
[630] Lambright, 'L'Amour de loin and the Vocal Works of Kaija Saariaho', 81.
[631] Ibid., 65.

As I mention above, Saariaho's melodies for Rudel's poetry in *L'Amour de loin* differ considerably from her closer transcription in *Lonh* (see Example 3.7). I discuss these melodies in greater detail and in harmonic context in my analysis in section 3.4: they are much more florid than the melody in *Lonh*, make use of different pitch collections, and in many cases follow completely different contours. As Peraino puts it, 'the medieval song remains "at a distance", as it were—a palimpsest …. delivered from the fallible memory of the Pilgrim'.[632] Once again, the palimpsest is invoked to describe the unfolding of song through time and space.

Having written elsewhere of the myth of the '"inseparable whole" of music and words, as well as the unity of expression' in troubadour song, Peraino sees in *L'Amour de loin* a continuation of a very medieval tradition: 'the transmission history of the song itself as the Pilgrim-*jongleur* effects a scrambling and redaction of stanzas'.[633] Paul Zumthor coins the term *mouvance*—most commonly translated as 'textual instability'—to describe the nature of texts the predate dissemination in print.[634] As Jennifer Rushworth points out, Zumthor frequently uses song to illustrate how 'the physical texts which constitute the work manifest, through the play of variants and reworkings, something like a ceaseless vibration and a fundamental instability'.[635] Citing Simon Gaunt's reading of Bernart de Ventadorn's 'Can vei la lauzeta mover', Rushworth describes how this 'ceaseless vibration' stretches into the present day:

[632] Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', 38.
[633] Judith A. Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24; Peraino, 'Sonograms of Desire, Medieval and Modern', 38.
[634] For another application of *mouvance* to medievalism studies, see Jennifer Rushworth, 'Barthes and Mouvance', *Exemplaria,* 33/3 (2021), 312-26.
[635] 'Les textes concrets qui la réalisent présentant, par le jeu des variantes et remaniements, comme une incessante vibration et une instabilité fondamentale'. Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique mediévale* (Poétique (Series); Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 507; trans. Jennifer Rushworth in 'Barthes and Mouvance', 312.

> different versions embody different, interwoven forms of desire, not only that of each differently constituted lyric subject but also of the various medieval and modern editors involved in transmitting the text.[636]

Through these dynamics of desire, the *mouvance* of song forges a paradoxically close connection between the present day, the 'distant' past, and the distant love.

When Sarah Kay writes that, for medieval listeners, 'the body of the performer, enacting the "character" of a troubadour, offers a possible visible correlative of the first-person voice, and connects it, at least temporarily, with social experience', perhaps we could say that this mode of medievalist opera connects us, at least temporarily, with the Middle Ages.[637] The *chansonniers* were mostly commissioned, John Haines points out, 'for posterity', 'at the very point of the waning of the troubadour and trouvère art in the late thirteenth century' with 'songs once sung, now stilled by the quill'.[638] Peraino in fact attributes to this 'temporal gap' the creative intervention of *vidas* and *razos*, which, like historical fiction, present readers with the opportunity to imagine long-dead creatives back into existence.[639] As Kay suggests, with particular reference to Rudel, *mouvance* 'questions the validity of any distinction between the authentic and the apocryphal'.[640] One could ask why Saariaho chose to write an opera about Rudel, when she had no desire to

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[636] Rushworth, 'Barthes and Mouvance', 313.
[637] Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 170.
[638] Haines, *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères: The Changing Identity of Medieval Music*, 14; Eliza Zingesser observes that the Gallicization of troubadour poetry in some *chansonniers* renders them 'semi-intelligible' and that, while compilers may have heard troubadour song in performance, they 'likely ... worked with written sources', see *Stolen Song: How the Troubadours Became French* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 22; For transcriptions of the Gallicized versions of 'Lanquan li jorn' in *chansonniers* **W** and **X**, see Wolf and Rosenstein, *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, 165-67.
[639] Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love*, 23.
[640] Sarah Kay, 'Continuation as Criticism: The Case of Jaufre Rudel', *Medium Aevum*, 56 (1987), 46, 47; While the term *vida* tends to connote the life-story of a poet and *razo* the back-story of a particular song, the boundary between the two genres is not always clear. See Elizabeth W. Poe, 'At the Boundary Between Vida and Razo: The Biography of Raimon Jordan', *Neophilologus*, 72/2 (1988), 316-19; and Sarah Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotation and the Development of European Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 414, n. 10.

use his melodies and could easily have found a troubadour for whom no music survives (as Crimp and Benjamin do in *Written on Skin*). In one sense, Saariaho's seemingly paradoxical suggestion that she 'wanted to see' a manuscript of one of Rudel's songs is quite a profound expression of musical *mouvance*.[641] Saariaho sustains 'Lanquan li jorn's' textual instability by adding another layer to the palimpsest; Rudel's *vida* of yearning across time and space provides an apt pretext for that 'ceaseless vibration' by which Zumthor defines the textuality of medieval song.[642]

3.3. Jaufre Rudel: Lover and Crusader

3.3a. The *Vida*

The real Jaufre Rudel was a nobleman in Blaye, on the Southwest Coast of France. Very little documentation of his life survives. Gaston Paris has traced his possible lineage through a series of charters dating back to the late eleventh century, although none survives that corresponds to Rudel himself.[643] An important piece of interpersonal evidence is the 1147 *envoi* from Marcabru (see section 3.2b) which attests to his involvement in the Second Crusade (1147-48).[644] Crusading was common practice for someone of Rudel's class in twelfth-century France and, as Alfred Jeanroy suggests,

[641] Beyer and Christensen, *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time*, 310.
[642] Rushworth, 'Barthes and Mouvance', 312.
[643] Gaston Paris and Bruno Paulin, 'Jaufré Rudel', in Joseph Bédier (ed.), *Gaston Paris* (Cahiers de la quinzaine; Paris: l'Imprimerie de Suresnes, 1904), 47-48.
[644] Alfred Jeanroy, *Les chansons de Jaufré Rudel* (2 edn., Classiques français du Moyen Age; Paris: Champion, 1924), iii; this time-frame represents the narrowest definition of the Second Crusade and confines it to the Levant. For discussions of associated conflicts far beyond, see Luis García-Guijarro, 'Reconquest and the Second Crusade in Eastern Iberia: The Christian Expansion in the Lower Ebro Valley', in Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen (eds.), *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 219-56; Susan B. Edgington, 'The Capture of Lisbon: Premeditated or Opportunistic?', in Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen (eds.), *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 257-72; Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński, 'Poland and the Second Crusade', in Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen (eds.), *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 115-54.

consistent with the content of the poems attributed to him.[645] Jeanroy identifies several figures named in Rudel's poetry who went on crusade in 1147, suggesting that the 'Count of Toulouse' and 'Bertran' mentioned in Rudel's 'No sap chantar qui so non di' are Alphonse Jourdain and his son, and that the 'Ugo Bru' mentioned in 'Quan lo rius de la fontana' is Hugo Brun VII of Lusignan.[646] The Second Crusade lasted fewer than three years and, for reasons I discuss later in this subsection, was a resounding failure for the Franks—part four of Maalouf's *The Crusades Behind Arab Eyes* is entitled 'Victory (1146-1187)'.[647] By 1167, the fiefdom of Blaye had passed to another member of Rudel's family.[648] In the absence of further evidence it is likely that Rudel died in or after 1147.

The *vidas* were composed at least a century after the Second Crusade, and the creation of this hybrid fictional-biographical genre (along with, Kay writes, the authorship of 'many if not all' of its texts) is now ascribed to the thirteenth-century troubadour and scholar Uc de Saint Circ.[649] As a distinctive literary genre that developed as a paratextual feature of *chansonniers*, *vidas* can provide particularly textured information about the afterlife of a troubadour's output and the cultural ideals that they came to embody.[650] As William E.

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[645] Jeanroy, *Les chansons de Jaufré Rudel*, iii.
[646] 'Il est bien vraisemblable que le comte de Toulouse et le Bertran, nommés ensemble dans la pièce VI, sont Alphonse Jourdain et son fils naturel qui se croisèrent au mois d'août 1147. Quant a Le Brun, ce devait être Uc VII de Lusignan, comte de la Marche (croisé, luiaussi, en 1147), avec lequel il était tout naturel qu'un seigneur du Bordelais se trouvât en relations'. Ibid. Translation my own. In some copies of the song, Bertran is named only as the viscount of Quercy.
[647] Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, trans. Jon Rothschild (London: Saqi Essentials, 2006), 140.
[648] Jack Lindsay asserts that 'he was in the Holy Land in 1148, and round that time was friendly with the crusaders Hugues VII of Lusignan and Alphonse Jourdain of Toulouse' but provides no citation. Jack Lindsay, *The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (London: Frederick Muller, 1976), 63.
[649] Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotation and the Development of European Poetry*, 58; 413-14, nn.2-4; William E. Burgwinkle, *Love for Sale: Materialist Readings of the Troubadour Razo Corpus* (New York: Garland, 1997), 148-51.
[650] For the paratextual function of Uc de Saint Circ's *vidas*, see Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotation and the Development of European Poetry*, 59; Margarita Egan, *The Vidas of the Troubadours* (Routledge Revivals; Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), xiv.

Burgwinkle suggests, the 'deliberate myth-making and structural patterns' of *vidas* and *razos*, read alongside the lyrics that they frame, can be historicized as a cross-temporal theorization of the relationship between 'original and gloss, text and frame, poetic subject …, and third-person alter-ago'.[651] In a sense, Rudel's *vida* is a medieval medievalism; it creates a metatext with his songs similar in narrative function to Maalouf and Saariaho's composite reanimation of Rudel and 'Lanquan li jorn'. *Vida* and opera alike are retrospective pretexts for pre-extant song.

There are four known manuscript sources for Rudel's *vida*. Margarita Egan divides the into two groups of two (labelled **A**/**B**, and **I**/**K** to denote their *chansonnier* sources), but the differences between the texts are relatively minor.[652] Egan's translation of the **A**/**B** version reads:

> Jaufre Rudel de Blaia was a very noble man, the prince of Blaye. And he fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli without seeing her, because of the great good and the great nobility he had heard tell of her by pilgrims returning from Antioch. And he composed many good poems about her with good melodies and poor words. Determined to see her, he took the cross and sailed away to see her. And then he was taken so gravely ill on board that those with him thought he would die. But they did at least take him to Tripoli to a shelter, thinking him dead. And it was made known to the countess, and she came to him, to his bedside, and took him in her arms. And he knew that she was the countess, so he recovered his sight and his sense of smell, and praised God and thanked Him for having sustained his life until he had seen her. And thus he died in the arms of the countess. And she had him buried with honour in the House of the Temple [templars] in Tripoli. And afterwards, on that same day, she became a nun because of the grief she felt about him and about his death. And here are written some of his songs.[653]

The centrality of the 'faraway love' motif to the *vida* narrativizes its importance in poems like 'Lanquan li jorn'. Moreover, while not reliably contributing to the historical evidence

[651] Burgwinkle, *Love for Sale: Materialist Readings of the Troubadour Razo Corpus*, 148.
[652] Egan, *The Vidas of the Troubadours*, 61-63.
[653] Ibid., 61-62.

for Rudel's crusading activity *per se*, this *vida* establishes the Second Crusade as a key event within which to frame Rudel's output.

Two place names mentioned in Rudel's *vida*, Antioch and Tripoli, connect it with crusading from the outset. There were four Christian-controlled crusader states in 1147: the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch, the County of Tripoli, and the County of Edessa. In 1144, the Oghuz Turkic governor of Aleppo and Mosul Imād al-Dīn Zangī besieged Edessa with the help of Kurdish and other nomadic Muslim reinforcements.[654] The Syrian and Armenian Christians were allowed to remain under the administration of Bishop Abu'l-Faraj Basil, but the surviving Frankish Christians were imprisoned.[655] Pope Eugene III retaliated by issuing a papal bull calling for a second crusade, and he commissioned Bernard of Clairvaux to preach in its favour throughout France, the Low Countries, and parts of the Holy Roman Empire in 1146 (on which more later).[656] Louis VII of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine joined the crusade because of Bernard's sermon at Easter court the same year, and they departed from Metz in June, with a contingent of armies from Lorraine, Brittany, Burgundy, and Aquitaine.[657] As an Aquitanian nobleman, Rudel might have travelled with this party.[658]

[654] Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, 134-35. I spell all Arabic words and names as they are transliterated by Maalouf and Rothschild.
[655] Ibid., 136.
[656] Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 252; Ane L. Bysted, 'The True Year of Jubilee: Bernard of Clairvaux on Crusade and Indulgences', in Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen (eds.), *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 35-50, 37.
[657] Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 259; Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen, *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Outremer; Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 9, 11.
[658] Marcabru is likely to have travelled this route too. In his poem 'A la fontana del vergier', the lady's voice explicitly curses King Louis for leading the call-to-arms that separates her from her lover. See Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Jaufre Rudel, Contrarian', *Viator*, 47/3 (2016), 129-47, 137.

Roy Rosenstein has traced references to Hugo VII of Lusignan (mentioned above as the 'Ugo Bru' in 'Quan lo rius') through several charters, and proposed that Rudel accompanied him to hear Bernard preach at Vezelay before continuing with him to Metz.[659] The French crusaders, led by Louis and Eleanor, would then have followed an overland route through Hungary to converge with German forces in Constantinople, then marched to Adalia and sailed to Antioch, where they landed in March 1148 (see the red route in Figure 3.6).[660] Rudel's *vida* states that he 'took the cross and sailed away', implying that he made most of his journey by sea. Some crusaders did sail across the breadth of the Mediterranean Sea: a fleet from Provence led by Alphonse Jordan (count of Toulouse and the potential dedicatee of Rudel's 'No sap chanter' mentioned above), departed from Marseille to Damascus in August 1147 (see the blue route in Figure 3.6).[661] Marseille is about 380 miles from Blaye, however, and it seems unlikely that Rudel sailed with these Provençal forces.[662]

[659] There were several Hugoes Brun of Lusignan, but Rosenstein and Jeanroy concur that Hugo VII is most likely, see Roy Rosenstein, 'New Perspectives on Distant Love: Jaufre Rudel, Uc Bru, and Sarrazina', *Modern Philology*, 87/3 (1990), 225-38, 277.
[660] Roche and Møller Jensen, *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom*, 323.
[661] Ibid.; Giles Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the Twelfth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 260. Lindsay suggests that Jaufre and Alphonse Jourdain were 'friendly', see above.
[662] This theory is relayed in Lindsay, *The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, 67.

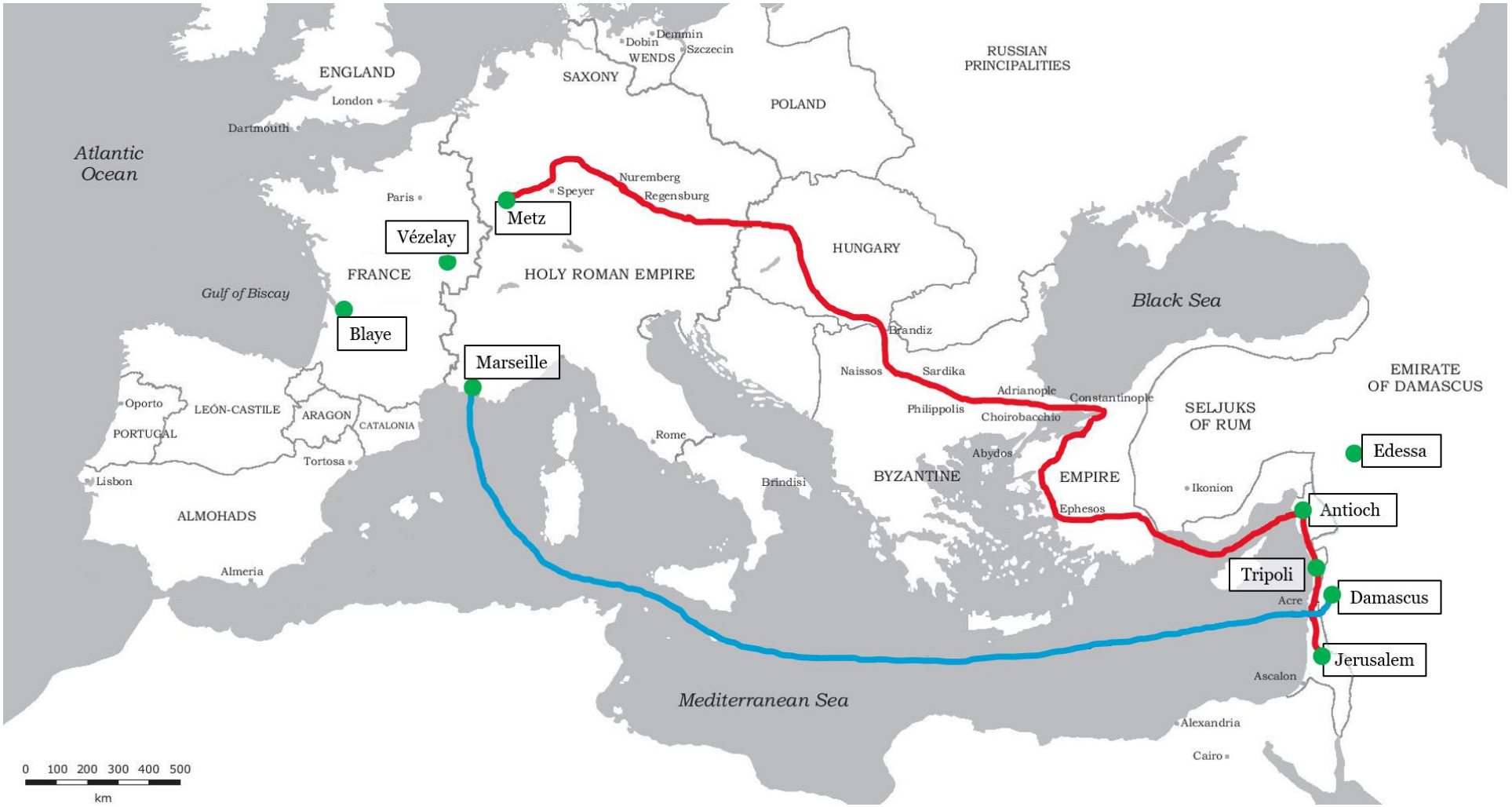


Figure 3.6: Frankish Routes during the Second Crusade.[663]

[663] Adapted from map in Janus Møller Jensen, 'The Second Crusade and the Significance of Crusading in Scandinavia and the North Atlantic Region', in Jason T. Roche and Janus Møller Jensen (eds.), *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 155-82, 323.

Rouben Charles Cholakian suggests that the voyage is as much a 'focal metaphor' in 'Lanquan li jorn' as it is in the *vida*, emphasizing its future-conditional-tense narration in the poem (see section 3.2c).[664] The sea is an analogously important structural feature of *L'Amour de loin*, in such a way as suggests that 'Lanquan li jorn' not only exerts citational influence over the opera, but sustains a deeper formal relationship with it.[665] Rudel's journey across the sea occupies the entirety of Act IV, is a conduit for the dream sequence, and arguably forms the dramatic core of the narrative in its slow, anxious tension and ensuing tempest. This sailing narrative also prompted Saariaho to work with the post-impressionistic sea topics that she developed in (and quoted from) *Oltra Mar* (see section 3.2b).[666] Jauré's journey forms a parallel with Act III of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, not to mention a wider constellation of medieval poetry and literature about voyaging.[667] As Lisa Perfetti suggests, lovers being separated by the sea bolsters a wider trope in crusade poetry of faithful absence.[668] In the anonymous trouvère song 'Jherusalem, grant damage me fais', for example, the woman's voice laments:

> Dear sweet beloved, how can you endure
> Such great pain for my sake on the salty sea?[669]

Rather than being read as factual, Rudel 'sailing away' in his vida could instead be read in part as a literalistic elaboration on the idea of the Outremer as exotic, far away, and beyond

[664] Rouben Charles Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 101.
[665] The Pilgrim even sings in Act II, scene i that he has sailed from Marseille ('nous avions embarqué à Marseille'), which suggests that Maalouf has considered the question of which route Jaufre could have taken.
[666] 'El se crosèt e se mes en mar'. Provençal text in Lisa Perfetti, 'Crusader as Lover: The Eroticized Poetics of Crusading in Medieval France', *Speculum*, 88/4 (2013), 932-57, 932.
[667] See especially crusade journeys in Rachel May Golden, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 225-34. See also questing in Grail narrative and, later, the travel narratives of figures like Marco Polo and John Mandeville.
[668] Perfetti, 'Crusader as Lover: The Eroticized Poetics of Crusading in Medieval France', 942.
[669] 'Biauz dous amis, con porroiz endurer La grant painne por moi en mer salee'. Translated in *Songs of the Women Trouvères*, ed. and trans. Eglal Doss-Quinby, Joan Tasker Grimbert, Wendy Pfeffer, and Elizabeth Aubrey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 146, cited in ibid.

the sea, but also as a poetic device that foregrounds a dangerous, feminized mass of liquid that must be navigated with faithful, loving endurance.

The twelfth-century entanglement of romance and the Second Crusade extends far beyond these seafaring narratives, however. In March 1148, Louis and Eleanor were received by the Prince of Antioch, Eleanor's uncle Raymond of Poitiers, who requested their assistance in an attack on Aleppo. Louis refused, insisting that his crusader's vow obliged him to complete a pilgrimage to Jerusalem first.[670] Allegedly, Eleanor argued in favour of attacking Aleppo, and Louis responded by accusing her of having an affair with Raymond, then took her to Jerusalem by force.[671] In June 1148, the remaining Frankish armies that had converged in Jerusalem, beset with infighting, decided to attack Damascus rather than take back Edessa—despite Damascus being the only Muslim city ever to ally with the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and despite the return of Edessa to Latin Christian rule being the original object of the Crusade.[672] Nobody from any of the other crusader states attended this council, and the siege was a failure.[673] The regent of Damascus, Mu'īn ad-Dīn 'Unar, had summoned significant reinforcements, including those led by Nūr ad-Dīn Mahmūd and Sayf ad-Dīn Ghāzī (sons of Zangī, who by this time had been stabbed to death by one of his slaves).[674] When Mu'īn threatened to hand the city over to Sayf, the Syrian Christian citizens implored the Franks to retreat which, pursued by archers, they did.[675]

[670] Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 279; whether this was his genuine motivation is a matter of debate, because he also benefited strategically from allying himself with the Kingdom of Jerusalem, see Roche and Møller Jensen, *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom*, 16-18.
[671] Flori Jean, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 224; for a discussion of the sources surrounding this controversy and its historiography, see Michael R. Evans, *Inventing Eleanor: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Image of Eleanor of Aquitaine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)., especially 21-43
[672] Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, 147.
[673] Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 281.
[674] Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, 138.
[675] Ibid., 149.

The alleged incestuous affair between Eleanor and Raymond was a source of scandal for chroniclers at the time.[676] As Michael R. Evans points out via Ernst Kantorowicz's theory of 'the king's two bodies', while a king's body to a certain extent transcends mortality in the body politic ('the king is dead, long live the king'), a queen's body is 'constrained by her mortal flesh, specifically her ability to produce a legitimate male heir'.[677] Queenly adultery was a threat to the male lineage of the realm, and to a certain extent a disavowal of the 'body' of the kingdom itself. Eleanor and Louis's marriage was annulled in 1152.[678]

3.3b. Bernard of Clairvaux and the Second Crusade

The failure of the Second Crusade happened late in Bernard's career, after he had achieved widespread fame and just four years before his death in 1153.[679] Maria L. Ruby Wagner summarizes how Bernard had written on several occasions in the years leading up to the crusade that he had no desire to leave his cloister in Clairvaux, and that armed pilgrimage seriously compromised his belief that 'the monastery was the spiritual equivalent of Jerusalem'.[680] Bernard's disappointment after the failure of the war is attested in his *Book of Considerations* to Pope Eugene III. Somewhat defensively, Bernard wrote, 'we rushed into this, not aimlessly but at your command', adding, 'or rather, through you at God's command'.[681] As Penny J. Cole writes, the modern tendency to overlook Bernard's romantic beautification of violent warfare stretches all the way back to the failure of the

[676] Evans, *Inventing Eleanor: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Image of Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 21.
[677] Ibid., 20.
[678] Ibid., 78.
[679] Bruce Holsinger, 'The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*', in David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (eds.), *The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 156-86. 160.
[680] Maria L. Ruby Wagner, 'The Impact of the Second Crusade on the Angelology and Eschatology of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux', *Journal of Religious History*, 37/3 (2013), 322-40, 323.
[681] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan (Cistercian Fathers series; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 48.

Second Crusade, with the Cistercians at Clairvaux probably destroying documents attesting to his involvement in the campaign upon his death.[682]

At first glance, Bernard's willingness to preach crusade propaganda may well seem incongruous with his affective rhapsodizing on the Song of Songs. But as Holsinger writes, the 'gentle intimacy of the "kiss of the mouth"' that 'so preoccupies' Bernard in his earlier sermons gives way to a more visceral language of desire in his later work.[683] Revisiting the *sponsa Christi* motif, where the devout reader is cast as part of feminized *ecclesia* ('Church') who loves Christ the Bridegroom (see Chapter 1), Bernard's twenty-sixth sermon details how, in Holsinger's words,

> the devotional subject must 'long to die', be willing to die and fly into the arms of Christ, in order to rid the body—and, more importantly, the 'body of the Church'—of the 'blackness' of affliction.[684]

This 'blackness' takes on a threefold meaning in Bernard's crusade propaganda. Firstly, it is eroticized in the voice of the woman in the Song of Songs ('I am black and beautiful … Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has gazed on me', 1:5-6).[685] Secondly, blackness is invoked derogatively to position Muslims as a corruption of the Holy Land. Thirdly (in a framework striking in its similarity to the black-and-white imagery in *Ancrene Wisse*, see Chapter 1), blackness is lauded as the outward manifestation (dust, armour, and suntan) of toil in crusading knights, who are 'white and gleaming underneath with the promise of salvation'.[686] More overtly than in *Ancrene Wisse*, these invocations of blackness and whiteness have racist connotations; Cord J.

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[682] Penny J. Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095-1270* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1991), 41; cited in Holsinger, 'The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*', 162.
[683] Holsinger, 'The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*', 178.
[684] Ibid., 173.
[685] See especially sermons 25-29, ibid., 165.
[686] Ibid., 172.

Whitaker discusses the flipside of the this rhetorical device in fourteenth-century romance *The Kings of Tars,* where a Sultan's skin turns white when he converts from Islam to Christianity.[687]

The latter two of these framings of blackness feature especially prominently in the *Liber ad milites templi de laude novae militiae* ('Book to the Knights of the Temple, in praise of the new knighthood'), a treatise Bernard wrote for Hugh of Payens upon his foundation of the Knights Templar in about 1130.[688] In this sustained exhortation of the new order of warrior-monks, Bernard enacts another *sponsa Christi* inversion, turning the spear-wound in Christ's side into a wound sustained by those who are 'pierced' by the arrow of love for Jesus.[689] In Holsinger's reading, Bernard's preoccupation with the black female body in the later sermons on the Song of Songs led him to this epistemological shift from the kiss to the spear: by enjoining crusaders to be both spiritually and bodily 'penetrated' in the name of God, Bernard's 'erotics of Christian devotion and desire for Christian domination ineluctably converges'.[690]

As Perfetti writes:

> The frequency with which poets combined the erotic and the religious over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries suggests that the two often functioned as complementary and interwoven discourses that worked in tandem to support crusading …. [The crusader's] suffering testifies to the deep-seated appeal of sacrificial desire as a way to demonstrate virtue in courtly culture.[691]

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[687] Whitaker, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking*, 20-47.
[688] Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood: A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Places of Jerusalem*, trans. Malcolm Barber and M. Conrad Greenia Ocso (Monastic Studies Series; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 9.
[689] Holsinger, 'The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*', 177-78.
[690] Ibid., 165.
[691] Perfetti, 'Crusader as Lover: The Eroticized Poetics of Crusading in Medieval France', 956.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I discuss the image of Christ as the ultimate lover-knight in *Ancrene Wisse*. Giles Constable numbers *Ancrene Wisse* among many examples of texts combining sacred and secular warfare in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the 1120s St Albans Psalter, for example, a miniature of two knights fighting is labelled, 'holy figures armed with a manly spirit, they are made into friends of Christ and heavenly athletes'.[692] Constable describes how monks and nuns were seen as 'soldiers of Christ engaged in spiritual warfare', with Abelard referring to a community of nuns as a 'militia of which the superior was the emperor, the six officials were dukes and consuls, the claustral nuns were mounted *milites*, and the lay sisters were foot soldiers'.[693] Significantly in relation to Bernard, the Magdeburg Charter of 1107-08 (an anonymous call-to-arms from the East of Germany) is replete with quotations from the Song of Songs: 'rise, make haste, my love, my dove, and come' (2:10); 'arise therefore bride of Christ and Come' (2.10; cf. 4:8 and 4:16); and 'let thy voice sound in the ears of the faithful' (2:14) are all rehearsed as exhortations to 'hasten to the war of Christ'.[694]

The intersection of courtliness and the (violent) love of Christ at work in these crusade-era texts challenges Moshé Lazar's objection to the 'Christianization' at work in analyses of twelfth-century secular love songs like 'Lanquan li jorn'.[695] Lazar argues that, at its core, courtly love is extramarital and therefore 'irreconcilable with the teaching of the church', and that Rudel's poetry with its 'secret love' is a perfect example of such an unchristian paradigm.[696] While I share Lazar's rejection of the idea (prominent in the discourse around

[692] Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the Twelfth Century*, 147.
[693] Ibid., 149.
[694] Ibid., 213.
[695] Moshé Lazar, 'Cupid, the Lady, and the Poet: Modes of Love at Eleanor of Aquitaine's Court', in William W. Kibler (ed.), *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Patron and Politician* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 35-59, 47.
[696] Ibid., 43, 47.

L'Amour de loin) that the faraway love is the Virgin Mary, my reservations have less to do with Christianity's rules and regulations and more to do with aesthetics.[697] As I discuss via Kristeva in Chapter 2 and the sacrament of confession in Chapter 4, there are manifold religious precedents for secretive love. Marian devotion is too unerotic, not urgent enough—Mary herself is too proximate to Christ and worshipper alike—to map convincingly onto the faraway love. But in his assertion of a 'divorce between religious and social life, between faith and love ideology', Lazar's fast separation of sacred and secular love stems from an imprudent expectation that cultural constructs as complexlu intertwined as courts and the Church would behave both logically and internally consistently.[698] As the bizarre erotic, martial, and religious countenances of crusading explored above suggest, Rudel's entanglements demand modes of reading capable of dealing with stranger modes of ambiguity, ambivalence, and transcendence that are irreducible to the sacred and the secular.

Tracing the connections between courtly love and crusading is a crucial means of situating Rudel (and by extension *L'Amour de loin*) within the messy and violent sexual and religious geo-politics of 1147-50. As Rachel May Golden writes:

> blending Crusade ideals and courtly beliefs, Rudel lies fluidly at the centre of several indices of troubadour song performance. He is the semi-fictionalized hero of his own vida, the real Second Crusader, the poet-composer of troubadour song; the narrator who speaks and sings within these songs; an inspiration for fellow troubadours, and a traveller and collaborator with new audience-creators. In assuming

[697] For Marian reading of Rudel's life and work, see Werf, *The Extant Troubadour Melodies: Transcriptions and Essays for Performers and Scholars*; for Marian readings of *L'Amour de loin*, see Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera'; Lambright, 'L'Amour de loin and the Vocal Works of Kaija Saariaho'; Lochhead, *Reconceiving Structure in Contemporary Music: New Tools in Music Theory and Analysis*; for examples of Marian themes in medieval secular poetry, see Daniel E. O'Sullivan, *Marian Devotion in Thirteenth-Century French Lyric* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
[698] For a further rebuttal of the secularization of courtly love, see Lindsay, *The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, 69-72.

> these many roles, Rudel offers numerous opportunities for the continuing performance of his songs.[699]

Understanding the way in which a song behaves within this historical milieu can shed new light on its postmedieval afterlives, especially within an the explicitly medievalist narrative of *L'Amour de loin*. There is a sense in which Maalouf, Saariaho, and any of the singers who have sung his role embody further extensions of Rudel's many cross-historical identities. Golden adds that '"Lanqan li jorn" embodies and reinforces this sense of openness, through its lack of resolution, engagement with memory, and suggestions of circularity'.[700] I will now turn to the song and unpack these qualities, before returning to Saariaho's setting in *L'Amour de loin*.

3.3c. 'Lanquan li jorn' as Crusade Song

As well as the three *chansonniers* with music that I discuss in section 3.1d, 'Lanquan li jorn' survives in fourteen sources without music, and the number and order of the stanzas varies between versions.[701] In *chansonniers* **I** and **K**, 'Lanquan li jorn' is copied immediately after the *vida*, with historiated L initials depicting Rudel. In **I** (Figure 3.7), Rudel is depicted at the point of death, swooning in the arms of his lady. In *chansonnier* **K** (Figure 3.8), he appears as a noble pilgrim, finely dressed in a red robe astride an imposing, decorated black horse. Although these historiated Ls forms the start of 'Lanquan li jorn', the death-scene in **I** conspicuously depicts an event from Rudel's *vida* and not the song. By the time these *chansonniers* were copied, both 'Lanquan li jorn' and Rudel's *vida*

[699] Golden, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song*, 224.
[700] Ibid., 225.
[701] In this chapter, I use Wolf and Rosenstein's edition. They point out that only *chansonniers* **A** and **B** include all seven stanzas and the *tornada* (each of which individual stanzas can be cross-referenced in other manuscripts), but follow Jeanroy in using **C** as the base text for its 'greater poetic logic'. See Wolf and Rosenstein, *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, 109; for an overview of stanza orderings in 'Lanquan li jorn', see Burger, '*Lanquand li jorn son lonc en mai*: une chanson d'amour et de croisade', 777; see also Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love*, 7.

appear to have accrued a very direct relationship via the faraway love motif, almost to the extent that the *vida* could be reclassified as a *razo*. These two images moreover depict the two sides of Rudel—upright, fighting nobleman on one hand, and fainting, passive lover on the other—as the hinges around which *vida* and song hang together.



Figure 3.7: Rudel's vida (written in red) followed by 'Lanquan li jorn' in chansonnier **I** *(Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 854, f.121v).*



Figure 3.8: Rudel's vida *(written in red) followed by 'Lanquan li jorn' in* chansonnier ***K*** *(Bibliothèque Nationale fonds fr. 12473, f.107v).*

In a close reading of this lyric, Cholakian points out the use of ‘lanquan’ rather than ‘the more obvious “quan”’, which creates a distinctive assonance with ‘lonh’ (‘faraway’).[702] Furthermore, Margaret Switten describes how ‘lonh’ always appears as a refrain-like tag, prominently closing in the second and fourth lines.[703] In this way, it ‘etch[es] the theme of distance into our memories’ and, with the circularity mentioned by Golden (described less positively by Cholakian as a ‘closed universe’), it thematizes distance on various textual levels.[704] In Emma Dillon’s words, the twice repetition of ‘loing’ that recurs through every stanza forms ‘the sonorous hook of the song … tied to its semantic heart: the conditions of loving at a distance’.[705]

1. Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai	1. When the days are long in May
m’es bels doutz chans d’auzels de loing,	I love the sweet sings of distant birds,
e qan me sui partitz de lai,	and when I have left that place
remembra·m d’un’amor de loing:	I remember a distant love:
vau de talan embroncs e clis,	I am burdened and bowed down with desire,
si que chans ni flors d’albespis	so that neither song nor hawthorn flower
no·m platz plus que l’iverns gelatz.	pleases me more than icy winter.
2. Ben tenc lo Seignor per verai	2. I consider true the Lord
per q’ieu veirai l’amor de loing,	by whom I shall see this distant love;
mas per un ben qe m’en eschai	but for one good thing that happens to me
n’ai dos mals, car tant m’es de loing;	I get two misfortunes, for she is so distant;
ai! car me fos lai pelleris,	ah! How I wish I were a pilgrim there,
si que mos pustz e mos tapis	so that my staff and my cloak
fos pels sieus bels oills remiratz!	might be seen by her beautiful eyes!
3. Be·m parra jois quan li qerrai,	3. It will be a joy for me when I seek it,
per amor Dieu, l’alberc de loing;	for the love of God, that distant shelter;
e s’a lieis platz, albergarai	and if it please her, I shall lodge
pres de lieis, si be·m sui de loing;	near her, though I am from a distance;
adoncs parra·l parlamens fis,	then the meeting will seem excellent,
qand drutz loindas er tant vezis	when this distant lover is so near
c’ab bels digiz jauzira solatz.	that in lovely talk he will enjoy her company.
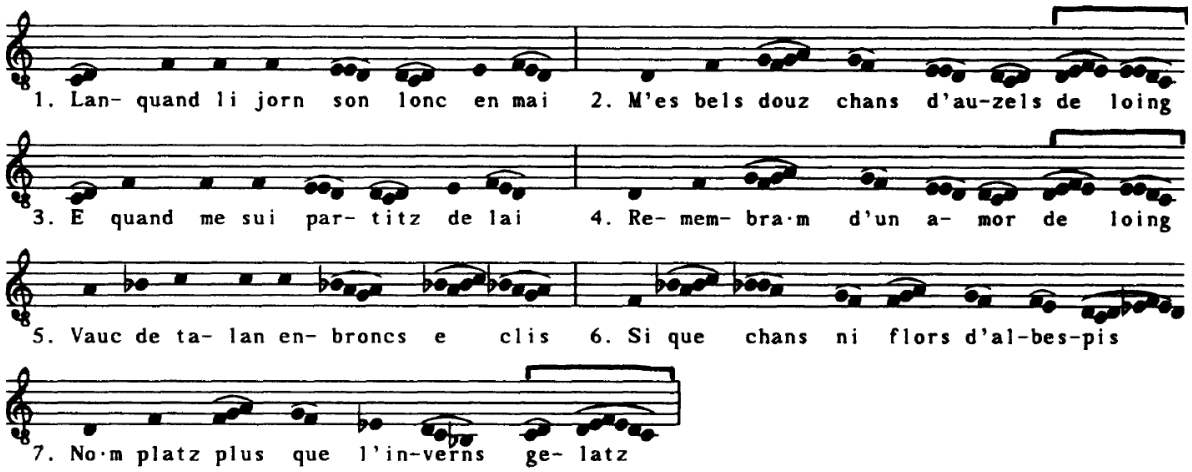
[702] Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 101.
[703] Margaret Switten, 'Singing the Second Crusade', in Michael Gervers (ed.), *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 72.
[704] Ibid.; Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 101.
[705] Emma Dillon, 'Distance', in Carol Symes (ed.), *A Cultural History of Media in the Middle Ages* (London: Bloomsbury, in press), 27.

4. Iratz e gauzens m'en partrai qan veirai cest'amor de loing; mas non sai coras la veirai, car trop son nostras terras loing; assatz hi a portz e camis, e per aisso no·n sui devis, mas tot sia cum a Dieu platz!	4. Sad and happy I shall leave, after I see this distant love; but I do not know when I shall ever see her, for our lands are too distant; there are plenty of ports and roads, yet I cannot guess about the future, but let things be as God pleases!
5. Ja mais d'amour no·m gauzirai si no·m gau d'est'amor de loing, que gensor ni meillor non sai vas nuilla part, ni pres ni loing, veraiamen en locs aizis, si que le cambra e·l jardis mi resembles totz temps palatz.	5. I shall never enjoy love if I do not enjoy this distant love, for I know none better or more noble anywhere, near or far; her distinction is so true and fine that there in the Saracens' kingdom I would be proclaimed a captive for her.
6. Dieus qui fetz tot cant ve ni vai, e formet cest'amor de loing, mi don poder, que·l cor eu n'ai, q'en breu veia l'amor de loing, veraiamen en locs aizis, si que la cambra e·l jardis mi resembles totz temps palatz.	6. God who made all that comes and goes, and created this distant love, give me strength, for I have the courage, soon to see the distant love, truly, in convenient places, so that the room and the garden may always seem a palace to me.
7. Ver ditz qui m'apella lechai ni desiron d'amor de loing, car nulls autre jois tant no·m plai cum gauzimens d'amor de loing; mas so q'eu vuoill m'es tan taïs q'enaissi·m fadet mos pairis q'ieu ames e non fos amatz.	7. Whoever calls me greedy and desirous of a distant love speaks the truth, for no other enjoyment pleases me as much as does the enjoyment of distant love; but what I want is so kept from me, for so my godfather fixed my fate that I should love and not be loved.
Mas so q'ieu vuoill m'es tan taïs: toz sia mauditz lo pairis qe·m fadet q'ieu non fos amatz!	But what I want is so kept from me; Cursed be the godfather Who fixed my fate so that I should not be loved![706]

Switten's musical analysis of 'Lanquan li jorn' elaborates on the importance of its circularity, while also emphasizing some of the melody's more ambiguous and unusual features. She describes the pitches sung to 'lonh' in lines 2 and 4 as 'cadential' and always the same, suggesting that the repetition of line 1's melody in line 3 completes this gesture

[706] Wolf and Rosenstein, *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, 146-50.

of continuous return (see Example 3.6).[707] The end of line 7, furthermore, closely resembles the 'lonh' pitches, creating 'an echo of distance'.[708] On a wider textual level, Cholakian points out the shifts in tense between present and future throughout Rudel's reminiscences, whereby he paradoxically 'remembers a love he has never seen', creating a 'fiction of love [as] the unbroken continuity of desire'.[709] This concept of desire operating outside of time is an important one—especially in relation to my discussion of Elizabeth Freeman's work in the introduction to this thesis—which I will further unpack towards the end of this chapter.



Example 3.6: Werf's transcription from chansonnier ***W***.[710]

Several commentators remark on the ambiguity of this song's tonality. While Hans Tischler suggests a central F with C as the co-final, Werf finds it 'difficult to determine whether this melody is a centric one, moving around F, or a standing one with C or

[707] Switten, 'Singing the Second Crusade', 73.
[708] Ibid.
[709] Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 102; Golden, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song*, 219.
[710] Transposed down a fifth, used in Switten's analysis. Werf, *The Extant Troubadour Melodies: Transcriptions and Essays for Performers and Scholars*, 215-19.

perhaps even D as a basis tone'.[711] Leo Treitler's reading is particularly detailed: he suggests that the first and third phrases emphasize D and F, whereas the second and fourth begin as if they will emphasize D and F, but depart to G and E, before closing on C; 'a shift from a more settled to a less settled configuration'.[712] Switten describes this schema as 'the opposite of what one might normally expect …. One expects a movement from unsettled to settled, open to closed, inconclusive to conclusive'.[713] Instead, she hears this melody as one that 'inscribes instability at its very centre', and reinforces that instability through repetition.[714]

Phrases 5 and 6 of 'Lanquan li jorn' are more florid and move towards the highest pitch of the melody (which is C, strengthening Werf's case for its being the co-final).[715] However, Switten finds the progression across the two phrases from A to D far more normative and stable; a stability which is undermined by the end of line 7, which returns to C.[716] Furthermore, these concluding Cs always coincide with the '-atz' rhyme—the only rhyme that has no couple within the stanza, but instead reaches across the final line of each from the lonely, wintry 'gelatz' ('frozen') to the anguished 'no foz amaz' ('I am not loved').[717] This convergence of unstable cadences and unhappy rhymes projects a sort of structural alienation, which Cholakian also locates on a textual level. As soon as the lover describes the rooms and gardens of the distant lady's palace in stanza 6, the first-person poetic voice

[711] Hans Tischler.'Performances of Medieval Songs'. Revue Beige de Musicologie, vol. 43 (1989), 231, cited in Switten, 'Singing the Second Crusade', 76; Hendrik van der Werf, *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères: A Study of the Melodies and their Relation to the Poems* (Utrecht: A. Oosthoek, 1972), 85-86.
[712] Leo Treitler, 'Music and Language in Medieval Song', in Margaret Louise Switten and Howell D. Chickering (eds.), *The Medieval Lyric* (commentary volume; South Hadley, MA: Mount Holyoke College, 1987), 12-27, 22-25.
[713] Switten, 'Singing the Second Crusade', 74.
[714] Ibid.
[715] Werf, *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères: A Study of the Melodies and their Relation to the Poems*, 85-86.
[716] Switten, 'Singing the Second Crusade', 74.
[717] Ibid., 73.

suddenly switches into the third person.[718] While Golden points out that the garden and the chamber harbour deep associations with memory in medieval culture (see the brain 'cells' in the previous Chapter, figure 2.10, section 2.3a), Cholakian emphasizes their erotic connotations.[719] 'Distancing is so much an inherent and essential part of the love discourse', writes Cholakian, 'that here at the *climax* of the tale both woman and lover are envisioned as being removed from their creator'.[720]

As Gaunt relates, Rudel's successor Peire Davenham took issue with what he perceived to be Rudel's undervaluing of the crusade.[721] But while 'Lanquan li jorn' is less explicit about crusading than Rudel's *vida*, the lover's desire to become the lady's 'captive' in 'the Saracens' kingdom' conflates femininity and orientalism in one enclosed image not dissimilar to the self-subjugation narrative that Holsinger finds in Bernard's pro-crusade literature.[722] Furthermore, a crucial part of the reception history of 'Lanquan li jorn' is the now-common assertion (first made in 1953 by Heinrich Husmann) that the early thirteenth-century crusading song 'Palästinalied' by Walther von der Vogelweide is a contrafacture of 'Lanquan li jorn'.[723] Henry Hope details a summary of the debates surrounding Husmann's proposal, concluding that the matter remains unsettled.[724] But

[718] Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 103.
[719] Golden, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song*, 219; see Chapter 2 for further discussion of rooms and gardens as what Kay terms 'places of thought' in medieval literature in *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry*.
[720] Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 103. Emphasis in original.
[721] Simon Gaunt, *Troubadours and Irony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 105-06; for a discussion of other troubadours influenced by Rudel (Marcabru, Peire Cardenal, and Bertran Carbonel) see Frank M. Chambers, *An Introduction to Old Provençal Versification* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1985), 78-79.
[722] Holsinger, 'The Color of Salvation: Desire, Death, and the Second Crusade in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*', 165.
[723] Heinrich Husmann, 'Das Prinzip der Silbenzählung im Lied des zentralen Mittelalters', *Die Musikforschung*, 6/1 (1953), 8-23, 44a; cited in Henry Hope, 'Constructing Minnesang Musically', PhD (University of Oxford, 2013), 282.
[724] Hope, 'Constructing Minnesang Musically', 282-301.

even if the contrafacture were conclusively disproven, the historical association between 'Lanquan li jorn' and 'Palästinalied' would remain inseparable from the afterlife of Jaufre Rudel. Moreover, his associations with the Second Crusade are demonstrable enough without the added complexity of drawing concrete historical connections between Rudel's output and Vogelwiede's involvement in the Fifth Crusade almost a century later.[725]

An important crusading resonance in 'Lanquan li jorn' rests in the way in which the lover styles himself as a pilgrim. Perfetti describes how the terms 'pilgrim' and 'crusader' were virtually interchangeable in the twelfth century, with the former probably even being more commonplace.[726] Concluding on another prominent '-atz' rhyme, the final three lines of stanza 2 read:

ai! car me fos lai pelleris,	ah! how I wish I were a pilgrim there,
si que mos pustz e mos tapis	so that my staff and my cloak
fos pels sieus bels oills remiratz!	might be seen by her beautiful eyes!

As John Rea details, the cloak and the staff are not just traditional travelling garments, but erotic tropes, the staff as a *double entendre* for a penis (especially in the poetry of William IX and in the *Romance of the Rose*) and the cloak providing a means of concealing (and revealing) nakedness.[727] 'Lanquan li jorn' invites the latter connotation in particular in its express desire for the pilgrim's garb to be seen by the lady's 'beautiful eyes', the enfolding cloak in turn mirroring the erotic enclosures of the chamber and the garden. The very

[725] For recent comparisons between the two songs, see Golden, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song*, 227; and Leo Treitler, *With Voice and Pen: Coming to Know Medieval Song and How it Was Made* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 478; For the possibility that chansonnier W was made for the Outremer during the Fifth Crusade, see John Haines, 'The Songbook for William of Villehardouin, Prince of the Morea (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fonds français 844): A Crucial Case in the History of Vernacular Song Collections', in Sharon E. J. Gerstel (ed.), *Viewing the Morea: Land and People in the Late Medieval Peloponnese* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2013), 57-109.
[726] Perfetti, 'Crusader as Lover: The Eroticized Poetics of Crusading in Medieval France', 936.
[727] John Rea, 'The Pilgrim Figure in Jaufré Rudel', *Neophilologus*, 65/4 (1981), 518.

existence of a pilgrim is premeditated on a distance for that pilgrim to cross, and that distance—like the garment—conceals an unknown, desirable thing.

Rudel's *vida* specifies that he hears of the faraway love by word of mouth from 'pilgrims' returning from Antioch. This detail provides the pretext for another crucial structural element in *L'Amour de loin*: the androgynous Pilgrim go-between, who (apart from the choruses) is the only interlocutor for both Clémence and Jaufré for most of the opera. *L'Amour de loin*'s Pilgrim is not warlike. He is, however, erotic and eroticizing. In her queer reading of *L'Amour de loin*, Iitti describes the exoticizing drive that underpins his role, traveling only because he 'wants to 'gaze' at 'what the Orient holds'.[728] Cholakian identifies this subtext cartography of desire in 'Lanquan li jorn', too: 'the amorous pilgrimage is a voyage to the unexplored and unexplorable regions, the dark, female continent'.[729]As go-between, The Pilgrim is instrumental in creating the idealized image of Clémence for Jaufré, with such intensity that Jaufré homosocially remarks, 'if any man in this world below has any rights over me, it is you alone'.[730] At the same time, citing Heather Hadlock, Iitti suggests that the Pilgrim's own implied love for Clémence generates a lesbian trouser-role eroticism.[731]

As the mouthpiece for both lovers, the Pilgrim occupies an agile sexual position. In section 3.2b, I mention that an *envoi* by Marcabru situates Rudel 'in Outremer'. An Old French term that literally means 'sending forth', *envoi* is a synonym for the Occitan *tornada*

[728] Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', 11.
[729] Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 103.
[730] Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', 11-12.
[731] Heather Hadlock, 'The Career of Cherubino, or the Trouser Role Grows Up', in Mary Ann Smart (ed.), *Siren Songs* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 67-92; Iitti, '*L'Amour de loin*: Kaija Saariaho's First Opera', 12.

('turning') that denotes the shorter, final stanza at the end of a lyric.[732] As in Marcabru's to Rudel, an *envoi* may address a patron or other recipient to whom the poet wishes to 'send' the lyric. In *L'Amour de loin*, the Pilgrim himself becomes a human *envoi*. He receives the love-song, transports it across the sea, and relays it to the beloved, in essence giving himself over as part of the text. The fact that the audience never hears Jaufré sing his love-song only serves to heighten the radical distancing at work in 'Lanquan li jorn''; texturally, structurally, gesturally, bodily, and now vocally.

3.4. Analysis: Act II, tableau ii

When 'Lanquan li jorn' first appears in Act II, tableau ii, the Pilgrim sings it to Clémence in Modern French. A response to Clémence's initial disbelief that a troubadour whom she has never met sings songs of love for her, it becomes aural proof of Jaufré as a desiring subject. The song-exchange marks the beginning of what Everett describes as the Pilgrim's dramaturgically 'pivotal function' as human *envoi*; from this point onwards, the two lovers' mirrored, atomized yearning of Act I 'dissolves' into the 'excesses of desire' that will eventually bring about Jaufré's death.[733] The introduction, for the first time in the opera, of diegetic song is signalled by the Pilgrim in bars 368-73, where he sings, 'but there is one of his songs that goes like this'.[734] He then proceeds, in bars 373-417, to sing stanza 5 of 'Lanquan li jorn' in Modern French. For the rest of this section, I refer to Saariaho's setting of Rudel's poetry by line number:

[732] D. J. Rothman and A. Preminger, 'Envoi', in Roland Greene et al. (eds.), *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (4 edn.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 438.
[733] Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', 333.
[734] 'Il y a cependant/ une chanson qui dit à peu près ceci'. Trans. Stokes and Hall, Saariaho and Maalouf, *L'Amour de loin*, vocal score, 361.

1. Jamais d'amour je ne jouirai	I shall never enjoy love
2. Si je no jouis de cet amour de loin.	if I do not enjoy this distant love,
3. Car plus noble et meilleure je ne connais	for I know none better or more noble
4. En aucun lieu ni près ni loin	anywhere, near or far;
5. Sa valeur est si grande et si vraie	her distinction is so true and fine
6. Que là-bas, au royaume des Sarrasins	that there in the Saracens' kingdom
7. Poue elle, je voudrais être captive.	I would be proclaimed a captive for her.[735]
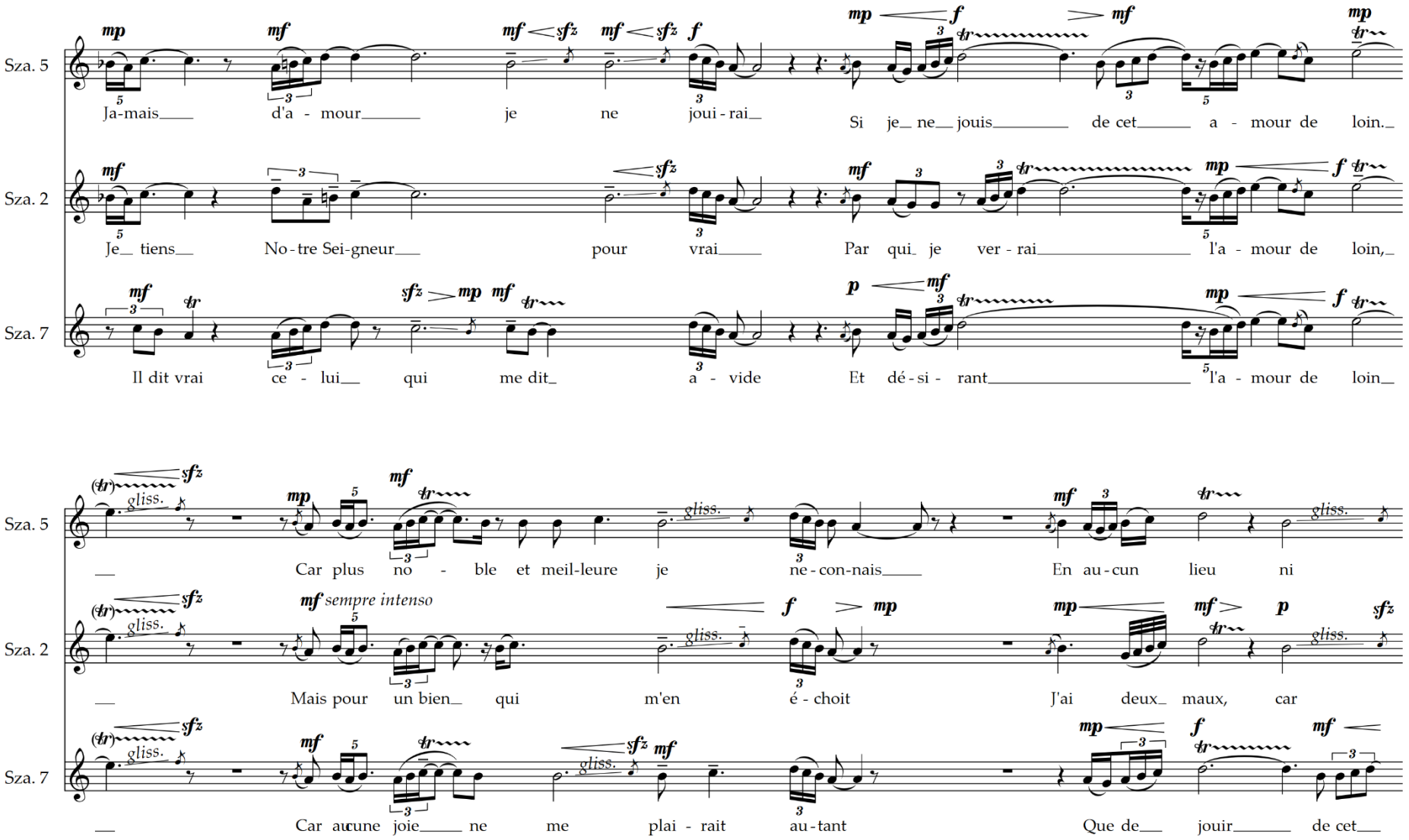
Along with the Pilgrim's verbal indication that he is about to sing a diegetic song, several orchestrational cues—crotales, quiet bass drum rolls, triangle, and the chorus altos singing a sustained A to an 'ah' vowel—signal a shift in narrative register replete with orientalist topics. As Abbate and Parker put it, the choral vocalization 'conveys pure awe, as if invisible spectators cannot remain silent in the face of some great mystery'; another signification of the compelling concealment at work within distance.[736] A score direction at the start of the song reads, 'from here on, until the end of the second act, the electronic part is very present, filling the air with whispers and other concrete sounds from nature, transformed by resonant filters'.[737] Reminiscent of the *musique concrète* electronic elements employed in *Lonh*, these filtered nature-sounds invoke the May birdsong from stanza 1 of Rudel's poems that causes the lover to recall his 'amor de loing'.

Saariaho connects the Pilgrim's introduction to the song itself through a continuous texture of sustained low strings. Their B-C-D♭-D tetrachord from bar 368 fades into a sustained A, played *sul ponticello* by the violas in bar 370, that in turn cues the alto chorus's wordless drone-pedal from bar 372. As I discuss in section 3.2c, Saariaho recomposes Rudel's melody, and the side-by-side comparison in Example 3.7 demonstrates how the Pilgrim's melodies vary little between his renditions in this tableau of stanzas 5 (bars 374-417), 7

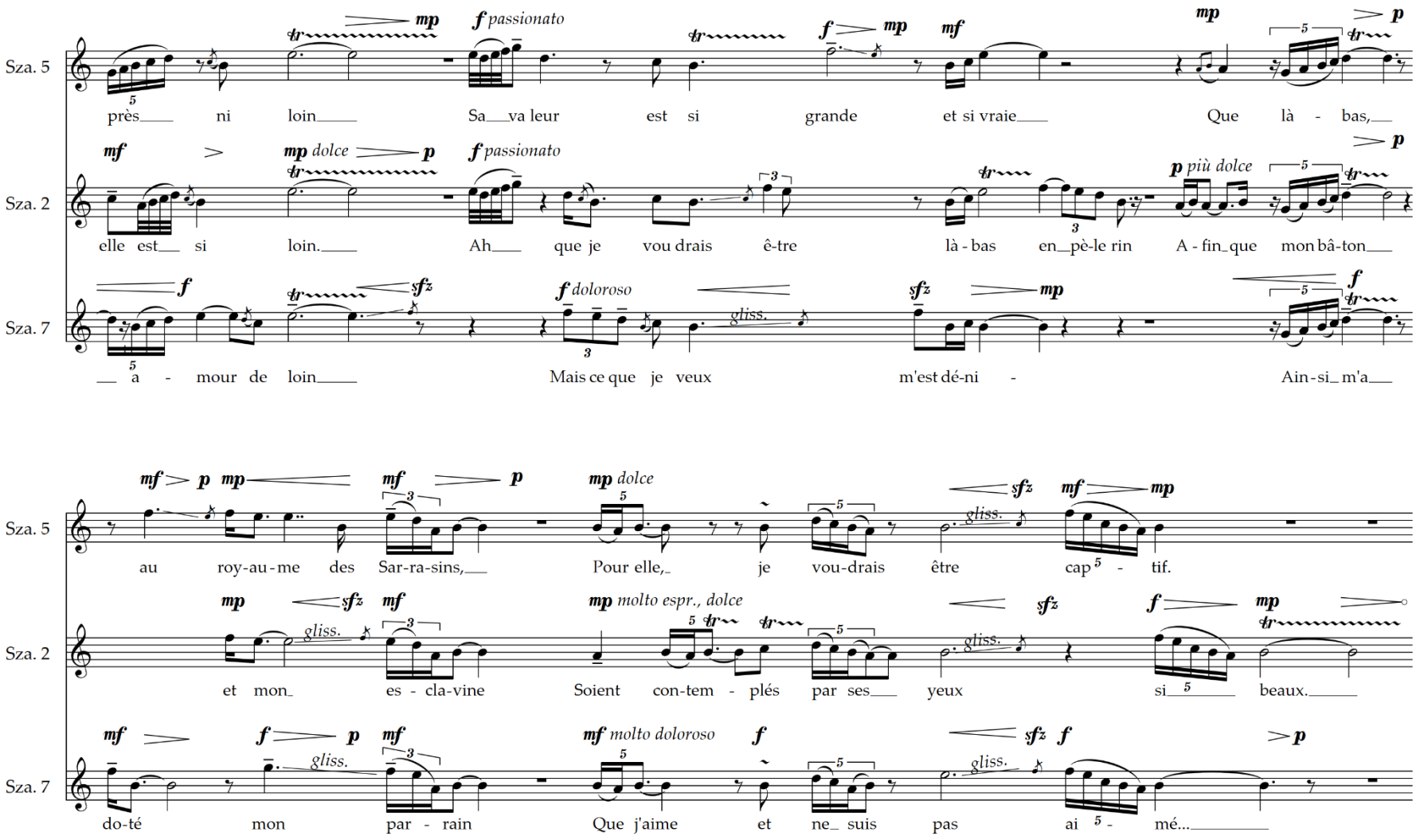
[735] Wolf and Rosenstein, *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, 146-50.
[736] Abbate and Parker, *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years*, 603.
[737] Saariaho and Maalouf, *L'Amour de loin*, vocal score, 113.

(bars 423-64), and 2 (472-511). The Pilgrim's melody for 'Lanquan li jorn' never crosses below the altos' A pedal. Ornamented with frequent trills, brief flourishes of melisma, and glissandi to neighbour notes that crescendo to *sforzando*, its overall effect alongside the orientalist percussion instrumentation invokes what Haines describes as the 'Arabic style of performing medieval music'—a practice that in part emerged from nineteenth-century orientalist hypotheses about the direct influence of Arabic music and poetry on troubadours during the crusades.[738]

[738] John Haines, 'The Arabic Style of Performing Medieval Music', *Early Music*, 29/3 (2001), 369-78.



Example 3.7: Melodic comparison of the Pilgrim's stanzas in Act II, tableau ii.
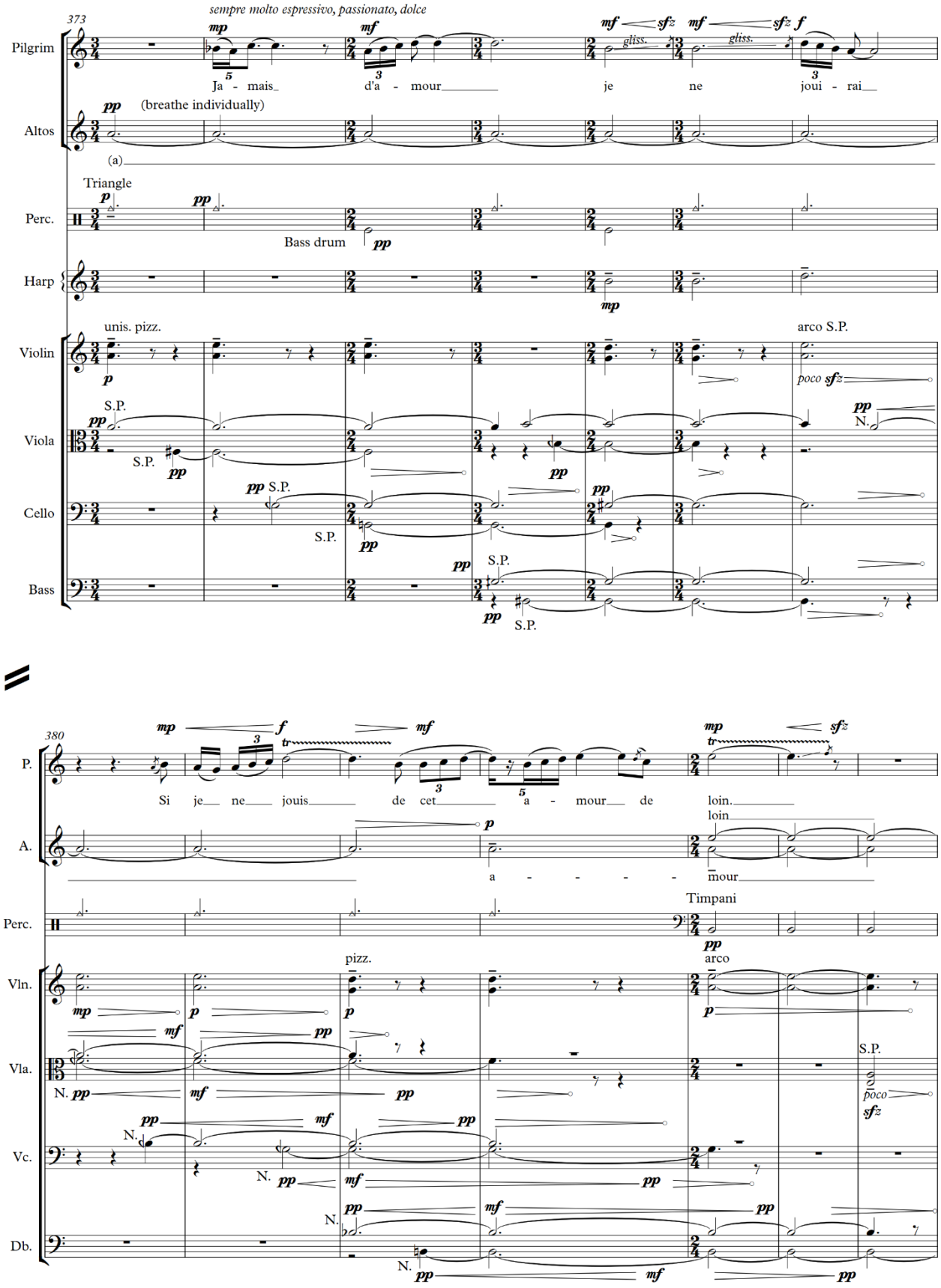


(Example 3.7 continued).

As Everett points out, the word 'loin' is 'always placed on the melodic apex, E5, on the alternate phrase', which she interprets as an 'Aeolian' dominant relationship with the altos' A pedal.[739] Several prominent Fs however supersede those Es in pitch: the *sforzando* end-points of the glissandi on 'loin', at the introduction of the word 'pèlerin' (pilgrim) in stanza 2, increasing in prominence in the final two lines of stanza 7, and at the top of the flourish on the final two syllables of each stanza. While Everett's reading might account for these Fs as E's upper neighbour, they could also be heard as part of a longer-term structural tritone with B, that envelops the central E in Saariaho's 'basic chord' (Example 3.4, section 2.3c).

Throughout the first two lines stanza 5, the Pilgrim's melody elaborates the orientalist percussion of its preceding bars: open fifths and fourths on violins (first *pizzicato,* then *arco sul pont* from bar 379, see Example 3.8) join the crotales and harp on strong beats, creating strumming and chiming invocations of the 'vielle or Arabic lute' Jaufré holds at the beginning of the opera (see section 3.2a). In Christopher Brown's piano reduction (Example 3.9), the low strings' sustained accompaniment to the first two lines of stanza 5 underpin the violins' A-E and G-D opens fifths with harmonies derived from harmonic fields II and IV (see Example 3.5, section 3.2c). In the full orchestration, however, through the incremental introduction of quartertones, they elaborate a more obscure harmonic landscape. When transposed by octave into the same register, they populate a pitch space that traverses by mostly quartertonal increments from F to B as the Pilgrim sings line 1, and then expands by one quartertone more to F𝄲 in the second violas' harmonic underpinning of the melody's second line (see Example 3.10). On the surface, this microtonal expansion of structural harmonic fields lends a hyper-real, uncanny quality to
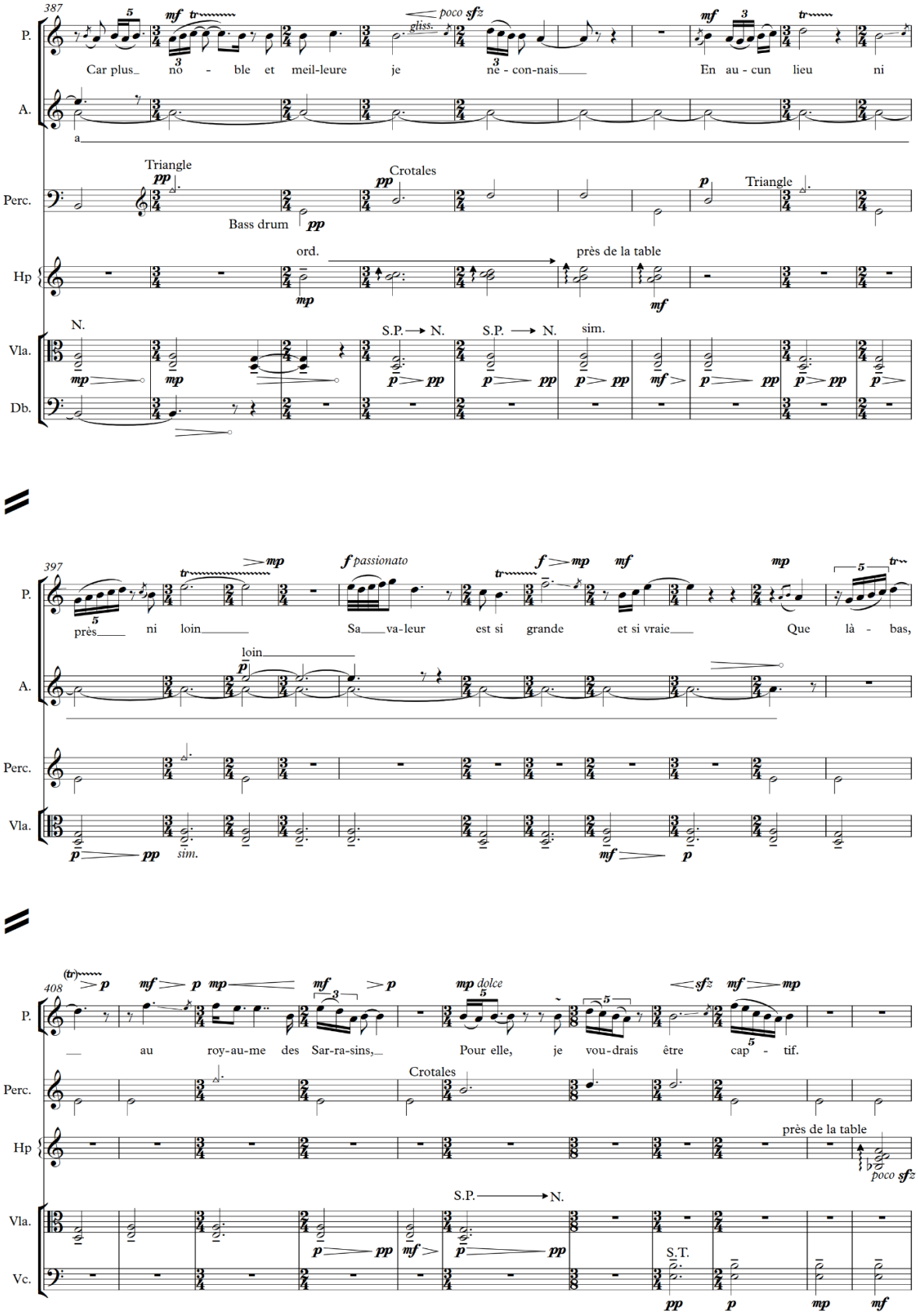
[739] Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', 339.

the melody that the Pilgrim-*envoi* imports to Clémence from abroad. The F♮ moreover foreshadows the prominent ‘loin’ glissandi between E and F that the Pilgrim sings in each stanza: like him, F♮ occupies the space between two places.
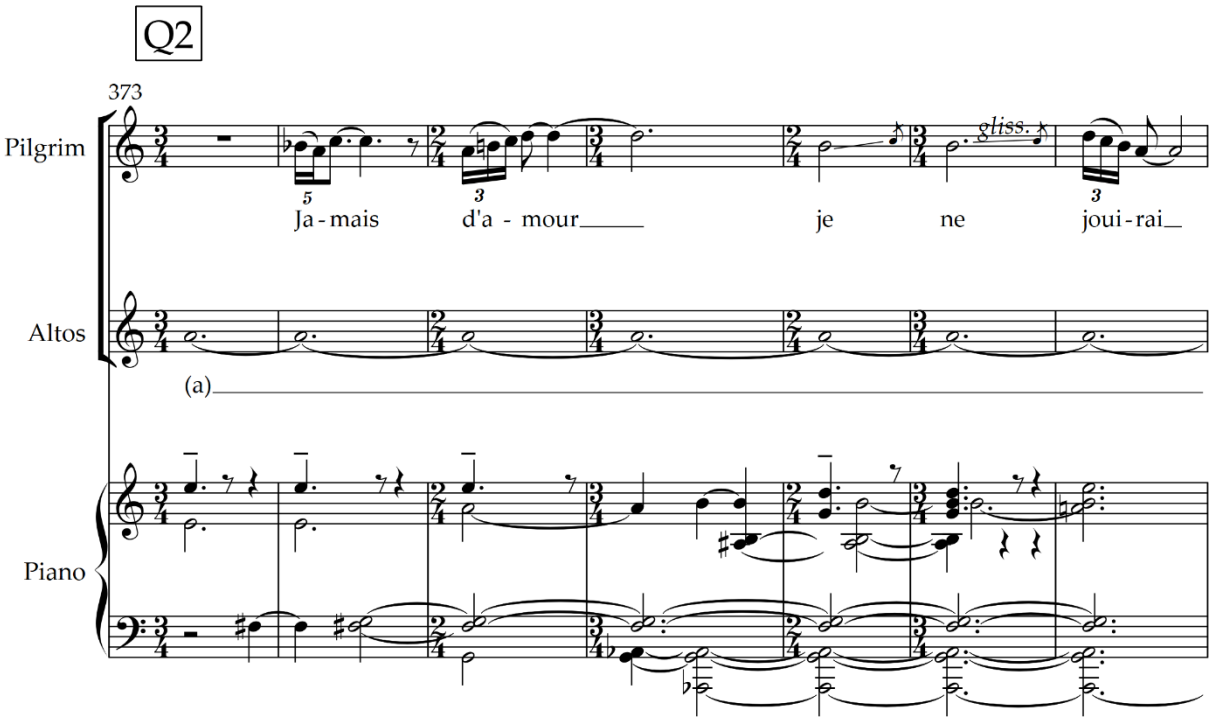


Example 3.8: The Pilgrim sings stanza 5, bars 373-418.[740]

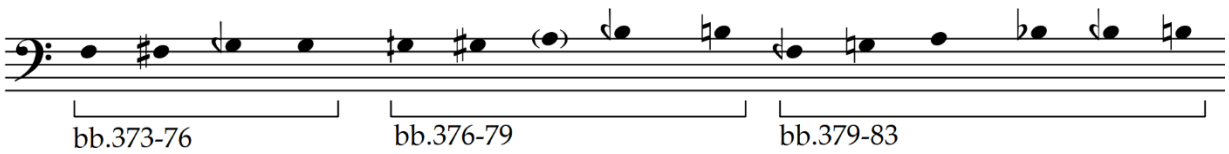
[740] 'N.' denotes 'normal' bowing (ie. not *sul ponticello*).



(Example 3.8 continued).



Example 3.9: Chris Brown's piano reduction of bars 373-79.



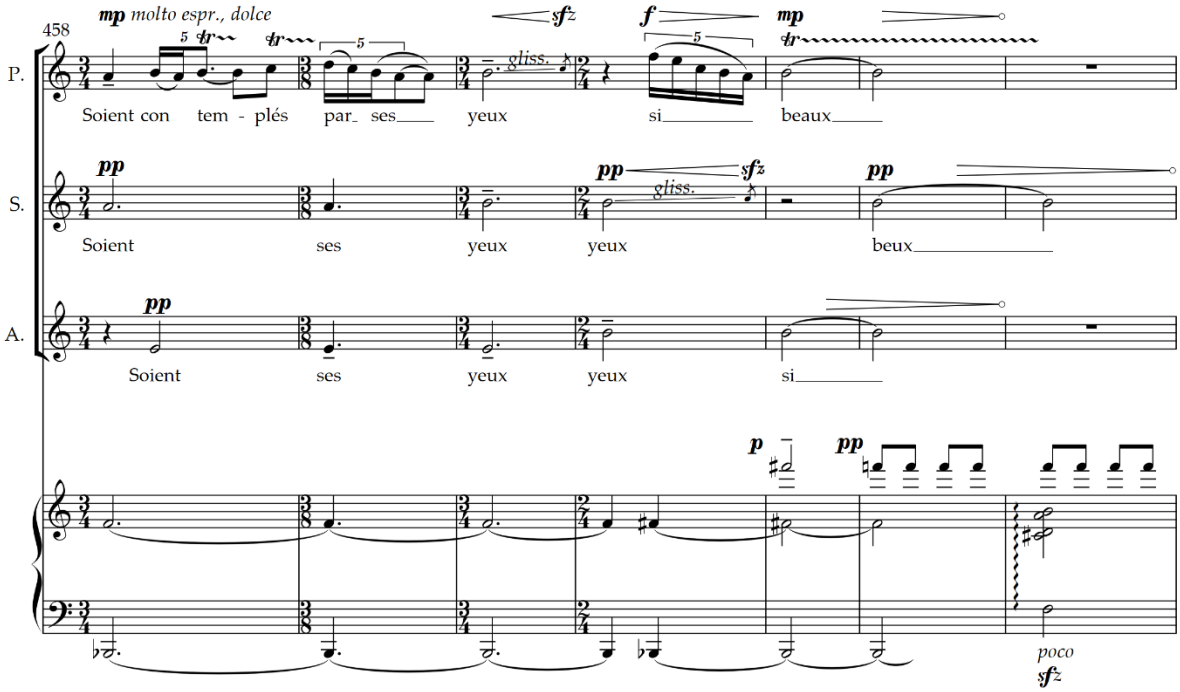
Example 3.10: Low-string microtonal inflections in bars 373-83.

At the end of line 2, the microtonal low-string harmonies fade away. The open fifths, bowed *sul ponticello* by the violins in a kind of timbral enjambement between lines 1 and 2 of the poetry (bars 379-82), move onto the violas before the start of line 3 (‘car plus’). The dramatic *sforzando-decrescendo al niente* articulations of these open fifths, vielle-like, settle into a consistent song-accompaniment texture for the remainder of stanza 5, briefly passing into the cellos in its final bars (Example 3.8). The vielle topic cycles between E-A and D-G open fourths in lines 3-7, almost always on strong beats with the orientalist percussion. The fact of its consistent return to E-A at the end of lines 3-6 bolsters Aeolian readings of the Pilgrim’s song, especially Everett’s, implicitly casting A as the first degree

of an underlying harmonic scale.[741] However, following the *diminuendo* of the altos' A-drone to silence in bar 406, the vielle topic disappears in bar 414, leaving the Pilgrim completely unaccompanied apart from a single crotale D as he completes the final line of the stanza ('je voudrais être captive'), expressing the poet's desire to 'become captive' in the 'Saracens' realm'.

From the interjections of timpani (bars 384-86), harp (bars 389-93), and crotales (bars 390-94) throughout this stanza, B verges on becoming a competing pedal against the A drone. After the gap under 'voudrais' in bar 414, the vielle topic re-emerges as an E-B fifth in the cellos, incorporating the Es identified by Everett as the 'loin' pitch into a fifth-relationship with B, while the Pilgrim's final flourishes outline the tritone B-F-B contour. These central pitches of the basic chord—F, E, and B (Example 3.4)—are reconciled as core pitches of the love-song, at the very point in the song where crusading is most explicit. As the Pilgrim proceeds to sing stanzas 2 and 7, the vielle topic is subsumed into the women's chorus, who sing a slow two-part counterpoint, echoing the Pilgrim's words, almost exclusively comprised of As, Bs, and Es (Example 3.11). These open fourths and fifths, once connoting Jaufré's instrument, are transplanted into the mouths of Clémence's retinue who (as I discuss in section 3.2a) effectively function as an extra, communal voice for her.

[741] Everett, 'The Tropes of Desire and Jouissance in Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin*', 339.
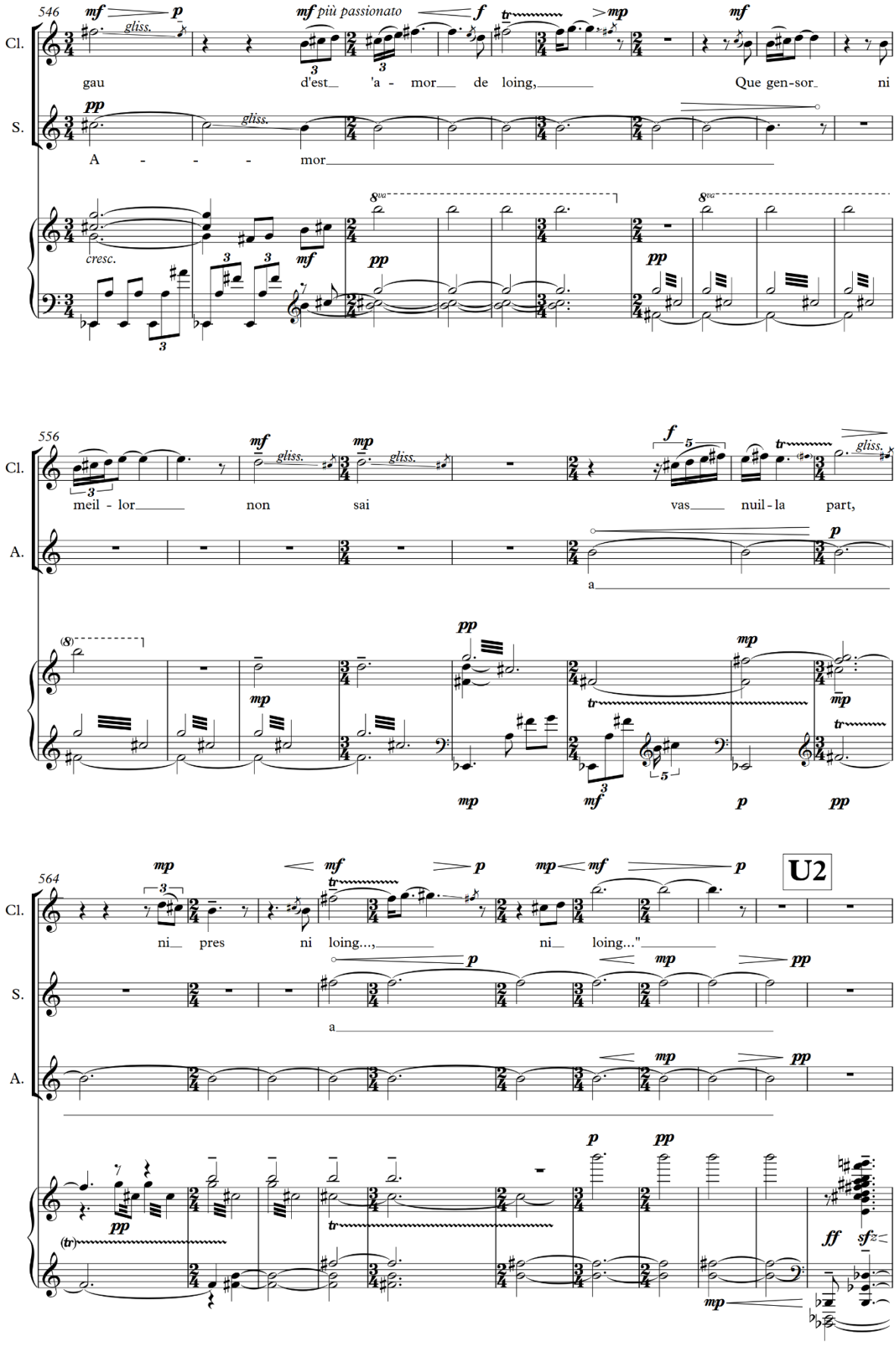


Example 3.11: The women's chorus takes up the vielle topic, bars 458-64.

When Clémence sings stanza 5 herself, now in Occitan, in bars 536-73, her melody is a step higher than the Pilgrim's and underpinned by new tritones: C♯-G violin harmonics against A-E♭ in the basses. As Everett suggests, this higher tessitura couples with Clémence's interpellation of new upward contours into the melody 'as if to project her desire more forcefully onto her psyche'.[742] This reading is bolstered by the subtly enhanced role of the women's chorus. Like during the Pilgrim's fifth stanza, they sustain the word 'amor', now with B assuming the place of the pedal A. However, the sopranos now symbiotically glissando with Clémence in bars 546-47, generating a parallel open fourth that slides from C♯-F♯ back to B-E, as if the vielle topic has been subsumed into the defining filigree of the melody. Sustaining F♯ and B below her in bars 567-74, the chorus finally supports Clémence's climactic motion from F♯5 to B5, when she repeats 'ni loing' (the end of line 4, 'near or far', Example 3.12). While B bisects the C♯-G and A-E♭ tritones at work in this stanza's harmony, its F♮ tritone pole is now completely absent, replaced by

[742] Ibid.

F♯s in abundance, particularly prominent in this glassy open-fifth accompaniment to her premature conclusion of stanza 5. Any suggestion of affective clarity potentially imparted by this harmonically spare ending to her song is undermined in bar 574 by the sudden eruption of what Everett terms ‘the chord of rupture’; a wind, brass, percussion, and low-string *fortississimo* outburst containing every pitch class (or, in the case of C and E♭, a quartertone neighbour) except F.



Example 3.12: The end of Clémence's excerpt from stanza 5, bars 546-74.

Everett describes this first rendition by Clémence's of 'Lanquan li jorn' in Lacanian terms, as 'the pivotal moment' when she 'passes from the Imaginary ("mirror-play")' domain of receiving Jaufré's song to the 'Symbolic domain', in which she 'takes ownership' of it. The stripping away of F from Clémence's reharmonization only superficially and temporarily stabilizes the song by enabling B—in the same register as the final B of the entire opera (see field IV, Example 3.5)—to come into full, climactic focus for the first time. The 'rupture' chord, portentous of the deathly consequences for Jaufré of the Pilgrim's message, presages what Everett terms the 'dysphoric pole' of the *jouissance* induced by excess desire; the unbearable pleasure of love is converted into pain.[743] It is neither Jaufré's off-stage composition nor the *envoi*'s delivery of 'Lanquan li jorn' that sets the opera's plot into motion. Instead, it is Clémence's active reception and creative re-rendition—her inscription of another layer of the palimpsest—that lends this power to song.

3.5. Conclusion

Standing alone on the beach in Tripoli in Act III, tableau ii, Clémence sings stanzas 2 and 7 of 'Lanquan li jorn' to urgent, pulsing string and harp textures, intermittently interrupted by intensely rhythmic clapping, tambourine, tom-toms, and a frame drum played by hand. A further analysis of Act III's more through-composed and complex recompositions of 'Lanquan li jorn' are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, an important observation arises from surveying these songs: that they represent by far the most overtly orientalist passages in *L'Amour de loin*, in a manner that the history of aesthetic slippage between medievalism and orientalism identified by Haines only partially accounts for.[744] One of the

[743] Ibid., 330; 339.
[744] Haines, 'The Arabic Style of Performing Medieval Music'.

primary loci of *L'Amour de loin*'s orientalist aesthetic is the topical imitation of Jaufré's 'Arabic lute'; he may project an orientalist ideal of distant feminine beauty, but its musical manifestation resides in the Pilgrim's imitation of Jaufré's own imagined singing style. Clémence herself may be 'au loin' ('far away'), but it is Jaufré's love that comes 'de loin' ('from afar') and both are, crucially, Westerners. The 'translocal' medievalism of Maalouf's writing described by Bahri and Canadé Sautman (see section 3.2a) manifests primarily in Clémence's diasporic position as a Westerner in the East—the inverse of Maalouf's own positionality as a Lebanese writer in the West.[745] While Clémence sings in Occitan, gazes Westward across the Mediterranean, and yearns for her childhood home in Toulouse, she both absorbs and refracts the fantasies of distance at work in Jaufré's song.

Since at least the nineteenth century, there has been much speculation about who Rudel's 'faraway love' could have been. Candidates have included Countess Odierna (wife of Raymond IV of Toulouse, the father of Alphonse Jourdain, see section 3.3a), Odierna's daughter Melisandendis, the Virgin Mary, Helen of Troy, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and an allegory for Jerusalem itself.[746] Jeanroy's position—that she is completely fictional—is expanded productively by Cholakian, who asks: 'isn't the unnamed woman in courtly discourse always an invention?'.[747] While Lindsay concurs that these fantasy elements of courtly love are 'vital parts of the troubadour system', he argues that this invented quality of the troubadour's lady does not render her 'unreal or unattainable': the 'separation

[745] Bahri and Canadé Sautman, 'Crossing History, Dis-orienting the Orient: Amin Maalouf's Uses of the "Medieval"', 176-77.
[746] Barbara Smythe, *Trobador Poets: Selections from the Poets of Eight Trobadors* (Old Occitan Series; Cambridge, ON: In Parentheses Publications, 1911), 24-25; Lindsay, *The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, 67; Jeanne Lods, 'Review of Frank/Spitzer Controversy', *Romania*, 71 (1950), 117-18.
[747] Jeanroy, *Les chansons de Jaufré Rudel*, iv; Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading*, 84.

theme' exhibits a 'tremendous magnetic pull towards the *body and soul* of the beloved'.[748] 'From one angle', he writes:

> the Distant Lady is every woman truly loved and loving, and the symbol of distance refers to the element of the unknowable in her …. The movement of love is towards knowledge of the other and of oneself.[749]

Distance is an inevitable part of this pursuit of total intimacy, because knowledge always leads to the potential for more and deeper knowledge: 'new dimensions of closeness and distance open up'.[750] Love becomes a simultaneously tangible and transcendent project; the inevitable distance of the terrestrial lover is in a sense the complement of the ultimate carnality of God in Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs. When, in her final aria, Clémence sings, 'Seigneur, c'est toi, l'amour de loin' ('it's you, Lord, the faraway love'), her response to Jaufré's death sutures these at once theological and libidinous modes of desire.

Just as Bernard's affective sermonizing enacted a historical hinge between Christian modes of desire and the violent invasion of the Holy Land, Rudel's afterlife situates him, in Golden's words, 'fluidly at the centre' of multiple historical and political implications for song that far exceed the boundaries of romantic love between individuals .[751] In the postmodern popular imagination, the image of the 'new troubadour' emerged during the folk revival of the 1960s and lent its name to influential café-bars in London and Hollywood. The figures associated with this subculture—Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Linda Ronstadt, Davey Graham—are perceived as romantic, itinerant singer-songwriters. Some (like Rudel) enabled modernist audiences to forge romanticising connections between the

[748] Lindsay, *The Troubadours and Their World of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, 69. Emphasis my own.
[749] Ibid.
[750] Ibid.
[751] Golden, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song*, 224.

distant and the exotic.[752] But these figures are also traditionally anti-war, intimately tied to 1960s counterculture, and a far cry away from the courtly environs that composer-singers like Rudel inhabited.[753] In *L'Amour de loin* and many of the other guises through which Rudel has crossed history, 'Lanquan li jorn' has been his personal *envoi*. But aside from the song's passing references to 'pilgrimage' and 'Saracens', the closest that *L'Amour de loin* ever comes to acknowledging the Crusades whatsoever centres once again on Clémence: in Act II, tableau i, the Pilgrim sings, 'Tripoli … belongs to your noble family'. Her status as a Western settler, and unspecified quality of the 'faraway love' of the *vida*, supplants Rudel 'taking the cross' in his *vida* as the signifier of war. Perhaps accompanying Jaufré with an army would have crowded Maalouf's sparing narrative and diluted the character's single-mindedness. Perhaps it would have made him unlikeable. Foremost, it would have sacrificed the intimacy of the lovers' exchanges with their *envoi* Pilgrim: the song medium through which they have both been conjured into exitance and the literal pretext for seeing one another in the flesh.[754] In the opera, Jaufré insists that 'she must now listen to all the songs I sing with my own voice'.[755] In the *vida*, he is 'determined to see her'.[756]

[752] For a discussion of 'hippie orientalism', see Brian T. Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 247 - 302.
[753] Haines, *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères: The Changing Identity of Medieval Music*, 284; Edward Macan, *Rocking the Classics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73; for a discussion of the ways in which courtly love has been used to buttress misogyny among male songwriters of the 1960s, see Gillian L. Gower, 'Disciplining Guinevere: Courtly Love and the Arthurian Tradition from Henry Purcell to Donovan Leitch', in Stephen C. Meyer and Kirsten Yri (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Medievalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 501.
[754] Nicholas Paul and Suzanne M. Yeager, *Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 2-3; Perfetti, 'Crusader as Lover: The Eroticized Poetics of Crusading in Medieval France', 936 fn.17; Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the Twelfth Century*, 155.
[755] 'A present il faudra qu'elle [mes chansons] entende de ma bouche'. Act III, tableau I, bars 339-40.
[756] 'E per volontat de lèis veser'. Lisa Perfetti translates this as 'out of desire to see her', see Perfetti, 'Crusader as Lover: The Eroticized Poetics of Crusading in Medieval France', 932.

Distance itself as the locus of love, writes Dillon, is one of medieval song's 'most pervasive and enduring themes'.[757] As well as providing a medium to describe and express the condition of being distant, medieval technologies of song—the 'tangible epistolary correspondence' of an *envoi* and, later, the increasing ontological agency of song-texts themselves in manuscript preservation—became a means of bridging distance, and obtaining a kind of intimacy.[758] Through its palimpsestic reinscription in *L'Amour de loin*, 'Lanquan li jorn' remains a means of imaginatively articulating and crossing distances, both spatial and temporal. The slowness of *L'Amour de loin*'s 'slow modernism' (see section 3.1a) is an aesthetic manifestation of the perpetual distance of intimacy. Dillon suggests that this paradox, so central to vernacular song, 'speaks in a sense for the medium of sound itself: as one whose powerful presence—as sound made and heard—is undermined by its fragility, and instant decay'.[759] As live song, historical opera partakes of both this power and this fragility. The distance between the lives (and deaths) of real, medieval people and the potent drama of the present moment on the operatic stage is, following Freeman's definition, a form of historiography: a 'visceral unconscious encoding what is at once lost and foreclosed'.[760]

[757] Dillon, 'Distance', 26.
[758] Ibid., 28.
[759] Ibid., 36.
[760] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xviii.

Chapter 4: Harrison Birtwistle's *Gawain* and the Chivalric Romance

4.1. Introduction

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a fourteenth-century Middle English romance poem, roughly contemporaneous with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (albeit written in a different dialect). In their 1991 operatic adaptation *Gawain*, Harrison Birtwistle and librettist David Harsent considerably embellish their source-text's dialogue and often avoid straightforward modern English translations of its wording, but adhere relatively closely to its plot. I begin this chapter with a synopsis of the poem, then introduce the opera by way of its performance history. In section 4.2, I situate *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* within the medieval literary genre of the chivalric romance and discuss some of its more distinctive aspects, namely its rather fraught sexual politics and idiosyncratic theological manoeuvrings. The latter is most expressly located in the symbol of the pentangle—a five-pointed star that Gawain bears as his heraldry—which the poet expounds through a fivefold scheme of Christian and courtly numerological virtues.

In section 4.3, I provide an overview of Birtwistle's long-standing medievalist tendencies, from his use of isorhythmic compositional devices to his interest in folk rituals and medieval art. With a particular emphasis on the comparisons that musicologists (and the composer himself) have made between Birtwistle's musical style and the medieval practice of *organum*, I then turn to the half-hour series of ritualistic tableaux at the end of *Gawain*'s first Act. During these tableaux, which are structured around the four seasons, a year passes and Gawain is armed in preparation for his journey while a choir of monks sings a series of seasonal Marian antiphons. Through the lens of Birtwistle's idea of line, I analyse his setting of the 'Regina coeli' in the summer tableau, noting its timbral resemblance to fourteenth-century *organum purum*. Finally, I relate Birtwistle's idea of musical line to the

image of the pentangle, paying particular attention to how the *Gawain* poet invites the reader to conceive of it in temporal terms as 'the endless knot'. Approaching the pentangle as a hermeneutic symbol for analysing Birtwistle's music, I refer especially to Geraldine Heng's feminist reading of the pentangle alongside the girdle he receives later in the narrative.[761] These two structural 'knots' can function as a hermeneutic device *Gawain* as well as its source-poem, offering a means of articulating and embracing the complexities of medievalist narrative time.

4.1a. Plot Synopsis

The Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* opens on New Year's Eve in the court of Camelot, where King Arthur demands to be entertained before the feast can begin. A mysterious knight rides in, covered head-to-toe in green, astride a green horse, and brandishing a sprig of holly and an axe. The Green Knight initiates a game: he challenges one of the knights to strike him once with his axe, then travel to the Green Chapel in a year and a day to receive a blow in kind. Gawain agrees and decapitates the Green Knight, who astonishes everyone by gathering his own severed head from the floor and continuing to speak. Reminding Gawain of his bargain, the mysterious knight rides away. The year passes, and Gawain sets off on a perilous journey which the poem's narrator briefly summarizes by writing that he encountered so many dragons, wolves, satyrs, giants, and other trials, that it would be too much to tell even a tenth of it.

When Gawain has nearly reached the Green Knight's chapel, he comes upon a house inhabited by a lord called Bertilak de Hautdesert, his wife, and a mysterious blindfolded

[761] Geraldine Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *PMLA*, 106/3 (1991), 500-14.

woman. Bertilak suggests yet another game: he will go out hunting each day and give Gawain everything that he catches. In return, Gawain must give Bertilak everything he gains while remaining at the house. On the first two days, Lady Hautdesert attempts to seduce Gawain, who rebuffs her first with one polite kiss, then with two. In accordance with their bargain, Gawain 'returns' these kisses by kissing Bertilak each evening, in exchange for a deer and a boar. On the third day, Lady Hautdesert offers Gawain a magic green girdle that will protect him from all physical harm. Fearing for his life at the hands of the Green Knight, Gawain accepts the gift. However, upon Bertilak's return, Gawain receives a fox from Bertilak but conceals the girdle, violating the rules of the game.

When Gawain finally arrives at the Green Chapel, he binds the magic girdle around his waist and kneels to receive the blow from the axe. However, the Green Knight deals him only a minor wound (a *nirt* or 'nick' on the neck): the bargain has technically been fulfilled, but Gawain is humiliated. The Green Knight reveals himself to be Bertilak, magically disguised by the witch Morgan le Fay (who in turn disguised herself as the mysterious blindfolded woman at the castle). Bertilak says that he would have allowed Gawain to leave unscathed if he had not dishonestly concealed the girdle, but pardons him on the basis that his only sin was the he loved life too much. Gawain returns to Camelot wearing the girdle over his armour as a mark of shame, and everybody at court, receiving him with laughter, decides to adopt the symbol too. Scholars have interpreted this ambiguous final gesture as either a derisive joke at Gawain's fall from grace, or as a gesture of camaraderie; a warm admission that they, too, are fallen and fallible.[762]

[762] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 134-35; Derek Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction* (Blackwell Introductions to Literature; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003a), 79.

4.1b. Performance History

Andrew Blake suggests that the proliferation of reported speech in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* meant that, formally, Harsent needed to abandon the alliterative text of the poem and write his own dialogue.[763] In his introduction to the libretto, Harsent claims to have 'retained little of the original save the essential narrative drift'.[764] As I discuss in section 4.4, however, several of the poem's vivid descriptive turns are perceptible in Harsent's libretto. Aside from the introduction of the character of Arthur's Fool, Harsent's only major alteration to the plot is that, in the opera, Lady Hautdesert and Morgan are almost permanently on-stage. The poem's moment of revelation in the Green Chapel, where the identity of the blindfolded woman is simultaneously exposed to Gawain and to the reader, is supplanted in *Gawain* by large-scale dramatic irony. Spectators of the opera are constantly made aware of the magical influence of the two women; invisible to the characters in Camelot, their identities and intervention are communicated to the audience throughout the drama, the action freezing for them to sing incantations in frenzied, confronting duets. In the 1991 production directed by Di Trevis with designs by Alison Chitty, Morgan and Hautdesert cut imposing, almost hydra-like figures (Figure 4.1). Anecdotally, the menacing edge to their representation led Peter Sellars to turn down an invitation to direct the premiere, describing the opera as 'anti-feminist'.[765]

[763] Andrew Blake, ''Wort oder Ton'? Reading the Libretto in Contemporary Opera', *Contemporary Music Review*, 29/2 (2010), 187-99, 194; see also Irene Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 46.
[764] Harrison Birtwistle, David Harsent, and Elgar Howarth, 'Gawain (CD release)', (England: Collins Classics, 1996), 6.
[765] Rhian Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4/2 (1992), 163-78, 176. For a discussion of Sellars's work on Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de loin* and Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*, see Chapter 3.



Figure 4.1: Morgan (Marie Angel) and Lady Hautdesert (Elizabeth Laurence) over Camelot.[766]

Birtwistle began composing *Gawain* from the late 1980s, when he lived in Southwest France.[767] When he completed the opera, he was in his late fifties and experiencing a period of rapidly escalating institutional success; as Robert Samuels wrote in his review of the first performance, 'the premiere of a new opera by Sir Harrison Birtwistle is now a national event worthy of attention in the Sunday supplements'.[768] In 1981, ten years before the premiere of *Gawain*, Birtwistle's music for Peter Hall's *Oresteia* trilogy as the National Theatre received widespread critical acclaim, and he was made an Associate Director of the National Theatre in 1982.[769] His instrumental ensemble piece *Secret Theatre* (1984) was premiered by the London Sinfonietta at his fiftieth-birthday concert at London's

[766] Royal Opera House dress rehearsal, 1991, photograph by Clive Barda.
[767] Harsent colourfully recalls delivering the libretto to Birtwistle's garden studio, see Fiona Maddocks and Harrison Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014), 153.
[768] Robert Samuels, 'Birtwistle's 'Gawain'', *Tempo*, 178/178 (1991), 32-33.
[769] Jonathan Cross, 'Harrison Birtwistle Timeline', in Fiona Maddocks and Harrison Birtwistle (eds.), *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014b), 289.

Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the following year he was invited to direct the Southbank Centre's 'Summerscope' festival (on which more in section 4.3a).[770] Following a long compositional process, his opera with Peter Zinovieff *The Mask of Orpheus* premiered to exuberant critical acclaim at the English National Opera in 1986, along with *Yan Tan Tethera* (which was also broadcast by the BBC) and *Earth Dances* (commissioned by the BBC Symphony Orchestra).[771] The premiere of *Endless Parade* (1987) led to his sketches being acquired by the Paul Sacher Stiftung in 1989; in 1986 he was made *Chevalier des arts et des lettres* by the French government, and in 1987 he was knighted by Elizabeth II.[772] As I discuss below, Birtwistle's music is often discussed in terms of its radical and challenging qualities, but it is worth noting that *Gawain* was written at a time when his work was being received by elite institutions.

And yet, in comparison with co-eval orchestral works like *Secret Theatre, Earth Dances*, and *Endless Parade*, Birtwistle's operas from this period are rarely performed. *Yan Tan Tethera* was broadcast by the BBC but remains unrecorded, and has only been performed again once, semi-staged at the Barbican's 'Birtwistle at 80' festival in 2014. Despite having been 'immediately hailed as the most important musical and theatrical event of its decade', *The Mask of Orpheus* remained unstaged for the thiry-three years between its premiere and Daniel Kramer's production at the English National Opera in 2019.[773] At the time of writing, *Gawain* has been revived at the Royal Opera House twice—once in 1994 (the radio broadcast of which was released on CD by Collins Classics in 1996 and re-

[770] Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 289.
[771] Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: The Mask of Orpheus* (Landmarks in Music Since 1950; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 1.
[772] Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 289.
[773] Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: The Mask of Orpheus*, 1; Jonathan Cross, 'The Mask of Orpheus, English National Opera at the London Coliseum, October 18', *Opera*, (2020): 85-87.

released by NMC Recordings in 2014), and again in 2000.[774] *Gawain* has received one new staging, directed by Alvis Hermanis at Salzburg Festival in 2013.[775] Finally, like *Yan Tan Tethera*, it was also semi-staged for Birtwistle's eightieth birthday celebrations at the Barbican Centre in 2014.[776]

Like many operas, (not least *L'Amour de loin*, see Chapter 3), *Gawain*'s score has been revised multiple times throughout its performance history. In the months following the 1991 premiere, Elgar Howarth (who also conducted the Royal Opera House performances) compiled material from the opera into a twenty-five-minute orchestral piece, *Gawain's Journey*.[777] Before the 1994 revival, Birtwistle removed over twenty minutes of music from the tableaux at the end of Act I (which I analyse in part 4.4 of this chapter), which Harsent states was at the behest of the Opera House (because the orchestra would otherwise have had to have been paid overtime for rehearsals).[778] Act II was also truncated for the following revival. Finally, following the Salzburg production, Birtwistle decided that the second act 'had some longueurs' and revised it before the 2014 Barbican performance, reinserting the Act I tableaux that had been removed in 1994.[779] This performance was the last before Birtwistle's death, at the age of 87, in 2022.

[774] Jonathan Cross, 'Recent Birtwistle CDs', *Tempo*, (1997), 53; Kevin J. Harty, 'Gawain', *Arthuriana*, 10/2 (2000), 104-05.
[775] Birtwistle and Harsent both disliked the Salzburg production, see Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 153.
[776] Jonathan Cross, 'Reflecting on Birtwistle at 80', *Tempo*, 68/270 (2014a), 85-87.
[777] Robert Adlington, 'The Triumph of Time; Gawain's Journey (Philharmonia Orchestra, Elgar Howarth)', *The Musical Times*, 134 (1993), 595-95.
[778] Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 153.
[779] Ibid.

I situate *Gawain* within the context of Birtwistle's institutional success of the 1980s in part because his fame manifested, in certain quarters, as infamy. Following his invocation of 'Sunday supplements' in his review of *Gawain*'s premiere, Samuels writes:

> if the reception of *Gawain* ranged from reverential enthusiasm on the part of Radio Three to a cartoon in the *Guardian* complaining at the lack of good tunes, this bears witness only to Birtwistle's continuing ability to preserve his individual voice despite public success.[780]

This assessment, in which the distinctive qualities of Birtwistle's music's exist in tension with his 'public success', relies upon a formulation of the composer's modernism as anti-populist. A generalizing perception of Birtwistle as an uncompromising and inaccessible modernist developed throughout the first half of the 1990s, and came to a head in two events. In 1995, Birtwistle's *Panic* for saxophone and orchestra premiered during the second half of the Last Night of the Proms. Derided in British tabloids, the piece was received as a deliberately disruptive presence in a widely televised annual fixture traditionally associated with conservative programming and nationalistic Victoriana.[781]

The controversy surrounding *Panic* took place one year after the 1994 production of *Gawain,* when a group of protesters—self-described 'Romantic Futurists' who named themselves 'the Hecklers'—staged a demonstration outside the Royal Opera House (see Figure 4.2) and booed from the upper slips at the end of the performance.[782] Chanting 'heckle for harmony', holding a coffin-shaped sign that read 'MODERNISM R.I.P.', swinging an incense thurible, and dressed like nineteenth-century Tractarian priests, their

[780] Samuels, 'Birtwistle's 'Gawain".
[781] Robert Adlington, 'Harrison Birtwistle's Recent Music', *Tempo,* /196 (1996), 2-8, 2; Jonathan Cross, 'First Performances: Thoughts on First Hearing Sir Harrison Birtwistle's "Panic"', *Tempo,* (1996), 34-35; Arnold Whittall, 'Birtwistle: Antiphonies; Crowd; Panic; Slow Frieze', (93; London: London: Mark Allen Group Ltd, 2015b), 28-28.
[782] David Lister, 'First Night: Hecklers lose their first night joust (*Gawain*/The Hecklers, Royal Opera House)', *The Independent,* 14 April 1994.

demonstration was striking in its medievalism.[783] The purpose of this chapter is not to define the modernist medievalism of *Gawain* in opposition to the romanticist Anglo-catholic medievalism of the Hecklers (who, Ian Pace suggests, ultimately did more to publicize Birtwistle's music than to undermine it).[784] On the contrary, the fact that so heated a debate over the cultural relevance of modernism should take place between two such radically different manifestations of medievalism is testament to how ideologically capacious invocations of the Middle Ages can be. The following two sections of the chapter formulate a method of approaching the modernist medievalism of *Gawain*, first by returning to the source poem (section 4.2), and then by examining how literary critical modes of reading it can be productively applied to Birtwistle's music (section 4.3).

[783] For a discussion of medievalism in Anglo-catholicism, see David Jasper and Jeremy Smith, '"The Lay Folks' Mass Book" and Thomas Frederick Simmons: Medievalism and the Tractarians', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 70/4 (2019), 785-804.
[784] Ian Pace, 'First Performances: "Secret Theatres"—The Harrison Birtwistle Retrospective, 12 April-May 1996', *Tempo* 197 (1996), 25-27, 25.


IT'S "HIP" TO HECKLE!
MODERNISM R.I.P



Figure 4.2: 'The Hecklers' protest outside the Royal Opera House at the 1994 revival of Gawain.[785]

4.2. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight appears in *folia* 94v-130r of one, small manuscript, copied in about 1400 (London, British Library, Cotton Nero A X, hereafter referred to as the *Gawain* manuscript). The manuscript's sole contents are four poems in a North-West Midlands dialect, all widely accepted to have been written by the same anonymous author.[786] Preceding *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the manuscript's ordering are *Pearl* (an allegorical dream-vision, ff. 41r–59v), *Cleanness* (a didactic homily on the theme of sexual purity, ff. 60r–86r), and *Patience* (a shorter homiletic poem, ff. 86r–94r). It is an unusual manuscript, possibly home-made rather than compiled in a professional scriptorium, and its striking, full-page illustrations (see Figure 4.3) are unprecedented among English manuscripts of its era.[787]

[785] Michael Waldman and Edward Mirzoeff (dir.), 'Episode 4: High Hopes', *The House (TV series)* (UK: BBC2, 1996). The bottom frame shows composer Alex Hills and pianist and musicologist Ian Pace (students at the time) vociferous in modernism's defence.
[786] A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Manuscript: British Library MS Cotton Nero A.x', in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (eds.), *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet* (Arthurian Studies; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 197-220.
[787] Ad Putter and Myra Stokes, *The Works of the Gawain Poet: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 1; Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390-1490* (Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 6; London: Harvey Miller, 1996), 66-67; Joel



Figure 4.3: The Green Knight holds up his head in the Gawain *manuscript, f. 94v.*

Rather than linking regular numbers of syllables per line by rhymed endings (a practice more widespread in French and Latin poetry of the late fourteenth century and seen, for example, in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*), the poems of the *Gawain* manuscript are prominent examples of Middle English alliterative verse.[788] Composed around stresses rather than syllables, most of the *Gawain* poet's works follow a conventional pattern with

Fredell has suggested that the scriptorium might have been in Yorkshire, see 'The Pearl-Poet Manuscript in York', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 36/1 (2014), 1-39.

[788] David Lawton, *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background: Seven Essays* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 93.

four stresses per line subdivided into two with a caesura. In the most conventional *aa/ax* form, the final stress introduces a new consonant that does not match the first three. In the following description of the Green Knight holding up his severed head and preparing to address the court (pictured in Figure 4.3), the stresses are underlined and the alliterations are in bold, with the P of 'up' eliding into 'even' (disrupting its preceding Hs) and the F of 'face' disrupting its preceding Ds. The caesuras are shown with a gap:

> For the **he**d in his **h**ande he **h**oldes upeven,
> Toward the **d**errest on the **d**ese he **d**resses the face.[789]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is distinctive, however, in how frequently it breaks with this convention in comparison with its companion poems. These ruptures usually function to intensify characterization: sometimes the alliteration is thickened with extra unstressed consonants when a particularly powerful character like Lord Bertilak is described, for example.[790]

Another distinctive aspect of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is its stanza formation. Within its four large 'fitts' (or 'parts'), the poem is grouped into uneven numbers of lines, and the stanzas punctuated by a five-line construction known as the bob-and-wheel.[791] The bob is a single-stress line of one or two words, and the wheel constitutes four lines of three stresses each. Together, they form five lines of iambic pentameter with an *ababa* rhyme scheme. This bob-and-wheel, for example, rounds off a description of the Green Knight's horse:

[789] 'He holds the head in his hand right up,/ And points the face towards the noblest on the dais'. Lines 444-45. All translations hereafter my own.
[790] Putter and Stokes, *The Works of the Gawain Poet: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* 232.
[791] For a history of the interpretation of the bob-and-wheel, see Emma Maggie Solberg, 'Imagining the Bob and Wheel', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America,* 137/1 (2022), 52-69.

Sertayn,	For sure,
A grene horse, gret and thik,	A green horse, great and brawny,
A stede ful stif to strayn;	A steed really hard to handle,
In brayden brydel quik,	Restive in hewn bridle,
To the gome he was ful gayn.	He was so obedient to the man.[792]

As Henk Aertsen describes it, the bob-and-wheel is not expository, but rather provides a reflective narrative break, almost analogous to an operatic aria.[793] Speculating about oral modes of poetic performance in the fourteenth century, he suggests that the intervening lines could have been chanted while the bob-and-wheels were sung like refrains.[794] As I will discuss in more detail in the final part of this section, the recurring five-fold structure of the bob-and-wheel can be read as an articulation of the significance of the pentangle on a structural level.

The dialect of the *Gawain* manuscript texts has led most scholars to agree that the poet probably came from Cheshire.[795] Among others, Jill Mann has also suggested that the poet may have moved to London as part of a major internal migration, when Richard II substantially increased his bodyguard in response to tensions with parliament and installed his favourite, Robert de Vere, as Justice of Cheshire.[796] While the exact nature of the *Gawain* manuscript's audience and patronage is unknown, Mann points out that its poems were composed at a time when the Ricardian court was widely criticized for its lavish spending; in the chronicles of Thomas Walsingham, Richard himself was depicted as

[792] Lines 174-78.
[793] Henk Aertsen, 'Game and Earnest in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald (eds.), *Companion to Middle English Romance* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), 83-100, 89.
[794] Ibid.
[795] Malcolm Andrew, 'Theories of Authorship', in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (eds.), *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet* (Arthurian Studies; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 23-34, 23-24; Ad Putter and Myra Stokes, 'The "Linguistic Atlas" and the Dialect of the *Gawain* Poems', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106/4 (2007), 468-91.
[796] Jill Mann, 'Courtly Aesthetics and Courtly Ethics in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 31 (2009), 231-65, 238; 40; Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the Gawain-Poet* (London: Longman, 1996), 29-31; Carolyn Dinshaw, 'A Kiss is Just a Kiss: Heterosexuality and its Consolations in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Diacritics*, 24/2/3 (1994), 205-26, 222-23.

effeminate, reckless, and having a gay affair with de Vere.[797] As John M. Bowers has suggested, all the poems in the *Gawain* manuscript (especially *Pearl*) are themselves courtly artefacts: 'highly wrought, intricate verbal constructions, decorated with vivid and colourful descriptions'.[798] Ann W. Astell and Mann both consequently suggest that various textual cues (including a 'green' pun on de Vere's name and a possible connection between the pentangle and his heraldry) position *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a token of loyalty to Richard, who might be styled as a 'latter-day Arthur'.[799]

4.2a. The Romance

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is just one example of Arthurian literature from an era in which tales of the mythical court of Camelot were a dominant narrative theme.[800] The body of medieval literature concerning the legendary kings and heroes of Great Britain and Brittany, known as 'The Matter of Britain', renders Arthuriana a distinctive form of medievalism, insofar as it originated as medievalist mythmaking within the medieval period itself. Early examples of 'the Matter of Britain' are attributed to Nennius (c.829), Geoffrey of Monmouth (c.1136), and Chrétien de Troyes (c. 1160–1191).[801] Being from the fourteenth century, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is in many ways a late example of Arthuriana.[802] And although, as J. A. Burrow suggests, fourteenth-century readers'

[797] Mann, 'Courtly Aesthetics and Courtly Ethics in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', 231.
[798] John M. Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 152; cited in Mann, 'Courtly Aesthetics and Courtly Ethics in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', 231.
[799] Ann W. Astell, 'Political Allegory in Late Medieval England', (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 137; Mann, 'Courtly Aesthetics and Courtly Ethics in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', 240-41; Alfred Thomas, *The Court of Richard II and Bohemian Culture: Literature and Art in the Age of Chaucer and the Gawain Poet* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020), 108.
[800] Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter, *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.
[801] Ann F. Howey, *A Bibliography of Modern Arthuriana (1500-2000)* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006); Helen Fulton, *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*, 1-19.
[802] John M. Ganim, *Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative* (Princeton Legacy Library; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 59-60.

primary reception of the Court of King Arthur through these earlier texts was as 'part of the real world of history', vernacular chivalric romances like *Sir Gawain* are self-consciously fictional.[803] As Patricia Clare Ingham puts it, 'fantasy and history have had a long acquaintance …. not simply because medieval writers about the past cared less for verisimilitude', but because narrativization and imaginative processes can serve to unify collective understandings of the past.[804] As such, the concept of 'world-building' in fantasy literature takes on political, even imperial significances when applied to historical narratives. Depictions of the court of King Arthur—from late-medieval romances, to Pre-Raphaelite retellings in the nineteenth century or 1950s fantasy literature like T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*—invariably provide far more historical texture about the times in which they were written than they do about premodern Britain.[805]

As James Simpson has observed, the medieval literary romance is resistant to meaningful definition to an unusual degree, to the extent that scholars disagree about whether it can productively be considered a genre at all.[806] Citing Derek Pearsall's definition ('a narrative intended primarily for entertainment, in verse or prose, and presented in terms of chivalric life'), Simpson observes that descriptions of the romance tend to exhibit a breadth of thematic content that does not account for how the genre formally manifests.[807] Among the most commonly cited chivalric themes, Simpson lists 'an interest in refined manners'

[803] J. A. Burrow, 'The Fourteenth-Century Arthur', in Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 69-83.
[804] Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 1-2.
[805] For a discussion of modern and postmodern Arthuriana, see J. Lacy Norris, 'The Arthur of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', in Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 120-36.
[806] James Simpson, 'Derek Brewer's Romance', in Charlotte Brewer, B. A. Windeatt, and Derek Brewer (eds.), *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Middle English Literature: The Influence of Derek Brewer* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 154-72, 155; K. S. Whetter, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 35.
[807] Derek Pearsall, 'The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century', *Essays and Studies*, 29 (1976), 58-83, 57; cited in Simpson, 'Derek Brewer's Romance', 156-57.

(Frans Diekstra even posits the description of manners as an 'end in itself' in twelfth-century French romances) along with: 'a focus on the "development" of a single protagonist who rides out alone'; an 'insouciance about economic reality'; and 'some aspect of the marvellous and the frequency of *aventure*' (a word that simultaneously encapsulates fate, adventure, jeopardy, and wonder).[808] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* exhibits all of these narrative elements.

The most direct thematic precursors of fourteenth-century Middle English romances like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are found in twelfth- and thirteenth-century French literature, among which Martin Gosman identifies a broad typology: 'epic' romances about the 'Matter of France' (*chansons de geste*); 'classical' romances (usually about Alexander the Great; and romances in 'Celtic' settings (usually Arthurian, including the *lais* of Marie de France and romances of Chrétien de Troyes).[809] Simpson writes that the word 'roman', originally a linguistic designation for French (as derived from Latin, the 'Roman' language), 'narrowed in meaning to designate narrative' during the twelfth century, but was always applied 'liberally' across a variety of narrative modes.[810] According to Pearsall, the twelfth-century transition of Arthurian narratives form the clerkly, historicizing mode of Geoffrey of Monmouth to the more literary mode embodied by Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes enacted the transformation of Arthurian legend from a 'national epic' into the more interpersonal realm of the courtly romance.[811] As Ad

[808] Simpson, 'Derek Brewer's Romance', 159; Frans Diekstra, 'Narrative Mode and Interpretation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald (eds.), *Companion to Middle English Romance* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), 57-82, 59.
[809] Martin Gosman, 'The French Background', in H. Aertsen and A. A. MacDonald (eds.), *Companion to Middle English Romance* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), 1-28, 4.
[810] Simpson, 'Derek Brewer's Romance', 159.
[811] Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*, 20; for a stylistic overview of French Arthurian romance, see Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, 'The Shape of Romance in Medieval France', in Roberta L. Krueger (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge Companions to Culture; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-28.

Putter writes, these French Arthurian romances were 'still being read in bulk in England' two hundred years later, their manuscripts populating the wills and inventories of the royalty, nobility, clerics, and merchants of the *Gawain* poet's time.[812]

These romanced Arthur narratives of the later Middle Ages are, Pearsall point out, set in Arthur's court but 'not about Arthur'.[813] Arthur's young marriage to Guinevere rendered the unmarried members of his retinue of knights (including Gawain) more auspicious protagonists for a post-twelfth-century readership increasingly interested in stories of courtship and illicit sex. As Sarah Kay points out, it was in connection to a Chrétien de Troyes Lancelot-narrative, *Le Chevalier de la Charrete*, that Gaston Paris coined the term 'courtly love' in 1883.[814] Alongside Michel Foucault's suggestion that the Sacrament of Penance in the form of individual confession among the laity formed a new 'technology of the self' in the twelfth century exists a history of medievalists drawing attention to the increasing individualism embodied by the protagonists of romance literature.[815] It is against this backdrop of the hero's *aventure* that Simpson suggests a way of accounting for the form of the romance: seemingly 'irreparable disintegrations of tragedy' are arrived at via 'archetypal binary oppositions' ('youth *versus* age, male *versus* female, human *versus* monster, castle *versus* forest'), but 'by drawing on the resources of the civilized order, the apparently insuperable forces of the wild can, in fact, be managed and absorbed'.[816]

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[812] Ad Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 2.
[813] Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*, 2003.
[814] Sarah Kay, 'Courts, Clerks, and Courtly Love', in Roberta L. Krueger (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge Companions to Culture; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81-96.
[815] Michel Foucault, 'About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth', *Political theory*, 21/2 (1993), 198-227, 221; Peter Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages: New Departures in Poetry, 1000-1150* (2nd edn., Westfield Publications in Medieval Studies; London: Westfield College, 1986); Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31/1 (1980), 1-17.
[816] Simpson, 'Derek Brewer's Romance', 169-70; Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance*; Whetter, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance*, 96.

Several scholars have suggested that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* sits uncomfortably within the romance tradition precisely because of its more untamed elements; in comparison with the vivid and ostentatious magic of the Green Knight, Camelot's 'civilizing' adoption of the girdle seems rather listless, for example.[817] While other romances like *Sir Orfeo* see love and chivalry tested within courtly conventions, Bart Verhoelden observes, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 'we see the conventions themselves being tested'.[818] I address the poem's resistance to straightforward interpretation in more detail later in this section, in my discussion of the pentangle. Before I turn to the afterlife of the medieval romance genre, however, the intense coexistence of magical and realist elements at work in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* bears further examination.

Supernatural elements are, as Derek Brewer puts it, an 'inherent' part of the 'pleasure' of most romances.[819] In John Stevens's formulation, the romance hero is 'like a man fighting ghosts in a mist ... [who] is engaged in a struggle but does not know who his adversary is'.[820] The Green Knight as Bertilak in disguise and the unseen (and unexplained) machinations of Morgan le Fay fit neatly within this formulation. What critics find peculiar in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the extent to which magical goings-on are accepted as almost unremarkable, in spite of their stark contrast to the almost quotidian presentation

[817] Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance*, 4; Sacvan Bercovitch, 'Romance and Anti-Romance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Philological Quarterly*, 44/1 (1965), 30; Mladen M. Jakovljević and Vladislava S. Gordić Petković, '*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: Not Really a Chivalric Romance', *Primerjalna Književnost,* 42/3 (2019), 185-202; Derek Pearsall, 'The Development of Middle English Romance', *Mediaeval Studies*, 27 (1965), 91-116, 93.
[818] Bart Veldhoen, 'Psychology and the Middle English Romances', in Henk Aertsen and Alasdair A. MacDonald (eds.), *Companion to Middle English Romance* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), 101-28, 115.
[819] Derek Brewer, 'The Nature of Romance', *Poetica*, 9 (1978), 9-48, 101; see also Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance*, 49.
[820] John Stevens, *Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches* (New York: Norton, 1974), 78-80; cited in Jill Mann, *Life in Words: Essays on Chaucer, the Gawain-Poet, and Malory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 223.

of life at Camelot. Moreover, the narrative glosses over the 'dragons, wolves, satyrs, and giants' of Gawain's journey, instead favouring highly realistic descriptions of violent hunting scenes in the North-West's winter landscape.[821] As Pearsall reads it, 'the rough rock-strewn hill-terrain of the hunts, the snow-covered and mist-capped hills of the last journey to the Green Chapel, are not part of Gawain's quest for self-realization and knightly identity: they are really there'; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is 'thus a romance transplanted into a new dimension of the real'.[822]

Remarking on this tendency neither to 'explain' nor to 'leave vague' the fantastical, but instead to integrate it into normality, W. P. Ker writes that the *Gawain* poet:

> might almost have been a modern novelist with a contempt for romance, trying, by way of 'experiment' to work out a 'supernatural' plot with the full strength of his reason; merely accepting the fabulous story, and trying how it will go with accessories from real life, and with modern manners and conversation.[823]

Ker's analogy is born in part of his assertion that the twelfth-century romance represents the birth of the modern novel, and in the context of this thesis sets up a tempting parallel with the rhetoric of 'experimentation' sometimes attached to modernist (and postmodernist) composition.[824] Problematic inferences of authorial intent notwithstanding, the simultaneous vividness and ambiguity at work in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* may well have proven appealing to Birtwistle and Harsent. Its critical commentary

[821] Robert Levine, 'Aspects of Grotesque Realism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *The Chaucer Review*, 17/1 (1982), 65-75.
[822] Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*, 77-78; Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance*, 10; P. L. Heyworth, 'Sir Gawain's Crossing of Dee', *Medium Aevum*, 41/2 (1972), 124-27; for critical perspectives on the *Gawain* poet's use of landscape, see Gillian Rudd, "The Wilderness of Wirral' in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Arthuriana*, 23/1 (2013), 52-65; and David K. Coley, 'Diaspora, Neighborhood, Empire: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Exemplaria*, 32/3 (2021), 206-28.
[823] W. P. Ker, *Medieval English Literature* (Oxford University Press: London, 1955), 102; cited in Diekstra, 'Narrative Mode and Interpretation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 57.
[824] Ker, *Medieval English Literature*, 73; 82-84; see, for example Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999a), 325-45.

provides a useful pretext for thinking about what constraints and opportunities this poem presents for operatic adaptation.

4.2b. Afterlives of the Romance

In a formulation that echoes John Haines's *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères* (see Chapter 3), Pearsall remarks that:

> Arthurian love-romance needs little explanation to modern readers, for it has had eight centuries of life to make it familiar. Wherever pre-marital or non-marital sexual love between men and women is represented in fiction, drama, opera or film as the most important experience of life … the inheritance of medieval courtly romance is present.[825]

From the late eighteenth century onwards, romances were among the most prominent scholarly editions of Middle English texts.[826] The influence of editions of both French and English medieval Arthurian romance is palpable and well-documented in the subsequent proliferation of nineteenth-century English medievalism, seen in the work of Walter Scott, Alfred Tennyson, Edward, Burne-Jones, William Morris, and other Pre-Raphaelite figures.[827] Romance characters and themes have moreover been prevalent in opera since the late seventeenth century. Prominent examples include Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Roland* (1685), Henry Purcell's *King Arthur* (1691), and George Frideric Handel's *Orlando* (1733), *Alcina* (1735), and *Ariodante* (1735). These libretti were adapted from early modern retellings rather than antiquarian editions of medieval texts; all of the examples listed above except *King Arthur* are based on Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (a sixteenth-century Italian epic poem derived from the eleventh-century *Chanson de*

[825] Haines, *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères: The Changing Identity of Medieval Music*; Pearsall, *Arthurian Romance: A Short Introduction*, 23.
[826] Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History*, 24ff; Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing Medieval Romances in Late-Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).
[827] Simpson, 'Derek Brewer's Romance', 162; Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*; Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

Roland).[828] Later in the eighteenth century, however, Peter Branscombe has suggested that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) might have been influenced by an early antiquarian edition of Hartmann von Aue's thirteenth-century *Iwein* (in turn based on Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*).[829]

One early nineteenth-century example of romance-influenced opera is Franz Schubert's *Fierrabras* (1823), the title character of which (an Arab knight who converts to Christianity after being defeated by Charlemagne) appears in several *chansons de geste*.[830] The most frequently performed and discussed operatic adaptations of the medieval romance remain Richard Wagner's, among them *Lohengrin* (1850) and *Parsifal* (1882, both based on the thirteenth-century *Parzifal* by Wolfram von Eschenbach); *Tristan und Isolde* (1859, based on the twelfth-century *Tristan and Iseult* by Gottfried von Strassburg); and the *Ring Cycle* (based in part on the twelfth-century *Nibelungenlied*).[831] Later nineteenth-century examples include Jules Massenet's *Esclarmonde* (1889, based on Denis Pyramus's *Parthénopéus de Blois*) and Arthur Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* (1891, based on Walter Scott's more confected, medievalist novel of 1819).[832] Aside from William Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* (1950, based on Chaucer), the *Wife of Bath's Tale* in Erik Chisholm's

[828] Ellen T. Harris, 'King Arthur's Journey into the Eighteenth Century', in Curtis Alexander Price (ed.), *Purcell Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 257-89; Tim Carter, 'Lessons in Madness: Orlando Furioso on the 18th-Century Operatic Stage (with Special Reference to Handel)', in Jane E. Everson, Andrew Hiscock, and Stefano Jossa (eds.), *Ariosto, the Orlando Furioso and English Culture* (British Academy, 2019), 169-85; for French examples, see Daniel Heartz, 'The Beginnings of the Operatic Romance: Rousseau, Sedaine, and Monsigny', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15/2 (1981), 149-78; and Haines, *Eight Centuries of Troubadours and Trouvères: The Changing Identity of Medieval Music*, 124ff.
[829] Peter Branscombe and D. R. R. Owen, 'The Story of Yvain', in Peter Branscombe (ed.), *W.A. Mozart, Die Zauberflöte* (Cambridge Opera Handbooks; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7-10.
[830] Gosman, 'The French Background', 9.
[831] Cusack, 'Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*: Medieval, Pagan, Modern'; Eichner, 'Richard Wagner's Medieval Visions'; Harper-Scott, 'Medieval Romance and Wagner's Musical Narrative in *The Ring*'; Mertens, 'Wagner's Middle Ages'; Danielle Buschinger, *Das Mittelalter Richard Wagners* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007).
[832] Jean-Christophe Branger, 'A Reading of Massenet's *Esclarmonde* by Chabrier: How Should French Composers Respond to Wagnerian Music Drama?', *19th-Century Music*, 42/2 (2019), 96-122; Arne Stollberg, '"A work so truly English in its story and its music": Arthur Sullivans *Ivanhoe* und die Suche nach einer englischen Nationaloper', *Studia Musicologica*, 52/1/4 (2011), 457-84.

Canterbury Tales (1962), Gillian Whitehead's *Tristan and Iseult* (1978), lesser-known *Gawain* adaptations by Andrew Wilson-Dickson and Richard Blackford (both 1978), and Kate Soper's much more recent *Romance of the Rose* (2023), I know of no other twentieth or twenty-first century operatic adaptations of the medieval romance.[833]

This sudden paucity of Arthurian adaptations that follows the turn of the twentieth century is particularly noteworthy in light of the extent to which modernist poets like T. S. Eliot have engaged with Arthurian themes.[834] In popular culture, moreover, the past century has seen a proliferation of Arthurian films, novels, games, and albums, not to mention at least six film adaptations of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (three feature-length [1973, 1984, and 2021], two for television [1991 and 2002]) and several highly circulated, accessible Modern English translations of the poem (including Jessie Weston's [1909], J. R. R. Tolkien's [1975], Simon Armitage's [2007], and Michael Morpurgo's [2013, for children]).[835] A likely explanation for post-nineteenth-century opera composers avoiding Arthuriana could be a desire to distance themselves from Wagner's ideologically loaded legacy. Perhaps this is a justifiable anxiety; the rather chilly critical reception of Walton's *Troilus and Cressida* featured unfavourable comparisons to Wagner from several quarters..[836] Birtwistle, conversely, has been favourably compared with Wagner on more

[833] Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain*, 45-47; Jim Samson, 'Andrew Wilson-Dickson's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', /124 (1978), 29-30; Kate Soper and Joseph Cermatori, 'From Medieval Romance to Contemporary Opera: Philosophy, Allegory, Eros', *PAJ (Baltimore, Md.)*, 44/2 (2022), 41-50. Kate Soper the American composer should not be confused with the British philosopher of the same name.
[834] Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain*, 47.
[835] Norris, 'The Arthur of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries'; Fulton, *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, 403ff; Pugh and Weisl, *Medievalisms: Making the Past in the Present*, 102-03.
[836] For a positive appraisal of Wagner's influence on *Troilus and Cressida*, see J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Music in Context; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 117-25; for Kurt Weill as an example of the desire to avoid association with Wagner, see Adrian Daub, *Tristan's Shadow: Sexuality and the Total Work of Art After Wagner* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 191-202; Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain*, 56-57.

than one occasion (in reference to his use of orchestration, motif, narrative flow, and ritualism), and, later, would weather grail-narrative parallels with *Parsifal* in his overtly eucharistic 2000 opera *The Last Supper*.[837] While a fuller account of Wagner's medievalism in comparison with Birtwistle's is beyond the scope of this chapter, both composers' established interest in ritualism intersects with the chivalric romance in particular ways. Before taking stock of some of the more explicitly medievalist elements of Birtwistle's music, I will first revisit *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* at the point from which Birtwistle and Harsent extract the most extended ritual sequence: the arming of Gawain.

4.2c. The Pentangle

After the Green Knight has ridden out of Camelot, severed head in hand, the *Gawain* poet relays how the young knight prepares for his 'anxious voyage'.[838] Fitt II of the poem attends first to the turning of the seasons, with lines 491-535 interspersing descriptions of the liturgical calendar ('after Christmas came petulant Lent') with lush natural descriptions that name pagan gods ('the season of summer with the soft winds, when Zephyrus sighs on seeds and plants').[839] On the morning of Gawain's journey, from line 567 to the bob-and-wheel that concludes in line 619, each piece of Gawain's bright armour is lavishly described as he dresses from toe to head. The scope of the narrative contracts from the broad sweep of the passing seasons to a slower commentary that savours each garment.

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[837] Irene Morra, 'Outstaring the Sun: Contemporary Opera and the Literary Librettist', *Contemporary Music Review*, 29/2 (2010), 121-35, 123; David Beard, 'The Shadow of Opera: Dramatic Narrative and Musical Discourse in Gawain', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 2/2 (2006), 159-95, 161; Jean-Philippe Héberlé, 'Gawain by Harrison Birtwistle: An Opera with (Extra-) National Features?/Gawain de Harrison Birtwistle: Un opéra (extra-) national?', *LISA (Caen, France)*, 4/2 (2006), 126; Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 163; Arnold Whittall, 'Wagner and 21st-Century Opera', *The Musical Times*, 149/1903 (2008b), 5-16; Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years* (Contemporary Composers; London: Robson, 1998), 78; 80; 89.

[838] 'Then thenkes Gawan ful sone/ Of his anious vyage' (line 535).

[839] 'After Cristenmas com the crabbede Lentoun' (line 502); 'After the sesoun of somer with the soft wyndes,/ When Zeferus syfles himself on sedes and erbes' (lines 516-17).

The final item is Gawain's shield, on which the five-pointed pentangle emblem is painted in gold (Figure 4.4).[840] Eugenie R. Freed has noted how, in the *Gawain* manuscript, the scribe draws attention to this passage by inserting a historiated T surrounding a tonsured face 'looking solemnly leftward in the line where pentangle is first mentioned' (Figure 4.5).[841]

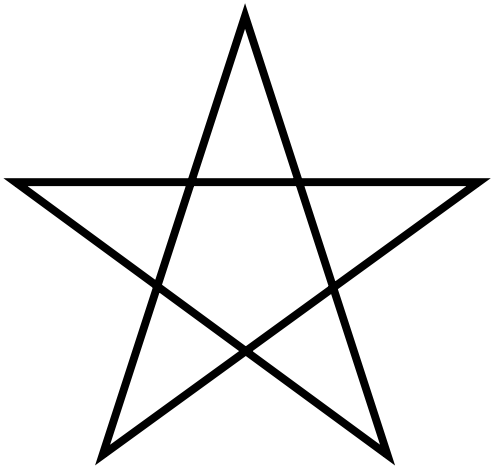


Figure 4.4: The pentangle.

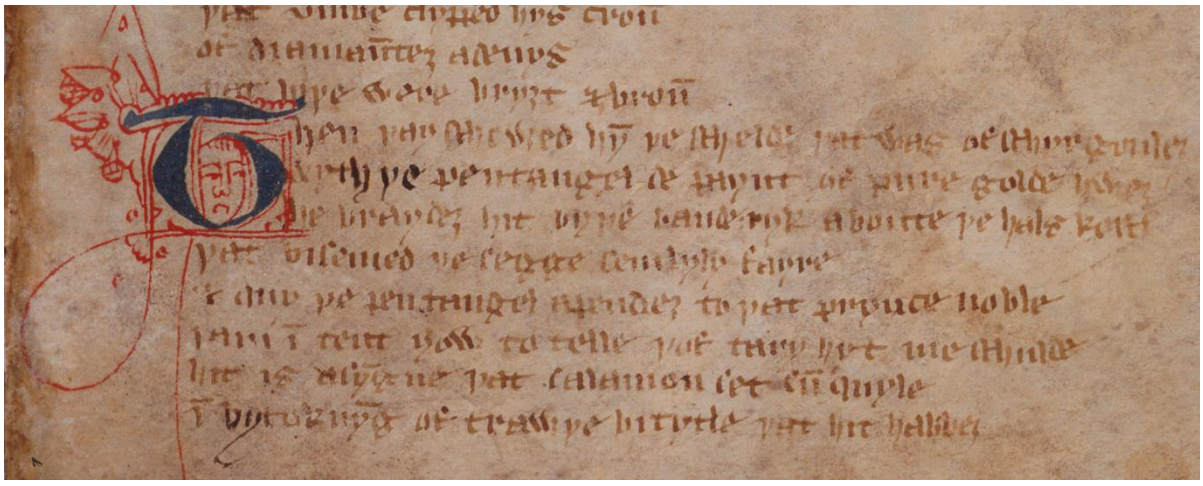


Figure 4.5: A tonsured face in a historiated T, the Gawain *manuscript, f. 103r.*

[840] For the suggestion that Gawain wears pentangles elsewhere on his armour, see Laura F. Hodges, "'Syngne", "Conysaunce", "Deuys": Three Pentangles in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Arthuriana*, 5/4 (1995), 22-31

[841] Eugenie R. Freed, "Quy the Pentangel Apendes...': The Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Theoria*, 77/77 (1991), 125-41, 125.

Rather than claiming the pentangle for himself, Gawain is presented with the shield; a gesture that establishes his humility as one who does not claim a sign that expresses perfection.[842] Ian Bishop describes this passage as 'the most conspicuous suspension of narrative time in the poem'.[843] Acknowledging that it causes the narrative to 'tarry' (line 624), the poet describes both the shield and its symbol's significance in exacting detail, dwelling on how the five points of the star can be drawn by one, unbroken line:

Then thay schewed him the schelde, that was of schyr goules, With the pentangel depaynt of pure golde hues. He braydes hit by the bauderyk, aboute the halse castes: That bisemed the segge semlyly fayre; And why the pentangel apendes to that prince noble I am in tente you to telle, thogh tary hit me schulde.— Hit is a syngne that Salomon sette sumwhyle, In bytoknyng of trauthe, by tytle that hit habbes: For hit is a figure that holdes fyve poyntes, And uch lyne umbe-lappes and loukes in other, And aywhere hit is endeles, and Englych hit callen Overal, as I here, the endeles knotte.[844]	Then they brought him the shield, which was of heraldic red, With the pentangle depicted in pure golden hues. He takes it by the shoulder-strap, binds it to his body: It became the man handsomely; And why the pentangle pertains to that noble young man I am intent on telling you, though it cases me to tarry.— It is the symbol that Solomon bore sometimes, As a representation of truth, by the claim that it manifests: For it is a figure that bears five points, And each line overlaps and interlocks with the other, And all over it is endless, and the English call it Everywhere, as I do here, the endless knot.

The pentangle serves an organizing function in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: the bob-and-wheel structure is five lines long, and the entire poem would be 100 stanzas long were it not for the final bob-and-wheel, invoking Christ's similarly wheel-shaped crown of thorns, which 'brings us to his bliss'.[845] As Freed observes, the line before this final bob-

[842] Arthur Lindley, *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnivalesque Subversion* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 71.
[843] Ian Bishop, 'Time and Tempo in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Neophilologus*, 69/4 (1985), 611-19, 614. 'Hit is a figure that holdes fyve poyntes, And uch lyne umbe-lappes and loukes in other' (lines 627-28).
[844] Lines 619-30.
[845] A. Kent Hieatt, 'Sir Gawain: Pentangle, Luf-Lace, Numerical Structure', (4: Papers on Language & Literature, 1968), 339-59.

and-wheel is an almost direct repetition of the poem's opening line, looping the narrative into a circle but also fostering a deliberate supernumerary quality.[846] Because 'any flesh-and-blood man who aspires to the perfection symbolized by the pentangle ... is guilty of presumptuousness', she suggests that the poet inserted the final prayer to elide its numerological tidiness.[847] The ultimate perfection of the poem rests in the poet's 'gesture of humility' by using the praise of Christ to go above and beyond the superficial perfection of the hundredth stanza's refrain.

While the precise reason for the poet's attribution of the pentangle to King Solomon has proven elusive, Larissa Tracy has connected it to the Star of David.[848] The *Magan David*, six-pointed in its modern depictions but more mutable during the Middle Ages, translates literally as 'shield of David', and was widely circulated in Europe via Kabbalistic *Zohar* manuscripts from the thirteenth century onwards.[849] Along with Theodore Silverstien and

[846] Freed, "Quy the Pentangel Apendes...': The Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 113.
[847] Ibid., 133; see also Bishop, 'Time and Tempo in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 618.
[848] Richard Hamilton Green, 'Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection', *ELH*, 29/2 (1962), 121-39, 130; Freed, "Quy the Pentangel Apendes...': The Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 126. I have written elsewhere of the shape of the pentangle and the magic of the girdle embodying pagan elements—a reading that the poet seemingly invites via the allusion to 'English … lore' in the pentangle description—and I wish to emend my position here. While Tracy attributes a 'pagan Celtic lore deeply embedded in the English psyche' to the pentangle, to which Christianity is then syncretically applied 'to reinforce the similarities between different religious traditions', there is a striking paucity of evidence for this suggestion. By the fourteenth century, Christianity had been present in England for a millennium and the official religion of the ruling class for seven centuries; almost all of the evidence for pre-Christian English religion had been destroyed by the Roman invasion (for some of the textual evidence of pre-Christian English religion, see Stephen Church, 'Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Bede's Ecclesiastical History Reconsidered', *History (London)*, 93/310 (2008), 162-80.) Citing the work of Anne Ross, Ronald Hutton argues that the sheela-na-gigs and green-man figures of Romanesque architecture, as strikingly ludic to modern eyes as the Green Knight, were built at great expense by church authorities. Hutton ascribes the late-nineteenth-century retrofitting of modern regional folk practices onto a suppressed medieval 'paganism' as an essentially political medievalism, born in part of the 'sense of alienation and fear' experienced by that period's bourgeoisie in the face of growing awareness of the power of urban working class and colonized populations, along with a 'growing disenchantment with conventional Christianity' (Ronald Sheridan and Anne Ross, *Grotesques and Gargoyles: Paganism in the Medieval Church* (Newton Abbott, UK: David & Charles, 1975).); cited in Ronald Hutton, 'How Pagan Were Medieval English Peasants?', *Folklore,* 122/3 (2011), 235-49, 237).
[849] Larissa Tracy, 'A Knight of God or the Goddess?: Rethinking Religious Syncretism in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Arthuriana,* 17/3 (2007), 31-55, 34-35; see also Piotr Sadowski, *The Knight on his Quest: Symbolic Patterns of Transition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Newark, DE: Associated University Presses, 1996), 120-28.

Cecilia A. Hatt, Tracy also suggests that the geometry of the pentangle could express a Classical, Pythagorean influence consistent with the poet's earlier invocation of Zephyrus.[850] In this geometrical imagining, the five extremities of the human body were mapped onto the shape of the star—an image not dissimilar to the *Ancrene Wisse* author's likening of Christ's body on the cross to a knightly shield (see Chapter 1, section 1.2c).[851]

The *Gawain* poet explicitly maps the pentangle onto the body by enumerating a five-fold *schema* of further fives. Now, the five senses and the five fingers serve to remind Gawain of the five wounds of Christ upon the cross, the five joys of Mary (who is also depicted on the inside of the shield), and five knightly virtues (nobility, camaraderie, purity, courtesy, and mercy):

First he was founden fautles in his fyve wyttes;	First he was found faultless in his five senses;
And eft fayled the freke never in his fyve fyngres;	And so too he never failed in his five fingers;
And all his afyaunce upon folde was in the fyve woundes	And all his trust moreover was in the five wounds
That Cryst caght on the cros, as the Crede telles;	The Christ got on the cross, as the Creed tells;
And wheresoever this man in melly was stadde,	And wherever this man found himself in battle,
His thro thoght was in that, thurgh all other thinges,	His firm thought was in that, through all things,
That all his forsnes he fong at the fyve joyes	That all his strength he took in the five joys
That the hende heven-quene had of her childe;	That the gracious heavenly queen had in her child;
At this cause the knight comlyche hade	To this end, the knight splendidly had
In the inner half of his schelde her image depaynted,	On the inner side of his shield her image depicted

[850] Sadowski, *The Knight on his Quest: Symbolic Patterns of Transition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Theodore Silverstein, 'Sir Gawain in a Dilemma, or Keeping Faith with Marcus Tullius Cicero', *Modern Philology*, 75/1 (1977), 1-17; Cecilia A. Hatt, *God and the Gawain-Poet: Theology and Genre in Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Suffolk, UK: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 195.
[851] Sadowski, *The Knight on his Quest: Symbolic Patterns of Transition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 118-19; Lawrence Beaston, 'Surprised by Grace: The *Gawain* Manuscript and *lectio divina*', PhD (The Pennsylvania State University, 1998), 195.

That when he blusched thereto his belde never payred.	That when he gazed thereon his strength never faltered.
The fyfthe fyve that I fynde that the freke used	The fifth five I find that the man used
Was fraunchis and felawschyp forbi all thinges,	Was nobility and camaraderie above all things,
His clannesse and his courtaysye croked were never,	His purity and courtesy were unbending,
And pyty, that passes all poyntes—these pure fyve	And mercy, that surpasses all points—these pure five
Were harder happed on that hathel then on any other.	Were more firmly mustered by that worthy man than by any other.
Now all these fyve sythes, for sothe, were fettled on this knighte,	Now all these five ways, indeed, were fashioned upon this knight,
And uchone halched in other, that non ende hade,	And each one fastened to the other, so that none had an end,
And fyched upon fyve poyntes, that faylede never,	And fixed upon five points, that never failed,
Ne samned never in no side, ne sundrede nauther,	Neither gathered in any respect, nor separable from one another,
Withouten ende at any noke, that nowhere couthe man fynde	Without end at any corner that anyone could find anywhere,
Where ever the game began or glod to an ende.	Wherever the happy process began or flowed to an end.
Therefore on his schene schelde schapen was the knotte,	Therefore on his splendid shield the knot was fashioned,
Ryally with red gold upon red goules,	Regally with red gold upon red heraldry,
That is the pure pentangel with the peple called	That is the pure pentangle that the people knew
With lore.	From learning.
Now graythed is Gawan gay	Now Gawain is gaily clad,
And laght his launce right thore	And seized his lance right then
And gave hem all good day,	And bade them all good day,
He wende for evermore. [852]	He went out for ever more.

Like the image of Christ's body as a shield, this invocation of the five senses and the five wounds of Christ echo incarnational devotions common to *Ancrene Wisse* (see Chapter 1) and found throughout Cistercian literature of the late middle ages.[853] The embodied devotions of the shield have in turn been attached by several scholars to Gawain being

[852] Lines 640-69.

[853] J. Stephen Russell, 'Sir Gawain and the White Monks: Cistercian Marian Spirituality and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 39/2 (2013), 207-26; Karen Cherewatuk, '"Becoming Male, Medieval Mothering", and Incarnational Theology in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Book of Margery Kempe*', *Arthuriana*, 19/3 (2009), 15-24.

'nicked' in the neck by the Green Knight on the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ.[854] A precursor to Christ's bloodshed on the cross and a covenant bizarrely comparable to the bargaining of the beheading game, R. A. Shoaf cites a twelfth-century sermon by Honorius Augustodunensis (who, like Bernard of Clairvaux, wrote commentaries on the Song of Songs) in which circumcision is configured as an 'ascesis of the senses': 'the circumcision of the lord is thus celebrated, so that we too will be circumcised spiritually in our five senses'.[855] Russell also finds the importance of kissing in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and its attachment to Gawain's covenant in Bertilak's castle reminiscent of the extreme emphasis on kissing in Bernard of Clairvaux's sermons on the Song of Songs (see Chapter 2) and Aelred of Rievaulx's treatise *Spiritual Friendship*.[856] Through a sacramental understanding, the carnal elements of the pentangle embody the structure of covenants that animates the plot of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

As Geraldine Heng notes, the Virgin Mary's appearance in the description of the shield is sudden, interrupting the description of the pentangle.[857] Mary's image is the private flipside to Gawain's public heraldry, intimately close to his chest yet the guardian of his five senses. She forms a humanized devotional mirror to the more abstracted contours of the pentangle. J. Stephen Russell writes of Mary's frequent incursions on the narrative as a pragmatic exposition of Cistercian spirituality, especially the more knightly writings of

[854] Sadowski, *The Knight on his Quest: Symbolic Patterns of Transition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 56; Cherewatuk, '"Becoming Male, Medieval Mothering", and Incarnational Theology in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the *Book of Margery Kempe*', 18; Su Fang Ng and Kenneth L. Hodges, 'Saint George, Islam, and Regional Audiences in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 32 (2010), 257-94, 289; R. A. Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1984), 15-27.
[855] Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 27.
[856] Russell, 'Sir Gawain and the White Monks: Cistercian Marian Spirituality and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', 215-16.
[857] Hieatt, 'Sir Gawain: Pentangle, Luf-Lace, Numerical Structure', 354 fn25 cited in Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 504.

Aelred and Bernard (see Chapter 3 of this thesis).[858] As Heng and Richard Firth Green both observe, it is not an invocation of the pentangle but of the Virgin Mary that saves Gawain from falling for the advances of Lady Hautdesert.[859]

The scholarly critique most often levelled against the pentangle resides in its ostensible perfection. Arthur Lindley describes it as 'rigid', a masculine, 'closed boundary of definitions', incapable of change; Shoaf describes it as a 'treacherous idol', a 'locus of pride' and of 'needless complexity'.[860] In a slightly more circumspect reading, Hatt sees the pentangle as a misdirection of energy, whereby Gawain's God-given virtues are selfishly 'turned back on themselves' instead of being allowed to 'spread out and proliferate': 'it is not Gawain's virtues that are false', she writes, but 'his arrangement of them, in a circle, around himself'.[861] Shoaf in particular consequently conceives of the girdle (and not the Virgin Mary) as supplanting the pentangle as a pious symbol of penitence when Gawain returns to court, favourably comparing its flexibility, imperfection, and humanizing 'relational' qualities to the pentangle's apparent stasis.[862] As many queer readings of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (among them those by Gail Ashton, Karma Lochrie, and Carolyn Dinshaw) suggest, queer analysis tends to rely on an at least provisionally stable straightness from which to deviate.[863] On the surface, the pentangle's one line appears to present such a straightness.

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[858] Sometimes these incursions are simply common turns of phrase, other times they are more consequential; Russell writes that 'Gawain's 'rising and falling fortunes directly mirror his troth to her', see 'Sir Gawain and the White Monks: Cistercian Marian Spirituality and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', 213.
[859] Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 504; Richard Firth Green, 'Sir Gawain and the Sacra Cintola', *English Studies in Canada,* 11/1 (1985), 1-11, 6-7.
[860] Lindley, *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnivalesque Subversion*, 72, 66, 73; Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 70, 33, 88.
[861] Hatt, *God and the Gawain-Poet: Theology and Genre in Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 197-98.
[862] Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 88; Lindley, *Hyperion and the Hobbyhorse: Studies in Carnivalesque Subversion*.
[863] Gail Ashton, 'The Perverse Dynamics of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', *Arthuriana,* 15/3 (2005), 51-74, 52; Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of

Heng, like Shoaf, describes the girdle of Gawain's downfall as a new, imperfect knot: 'a girdle, by definition, can only be built around an imperfect knot, whose provisionality holds open the possibility of continued use'—that is, being untied and retied again.[864] The 'knottiness' of the pentangle, negatively presented by Shoaf in particular as 'convolution', would appear to represent the opposite of the simplicity of a strip of cloth.[865] Where Heng's reading departs from Shoaf's is in her presentation of the girdle and the pentangle as inseparable: one is the more palpable, material manifestation of the other's processional, timeline qualities, and the two together weave around the 'curiously elusive, enigmatic women' who populate *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[866] Between Guinevere, the Virgin Mary, Lady Hautdesert, and Morgan, Heng writes, 'one might go on to suggest that a simple, schematic graph of feminine relationships in the poem would plot an interlinked, overlapping tracery, culminating in a pattern not unlike the familiar one invoked in the pentangle description'.[867] Crucially, Heng cites Shoshana Felman's etymological connection between 'analysis' and the Greek 'analusis', or the loosening of a knot.[868] Within this formulation, 'knottiness' and complexity are prerequisites for analysis, and the very openness and mutability of the girdle renders it capable of re-making complexity even as it 'loosens' it.

The *Gawain* poet describes the pentangle as a 'game'—in this context less frivolous than its Modern English counterpart, but still an invocation of a pleasant thing to do—and I translate 'where ever the game began or glod to an ende' as the poet expressing the shape

Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 51-54; Carolyn Dinshaw, 'Getting Medieval: *Pulp Fiction, Gawain*, Foucault', in Dolores Frese, O'Brien Warwick, and Katherine O'Keeffe (eds.), *The Book and The Body* (Notre Dame; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 116-64.

[864] Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 508.

[865] Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 88.

[866] Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 501.

[867] Ibid., 503.

[868] Shoshana Felman, 'Postal Survival, or the Question of the Navel', *Yale French studies*, 69/69 (1985), 49-72; cited in Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 508.

itself as 'process' that 'flows' from one point to another.[869] In section 4.4 of this chapter, I describe how Birtwistle and Harsent concertina the passing of the seasons and the arming of Gawain into one, ritual sequence that establishes the pentangle as a complex and elusive focal point for the drama. This 'endless knot' around which the characters can, as Heng suggests, subtly weave becomes the basis for the ritual itself. In the original production, Chitty's design sees the pentangle emblazoned on a raised platform, which also serves as the Round Table (Figure 4.6). Christlike and nude, Gawain is pinned against it to be ritually washed at the beginning of the tableaux. When in Act II, the same platform serves as the bed in Bertilak's castle, the pentangle becomes the physical base upon which the girdle can be untied and tied again. Like the girdle, his body—undressed, dressed, and undressed again—is a site upon which time is inscribed.



Figure 4.6: Bertilak's house with a pentangle floor.[870]

[869] Ross Gilbert Arthur, *Medieval Sign Theory and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 96.
[870] Royal Opera House, 1991, photograph by Clive Barda.

4.3. Analytical Approaches

4.3a. Birtwistle the Medievalist

There are numerous reasons why *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will have been an attractive source-text for Birtwistle. Referencing his long-standing interest in puppetry—be it derived from traditional English entertainment in his 1967 opera *Punch and Judy* or used more abstractly as in *The Mask of Orpheus*—Birtwistle has suggested in several interviews that he was drawn to the figure of the Green Knight's 'noble pantomime horse'.[871] The wild, naturalistic imagery of the green man and Gawain's journey through the northern winter landscape reflect the subject matter of pieces like *Down by the Greenwood Side* (1968-69); and the mound-like Green Chapel is reminiscent of the monumental hill of *Yan Tan Tethera,* or the prehistoric Wiltshire mound that is the subject of *Silbury Air* (1977). The singing severed head of the Green Knight is also reminiscent of the singing severed head of the Orpheus myth, and Orpheus is the subject of several of Birtwistle's works (most notably *The Mask of Orpheus* but also *The Corridor* [2008-09], and his head features prominently in *The Second Mrs Kong* [1994]).

I dwell upon the formal schemes and features of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the previous section of this chapter in order to position the poem as a structural analogue to Birtwistle's compositional style. This analogue functions on at least three levels. Firstly, the frank, declamatory style fostered by alliterative Middle English poetry's emphasis on stress over metre has a certain kinship with Birtwistle's approach to rhythm and word-setting—especially in comparison with the Gawain poet's more flexible, drama-oriented approach. It also arguably has more in common with the libretto than Harsent tends to

[871] Maggie Ferguson, Harrison Birtwistle, and David Harsent (2014), 'Words and Music', *The Royal Society of Literature*. <https://rsliterature.org/library-article/words-and-music/>, accessed 25 April 2023.

imply in interviews (see section 4.1b).[872] Secondly, the unpredictable yet dependable punctuations of the bob-and-wheel could be productively compared to the musical events that come into focus in the foreground of many of Birtwistle's processional pieces.[873] Finally, the formal complexities of the Gawain poem's plot and themes, along with its self-conscious interaction with its own method of delivery, may have appealed to Birtwistle as a modernist.

In terms reminiscent of Heng's formulation of the intertwined pentangle and girdle (see section 4.2c), Ad Putter and Myra Stokes describe the poem as 'a double plot ... the one embedded in the other, connected to each other in a manner that is revealed only at the end'.[874] Birtwistle emphasizes these concentric plots in numerous ways, including rising and falling flourishes that depict doors opening and closing at structural moments, time shifts and repetitions (especially of the Green Knight's arrival in Act I), and repeated and returning lines of text and ritual formulae (such as spells and riddles). Furthermore, Putter and Stokes point out the importance of the structural interplay between streams of alliteration and punctuating bob-and-wheel figures, through which 'the metre thus shares in the duality that pervades the plot, style and organization of the poem'.[875] As I discuss later in this chapter, embedding juxtapositions between methods, especially in the manner of a game, is another Birtwistlian trait.

[872] Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain*, 46.
[873] Arnold Whittall, '"Let it drift": Birtwistle's Late-Modernist Music Dramas', in David Beard, Kenneth Gloag, and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *Harrison Birtwistle Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015a), 1-25, 125.
[874] Putter and Stokes, *The Works of the Gawain Poet: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 218.
[875] Ibid., 223.

If Birtwistle's music shares an affinity with medieval poetry, its affinity with medieval music is yet more pronounced. Jonathan Cross has written of Birtwistle's 'fascination with medieval music' manifesting in arrangements of music by Guillaume de Machaut, first for military band during his national service in the 1950s, then in *Hoquetus David* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and glockenspiel (1969) and *Machaut à ma manière* for orchestra (1988).[876] His interest in early music extended into renaissance influences, such as *Ut Heremita Solus* (a 1969 Ockeghem arrangement for mixed ensemble), and when he was invited to curate the Southbank Centre's Summerscope festival in 1985, the programme was entitled, 'Harrison Birtwistle: His Fancies, His Toys, His Dreams' after miniatures by Giles Farnaby from the seventeenth-century *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*. Describing Birtwistle's approach to programming, Michael Hall writes that Birtwistle insisted that he wanted to 'do lots of polyphony ... only it should be Pérotin with saxophones'; the final festival programme featured ten different composers, all of whom Birtwistle asked to arrange Machaut's *Hoquetus David* for the ensemble they had been programmed with.[877]

In an interview with Fiona Maddocks, Birtwistle recalls first becoming interested in medieval music as a student in Manchester, with explicit reference to *Hoquetus David*:

> [Peter Maxwell Davies and I] became a pair of medievalists … there was one particular piece … called *Hoquetus David* by Machaut. It's the great enigmatic piece …. I could never work out what the decisions were, for its continuity. You know, what was the process of getting from one note to another?[878]

[876] Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music* (electronic edn.; London: Faber, 2000), 28.
[877] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years*, 65-66.
[878] Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 133. For a discussion of the impact of the early music revival on Birtwistle's contemporaries, see Kolassa, 'Presentness and the Past in Contemporary British Opera'.

Birtwistle's emphasis on enigma as a crucial quality that he finds in Machaut's music will become relevant to my argument later in this chapter. In an explicit comparison between Birtwistle and Machaut, Robert Adlington invokes similarly elusive musical qualities:

> Multi-layered textures; rhythmic asymmetry and complexity; hocket; consignment of melody to submerged registers: all these are central to both Machaut's and Birtwistle's music.[879]

Adlington places more emphasis on complexity than enigma. His reference to 'submerged' melodies will become particularly pertinent to my discussion of Birtwistle's idea of line in the following subsection, and to a broader hermeneutic of secrecy toward the end of this chapter. Birtwistle's exploration of a kind of 'cantus firmus' technique (perhaps one facet of what Adlington describes as 'submerged melody') can be heard in *Secret Theatre*, and his experiments with isorhythmic organization can be heard in *Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum* as well as *Melencolia I* (1976).[880] Birtwistle's use of hocket—a very tangible textual medievalism—can be heard most overtly in *Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum* [1977-78]) and *Hoquetus Petrus* (1995); in Mark Delare's analysis of the latter piece, he creates an analogy between the 'radical' qualities of *ars nova* notation in the fourteenth and Birtwistle's approach to rhythmic complexity.[881]

These terms—hocket, cantus firmus, *ars nova*, complexity, and enigma—range between the historically specific and the supremely vague (yet evocative). The distinctive textural qualities of hocket, for example, have rendered it a popular medievalist compositional

[879] Robert Adlington, '"Good lodging": Harrison Birtwistle's Reception of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in Richard W. Barber (ed.), *King Arthur in Music* (Arthurian Studies; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 127-43.
[880] Aleksandra Vojčić, 'On Taking a Walk', in David Beard, Kenneth Gloag, and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *Harrison Birtwistle Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 232-65, 253; Michael Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle* (Contemporary Composers; London: Robson Books, 1984), 18.
[881] Mark Delaere, 'Self-Portrait with Boulez and Machaut (and Ligeti is there as well): Harrison Birtwistle's *Hoquetus Petrus*', in Björn Heile (ed.), *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 191-204; Mark Delaere, '"Cantus autem iste cholericis et iuvenibus appetibilis est propter sui mobilitatem et volocitatem": Zur Hoquetus-Technik in der jüngsten Musik', in Herbert Schneider (ed.), *Mittelalter und Mittelalterrezeption: Festschrift für Wolf Robenius* (2005), 407-33.

practice among many modernist composers (in György Ligeti's Violin Concerto, for example). Complexity and enigma, on the other hand, are not inherently medieval qualities, but could perhaps convey a sense of the overwhelming temporal gap between now and the Middle Ages, and a certain awareness of how epistemologies of music are altered or lost over the passing centuries. Cross has also referred to more conceptual medievalisms that apply to Birtwistle's music:

> anti-narrative, ritual and ceremony, ostinato, drone, the processional, new kinds of (timeless or non-directed) time, even a certain naive boldness or simplicity.[882]

These affective qualities illuminate how Birtwistle and his audiences might perceive the Middle Ages themselves, as a time in which ambiguity functioned differently. When applied carefully and comparatively, medievalist methods of music analysis have the potential to offer new perspectives on Birtwistle's music.

4.3b. Birtwistle's Idea of Line

In her 'essay and diary', documenting the rehearsal process for *Gawain,* Rhian Samuel recalls receiving feedback from Birtwistle on an early draft of her analysis:

> He didn't like the use of the word 'accompaniment' …. He also objected to a reference to counterpoint being a fundamental technique in the opera, because the work, he explained, was built from a single line. This line could multiply into several simultaneous lines (a kind of organum) or be subjected to ornamentation, but it was one line. He drew the line on a brown paper envelope—it spiralled around a circle. And he drew the repeated sections as rectangles on this circle.[883]

This 'fundamental line' is referred to throughout *Gawain*'s critical literature, often in connection with analogies about *organum* and the refutation of terms (like 'counterpoint' and 'accompaniment') more commonly associated with post-renaissance common-practice harmony. Like many of the medievalisms recounted in the previous subsection, these terms

[882] Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, 27.
[883] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 173.

are foremost conceptual in their application to Birtwistle's music, and their concrete application can be elusive. Before I introduce *Gawain*'s arming ritual, this subsection will attempt to synthesize how Birtwistle's conceptions of modality, 'fundamental line' and *organum* have been broadly applied.

Birtwistle's music can be daunting to analyse for a number of reasons: Adlington describes it as 'often forbiddingly abstract and resistant to easy analysis', and he warns against falling back on 'the idea that it is all "essentially theatrical"' as an easy way of 'making new works explicable'.[884] As Hall puts it, Birtwistle 'insists he is essentially a modal composer'.[885] Hall places this assessment in tension with the fact that much of Birtwistle's harmony is built from symmetrical procedures, because he suggests that modality implies harmony built from the bass upwards.[886] Indeed, as Cross has emphasized, Birtwistle's study of integral serial compositional methods with Milton Babbitt in 1966 left its mark on his subsequent work.[887] As I discuss in Chapter 1, however, the term 'mode' is a particularly mutable one in music theory, and can be especially obfuscating in medievalist contexts; if used in the same sense as Messiaen's modes of limited transposition, moreover, modes can be maximally symmetrical in ways which directly contradict Hall's bottom-up description. Nevertheless, Hall reconciles Birtwistle's formulation of himself as a 'modal composer' by pointing out that his harmonic symmetries are rarely perfect, and suggesting that Birtwistle juxtaposes opposite procedures in 'just about everything he does', albeit in a way which 'varies from piece to piece'.[888] In other words, Birtwistle's harmonic processes tend to be ambiguous.

[884] Robert Adlington, *The Music of Harrison Birtwistle* (Music in the Twentieth Century; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5.
[885] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years*, 16.
[886] Ibid.
[887] Ibid.; Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, 409.
[888] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years*, 15.

Foremost because of this harmonic ambiguity, Birtwistle's use of the term 'fundamental line' should not be confused with the Schenkerian sense of the word. As Cross points out, Birtwistle studied Schenkerian analysis while he was in the USA in the late 1960s, and it demonstrably affected the way in which he spoke about his own music (using terms like 'foreground' and 'background' in *Secret Theatre*, for example).[889] However, a 'fundamental line' (or *Urlinie*) in Schenkerian analysis is always a stepwise melodic descent to the tonic, mutually dependant on cadential bass motion, that underpins an entire movement of diatonic music. Birtwistle's fundamental line may be a similarly deep, structuring musical process that is harmonized and expanded out from. But Birtwistle's harmonies combine modal and symmetrical procedures, and do not adhere to any of the diatonic fundaments that ultimately define a Schenkerian *Urlinie*.

Birtwistle's idea of 'line' as resistant to both contrapuntal treatment and neat excision from 'accompanimental' surroundings also distinguishes it from meaningful Schenkerian analogy. Alongside other Wagnerian comparisons I mention earlier in this chapter, the long, intense melodic lines that sometimes emerge from within Birtwistle's textures have sometimes invited comparison with Wagner's concept of 'unendliche Melodie' ('endless' or 'infinite melody'), and David Beard points out that Birtwistle completed *An Interrupted Endless Melody* for oboe and piano in 1991, shortly after *Gawain*.[890] But this small-scale piece represents just one manifestation of a Birtwistlian line, and his adoption of Wagnerian terminology in this case, while perhaps gesturing towards large-scale through-composition and a dramatic conceptualization of musical time, would require closer analysis to yield a more concrete understanding of line in Birtwistle's broader output.

[889] Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, 409.
[890] David Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre* (Music Since 1900; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 200.

If Birtwistle's idea of line is simultaneously so fundamental to his practice and so multifarious, perhaps it could be more fruitfully located within his sketches, on a piece-by-piece basis. Birtwistle's high-modernist aesthetic often involves tight formal planning in terms of dramatic contour; Peter Zinovieff's conceptual and diagram-heavy libretto for *The Mask of Orpheus* (1986) is one example of this approach. Several of Birtwistle's librettists report him having asked them for extra text in certain scenes which he wished to compose as elaborate rituals (such as the arming of *Gawain*).[891] However, Beard has found that Birtwistle stopped making pre-compositional schemata in the late 1970s, and in the subsequent decades seems instead to have tended towards an intuitive, contextual, 'moment-to-moment' working method.[892] While he made tables of raw material sometimes, he did not necessarily adhere to these workings-out, and in a 1984 programme note for *Secret Theatre* he suggested that he would sometimes deliberately lose such sketches to make sure that he did not feel bound by them.[893]

Direct repetition is rare in Birtwistle's music; if a melody returns, it is usually altered in some way.[894] In one interview with Hall, he describes his predilection for 'fuzziness' around structurally important lines. He gives the example of when 'a spread of Es gets disturbed by adjacencies, so that you're not quite sure if you're on E or not'.[895] Birtwistle is more likely to punctuate his music with qualities like gesture and timbre, which are harder to define than more traditional operatic techniques like melodic repetition, home tonalities, or recitative and aria. As Arnold Whittall writes, Birtwistle's music was more

[891] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 174; Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 152.
[892] David Beard, 'What the Sketches Tell Us', in David Beard, Kenneth Gloag, and Nicholas Jones (eds.), *Harrison Birtwistle Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 120-74, 155.
[893] Birtwistle, cited in Andrew Clements's programme note to the first performance of *Secret Theatre* on 18 October 1984, performed by the London Sinfonietta at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. Cited in ibid.
[894] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 177.
[895] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle*, 149.

rarely analysed before 2000 than that of Maxwell Davies, perhaps because of this intuitive method of generating foreground material (Birtwistle reportedly once stated that he could change all of the pitches in his music 'without doing any damage' to it).[896]

Birtwistle stated on several occasions that the orchestra is not accompanimental in *Gawain*, and that sometimes the orchestra 'may relate more closely than the voice part to the fundamental line'.[897] Scholars who have worked with Birtwistle's sketches, however, especially Beard and Hall, unanimously conclude that Birtwistle's vocal lines were written first and the orchestral parts added later.[898] Hall describes them as 'supportive yet independent', and Beard describes how vocal lines appear in the sketches:

> clearly legible with more roughly assembled orchestral parts that embellish, simplify, or directly mirror the progress of the voice. If simultaneous vocal melodies are required, either a single line is distributed among the parts, or a line is composed first and counterpoint is generated from it.[899]

At least in terms of compositional process, if Birtwistle composed *Gawain* outwards from a central melodic underpinning, then that underpinning would be likely to be much more present in the vocal lines. Compositional process need not be a central focus in analysis after the fact, however, and Beard cites Whittall's analysis of Birtwistle's *Pulse Shadows*, where he resists Hall's overemphasis of the order of composition, writing that: 'there is the most essential and productive ambiguity between lines which were conceived as a consequence of vocal melody and yet which sound as if they are prior, creating a context

[896] Vojčić, 'On Taking a Walk', 237; Arnold Whittall, 'Comparatively Complex: Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies and Modernist Analysis', *Music analysis*, 13/2/3 (1994), 139-59.
[897] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 167.
[898] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle in Recent Years*, 92.
[899] Ibid., 52-53; Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre*, 210.

for that melody'.[900] Once again, it becomes increasingly clear that analysing Birtwistle's music demands that analysis embraces ambiguity rather than explaining it away.

If Birtwistle's music is most effectively approached without a preconceived notion of the order in which voices were composed, this method arguably sits in tension with analogies (like the one I quote from Samuel at the beginning of this subsection) between his compositional method and *organum*. The term 'organum' most generally denotes the technique of harmonizing plainchant with at least one other voice. There is written evidence for this practice from the ninth century onwards, and by the fourteenth century it would gradually begin to be redubbed 'counterpoint'. In the late thirteenth century, an English theorist studying in Paris known in modern scholarship as Anonymous IV referred to a repertory called *Magnus liber organi* by composers Léonin and Pérotin.[901] No surviving manuscript corresponds exactly to what Anonymous IV describes, but as Catherine A. Bradley writes, 'his description can also be interpreted as a more general reference to a body of liturgical polyphony associated with the Cathedral of Notre Dame'.[902]

Anonymous IV describes several different ways of harmonizing chant. The basic formulation of 'organum' Samuel relays perhaps bears most resemblance to *discantus*, a system for improvising a second voice above a pre-existing tenor line relayed in numerous treatises from the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries, that emphasizes the creation of

[900] Arnold Whittall, 'Review-Article: The Mechanisms of Lament: Harrison Birtwistle's "Pulse Shadows"', *Music & Letters*, 80/1 (1999b), 86-102, 89.
[901] Anonymous IV, *The Music Treatise of Anonymous IV: A New Translation*, ed. Jeremy Yudkin (Musicological Studies and Documents; Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler; American Institute of Musicology, 1985).
[902] Catherine A. Bradley, *Polyphony in Medieval Paris: The Art of Composing With Plainchant* (Music in Context; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 15.

consonant intervals in contrary motion with the tenor.[903] During the fourteenth century, progressions to perfect consonances (octaves, fifths, and unisons) from imperfect consonances (thirds and fifths) began, in Richard L. Crocker's words, to take on 'more and more importance as building blocks of counterpoint'.[904] As more voices were added, they were composed 'successively', with the 'basic unit' of composition still consisting of two notes against one another.[905] In *organum purum*, which I relate to my analysis in section 4.4b, the chant is sustained (or literally 'held') through extremely long notes in the tenor voice and decorated by faster-moving melismatic flourishes in at least one upper voice. These melismas were notated according to rhythmic modes, and are basically formulae of long and short note lengths combined into rhythmic building blocks. Based on the witness of Anonymous IV, Pérotin is generally credited with adding a third and fourth voice to *organum purum*.

Early music analogies form a particular focus in Hall's writing. He describes Birtwistle, as a teacher in the mid-1960s, arranging four-part canzonas by Heinrich Isaac for his students to play. Birtwistle was reportedly 'fascinated by how the tenor's melody gets obscured by upper voices', comparing Isaac's technique to that of Picasso.[906] Perhaps hyperbolically describing all Birtwistle's music as 'essentially monody', Hall suggests that it was 'inevitable that it would be thickened by the medieval practice of *organum'*, which he glosses as 'the doubling of the line'.[907] He uses Birtwistle's *Triumph of Time* (1971-72) as a more 'obvious' example: in part a response to a sixteenth-century woodcut by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Triumph of Time* explicitly gestures towards the practice of

[903] Richard L. Crocker, 'Discant, Counterpoint, and Harmony', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 15/1 (1962), 1-21, 2-3.
[904] Ibid., 11.
[905] Ibid., 12-13.
[906] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle*, 23.
[907] Ibid., 20.

doubling at the fourth, fifth and octave, but uses chromatic adjacencies to those perfect intervals (generating the 'fuzziness' Birtwistle invokes in relation to his use of line, see above).[908] Presenting a more *discantus*-like case, Hall also points to Birtwistle's arrangement of *Hoquetus David* as an example of a piece which 'adds organum to organum'.[909]

Birtwistle has stated that he was especially attracted to Machaut's *Hoquetus David* because he perceived it to be 'enigmatic' in the 'process of getting from one note to another'.[910] The locus of his interest in medieval harmony resides in a perception of his own enigmatic method being allied to Machaut's, rather than any more specific compositional processes at work in Machaut's music that would have been considered especially enigmatic in Machaut's time. Put another way, what attracts Birtwistle to Machaut's music is the cultural and temporal gap between contemporary and medieval listening and its potential strangeness. Hall's appeals to *organum* provide yet another opportunity to approach Birtwistle's music as process; *discantus* is, after all, a compositional process and not a form. Unlike *discantus*'s fundamental two-voiced construction, however, perhaps Birtwistle's idea of line is better expressed as some multidimensional process, with many faces that can be seen from different sides. In the words of Cross:

> it soon becomes apparent that Birtwistle's notion of a fundamental melodic line is neither endless melody nor permanent transition, but rather something more elusive, a substructure which underpins the music, an idea which is constantly being alluded to but which is not literally present in the music at all times. At least, not in the case of a work of the proportions of *Gawain*.

The purpose of this chapter is not to uncover an immutable 'fundamental line' in *Gawain*. The line is fundamentally conceptual, and (pertinently, in this Arthurian context)

[908] Ibid.
[909] Ibid.
[910] Maddocks and Birtwistle, *Harrison Birtwistle: Wild Tracks*, 134.

attempting to pin it down would be a fool's errand. Instead, I aim in my analysis to think through the implications of such a line, specifically as a musical-dramatic manifestation of the pentangle and its elusive, multivalent, and dynamic manifestations of meaning.

4.4. Analysis

4.4a. The Turning of the Seasons

Like *The Tale of Januarie* (see Chapter 2), *Gawain*'s long tableaux-section (cut from the end of Act I in 1994 and reinstated in 2014) conveys the passage of time by foregrounding the turning of the four seasons. Cycling quickly through the seasons is something of a medievalist trope, often seen in cinema, that tends to romanticize pre-industrial societies' connection to the land, seasonal patterns of work and rest, and vulnerability to changes in weather.[911] But while in *The Tale of Januarie* (see Chapter 2) the passage of time demarcates life-cycles of ageing, reproduction, and death, in *Gawain* it carries a more immediately deathly quality of Gawain's looming, seemingly inevitable beheading by the axe of the Green Knight.[912]

As I discuss in section 4.2c, the turning of the seasons falls at the start of Fitt II in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In 1964, Birtwistle set a modern English translation of this part of the poem in an unaccompanied choral piece, *Narration: A Description of the Passing of a Year*—evidence of his long-standing interest the poem. In *Gawain*, this section is divided into five seasonal tableaux: winter, spring, summer, autumn, and winter again. Smaller delineations of time are visually represented in the score by periodic

[911] See, for example Ralph Bakshi's 1978 animated *The Lord of the Rings* (1978) and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975).
[912] For a discussion of the liturgical implications of the seasons in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* see Russell, 'Sir Gawain and the White Monks: Cistercian Marian Spirituality and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', 220.

sketches of the sun and moon traversing a horizon (Figure 4.7), with each season beginning with a sunrise. These sketches are not dissimilar to the allegorical masks, arches, and seasonal 'auras' sketched in the libretto for Birtwistle and Zinovieff's *The Mask of Orpheus* (1986), but in *Gawain* they serve as concrete cues for stage design; in Chitty's 1991 production, the stage resembled an astrolabe, ringed by rotating circles.[913] In another parallelism with *The Tale of Januarie*, the influence of the *Très riches heures du Duc de Berry* (Figure 4.8) on Chitty's set is manifest in its star-covered arches, while the astrolabe structure is perhaps further reminiscent of Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner* (1972).[914] Dancers holding suns and moons orbit the action on a turning circle to correspond with the sketches in the score, while seasonal reapers, shepherds, and other pastoral characters crisscross, pageant-like (Figure 4.9).

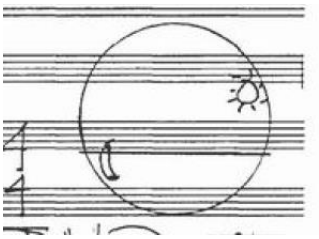


Figure 4.7: The positions of the sun and moon represented in the score.[915]

[913] Harrison Birtwistle, David Harsent, Di Trevis, Elgar Howarth, and Alison Chitty (1991), *Gawain* (UK: Royal Opera House; BBC television broadcast). Royal Opera House Archive, DVD STA/01693.
[914] For further discussion of the staging of *Taverner*, see Majel Connery, 'Peter Maxwell Davies's Worst Nightmare: Staging the Unsacred in the Operas *Taverner* and *Resurrection*', *The Opera Quarterly*, 25/3-4 (2009), 247-69; Kolassa, 'Presentness and the Past in Contemporary British Opera'.
[915] Harrison Birtwistle and David Harsent, *Gawain: An Opera in Two Acts*, (Full score; London: Universal Edition, 1990), 202.

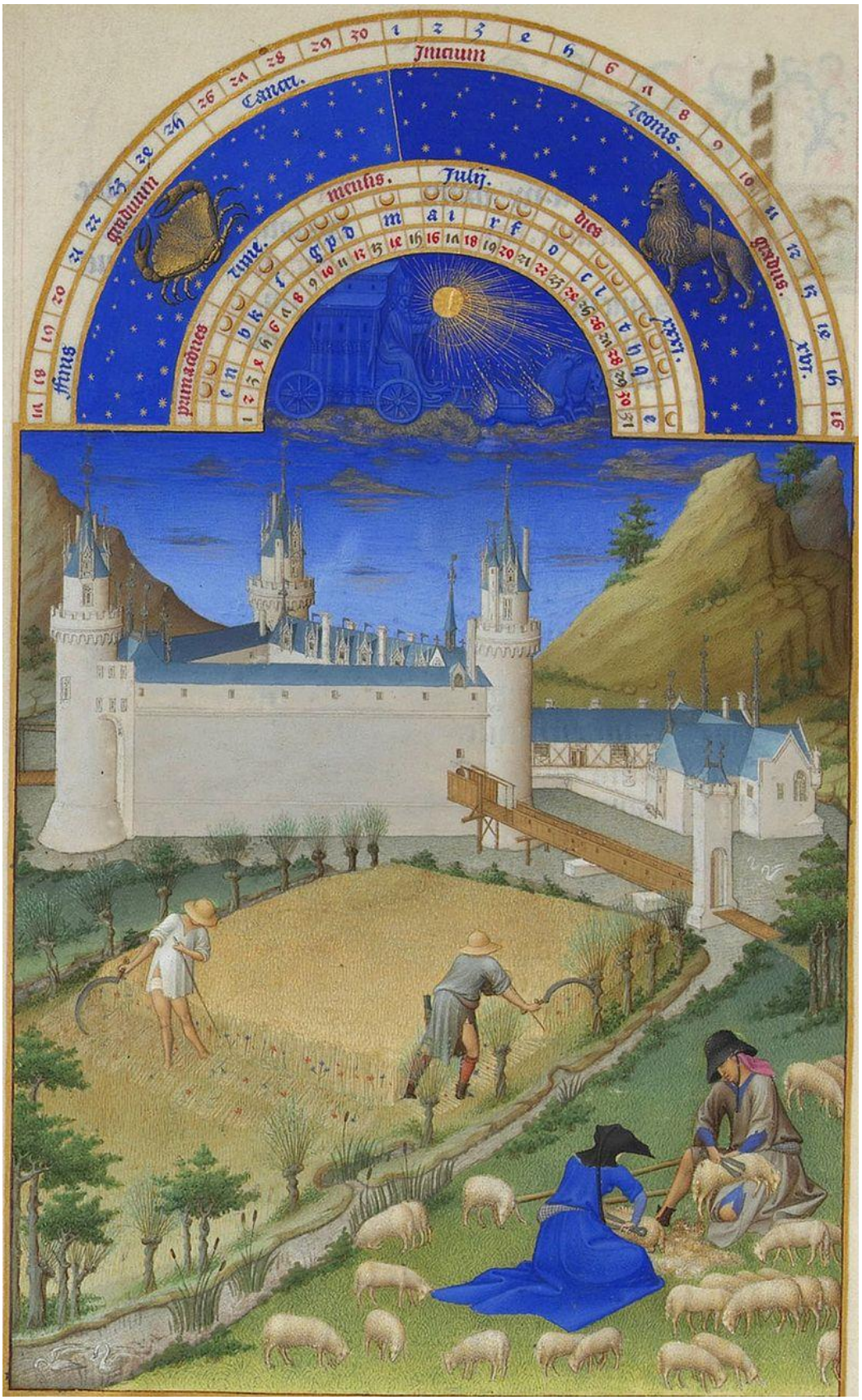


Figure 4.8: July in the Très riches heures.[916]

[916] Musée Condé MS 65, f.7v.



Figure 4.9: The autumn tableau.[917]

Birtwistle divides the chorus into on- and off-stage groups. These groups correspond to the opera's wider thematization of 'concentric plots', signalled by the opening and closing of doors, to which I briefly refer in section 4.3a.[918] In Chitty's production, the on-stage chorus were dressed as monks, and the performers comprised an expanded assemblage of early music vocal ensemble The Sixteen.[919] This on-stage monks' chorus sings in Latin, with a pattern of interpolations by members of the court throughout each indoor 'daytime' section. In the night section of each season, the off-stage chorus sings a refrain, 'and so the world turns', to bookend Morgan and Lady Hautdesert, who curse Gawain with wild and threatening descriptions of nature. In Chitty's production, they traversed the top of the

[917] Royal Opera House, 1991, photo by Clive Barda.
[918] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 166.
[919] Ibid., 164.

stage in an illuminated moon in an overtly feminine-gendered visual gesture (see section 4.1b, Figure 4.1).

Each of the five seasons in the ritual follows an identical pattern of components, which begin to feel almost liturgical in their regularity. Every season begins with what Birtwistle refers to as a 'motet': choral settings of the four Marian antiphons intoned by the Bishop and continued by the monks' chorus. In their original function (and in *Gawain*), the Marian antiphons are not antiphons in the usual sense of a piece of chant sung before and after a psalm, but rather function more like hymns. Since the mid-thirteenth century (and still in many religious communities today), they have been sung at the end of Compline in the Divine Office; the last liturgical item that religious communities sing together before they go to bed.[920] Each of the four Marian antiphons is assigned to a different stretch of the liturgical calendar, and Birtwistle aligns each with its own season. The length of Ordinary Time means that Birtwistle pushes the Eastertide *Regina Caeli* forwards into summer, but their ordering in the opera remains unchanged (see Table 4.1).

*Table 4.1: Marian antiphons and corresponding liturgical/*Gawain *seasons.*

Antiphon	**Liturgical Season**	**Season in *Gawain***
Alma redemptoris Mater	Advent to Candlemas	Winter
Ave Regina caelorum	End of Candlemas to Holy Saturday	Spring
Regina Caeli	Eastertide	Summer
Salve Regina	End of Eastertide to Advent	Autumn

[920] Sally Elizabeth Roper, 'Medieval English Benedictine Liturgy', PhD (University of Oxford, 1989), 141-46.

These Marian motets dominate the tableaux in *Gawain*, taking up most of each daytime section, and Birtwistle sets them in different styles from season to season. Winter's *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, for instance, uses slow, sustained polyphony—perhaps texturally, but not harmonically, reminiscent of Palestrina—ornamented by high, florid melisma sung by the Bishop (a male mezzo-soprano, Kevin Smith in the 1991 production).[921] Summer's *Regina Coeli*, conversely, features a sustained bass line with upper voices moving in quick rhythmic unison above it, a texture strongly evocative of *organum purum* (introduced in section 4.3b, and on which more later). The orchestral accompaniments also change substantially between each section. Despite such pronounced textural variation between each tableau, Birtwistle almost directly repeats the *Alma Redemptoris Mater* motet when winter returns. This is particularly noteworthy given how rare direct repetition is in Birtwistle's music (see section 3b). As the second winter cycle in

Table 4.2 and summer cycle in Table 4.3 show, the rest of the components in each tableau follow a repeating formula of interjections by fixed groups of characters.

[921] For more overtly Palestrina-influenced motet-writing, see Birtwistle's *The Last Supper*, Whittall, '"Let it drift": Birtwistle's Late-Modernist Music Dramas', 9.

Table 4.2: The structure of the text in the second winter tableau, figures 146-57.[922]

Section	Character(s)	Text	
Transition	Morgan and Hautdesert	Slowly the winter's winch hauls sheet of ice And the ice wind sing 'A', the end of everything, 'AEIYA'.	
Motet	Monks' chorus	Alma redemptoris mater que pervia caeli porta manes, Et stella maris, succus recadenti surgere qui curat populo: Tu que genuisti, natura mirante, tuum sanctum Genitorem: Virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis abore sumens illud Ave peccatorum miserere.	Loving Mother of the Redeemer, who remains the accessible Gateway of Heaven, and Star of the Sea, Give aid to a falling people that strives to rise; O Thou who begot thy holy Creator, while all nature marvelled, Virgin before and after receiving that "Ave" from the mouth of Gabriel, have mercy on sinners.
Arming	Ywain, Fool, and Agravain	Here is your badge of steel, the endless knot, weave your purpose to that. Here is Solomon's sign, the emblem asks Fivefold virtues, fivefold tasks.	
Chant	Bishop Baldwin	Huic ergo pace, Deus Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis Requiem.	Spare him, O God, Merciful Lord Jesus, Grant them rest.
Dream	Gawain	I dreamed my enemy kneeling before me, his hands raised like a supplicant's; I gave him food and drink.	
Blessing	Guinevere	Here is the golden boy in love with his journey. He dreams himself taking the last few steps.	
Refrain	Off-stage Chorus	And so the world turns.	
Curse	Morgan and Hautdesert	Gawain, can you smell that stench? The earth's a charnel house; these are your journey's milestones: the season's bare bones. Moment by moment we overhaul yesterday. Midwinter snowlight, so the world turns.	
Refrain	Off-stage Chorus	Moment by moment, season by season, sunrise by sunrise.	

[922] Sections that repeat melodic formulae are shown in bold. Indoor characters are filled in grey.

Table 4.3: The structure of the text in the summer tableau, figures 123-35.[923]

Section	**Character(s)**	**Text**	
Transition	Morgan and Hautdesert	All mellows to fat, green-leaf mid-summer's midday hush. Broad wing on the valley floor, a heat-haze on the moor.	
Motet	Monks' chorus	Regina coeli, laetare, alleluia. Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia. Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia. Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.	Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia. The Son you merited to bear, alleluia, Has risen, as he said, alleluia. Pray to God for us, alleluia.
Arming	Ywain, Fool, and Agravain	Here is your second skull, your cap of steel. If both are sundered, which will heal?	
Chant	Bishop Baldwin	Juste judex ultiones, donem facte missionis, ante diem rationis.	Just Judge of vengeance, make a gift of remission before the day of reckoning.
Dream	Gawain	I dreamed my enemy before me; he stared at the emblem, his gaze fixed, like someone watching water.	
Blessing	Guinevere	Here is the warrior, charmed by his own recklessness. He dreams the woodlands cordoned by shadow.	
Refrain	Off-stage Chorus	And so the world turns.	
Curse	Morgan and Hautdesert	The grain is green as belief, meadows are heaped in their thresh; Before the day has really begun, the sea is reined in by the sun. Tomorrow will stumble on yesterday's promises, cancelling everything.	
Transition	Morgan and Hautdesert	Next the year's slow death, A faint, dull-blush of decay in the bloom as fallen fruit. Mulch to feed the root.	
Refrain	Off-stage Chorus	Moment by moment, season by season, sunrise by sunrise.	

[923] Unlike in the final tableau (table 4.2), Morgan and Lady Hautdesert sing a short transition text after their curse to link to the next season.

Harsent recalls Birtwistle asking him to write extra lines of libretto from which to build these ritual components.[924] With the exception of the motets, all the components sung by the courtly, indoor characters (in grey on the two tables above) are set to melodies which remain virtually identical from season to season. These passages feature Ywain, the Fool, and Agravain presenting Gawain with various items of armour, Bishop Baldwin chanting progressive Latin verses from the *Dies irae* (a sequence describing the day of judgement, famous for its inclusion in the Requiem Mass), Gawain detailing dreams he has had about the enemy he faces, and Guinevere bestowing an ambiguous blessing on Gawain (see Example 4.2, discussed in more detail in section 4.4b). The passages that I label 'transition' and 'curse', sung by Morgan and Lady Hautdesert and interspersed with refrains sung by the offstage chorus, contrastingly exhibit highly varied musical settings. Their 'AEIYA' nonsense syllables (Birtwistle's addition, see

Table 4.2) are semantically destabilizing and spell-like, and their 'transition' passages (Table 4.3) almost give the impression that they themselves control the passage of time, dictating when each season will fade into the next. While a thoroughgoing analysis of Morgan and Hautdesert's material in these tableaux is beyond the scope of this chapter, their magical framing provides a powerful and complex counterweight to the pentangular, repetitious way in which Arthur's court describes Gawain.

As I suggest in the introduction to this chapter, the dramatic irony at work in the division between the courtly characters within Camelot and the external influences of Morgan and Lady Hautdesert is an important device in *Gawain*. By making the two women so consistently visible to the audience and enabling them pause time to interject their own, destabilizing narration, Birtwistle and Harsent generate a vivid impression of the ways in

[924] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 174.

which Gawain is subject to subversive forces outside of his courtly sanctuary. In interviews, Harsent makes much of the divide between the indoor and outdoor domains in both *Gawain* and his wider output, describing:

> the extended metaphor of the indoors/outdoors division between culture and nature, between society's rules and a self-governing wilderness, between the trappings of a spurious decency and unignorable appetites, between the mendacity inherent in 'civilized' behaviour and the unfakeable bare bones of landscape and weather.[925]

Several musicological commentators, too, have made much of this binary. Samuel writes of the 'marked air of duality' that 'pervades every aspect of the opera'.[926] Adlington writes of the 'important role' that the inside-outside divisions in Chitty's staging played in 'reinforcing the cyclical elements of the music and plot', and how 'the unreigned natural world that Harsent depicts as a persistent threat to human certainties is symbolized by a 'wild' music that 'fails to respect the text's cosy repetitiousness'.[927] Literary scholars, too, have written of the hinge between the interior life of Arthur's court and its threatening exteriors in the poem, from H. Bergner's invocations of the calm, almost static peacefulness of its depiction of Arthur's court, to Elizabeth D. Kirk's and Elizabeth Allen's conceptions of the courtly code as a collection of enclosing rules that exclude and outlaw that which is ungovernable.[928] Even within the relatively narrow remit of Birtwistle's tableau structure, however, these boundaries are more blurred than they initially seem. On a musical level, repetition is not the sole preserve of Arthur's court, because it is the outdoor, off-stage chorus who sing the two refrains. From a literary

[925] Lidia Vianu and David Harsent (2006), 'Postmodernism has Proved Such a Muddle and Mess', *Desperado Essay-Interviews*. <http://lidiavianu.scriptmania.com/David%20Harsent.htm>, accessed 10 November 2022; cited in Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre*, 201.
[926] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 168; Adlington, '"Good lodging": Harrison Birtwistle's Reception of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 132-33; 29.
[927] Adlington, *The Music of Harrison Birtwistle*, 29.
[928] H. Bergner, 'The Two Courts: Two Modes of Existence in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *English Studies*, 67/5 (1986), 401-16, 407-08; Elizabeth D. Kirk, '"Wel Bycommes Such Craft Upon Cristmasse": the Festive and the Hermeneutic in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Arthuriana*, 4/2 (1994), 93-137, 108; Elizabeth Allen, *Uncertain Refuge: Sanctuary in the Literature of Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 143.

perspective, Harsent crucially describes the mendacity not of the magical characters who trick and manipulate Gawain, but of courtly society.

If the turning of the seasons in *Gawain* is simultaneously an unstoppable, immutable truth and a culturally potent condition to be at turns ritualized at court and manipulated by magic, the measurement of the year itself between the Green Knight's first appearance and Gawain's arrival at the Green Chapel has proven strangely ambiguous in both the poem and the opera.[929] Samuel recalls Birtwistle's apparent ambivalence about these timeline inconsistencies:

> of the 'year and a day' before Gawain meets the Green Knight, the first year is taken up with the 'preparation' (the Seasons). 'You mean the journey takes only one day?' I asked him. He seemed a bit taken aback: 'Oh no, no. It's a - year - too…'. He seemed not to have thought about this before, but anyway he certainly didn't consider the journey to be (dramatically) shorter than the preparation time.[930]

Irene Morra considers the poem's narrative inconsistency to be mirrored in myriad thematic and structural inconsistencies that permeate *Gawain*; an assertion that I address in greater detail in section 4.5.[931] For the present analysis, it is worth emphasizing how easy it would have been for Birtwistle to have set the arming ritual over four seasons, running the gamut of Marian antiphons and seasonal moods without returning to winter again. In this passage that became so long that it was virtually excised from the 1994 production, it appears that the conceptual five-fold form of the ritual takes precedence for Birtwistle over narrative realism. In Freed's analysis the *Gawain* poet writes a supernumerary 101st stanza as a gesture of humility, the way in which that final bob-and-wheel reiterates the poem's

[929] For a discussion of timeline vagueries in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, see Jamie McKinstry, *Middle English Romance and the Craft of Memory* (Middle English Romance & the Craft of Memory; Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2021), 96; Ad Putter, 'In Search of Lost Time: Missing Days in *Sir Cleges* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in Chris Humphrey and W. M. Ormrod (eds.), *Time in the Medieval World* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press in association with the Boydell Press, 2001), 119-36.
[930] Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 170-71.
[931] Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain*, 53.

opening line ties the poem into a sort of textual eternal present.[932] As a fifth element, Birtwistle's second winter similarly locks the ritual into a cyclic pattern that could implicitly go on forever: an 'endless knot'.

Trenchantly, this fifth element in *Gawain*'s ritual sees the introduction of the pentangle. As Ywain, Agravain, and the Fool bring it forward, they present 'the endless knot' as a template around which Gawain can 'weave [his] purpose':

> Here is your badge of steel, the endless knot,
> weave your purpose to that.
> Here is Solomon's sign, the emblem asks
> fivefold virtues, fivefold tasks.

While the relational and undoable girdle knot in Heng's analysis of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is necessary for the pentangle to be drawn out of the realm of abstraction and into the realm of human interaction, the pentangle's emergence at the fifth node of *Gawain*'s ritual presents him with a path 'to weave' into the future. When time is conceived in a dynamic shape like the pentangle, any one of the five points could be the fifth, because it is a line drawn by the act of tracing. In the fullness of time, all five points are the fifth.

In the context of medieval Christendom (and as I discuss in the conclusion to this thesis), this endless multiplicity in one is a fundamentally Trinitarian idea: God takes flesh in Christ, who is alive through the Holy Spirit, which itself is the *anima* that generates the living motion of the Trinity. In other words, the Trinity is not a static emblem, but a three-way, mutually dependent relationship. In affective piety, the eternity of the present is depicted by the wound in Christ's side as a birth canal, that pours out the blood of eternal
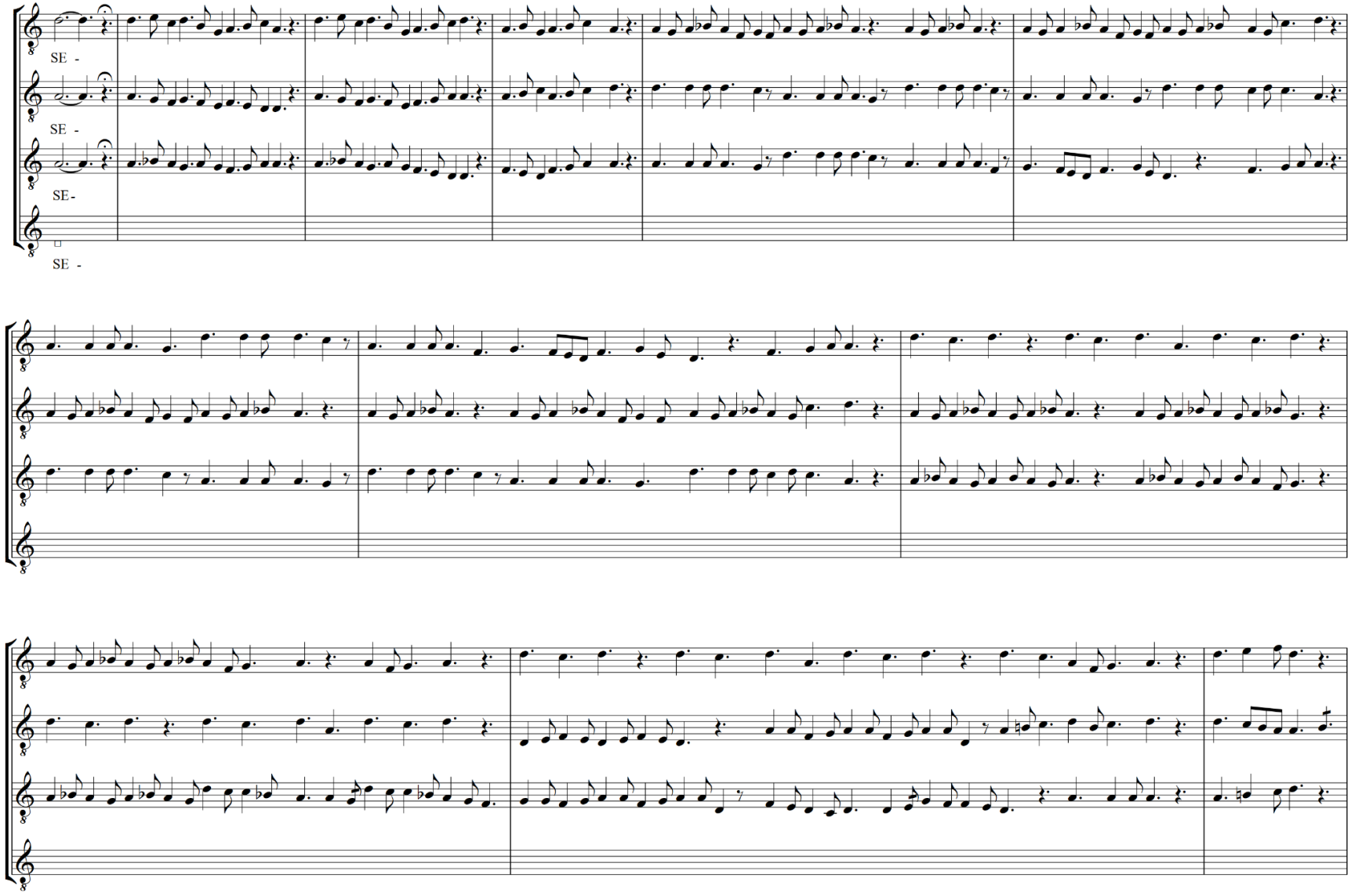
[932] Freed, "Quy the Pentangel Apendes...': The Pentangle in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 133.

life.[933] In Ricardian literature like the work of the *Gawain* poet, it manifests in what Bergner describes as 'multi-dimensionality … the perception of one and the same thing from different view-points'.[934] Contemporaneously, this narrative mode also manifests in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: multiple stories told from multiple perspectives within one big journey. If the entire ritual section of *Gawain* is structured around such a pentangular line, I now attend to the question of how Birtwistle's idea of musical line can be traced within particular musical moments, and the ways in which his idea of line manifests compositional medievalism.
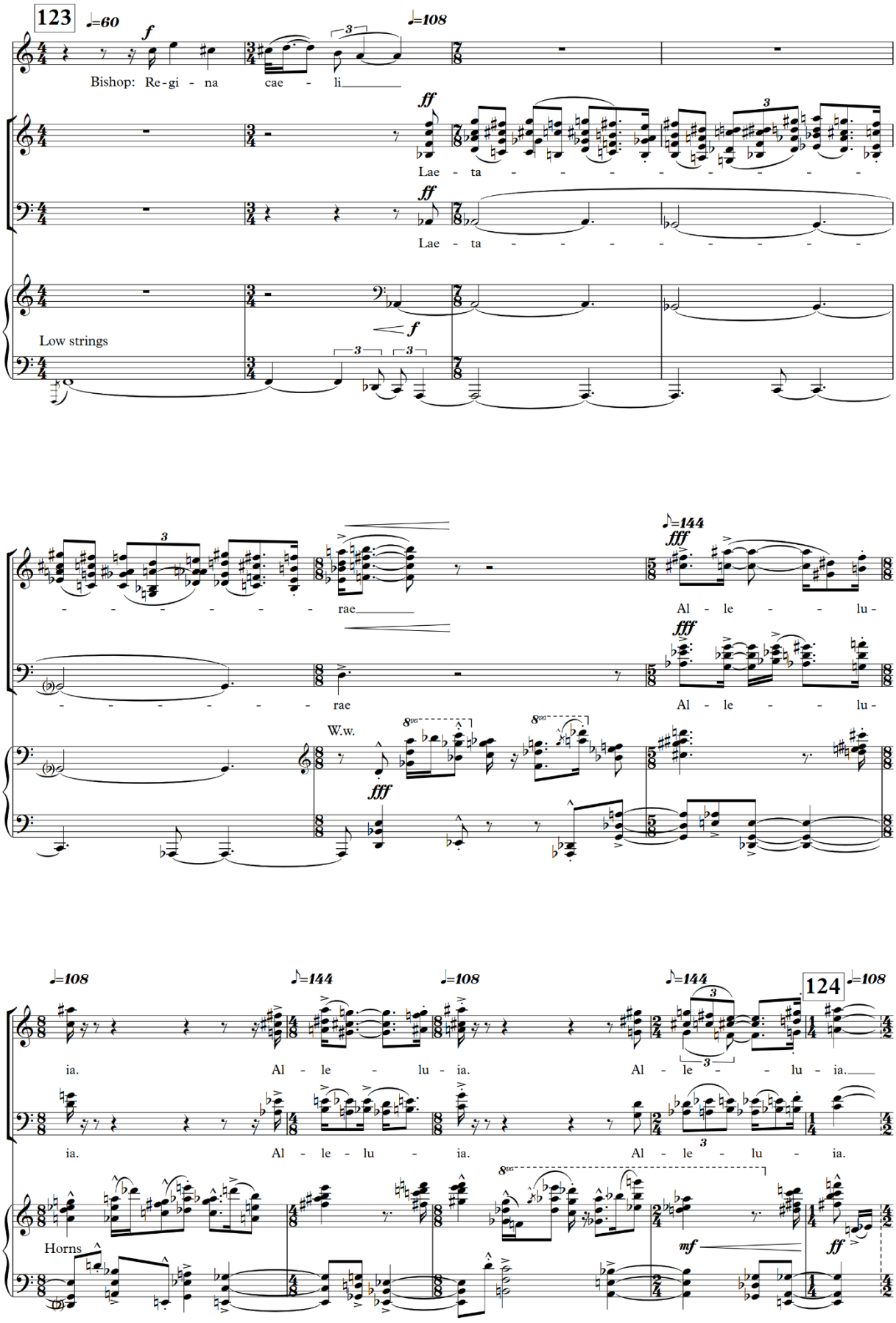
4.4b. Summer

As I mention in section 5, the summer *Regina Coeli* motet in *Gawain*'s ritual constitutes a type of modernist pastiche of Notre-Dame School *organum purum*. By way of illustration, Example 4.1 shows the first syllable of Pérotin's *Sederunt Principes*¸ while Example 4.2 shows an extract from the start of Birtwistle's *Regina Coeli* until Gawain's helmet is brought in.[935] The textural similarities in the vocal writing are striking. In the second syllable of 'laetarae', Birtwistle's stark divide between the extremely florid upper voices and the basses' single, sustained note casts the latter in an analogous role to the *organum* tenor (the bottom line in the Pérotin). Birtwistle's interplay between long and short note values and occasional triplet rhythms is also reminiscent of Pérotin's style of melodic and rhythmic embellishment.[936]
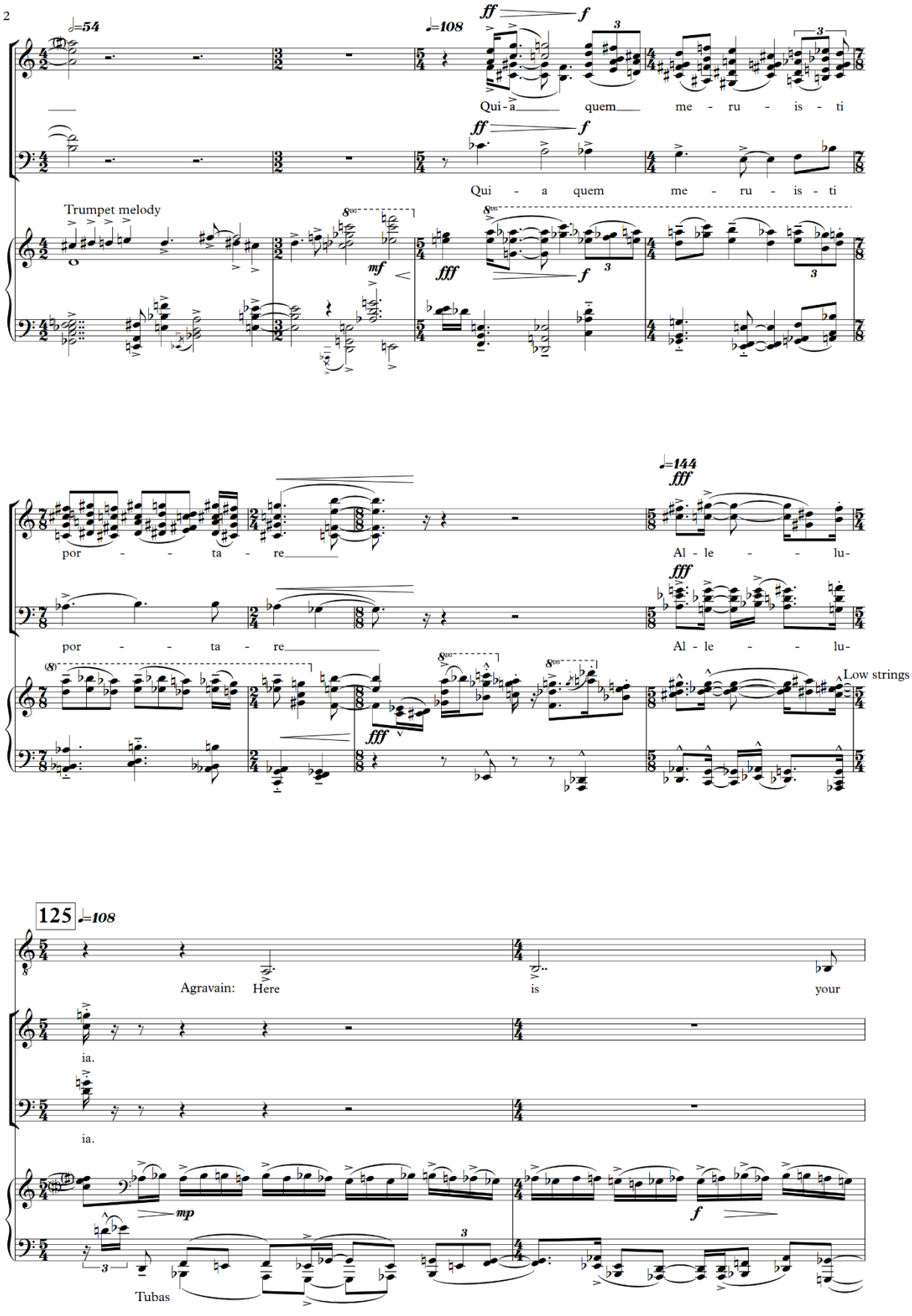
[933] Chewning, 'Intersections of Courtly Romance and the Anchoritic Tradition: *Chevelere Assigne* and *Ancrene Wisse*', 89-91.
[934] Bergner, 'The Two Courts: Two Modes of Existence in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 404.
[935] See *The Works of Perotin*, ed. Ethel Thurston (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1970), 31-45.
[936] It is in this specific context that Anonymous IV uses the term 'color', see Ernest H. Sanders and Mark Lindley (2001), 'Color', *Grove Music Online*. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040034>, accessed 9 April 2023.
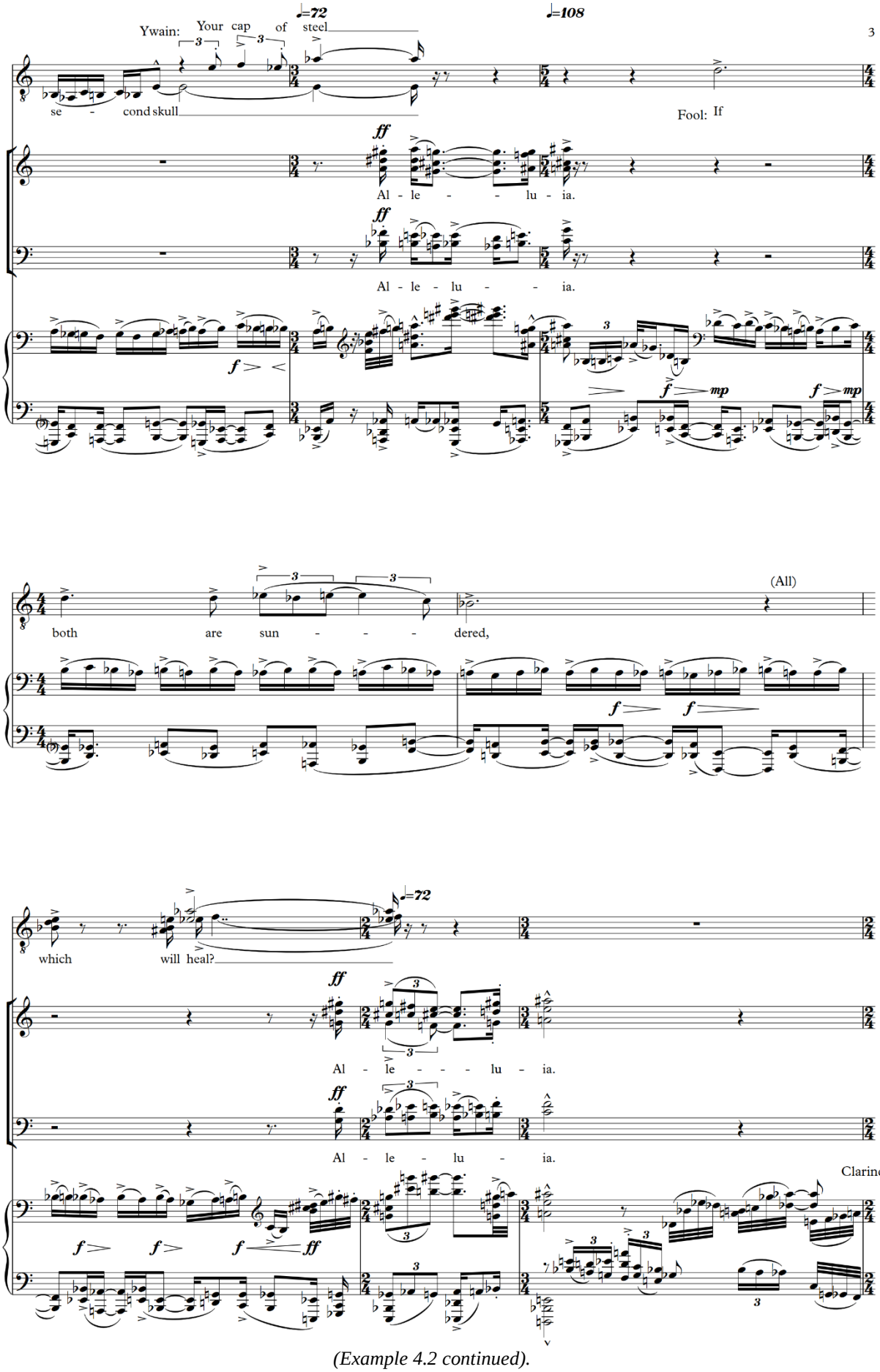


Example 4.1: The first syllable of Pérotin's Sederunt Principes *(ed. Ethel Thurston).*
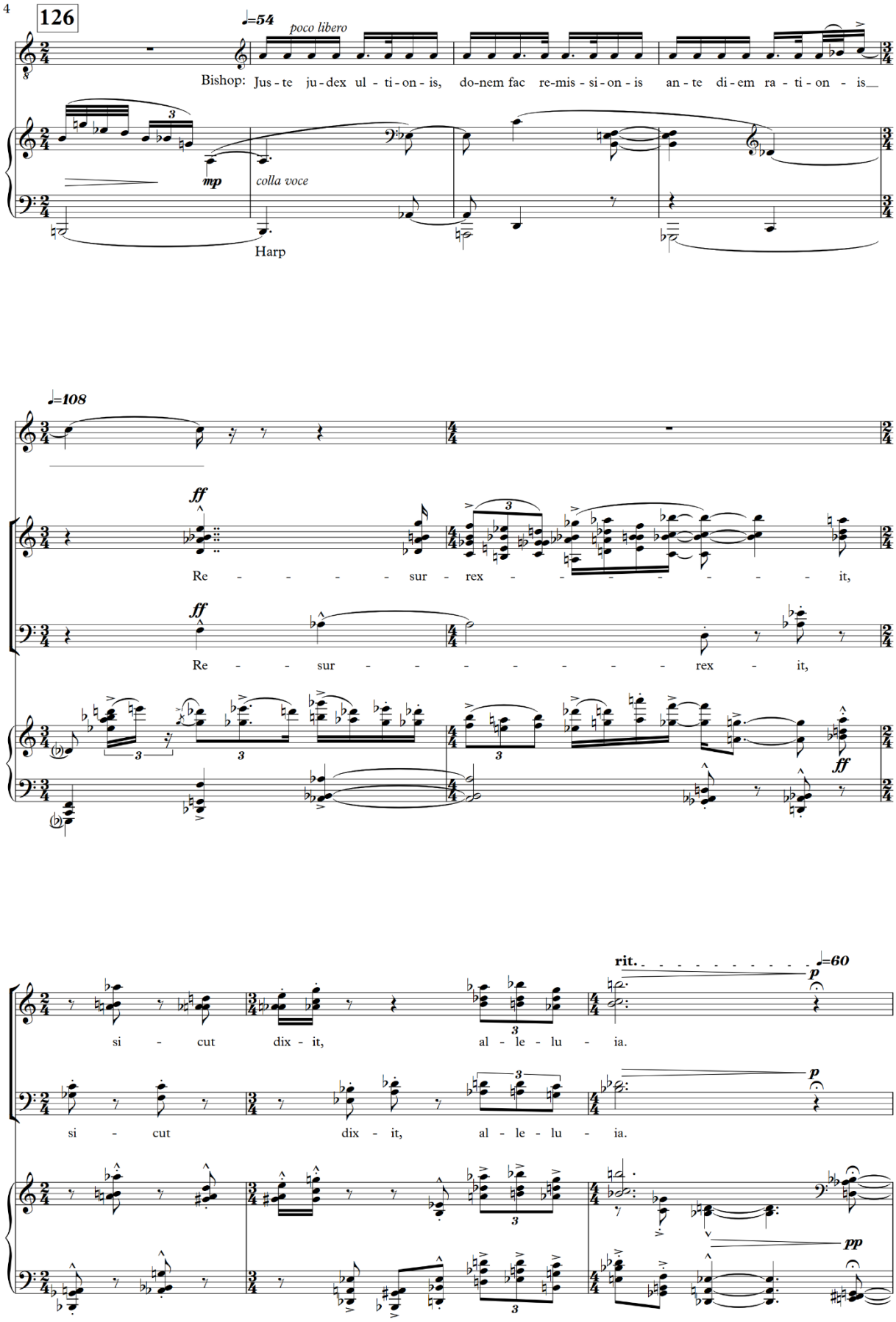


Example 4.2: The Regina Coeli *motet (Universal Edition reduction).*



(Example 4.2 continued).



(Example 4.2 continued).
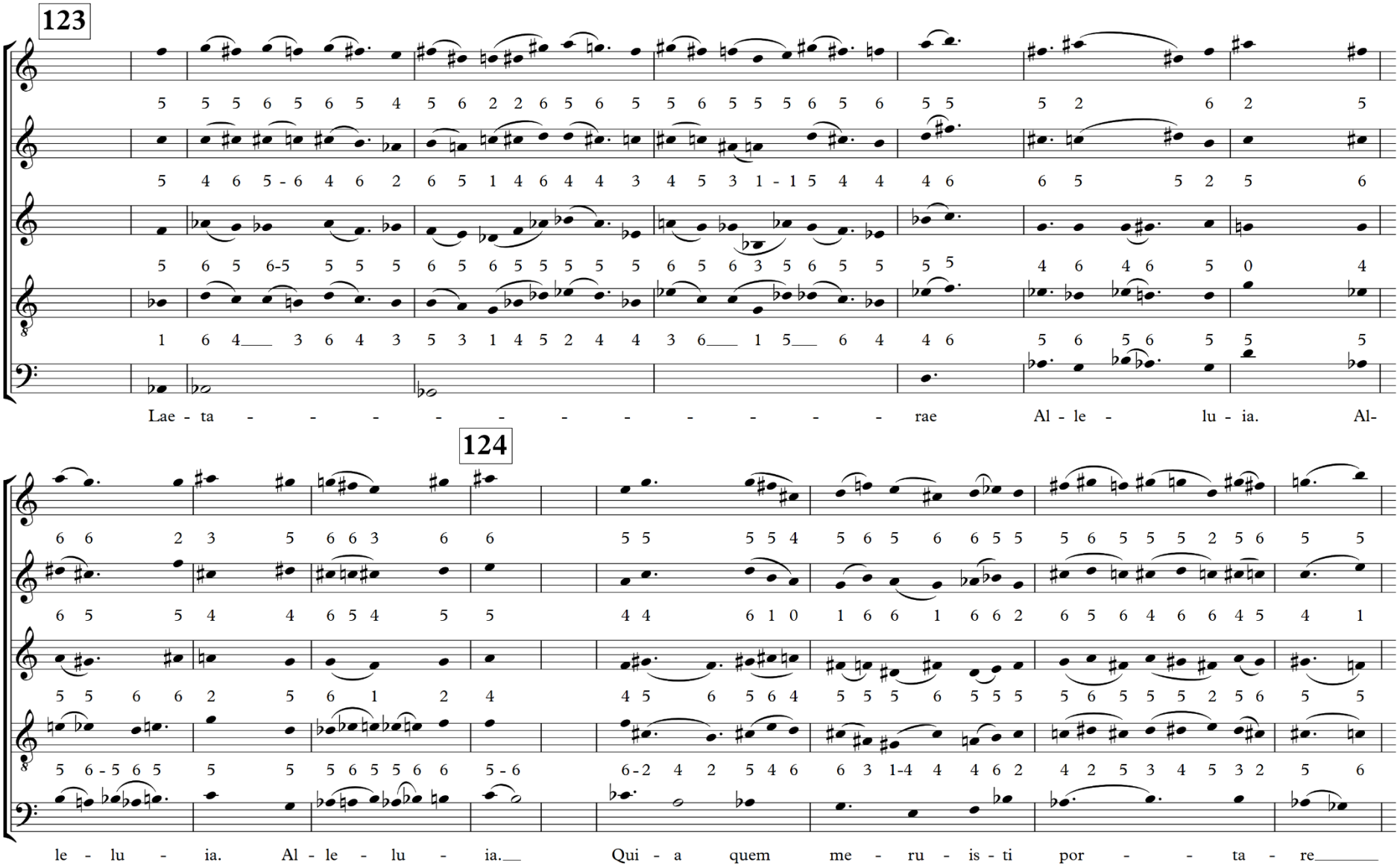


(Example 4.2 continued).

I focus primarily on the chorus in this analysis, partly as a means of foregrounding this motet's resemblance to *organum purum*, but also in response to the fact that orchestral lines tend to support the chorus throughout this section of the tableau, often by directly doubling them. Birtwistle's insistence that the orchestra is not a hierarchically inferior accompaniment to the voices can still hold true for the ritual as a whole, especially in some of the intense brass melodies that intersperse vocal entries (such as the trumpet melody at rehearsal mark 124).[937] But those orchestral melodies tend to inject tension into transitions between the items of the ritual, and function here primarily as a means of integrating Birtwistle's *organum purum* into the dramatic flow. Unusually for Birtwistle's operas after *Punch and Judy* (1966-67), these motets represent discrete musical 'numbers'. The quasi-liturgical function of *Gawain*'s motets set it apart from the more ambiguous and musically mutable ritual elements of Birtwistle's operas based on classical source-texts (such as the wedding chants in *The Mask of Orpheus* or the oracle in *The Minotaur*).[938]

Example 4.3 shows the individual chorus lines (soprano, second soprano, alto, tenor, bass), which were reduced to two staves in Example 4.2. A small number of repeated pitches have been removed, but the harmony has not been reduced, and all the interval classes between adjacent voices are marked as integers. The voices never directly cross, and only meet on two occasions (the tenor-bass G on the final syllable of the first 'alleluia' and the soprano-alto A at the end of 'quem'). Individual voices are relatively conjunct, snaking around small intervals but without establishing any clearly definable patterns. Parallel motion occasionally occurs between pairs of voices. Apart from the basses' *organum*-

[937] There are no bar numbers in the score of *Gawain*; hereafter I refer to rehearsal figures as in the Universal Edition vocal reduction.
[938] See Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: The Mask of Orpheus*, 62-67; Dominika Micał, 'Rhetorical Figures and Rhetorical Strategies in *The Minotaur* by Harrison Birtwistle', *Kwartalnik Młodych Muzykologów UJ,* 30 (3)/3 (2016), 89-113, 93; 106.
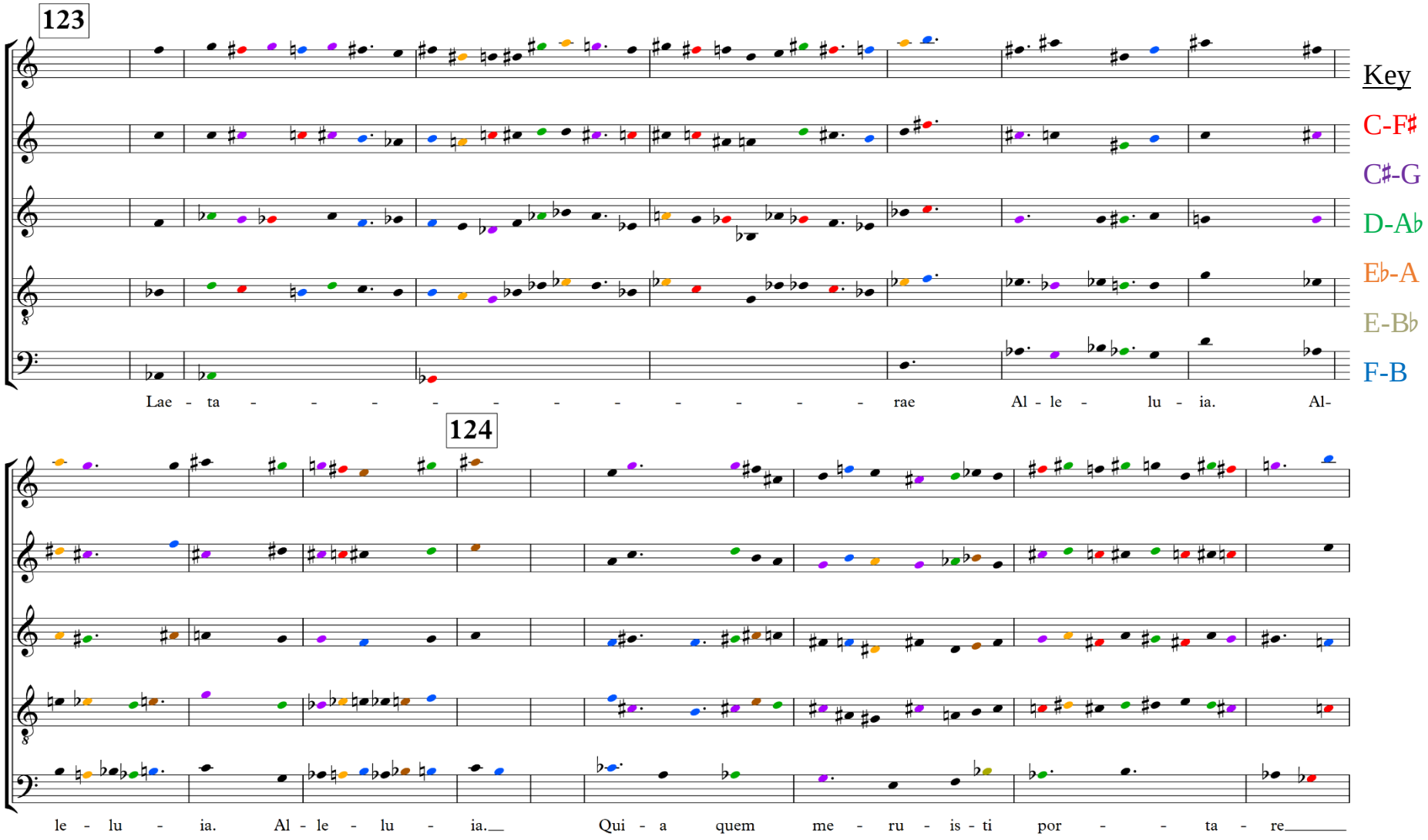
tenor-type line, no single pitch or set is ever emphasized for longer than a few quaver beats. There are some similarities in shape and pitch content between the alleluias, but their differences are significant enough that they could also be read as uncannily *dis*similar. There is a striking preponderance of interval classes 6 and 5 (tritones and perfect fourths or fifths) between adjacent voices. The open B♭-F-C-F between the upper voices at the start of the motet and its various transformations (such as the D-G-C at the end of the first 'alleluia') suggest a degree of equivalency between perfect fourths and fifths. Given that there are twelve possible transformations of interval class 5 and only six of interval class 6, the abundance of tritones is particularly notable. The voices' tendency towards these wider intervals maintains a wrought tension, and necessitates an arrestingly high tessitura for the first sopranos.



Example 4.3: The beginning of the Regina Coeli *with labelled interval classes.*

In Example 4.4, simultaneous tritones have been highlighted, with each tritone pole assigned a different colour. The harmony remains unreduced, and the paucity of black noteheads (representing pitches not harmonized at the tritone) further demonstrates the profusion of tritone harmony in this section. In many cases, three or more of the five voices occupy the same tritonal pole simultaneously. By far the least prolific tritone pole is E-B♭, which could inform a reading of this section for a number of reasons. For reasons he never fully explained (in one BBC interview he said it 'seemed as good as any'), E is a significant pitch in much of Birtwistle's music.[939] His tendency to open or close pieces with it, or otherwise use it as a focal point in his harmony is well-documented.[940] As Beard and Samuel have both pointed out, B♭ is strongly associated with *Gawain* in various motifs throughout the opera (including when he first sings his own name).[941] Both pitches are therefore notable for their absence. Given that the *Regina Coeli* is an antiphon for Eastertide, perhaps the season's resurrective subject matter sits uncomfortably alongside the Green Knight's seeming immortality, especially given that the piece of armour being brought out immediately after this extract is the helmet or 'second skull'.
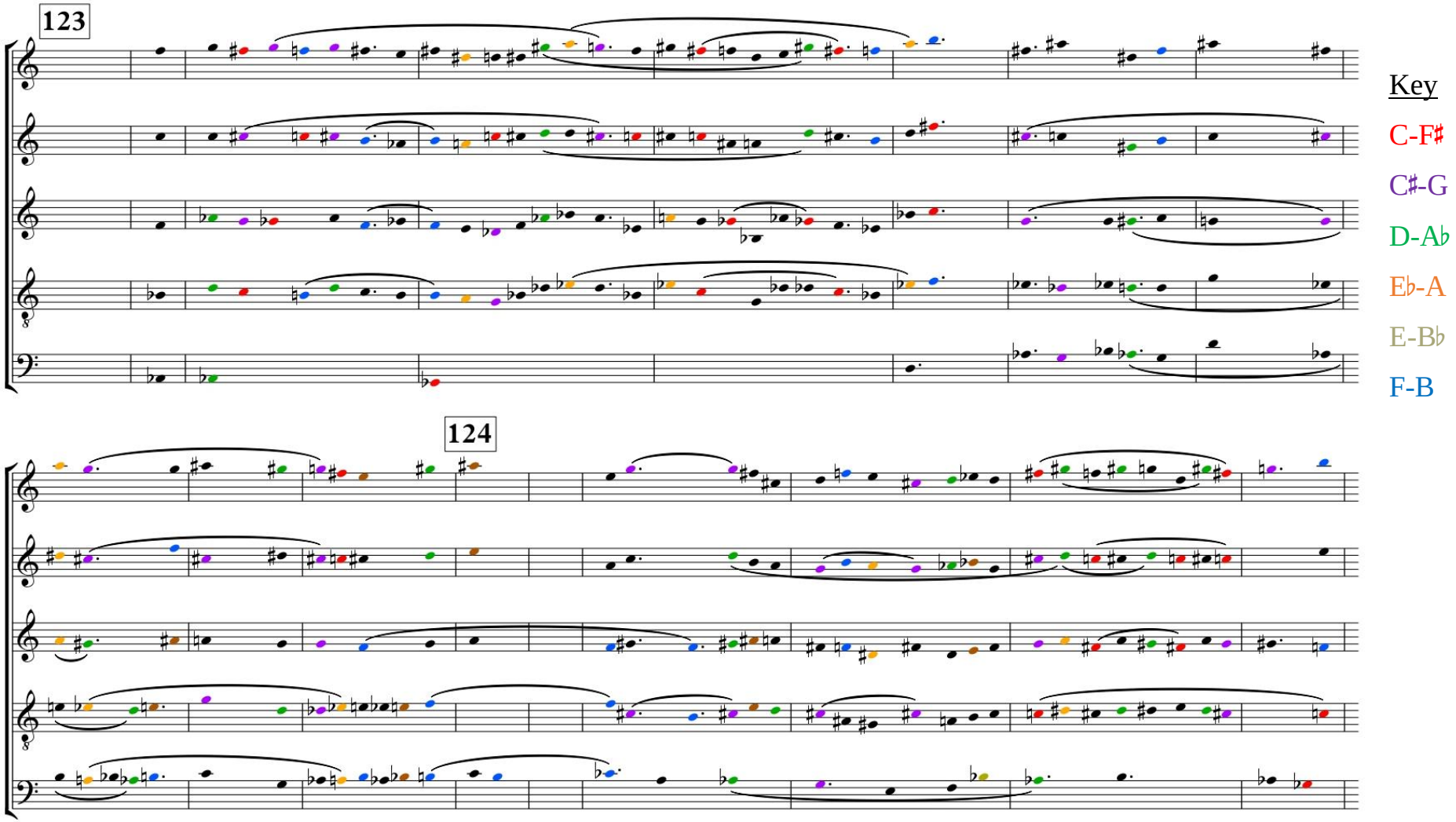
[939] Harrison Birtwistle and Sara Mohr Pietsch, 'Composers' Rooms: No.11: Sir Harrison Birtwistle', *Hear and Now* (UK: BBC Radio 3).
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p022cdl9?_ga=2.59226094.2114061844.1685394945-1895942325.1685394945>, accessed 29 November 2022.
[940] Vojčić, 'On Taking a Walk', 245; Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, 219-327.
[941] Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre*, 225; Samuel, 'Birtwistle's *Gawain*: An Essay and a Diary', 166.



Example 4.4: Tritone pairs colour coded.

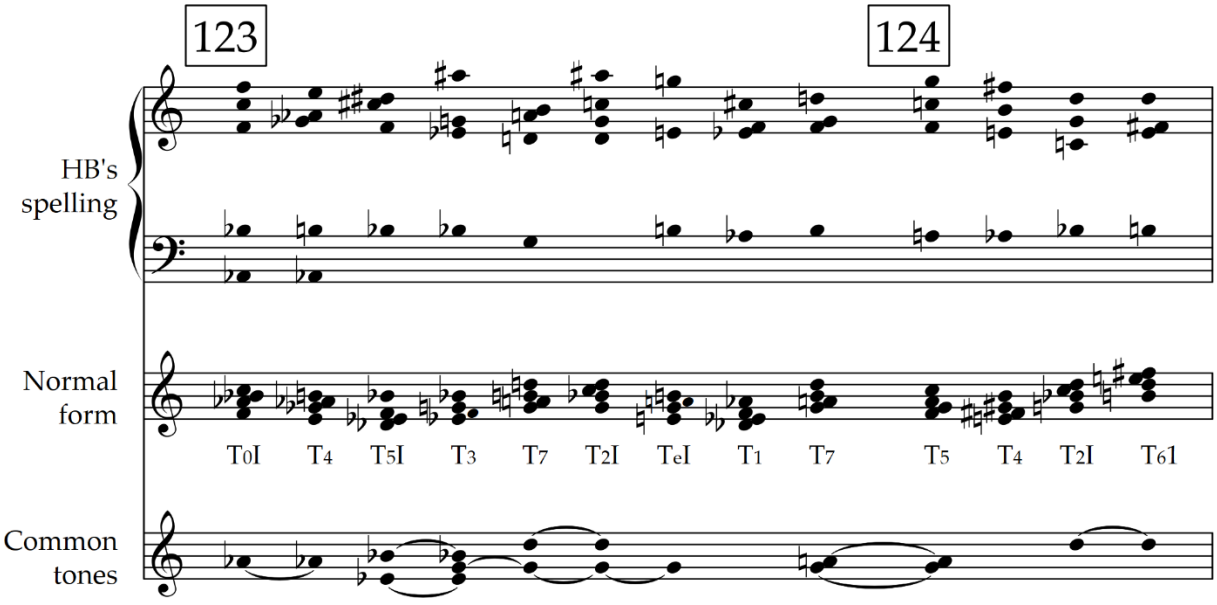
In Example 4.5, slurs connect tritone pairs that strictly return in the same voices and registers. What emerges is an almost uninterrupted chain of sustained and interlocking lines that knit the counterpoint together, and fan out from themselves in hocket-like echoes. Unlike the actual hocketing between the lower and upper voices on '[resur]-rexit sicut dixit' (the final system in Example 4.2), these tritone-lines can cut across boundaries of texture and word-setting. For example, from the bar before figure 124 to three bars after, the B-F tritone (in blue) is sustained in three voices, stretching from the third alleluia to 'quia quem'. The only point at which no tritone phrases interlock is between the end of the florid 'laetarae' and the first alleluia. Here, the basses horizontally articulate a D-A♭ tritone that, as the green circles highlight, their line has been constructed around since the beginning of the motet. Beard has pointed out that A♭ is a pitch motivically associated with the Green Knight; perhaps its presence in the motet could portend to the threat he poses to Gawain once the ritual is complete [942]

[942] Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre*, 225.



Example 4.5: Tritones that return in the same voices and register are tied.

Almost every instance of non-tritone harmony in this section (black noteheads in my reductions) alights on set 4-22 or one of its supersets. In diatonic terms, set 4-22 can either be a major triad with an added second (eg. C-D-E-G), or a minor triad with an added fourth (eg. C-E♭-F-G). As Example 4.6 shows, when separated from their tritone-rich surroundings, these set 4-22 harmonies can form their own harmonic underpinning, full of semitonal adjacencies (see the normal-form spellings in the second line) and common tones (see the ties in the third line). When the entire motet is approached vertically in this way, as a series of chords, the tritone-rich harmony between these instances of set 4-22 is dominated by the all-interval tetrachords (Z-mates 4-z15 and 4-z29) and their supersets: every possible interval class is audible almost all the time.[943]



Example 4.6: Instances of set 4-22 in the first part of Regina Coeli.[944]

[943] Arnold Whittall, *The Cambridge Introduction to Serialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008a), 147.

[944] In example 4.6, the B♭ in $\mathbf{T}_5$I is displaced up an octave from normal form to illustrate its commonality with $\mathbf{T}_3$ that directly follows.

This outlandish saturation of pitch content—evocative of the distorting and obscuring summer imagery described earlier in the tableau by Morgan and Hautdesert ('all mellows to fat … a heat-haze on the moor') as well as Guivenere ('he dreams the woodlands cordoned by shadow)—disguises the deeper contrapuntal connections that reach across the motet. The prominence of interval class 5 in set 4-22, combined with the frequency with which tritone pairs are semitonally adjacent, enables this motet to avoid whole-tonal inflections almost entirely. There is a stasis in symmetrical sets, like the all-interval tetrachords and the wholetone scales, in the limitedness of their transpositions. Given that *Gawain* opens with a distinctive descending whole-tone scale played by three tubas, Birtwistle's almost fastidious disruption of symmetrical harmonies through semitonal adjacencies implies that the 'fuzziness' he describes in his method of rendering the 'fundamental line' ambiguous is more a structural element than a mere surface blurring.[945] 'Structural ambiguity' may appear to be a contradiction in terms, but by avoiding the stability of wholetone harmony, Birtwistle here exploits the jagged poles of tritonal pairs without sacrificing semitonal pressures and asymmetries that drive the harmony from one moment to the next.

As Crocker points out in his characterization of medieval compositional processes, the harmony-counterpoint dichotomy has always been somewhat forced: whether the basic harmonic unit is two simultaneous pitches or nine, basically all harmonized music can be said to consist of linear 'progressions' from one moment to the next.[946] One of the central claims of Schenkerian analysis rests on the inherently contrapuntal nature of large-scale functional harmony and the dialectic space that it opens, and the theoretical writings of Arnold Schoenberg abound with references to the ultimate inseparability of the 'vertical and the

[945] Hall, *Harrison Birtwistle*, 149.
[946] Crocker, 'Discant, Counterpoint, and Harmony', 12-13.

horizontal'.[947] While Crocker's is, arguably, an interpretation of medieval treatises refracted through modernism (Judith A. Peraino describes his approach as 'radically phenomenological'), perhaps this very modernism renders his approach to medieval music theory particularly salient to an understanding of Birtwistle's compositional medievalism.[948] The pitch-class sets I identify in this analysis would merely be descriptive if they were not tied into the chaotic and elusive dynamic of connections that arise between them. I neither claim this method of accounting for almost every pitch in so dense a section of choral writing to be a normatively sustainable way of approaching operatic texts, nor suggest that my findings necessarily resemble Birtwistle's working method. As Beard suggests (see section 4.3b), there is an apparently intuitive quality to Birtwistle's music, and that intuition is born out in the way in which this motet's pitch landscape hangs together in suggestive couplings that adamantly resist patterns, schemes, or fixed interpretations.[949]

4.5. Conclusion: The Endless Knot

In section 4.2c, I discussed how the pentangle has in turns been denigrated by Shoaf as needlessly convoluted and 'knotty' and by Hatt as excessively ordered and prepossessing.[950] While the anti-modernist critiques of Birtwistle's music that I discuss in section 4.1a are levelled in similar terms to Shoaf's, Morra's analysis of *Gawain* arrives at a critical point strikingly similar to Hatt's. Describing an 'ultimate incompatibility between Birtwistle's aesthetic approach and the structure, narrative, and themes of his source', she suggests that:

[947] Michael Cherlin, 'Hauptmann and Schenker: Two Adaptations of Hegelian Dialectics', *Theory and Practice*, 13 (1988), 115-31, 130-31; Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg* (60th anniversary edn.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 220.
[948] Judith A. Peraino (2021), 'In Memoriam: Richard Crocker, 1927-2021', *American Musicological Society*. <https://www.amsmusicology.org/news/581473/Richard-Crocker-1927-2021.htm>, accessed 29 April 2023.
[949] Beard, *Harrison Birtwistle's Operas and Music Theatre*, 155.
[950] Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 103; Hatt, *God and the Gawain-Poet: Theology and Genre in Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 99.

> unlike his source, Birtwistle minimizes the psychology of his hero in favour of emphasizing a vaguely defined importance to the ritualistic process. Thus, the temptation scene in the opera can be associated musically and dramatically with the similarly extended ritual scene in which Gawain is armed. This parallel disregards the narrative events which have occasioned Gawain's particular situation.[951]

In framing the parallelism between Act I's arming and Act II's temptation as a sacrifice of Gawain's human qualities to structural artifice, Morra justifiably champions the poem's enduring resistance to neat interpretations. Structural parallels notwithstanding, she identifies a complementary ambiguity in *Gawain*'s overarching mood and emphasis:

> neither traditional drama nor innovative music ritual, the opera inhabits an undefined generic territory that emphasizes the journey 'through mists and swarming shadows' which the libretto recognizes in the source. This journey has yet, if ever, to terminate in certainty.[952]

In locating *Gawain* amid these interpretative mists, yet rejecting the ritual dialogue that the opera establishes between Gawain's arming and his temptation, Morra elides the structural connection between the powerful symbols exchanged during these passages of the poem. Such a reading precludes interpretations of either poem or opera that might productively embrace the dual ambiguities of the pentangle and the girdle.

In section 4.2c, I discuss the various significances attached to the pentangle in the poem. Most of these meanings are glossed in Harsent's libretto: 'the endless knot'; 'Solomon's sign'; and 'fivefold virtues, fivefold tasks'. The Cistercian-influenced carnal aspects of pentangle imagery (five wounds, five fingers, and five senses) are foregrounded in Chitty's staging, with Gawain's prostration on the emblem invoking the fiveness of the human form and a large icon of the passion—brought on, with an icon of the Virgin Mary, towards the end of the ritual—serving as a visual reminder of Christ's five wounds (Figure 4.10). As I discuss in section

[951] Morra, *Twentieth-Century British Authors and the Rise of Opera in Britain*, 60.
[952] Ibid., 53.

4.4a, the fivefold structure of the tableaux with its repetition of winter also structurally mirrors the 'endless' quality of the pentangle. While this latter point serves as an example of Birtwistle privileging conceptual form over narrative realism, it does not amount to the minimization of Gawain's character invoked in Morra's criticism.[953] On the contrary, by making the ritual stripping and adorning Gawain's body map so directly onto a year of narrative life, Birtwistle and Harsent place Gawain's subjective vulnerability at the centre of the drama. The strange liturgical implications of his Christmastide rebirth in the tableaux in preparation for the allegorical 'circumcision' by the Green Knight in the New Year (see section 4.2c) generate an elaborate *imitatio Christi* dynamic for Gawain.[954] He is refigured as a remarkably ascetic chivalric subject, on whom the fallen, adult complexity of the girdle is thrust from the moment Morgan and Hautdesert's 'plot' begins. In the duet that opens Act I, Morgan and Hautdesert sing of how 'the promise is renewed now, at the year's glad end' and the magic, prophetic inevitability of Gawain's downfall is 'already rehearsed'.[955] By the same token, while not unscarred by the experience, he is always-already absolved.

[953] Ibid., 60.
[954] Shoaf, *The Poem as Green Girdle: Commercium in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 27.
[955] Rehearsal marks 2-10.

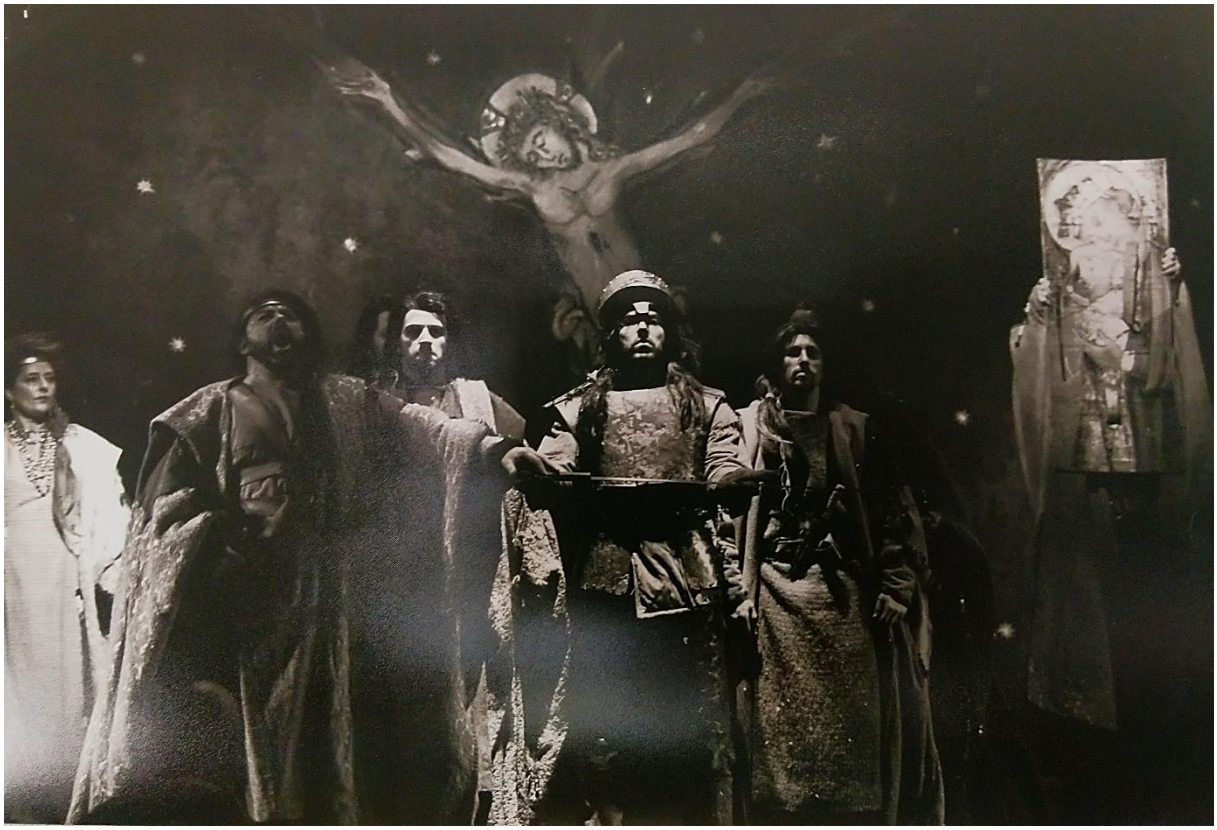


Figure 4.10: Gawain, an icon of the Virgin Mary (right), and a Passion illustration.[956]

In describing the pentangle as a 'game', a serious kind of play 'without an end', perhaps the *Gawain* poet, too, weaves it through with the green girdle of Hautdesert's 'game'.[957] As Karma Lochrie writes, the dynamics of mystery and revelation are as much at work in medieval courtly 'games' as they are in the sacrament of confession. Locating the pleasure of secrecy in its suspension of inevitable truth-telling (and following Foucault's configuration of personal confession as a technology of selfhood), Lochrie writes:

> chivalric identity and Christian subjectivity depend upon the creation and circulation of secrets, upon concealment and verbalization; yet this same system threatens the coherence of the Christian subject, the chivalric ideal as it is represented in the pentangle on Gawain's shield and as it composes community identity and religious morality itself.[958]

[956] Royal Opera House dress rehearsal, 1991, photograph by Clive Barda.
[957] 'Withouten ende at any noke, that nowhere couthe man fynde/ Where ever the game began or glod to an ende', lines 660-61.
[958] Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, 53-54.

As such, the pentangle is the structure of life that both conceals and provides the structure through which the messier texture of life reveals itself. Rather than flattening and simplifying such complexity, the pentangle can provide a cipher for, to paraphrase Elizabeth Freeman, the bind of time.[959] Citing the way in which Lochrie reads the wounds of Christ in medieval women's mysticism, Freeman describes how the fluidity of blood 'confounds the boundary between inside and outside' by breaching the paradox between time's necessary dynamism from moment to moment and the unknowability of eternity.[960] The five wounds of Christ and five human faculties can only be coherently symbolized by the pentangle by virtue of the endlessly overflowing action of its structure.

If the pentangle is configured as time, and (medieval) time binds meaning to itself through the 'creation and circulation of secrets', the pentangular Christian subject may appear 'threatened' by the girdle (as Lochrie suggests) but is in fact dependant on it.[961] The pentangle alone is unanalysable. Its undifferentiated points, as Heng suggests, require bodies—'fragile, uncertain … always on the verge of unravelling and reconstitution in infinitely varied sequences of possibility'—in order to mean anything.[962] The pentangle can provide an analogue for the conceptual core of Birtwistle's line, but that line would be meaningless without the 'fuzzy' proliferation of strange music and ritual actions that surround it, providing the endless discursive possibility of 'imperfect knots' to undo and retie. Hatt finds the *Gawain* poet's 'resistance to single interpretations' to be an 'expression of his theological position rather than a resiling from it'; another serious game in which knowledge and secrecy eternally

[959] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*.
[960] Lochrie, 'Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies', 190; cited in Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 49.
[961] Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, 54.
[962] Heng, 'Feminine Knots and the Other: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', 503.

(and pleasurably) pursue one another.[963] Enfolded into the five-fold structural repetitions of the entire arming ritual, Birtwistle's at-once complex, intuitive, medievalist 'game' is contingent on relationality. The close reading it invites, in Freeman's terms, means 'fixating on that which resists any easy translation', the 'unintelligible', and 'visceral unconscious encoding what is at once lost and foreclosed'.[964] Hewn, like the girdle, from a seemingly un-patterned yet elusively powerful weaving process, *Gawain*'s flamboyant medievalism lies in the abundant meaningfulness of its evasion of fixity.

[963] Hatt, *God and the Gawain-Poet: Theology and Genre in Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 170.
[964] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xvi-xviii.

Conclusion: Spirituality

In 2003, Siglind Bruhn published *Saints in the Limelight: Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Stage*.[965] Bruhn's project spans thirty-eight post-war operas that depict the lives of saints, differing significantly in scope from my own.[966] Nevertheless, the phenomenon she identifies—that so many operas about saints have been composed in an era usually associated with advancing secularization—is at least in part a medievalist one. Among the works based on medieval lives that Bruhn discusses are Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Martyrdom of Saint Magnus* (1977), Louis Andriessen's *Hadewijch* (1988), and several dramatizations of the lives of Joan of Arc and Francis of Assisi (including Olivier Messiaen's). [967] Bruhn and I speak to these similar phenomena from productively divergent perspectives. Conceiving of opera in sociological terms as a medium that simultaneously entertains and educates, Bruhn suggests that:

> in depicting saints, operatic composers express their need (and that presumed in their listeners) to learn from, to be inspired and encouraged by prototypes who realize the spiritually oriented life as one form of the human potential.[968]

Bruhn suggests that sometimes (although not always) these on-stage saints derive their dramatic power from the ways in which audiences identify with them.[969]

There are two conditions that Bruhn's framework does not quite account for: temporality (which I discuss in detail in the introduction) and the hermeneutics of spirituality (which I

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[965] Aside from my own passing references to Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* (1983, see Chapter 3 and below) and Bruhn's to Birtwistle's *The Last Supper* (2000), there is no overlap in the repertoire that Bruhn and I discuss. See Bruhn, *Saints in the Limelight: Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Operatic Stage*.
[966] Ibid., 575.
[967] Sainthood is not the sole preserve of the Middle Ages; Bruhn also writes of John Tavener's 1976 opera on the life of nineteenth-century saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Moreover, she extends her definition of sanctity beyond the Roman Catholic and Orthodox canons to include reformist figures like Martin Luther (Kari Tikka's *Luther* [2000]), and beyond Christianity to include the Buddha (Per Nørgård's *Siddhartha* [1979]) and—perhaps more tenuously—Mahatma Gandhi (Philip Glass's *Satyagraha* [1980]). Ibid., xvii-xxii; 593-94.
[968] Ibid., 586-87.
[969] Ibid., xvii.

attend to now). There are wide historical distances between the late twentieth century and most of the saints in Bruhn's examples (over half of which predate the reformation), and my thesis is deeply concerned with how that historical gap might inflect practices of composition and spectatorship today. Bruhn's liberal-humanist approach to operatic saints may indeed capture a reality for many modern audiences (a prime example being Messiaen's large and devoted Catholic audiences). However, the question remains: why have nonreligious composers also chosen to stage the lives of saints, and not just secular figures like Sophie Scholl in Udo Zimmerman's *Weiße Rose* (1986), and the eponymous characters in Philip Glass's *Galilei* (2002) and Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk* (1995)? By approaching opera as a site for more ambiguous encounter, I propose to read it alongside a fundamental quality of sanctity itself: that while saints can serve as exemplars for life in preaching and popular piety, holy lives are not lived in terms of individual success or failure, but of the (nominally) self-effacing desire for proximity to God.

As I discuss in Chapter 1, even the supreme isolation of an anchorite was continually framed in its surrounding literature as a lifelong union with Christ, prayerful endeavour supervised by confessors and saints, and faithful witness enveloped by the parish community. Bruhn suggests that mystics 'move us because of their inner vision and intuitive access to truths not accessible to ordinary mortals', but as Barbara Newman observes, the writings of Julian of Norwich repeatedly emphasize that her revelations 'are not hers alone'.[970] Julian writes:

> everything that I say about myself I mean to apply to all my fellow Christians, for I am taught that this is what our Lord intends in this spiritual revelation …. For it is common and general, just as we are all one.[971]

[970] Ibid., xvi; Barbara Newman, *Intimate Reading: Textual Encounters in Medieval Women's Visions and Vitae* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021), 1.
[971] 'And this lerning and this trewe comforthe, it es generalle to alle mine evencristen'; 'Alle that I saye of myselfe, I meene in the persone of alle mine evencristene, for I am lernede in the gastelye shewinge of oure

The point in Julian representing her vision to audiences is to invite them into it. As Newman puts it, 'for her writing to achieve its aim, readers must see themselves as sharing in precisely her experiences, not by identifying with Julian, but by regarding the text as the vehicle for an immediate experience of God'.[972] Sharing in Julian's mystical vision presents the reader with a far greater challenge than simply identifying with her as a person, because it requires exactly the kind of 'close reading' that I draw from Elizabeth Freeman in my introduction to this thesis. Just as Freeman resists framing queerness as 'just one of many possible "lifestyles"' and instead invites the reader to 'look both hard and askance at the norm', Julian forecloses any possibility of assimilating her revelations into the mundane realm of privacy.[973] She sanctifies her revelations in the act of disclosure and sharing.

In her more recent work, Bruhn has engaged in much close reading, especially of Messiaen's music. Her analysis of *Saint François d'Assise* in *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity*, for example, places great emphasis on the musical mediation of *imitaito Christi* and uses stained glass windows as an extended hermeneutic device.[974] *Saint François d'Assise*, she writes, is:

> crafted with infinite love in so many stunning shards of tone, colour, and light …. Like [stained glass], it strains our ability to absorb, interrelate, and interpret all images in their complexity of shape and hue, depth and sparkle.[975]

lorde that he meenes so …. For it is comon and generale, as we ar alle one'. Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, eds Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (Medieval Women—Texts and Contexts; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 22.28–29; cited in Newman, *Intimate Reading: Textual Encounters in Medieval Women's Visions and Vitae*, 1.

[972] Newman, *Intimate Reading: Textual Encounters in Medieval Women's Visions and Vitae*, 1.

[973] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, xv-xvi.

[974] For an even more theologically developed interpretation of Messiaen's music via stained glass, see Maas, *The Reinvention of Religious Music: Olivier Messiaen's Breakthrough Toward the Beyond*, 179.

[975] Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera*, 202.

The interpretative 'strain' of close reading is here understood as a never-ending, limitlessly complex process emphatically inseparable from love. The particular twentieth-century French Catholic understanding of divine love in which Messiaen conceived of his own music (all of which he said expressed either God's Love in Christ, the emulation of God's Love between humans, or the glorification of God in birdsong) need not necessarily apply to the composers in this thesis for the afterlives of medieval mysticism to illuminate operatic close reading.[976] What is 'common and general' and means that 'we are all one' in Julian's vision is human embodiment—yes, shared with Christ, but also shared with everybody else in the vulnerable fallibility of being human.[977] Bernard of Clairvaux—the only *bona fide* mystic and canonized saint to appear in this thesis, and whose presence seems to haunt so much of the literary criticism surrounding these operas' source-texts—was, as I discuss in Chapter 3, profoundly fallen, entangled in contemporary politics, and enmeshed in violence.

Christ's famous dictum in Julian's vision that 'all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well' is preceded by a too-often overlooked proviso: that 'sin is behovely [inevitable, fitting, or even gainful]'.[978] Without sin there is no salvation. Or, to extend this structure beyond the Christological: without distance there is no desire.[979] This gap or rupture that constitutes sin, so optimistically framed by Julian, is fundamental to the mode of performance and spectatorship laid out by Burgwinkle and Howie when they compare medieval saints to porn stars. Like the structures of secrecy that configure both Christian and chivalric identity in

[976] Bruhn, *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*, vii.
[977] Several scholars have suggested that Julian's theology amounts to universal salvation, see Maureen L. Walsh, 'Re-imagining Redemption: Universal Salvation in the Theology of Julian of Norwich', *Horizons (Villanova)*, 39/2 (2012), 189-207.
[978] 'He answerde be this worde and saide: "Sinne is behovelye …. Botte alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thinge shalle be wele"'. Julian of Norwich, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and A Revelation of Love*, 13.45-61.
[979] For an overview of the doctrine of the Fall of Man as the *felix culpa* or 'happy fault' in Thomas Aquinas, see Sean A. Otto, 'Felix Culpa: The Doctrine of Original Sin as Doctrine of Hope in Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles*', *Heythrop Journal*, 50/5 (2009), 781-92.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (see Karma Lochrie in Chapter 4) or divine-erotic secrecy of the 'holy of holies' that the *hortus conclusus* contains (see Julia Kristeva in Chapter 2), the process by which saints and porn stars 'continue to shock and inspire devotion' resides in a dynamic of desire constructed around concealment and revelation.[980] Through video, photography, vita, or icon, saints and porn stars 'simultaneously solicit and withdraw from the gaze of their devotees', and 'disclose themselves as much as they simultaneously summon us to be disclosed'.[981]

Sanctity and pornography are spectacular, not only because the subjects of both are represented 'in extreme detail or in extreme situations', but also because their 'ecstasy' has the power to elicit similarly ecstatic responses—not in casual observers, but in those prepared to 'disclose' themselves and lay themselves bare to the encounter.[982] This vulnerable spectatorship that Burgwinkle and Howie call 'disclosure' is not 'identification' in the sense that Bruhn invokes it.[983] As Caroline Walker Bynum writes, 'medieval hagiographers pointed out repeatedly that saints are not even primarily "models"' for ordinary people, but were instead to be 'loved, venerated, and meditated upon as moments in which the other that is God breaks through into the mundane world, saturating it with meaning'.[984] In this excess of meaning, ecstasy proper is more than embodied physical pleasure (although that is also a profound part of it); the matter of its spiritual dimension is the connection it forges to the bodies of others. 'What sanctity and pornography reveal', Burgwinkle and Howie write, 'is

[980] Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, 53-54; M. C. Bodden, '*Via erotica* / *via mystica*: A *Tour de force* in the *Merchant's Tale*', in Susannah Mary Chewning (ed.), *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture: The Word Made Flesh* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 51-73, 62; Burgwinkle and Howie, *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge*, 1.
[981] Burgwinkle and Howie, *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge*, 2.
[982] Ibid., 8; 1.
[983] Bruhn, *Saints in the Limelight: Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Operatic Stage*, xvii.
[984] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, 7.

the fraught and fallow tissue of our connectedness ... that allows us to speak in the first-person plural at all'.[985] Sanctity and pornography would be unthinkable without the communities of subjects which they in turn cause to cohere. The series of overwhelming horizons that make ecstasy possible rely on the imaginative projection of infinite further horizons; the sense in which desire functions by concealment and revelation relies on there always being more to reveal.

This acknowledgement that there is 'always more' is, in a systematically theological sense, transcendence. As David F. Ford elucidates Anselm of Canterbury's definition of God ('that than which no greater can be conceived'):

> if you think you have finally caught God in a definition then you can be sure that what you have caught is not this God. God is 'always greater', and this has a direct consequence for any attempt to prove God's existence: there can be no larger framework within which God's reality can be assessed.[986]

This thesis need not become an exercise in Christian apologetics to appreciate that the ultimate framework within which its medieval texts were conceived was that of faith in the God of Abraham. As Sarah Kay writes, the basis for truth and meaning throughout the Middle Ages was 'foremost associated with a God who both is One and wants his creatures to be one with him', but with whom 'community is beyond words'; a 'oneness that we cannot hope to define'.[987] As I discuss in Chapter 4, the Oneness of God in Christian orthodoxy, especially after Augustine's *de Trinitate*, is itself conceived as a relationship.[988] The *kenosis* by which each person of the Trinity empties itself into the other is the energy from which matter flows

[985] Burgwinkle and Howie, *Sanctity and Pornography in Medieval Culture: On the Verge*, 7.
[986] David F. Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Very Short Introductions; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 41.
[987] Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry*, 9.
[988] Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity: Books 8-15*, trans. Gareth B. Matthews and Stephen McKenna (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23-40.

(first in creation, then in Christ). Of the many kisses in Bernard's sermons, the Trinity is among the most potent. In the eighth sermon on the Songs of Songs, he writes:

> [if] the Father is he who kisses, the Son is he who is kissed, then it cannot be wrong to see in the kiss the Holy Spirit, for he is … their unshakeable bond, their indivisible unity …. Thus the Father, when he kisses the Son, pours into him the plenitude of the mysteries of his divine being, breathing forth love's deep delight.[989]

If the Holy Spirit is the kiss itself, then the spiritual realm constitutes matter, action, and connection. What prevents the Trinity from becoming a 'conceivable' framework (and thus precluding its being God) is the timelessness of this endless love, which exceeds both its own beginning and its own end.

What could the simultaneous tangibility and mysteriousness of Bernard's kiss have to do with music? As I discuss in the introduction to this thesis, discourses of desire have been a driving force in the study of the singing voice. At work in the (broadly) Barthesian writing of Abbate, Michel Grover-Friedlander, and Sam Abel is a material desire that deals in drastic proximity to the embodied singing voice, and more particularly the ability of beloved voices to outlast narrative death.[990] In this latter configuration, the desire rehearsed in listening and memory enables the voice of the operatic diva to break out of narrative time. In Michel Poizat's Lacanian approach, the force of the spectator's desire solicits orgasmic *jouissance,* with the powerful yet fading voice-object of the singer—now disembodied from its source—becoming a symbol for loss itself.[991] As Michelle Duncan points out, both Barthesian and Lacanian approaches rely on a fetishization of the body of the singer, which becomes 'secondary to the affect or erotic desire of the spectator'.[992] Most erotic of all is Wayne Koestenbaum's

[989] *Sermones Super Cantica Canticorum*, Sermon 8: 1,2; 6,6, cited in Neil M. Mancor, 'Tradition in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 21 (1995), 53-67, 63.
[990] Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women'; Grover-Friedlander, *Operatic Afterlives*; Samuel D. Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performances* (Queer Critique; Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).
[991] Poizat, *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, 93-109.
[992] Duncan, 'The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity', 287; ibid.

discussion of gay male opera obsessives in *The Queen's Throat*. His model of desirous listening takes cues from Ernest Jones's Freudian essay 'The Madonna's Conception through the ear':

> nuns in the Middle Ages believed they were pregnant because Jesus had *thought* of them; no wonder, then, that Opera queens, nuns of an unnamed order, believe that voices entering through the ear are forms of the Holy Ghost …. To hear is metaphorically to be impregnated—with thought, tone, and sensation.[993]

Koestenbaum's deliberately uncited, hyperbolically spurious invocation of medieval women's spirituality here is (however perversely) generative. Where Grover-Friedlander and Abbate hear the voice as life after death, Koestenbaum's playful moment of medievalism represents a rare moment of optimism in a book so suffused with AIDS-era mourning.[994]

The largely unacknowledged influence that biblical imagery has over this theoretical landscape is striking. While Abel discusses being an opera queen in connection to his and Koestenbaum's gay Jewish identity, and while Abbate's discussion of Richard Strauss's *Salome* necessarily reflects on the biblical figures that populate its libretto, these recurring themes of conception, ecstasy, and resurrection exhibit a grappling with the limitations of the mortal body.[995] The recourse to angels in Poizat and the Holy Ghost in Koestenbaum, moreover, gestures towards some powerful sound-making that—rather than emitting from it—precedes embodiment and sex. The 1993 Gay Men's Press edition of *The Queen's Throat* comes adorned with medievalist filigree: kitschy Pre-Raphaelite angels flank the inside cover, playing a psaltery and a portative organ and entwined by flowers (Figure 5.1), while the final page is decorated with smaller flowers, almost in the place of historiated initials (Figure 5.2).

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[993] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, 16.
[994] For a discussion of Koestenbaum's approach to opera as a retrograde or 'dead' art form, see Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performances*, 4. For Koestenbaum on AIDS, see *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, 33; 40-41; 45; 205; 35.
[995] Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performances*, 4; Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', 236-48.

The angels' mouths are closed, and something in the profusion of their twisting floral raiment implies that whatever singing they might have been doing took place before the viewer's gaze arrived.

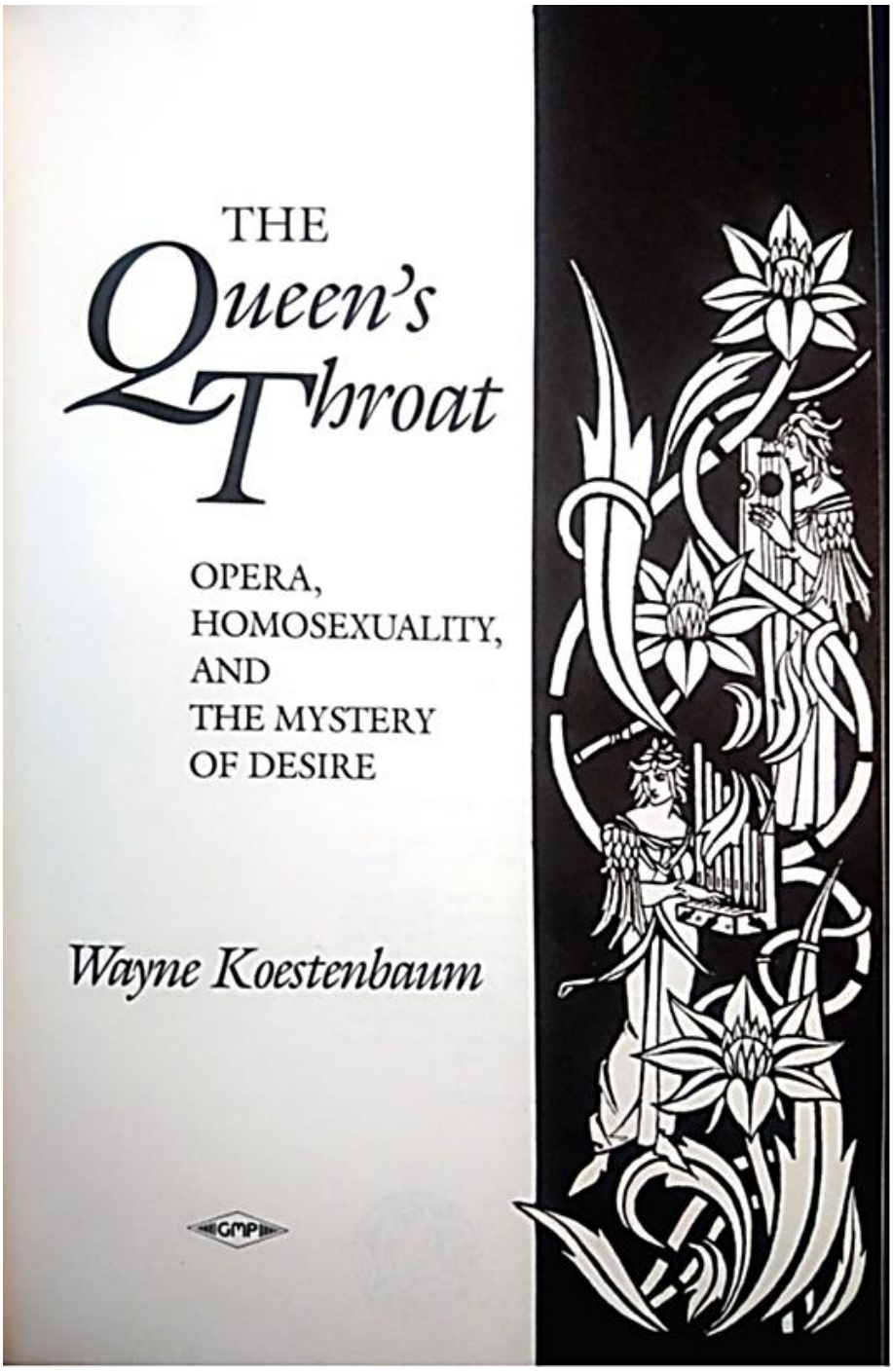
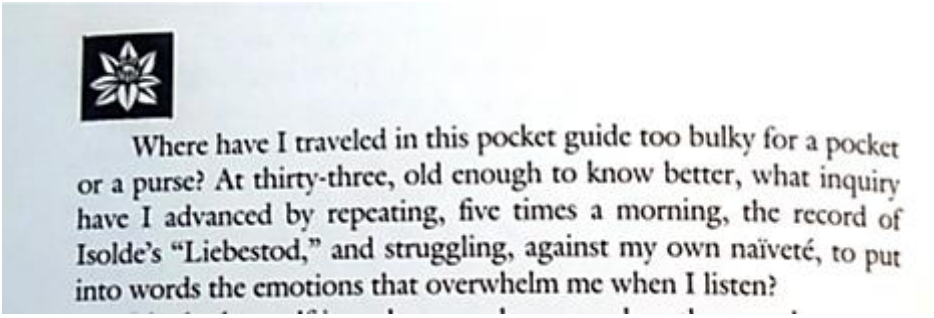


Figure 5.1: Koestenbaum's Pre-Raphaelite Angels.[996]

[996] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. The illustrator is uncredited.



Where have I traveled in this pocket guide too bulky for a pocket or a purse? At thirty-three, old enough to know better, what inquiry have I advanced by repeating, five times a morning, the record of Isolde's "Liebestod," and struggling, against my own naïveté, to put into words the emotions that overwhelm me when I listen?

Figure 5.2: One of Koestenbaum's marginal flowers.[997]

In *Sonic Bodies: Text, Music, and Silence in Late Medieval England,* Tekla Bude, like many writers about the voice in opera, attempts to locate the human body in sound, and finds a body 'that has access to forms of subjectivity, power, ways of being, and linguistic meaning that do not accrue to the visible or visio-tactile body'.[998] Unlike most writers about the voice in opera, however, she adds that 'matter might be at the heart of this body, but so too might *immateriality'*.[999] A direct cause of Bude's admission of immateriality is her inquiry into angels, first via two late-medieval theoretical attempts to define angel song (Jacobus's *Speculum* and Richard Rolle's descriptions of *canor,* or heavenly melodies), and then via *Of Angels' Song,* a treatise by fourteenth-century English Augustinian mystic Walter Hilton. Pointing out that late-medieval visual art almost never depicts humans and angels physically touching, Bude discusses how, while most medieval writers believed that angels sang, they also believed that they 'lacked physical, material flesh' and so 'were also immaterial, incapable of propagating through matter as sound waves'.[1000] Hilton approached the problem of how saints and mystics claimed to have heard such immaterial sound by describing angels' song as a type of inner, 'spiritual' ('gastly', in Hilton's Middle English) touch.[1001] Bude describes this 'touch' as akin to Julian of Norwich's use of 'in a toch' to refer to a 'time-

[997] Ibid., 271.
[998] Bude, *Sonic Bodies: Text, Music, and Silence in Late Medieval England,* 5.
[999] Ibid. Emphasis my own.
[1000] Ibid., 8; 7.
[1001] Ibid., 34.

outside-of-time' in which she would receive a vision: a 'a non-quantifiable internal tactile register where the senses are literally squeezed into the same place'.[1002]

If time can be transcended by a 'touch' within the ecstatic body, what can the ecstatic body elucidate about the moments when—in the thrall of performance—narrative time overtakes mundane time, which proverbially 'stands still'? Or of when objects of philology reach through time and 'touch' those who behold them? In immediate sensory terms, the 'material turn' in medieval studies saw Jonathan Wilcox describe the 'assault on the senses' of the velum-making process, with its 'smell of blood and sex and death' provoking a combination of disgust and a 'captivated' desire to 'fondle'.[1003] In Kay's Deleuzian event of parchment being cut by 'the body of the knife, as it slices into the body of the flesh', the three-dimensional body is peeled into a two-dimensional 'Möbius strip', which—akin to Hilton's angel-touch—'transcends inside and outside'.[1004]

Most trenchantly for this thesis, Emma Dillon's reading of George Benjamin and Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin* approaches parchment, a 'seemingly out-of-place vocal technology' for the contemporary operatic stage, as a means of bringing medieval philology to bear on operatic voice studies.[1005] Parchment, Dillon writes, 'bears witness to the voice's desire to be heard again' by bearing notation to preserve and transmit medieval song.[1006] But, as the

[1002] Ibid., 53.
[1003] Jonathan Wilcox, *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts* (Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy; Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 4-5.
[1004] Sarah Kay, 'Original Skin: Flaying, Reading, and Thinking in the Legend of Saint Bartholomew and Other Works', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 36/1 (2006), 35-74, 61.
[1005] Dillon, 'Vocal Philologies: *Written on Skin* and the Troubadours', 208.
[1006] Ibid.

chansonnier manuscripts I discuss in Chapter 3 attest, manuscript culture (like live performance) is:

> a story not of fixity, repeatability, and permanence, so much as it is one of variability and instability …. What aspires to render the voice durable, then, also, always, reveals its precariousness and resistance to permanent record.[1007]

Where Dillon locates the 'touch' of voices past and present is therefore not on the surface of the parchment-skin, but in the more dynamic 'points of contact' where operatic performance and medieval culture unpredictably collide.[1008] To a great extent, my thesis is an expansion on Dillon's 'points of contact' between manuscript philology and *Written on Skin*. By engaging in the close-reading project via literary criticism of the source-texts for *Caritas*, *The Tale of Januarie*, *L'amour de loin*, and *Gawain*, I offer one of many possible methodological responses to medievalism studies' sundry and fascinating case studies which (as I argue in my introduction) demand deeper and more sustained theoretical engagement. To read medievalism in contemporary opera closely is an opportunity to confront the ecstatic qualities of performance. To dream of the Middle Ages, however selectively, is an opportunity to crack open modernity's more stultifying commonplaces, and learn from the productive ambiguity of medieval thought.

As Dillon has written elsewhere, written texts are 'technologies of only partial prescription of sound', that leave 'gaping absences in evidence of the human experience of music'.[1009] In only partially satisfying our desire for medieval song, manuscript sources generate a further desire for what Dillon terms 'the possibility of recovering the living pulse of musical

[1007] Ibid.
[1008] Ibid., 216.
[1009] Emma Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260-1330* (New Cultural History of Music; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 14.

sound'.[1010] This desire will never be satisfied, because 'to historicize the moment of performance is, after all, seemingly at odds with the very essence of music—its vanishing quality'.[1011] This precise quality of song animates Kay's argument in *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera*. 'An object of imagination and desire for modern scholars, performers, and audiences', medieval song 'is wreathed in an aura of absence and thus of desirability'.[1012] This absence must not be mistaken for death; on the contrary (and as witnessed by the numerous recordings that accompany Kay's book), it continues to give rise to a vibrant culture of performance, discussion, and reinterpretation—a culture that will arguably always engage in its own form of medievalism. Kay figures song as 'precariously balanced between life and death' and 'dependent on the air on which our lives depend'.[1013] Etymologically, I might add, the *spiritus* of breath and life render 'inspiration' a life-giving act of breath.

Medievalists attuned to working with richly illuminated manuscripts full of polysemic repertories, Kay and Dillon are both drawn to opera by the way in which it demands intersensory, creative participation. As Kay writes:

> sound and spectacle are intrinsic to [manuscripts], not decorative afterthoughts. Experiencing them can best be described as the site of an always singular, shifting balance between abstract understanding and sensory perception, where each shapes the other, perception framing understanding and being in turn framed by it.[1014]

This dialectic between sensing and perceiving is not unique to aesthetic experience, but always integral to the phenomenology of being-in-the-world. As Bude in particular demonstrates, voice has the capacity to be more than multisensory; its demands can be greater and more ambiguous still. The desire-animating temporal gap between song and singing co-

[1010] Ibid.
[1011] Ibid.
[1012] Kay, *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera,* 2.
[1013] Ibid., 10.
[1014] Ibid., 22.

exists complexly with the immediate vibrancy of performance. As Kay describes, again with reference to breath,

> an actual sound is only ever heard after the fact, in the second-order collision with the ear of the air displaced by an earlier blow …. although singing appears to be intensely of its moment, it is not confined by it but rather always potentially out of time with itself.[1015]

This gap between production and reception—a microcosm of the gap between composition and performance—is not an abject hole, but the desire-filled space in which action occurs. Just as Freeman sees the 'wounds' in history as sites of queer potentiality, anchoritic literature conceives of them as birthplaces.[1016] The 'belatedness' that Kay finds inherent in song is precisely the kind of 'rear-guard or recalcitrant' quality that Freeman seizes upon as a precursor to close reading. It allows queer time to 'overtake both secular and millennial time' and 'generates a discontinuous history of its own' that 'foster[s] erotic contact between men'.[1017] In Bernard's trinitarian analogy, the desire-filled space precedes the kiss.

To invoke a final queer angelic medievalism: reflecting on the logo for Angel Records (Figure 5.3), which he contrasts with the bestial dog of the His Master's Voice logo, Koestenbaum describes:

> a nude and androgynous cherub … magically inscribing itself on the grooves; the cherub embodies the mystery of phonographic technology. However, it's possible that the listener is the cherub; the quill resembles a needle, and I 'write' the record by placing the needle in the otherwise mute grooves.[1018]

The desire-filled spaces that surround song invite such creative interventions: writing, staging, and singing again each inviting their own modes of close reading, close listening, and—after Freeman—historiography. Kay writes that song, always-already late:

[1015] Ibid., 6.
[1016] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 9-12; xxii; McQuinn, '"Crepe into that blessed syde": Enclosure Imagery in Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum*', 96.
[1017] Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, x-xi.
[1018] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, 53-54.

> anticipates future transmission, realization, or composition, which in turn will seem belated. Imagination or desire are free to construct past or future soundings …. [and] the actual soundtrack of song in performance does not exhaust what may be heard—in imagination or memory—with the inner ear.[1019]

Song exists in a constant *spiritus* of desire, expectation, and contact. The infinite possible spaces within, without, and beyond the body solicit its inexhaustible capacity for re-sounding, re-imagining, and re-membering. There will always be more.



Figure 5.3: The Angel Records logo.

[1019] Kay, *Medieval Song from Aristotle to Opera*, 6.

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Appendix: An Incomplete List of Medievalist Operas, Post-1945

All 102 of the operas on this list were composed after 1945, have been performed at least once, and are either set during the Middle Ages or based on a text or figure dating from between the sixth and fifteenth centuries.[1020] While medievalism is a more capacious concept than the works here necessarily represent, I have imposed these limitations for the sake of clarity and to keep the list to a manageable length. Not included, for example, are operas that make use of passing medievalist imagery (like Jennifer Walshe and Timothy Morton's *Time Time Time* [2019], which briefly invokes the land of Cockaigne). Biblical pieces with a basis in medieval drama have been included, while those less overtly mediated via the Middle Ages (such as Harrison Birtwistle and Robin Blaser's *The Last Supper* [2000], which references the *Quem quaeritis?* dialogue but is otherwise very different from liturgical drama in both structure and gesture) have not. I have attempted as broad an enquiry as possible, but my findings are likely to be skewed towards English-language works.

Composer	Title	First performance	Subject matter
Abdi, Behzad	*Rumi*	2010, Aran Puppet Theatre Group, Tehran	Thirteenth-century poet and mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi, based on based on his *Masnavi* and *Divan E Shams*. Libretto by Behrouz Gharibpour.
Adwan, Moneim	*Kalīla wa-Dimna*	2017, Aix-en-Provence Festival	Based on the *Kalila and Dimna* fables, attributed to eighth-century Persian philosopher Ibn al-Muqaffa'. Libretto by Fady Jomar and Catherine Verlaguet
Andriessen, Louis	*Hadewijch*	1989, Muziektheater, Amsterdam	The seventh vision of thirteenth-century Dutch mystic Hadewijch. Part II of *De Materie* ('Matter'). Libretto by the composer.

[1020] I have marked with an asterisk (*) some cases where I have been unable to establish the performance venue.

	La Commedia ('The Comedy')	2008, Royal Theatre Carré, Amsterdam	Dante Alighieri's fourteenth-century *Divine Comedy*. Libretto by Ian Burton.
Battistelli, Giorgio	*Richard III*	2005, Vlaamse Opera, Antwerp	Fifteenth-century king Richard III of England (based on Shakespeare's play of the same name). Libretto by the composer.
Benjamin, George	*Into the Little Hill*	2006, Opéra Bastille, Paris	Modernization of thirteenth-century legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Libretto by Martin Crimp.
	Written on Skin	2012, Aix-en-Provence Festival	Thirteenth-century troubadour Guillem de Cabestaing. Libretto by Martin Crimp.
	Lessons in Love and Violence	2018, Royal Opera House, London	Fourteenth-century king Edward II of England and his lover Piers Gaveston (based on Christopher Marlowe's play *Edward II*). Libretto by Martin Crimp.
Birtwistle, Harrison	*Gawain*	1991, Royal Opera House, London	Fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Libretto by David Harsent.
Blackford, Richard	*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	1978, Blewbury, Oxfordshire	Fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Libretto by John Emlyn Edwards.
Blanco Albert, Daniel	*Besse: Water, Hops and Rye*	2022, Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London	A fictional fourteenth-century woman brewer. Libretto by Roxanne Korda.
Börtz, Daniel	*Den heliga Birgittas död och mottagande i himmelen* ('Holy Bridget's Death and Reception in Heaven')	1973, Lund Cathedral	The *Revelations* of fourteenth-century mystic Bridget of Sweden. Libretto by Bengt V. Wall.
Britten, Benjamin	*Abraham and Isaac*	1952, Albert Hall, Nottingham	Genesis 22, adapted from the fifteenth-century Chester mystery cycle play. Libretto by the composer.

	Noye's Fludde	1958, Aldeburgh Festival	Genesis 6-9, adapted from the fifteenth-century Chester mystery cycle play. Libretto by the composer.
	Curlew River	1964, Aldeburgh Festival	Fifteenth-century Japanese *Noh* drama *Sumidagawa* ('Sumida River') by Kanze Jūrō. Libretto by William Plomer.
Bush, Alan	*Wat Tyler*	1956, Leipzig Opera	The 1381 Peasants' Uprising. Libretto by Nancy Bush.
Chisholm, Erik	*The Canterbury Tales*	1962, University of Cape Town	The *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the *Pardoner's Tale*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* from Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century *Canterbury Tales*. Middle English libretto adapted by the composer.
Davies, Peter Maxwell	*The Martyrdom of St Magnus*	1977, St Magnus Festival, Orkney	Twelfth-century saint Magnus Erlendsson (based on George Mackay Brown's 1973 novel *Magnus*). Libretto by the composer.
	Le Jongleur de Notre Dame	1978, St Magnus Festival, Orkney	Thirteenth-century French poem *Del Tumbeor Nostre Dame* ('Of the Tumbler of Our Lady') from *Les Miracles de Nostre-Dame* ('The Miracles of Our Lady') by Goutier de Coinci. Libretto by the composer.
Dello Joio, Norman	*The Triumph of St. Joan*	1958 (revised version), New York City Opera	Fifteenth-century martyr Joan of Arc. Libretto by the composer.
Dhondy, Danyal	*Shahrazad*	2017, Leighton House Museum, London	Three tales from the *One Thousand and One Nights*. Libretto by Nick Pitts-Tucker.
Dun, Tan	*Marco Polo*	1996, Munich Biennale	Marco Polo's thirteenth century journey from Venice to China. Libretto by Paul Griffiths.

Ebizie, Nwando; Tom Richards; Loré Lixenberg	*Hildegard: Visions*	2019, Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London	An operatic installation structured around twelfth-century chant by Hildegard von Bingen. Developed collaboratively.
Fiddes, Ross	*Abelard and Heloise*	2002, Christ Church Cathedral, New South Wales	Twelfth-century love affair between French philosophers Peter Abelard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil. Libretto by Paul Kavanagh.
Fox, Christopher	*Showing and Telling*	2015, Unerhörte Musik, Berlin	Fifteenth-century mystic Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love.* Libretto adapted by the composer.
Gardner, William	*A New England*	2022, Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London	Ninth-century king Alfred the Great. Libretto by Matthew Green.
Goldenthal, Elliot	*Grendel*	2006, Los Angeles Opera	Tenth- or eleventh-century Old English poem *Beowulf* (based on John Gardner's 1971 novel *Grendel*). Libretto by Julie Taymor and J.D. McClatchy.
Harvey, Jonathan	*Passion and Resurrection*	1981, Winchester Cathedral	The Passion of Christ, via twelfth-century Benedictine liturgical drama. Libretto by Michael Wadsworth.
Heininen, Paavo	*The Damask Drum*	1984, Finnish National Opera	Anonymous fourteenth-century Japanese *Noh* play *Aya no Tsuzumi* ('The Damask Drum'), revised by as Zeami Motokiyo *Koi no omoni* ('Love's Heavy Burden'). Libretto by the composer.
Hendrickx, Wim	*De Bekeerlinge* ('The Convert')	2022, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen, Antwerp	Eleventh-century Jewish convert Vigdis Adelaïs (based on the novel by Stefan Hertmans). Libretto by Krystian Lada
Higgins, Gavin	*The Monstrous Child*	2019, Royal Opera House, London	Hel, ruler of the underworld in Norse mythology. Adapted from 2016 young adult novel of the same name by librettist Francesca Simon.

Holger Petersen, Nils	*Vigilie for Thomas Becket* (‘Vigil for Thomas Becket’)	1990, Copenhagen*	Twelfth-century archbishop Thomas Becket. Libretto by the composer.
	Dronning Ingeborgs lovsang (‘Queen Ingeborg’s Eulogy’)	1992, Frederiksborg Castle Chapel	Twelfth-century Ingeborg of Denmark, Queen of France. Libretto by the composer.
Hosokawa, Toshio	*Matsukaze*	2011, Royal Theatre of La Monnaie, Brussels	Fourteenth-century Japanese *Noh* drama of the same name, by Kan'ami Kiyotsugu and revised by Zeami Motokiyo. Libretto by Hannah Dübgen.
Inglis, Brian	*Hildegard von Bingen*	1997, City University, London	Twelfth-century German Abbess Hildegard von Bingen. Libretto by the composer.
	The Song of Margery Kempe	2008, Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London	Fifteenth-century English mystic Margery Kempe. Adapted from her autobiographical *Book of Margery Kempe* by the composer.
Jamieson, Daryl	*Matsumushi* (‘The Pine Cricket’)	2014, Institute of Italian Culture, Tokyo	Fifteenth-century *Noh* drama by Konparu Zenchiku. Libretto by the composer.
Karetnikov, Nikolai	*Till Eulenspiegel*	1993, Bielefeld Opera (composed 1983)	Till Eulenspiegel, folk hero of sixteenth-century chapbooks set during the fourteenth century. Based on Charles De Coster's 1867 novel *The Legend of Thyl Ulenspiegel and Lamme Goedzak in the Land of Flanders and Elsewhere*. Libretto by Pavel Lungin.
King, Matthew	*The Pied Piper*	2015, Stour Music Festival	Thirteenth-century legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Libretto by Michael Irwin.
Kirsten, Amy Beth	*Savior*	2018, Harris Theatre for Music and Dance, Chicago	Fifteenth-century martyr Joan of Arc. Libretto by the composer.

Klebe, Giselher	*Das Mädchen aus Domrémy*	1976, Staatsoper Stuttgart	Fifteenth-century martyr Joan of Arc (following Friedrich Schiller's 1801 play *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*). Libretto co-written with Lore Klebe.
Kratochwil, Heinz	*Franziskus*	1999, Wotruba Church, Vienna	Thirteenth-century saint Francis of Assisi. Libretto by the Herbert Vogg.
Lambert, Edward	*Caedmon*	1989, Donmar Warehouse, London	The Venerable Bede's account of seventh-century Old English monk Cædmon's poetry. Libretto adapted by Christopher Fry from his 1987 play *One Thing More.*
	The Burning Question	2022, Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London	Refers to fifteenth-century myth of Pope Joan. Libretto by Norman Welch & Edward Lambert.
LeFanu, Nicola	*The Green Children*	1990, Kings Lynn Festival	Green-skinned children appearing in twelfth-century Suffolk, based on Ralph of Coggeshall's thirteenth-century account in *Chronicum Anglicanum*. Libretto by Kevin Crossley Holland.
	The Wildman	1995, Aldeburgh Festival	A merman caught by fishermen in twelfth-century Orford, based on Ralph of Coggeshall's thirteenth-century account in *Chronicum Anglicanum*. Libretto by Kevin Crossley-Holland.
	Light Passing	2004, National Centre for Early Music, York	Fourteenth-century Pope Clement VI. Libretto by John Edmonds.
Leighton, Kenneth	*Columba*	1981, Glasgow Theatre Royal	Sixth-century Irish saint Columba. Libretto by Edwin Morgan.
Lim, Liza	*The Navigator*	2008, Brisbane Festival	Partly based on *Tristan and Iseult* romances. Libretto by Patricia Sykes.

Linkola, Jukka	*Robin Hood*	2010, Finnish National Opera	Set in twelfth-century England (Robin Hood folklore approximately dates from the fourteenth century). Libretto by Yukka Virtanen.
MacMillan, James	*Inés de Castro*	1996, Edinburgh Festival	Galician noblewoman and courtier. Libretto adapted by the composer from the 1989 play by Jo Clifford.
	Visitatio Sepulchri	1993, Tramway, Glasgow	The Passion of Christ, based on fourteenth-century Notre Dame liturgical drama for Easter Day. Libretto adapted by the composer.
	The Sacrifice	2007, Wales Millennium Centre	A story from the twelfth-to-thirteenth-century Middle-Welsh *Mabinogion* ('Matter of Britain'). Libretto by Michael Symmons Roberts.
Mander, Louis	*Beowulf*	2013, Opera at Chilmark, Wiltshire	Tenth- or eleventh-century Old English poem. Libretto by Nick Pitts-Tucker.
	Wild Edric	2016, Opera at Chilmark, Wiltshire	Eleventh-century Shropshire landowner who resisted the Norman conquest. Libretto by Nigel Gearing.
Martynov, Vladimir	*Vita Nuova* ('New Life')	2009, Royal Festival Hall, London	Dante Alighieri's 1294 prosimetrum *La Vita Nuova* ('The New Life'). Libretto by the composer.
Mellnäs, Arne	*Erik den helige* ('Eric the Holy')	1976, Engelbrekt Church, Stockholm	Twelfth-century king Eric IX of Sweden. Libretto by Bengt V. Wall.
Messiaen, Olivier	*Saint François d'Assise*	1983, Palais Garnier, Paris	Thirteenth-century saint Francis of Assisi. Libretto by the composer.
Milhaud, Darius	*Le jeu de Robin et Marion*	1951, Hessicher State Theatre, Wiesbaden	Adam de la Halle's thirteenth-century *Le jeu de Robin et Marion*.
	Saint Louis Roi de France ('Saint Louis, King of France')	1972, Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro	Based on Paul Claudel's poem about thirteenth-century king Louis IX of France. Libretto by Henri Doublier.

Monk, Meredith	*Book of Days*	1988, PBS (USA television broadcast)	Parallels between the fourteenth-century Black Death and AIDS epidemics.
Pasatieri, Thomas	*Inés de Castro*	1976, Baltimore Lyric Theatre	Fourteenth-century Galician noblewoman Inês de Castro. Libretto by Bernard Stambler.
Paulus, Stephen	*Heloise and Abelard*	2002, Julliard Theatre, New York	Twelfth-century love affair between French philosophers Peter Abelard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil. Libretto by Frank Corsaro.
Paynter, John	*The Voyage of St Brendan*	1984, Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival	Sixth-century Irish saint Brendan of Clonfert. Libretto by Elizabeth Paynter.
Philips, Julian	*Knight Crew*	2010, Glyndebourne Festival	Modern retelling of Arthurian legend. Libretto by Vicky Singer, from her 2009 young adult novel of the same name.
	The Tale of Januarie	2017, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London	The *Merchant's Tale* from Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century *Canterbury Tales*. Libretto by Stephen Plaice.
Pizzetti, Ildebrando	*Assassinio nella cattedrale* ('Assassination in the Cathedral')	1957, Teatro alla Scala, Milan	Twelfth-century archbishop Thomas Becket (based on T. S. Eliot's 1935 play *Murder in the Cathedral*). Libretto by the composer.
Rautavaara, Einojuhani	*Thomas*	1985, Joensuu Song Festival	Thirteenth-century bishop Thomas of Finland. Libretto by the composer.
Rolfe, James	*Inês*	2009, Enwave Theatre, Toronto	Fourteenth-century Galician noblewoman Inês de Castro. Libretto by Paul Bentley.
Rouders, Poul	*The Thirteenth Child*	2019, Santa Fe Opera	German folktale 'The Twelve Brothers', unspecified medieval setting. Libretto by Becky and David Starobin.
Saariaho, Kaija	*L'Amour de loin* ('Love from Afar')	2000, Salzburg Festival	Twelfth-century troubadour Jaufre Rudel. Libretto by Amin Maalouf.
Sallinen, Aulis	*Kuningas lähtee Ranskaan* ('The King Goes Forth to France')	1984, Savonlinna Opera Festival	Partly set during the Hundred Years' War. Libretto by Paavo Haavikko, based on his 1974 play of the same name.

Saltzmann, Arnold	*Geniza: Hidden Fragments*	2023, Adas Israel Synagogue, Washington D.C.	The discovery of the Cairo Geniza manuscripts; a fictional romance between medieval Egyptian Jews; a soliloquy from the writings of twelfth-century Jewish convert Obadiah the proselyte. Libretto by the composer.
Saxton, Robert	*Caritas*	1991, Wakefield Opera House	Fourteenth-century English anchorite Christine Carpenter. Libretto by Arnold Wesker, after his 1980 play of the same name.
	The Wandering Jew	2010, BBC Radio 3 (radio opera)	Derived from thirteenth-century legend, partly set in eleventh-century Córdoba, also features Kundry (Arthurian character) and Odin (Norse mythology). Libretto by the composer.
Scartazzini, Andrea Lorenzo	*Wut* ('Rage')	2006, Erfurt Theatre, Germany	Fourteenth-century Galician noblewoman Inês de Castro. Libretto by Christian Martin Fuchs.
	Edward II	2017, Deutsche Oper, Berlin	Fourteenth-century English king (based on after Christopher Marlowe's 1592 play). Libretto by Thomas Jonigk
Schafer, R. Murray	*The Children's Crusade*	2009, Toronto Warehouse	Thirteenth-century semi-mythical crusade.
Schwemmer, Frank	*Robin Hood*	2008, Komische Oper, Berlin	Modern retelling of Robin Hood folklore for children, partially set in the Middle Ages. Libretto by Michael Frowin.
Sciarrino, Salvatore	*Da gelo a gelo* ('From One Frost to the Next')	2006, Schwetzingen Palace Theatre	Sixty-five poems and the year 1002-03 and from the journal of Japanese poet Izumi Shikibu. Libretto by the composer.
Sitsky, Larry	*Fiery Tales*	1976, Adelaide Festival	Chaucer's *Miller's Tale* and the sixth story of the ninth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (both fourteenth century). Libretto by Gwen Harewood.

Sommerro, Henning	*Querini*	2012, Querini Hall, Røst	Venetian captain Pietro Querini, shipwrecked at Røst, Norway during the winter of 1432. Libretto by Ragnar Olsen.
Soper, Kate	*The Romance of the Rose*	2023, Long Beach Opera, California	Thirteenth-century French poem *Le Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris, expanded by Jean de Meun. Libretto by the composer.
Tahourdin, Peter	*Heloise and Abelard*	1993, University of Western Australia	Twelfth-century love affair between French philosophers Peter Abelard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil. Libretto by the composer.
Tamba, Akira	*Shiramine*	2014, Sumida Triphony Hall, Japan	Buddhist reading of the political intrigue following the death of twelfth-century Japanese emperor Sutoku. Libretto by the composer.
Tinoco, Luís	*Paint Me*	2010, Culturgest, Lisbon	Modernization of Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century *Canterbury Tales.* Libretto by Stephen Plaice.
Tomasi, Henri	*François d'Assise 'il povorello'* ('the poor')	1957, Paris*	Thirteenth-century saint Francis of Assisi. Libretto by Albert Bonheur and Jean Marietti.[1021]
Wallace, Stewart	*Kabbalah*	1989, Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York	Cross-temporal exploration of Jewish mystical traditions including representations of medieval Sephardim in Old Spanish. Libretto by Michael Korie.
Walton, William	*Troilus and Cressida*	1954, Royal Opera House, London	Geoffrey Chaucer's fourteenth-century poem *Troilus and Criseyde*. Libretto by Christopher Hassall.
Ward, Robert	*Abelard and Heloise*	1982, Charlotte Opera, North Carolina	Twelfth-century love affair between French philosophers Peter Abelard and Héloïse d'Argenteuil. Libretto by Jan Hartman.

[1021] Bruhn suggests that the libretto may have been by Tomasi alone, see Bruhn, *Saints in the Limelight: Representations of the Religious Quest on the Post-1945 Operatic Stage*, 346.

Weir, Judith	*King Harald's Saga*	1979, Dumfries Music Club	Harald Hardrada's unsuccessful 1066 invasion of England, as described in Snorri Sturluson's thirteenth-century Icelandic saga *Heimskringla*. Libretto by the composer.
	The Black Spider	1985, Canterbury Cathedral	The subjects (and cursed tomb) of fifteenth-century king Casimir IV of Poland (based on Jeremias Gotthelf's 1842 novella *Die schwarze Spinne*). Libretto by the composer.
	The Consolations of Scholarship	1985, University of Durham	Thirteenth-century Yuan dramas *The Orphan of Zhao* (attributed to Ji Junxiang) and *A Stratagem of Interlocking Rings* (anonymous). Libretto by the composer.
	A Night at the Chinese Opera	1987, Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham	Thirteenth-century Yuan drama *The Orphan of Zhao* (attributed to Ji Junxiang). Libretto by the composer.
	Blonde Eckbert	1994, English National Opera	Based on Ludwig Tieck's 1797 short fairy story *Der blonde Eckbert* about a paranoid medieval lord. Libretto by the composer.
	Armida	2005, Channel 4 (UK television broadcast)	An implicit commentary on the Iraq War based on Torquato Tasso's 1581 poem *La Gerusalemme liberate* ('Jerusalem Liberated'), about the First Crusade. Libretto by the composer.
Whitehead, Gillian	*Hotspur*	1980, Darlington, UK*	Fourteenth-century noblewoman Elizabeth Mortimer describing her husband, Henry 'Hotspur' Percy. Libretto by Fleur Adcock.
	Eleanor of Aquitaine	1988, New Directions Festival, Sydney	Twelfth-century queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. Libretto by Fleur Adcock.

	Tristan and Iseult	1978, Auckland International Festival	Adapted from various twelfth- and thirteenth-century *Tristan and Iseult* romances. Libretto by Malcolm Crowthers and Michael Hill.
Wilson-Dickson, Andrew	*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	1978, Leicester University	Fourteenth-century Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.*
Woo, Naomi	*The Minutes of the Hildegard von Bingen Society for Gardening Companions*	2020, Tête à Tête Opera Festival, London	Conceptual piece about twelfth-century abbess Hildegard von Bingen. Developed collaboratively with Sophie Seita.
Zuidam, Robert	*Suster Bertken* (‘Sister Bertken’)	2010, The Concertgebouw, Amsterdam	Life and writing of fifteenth-century Dutch anchorite Sister Bertken. Libretto by the composer.