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Both the Edge and the Centre:

The Politics of Understanding Music in Middle English Poetry
- An Interdisciplinary Study

Sarah Nangle
06485197

This thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

School of English, Drama and Film
College of Arts and Celtic Studies
Head of School: Professor Danielle Clarke
Principal Supervisors: Dr. Niamh Pattwell, Dr. Frank Lawrence

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Abstract

This dissertation offers an interdisciplinary examination of the uses of music in Middle English poetry through analysis of numerous allusions to music in texts from the late-thirteenth to early-fifteenth century, with particular focus on the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. The position of music as a cornerstone of philosophic thought, perceived as a reflection of the divine harmony of the universe and as sounding number made it central to medieval life. However, music’s abstract connotations also permitted it to inhabit the margins of the medieval universe – the boundaries between human and animal, rational and irrational, nature and artifice, sense and the ineffable. Music was thus both at the edge and the centre of the medieval imagination.

The role of music in discourses concerning creativity, religion, and society in Middle English poetry will be considered in relation to the spiritual, social, and artistic implications of “knowing” or making rational judgment – what I term “the politics of understanding”. I divide consideration of the politics of understanding music in dream visions, complaints, bestiaries, religious texts, and romances into three sections: philosophical, spiritual, and political. This division allows me to examine a broad range of texts, beginning with consideration of the literary and philosophical tradition inherited from French influences and Antiquity, then turning to spiritual devotion, moving away from aesthetic to ascetic concerns, and finally considering the secular and more immediate and practical implications.

The philosophical implications of understanding music in Chaucer’s dream poems, the Book of the Duchess, House of Fame, and Parliament of Fowls are first considered. I then examine the spiritual dimensions of understanding music in London, British Library, MS Arundel 292 and in Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale. I conclude with an exploration of the representation of kingly harpers in the romances King Horn and Sir Orfeo, and in Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale.
Acknowledgments

Overseeing a project of this duration, that seeks interdisciplinary dialogue, requires considerable diplomacy and even-handedness. I could not have asked for better supervisors than Dr. Niamh Pattwell and Dr. Frank Lawrence, who patiently helped me to navigate the path between their own two fields and tirelessly read drafts, responded to my every query, and encouraged this venture.

Many members of UCD School of English – administrative and academic staff, as well as the students that I have had the good fortune to teach – have helped to contribute to this project. I am indebted especially to Professor Mary Clayton, who has been most generous with her time and expertise, Pat O’Brien, who scrupulously read an early draft of my work on Chaucer’s Prioress and Second Nun, and Dr. Huiyi Bao for lively discussions on astronomy and the medieval sensorium. I would like to express gratitude to scholars in other universities who have supported my work through discussion and sharing their own expertise, particularly, Dr. Brendan O’Connell at Trinity College Dublin.

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Finally, to my family – my brothers Joe, Mark and Luke, my aunt Siobhán, my grandmother Joan, and especially my parents Peter and Veronica Nangle – I owe my immense gratitude. Without their constant support and encouragement, this journey would not have been possible.
Statement of Original Authorship:
I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work.
Abbreviations

Arundel 292  London, British Library, Arundel MS 292
BD  The Book of the Duchess
CA  Confessio Amantis
ChauR  The Chaucer Review
ChL  The Choristers’ Lament
CT  The Canterbury Tales
DIMEV  Digital Index of Middle English Verse (http://www.dimev.net/index.html)
De ins. mus.  De institutione musica
EETS  Early English Text Society (OS: Original Series; ES: Extra Series; SS: Supplementary Series)
FL  The Floure and the Leafe,
Gg 4.27.2  Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4.27 part 2
Harley 2253  London, British Library, Harley MS 2253
HC  Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild
HF  The House of Fame
KH  King Horn
Laud 108  Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud Misc.108
LGW  The Legend of Good Women
MancT  The Manciple’s Tale
ME  Middle English
MED  Middle English Dictionary (http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/)
MS  Manuscript
NMGS  Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey (http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/)
NPT  The Nun’s Priest’s Tale
PF  Parliament of Fowls
PrT  The Prioress’s Tale
RH  The Romance of Horn
RR  Roman de la Rose
SirO  Sir Orfeo
SNT  The Second Nun’s Tale
SuM  The Summa Musice
TEAMS  The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages
Both The Edge and The Centre

Introduction

– A hypersphere, very simply described, is a universe whose outermost edge is also its centre. If we imagine the light at the edge of the universe coming towards us, we must understand that that light is the oldest light in the universe, originating with the Big Bang. But if the edge of the universe is the oldest, it is also the centre of the sphere that we now imagine the universe to be. The edge is also the centre, and what we see there is the remote past. (Jean-Marie Kauth “The Shaping of Dante’s Cosmos” 19)

The title of this project was inspired partially by Jean-Marie Kauth’s consideration of the shape of Dante’s cosmos. Kauth’s analysis of Dante’s cosmos as a hypersphere, where the edge is also the centre, recognizes the same supremacy of understanding of the universe as ordered by number as is embodied in the centrality of music in medieval poetry, philosophy, religious practice, and everyday life. Music, with its divinely ordered connotations, was at the centre of the medieval imagination. However, as music could be non-linguistic, nonhuman, abstract, and irrational, it also had the capability to transcend the “edges”, boundaries, or margins, of traditional fixed structures within the medieval imagination. Music’s resistance to single interpretation, its ineffable nature, placed it as much at the edge as the centre.

“The Politics of Understanding Music in Middle English Poetry” is an interdisciplinary examination of music in medieval narrative poetry. This research combines literary criticism and musicology to bring to light the centrality of music in medieval life through textual analysis of allusions to music in texts from the late-thirteenth to early-fifteenth century, with particular focus on the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. The position of music in discourses concerning language, creativity, learning, religion, governance, and authority in Middle English poetry will be considered in relation to the implications of “knowing” or making rational judgment. I frame this analysis with the phrase “politics of understanding” to consider the spiritual, social, and artistic dimensions of uses of music – inextricably associated with reason and order – in the Middle Ages. My objective in this thesis is to illustrate the cultural and political climate in which these works were composed in order to contextualize these allusions, and to explore the effect which these musical references have within the poems themselves. Understanding of the
intellectual environment in which the poetry of Chaucer and his contemporaries was composed elucidates the sophisticated understanding of music evident in poetry of the Middle Ages.

Middle English poetry shows decisive evidence of the profound influence of music upon medieval culture. The pervasiveness of music in the everyday intellectual culture of medieval life cannot be overemphasized. Regarded as a reflection of the divine harmony of the universe, music was a cornerstone of philosophic thought and understanding of the organized perfection of the cosmos. As an *ars mathematicae* music was taught as part of the seven liberal arts at medieval universities and was included in such encyclopaedic works as Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (c. 410) and Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* (c. 600).

More fundamentally, music was integral to everyday medieval life. Emma Dillon notes, in her examination of music in thirteenth and fourteenth century France, that “in many quarters the sacred word was synonymous with the sung voice” (174). Music is an intrinsic element of the Christian liturgy – many texts such as the *Gloria* and *Sanctus* began as sung even if later recited – and the sounds of church bells and of hymns and psalms were familiar throughout medieval towns and cities. Bells signalling celebration of hours are referenced by Chaucer, in the *Miller’s Tale* when Alison and Nicholas lie “in bisynesse of myrth” until “the belle of laudes gan to rynge” (*CT* I. 3655), and the three rioters of the *Pardoner’s Tale* “longe erst er prime rong of any belle, were set hem in a taverne to drynke” (*CT* VI. 662-663).¹ Recounting the ceremonies surrounding the death of Athelwold, the poet of *Havelok the Dane* says that “belles deden he sone ringen, Monkes and prestes messe singen” (242).² The broadening accessibility of the sacred through private devotion from the thirteenth century onwards took many forms as Dillon notes, “from burgeoning cults of Marian devotion to vernacular religious drama and vast civic processions, and is evident of course in a large repertory of devotional songs from vernacular chansons to motets” (174). Song-schools, where young children were introduced to the rudiments of Latin through learning to sing liturgical texts and the hymns in plainchant, were often attached to churches as in the habitually cited archetype of this the ‘litel scole of Cristen folk’ in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Prioress’s Tale* (*CT* VII. 495).

As a vital part of secular entertainment every gathering, whether a small family event or a noble coronation, was celebrated through this thriving art form. The call to feasts of nobility was the heralding of trumpets; the dominant forms of entertainment after feasting (along with

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¹ Throughout, all quotations from Chaucer’s corpus are from *The Riverside Chaucer* (Larry Benson ed., 3rd ed.) unless otherwise stated.

² For all references to *Havelok the Dane*, I cite Herzman et al.’s edition in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*. 

2
recitations of poetry) were dancing and singing. Among the laity, music was a means to ease the tedium of physical labour, a practice indicated by Franco Sacchetti (c. 1335-c. 1400) in his Il Trecentonovelle CXIV in which he recounts incidences when “Dante Alighieri fa conoscente uno fabbro e uno asinaio del loro errore, perché con nuovi volgari cantavano il libro suo” [Dante Alighieri informs a blacksmith and a donkey rider about their mistake, because they sang his book in new (strange) vernaculars] when the dismayed Dante overhears labourers singing verses of his Commedia whilst going about their business in the streets of Florence.3

In addition, music was perceived to have healing powers for both the body and soul as is advocated by Petrus and Perseus, the authors of the Summa Musice, a thirteenth-century manual for singers, who professed:

Musica itaque medicinalis est et mirabilia operatur. Per musicam morbi curantur, precipue per melancholiam et ex tristicia generatī... Musica mitigat iracundos, tristem letificat, varias cogitationes dissipat et ab eis dissolvit. Musica et quod maius est spiritus malignos perterret et fugat. (242-254)

[Music has medicinal properties and performs miraculous things. Music cures diseases, especially those which arise from melancholia and sadness… Music calms the irascible, gladdens the sorrowful, dissipates anxious thoughts and destroys them. What is greater still, music terrifies evil spirits and banishes them. (55-56)]4

The currency of music in everyday medieval life is also evident in the permeation of music into poetic thought: in the life and works of such figures as Guillaume de Machaut; in the pervasiveness of troubadours, trouvères, and minstrels throughout medieval Europe; in liturgical dramas; in the popularity of musico-poetic genres such as motets; and in the utilization of music as a means to teach literacy. Music was ever-present in the urbane circles of the court and ecclesiastical life, as well as in the streets of medieval cities. Consequently, the context of medieval music culture demands recognition when evaluating the circumstances in which the poetry of Chaucer and his contemporaries was composed. What emerges is a preoccupation with learning and craft, and a glimpse of how “understanding” was politicized and moralized.

3 See Emilio Faccioli’s edition of Il Trecentonovelle (216) and Elena Abramov-van Rijk’s translation in Parlar Cantando (49).
4 All quotations of the Summa Musice are from Christopher Page’s edition and translation, referring to line numbers for Latin and page numbers for translation.
The Late Middle Ages has long been recognised as a period of greater fluidity of intellectual resources. Katherine Zieman, for example, writes that:

The rise of Lollardy and Oxford translation debates, the uprising of 1381 and the cultivation of vernacular poetry, to say nothing of “vernacular theology”, are just a few indicators of this mobility that have garnered scholarly attention. (3)

The significant exchange of ideas among poets and musicians in courtly and clerical communities and in the cities of medieval Europe, manifested in the nuances of references to music in Middle English poetry, was just one facet of the much greater cultural and intellectual growth during this period. High regard for proficiency in more than one field of study is reflected throughout medieval Europe in the sophisticated arenas of the court, the Church, and the university. The period is marked by communities of urbane individuals who pursued knowledge across a broad range of disciplines. Such figures as Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) whose knowledge spanned medicine, linguistics, botany, art, philosophy, and music; Jehan de Murs (c. 1290 - c. 1355), who was an expert in music, astronomy, and mathematics; Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300-1377), who was famed for his achievements as both a poet and composer; Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400) and Dante Aligieri (c. 1265-1321), both poets who composed treatises on astronomy; Walter Odington (c. 1280-1320), William of Ockham (c. 1288-c. 1348), Nicole Oresme (c. 1320-1382), Guillaume Du Fay (c. 1397–1474), and countless others in communities of widespread intellectual discourse, demonstrate the primacy for “understanding” in the Middle Ages. These polymaths might be perceived as precursors to the Homo Universalis of the Renaissance, thriving in an economy of scholarly exchange and pansophic transmission of ideas. This salient contextual circumstance is demonstrated by Johannes de Grocheio (c. 1255–c. 1320), who observed the circulation of ideas in Paris at the beginning of the fourteenth century, writing in his Ars Musicæ: “diebus nostris principia cuiuslibet artis liberalis diligenter parisius inquiruntur et usus earum et fere omnium mechanicarum inveniuntur” [“in our days the principles of any liberal art are carefully investigated in Paris, and the uses of these and of almost all mechanical arts to be found” (60-61)].

The lives of such figures as Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) – whose music only received attention after the wider study of her theological, botanical, and medicinal texts by historians – are prime indicators of the need to look beyond the boundaries of academic disciplines to fully understand the fluidity of medieval intellectual culture, and the intermediality

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5 All references to de Grocheio’s Ars Musicæ cite Constant J. Mews et al.’s edition and translation by page number.
of many medieval art forms. Liturgical Dramas for example, might fall under the domain of musicology, literary analysis, theology, medieval dress, politics, visual arts, or performance studies. Examining the medieval motet, in itself an art form that is musical, poetic, and – in layout in manuscripts – visual, Anna Zayaruznaya argues that “multidisciplinary approaches seem suitable to cultural production of the Middle Ages” (150). She observes that such figures as Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361) “famous as a poet and composer, expert in law, and, according to his friends, learned in the mathematical sciences) would hardly have been sympathetic to our [sic] disciplinary boundaries” (15). Interdisciplinary research is thus foundational to academic practice in medieval studies. An understanding of any one aspect of the field is limited by exclusion of others. It is useful to discipline-based research to acknowledge the complexity of medieval art forms, culture, and thought. Such figures as the polymaths Hildegard and de Vitry demand the perspective of multiple disciplines to be considered in context.

It is for this reason that my approach to understanding references to music in Middle English poetry has prioritized interdisciplinarity. Veronica Strang and Tim McLeish’s recent assertion that a view of interdisciplinary research as foundational rather than additive to the academy “underlines its capacity to feed into and reintegrate disciplinary thinking” (Evaluating Interdisciplinary Research 5), seems especially appropriate when approaching the polymathic culture of the Middle Ages. Interdisciplinary studies not only enhance disciplinary strengths, but also provide more nuanced understanding through framing in other fields of study. As Strang and McLeish assert: “The extension of knowledge beyond disciplinary boundaries extends the capacity of research to address much broader kinds of questions, and in particular to tackle larger, more intractable problems” (5). Through contextualizing literary analysis through the framework of musicology, this research seeks to evince the value of crossing the traditional boundaries of the academy and venturing towards nonlinear appraisal of music and poetry within the context of the universe they were created in. Rather than simply identifying occurrences of references to music in medieval literature or considering their poetic effects, this research has sought to demonstrate the wider implications of medieval poetic reference to music.

In recent years, interdisciplinary research of word and music relations has developed frameworks strengthened by the vast corpus of study of intersections of the two arts. Since Steven Paul Scher’s theorization of the interrelationships of music and literature in Verbal Music in German Literature in 1968, the field has expanded significantly beyond Scher’s tripartite division of areas (literature in music, music and literature, music in literature). The framework proposed by Scher leans more towards cross-disciplinary analysis – the application of one field of knowledge to another – in the analysis of musical aesthetics in literature and vice-versa, which Werner Wolf
describes as “‘intracompositional intermediality’ or ‘intermediality in the narrow sense’” (13). Intermedial reference through thematization and imitation of other media is not the focus of this study, however. Although the use of music in Middle English poetry may be regarded as intermedial in the narrow sense, this research seeks to explicate extracompositional intermediality, i.e. the greater implications of the intersection of music and poetry in medieval courtly and clerical circles. My concern is not with stylistic effects within individual poems, but how these are reflective of the environment in which they were composed. As such, what emerges from this study is an understanding of the construction of the idea of music in thirteenth and fourteenth-century England.

The date range of texts examined in this study is broad, extending over almost two centuries. In addition to a range of works by Chaucer, the Middle English romances King Horn and Sir Orfeo, and the contents of London, British Library, Arundel MS 292 will be considered. References to musical allusions in the broader corpus of Middle English poetry, and in contemporary French and Italian works, will provide context for the use of music in the poems identified. Understanding of the cultural supremacy of “learning”, “knowing”, and “understanding” in the Middle Ages allows us to better understand the implications of the technical and pointed use of music by the individual makers of Middle English poetry. Reflective of a wider movement in medieval studies in recent years this research, through consideration of a broad range of texts, offers a more holistic understanding of intellectual exchange in the Middle Ages, rather than appraising Chaucer as an isolated genius.

By demonstrating the extent to which medieval poets were exposed to the theories and aesthetic principles of music, this approach explicates what references to music in medieval poetry reveal about poetic craft and how this reflects upon the society in which these works were composed. This research illustrates how references to music in their works enabled these poets to do and say things that they otherwise could not have said or done, such as transcend social hierarchies, discuss religious reform, represent unconventional gender roles, and comment on political unrest. None of the Middle English texts considered contain musical notation, which at their time was propagated. They do, however, provide a written record of musical practice in the Middle Ages. The poetry and prose that will is considered in this thesis encodes the sounds of the medieval poet’s environment on paper, thereby offering another kind of notation which can be decoded to better understand medieval musical practice.

I have divided consideration of “the politics of understanding music” into three broad areas: philosophical, spiritual, and political. The three are not necessarily independent of one another often intersect within the same texts. This is evidenced in the recurrence of certain
themes across these chapters, such as birdsong, language, gender, human and animal vocalization, the distinction between learned and unlearned, rational and irrational, noise and music, nature and artifice. This grouping, however, allows me to examine a broad range of texts – dream visions, complaints, bestiaries, religious texts, romances – in a way that permits close attention to textual details that then contribute to a broader understanding. By beginning with the philosophic “understanding” of music, we can consider the tradition of literary depictions of music which Chaucer and his contemporaries inherit from Antiquity, and from French and Italian traditions. Because of the profound influences of French and Italian cultures upon Chaucer and his contemporaries, we must be cautious not to take every poetic reference to music as literal or as localized in English practice, but rather, realize that these depictions engage with a tradition that has preceded them. Understanding of philosophic approaches to music allows us to better recognize convention and idiom in writings about music, but also, those details that are original or unique and thus might be linked more explicitly with a poet’s own environment. With greater understanding of the wider implications of music in medieval philosophy, we can also proceed to examine descriptions of religious music with an appreciation of the spiritual significance revealed in the practical details. Finally, having moved from the private and personal to the more public (from the reading and dreaming of Chaucer’s early poems to the singing and praying of The Canterbury Tales) we may then look outwards at wider public implications of music in secular spheres.

Chapter One introduces the medieval poet’s experience of music through the frame of the lives and works of Guillaume de Machaut, Dante Alighieri, and Geoffrey Chaucer. My refraction of medieval musical culture through the lens of these figures draws attention to the close relation between civil service and diplomatic activity, and cultural sophistication in the Middle Ages. Religion, politics, and philosophy are embodied in the careers and creative outputs of these three figures. This illustration of the centrality of music to the life of the medieval poet will prepare the reader for a contextual analysis of the literary representation of music which follows in the three subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two examines Chaucer’s engagement with speculative music theory in the Book of the Duchess (BD), House of Fame (HF), and Parliament of Fowls (PF). Musica theorica, speculative music theory, is the study of the abstract mathematical and philosophical aspects of music rather than interest in composition or performance, which were the concerns of musica practica. David Higdon has identified Chaucer’s adoption of “the theocentric metaphors of music made available by Augustine, Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Isidore and popularized by medieval illustrators and poets” in the General Prologue of the Canterbury Tales (98). Here, I draw attention to the use of such
theocentric metaphors in the poet’s earlier works. Boethian concepts of healing through music are related to the potential for consolation in BD. It then considers the interaction of Aristotelean Naturalism and NeoPlatonic musica theorica in HF. Finally, the political use of music in PF is contextualized by consideration of Ciceronian ideas of universal harmony.

Chapter Three explores representations of ecclesiastical music making. Through close reading and palaeographical study of London, British Library, Arundel MS 292 and analysis of Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale, I expound anxieties concerning understanding and appropriate performance present in the portrayals of ecclesiastical musicians in Middle English poetry. Music was considered a vehicle for spiritual improvement in the medieval Church, yet Middle English representations of music are concerned with the dangers of performing without understanding, or of being misled by hearing improper music that is instinctive, irrational, or untrained. This chapter also adds a new dimension to understanding writing “about” music. What precedes it is contextualization of poetic and philosophic conventions of representing music, however, here I also discuss the notation of music which features heavily in the poem The Choristers’ Lament, perhaps the only literary text considered which is concerned primarily written records of music itself.

Chapter Four considers the figure of the musician king in Middle English poetry. The anonymous poems King Horn and Sir Orfeo, and Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale are examined with reference to conventional tropes of literary representation of this figure and also to conventional criticisms of royal inadequacy (via the context of specific political and social issues that shaped the respective representations of musical kings and power figures).

While considering the legacy of institution and convention, my analysis of Middle English poetry will also take into consideration art-external circumstances such as performance contexts, medieval pedagogy, the parity of music and words in medieval aesthetics, and socio-political factors such as The Hundred Years War, The Peasants’ Revolt, and Wycliffite heresy. Through consideration of the material culture – through codicology and consideration of engravings, iconography, and figural decoration – this study endeavours to demonstrate the permeation of music not only into the literary text, but more widely into medieval thought.

Throughout, I refer closely to medieval music treatises, especially those most widely read and disseminated, including those of Boethius, Guido d’Arezzo, and Johannes de Grocheio. I wish to emphasize that it is not my intention to identify these treatises as “sources” for the references to music in Middle English poetry discussed. There is uncertainty concerning the circulation of books in the Middle Ages, and I do not intend to overestimate reading culture in this society. What I have sought to do instead through these references is demonstrate the
correspondence between theoretical understandings of music and the representation of music in Middle English poetry. My research is strongly based in social and historical contextualization, and draws attention to what these poets may have learned from social and professional interactions, working as diplomats, clerks, and secretaries, during a period of significant cultural exchange and enrichment during the Anglo-French negotiations of the Hundred Years War. The correspondence of tropes in treatises and poetic representation demonstrates evidence of intellectual and cultural discourse in such environments.

Lawrence Kramer, writing on the usefulness of musico-literary studies observes that such research offers “greater explicitness, resources of enrichment, wider interpretive adventure” (167). Textual analysis of medieval poetry, framed in the context of contemporaneous music pedagogy, allows for such enrichment. Consideration of the “politics of understanding music” in Middle English poetry allows psychological and sociological insight which is unattainable through exclusive study of political or military history of the period. These musico-poetic allusions offer new insight into the impact of Norman, and subsequent French, presence in England in expressions of Englishness through music in *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*, consideration of French choir masters in the *Choristers’ Lament*, and the transformation of musical and poetic styles and tropes by Geoffrey Chaucer throughout his corpus. Attitudes to devotional performance, and the role of music in Heterodox and Orthodox religious practice will be uncovered, including understanding of attitudes to Lollardy in the Middle Ages (which have been difficult to determine given the strict censorship that followed Wycliffite heresy). Comments on governance, kingship, and political rulership may be extricated from depictions of musical heroes in Middle English romance. This exploration of the permeation of one set of aesthetic principles into another art form will also offer a new perspective on learning in the Middle Ages. By addressing the close interaction of poets and musicians in late medieval society, it provides a more nuanced understanding of the transmission of knowledge in a society in which books were scarce and literacy rare.

The resources to understand the experience of music in the Middle Ages, and how medieval poetry engaged with the intellectual material of its sister art, exist in the wealth of references to music in medieval poetry yet to be appraised. This project will offer original insights into both music and literature through its contextual evaluation of these literary musical allusions. This thesis will go beyond listing references to music to explore the implications for our understanding of medieval poetic craft.

There are a number of commendable studies of Chaucer’s use of music in his works that have enabled this project. Franz Montgomery’s and Clair Olson’s surveys of Chaucer’s
references to music opened up extensive dialogue surrounding the possibilities of Chaucer’s own musical education, the potential of recreating his “songs”, and the usefulness of his references to musicologists.\textsuperscript{6} Nigel Wilkins’s and James Wimsatt’s extensive studies have provided context for musical life and the intersections of music and poetry in the fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{7} Whilst David Chamberlain, David Higdon, and Derek Brewer highlight Chaucer’s familiarity with music theory, Jesse Gellrich and Robert Boenig consider musical irony, and Nicolette Zeeman and Christina Francis examine the quality of song in Chaucer’s works.\textsuperscript{8} However, as minimal consideration has been given to the employment of music in other Middle English poetry, my analysis of the larger cultural field, by relating poetry to surrounding textual sources, will provide a better understanding of the artistic and intellectual depth which works contemporary to Chaucer are denied by treatment of his \textit{oeuvre} as an isolated example of genius. Whereas previous scholarly focus has often been upon individual texts, the inheritance of the French musico-poetic aesthetics of Machaut and Deschamps, or humour, my research demonstrates that there are deeper semantic expressions to be found in the musical allusions of Middle English poetry, not only in the works of Chaucer, but also in the poetry of his peers. This research, therefore, seeks to bring contemporary Middle English poets into dialogue with Chaucer. Whilst endeavouring to preserve the autonomy of Chaucer’s works, this study demonstrates that in musical expression, Chaucer’s contemporaries were capable of equal sophistication and depth.

An appreciation of the multilingual environment in which Chaucer and his contemporaries write and read is fundamental to the aims of this research in highlighting the circulation of ideas in medieval courtly culture. As such, studies which cross the traditional boundaries of academic discipline or the limitation of single-language studies have been crucial to my understanding. John Stevens’s, Christopher Page’s, and Richard Rastall’s extensive consideration of intermedial musico-poetic formats, and Bruce Holsinger’s, Elizabeth Leach’s, and Ardis Butterfield’s multilingual studies have permitted this research to proceed towards contextual engagement with Middle English references to music.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{7} See Wilkins, \textit{Music in the Age of Chaucer} and Wimsatt, \textit{Chaucer and His French Contemporaries}.
References to music in Middle English poetry – which have yet to be substantially analysed – disclose medieval attitudes to music and its performers, offering insight into the role of music in medieval society. Ultimately, this project offers a nuanced comprehension of attitudes to music and understandings of the art in medieval culture, recognition of the profound influence that music had upon medieval poets, and insight into the many layered compositional process of Middle English poets.
Chapter One
The Medieval Poet's Experience of Music

– First, it is true that if we perform the commandments of the Creator and with pure minds obey the rules he has laid down, then every word we speak, every pulsation of our veins, is related by musical rhythms and the powers of harmony.

(Cassiodorus, *Institutiones Divinarum et Saecularium Litterarum* 543–555)\(^{10}\)

Before considering the use of music in Middle English poetry, an understanding of the medieval experience of music must first be established. An extensive account of the history of music in the Middle Ages is beyond the scope of this thesis, and so the focus will be narrowed to consider specifically the medieval courtly poet’s engagement with music. I draw on the substantial body of work in recent years on the subject to provide this outline.\(^{11}\) In addition I refer to the understanding of music in contemporary treatises, and medieval poetry itself, to illustrate the circulation of ideas among poets and musicians of the period and to contextualise the particular interests of this study: the relationship of music to education, religion, politics, philosophy, society, and art. Examples from the life records and works of Chaucer, Dante, and Machaut will provide a framework for such considerations. These figures, in particular Machaut, provide an archetype for the intersections of music, poetry, politics, and religion with which this dissertation is concerned. Leach writes that:

At no other point in time was such centrality to the histories of both European literature and European music combined in one person; even if Schubert and Goethe had been one man, his Lieder would still need to occupy cultural places given respectively to the symphony and the novel for him to signify as much to the nineteenth century as

\(^{10}\) “primum, si Creatoris mandata faciamus et pueris mentibus statutis ab eo regulis serviamus, quicquid enim loquimur vel intrinsecus venarum pulsibus commovemur, per musicos rithmos armoniae virtutibus probatur esse sociatum” (Mynors ed., 143.8-19, trans. McKinnon, *Strunk's Source Readings* 32).

\(^{11}\) I have already noted the works of Wilkins, Page, Wimsatt, and Leach in this regard. In this chapter I also draw on Reinhard Strohm’s *The Rise of European Music*, Calvin Bower’s “The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory”, Susan Boyton and Roe-Min Kok’s *Musical Childhoods*, Boyton and Eric Rice’s *Young Choristers*, Katerine Zieman’s *Singing the New Song*, and Emma Dillon’s *The Sense of Sound*.
Machaut’s life and education serve as a useful point of departure to examine the functions of music in medieval life and poetic thought with regards to politics and religion. His own work embodies the interactions between musical and poetic thought in the climate of dynamic scholarly transmission of fourteenth-century Europe. Machaut crossed both the traditions of educated life in the court and the church in his experience in the service of wealthy patrons such as John of Bohemia (1296-1346) and as a canon at Reims Cathedral, permitting us an eclectic insight into education and artistic cultivation in the Middle Ages. However, I wish to demonstrate that the culture of musico-poetic intersection evident in Machaut’s life was not a phenomenon exclusive to this one figure’s life and works, but rather, is reflective of wider occurrence throughout medieval Europe. Siegmund Levarie’s statement that the “dry facts” of Machaut’s life, that “he was born, lived, and died”, are “of no distinction unless related to the specific forces around them” (3) correlates with the intentions of this research to contextualise the works of a number of poets from this period. It is “the specific forces” – the intellectual, cultural, political, economic, social and religious circumstances – that I wish to outline before turning to analysis of Middle English texts. My objective here is not to provide analysis of either Machaut’s, Chaucer’s or Dante’s works but to demonstrate the environment in which these works were composed, and to overcome the limitations of considering Middle English literature as geographically or culturally separate from the cultures with which its writers came into contact. Reflection on textual references in this chapter will consequently be brief; instead, I wish to consider the factors which influenced these texts in an environment of lively scholarly connexion, through the experiences of attendants to various royal benefactors and of educated clerics.

I. **Musica and the Medieval Imagination**

Augustine’s opening declaration of his treatise *De Musica*: “musica est scientia bene modulandi… et bene movendi” [“music is the science of measuring well…and moving well”], serves as a useful starting point to consider medieval understanding of music.\(^\text{12}\) *Musica* – understood in terms of mathematical proportions – comprised more than acoustic appreciation of the art or study of harmonics and intervals, but rather, is an art with much wider implications.

\(^\text{12}\)Trans. Catesby in *Writings of Augustine: Volume 2* (175).
As one of the quadrivium of *artes mathematicae*, *musica* encompassed the physical properties of sound, the numerical foundations of the physics of music, and the abstract connection of these numerical divisions to the order of the universe. Augustine’s definition of music as a “science” of “movement” resonates with the curiosity for the numerical underpinning of music which is evident in ancient Greek philosophy. The association of music with divine and natural order is unbroken from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Boethius’s assertion in *De institutione musica* (*The Fundamentals of Music*, hereafter *De ins. mus.*), “hinc etiam internosi potest, quod non frustra a Platone dictum sit, mundi animam musica convenientia fuisse coniunctam” (I.1) [“what Plato rightfully said can likewise be understood: the soul of the universe was joined together according to musical concord” (2)], was itself conveyed to the later Middle Ages in a predominant tradition of *musica theorica* (speculative music theory).13

Much of medieval *musica theorica* derives from Ancient Greek and Latin understandings of the subject. NeoPlatonic and Pythagorean understanding of the cosmos and perceptions of music as a mathematical science were transmitted into the Middle Ages. Latin writings such as Boethius’s *De ins. mus.* (sixth century), Martianus Capella’s allegorical *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (fifth century), and encyclopaedic Judaeco-Christian works such as Cassiodorus’s *Institutiones Divinarum et Humanarum Lecionum* (sixth century) and Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologiae* (seventh century), informed the study of speculative music theory. In the later Middle Ages, these abstract philosophical works were complemented by texts concerned with *musica practica*, the practical matters of the performance and composition of music, such as Guido of Arezzo’s comprehensive guide for singers *Micrologus* (c. 1026) and Franco of Cologne’s *Ars Cantus Mensurabilis* (c. 1280), which explored such matters as scales, notation, and composition.

The necessity of practical theory for the performance of the liturgy ensured that, by the fourteenth century, the study of *musica practica* carried as much merit as the study of *musica theorica*. In the Late Middle Ages, speculative music theory and practical instruction in performance were discussed in tandem. Treatises including the anonymous thirteenth-century *Summa Musice* (c. 1200, hereafter *SumM*), Walter Odington’s *De Speculatione Musice* (early fourteenth century), Johannes de Grocheio’s *Ars Musice* (c. 1300), and Johannes de Muris’s *Notitia Artis Musiceae* (c. 1320) consolidated *musica theorica* and *musica practica*. Thomas Christensen writes that it is in the fourteenth century:

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13All references to *De ins. mus.* cite GottfriedFriedlein’s edition and Calvin M. Bower’s translation (*The Fundamentals of Music*, ed. Claude V. Palisca) by section for the Latin and page number for the translation.
that we can find probably the most full-scale evidence of scholasticism among the encyclopaedic authors who wrote their extensive summae of music knowledge along Aristotelian lines: Jerome of Moravia, Johannes de Grocheio, Johannes Boen, John of Tewkesbury, Walter of Odington, Jehan des Murs, and above all, Jacques of Liège …

Books of learned speculation (often extended commentaries on Boethian harmonics) are paired with extensive tracts on practical problems of the day: modal species and classification, mensuration, rules of contrapunctus, etc. (14-15)

Boethius’s *De ins. mus.* remained the single most authoritative text on the subject of music in the Middle Ages. The survival of over 137 manuscripts from the Middle Ages evince its prominence (Calvin Bower “A Handlist of Manuscripts” 205). Christensen writes that: “the greatest legacy of Boethius’s text was simply the prestige and legitimization it gave to music as a subject of philosophical inquiry within the seven artes liberales” (4). Boethius gave currency to Pythagoras’s three-fold division of music as *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis*. Whilst *musica humana* (human music) was concerned with the microcosmic harmony of the human body and soul, and *musica instrumentalis* (instrumental music) with the harmony of singing and musical instruments, *musica mundana* (cosmic music), was the macrocosmic harmony of the universe, the change of seasons, and planetary movement. The authors of the *SumM*, transmit a Boethian understanding of cosmic music, writing that:

> Musica mundana fit par varietatum et concordiam sonorum a motibus supercelestium corporum causatorum. Sicit enim testantur philosophi, non fuit possible tanta corpora tam velociter moveri et tam continue absque sono. Cum igitur firmamentum et planete spirituales et differentes motus habeant a quibus et spirituales et differentes causantur [soni], harmoniam quandam ex se generant que musica mundana vocatur. (399-407)

[ Celestial music arises from the diversity and concord of sounds produced by the movements of heavenly bodies, for just as scholars have said, such bodies could not move so rapidly, and so continuously, without emitting sound. Since the firmament and the planets have spiritual and different motions, producing both spiritual and different sounds, they generate a kind of harmony within themselves which is called celestial music. (61)]

Boethius’s three-fold division of music became one of the most often quoted passages of *De ins. mus.* in later treatises on music theory. The concept found its way not only into theoretical
writings, but also into literary works, as *musica mundana* in particular secured the interest of poets and philosophers of the Middle Ages. Henry Chadwick writes that: “the poetic qualities of the idea, added to the reassurance it offered to humanity that the universe has principles of order, ensured a long career for the notion of planetary music” (79).

Cicero’s *In Somnium Scipionis* offered scholars of the Middle Ages an especially potent description of *musica mundana*. In his openly political dialogue on the Roman commonwealth, *De Republica*, Cicero offers a detailed explanation of cosmic music in his fictional account of Scipio Amilianus’s ascent to the heavens guided by his grandfather, Scipio Africanus. 14 From “excelso et pleno stellarum, illustri et claro quodam loco” (86) [“a lofty perch, dazzling and glorious, set among the radiant stars” (70)], whilst he is foretold his future, the younger Scipio, mirroring the myth of Er from Plato’s *Republic*, overhears the sounds of celestial music and enquires: “quis est qui compleat aures meas tantus et tam dulcis sonus?” (88) [“what is this great and pleasing sound that fills my ears?” (73)] to which his grandfather replies:

> “Hic est” inquit “ille qui interuallis coniunctus inparibus, sed tamen pro rata parte rationale distinctis, impulsi et motu ipsorum orbium efficitur, et acuta cum grauibus temperans varios aequabiler concensus efficit; nec enim silentio tanti motus incitari possunt, et natura fert ut extrema ex altera grauiter, ex altera autem acute sonent. (88-89)

[That is a concord of tones separated by unequal but nevertheless carefully proportioned intervals, caused by the rapid motion of the spheres themselves. The high and low tones blended together produce different harmonies. Of course such swift motions could not be accomplished in silence and, as nature requires, the spheres at one extreme produce the low tones and at the other extreme the high tones. (73)]

The elder Scipio speculates that “qui numerus rerum omnium fere nodus est” [“these numerical ratios are “the key to the universe” (74)]. Although mere mortals cannot hear this music, there are certain philosophers and musicians that can perceive these harmonies, as Africanus continues:

> quod docti homines neruis imitati atque cantibus aperuerunt sibi reditum in hunc locum, sicut alii, qui praestantibus ingeniiis in uita humana diuina studia coluerunt. (89)
[Gifted men, imitating this harmony on stringed instruments and in singing, have gained for themselves a return to this region, as have those who have devoted their exceptional abilities to a search for divine truth. (74)]

Jamie James writes that Cicero’s account: “is not the clearest account of the music of the spheres ever written, either from a musical or a cosmogonic point of view, but it is probably the most widely read.” (62) Macrobius’s commentary, which Chaucer cites in *PF*, and whom Chaucer inaccurately credits as the author of *In Somnium Scipionis* in both *HF* and *BD*, emphasized the mathematical qualities of music in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, dedicating the first four chapters of Book Two to explanation of *musica mundana* (185-200). Despite the prevalence of speculative mathematical explanations of music and the cosmos, the concept of *musica mundana*, although often a popular subject for poets, philosophers, and music theorists alike, was not so unconditionally accepted by a number of medieval scholars. Thomas Aquinas, following the Aristotelian suggestion that such planetary noises would be deafeningly loud and unpleasant should they exist, expressed doubt, when he wrote:

Quaecumque quidem enim secundum se ipsa feruntur sonum et plagam. Quaecumque autem in lato infixa sunt, aut existent, quemadmodum in navi partes, non possible est sonare: neque rursus navi, si feratur in fluvio … Quare hic dicendum quod, si quidem ferebantur corpora horum, sive in aeris multitudine expansa per totum, sive ignis, quemadmodum omnes dicunt necessarium facere super naturalem magnitudinem sonum; hoc autem facto et huc pertingere et perimere.

[All that moves against something else produces a friction and sound and all that is fixed, such as the parts of a ship, cannot possibly sound: like a ship, sailing a river… Therefore if the celestial bodies were moving, either through air or fire, as everyone says, they should produce a sound of enormous loudness. But this would destroy everything.]\(^\text{15}\)

In addition, Nicholas Oresme and Vincent of Beauvais both discarded *musica mundana* as a “foolish idea” (Ciabattoni 206). For Chaucer and his contemporaries, the subject of musica mundana was appreciated less literally. The reconciliation of this Aristotelian scepticism and Platonic and Pythagorean speculative theory in the thirteenth century resulted in *musica mundana* becoming a realm for poetic rather than scientific contemplation. Christensen writes:

\(^{15}\) See Raimondo Spiazzi’s edition of *Commentaria in Aristotelis libros de caelo et mundo* (14), trans. Francescso Ciabattoni (*Dante’s Journey to Polyphony* 206).
Most treatises of “speculative” music theory in the late Middle Ages had dropped any serious discussion of celestial harmony (or at least, tempered it by a healthy dose of Aristotelian scepticism). (6)

Indeed, this attitude to *musica mundana* is reflective of wider philosophical trends of the time. The late-thirteenth century and early-fourteenth century Aristotelian revival at universities significantly influenced Natural Philosophy of the Middle Ages and the place of empiricism and observation in understanding existence.16

Such canonical presentations of *musica theorica* as Boethius’s and Macrobius’s would have been familiar to Chaucer as an integral part of medieval philosophy. Although music theorists of the later Middle Ages began to treat the subject with more scepticism, *musica mundana* maintained significant currency in late medieval poetry. Speculative music theory frequently found its way into late medieval literature. Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus* and *De Planctu Naturae*, and Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose* are examples of literary works of the late Middle Ages which draw inspiration from this area of *musica theorica*, and which served as source texts to Chaucer in his dream poem. Another archetypal example of a literary work which both incorporated speculative music theory and formed part of Chaucer’s repertoire of “source texts” is Dante’s *Commedia*.

Dante’s interests in music are evident not only in the *Commedia*, but also in his treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, in which he describes poetry as: “nichil aliud est quam fictio rethorica musicaque poita” [“nothing other than invention fashioned with music and rhetoric”].17 Recalling his contemporary’s appreciation for music, Boccaccio writes in his *Trattatello in Laude di Dante*:

Sommamente si dillettò in suoni e in canti nella sua giovanezza, e a ciascuno che a que’ tempi era ottimo cantatore o sonatore fu amico e ebbe sua usanza; e assai cose da questo diletto tirato compose, le quali di piacevole e mastrevole nota a questi cotali facca rivestire.

[In his youth he derived great pleasure from music and songs. He also cherished the friendship and company of all the best singers and musicians of his day. Drawn on by

16 See Edward Grant *The Nature of Natural Philosophy* 16-48.
17 Steven Botterill’s edition (56) and translation (57).
this delight, he composed many lyrics which were then embellished by pleasant and masterful melodies.]^{18}

Mimi Stillman comments on the “musical realism” of Dante’s allusions to *musica instrumentalis, musica humana,* and *musica mundana* in *Inferno, Purgatorio* and *Paradiso,* writing: “it is possible that the music of the spheres in *Paradiso* is grounded in the actual music of the early fourteenth century” (19). Francesco Ciabattoni observes that, analogous to late medieval understandings of *musica theorica,* Dante does not take speculative music theory to be a literal science, but rather a source of poetic inspiration:

Dante’s subtlety in dealing with the Platonic and Aristotelian legacies consists in not taking the harmony of the spheres literally, but nevertheless salvaging it by representing it in the revolving garlands of souls … In the Commedia, Dante’s interest in the speculative side of musical thought yields to poetic invention. (216)

Dante creates a musical structure of the sounding universe based on NeoPlatonic models of the cosmos, tempered by Christian rewritings such as those of Isidore. As such, Ciabattoni writes, Dante “skilfully avoids taking an overt stance against the current theological and philosophical authorities, and at the same time does not renounce a rich source of poetic inspiration” (216). Dante’s manipulation of the concept of cosmic music is reflected in the fact that it is the voices of spirits, not the motion of spheres that produce the beautiful sounds that he hears ascending through the heavens, and by the fact that he momentarily silences the celestial music in the sphere of Saturn in *Paradiso* as the contemplative souls refrain from singing in order not to overwhelm the poet’s auditory faculties:

> Benigna volontade…
> silenzio puose a quella dolce lira,
> e fece quëtar le sante corde
> che le destra del cielo allenta e tira (XV 1, 4-6)
> [The will for good…
> Had set a silence on that gentle lyre
> and let the trembling of the strings be still,
> those drawn or loosened by the hand of Heaven.]^{19}

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As Dante demonstrates a particularly developed understanding of contemporaneous conceptions of the cosmos, evinced by his *Questio de Aqua et Terra*, he provides a good example of how musical thought permeates the work of a poet with sophisticated understanding of cosmogony. Dante, though displaying complex understanding of Pythagorean and Platonic understandings of *musica mundana*, firmly asserts his belief in God as creator of the harmony of the cosmos in this deliberate variation from his pagan precursors, prizing faith over science in the attribution of this music to heavenly spirits, and in the capability of faith to silence the cosmos.

Dante’s adoption of *musica theorica*, in a more figurative manner than the literal presentations of Boethius and Macrobius, offered Chaucer and his contemporaries a model for literary allusion to *musica mundana* that was suited to a late medieval understanding of the subject – a fascination with the poetic nature of the concept, tempered by Aristotelian scepticism. Calvin Bower writes that the transmission of ancient music theory into the Middle Ages: “was both limited and enriched by the intellectual and spiritual contexts in which it was received” (“Transmission” 136). Dante’s refiguring of *musica theorica* in his *Commedia* reflects a subtle preservation of ancient philosophy, transformed by the poet’s religious views and personal encounters with the music of his own time. Dante reinterprets rather than rejects this source of inspiration. The permeation of musical thought into Dante’s poetic composition reflects an inclination that goes far beyond his own work. de Lorris and de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*, de Lille’s *Anticlaudiamus*, and *de Planctu Naturae*, and the Chester Cycle of Mystery plays are just a few examples of other works offering literary depictions of cosmic or celestial music.

What is seen throughout the history of transmission of *musica theorica* and its appearance in medieval poetry is an emphasis upon learning, knowledge, and understanding. Boethius encouraged the study of speculative music theory to philosophers and musicians alike:

\[
\text{it appears beyond doubt that music is so naturally united with us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desired. For this reason, the power of intellect ought to be}\]

\[\text{(I. ii)}\]

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19 *Paradiso* XV 1, 4-6 (Anthony Esolen’s edition and translation 154-155).
summoned, so that this art, innate through nature, may also be mastered, comprehended through knowledge. For just as in seeing it does not suffice for the learned to perceive colors and forms without also searching out their properties, so it does not suffice for musicians to find pleasure in melodies without also coming to know how they are structured internally by means of ratio of pitches. (8)]

Boethius asserted that it was not enough to be capable of composing or performing music, but that it was also necessary to understand speculative music theory, declaring “is vero est musicus, qui ratione perpensa canendi scientiam non servitio operis sed imperio speculationis adsumpsit” (I. xxxiii) [“the true musician [is] the philosopher, the critic, who exhibits the faculty of forming judgements according to speculation or reason relative and appropriate to music” (51)]. This precedence for theoretical inquiry in the study of music was maintained by music theorists throughout the Middle Ages. The authors of *SumM* liken cantors who do not have theoretical understanding of music to: “ebrio versus locum propositum eunti, vel ceco alicui canem verberare volenti” (233-235) [“a drunkard trying to find his way or a blind man who wants to beat a dog” (55)]. As music was understood as a *scientia*, such pejorative considerations of those who sing without understanding was prevalent not only in medieval music treatises, but also in literary imaginations of medieval singers as will be demonstrated in discussion of Chaucer’s *Prioress’s Tale* and the contents of London, British Library, Arundel MS 292 in Chapter Three of this thesis.

**II. The Medieval City**

It is unsurprising that music is such a potent subject for the medieval imagination. The world in which medieval poets lived and composed was one of perpetual sound. Medieval cities, such as Florence where Dante spent much of his life, were resonant with the sounds of voices going about their daily duties. Chiara Frugoni attests that approaching the walls of a medieval city, “we would hear the calls and cries of animals, the rumble of carts, the pounding of horses’ hooves, the pealing of bells, the voices of people” (63). For those who could not read or write, news was relayed by town criers who, announcing their presence by ringing a bell, beating a drum, or blowing a hunting horn, would communicate bylaws, market days, and other information. As it was difficult to preserve food, it was necessary to buy in small quantities adding a daily commotion of shoppers and shouting merchants selling their goods to the already bustling acoustic environment of the medieval city.
As we observed from Dante’s encounters in the streets of Florence, singing was a common means to pass the time of tedious work, a fact further witnessed by Johannes de Grocheio in his *Ars Musice* – which primarily comprises of consideration of the social function of music in Paris at the end of the thirteenth century – as he observed that music for the lay public was useful as “ut eis mediantibus mitigentur adversitates hominum innatae” [“so that through their meditation, the innate trials of humanity may be softened” (66-67)]. Music was a primary form of diversion for those involved in agrarian and physical work, not only to pass the time of labour, but also as a form of entertainment when labour was done as de Grocheio states of the *chansons de geste*.

Cantus autem iste debet antiquis et civibus laborantibus et mediocribus ministrari dum requiescunt ab opere consueto. Ut auditis miseriis et calamitatibus aliorum suas facilius sustineant. Et quilibet opus suum alacrius aggrediatur. Et ideo iste cantus valet ad conservationem totius civitatis.

[That cantus ought to be provided for the aged and working citizens and ordinary people while they rest from their usual labor, so that, having heard about the miseries and disasters of others, they may more easily bear their own, and each one may approach his own work more eagerly. And therefore this kind of cantus is beneficial for the preservation of the whole city. (66-67)]

De Grocheio’s division and commentary upon the diversity of music in Paris is remarkable for its rare consideration of secular song and dance forms. As Gretchen Peters notes, “the music that would have been heard on the streets…the sounds of everyday life…has tended to be marginalized in musicological scholarship” (*Musical Sounds* 1). This is in part because this musical culture is not preserved in manuscripts. Little purely instrumental music survives from the fourteenth century. Instrumental music was for the most part improvised, however, London, British Library MS Add. 28550 (the Robertsbridge Codex c. 1360) includes keyboard music for three Italian dances and three arrangements for motets. The most commonly used instruments in the fourteenth century include harps, vielles, lutes, psalteries, portative organs, flutes and recorders (all low pitched); shawms, cornets, trumpets (all high pitched); kettledrums, bells, and cymbals. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the use of keyboard organs became more widespread. Although invented in the fourteenth century, the harpsichord and clavichord were not widely used until the fifteenth century.
Clair Olson notes that throughout Chaucer’s texts the poet makes numerous references to musical instruments including bowed instruments “rubible, simphonye”, string instruments that were plucked or struck “giterne, harpe, sautrye, lute, rote”, wind instruments “trompel, clarioun, horn, beme, liting horn, pype, pypes of grene corn, floute, doucet, organ, cornemusel, shalmye, rede” and percussion instruments “tabour, naker, belle” (73-74). The frequency and diversity of descriptions of music-making in Chaucer’s repertory affirms that although we may be lacking in extant notation, instrumental music enjoyed a lively existence in the Middle Ages. Dante is not the only medieval poet to show disdain for popular music and suggest its prevalence in everyday life. In 1356 Petrarch revised his ballata beginning: Amor, quand’io credea, writing in the margin: “hoc est principium unius plebeie cantionis d(icte)” [This is the beginning of a plebian song]. Whilst William Prizer sees this as evidence of popular influence on Petrarch’s verse (19), Ernest Wilkins argues that Petrarch “knew of a popular ballata beginning Amor, quand’io credea, and decided consequently to change the beginning of his own poem” (118).

III. Education, Court Culture, Diplomacy and Intellectual Negotiation

These poets composed at a time of considerable social fluidity in medieval society. The emergence of a new middle class of “bourgeois” merchants, artisans, and professionals, who found their ways into positions of civic and clerical power by attaching themselves to wealthy noble patrons, blurred the previous social divides of the medieval estates of the realm. These educated and urbanized professionals did not correspond to any one of the traditional social groups of clergy, nobility, and peasantry, but reflected the interchange between these groups in the late fourteenth-century.

Paul Strohm describes Chaucer’s first audience of civil servants and gentlepersons as a “more ambiguously situated, somewhat fluid group” (“Literary Scene” 4). They were careerists,

20 The rubric is translated by Prizer in “Games of Venus” (21).
21 The ballata stands in the Canzoniere as 324 (see Frederic’s parallel text edition 140-141), beginning:

Amor, quando fioria
mia spene, e ’l guidardon di tanta fede,
tolta m’è quella ond’attendea mercede.
[Love, while my hopes
were waxing, the reward for deep fealty,
the lady I begged for mercy was torn away from me.]
whose education enabled them to transcend the traditional social hierarchy through their service to the nobility. Their position on the margin of both urban and courtly circles was precarious, as it was determined not by the traditional foundations of military service or land tenure, but by engaging in professional, legal, and clerical employment as clerks, scribes, diplomats, lawyers, secretaries and administrators. Therefore, greater value was placed upon education by this ambiguously situated social group. This intellectual community grew in fourteenth-century London, as urban merchant families made use of education to secure work as court attendants and civil servants. Craig Bertolet observes that:

more English merchant families realized the economic importance of education and, as a result, more of their children were taught to read, write, and seek important jobs as clerks (either lay or otherwise) in the government or in the service of a noble household. (372)

The immediate audience of Chaucer’s poetry was not the royalty and nobility for whom he worked as a page, a valettus, a customs official, and a clerk of the King’s work, but rather was comprised of members of the emerging new middle class. Strohm and John Scattergood, among others, demonstrate that despite the courtly aspirations of Chaucer’s poetry, its immediate audience was his peers. Scattergood remarks that Chaucer’s “more significant readers”: “appear to have been career diplomats, civil servants, officials, and administrators who were attached to the court and government” (English Court Culture 38). Strohm remarks that: “patronage based on his literary accomplishments seems not to have been a major factor in Chaucer’s civil career” (4).

Thomas Tout observes that the financial stability and education which civic careers proffered, allowed this fluid social group “the training to befriend literature and science, and in some cases, to make personal contributions to them” (367). Chaucer’s profession depended upon talents other than his literary skills and, like the narrator of House of Fame, the poet’s literary interests were pursued outside of his professional circle. The bookish narrator of House of Fame, once he has his “labour doon” and “y-maad” his “rekeninges”, invariably turns to books and to reading (652-658). In the vein of the ironically self-referential narrator, the advantages of a civic career allowed Chaucer and his peers the opportunity to engage in their own intellectual and artistic pursuits.

Scholars moved fluidly between the court and the medieval university in late fourteenth-century England. William Courtenay attests to the intersection of the intellectual life of Oxford and Cambridge universities and the royal courts of England:
More than for earlier generations, the schools and courts of the fourteenth century impinged on one another, sometimes shaping the content of thought and letters … These two worlds intersected at the professional, post-educational level. Indeed, both scholar and poet needed a patron, and it was not uncommon for them to find one in the same person or agency. (xi)

Although Chaucer’s peers may not have had substantial access to treatises, encyclopaedias, ancient Greek and Latin works, or contemporary continental works, there was undeniably a thriving intellectual exchange among this social group. The attachment of scholars to households of *familiares* allowed for extra-university intellectual exchange. Courtenay writes:

> It was in such settings that university scholars met poets, musicians, artists and architects. And it was as secretaries and envoys abroad or in halls and chambers of London that both scholars and literary figures came into contact with Italian humanism. (378)

Among Chaucer’s social circle were such erudite individuals as the astronomer and mathematician Nicholas of Lynn (fl. 1360-1411); the philosopher Ralph Strode (f. 1350-1400); fellow poets John Gower (c. 1330-1408), John Clanvowe (1341-1391) and Henry Scogan (c. 1361-1407); and Knight of the Garter, Lewis Clifford (c. 1359-1404) whom Strohm credits with serving as “a literary intermediary” between Chaucer and Machaut (11). Janet Coleman writes that

> The blossoming of English poetry and prose in the fourteenth century is most easily intelligible, in fact, as the reflection of a changing social structure and its changing ideals: a broadening of the middle range of society, its greater participation in government and its increasing demand for a literature read for information, for pleasure and for spiritual edification. (24)

Appreciation of the vivacity of intellectual life among members of this fourth estate need not undermine Chaucer’s own learning. Chaucer’s extensive knowledge across a span of subjects, and would have been superfluous if his immediate audience did not have an understanding of the “old books” and “new science” which he referenced in his poetry. His audience’s capacity to comprehend more abstract and complex matters allowed Chaucer to include allusions to such
subjects in his longer narratives, and to offer his understanding of these fields of learning to an audience with whom he could discuss and develop his ideas. Edmund Reiss writes that:

Chaucer is able to proceed as he does because of the rapport that exists between himself and his court audience. Because of his sense not only of what his audience expect from him but of what his audience actually bring to bear on the work at hand, Chaucer is able to proceed as he does, mixing the expected and the unexpected, the conventional and the new, the sincere and the ironic. (393)

Chaucer’s incorporation of facets of medieval learning does not merely involve reproduction of textbook material, but manipulation, alteration, and play with these ideas. His audience, thus, must also understand the nuance of his personal interaction with medieval learning.

During the earliest years of Chaucer’s civic career, when the young poet entered the household of Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster, England was home to a thriving court culture in which music, poetry, and philosophy were widely cultivated for the entertainment and enlightenment of the nobility. England’s victory at Poitiers and the capture of King Jean II of France in 1356 sparked a growth in cultural patronage in the English courts. Michael Bennet states that in the middle decades of the fourteenth century “England occupied centre stage in international diplomacy and culture” (*The Age of Edward III* 215). The triumphant Edward III played host to numerous diplomats, noblemen, and envoys as part of negotiations for the release of the French king. Wimsatt writes that “The evidence of Edward's cultural sophistication and his patronage of the arts is substantial” (*Chaucer and His French Contemporaries* 49). The reception of both King Jean II and the Scottish King David (captured at Neville’s Cross in 1346) in England provided Edward with an ideal opportunity to showcase this cultural sophistication as numerous tournaments, parades, feasts and other displays of pageantry were conducted. Bennet remarks that “Edward was clearly seeking to make Windsor a new Camelot” (221). In his youth, Chaucer, serving as a page in the household of the Countess of Ulster (wife of Prince Lionel), would have witnessed the feasting, ceremony, and exhibition of excellence in learning, in poetry and in music. Bennet writes that Countess Elizabeth: “perhaps with Chaucer in tow, not only attended all the great feasts … but also, on occasion, dined with Queen Isabella at Hertford Castle” (224). Wimsatt writes that: “from the beginning of Edward's reign, his court provided a home to men of letters, poets, and entertainers” (50). In the generation preceding Chaucer’s, Edward counted among his associates the Benedictine monk and author of *Philobian*, Richard de Bury (1287-1345); scientist and philosopher, Bishop Thomas Bradwardine (c. 1290-1349); Walter
Burley (c. 1275-1344), author of *De Puritate artis logicae. Tractatus longior*; and Henry, Duke of Lancaster (c. 1310-1361), author of the *Livre de seyntz medicines*, and one of the founders and early patrons of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, whom Wimsatt identifies as: “a patron and associate of learned men” (50). The draw of educated men from both civic and clerical backgrounds to the court would continue during Chaucer’s own civic career. Interactions between various fields of knowledge inevitably occurred in the close interaction of numerous clerks, envoys, and diplomats brought together by the peace negotiations of the middle decades of the fourteenth century. These interfaces provided opportunity to exchange knowledge on such matters as music, mathematics, poetry, and philosophy as the negotiation process was quite cordial. As Ardis Butterfield notes, when captured, Jean II was treated “with utmost courtesy and kinship by Edward III, and even given a palace of his own, while simultaneously being required by Edward to negotiate away his territorial possessions, financial resources and personal power” (*The Familiar Enemy* 225). Although negotiations had deteriorated, the same familial closeness is demonstrated in the rapport between Richard II and Charles VI in letters of the subsequent decade (225). The intellectual environment of these negotiations provided an influential benchmark for the young Chaucer, his peers, and the generation of cultured courtiers and civil servants.

Examining the cultural exchange surrounding Anglo-French negotiations concerning the marriage of Edward III, Andrew Wathey documents the transmission of French motets to England during the period 1325-6 (1-29). Discussing the rise in diplomatic activity in England in the fourteenth century, Wathey argues that the negotiations were not only the scene of diplomatic interaction, but also provided opportunity for artistic and intellectual communication. He writes specifically of the transmission of music to England, observing that: “in the missions of ambassadors to France and the expeditions of the English kings to render homage, there lay a potent source of contacts between English and French musical cultures” (1).

This process of cultural exchange continued in the decades following Edward’s marriage to Philippa of Hainault. The Hundred Years War, which simmered throughout Chaucer and Machaut’s lives, caused numerous meetings of the cultural elite, as diplomatic activity increased significantly. Chaucer’s own life records provide evidence of this, documenting numerous visits to France, Italy, Spain, and Flanders on royal business. It is likely that discussions of various

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22 Chaucer was issued with letters of protection to go on royal business, safe conduct is promised by the king of Navarre in 1366, he travels to Florence and Genoa from 1372-1373 (*Life Records*, eds. Crow and Olson 32), Flanders and France in 1377 (44-46), Lombardy in 1380 (59), Calais in 1387 (61) etc. In 1381 he receives a gift of £22 for
artistic and intellectual disciplines may have occurred. The exchange of ideas among educated courtiers and civil servants need not remain a speculative topic. Numerous physical artefacts bear witness to the transmission of culture during the negotiations of the Hundred Years War. Wathey, for example, attests to the transmission of the motets *Ludowice prelustris francorum/ Servant regem/ Rex regum et dominus dominationum and Qui secuntur/ Detractor est/ Verbum iniquum* in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Français 571 (2). It is safe to infer that culture was transmitted orally as much as physically at these events. Ideas and cultural innovations would have been exchanged by the attending diplomats as fluidly as gifts were given among the nobles that they accompanied. The centrality of music to poetic form, education, and politics in France would have been very well known to Chaucer during his years of work in diplomacy and as keeper of customs. The influences of French and Italian ideas and cultures should be understood as an inherent part of medieval English life during these years of close negotiation and frequent diplomatic travel. As David Wallace notes: “Chaucer’s native ground, for both his poetry and his royal service, is not ‘England’, but rather a territory extending from the south-east quadrant of the island into continental Europe” (37).

Neither Chaucer nor Machaut were of noble birth, yet they frequented the most prestigious circles in medieval society. It was through education and attachment to royal patronage that these figures gained this privileged position. Lawrence Earp observes:

> It was Machaut’s education as a clerk that allowed him to enter a level of society that otherwise would have been closed to him, and gave him a sufficient background in literary and musical matters for his artistic personality to develop. (7)

Utilization of education for courtly service, and dependence on the financial stability of a clerical position to pursue artistic and intellectual endeavours, were not phenomena unique to Chaucer and Machaut in the Middle Ages. Countless others entered the service of noble patrons on the foundation of an education. In addition, the financial assistance of ecclesiastical benefices may be credited with funding the endeavours of numerous artists and scholars. Machaut’s predecessor, the poet and composer Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361), moved as easily between noble and ecclesiastical circles as Machaut, serving as secretary and advisor to John II of France before he was appointed as a canon at Soissons and later as Bishop of Meaux by Clement VI (1291-1352).23

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Indeed, we can observe such interactions and attachments even earlier as Cary Nederman observes of John of Salisbury (c. 1120-1180):

Because Theobald’s court attracted many clerics with training and experience similar to John’s own, he could continue to indulge intellectual pursuits in a sympathetic environment at Canterbury during the 1140s and 1150s. John seems to have been a member of a small circle of learned bureaucrats [sic] whose members included Thomas Beckett… It was this circle of like-minded men that constituted the immediate audience for much of John’s audience. (xvi)

Studying late medieval chronicles in French, Flemish, and Latin relating to the deeds and circumstances of the lives of members of the Houses of Luxembourg and Bohemia in the fourteenth century, Nigel Wilkins remarked that:

The most striking feature … is the amazing fluidity of relationships and the movements across the map between France, Bruxelles, Luxembourg, Brabant, Hainaut, Flanders, Prague, Poland, Hungary, Italy … Language and distance seem to have been no obstacle to the nobility of these times, especially if they were prepared to plunder the resources of the State in the style of John of Bohemia. With the movement caused by intermarriage and political or military events went artistic currents too, because the poets and musicians prized by the sophisticated aristocracy were employed by them and attached to their households. Beautifully illuminated manuscripts were purchased and donated; minstrels were exchanged. (257)

In addition to being exceptionally well travelled, in the service of patrons such as John of Bohemia, figures like Machaut would have been exposed to the vibrant musical life of courtly pageantry. In his commentary on musical life in Paris, Grocheio, praised the function of courtly secular songs, dealing with “de delectabili materia et ardua, sicut de amicitia et caritate” [“delightful and lofty material, such as friendship and love”] and “qui etiam a regibus et nobilibus solet componi et etiam coram regibus et principibus terre decantari, ut eorum animos ad audaciam et fortitudinem, magnanimitatem et liberalitatem commoveat, quae omnia faciunt ad bonum regimen” [“sung before kings and princes of the earth, so that it may move their spirits to boldness and bravery, magnanimity and liberality, which all make for good government” (68-69)].
The experience of serving in a king’s retinue would have afforded opportunities to encounter processions of professional musicians and poets. As Wilkins notes, “not only musical performers but also many reciters and poets are frequently listed, described variously as *spreker, dictator, dictor, dichter*; often they recite before the guests at table” (266). Music is a constant component of social gatherings in the courtly circles. Machaut recalls in *Le Jugement du Roy de Béaigne* how guests are called to feasting by the heralding of musicians, writing:

> Et il estoit prè huere de souper,  
> Et a ce mot on prist l'iaue a corner  
> Par le chastel, et forment a tromper;  
> Si se leverent. (2017-2020)

[And it was nearly the dinner hour,  
And at this word the call to wash was begun,  
Throughout the castle, and likewise loud trumpeting;  
So they rose.]

24 And in *La Prise Amoureuse*, Froissart recalls that after feasting, when minstrels retired from their performance, the nobility, in particular the ladies, would sing virelais as accompaniment to their own dances, noting:

> Et quant li menestrel cessoient,  
> Les dames pas ne se lassoient,  
> Ains caroloient main a main  
> Tout le soir jusqu’a l’endemain.  
> Et quant chante li une avoit  
> Un virelay, on ne savoit  
> Encores s’il avoit fin pris,  
> Quant uns aultres estoit repris  
> Ou de dame ou de damoiselle.  
> Mainte canchon bonne et nouvelle  
> On y chanta et respondi (400-11)

[And when the musicians stopped for the night, the ladies did not leave off, but kept dancing in a circle hand in hand, all night until the next morning. And whenever one of

them sang a virelai, even before you knew she had finished, a different lady or maiden would take up another song. Many good and new songs were sung and recited that night.\textsuperscript{25}

Wilkins speculates that this practice was “no doubt the function of all of Machaut’s virelais (“A Pattern of Patronage” 268.). Chaucer would recall the same practice in England when in the BD, singing and dancing are noted as two of Lady White’s many charming virtues as the Man in Black recalls “I saw hir daunce so comfily, carole and singe so swetely” (848-849).

In the court, church, and city, there was a distinct hierarchy among music makers as some were regarded with much more favour than others. The precarity of positions of court minstrels is expressed by the titular hero of \textit{Sir Orfeo}, who, in his minstrel disguise, admits:

\begin{quote}

it is the maner of ous
To seche mani a lordes hous -
Thei we nought welcom no be,
Yete we mot proferi forth our gle. (431-434)
\end{quote}

Boethius expounds a division of those who understand the purpose of music from those who perform or compose, writing:

\begin{quote}

Tria igitur genera sunt, quae circa artem musicam versantur. Unum genus est, quod instrumentis agitur, aliud fingit carmina, tertium, quod instrumentorum opus carmenque diiudicat. (I.xxxiv)
[Thus, there are three classes of those who are engaged in musical art. The first class consists of those who perform on instruments, the second of those who compose songs, and the third of those who judge instrumental performance and song. (51)]
\end{quote}

Boethius argues that the instrumentalist relies upon labour to perform and the composer upon instinct to create, thus neither employ reason or rationality. The true musician, he maintains, is not the singer or someone who composes songs by instinct, but a third category, the philosopher or critic:

\begin{quote}

\textsuperscript{25} Ed. and trans. in de Looze’s parallel text edition (22-23).
Tertium est, quod iudicandi peritiam sumit, ut rythmos cantilenasque totumque carmen possit perpendere. Quod scilicet quoniam totum in ratione ac speculatione positum est, hoc proprius musicae deputabitur, isque est musicus, cui adest facultas secundum speculationem rationem musicae. (I. xxxiii)

[The third class is that which acquires an ability for judging, so that it can carefully weigh rhythms and melodies and the composition as whole. This class, since it is totally grounded in reason and thought, will rightly be esteemed as musical. That person is a musician who exhibits the faculty of forming judgments according to speculation or reason relative and appropriate to music. (51)]

It was the educated listener, the one who had sufficient understanding of the structure and nature of music to judge what he was hearing, who was classed as the “true musician.”

Though we may be tempted to imagine that those in royal service and positions as high ranking clerics would have enjoyed relatively comfortable and untroubled lives, we must not underestimate the impact of significant political and social upheaval in Europe in the fourteenth century. The city of Reims, where Machaut resided as a canon, is an exemplar of the first hand experiences of these poets and diplomats of the Hundred Years War. Derek Pearsall explains the significance of the town, remarking:

Reims had great symbolic importance as the city where the kings of France were traditionally crowned, and Edward III made it the major target of the 1359-60 campaign, intending to have himself crowned there. (41)

The failed siege proved to be the turning point for conflicts in which the French were largely on the losing side. Machaut’s patron John of Bohemia had been killed at the Battle of Crecy in 1346, and in 1350 at the Battle of Poitiers the French King John was captured by the English and traded for an enormous ransom.

It was during this same conflict that Chaucer was captured and taken hostage by the French in 1360. Reflecting on the poet’s life records, Crow and Olson assert that Chaucer was most likely in the service of Prince Lionel, earl of Ulster “as opposed to the king himself” (26) when he was captured near Rethel, forty kilometres north east of Reims. George Williams’s analysis of similarities in the architecture of the House of the Counts of Champagne, a building on the rue de Tambours in Reims often referred to as ‘La Maison des Musicians’ (the House of Musicians), and Lady Fame’s Palace in Chaucer’s HF raises questions concerning Chaucer’s
captivity at Reims. Williams observes “the picture of a house with niches containing major minstrels surrounded by a multitude of subsidiary figures, grotesque or human, is exactly the same basic picture as that afforded by the House of the Musicians”(7).

The dissemination of Machaut’s works was undoubtedly influenced by the war. Wimsatt speculates that MS C (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Français 1586), the earliest manuscript of Machaut’s collected works, may have been among the books seized with the French King John II at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, and “taken to England, where perhaps Chaucer saw it” (Earp 27). Even before the conflict broke out Wathey observes that the terms of the Treaty of Paris, concluded in 1259, motivated “a sharp increase in the level of diplomatic activity” by the English in France, remarking: “Here, in the missions of ambassadors to France and the expeditions of the English kings to render homage, there lay a potent source of contacts between English and French musical cultures” (1). As Machaut, Chaucer and numerous others like them accompanied their benefactors on so many of these diplomatic missions, it was inevitable that they would be exposed to the cultures of their adversaries.

IV. Music and the Church

From the early stages of Christianity, music played a fundamental role in liturgical practices. In the Late Middle Ages, music held an equally influential status in the practice of Christian devotion. Music was understood to instill devotion and humility in the hearts of listeners. The assertion of the eponymous nightingale of the Middle English Owl and the Nightingale, of the importance of music as an expression of faith:

Wostu to wan man was ibore? –
To þare blisse of houene riche,
Þar euer is song and mur3þe iliche;
Þider fundeþ eurich man
Þat eni þing of gode kan.
Vorþi me singþ in holi chirche
An clerkes ginneþ songes wirche,
Þat man þenche bi þe songe
Wider he shal, and þar bon longe;
Þat he þe mur3þe ne uor3ete,
Ac þarof þenche and bi3ete,
Petrus and Perseus, the authors of *SumM*, share in this confidence in music as a means of spiritual devotion, writing:

> Modus itaque canendi et ipsus cantoris devotionem ostendit et in audiente, si bone voluntatis est, suscitat devotionis affectum, et propter hoc in ecclesia merito frequentatur humili
ter ac devote. (346-350)

[The manner of singing reveals the devotion of the singer and arouses a feeling of pity in the listener if he is well disposed, and so music is deservedly and rightly used in the Church in a lowly and devout fashion. (59)]

It was through his affiliation with John of Bohemia that Machaut secured his canonry at Reims Cathedral (in addition to benefices in expectation of canonries at the cathedrals of Verdun and Arras before the intervention of Pope Benedict XII’s bull in 1335 curtailing the number of benefices a person could hold). Roger Bowers observes that even after securing his canonry Machaut most likely remained in John’s service for a number of years, writing: “an employer undertook to secure such a benefice for an employee not in order to divest himself of that person’s services, *but in order to retain them*” (4). Machaut would undoubtedly have continued his work elsewhere with various benefactors. Even when he finally settled in Reims, Machaut still maintained a rapport with courtly patrons, as when he was host to Charles, son of Bonne of Luxembourg (1315-1349), and grandson of John of Bohemia in 1361 when, as Earp notes, Charles visited “to mediate a conflict between the archbishop, Jean de Craon, and the secular authorities of the city” (43). Charles, a musical aficionado, who, according to Christine de Pisan (1364-1430), “de musique, qui est la science des sons accordez par notes minimes, entendoit tous les poins si entiérement que aucun descort ne luy peut estre mucié” [“understood so well every

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26 Stanley’s edition (70).
aspect of music, which is the science of harmonizing sounds by slow and fast notes… that no discord could pass unperceived by him”), would later be crowned King Charles V of France at Reims in 1364.27

The allocation of funding for twelve singers by a papal bull from Clement VI in 1352 marked what Anne W. Robertson refers to as “the turning point for the choir at Reims” (49), providing Machaut with “the presence of a body of highly skilled performers” (47) and an environment where he could have composed such elaborate musical works as his *Messe de Nostre Dame*, his motets, and his *David* hocket. Machaut adopted the compositional techniques of *ars nova* championed in Paris by Philippe de Vitry, allowing for greater rhythmic flexibility in his works. These techniques were discouraged some years earlier by John XXII in his papal bull of 1324, *Docta Sanctorum Patrum*, which criticized composers of *ars nova* music for the unintelligibility of their settings of sacred texts. John XXII feared that in the midst of the layering of voices in these new styles of composition, the meaning of sacred texts would be lost, and so prohibited such techniques. John of Salisbury also denounces ornate and non-standard musical practices in the *Policraticus* (1159):

> Ipsum quoque cultum religionis incestat quod ante conspectum Domini in ipsis penetrabilibus sanctuarii lasciuientis uocis luxu, quadam ostentatione sui, muliebris modis notularum articulorumque caesuris, stupentes animulas emollire nituntur. Cum praececentium et succinentium, concinentium et decinentium, intercinentium et occidentium praemolles modulationes audieris, Sirenarum concentus credas esse non hominum. (I. 6, 75-82)

[The very service of the Church is defiled, in that before the face of the Lord, in the very sanctuary of sanctuaries, they, showing off as it were, strive with the effeminate dalliance of wanton tones and musical phrasing to astound, enervate, and dwarf simple souls. When one hears the excessively caressing melodies of voices beginning, chiming in, carrying the air, dying away, rising again, and dominating, he may well believe that it is the song of the sirens and not the sound of men’s voices.]28

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28 See Keats-Rohan’s edition (48) and Pike’s translation (32).
The burgeoning of polyphonic vocal music in medieval cathedrals of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had some detractors. As choirs expanded, harmonies were layered, and rhythms became more complex, anxiety concerning the proper use of music in the Church grew. Chaucer’s Parson’s sermon contains anti-musical sentiments as he declares:

Whoso thanne wolde wel understande thise peynes and bithynke hym weel that he hath deserved thilke peynes for his synnes, certes, he sholde have moore talent to siken and to wepe than for to syngen and to pleye (CTX. 227-228).

Although music in the Church was intended as a means to reach spiritual enrichment, Chaucer’s Parson imagines music to be a distraction from proper suffering. The Parson concludes his discussion of penitence with the assertion that without Christ’s pity, “a sory song we myghten alle synge” (X.315). As Michael Bigley notes “song is figured as a respite from suffering, but an unavoidably weak one in comparison to the divine possibility offered by God” (45). Chaucer’s contemporary, John Wycliffe (c. 1331-84) the anticlerical lay preacher wrote “Of Feigned Contemplative Life”:

þe more þat þei ben occupied aboute siche mannus song þe lesse moten þei be sette aboute goddis lawe; for þis stiriþ men to pride & iolite & lecherie & opere synnys, & so vnableþ hem many gatis to vnderstonde & kepe holy writt þat techeþ mekenesse, mornynge for oure synnys & opere mennus, & stable lif & charite. & þit god in all þe lawe of grace chargiþ not siche song but deuocion in herte, trewe techynge & holy spekynge in tonge, & goode werks & holy lastynge in charite & mekenesse; but mannus foly & pride stieþ vp euere more & more in þis veyn nouelrie.29

In both Orthodox and Heterodox writings, we find anxiety about the appropriateness of music in religious settings. Taking into account the regulation and valuation of sacred music in the Middle Ages, the employment of music as a form of allegory or moralization in medieval poetry provokes inquiry.

These uses of music often demonstrate the intersection of sacred and secular in medieval life. In book 10 of the Ovid Moralisé and in Guillaume de Machaut’s Dit de la Harpe for example, the image of the harp is deployed as a metaphor for the spectrum of human virtue and vice, and on ff. 38-39 of London, British Library Arundel MS 292 a moralization of a popular French song

29 See Matthew, ed., The English works of Wyclif (191).
appears under the title *Sermo magistri Stephani de Langedune*. Instead of taking a biblical quotation as a starting point for a sermon, the preacher takes a popular dance song *Belle Aliz Matin Leva*. Aliz’s name and appearance, early rising, careful preparation, and flower gathering are taken as moral signifiers. Taking a vernacular and definitely secular popular *rondet de caro* as material for sophisticated Marian exegesis, it provokes its listeners to turn dancing for vanity’s sake into “dancing for God”, to imbue things that are good with greater spiritual significance.

Sed in tripudio tria sunt necessaria, scilicet: vox sonora, nexus brachiorum, strepitus pedum. Ut ergo possimus Deo tripudiare, hec tria in nobis habeamus: vocem sonoram, id est, predicacionem sanctam, gratam Deo et hominibus; nexus brachiorum, id est geminam caritatem, scilicet dilectionem Dei et proximi strepitus pedum, id est, opera concordancia nostre predicacioni, ad imitationem Domini nostri Jhesu Christi, qui primo cepit bona facere et postea docere.

[in dancing three things are necessary, namely: a sonorous voice, the entwining of arms, and stamping of feet. In order, therefore, that we may be able to dance to God, we must possess these three things in us: a sonorous voice, that is, holy preaching, pleasing both to God and to men; the entwining of arms, that is, a twofold charity, namely, the love of God and neighbour; and the stamping of feet, that is, works harmonizing with our preaching, in imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who undertook first to do good works, and then to teach.] ³⁰

V. The Politics of Understanding

The interrelationship of words and music in the Middle Ages is witnessed in Machaut’s testimony of his artistic goals in his *Prologue* through the dream vision allegory of:

Comment Nature, volant orendroit plus que onques mais reveler et faire essaucier les biens et honneurs qui sont en Amours, vient a Guillaume de Machaut et li ordonne et encharge a faire seur ce nouviaus dis amoureus et li baille pour lui conseillier et aider ad ce faire trois de ses enfans, c’est assavoir Scens, Retorique, et Musique.

[How Nature, wishing more than ever before to make known and exalted the goods and honours pertaining to Love, comes to Guillaume de Machaut, ordering and charging him]

Machaut offers us here a glimpse of the ascendency of music in life of the fourteenth century. The prevalence of references to music in poetry of the Middle Ages may seem more understandable to us now that we realise how frequently medieval poets would have been exposed to musical display.

The poet’s experience of music in fourteenth-century Europe was inextricably linked to the cultural, socio-economic, and intellectual circumstances in which music thrived. Accompaniment of wealthy patrons on diplomatic missions provided these figures with the opportunity to exchange ideas with their equally cultured counterparts, and to travel extensively throughout Europe. Transmission of culture between Church and court, and the reciprocal nature of civic and artistic careers, are exemplified in the fluid movement of figures between both spheres. The interactions of French and English (and Italian) cultures during periods of political unrest, especially for those creative civil servants attached to royal houses and involved in diplomatic work, are embodied in the experiences and works of Machaut, Chaucer, and Dante. The varied and sophisticated nature of both medieval art and medieval knowledge is typified by their substantial creative outputs. In Machaut’s career at Reims and Dante’s magnus *Commedia* we may understand the centrality of music to medieval religious practice.

What each of these three figures also demonstrates in their works is a newly emerging self-awareness of their roles as poets and composers. Machaut’s statement of his own artistic goals in *La Fontinne Amoureuse*, his endeavours to record his works in deluxe manuscripts, and his steps towards ensuring his commemoration at Reims anticipate the budding of humanism, bridging what Robertson refers to as: “the gap between the largely anonymous, church-based musician of the high middle ages, and the renowned, peripatetic composer of the fifteenth century” (277). Leach writes: “if he didn’t invent it, Machaut certainly bolstered and enshrined the idea of the vernacular author figure, complete with a problematic and ironic relationship to his own poetry’s truth-value” (8).

This research provides deeper understanding of the intellectual climate of fourteenth-century England through its consideration of music in Middle English poetry. Considering the significance of context when analysing Machaut’s own works, Leach writes: “one has to learn the language, its conventions, and something about what its audience knew and expected before one can really “enjoy” it at all” (6). I have sought here to offer an introduction to the language of

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medieval musical life so as to allow the reader an appreciation of the conventions, audience, and ideas that shaped the medieval poet’s engagement with music as we proceed to textual analysis.

Questioning modern estimations of reading culture of the fourteenth century and appraisals of the learnedness of Chaucer and his immediate audience, Anthony Spearing identifies a recurrent oversight in contemporary Chaucer scholarship:

much recent and current discussion of the dream poems, and indeed of Chaucer’s work in general, may overestimate the extent of Chaucer’s learning and, more particularly, the learning of his immediate audience. In my view, there is a large and growing gap between what modern scholars know and what Chaucer’s audience, and even Chaucer himself, would have been likely to have known. (“Dream Poems” 160)

Piero Boitani expresses similar caution against overestimation (and, also underestimation) of reading and learning in the Middle Ages, remarking:

Chaucer’s personal library can be expanded almost ad infinitum by people who take every literary allusion in his works to imply knowledge of a ‘book’, and reduced to far less than sixty volumes by those who consider the way in which many works of literature or philosophy circulated throughout the Middle Ages as fragments in anthologies and miscellanies. (58)

In the subsequent chapter, I will discuss the textual evidence in Chaucer’s early dream poems of the poet’s knowledge of speculative music theory and, from contextualization through reading of medieval music treatises, will consider in depth the implications of Chaucer’s allusions to musica theorica. Mindful of Spearing and Boitani’s words against subjective speculation about Chaucer’s immediate access to books, I do not wish to presuppose the currency of such a complex and conceptual subject. As the extent to which music treatises would have been available to the reading public of fourteenth-century England is uncertain, my examination of Chaucer and his audience’s knowledge of speculative music theory is based on a study of the intellectual climate of the poet’s social and professional circles. Social integration in the court and in the medieval city shaped the poet’s understanding of the subject considerably. Despite the disparity that Spearing has observed “between what modern scholars know and what Chaucer’s audience, and even Chaucer himself, would have been likely to have known”, there is evidence of a culture of intellectual exchange within these communities. Evidence of the circulation of ideas in late
fourteenth-century England indicates the potential for Chaucer, and for his audience too, to have understood *musica theorica* sufficiently to appreciate the poet’s unique employment of the subject. In light of the evidence of cultural and intellectual dynamism of this period considered in this chapter, we can be confident of Chaucer’s, and his contemporaries’, familiarity with this subject.

As should be clear from our consideration of the poet’s experience of *musica*, the medieval understanding of music considered the quantitative nature of sound a mathematical science, manifesting natural and divine order. Understanding of the manner in which music was linked to concepts of truth and perfection is, therefore, crucial to understanding its uses in Middle English poetry.
Chapter Two

Musica Theorica in Chaucer’s Dream Poetry

– For hyt is wonder, be the roode,
To my wyt, what causeth swevenes.
(Chaucer, House of Fame 2-3)

I. Dream Poetry and Freedom of Invention

This chapter will explore the permeation of speculative music theory – the abstract mathematical and philosophical aspects of musica – in Chaucer’s early dream poems The Book of the Duchess (BD), House of Fame (HF), and Parliament of Fowls (PF). References to legendary music makers including Jubal, Orpheus, and Pythagoras, allusions to musica mundana, and frequent mixture of musical and mathematical idioms, pervade BD, HF, and PF. With errant interplay of sight and sound, harmony and dissonance, experience and authority, and realism and artifice, all three poems employ music and music theory in ways that evoke the more esoteric, abstract, and spiritual dimensions of medieval music theory. Through frequent references to music and to non-musical sounds, Chaucer examines the limitations of art, social order, philosophy, language and learning in these dream visions. BD, HF, and PF evince an aesthetic of intellectual depth across a number of fields of learning. Knowledge of such diverse subjects as grammatical theory, philosophy, astronomy and arithmetic is evident in Chaucer’s dream poems. Alongside his technical and detailed engagements with many of these intellectual disciplines, musica theorica is considerably represented.

More so than any other form of medieval poem, the dream vision is especially inclined to the employment of musical allusions. In part, the dream poem befits the incorporation of abstract art-external material by virtue of what Spearing identifies as the “freedom of invention” which the dream format allows (“Dream Poems” 169). The incorporation and manipulation of the basic materials of music are not exclusive to the works of Chaucer, but was prevalent in contemporary Middle English dream poetry, and in other romance languages in dream poems such as those of Dante, Machaut, and Boccaccio. Spearing writes that the poetic of dream experience: “offered Chaucer and other medieval poets a compositional freedom unusual to their culture” (168). The dream space unchains the poet from many typical narrative measures. It is not obligatory that the narrative express a linear consciousness of time and place; it may drift to
contemplate occurrences which are symbolically or subjectively significant to the focus of the poem. This made the dream poem an ideal mode to transmit considerations of philosophic and spiritual matters to a wider audience than may have been possible in a complex, instructional treatise. The creative freedom of the dream also allowed the poet to be somewhat looser with the facts than would have been expected of an educational text. Peter Brown summarises the various qualities of this type of poem which accommodate exploration of abstract concepts:

It is not difficult to see why, a priori, later medieval poets found the dream such a useful means of framing their narratives. As a rhetorical device it has numerous advantages. It intrigues and engages the interest of an audience by appealing to a common experience and by inviting its members to become analysts and interpreters. It allows for the introduction of disparate and apparently incongruous material. It encourages and facilitates the use of memorable images. It permits the author to disavow responsibility for what follows. It invokes an authoritative and impressive tradition of visionary literature. It provides a way of dealing with a wide variety of subjects: divine prophecy; erotic adventure; political or philosophical speculation; apocalyptic vision. It offers a point of entry into a representational mode (sometimes allegorical) which is less restrictive than, say, the conventions of realist narrative. (25)

The frequency of reference to music and music theory in Chaucer’s dream poems cannot be overstated. Among the recurrent allusions to music are examples of intercalated lyrics, such as the Black Knight’s lament (475-486) and song to his lady (1175-1180) in BD, the concluding song of PF (680-692); allusions to famed musicians, such as Orpheus in HF (569); descriptions of the sensation of hearing music, as when the Dreamer is awoken by bird song in BD (295-324) and when Geoffrey hears a host of musicians in Lady Fame’s palace in HF (1201-1258); and also, the discussion of musica theorica when the legend of Pythagoras’ discovery of musical ratios is presented in BD (1160-1170), or the eagle’s explanation of the science of sound in HF (765-781), and a description of the musica mundana in PF (60-64).

Kathryn Lynch remarks that “the dream vision was a genre that concerned itself with the struggle to comprehend ineffable truths and thus with problems of knowledge more broadly defined” (39). There are subtle differences in the Chaucer’s treatment of speculative music theory in each of his dream poems indicating different purposes to the incorporation of musica theorica in BD, HF, and PF. Though each of the poems show different preoccupations in the use of musical allusions, there are also some overlaps. Consideration of liminality and limitation,
reality and artifice, and experience and authority thread through all three texts in their use of music.

II. Music and Consolation in the *Book of the Duchess*

Chaucer’s *BD* is a poem frequently punctuated by the sounds of its idyllic dreamscape. Commenting on the unique appeal to the senses of this poem, Helen Phillips writes that:

The absence of a dream-guide, or of any commentary or conclusion, together with Chaucer’s use of a narrator who in understanding, or at least in explicit comment, falls short of the meaning of what he sees, leaves the reader unusually dependent on the non-rational guides of eye and ear. (“Structure and Consolation” 108)

Throughout the poem, both natural and artificial sounds direct the reader – the natural noises of birdsong and shouting juxtapose the human-made sounds of bells and horns. The birdsong awakening the Dreamer from his catatonic melancholy (294-325), the hunting horn that prefigures the Black Knight’s appearance (344-347), and the castle bell that heralds the poem’s end (1321-1323) are all examples of sound being used to indicate narrative transitions. *BD* follows a mode of narrative made popular by Machaut in his *dits amoureux* (for example *le Jugement dou Roy de Beaufins* and *le Jugement dou Roy de Navarra*), whereby a dreaming narrator plays the role of poet-servant, encountering a nobleperson in a *locus amoenus* whose emotional distress will serve as poetic subject-matter. In *BD*, the sleepless narrator recounts his own melancholy before turning to a book of Ovidian stories for distraction. After recounting the story of Ceyx and Alcyone he falls asleep and “awakens” in the dream proper. The Dreamer follows a hunt into a forest and in a clearing finds a knight, dressed in black, intoning a lament. The main body of the narrative focuses on the Black Knight’s account of his grief at the death of his wife “goode faire White”, and the Dreamer’s failure to comprehend the situation – taking as literal the knight’s statement that he had lost his queen to Lady Fortune in a game of chess – before the blunt realization “she ys ded” (1309) and the Dreamer’s resolution to set about writing the story.

In *BD*, the most evident literary influence is that of Old and Middle French works in the tradition of Guillaume de Lorris’ *Roman de la Rose* (hereafter, RR), the *dits amoureux* of Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and their contemporaries. In *dits* such as Machaut’s *La Fonteinne Amoreuse* and Froissart’s *Le Paradys d’Amours*, emulating de Lorris’ RR, dream narratives focus on
encounters with lovers and their stories contain intercalated lyrics. These “songs” within the poem serve as a virtuosic display of poetic craft. In the case of Machaut’s _Remede de Fortune_, seven intercalated lyrics are notated in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Français 1586 (MS C). Chaucer adapts this technique in _BD_, including two songs composed by the Black Knight, the grieving lay which the Dreamer describes as “maner song, withoute note, withoute song” (471-472), and the love song which he composed for his lady (1175-1180). For Chaucer, these songs serve as a narrative device rather than a showcase, as they indicate a transition in the narrative itself. Alastair Minnis observes:

> Chaucer is rather more interested in having the intercalated lyric fulfil a definite narrative function … these lyrics keep the narrative moving rather than hold it up; to some extent this is due, of course, to the fact that they are a lot shorter than most of the effusions in the French dits, but different literary priorities are the major determining factor. (82-3)

These songs not only move the narrative forward, but also emphasize underlying themes of the text, as will be discussed in greater detail below. Scholarship has tended in recent years to move away from treatment of Machaut and his French Contemporaries as a footnoted “source” for Chaucer’s poetics, assessed unfavourably in comparison to what George Lyman Kittredge affirmed a century ago was “the essential originality of Chaucer’s genius” (24). As Steven Davis notes “in the process of asserting Chaucer’s artistic subjectivity – his “originality” – Kittredge atomizes the artistic output of Chaucer’s French contemporaries into a collection of discrete sources” (391). Perception of these literary predecessors as a backdrop to Chaucer’s writing underestimates the supremacy of French language and culture in fourteenth-century courtly circles. This was not an alien or foreign influence that Chaucer merely encountered on diplomatic work, but an intrinsic part of English life. Butterfield writes:

> From clothes design, cooking styles, textiles, architecture, and manuscript layout to grand tournaments and civic processions, court and city practice was characterized by an international French style. Chaucer’s own domestic life, one presumes, was spent negotiating in and between English and continental French, just as it was in his

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32 Examples of recent studies that have challenged this approach include Wimsatt’s _Chaucer and His French Contemporaries_, Davis’s “Guillaume de Machaut, Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess, and the Chaucer Tradition”, Butterfield’s _The Familiar Enemy_, and Elizabeth Leach’s _Guillaume de Machaut_.

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diplomatic and business roles (here combined with Latin). (“Chaucer’s French Inheritance” 22)

Whilst we must be cautious not to imagine a dramatic break from such a predominant cultural influence, Davis argues that we should also acknowledge that this is an impression that Chaucer himself sought to cultivate, writing that in *BD* “Chaucer deploys elements typical of Machaut and his literary milieu to create a Machaut-like central character” and “then evokes a historical occasion to which this Machauldian figure is inadequate” (392). The French poets provided a model for Chaucer to include elements of music in his poetry. His use of intercalated lyrics is just one way in which he manipulates poetic idiom and departs from Machauldian elements of dream narrative. Chaucer, beyond incorporating songs in his narrative, also employs various evocative sounds and allusions to music theory. The manner in which physical sounds underscore the narrative of *BD* suggests that they serve the same purpose as intercalated lyrics for Chaucer, to both propel the action of the dream and sharpen symbolic significations. The horn (182), birdsong (295-320), and bell (1322) for example, mark tonal shifts in the poem and transition in the narrative. The horn and raucous shouting in Morpheus’s cave irreverently indicate that grief will not be idealized or romanticized; the birdsong awakens the Dreamer into the dream proper; and the bell marks the conclusion of the poem. These interjecting noises show an awareness of tradition in how they both resemble and depart from French models. Consciousness of craft is notable in the Dreamer’s description of birds that awaken him “thorh noyse and swetnesse of her song”, as he recounts:

songe, everych in hys wyse,
The moste solempne servise
By noote, that ever man, y trowe,
Had herd; for som of hem song lowe,
Som high, and al of oon acord. (301-305)

The birdsong is crafted and deliberate, taking the form of a “solempne servise”, much like a church choir. Their singing is communal and coordinated as they sing “al of oon acord”, some high and some low. Chaucer suggests intentionality to this coordinated singing in the following lines as the Dreamer continues:

Thurgh syngynge of her armonye.
For instrument nor melodye
Was nowhere herd yet half so swete,
Nor of acorde half so mete;
For ther was noon of hem that feyned
To syng, for ech of hem hym peyned
To fynde out mery crafty notes;
They ne spared not her throtes. (313-320)

Chaucer draws upon the same inspiration for his birdsong as he does for the beautiful, colourful images that adorn the walls of the chamber in which the Dreamer awakens, as: “alle the walles with colours fyne were peynted, bothe text and glose, Of al the Romaunce of the Rose” (332-334). The birds’ beautiful music shares many characteristics with de Lorris’ RR, a text that Chaucer himself partially translated, or so his narrator declares in the prologue of The Legend of Good Women (329). Chaucer’s use of this trope in BD, though bearing many resemblances to similar passages in French and Middle English poetry, has a number of distinctive characteristics. Charles Muscatine describes Chaucer’s birdsong as “more particular and sensuous than its models, but no less enchanting” (103). There is a technical quality to the birdsong, presented not as random animal sounds, but as a “moste solempne servyse”, in which the birds sing “of oon accorde”, in high and low tones, not sparing their throats. Though such details as the harmony of high and low tones can be traced to the RR (705), and the metaphor of birdsong as divine service was common to a number of dits, the detail that the birds do not spare their throats when singing is a significant addition on Chaucer’s behalf, and which has resonance in discussions of musica theorica.

The authors of the SumM, dedicate an entire section of their treatise to warning students against the many ways one may go astray in chant. The authors criticize singers who do not strain to reach the correct notes when they sing, who, because they are fatigued, bored, or ill bred, sing “non cantui sed sibi parcentes” (2017-2018), sparing not the chant, but themselves, and those who sing obstinately to suit their own taste rather than the set and very strict melodic formulae of liturgical music. The anonymous authors affirm:

Modus itaque canendi et ipsius cantoris devotionem ostendit et in audiente, si bone voluntatis est, suscitat devotionis affectum, et propter hoc in ecclesia merito frequentatur humiliter ac devote. (346-350)
[The manner of singing reveals the devotion of the singer and arouses a feeling of piety in the listener if he is well disposed, and so music is deservedly and rightly used in the Church in a lowly and devout fashion. (59)]

For these thirteenth-century theorists, the legitimacy of one’s faith was measured by vocal technique. The Dreamer’s assertion that none of the birds feigned in their singing, and that “ech of hem hym peyned to finde out mery crafty notes”, aligns Chaucer’s birds with accomplished and pious liturgical singers. Chaucer’s familiarity with performance practice is evident in this detail, which he returns to in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (CT) when the Prioress appears to be a less dedicated singer, who does in fact spare her throat when she sings: “the service dyvyne, entuned in hir nose ful semely” (122-123). In this detail we might infer a moment of Chaucerian irony (that birds would sing by the same principles as a cantor who sings the divine service), or we may appreciate a sense of realism, as Chaucer draws from “real life” singing practice and not just the literary descriptions set out in the French dits amoureux. At once Chaucer incorporates his own unique take on his source material whilst conjuring a consciousness of craft, juxtaposing a consideration of “tradition” with inventive realism.

Ryan Judkins argues that the reason for this is that “the animals in the dream are only expressions of or corollaries to human action” (163):

As the dreamer struggles to describe the birds for himself, and as Chaucer describes them for the audience, the narrator necessarily uses human analogies to make sense of them, and in doing so projects human social and psychological structures onto the birds. They are like priests or monks singing a solemn service, and the different birds have a vocal range similar to humans’. They sing together liked a trained choir, but they do it so well that it surpasses human ability. (162-163)

The interplay of human and animal here is, however, more complex than may be dismissed as anthropocentrism. That Chaucer’s birds possess not only human speech but also human musical skills is significant given that music was understood as a mathematical science, an art of reason and sapience, and a civilizing force in the Middle Ages. The authors of the SumM, write of the natural disorder of birdsong which they distinguish from human music:

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Hec modulare sonos discreta mente docebit
Verbaque subiungit; volucres nil tale decebit
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Chaucer’s birdsong contradicts medieval perceptions of the difference between human and animal sounds, and the idea that human music is an art of rational intellectual application, whereas animal sounds are instinctive and non-articulate. The birdsong is at once natural and artificial.

The widespread distinction between human and animal music as rational in the Middle Ages is witnessed in descriptions of unskilled musicians as bestial. The Benedictine monk Guido of Arezzo, second only to Boethius as an authority on the subject of music provides an example. In his *Regulae Rhythmicae*, when emphasizing the importance of understanding the abstract numerical principles fundamentally underlying musical scales, Guido differentiates between the *musicus* (a musician who was both theorist and performer) and the *cantor* (a singer who performs instinctively without understanding the theory behind practice), declaring:

Musicorum et cantorum magna est distantia
Isti discunt, illi sciunt, quae componit Musica.
Nam qui facit, quod non sapit, diffinitur bestia. (8-10)

[There is a great difference between musicus and cantor. The latter say, the former know what things make up music. He who sings without theoretical understanding is termed a beast.]

Chaucer’s departures from naturalistic depictions of birdsong might be interpreted as part of a prescript of anthropomorphic representation, complementing the other human-like mannerisms of his avian characters. However, as *musica* was considered to be a science of reason in the Middle Ages, this particular form of anthropomorphism draws attention to itself through its mingling of human and animal, rational and non-rational, and realism and artifice.

The counterpointing of concepts “natural” and “unnatural” (or artificial) and of “rational” and “non-rational” are anticipated from the beginning of this text with the Dreamer saying that it is “agaynes kynde” to remain sleepless and sad as he does:

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33 Ed. and trans. Pesce 330-331.
And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
Hyt were to lyven in thys wyse,
For nature wolde nat suffyse
To noon erthly creature
Nat longe tyme to endure
Withoute slep and be in sorwe. (16-21)

The implication that it is unnatural to prolong emotional inertia, brings questions of what is natural or unnatural, rational or non-rational in relation to human emotion immediately to the fore. Reading this poem ultimately as “an elegy for Blanche of Lancaster”, themes of loss, love, and grief are pertinent. The appropriateness and rationality of human grief are key concerns throughout, as is the extent to which art, religion, reading, or philosophy may offer consolation.

Though drawing on details of real-life practice, this portentous music is otherworldly, having a supernatural effect as it rouses the Dreamer from his melancholia and is described in ethereal terms: “To telle shortly, at oo worde, was never herd so swete a steven, but hyt had be a thyng of heven” (306-8). There are elements of Chaucer’s description of the birdsong that, following RR, became common property in literary descriptions of music in French and Middle English poetry. The term “swete stevene” reappears, rhymed with “hevene” in John Gower’s description of the Siren’s song in Confessio Amantis (CA): “With so swete a stevene Lik to the melodie of hevene in wommanysshe vois thei singe” (I. 493-5). This type of vocalization is similarly associated by Gower with the non-human, supernatural music that enthral its hearer. Furthermore, description of birdsong as having a rapturous effect upon its hearer recurs in the fifteenth-century anonymous poem, The Floure and the Leafe, as another dream narrator is mesmerized by the sound of a nightingale, recounting:

I stood astonished; so was I with this song,
Thorow ravished, that, til late and long,
I ne wist in what place I was, ne where. (101-104)

In these two literary descendants of Chaucer, we see music’s power to either corrupt or to elevate the listener. The Nightingale was a symbol of virtue in the Middle Ages, associated with the classical Philomela (see, for example CA V: 5943-6002) and Leach observes that the
nightingale “in Christian medieval contexts becomes a cognate for the soul, singing the Hours, praising God in song, and ultimately dying for Divine Love” (Sung Birds 100). The Siren conversely, was considered a deadly creature, its hybrid form (half human, half bird or fish) was thought to represent duplicity. Their beautiful music was thought to charm sailors to watery deaths and Leach observes “the aquatic nature of sirens would have linked their sexual voraciousness and their ability to make music in the mind of medieval clerics” (“Little Pipe” 197). In both instances the hearer is stupefied by the music, losing their faculties of judgement, and in both cases the ravishing music carries moral implications. Whilst the nightingale’s music instils virtue in its hearer, and the Siren lures listeners from paths of virtue, the implications of the ravishing “swete steven” of BD are less explicit.

The birdsong of BD, though sharing many attributes with the models of the dits amoureux and RR, is also notable for its suggestion of a very traditional component of speculative music theory’s contemplation of musica humana, the healing capabilities of music. Having suffered from an eight-year sickness which has left him seized by “sorwful ymagynacioun” (14), the Dreamer is almost miraculously revitalised by the sound of birdsong outside his window. This melancholy character, who claims to “have felynge in nothyng” (11) and “drede” “for to dye” (24), is roused from his catatonic state and filled with delight by the sound of the birds’ music. The authors of SumM transmit NeoPlatonic perceptions of the healing powers of music, writing:

Musica itaque medicinalis est et mirabilia operator. Per musicam morbi curantur, precipue per melancholiam et ex tristicia generate. Per musicam prohibetur ne quis incidat in desperationis exilium et merorem. (242-245)
[Music has medicinal properties and performs miraculous things. Music cures diseases, especially those which arise from melancholia and sadness. Through music, one can be prevented from falling into the loneliness and pain of despair. (55)]

The emotional and spiritual effect of this music on the hearer is made clear in the Dreamer’s willingness to venture into the world outside of his window given his previous assertion that: “ne me nys nothynge leef nor looth … for I have felynge in nothyng”(8-11). The perceived healing powers of music were known not only in treatises, but among Chaucer’s contemporaries. Machaut wrote that:

Musique est une science
Que vuët qu’on rie et chante et dance.
Cure n’a de merencolie
À chose qui ne peut valoir,
Eins met tels gens en nonchaloir.
Partout ou elle est, joie y porte. (Prologue 85-91)

[Music is a science which encourages laughing and singing and dancing. It doesn’t care for melancholy or for the man who broods on trivial matters. Wherever [Music] is, she brings joy.]35

And Deschamps, in his l’art de Dictier, that:

Musique est la derniere science ainsi comme la medicine des viu ars; car quant le couraige et l’esprit des creatures ententives aux autres ars dessus declariez sont lassez et ennuiez de leurs labours, musique, par la douceur de sa science et la melodie de sa voix, leur chante par ses viu notes tierço'yees, quintes et doublées, ses chans delectables et plaisans... tant que par sa melodie delectable les cuers et esperis de ceuls qui auxdiz ars, par pensee, ymagination et labours de bras estoient travailliez, pesans et ennuiez, sont medicinez et recreex, et plus habiles apres a estudier et labourez aux autres viu ars dessus nommez. (85-99)

[Music is thus the last science, the medicine of the seven arts. For when the hearts and spirits of creatures who understand the aforementioned arts are weary and tired of their labors, music, by the sweetness of its science and the melody of its voice, sings its delightful and pleasing songs to them with its six notes in thirds, fifths, and octaves... until with its delightful melody the hearts and spirits of those who were fatigued, burdened, and bored in practicing the named arts through thought, imagination, and manual labor, are remedied and restored, and rendered more able thereafter to study and work the other six arts named above.]36

The manner in which the Dreamer of BD is so dramatically revitalized recalls speculative understandings of music’s therapeutic powers. Thus the birds’ technical and beautiful music incorporates knowledge of musica theorica as a potent narrative device as Chaucer transports his Dreamer from the dark world of his eight year sickness to the beautiful world of the dream proper.

We see comfort through music again shortly afterwards in the vignette of the Black Knight singing to himself in a forest clearing. This is counterpointed with the reference to Orpheus as a healer:

\begin{verbatim}
May noght make my sorwes slyde,
Nought al the remedyes of Ovyde,
Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
Ne Dedalus with his playes slye;
Ne hele me may no phisicien,
Noght Ypocras ne Galyen;
Me ys wo that I lyve houres twelve. (567-573)
\end{verbatim}

Music is associated with healing not only in the grieving Black Knight’s cathartic song to himself, but also in the association of the legendary musician Orpheus with medicine. Indeed, the concept of turning grief into music is further emphasized by the assertion that “Pan, that men clepeth god of kynde, were for hys sorwes never so wroth” (512-513). In classical mythology Pan literally turns his lost love into music. The water nymph Syrinx, running from Pan’s importunities, was metamorphosed into a reed by her sisters. The love-sick god, unable to identify Syrinx among other reeds, joined several together (seven in some versions, nine in others) to fashion a musical instrument (now referred to as the pan flute or syrinx). The reference to Pan, the god of “kynde”, suggests that grief is both natural and unnatural, and that consolation through music is equally rational and non-rational. As the Black Knight’s grief and mourning through music mirror Pan’s they are depicted as natural, but as even Pan was “for hys sorwes never so wroth”, the Black Knight’s grief is at the same time suggested to be beyond natural or appropriate.

The sorrows of the Dreamer and the Black Knight, and the power of music to ease these sorrows, are particularly significant given the occasion of the poem’s composition. The birdsong of BD displays the poet’s knowledge of the craft of song, and of the effects which music may have on an individual, but there is also a more coded meaning to this use of *musica theorica* given its specific placement in BD. The birdsong follows an account of the myth of Ceyx and Alcyone, who, in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, are transformed into Halycon birds by the gods when Alcyone dies of grief following Ceyx’s death at sea. Chaucer evocatively excludes the lover’s metamorphoses from BD as the narrator abruptly ends his account of the tale with Alcyone’s death and an anticlimactic: “‘allas!’ quod she, ‘for sorwe!’ and deyede within the thridde morwe” (213-214).
The insubstantial remark of the Dreamer: “Is that youre los? By God, hyt ys routhe!” (1310) upon learning of Lady White’s death and the cause of the Black Knight’s grief evokes the same sense of bathos and dissatisfaction at the lack of explicit comfort or consolation to be offered for the Black Knight, or for the grieving John of Gaunt. The absent consolation of *BD* is refigured in the birdsong. The description of music as “a thyng of heven” seems pointed with suggestion of the afterlife that is denied in Chaucer’s modification of Ovid’s tale. Not only does the mention of the birds immediately after the account of Ceyx and Alcyone’s tale offer a transfigured image of the Halcyon birds and evocation of the transformed lovers of *Metamorphoses*, but also, the sublime “solempe servise” of the birdsong, which revivifies the catatonic Dreamer, may suggest a mode of comfort for readers of *BD* (and for the grieving Gaunt), by bringing attention to the healing powers of music. The spiritual quality of the musical “healing” is further suggested in the description of the birdsong as a “solempe servise”, and in the manner in which the poet reinterprets the RR description of birdsong as otherworldly. Guillaume de Lorris’ Dreamer describes hearing music so beautiful that no mortal bird could make it, recounting: “Qu’onc mès si douce meloudie, ne fu d’ome mortel oïe” (667-668). Chaucer’s Dreamer goes one step further, describing the music he overhears as “a thyng of heven” (310.) For a poem which offers no explicit Christian consolation to its grieving protagonist, or to its intended addressee, the recurrence of religious suggestion in the description of musical sounds is notable. Wimsatt (“Secular Elegy” 119) reads the reference to the “toune” of “tewnes” as an allusion to the Song of Songs, and the Bible is again recalled in association with the invention of music with Tubal (Jubal). In addition, the presence of mathematical language in the text (references to Pythagoras, to “nought”, and NeoPlatonic mathematical understanding of the universe in reference to Scipio) might allow for NeoPlatonic understanding of the consolation that is manifest in music.

Analyzing references to Pythagoras and to Macrobius’s *Dream of Scipio* in *BD*, Sandra and Glenn Erickson argue that Biblical and NeoPlatonic number symbolism evoke the souls return to heaven: “This return is an occasion for happiness, the hope of liberation of the soul from its bodily confinement” (60). Identifying references to numerological traditions, they observe a comingling of Neoplatonism and Christianity with, perhaps, a greater leaning towards the latter. Erickson and Erickson write on the reference to “toun” of “tewnes” that, in the context of references to Macrobius earlier in *BD*, “the line in question could mean that the pleasure of the bird-song, the harmony of the Spheres, is not to be exchanged for that of the “tune of tunes” (50). Healing and consolation thus come from music not only in a physical and literal sense, but in the sense that music [as sounding number] embodies certain universal truths which may be
held as consolation. As Erickson and Erickson write, “it is then music of poetry that heals and redeems the soul by rebalancing the number” (60).

This is also apparent in reference to the “invention” of music as the Black Knight contemplates who the first “finder” of music was. Kay G. Stevenson writes that there is “a consciousness of craft and of tradition revealed in citing the Biblical Tubal and the Greek Pythagoras as the first makers of songs” when the Black Knight introduces his own love song in *BD* (9). The Black Knight, describing the songs he wrote for Lady White, admits that he could not compose as well

As koude Lamekes sone Tubal,
    That found out first the art of songe;
For as hys brothres hamers ronge
Upon hys anvelt up and doun,
    Therof he took the firste soun --
But Grekes seyn Pictagoras,
That he the firste fynder was (1162-1168)

Both Neoplatonism and Christianity are cited in this reference, as if the ideals of biblical narratives may not be considered without also acknowledging the reality of natural existence embodied in mathematical understanding of the universe, and music as a manifestation of this. The emphasis on acknowledgment of natural existence might be taken to infer that conception of a Christian afterlife must first recognize the reality of a natural death as part of the process of consolation.

In *BD*, there is a divergence between “artificial” and “natural” sounds. It is the artificial sound of the hunting horn which distracts the Dreamer from the reverie of the birdsong and, although the poem concludes with the artificial sound of the castle bell, the more natural sound of the birdsong is recalled again in the Dreamer’s remark:

Therwyth I awook myselve,
    And fond me lyinge in my bed;
And the book that I had red,
Of Alcione and Seys the kyng (1324-1327)
In the counterpoint of natural and artificial sounds, the crux of *BD* is apparent: the difficulty in reconciling the conflict between the expectations of idealism and convention demanded by the format of the *dits amoureux* when writing an elegiac poem, with the stark reality of natural death. Idealism was expected in writing courtly poetry, and yet the realism of the poem’s occasion was undeniable. Muscatine wrote of the uniqueness of Guillaume de Lorris’ poetic style that:

> Perhaps the greatest distinction of the poet is that he manages a delicate poise between the a priori dictates of courtly idealism and medieval habit, and the push of particular human experience itself. (30-31)

The constant push of the “real” world upon conventional poetic tropes in *BD* suggests that Chaucer adapted this same approach when presenting his elegy to the memory of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster. Chaucer’s *BD* fulfils all the demands of a conventional courtly poem. It offers a beautiful *locus amoenus*, a sublimely sentimentalised romance, intercalated lyrics, references to classical and contemporary poets, yet there is also a continuous influx of realism, from the obtuseness of the Dreamer to the invasion of sounds from the outside world (the bell, the horn). This recognition of reality may be at the heart of what Minnis refers to as “the consolation of experience” of *BD* (135). A true consolation cannot be drawn from the conventional source material of the *dits amoureux*, thus Chaucer subtly includes elements of realism and the realisation of natural law in his adaptation of the trope of literary music, attempting to reconcile the artificial realm of courtly poetry with the natural world of the circumstances of the composition of *BD*.

This attempt at reconciliation might not be seen as entirely successful or indeed possible. In the same way as all consolations in the text fall short, the limitations of art do not perhaps permit for perfect rendering of things that are real or natural. Myra Seaman reads *BD* as a text that “enacts a disconsolate poetics, in which pain and suffering perdure” (140). We are still presented with disharmony, indirectness, and inconclusiveness at the poem’s abrupt end, and the image of the narrator returning to his starting point, a book.

**III. “Of Science and of Lyght”: Musical Realism in *House of Fame***

In the second of Chaucer’s dream poems, *House of Fame* (*HF*), the crafted and emphatic music of *BD* is supplanted by auditory confusion, as the poet’s treatment of *musica theorica* becomes more playful and irreverent. Stephen Knight describes *HF* as a “discourse of science, sounds, and the
construction of earthly fame” (“Classicizing Christianity” 149). This discourse connects realism and natural philosophy, while moving away from the NeoPlatonic contemplation of therapeutic music of BD. Like Dante’s Commedia and Macrobius’s commentary on Cicero’s In Somnium Scipionis, HF recounts a vision of philosophical flight, as Chaucer’s rotund narrator, Geffrey is taken on a cosmic journey by an eagle that promises to show him tidings of love. Whilst Dante’s poem envisions the prospects of a Christian afterlife and Macrobius explores the nature of the divine through Cicero’s perception of cosmic travel, Chaucer’s dreaming narrator ventures to less eminent territories, as Minnis summates: “Chaucer’s eagle soars not to heavenly regions of immutable truth and total certainty, but to gossip-filled dwellings of rumour and dubious reportage” (166).

At the beginning of Book III of HF, the narrator invokes Apollo, the Greek god of music and poetry, for guidance with his narration. This classical figure may seem an apt power to invoke for a poem concerned with literary fame. However, the narrator does not even acknowledge the god’s association with these arts, instead addressing him: “O God of science and of lyght, Appollo, thurgh thy grete myght, this lytel laste bok thou gye!” (1091-1093). This detail reveals some other concerns of this poem in the attributes with which Apollo is identified, “science” and “lyght”. Given Apollo’s association with solar imagery, we might presume that the narrator simply means light as a substance that illuminates objects or darkness, but “lyght” can also denote “the light issuing from, or provided by, truth, righteousness, knowledge, wisdom, grace, etc.; also, the state of intellectual enlightenment or excellence” (MED). This form of “lyght” is a key interest in HF. Consideration of learning, knowledge, wisdom, philosophy, and “news” pervade this dream vision. As in BD, Chaucer incorporates both personal experience and literary tradition in his use of musica theorica but also, more explicitly, adds references to pedagogical materials, tying in with concerns about knowledge and its usefulness throughout the poem.

In BD, as Helen Phillips has observed, the absence of a dream-guide “leaves the reader unusually dependent on the non-rational guides of eye and ear” (108). In HF, even with the eagle’s direction, the reader is still reliant on these non-rational influences as the narrator’s senses are overloaded by the sights and then sounds of his dreamscape. On the 10th of December Geffrey, a composer of “bookys, songes and dytees” (622) is transported from his silent and lacklustre studies to a dream world full of colour, noise, and movement. Upon finding himself in a temple made of glass awash with vibrant images of Classical heroes and lovers, the bookish Geffrey is carried by the eagle, sent by Jupiter, to the cacophonous and chaotic palace of Lady Fame (to find inspiration, the eagle tells Geffrey, for his love poems, seeing as this narrator does
not have much experience in the matter himself). Geffrey first journeys to the Castle of Lady Fame filled with the clamour of throngs of poets, lovers, and musicians seeking the capricious goddess’s favour. He then moves to the House of Rumour, a whirling, spinning structure, more complex than Daedalus’s labyrinth and more raucous than a Roman mob, where the narrative abruptly ends with the promise of Geffrey’s introduction to a man of great authority. The progression from Geffrey’s silent and solitary study to the tumultuous experience of the dream world is punctuated by the narrator’s fascination and bewilderment at the bedlam of sounds that exist outside of his contemplative life spent in books where he was oblivious even to the tidings of the neighbours living at his door step. Geffrey compares the clamour of chatter in Lady Fame’s palace to the tempestuous beating of the sea when the eagle informs him of the great sound:

that rumbelth up and doun
In Fames Hous, full of tydynges,
Bothe of feir speche and chidynges,
And of fals and soth compounded. (1026-1029)

The House of Rumour presents Geffrey with a soundscape even more confusing and overwhelming than that of the House of Fame. The wooden structure rings and jangles with tidings of war and peace, life and death, love and hate, health and sickness, trust and envy, folly and famine, and many other things whispered and roared all at once. The sound of the curious collection of “gygges”, “chirkings”, and “gossip” is so loud says Geffrey that if it had come from the banks of the river Oise in Northern France, it would have easily been heard in Rome. Once taken by the eagle from the Temple of Glass there seems never to be a peaceful moment for the dreaming Geffrey. If he is not marvelling at the procession of musicians at Fame’s palace, or aghast at Aeolus’s trumpeting tidings of good and bad fame, or confounded by the maelstrom of hearsay in the House of Rumour, he is the recipient of one of the eagle’s many long-winded and voluble speeches.

In addition to the transition in Geffrey’s journey from sight (the Temple of Glass) to sound (the House of Fame and the House of Rumour), he is guided by the eagle from reliance upon books to personal experience as literary inspiration. As HF progresses, Geffrey moves from consideration of the subject matter of French love-vision poetry (painted in the Temple of Glass) to experience of the “real world” of the dreamscape. It is tempting to view this as a
rejection of the conventions of his French predecessors in favour of Italian sources; however, this appraisal is reductive. Butterfield writes:

this schema is profoundly misleading. Chaucer undoubtedly based Troilus heavily on Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato*, as well as Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, and read far more widely than just in French throughout his writing career. But none of his specific phases of reading cancelled out earlier interests and influences. In particular, French patterns of thinking were too pervasive in European culture to be ‘outgrown’. (26)

The humorously obtuse narrator character of *HF* is evidence enough that the influence of Machaut remained.37 In addition, resemblance of the architecture of Lady Fame’s palace to the “House of Musicians” in Reims, discussed in the previous chapter of this study, shows that Chaucer also drew on his own experience of France. The linear narrative of analysis that interprets *HF* as a transition from French to Italian authority, overlooks the residual and pervasive influence of French literature and culture.

As in *BD*, Chaucer draws on both personal experience and a number of pedagogical sources in his portrayal of music. In comparison to the concerns of craft, rationality, and artifice evident in the use of *musica theorica* in *BD*, Chaucer’s treatment of the subject shifts, becoming irreverent in its pragmatism. Whereas the birds’ music of *BD* is harmonious and beautiful, the descriptions of music in *HF* is grotesque and discordant, as the jumble of musicians jangle and clash with each other, playing all of their songs at once. Whilst Chaucer presents Jubal and Pythagoras as otherworldly and distinct from musicians of the “real world” in *BD*, Orpheus, described as the “god of melody” in *BD*, appears among a crowd of jesters and minstrels, far removed from the pedestal of “tradition” in *HF*. The narrator recounts hearing:

```plaintext
alle maner of mynstralles
And gestiours that tellen tales
Both of wepinge and of game,
Of al that longeth unto Fame.
Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe,
That sowned bothe wel and sharpe,
Orpheus ful craftely. (1197-1203)
```

37 C.f. for example, the narrators of Machaut’s *Dit de la Fontaine Amoureuse* and *Le Voir Dit.*
The noise-filled reality of Fame’s palace, which such legendary musicians as Joab (1245), Arion (1205), and Misenus (1243) inhabit, is nothing like the tranquil, harmonious environment of *BD*. The “blody soun” of trumpets and clarions (1239) over-ride any sense of musicality that the reference to pipers learning love dances suggests (1235). The inclusion of such instruments as the clarion in this “minstrelsy” is ironic, as this shrill, loud trumpet was more commonly heard upon battlefields than in banquet halls. Chaucer emphasizes this when the narrator declares “for in fight and blood-shedinge is used gladly clarioninge” (1241-1242). John Kerr, examining Chaucer’s engagement with Dante’s *Commedia* in *HF*, writes that Chaucer: “resists the supernatural poetics associated with Dante”, instead “grounding House of Fame in experience of the earthly” (185). There is a sense that Chaucer is drawing on personal experience in this account. Roland Smith notes that in the decade preceding the composition of *HF* there is record in John of Gaunt’s register of employment of musicians including “Hans Gough piper”, “Henry Hultescrane piper”, “Johan de Bokyngham clarioner”, and the suggestively Spanish name “James Senche[z] clarioner” (525-526). Smith links these figures with Chaucer’s allusions to Dutch pipers and Spanish clarioners in *HF* (1233-1250) (526). Indeed, there is a physicality to the description of the sound’s production. It is no longer a “thyng of heven”, rather, Orpheus’ harp is “sharp” and the clarioner’s trumpeting “blody”. Whereas music eases suffering in *BD*, the noise of *HF* is almost painful to hear.

Unlike the technical and otherworldly presentation of birdsong of *BD*, allusions to *musica theorica* are fixed firmly in the natural world. Exceptionally irreverently, Chaucer highlights the impracticality of abstract speculative music theory in a moment which is regarded as one of the most elaborate jokes about flatulence in the history of the English language. The wordy eagle, in one of his many discursive lectures explains to Geffrey how news travels to the House of Fame by the air, explaining that noises are formed by wavelengths and vibrations caused by movements of air:

```
Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,
And every speche that ys spoken,
Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
In his substaunce ys but air;
For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke,
Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke.
But this may be in many wyse,
Of which I wil thee twoo devise,
```

59
As soun that cometh of pipe or harpe.
For whan a pipe is blowen sharpe,
The air ys twyst with violence,
And rent – loo, thys ys my sentence;
Eke, whan men harpe-strynges smyte,
Whether hyt be moche or lyte,
Loo, with the strok the ayr tobreketh;
And ryght so breketh it when men speketh. (765-780)

Understandings of the physics of sound as movement of air were, as Minnis asserts: “the staple fare of the Medieval grammar school” (165). Such works as Vincent of Beauvais’s *Speculum Naturale* and Priscian’s *Institutiones Grammaticae* would have circulated this explanation of sound widely among literate audiences of the Middle Ages. Boethius writes that “sonus percussio aeris indissoluta usque ad auditum” (*De ins. mns.* I.iii) [“sound is the percussion of air remaining undissolved all the way to hearing” (11)]. His treatise resonates noticeably with Chaucer’s description of the “multiplication” of sound waves and its analogy with a pebble creating waves when thrown into water, as he writes:

Prius enim in parvissimum orbem undam colligit, deinde maioribus orbibus undarum globos spargit…. Ita igitur cum aer pulsus fecerit sonum, pellit alium proximum et quodammodo rotundum fluctum aeris ciet, itaque diffunditur et omnium circum stantium simul ferit auditum. Atque illi est obscurior vox, qui longius steterit, quoniam ad eum debilior pulsi aeris unda pervenit. (I.xiv)

[First it causes a wave in a very small circle; then it disperses clusters of waves into larger circles and so on … In the same way, then, when air that is struck creates sound, it affects other air nearby and in this way sets in motion a circular wave of air; and so it is diffused and reaches the hearing of all standing around at the same time. The sound is fainter to someone standing at a distance, since the wave of activated air approaches him more weakly. (21)]

Chaucer’s eagle uses the same example to illustrate his point asserting:

yf that thow
Throwe on water now a stoon,
Wel wost thou hyt wol make anoon
A litel roundell as a sercle
...
Every sercle causynge other
Wydder than hymselfe was;
And thus fro roundel to compas,
Ech aboute other goynge
Causeth of othres sterynge
And multiplyinge ever moo
...
And ryght thus every word, ywys,
That lowd or pryvee spoken ys,
Moveth first an ayr aboute,
And of thys movynge, out of doute,
Another ayr anoon ys meved;
As I have of the watir preved (788-791, 796-801, 809-814)

Whilst Vincent of Beauvais, Priscian and Boethius argue that the pulsation of air is what generates sound and thus speech, Chaucer’s eagle suggests instead that ‘broken air’ is in fact the very substance of sound, and that every word spoken is nothing more than broken air. In this *reductio ad absurdum* the eagle lampoons medieval scholars of grammar and music on the subject of the physics of sound and provokes readers to question the authority of all that is said and heard in Geffrey’s dream vision. Shiela Delany writes that: “from beginning to end, the Eagle’s speech relies on tautology, analogy, non sequitur, reductive simplicity, abuse of syllogism, circular argument, and ‘proofs’ that prove nothing” (75). This cannibalization of *musica theorica*, in making this abstract subject matter earthly, suggests caution against overly erudite and theoretical understandings of music or sound theory. Chaucer may have known the inapplicability of speculative music theory to practical music-making at this time as he mischievously plays with the basic materials of speculative understanding of the “science” of sound, taking the theoretical and the abstract and applying it to the “natural” world. As in BD, the limitations of art and philosophy are explored here, but in far more humorous terms. This treatment of *musica theorica*, representing learning and philosophy more generally, suggests that textbook knowledge may be impractical and inapplicable to real world existence. In PF, the narrator asserts that “out of olde
bokes, in good feyth, cometh al this newe science that men lere” (24-25). In HF this “newe science” that comes from “olde bokes” is derided through long-winded explanation.

One of the criticisms of musica theorica was that, being so concerned with music at a conceptual level, it did not have practical applications. Guido d’Arezzo for example, in promoting his own practical instruction for singers, refers to Boethius “cuius liber non cantoribus, sed solis philosophis utilis est” [“whose book is useful to philosophers only, not to singers”].38 For this reason, it serves as a useful example for Chaucer as he applies the NeoPlatonic philosophy to the natural universe. This resistance to musical learning is seen again when the dreaming Geffrey declines the knowledge of musica mundana proffered to Scipio in his similar dream flight (cited earlier in this chapter). The eagle offers to instruct Geffrey on the cosmos, asking “wilt thou lere of sterres aught?” to which the obtuse narrator replies “nay, certeynyly,” “ryght naught.” (993-4). Further, in the invocation of Apollo, Geffrey overlooks the god’s association with music and poetry, and comically downplays its importance. In comparison to the invocation of Apollo in Dante’s Paradiso “fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso, come dimandi a dar l’amato alloro” [“make me fit as a vessel of your power as you demand when you bestow the crown of the beloved laurel”], Geffrey is less ceremonial.39 Whereas Dante’s narrator wishes to be crowned with laurels for his work, Chaucer’s narrator instead promises: “Thou shalt se me go as blyve unto the nexte laure y see, and kysse yt, for hyt is thy tree” (1106-1108). Such a line is typical of the earthly and pragmatic approach to music and musical learning throughout. Geffrey views Apollo’s “laurel” literally, thinking of approaching the nearest tree, rather than as the metaphor for enlightenment and elevation that it is treated as in Dante’s Commedia.

The naturalism and realism which musica theorica is faced with in HF suggests limitations to what “lyght” may be achieved through learning from books. As the eagle berates the dreaming Geffrey for neglecting life experience in favour of reading, we might also interpret criticism of giving too much attention to the matters of musica theorica, which, as was noted earlier in this chapter, had little practical use for musicians or singers. The comical and reductive focus on the “scientific” substance of sound causes a loss of understanding of meaning, as the more one pursues or tries to explain a phenomenon, the more dissonant and inconclusive the explanation seems.

IV. Music and Politics in Parliament of Fowls

38 Epistola ad Michaelam 385-388, (ed. and trans., Pesce 530-531).
Peter Travis has described *Parliament of Fowls (PF)*, as “the most explicitly musical of Chaucer’s early poems” (206). The narrative of an assembly of birds, presided over by Dame Nature, who congregate on St. Valentine’s Day to choose their respective mates, is permeated with musical sounds, songs, and signifiers. The world of *PF* is filled with birdsong, references to speculative music theory derived from Cicero and Macrobius, and symbolic use of metaphors of “harmony” and “dissonance” when the parliament confers to determine the most appropriate suitor for a formel eagle.

*PF* is analogous with a tradition of bird-debate poetry in both French and Middle English. The most prominent of these in the Middle English tradition is the *Owl and the Nightingale* (c. 1210), but in choosing Love as the focus of the debate, *PF* is closer to French poems such as *Le Jugement d'amour, ou Florence et Blancheflor* (late twelfth century), and Jean de Condé’s *Messe des oiseaux* (c.1300-1340). Jill Mann has observed that in these French poems, which champion various types of love, birds serve as secondary advocates, as an embellishment to a debate which has an explicit human context (*Le Jugement d'amour*, for example, recounts “des débats du clerc et du chevalier”, an argument over whether knights or clerks make better lovers.) Mann writes:

This means that these French debate-poems differ from *Parliament of Fowls* in a crucial respect: the birds are not arguing about love in relation to themselves, but in relation to the human beings on whose behalf they speak or fight. (194)

Chaucer’s birds do not simply parrot opinions relevant to a human predicament, but express views individual to their own species and mating habits which are comparable to human attitudes to love and sexuality. The birds of *PF* are thus more like social types than decorations, voicing diverse opinions. The division and characterization of various social types in the avian society of *PF* would have had particular resonance at the time of its composition reflecting the emergence of more mobile, though still relatively distinct, class divisions. Mann observes that in *PF*, Dame Nature “produces not only diversity but also hierarchy” (197), and this hierarchy is emphasized by the initial monopolization of the debate by the eagles who voice aristocratic views.

Various historical events have been suggested as the occasion of the composition of *PF*. Although there is no tangible evidence to link the text to any specific date or event, the rivalry of multiple suitors for one lady’s hand upon which the birds’ parliament is centred has been
associated with various contemporaneous marriages, most frequently the courtship of Anne of Bohemia by Richard II, Charles of France, and Friedrich of Meissin.\textsuperscript{40}

What is more ostensibly discernible, though, is a trend at the time of the composition of \textit{PF} of literary interest in the subject of parliament itself. Gwilym Dodd observes that in the final quarter of the fourteenth-century, both chroniclers and poets paid more substantial notice to the subject of “parliament” in their works. Dodd reflects that “the absence of a fully functioning, effective king” in England from 1376-1388 “elevated parliament as the principal forum where politics was conducted” (302). During the final years of Edward III’s reign and in the years when the ascension of his grandson, Richard II, was contested, the principal decisions in England’s administration were determined by parliament. It became the context for political turmoil and accord, and the works of the Good Parliament of 1376, the Bad Parliament of 1377, and the Merciless Parliament of 1388 attracted the interest of Middle English chroniclers and poets alike.

Chaucer’s contemporary, William Langland, demonstrates the prevalence of the theme of “parliament” in Middle English poetry of the late fourteenth-century. In the B and C versions of Langland’s \textit{Piers Plowman}, the Prologue includes the fable of a parliament of mice and rats who “comen to conseille for here comune profit” (\textit{B Prol.} 148) to debate the best manner to deal with a tyrannical cat that terrorizes their society. Just as \textit{PF} has been associated with various political marriages, Langland’s parliament of mice and rats has become inextricably linked with the works (and subsequent reversal) of the Good Parliament 1376. The fable of belling the cat was used in a sermon by Archbishop Thomas Brinton to the convocation of clergy in Canterbury during the meeting of the Good Parliament.\textsuperscript{41} Wallace describes both Chaucer’s and Langland’s works as “a poetry of Westminster and London (rather than of baronial castles, and the province)” (37). The allusions to parliament by both writers indicate sensitivity to socio-political circumstances in fourteenth-century England. However, the manner in which \textit{PF} suggests any kind of social or political implication is much less explicit than the overt didacticism for which Langland’s \textit{Piers Plowman} is renowned.

Chaucer, through his allusions to music, takes up the question of parliament in the changing society of late fourteenth-century England. There is more to this poem than the amusements of the \textit{demande d’amour} of the bird-debate of \textit{Florence et Blancheflor}. Chaucer exposes discord and diversification in urban London society during a period in which the \textit{vox populi} was especially vocal, concurring with the rise in the influence of Parliament between 1376 and 1388. Music plays an integral role in Chaucer’s poetic representation of social integration amid

\textsuperscript{40} See Larry Benson, “The Occasion of \textit{The Parliament of Fowls}.”
\textsuperscript{41} See Wenzel’s translation of the sermon in \textit{Preaching in the Age of Chaucer} (242-253).
divergent public voices. The juxtaposition of harmony and dissonance in the musical imagery of Chaucer’s PF serves as a metaphor for questions concerning governance and community in late medieval England.

Chaucer explicitly flags his knowledge of speculative music theory when the narrator declares that, before falling asleep, he was immersed in a book entitled “Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun” (31). Cicero’s In Somnium Scipionis, which includes doctrine on the subject of the music of the spheres, was transmitted to the Middle Ages, and greatly explicated by Macrobius’s Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Chaucer also unambiguously references Alan of Lille’s De planctu Naturae, which begins with a description of the same planetary music, when the Dreamer remarks that Dame Nature’s appearance is “right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde, devyseth Nature of aray and face” (316-317). With Cicero’s and Alan of Lille’s planetary music in mind, the numerical, cosmic, and aesthetic principles of musica mundana can be perceived not only in the Dreamer’s transmission of In Somnium Scipionis, but as an underlying frame for the narrative of PF.

Musica mundana, the music of planetary movement and the change of seasons, governs the world of PF. This is evident not only from Chaucer’s pointed transmission of Cicero’s description of the music of the spheres at the beginning of the poem, but also in the distinctive image of natural harmony with which the dream proper begins. Entering gates reminiscent to the beginning of Dante’s Commedia – the inscription on Chaucer’s gates beginning “Thorgh me men gon” (127), echoing Dante’s inscription beginning “Per me si va” (Inferno 3.1) – the Dreamer recounts:

Of instruments of strenges in acord
Herde I so pleye a ravyshing swetnesse,
That God, that makere is of al and lord,
Ne herde nevere better, as I gesse;
Therwith a wynd, unnethe hit myghte be lesse,
Made in the leves grene a noyse softe
Acordaunt to the foules songe aloffe. (PF 197-203)

As the Dreamer enters the idyllic garden, instrumental music is heard as strings play in accord, whilst human music (the harmony of body and soul) is suggested by the fact that the Dreamer describes the experience of hearing this music as ravishing. The presence of musica mundana is
indicated by the fact that the earth seems to be in harmony with the instrumental music, as the wind makes soft noises complementing the strings and singing birds.

Travis describes Chaucer’s *PF* as “framed by circles of music-making harmony – opening with the *musica mundana* of the heavenly spheres and closing with the roundel sung by the mating birds at the poem’s end” (207). In the detail that the the birds sing “to do to Nature honour and plesaunce” (676) there is a literal realization of *musica mundana*, celebrating the natural order of the universe. At the centre of the poem, however, there is great noise and discontent. The birds of *PF* are introduced to us singing a beautiful and soothing melody as the Dreamer recounts that: “on every bough the bryddes herde I synge, with voys of auangel in here armoyne” (190-1). However, when the birds are called together by Dame Nature to choose their mates, and are delayed by the dispute of who would be the most suitable mate for a formel eagle, their angelic singing quickly descends into discord. It does not take long for the beautiful harmony which the Dreamer overhears upon entering the garden to descend into a cacophony of clashing voices as the debate is reduced to raucous and unintelligible squawking, perhaps best captured in the lower birds’ outburst: “The goos, the cokkow, and the doke also so cryede, ‘Kek kek! kokkow! quek quek!’ hye, that though myne eres the noyse wente tho” (498-500).

J. A. W. Bennett describes *PF* as “turning away from metaphysics to study the actual behaviour of things” (14-15). Although the poem begins with an idyllic presentation of NeoPlatonic harmony in nature, and ends with the birds’ roundel, the beautiful music with which the dream begins and ends is unnatural; we need only recall the author of the *SumM’s* assertion that birds “nil rationis habent quoscumque sonos modulentur” (495) [“have no power of reason over what they sing” to realize this (65)]. Chaucer emphasises this sense of artificiality even further by noting that the birds sing a roundel, a lyric form that is fixed, to “a French tune”, not spontaneously but in set metres to a melody composed by, perhaps, Machaut or Deschamps, as the Dreamer remarks: “the note, I trowe, imaked was in Fraunce” (677).42 The artificiality of the heavenly music with which the dream begins, and of the roundel which the birds sing at the end, indicate the unnaturalness of harmony in a community composed of many divergent social groups. The circles of music-making which Travis describes as a frame for the narrative seem barely capable of containing the great noise of the *vox populi* embodied in the birds’ parliament. Wallace observes that: “such a musical resolution to the vehement conflicts of a London parliament is, of course, a fantasy of art, not a record of life”

42 A thirteen line poem beginning “Now welcome somer with thy sun soft” (DIMEV 3815) has been insterted in three Chaucer MSs: Cambridge, University Library Gg.4.27 Part 1a (1410-1430, added in a later fifteenth-century hand), Oxford, St John’s College, MS 57 (1450-1475), and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby, 181 (1475-1500).
(47). The artificiality of this framing music evokes the same sense of irresolution as the poem’s unconvincing conclusion. Although Dame Nature’s verdict concludes the debate, the predicament of the avian parliament is unresolved. The noise at the centre of PF is not harmonized but suspended, as the formel chooses to wait another year before selecting a mate. If the failure to harmonize the vox populi was not already evident to the musically sensitive reader by the strained and unnatural roundel (which is both mimetic of human musical practice and of literary convention), the point is truly driven home by the Dreamer’s note that once the song is done, the birds revert to shouting:

And with the shoutynge, whan the song was do,
That foules maden at here flyght away,
I wok, and othere bokes tok me to
To reede upon… (693-696)

Chaucer transmits Cicero’s account of musica mundana in PF, adding the detail that the harmony of the spheres is also the cause for all earthly music recounting the Dream of Scipio, writing:

And after shewed he hym the nyne spere,
And after that the melodye herde he
That cometh of thilke spere thryes three,
That welle is of musyk and melodye
In this world heer, and cause of armonye. (59-63)

Chaucer’s treatment of Cicero’s In Somnium Scipionis is a more even-handed transmission of speculative music theory than in HF. PF is the first of Chaucer’s dream poems to associate Cicero with Scipio’s dream; both BD (276-289) and HF (913-918) attribute the authorship instead to Macrobius. The musica mundana of PF is, as such, more explicitly linked with political and social stability. Macrobius, author of the Saturnalia, was known in the Middle Ages for his knowledge of cosmology whereas Cicero, a statesman and political theorist, was known for his thoughts on government, justice, and education.

Although Chaucer’s transmission of In Somnium Scipionis is more controlled, there are notable departures from the original. Chaucer adds an element of Christianity to Cicero’s pagan vision, and simplifies it by having Africanus guide the whole dream rather than including the
guidance of the younger Scipio’s father. It is interesting that, although he alters and abridges *In Somnium Scipionis*, Chaucer carefully preserves the description of the music of the spheres.

In Chapter XVII of Cicero’s *In Somnium Scipionis* Africanus, after dismissing worldly fame, warns the younger Scipio “neque te sermonibus vulgi dederis”(91), to ignore the chatter of “the common herd”(76). In *PF*, it is impossible to ignore the chatter of the *vox populi*. Instead of overlooking the voices of the masses, as Africanus advocates, Chaucer’s *PF* combines a variety of high and low tones, which are divergent and discordant, all a part of the natural order, and impossible not to hear.

Neither Chaucer’s *PF* nor that of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* resolves the quandary presented to their assemblies. Langland’s mice are unable to govern themselves or implement their own policies. No member of the assembly of mice and rats is brave enough to bell the cat and so they “helden hem unhardy and here conseille feble, and leten here labore lost, and alle here longe studye” (*B Prol* 180-181). Chaucer’s birds are too divergent to contribute anything substantial towards the settlement of their predicament. Not only do the various groups of bird species disagree, but also, the three noble eagles of the same species cannot reach a common decision. Each of Chaucer’s group of birds views the dilemma in light of their own interests: the turtle-dove advocates celibacy; the waterfowls encourage the eagles to find alternative suitors; the lower ranks are more concerned with profit and progress; the noble ranks deal primarily with rhetoric and with courtly formalities.

The inherent intransigence of the birds is in their nature as they behave according to their own species. As a reflection of the social mobility of fourteenth-century London, the unreasonableness of Chaucer’s avian parliament members suggests that although the rising middle class were finding a forum to express their views, irreconcilable distinctions between social groups remained.

Perhaps the implication in Chaucer’s employment of music in *PF* is to bring to light the persistent divisions of social groups despite movement between the traditional three estates becoming more fluid. As high and low tones are both required to complete the music of the spheres which Chaucer transmits from Cicero, so too, perhaps, both the high and low voices of the *vox populi* must be recognized despite a seeming blurring of distinction between their ranks. The unsatisfactory nature of the poem’s resolution represented by the shouting which breaks the artificial harmony of the birds’ roundel, suggests difficulty in containing and controlling new public voices.

In the telling of tales in both high and low tones by tellers from various social degrees, Chaucer’s later work *The Canterbury Tales* evokes the same sense of social diversity that is
suggested in *PF*. The dissonant noise, threatening to override the fragile framing harmony of *PF*, prefigures the unruliness of the pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales*, whom Harry Bailey strives to keep in accord.

The musical metaphors of *PF* make it clear that in a society as changing and diverse as that of late fourteenth-century London, harmony and order are not always easy to maintain. The dream vision permits Chaucer a space to safely voice such concerns. In his *In Somnium Scipionis*, Cicero voices politically controversial views. However, by choosing the format of a philosophical dialogue he avoids addressing adversaries directly, and by employing various speakers to raise differing opinions, Cicero distances himself from the views raised. Chaucer’s *PF* achieves a similar end through exploration of social order though the mode of dream vision, and by allowing for diverse expression in the vocalizations of various species and classes of birds. The difficult nature of harmonizing divergent voices is made clear, suggesting that even with the precedence of parliament as a platform for the *vox populi* in England from 1376-1388, that perfect harmony is indeed, to borrow Wallace’s turn of phrase, “a fantasy of art” (47).

In the same way as *BD* presents the real world invading the space of idealism of dream poetics, the “shoutyng” at the conclusion of *PF* suggests the limits of artifice, as natural order resists the organization and classification manifest in attempts to make various voices of high and low tones sing “of oon acorde”.

V. **Conclusion – Dream Poetry and Freedom of Invention**

Chaucer’s expression of understanding of speculative music theory is not just a display of knowledge for the sake of it. Recognition of the significance of these allusions can offer new perspective in understanding the greater structure and meaning of the poems themselves, and insight into the depths and interests of Chaucer’s artistry. In his three dream poems, the use of *musica theorica* is closely linked to overall intentions and implications of the narrative, illustrating the complex nature of his engagement with this field of knowledge, as he does not merely replicate ideas read elsewhere, but manipulates them to serve as part of a more intricate network of signs and signifiers.

Chaucer’s musical realism is complex, his depictions of birdsong employ details of real life practice, as opposed to literary convention, but it is the musical practice of humans transposed onto animals. Chaucer’s singing birds exemplify an intermingling of natural and unnatural representation. At times they behave according to their species (for example, when the geese, cuckoos, and ducks of *PF* exclaim; “kek, kek!”, “kukkow!”, “quek, quek!”). Elsewhere
however, Chaucer’s birds produce sounds which bear greater resemblance to human music (such as when these birds sing a roundel in unison to a French tune at the poem’s end).

In each of these texts, Chaucer links music to concepts greater than our immediate association of the art with courtly entertainment or amusement. In BD, music is seen to rationalize and temper irrational human emotion, having the power to console; in HF it is linked to philosophy and enlightenment; in PF it is connected to natural and social order. Music is firmly associated with number these dream poems, from references to Pythagoras in BD, to the multiplication of sound in HF, to the disharmony of multiplicity in PF. This association firmly witnesses medieval understanding of music as being bound to the underlying structures of reality. As a manifestation of sounding number, Chaucer repeatedly associates music with order and rationality, and disrupts this perceived order with unmusical (irrational) noyse. This consequently complicates the association of musica with natural order. Although it is so firmly associated with rationality in the medieval mind, Chaucer presents such permanence as artificial through the invasion of “real” sounds into his dreamscapes. The animal shouts of PF interrupting the idyllic resolution at the tale’s end is more true to reality than the associations of musica mundana with natural order.

Chaucer’s use of birdsong, intercalated lyrics, portent sounds, musical mythology, and musica theorica reveal concerns with art, artifice, and life. These manipulations of the materials of music education counterpoint artifice and realism, rational and non-rational, experience and authority, natural and unnatural. In each case they demonstrate limitations, of art, of social order, of philosophy and religion, and of language and learning. In all three texts, there is a sense of preoccupation with impropriety in the inappropriateness of application of musica theorica. Consolation via music is rendered inadequate in BD, the NeoPlatonic conceptual theory of HF applied to subject matter that is unsuitable, and perception of the ability of music to restore order is challenged with the conclusion of PF. In addition, we see this emerge in the ways that musicians behave inappropriately in these texts. The birdsong of BD and PF, mimetic of human musical practice is disrupted, and the “smale harpers” of HF who imitate superior musicians are described as “apes”. Through such inadequacies, Chaucer examines the ethics of “understanding” as often the musicians (and indeed in the case of the eagle of HF, theoreticians) of his dream poems do not comprehend the deeper significance of the art. As these three poems are so patently concerned with literary convention and idiom, that the mimetic reproduction enacted by these musicians is challenged is telling of how Chaucer positions himself within poetic and philosophic traditions.
The prevalence of a developed understanding of speculative music theory in Chaucer’s poetry has implications not just for the poet himself, but also for his audience. Helen Barr asserts that

Language use in literary texts can [also] be seen as a material form of social practice in the way that writers deploy marked vocabulary whose significance would have been apprehended by audiences who belonged to a similar social matrix. (4)

The fact that allusions to music theory are so frequent in Chaucer’s poetry implies that he would have expected his audience not only to be familiar with the subject matter, but also to appreciate the subtleties of his own treatment of the subject. Reiss wrote over thirty years ago that: “Chaucer’s poetry does give a real sense of an immediate audience. And this audience may be so important in the construction of Chaucer’s poetry that, if we ignore it, we are rejecting something essential to the understanding of Chaucer’s artistry” (390). The widespread popularity of intellectual exchange in fourteenth-century England must be emphasized for us to truly understand the originality and inventiveness of Chaucer’s treatment of speculative music theory.
Chapter Three

Teaching, Preaching, and Performing:

“Without a teacher there can be no antiphons.”

(Guido of Arezzo, Regulae Rhythmicae 15)\(^{43}\)

This chapter takes as its starting point an oft quoted dictum of the Benedictine monk and celebrated music theorist Guido d’Arezzo (c. 991-1050). I begin with reference to this assertion as I will examine textual representations of music underpinned by a preoccupation with education, understanding, and the proper use of music in religious settings. Guido seems a fitting figure with which to begin as his Micrologus – one of the most widely read texts for musical instruction in the Middle Ages – marked a widespread progression from reliance upon the ear to the written record. Guido codified and propagated staff notation of music, which replaced neumatic notation as the uniform mode of representation to encode sounds onto paper, or decode those signs back into sound. It is in the Regulae Rhythmicae, a later short verse treatise restating the materials of the Micrologus, that Guido affirms the necessity of proper training for church singers. Guido’s emphasis on education and understanding for religious singers resonates with depictions of music in Middle English poetry. London, British Library, Arundel MS 292 (hereafter: Arundel 292) and in Chaucer’s Prioress’s Tale (PrT), Nun’s Priest’s Tale (NPT), and Second Nun’s Tale (SNT) all, in varying ways, articulate concerns about the proper teaching, learning, performance, and hearing of liturgical music. I will argue that the musical allusions found in Arundel 292, a miscellany from the Benedictine Cathedral Priory of Norwich, and in the tales of Chaucer’s religious company, resonate with Guido’s statement, “Sine magistro nulla discitur antiphona”, on two levels. On a practical level, in the anonymous poem the Choristers’ Lament (ChL) extant in Arundel 292 and in Chaucer’s PrT and NPT, there are evident preoccupations with the pedagogy and training of singers, and with appropriate performance of music.

Moreover, I will consider the figurative significance of these depictions of music, insofar as the proper teaching, learning, and understanding of music serve as a metaphor for spiritual enrichment (and debasement) in Arundel 292 and in Chaucer’s Prioress’s company. These texts demonstrate awareness of the centrality of music to religious devotion, articulating that, as the anonymous authors of the SumM write, “modus itaque canendi et ipsus cantoris devotionem ostendit” (346) [“the manner of singing reveals the devotion of the singer” (59)]. These representations of music as a vehicle for spiritual improvement are frequently framed by interest

\(^{43}\) “Sine magistro nulla discitur antiphona” (ed. and trans. Pesce 326-326).
in the intellectual application on behalf either of the singer or of the listener. The dangers of hearing without understanding or of being misled by hearing improper music (that is instinctive, irrational, or untrained) are imagined in the ME Physiologus of Arundel 292 and in Chaucer’s PrT, whilst the piety of the “litel clergeon” of PrT and of the Prioress herself are both placed in a balance between understanding and performing. This is echoed in the NPT and SNT. The representations of music in Arundel 292 and the tales told by the Prioress and her company in CT both espouse and challenge the attitudes embodied in the Latin proverb often attributed to Augustine: “bis orat qui bene cantat” [“he who sings well prays twice”].

The association of skilled musical practice with virtue is explicit in the Latin sermon attributed to Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton (c. 1150 – 1228) in Arundel 292 and in Chaucer’s PrT.

To allow for contextual understanding of the texts of Arundel 292, I also include a description of the manuscript itself. My discussion of depictions of music in Arundel 292 seeks to emphasize the continuity and correlation of the texts transcribed by Hand 1 and their relevance to the analysis of the later additions to the manuscript, such as the ChL and the Complaint Against Blacksmiths. These two Middle English poems demonstrate obvious references to music and have received significant scholarly attention in this regard. However, these two texts have yet to be considered in relation to the depictions of music in the works transcribed by the primary scribe. I will demonstrate that ChL in particular displays patent thematic and textual correspondence to works of earlier transcription in Arundel 292. Arundel 292, remains a less studied miscellany. In the following discussion, I will refer to Wirtjes’ edition of the Physiologus. This provides substantial palaeographical documentation of the Middle English works of Hand 1, but will substantiate her study with reference to my own examination of the additional contents of the manuscript, marginalia, inscriptions, and idiosyncrasies.

44 From Augustine’s commentary on Psalm 72, 1: “Qui enim cantat laudem, non solum laudat, sed etiam hilariter laudat” [“For anyone who sings praise is not only praisin, but praising cheerfully” (trans. Boulding 470)].
45 Francis Utley’s “The Chorister’s Lament” provides a transcription and modern edition of ChL in addition to explanatory notes (through consultation with Gustave Reese and Manfred Bukofzer to provide glosses for musical terminology). Elizabeth Salter offers a transcription of the Complaint Against Blacksmiths, context of the impact of smithing upon the medieval city of Norwich, and asserts that the addition of the poem was likely prompted by reading De Purgatorio Sancti Patricii and association of the sounds and smells of the forge with hell (212-213). In Music, Body, and Desire, Holsinger discusses the intersections of musical pedagogy and bodily violence in ChL (272-208). Richard Schrader’s “The Inharmonious Choristers and Blacksmiths” argues that the addition of the Complaint Against Blacksmiths was prompted by reading ChL, commenting on the association of music-making with blacksmiths via Pythagoras’ legendary discovery of music in the forge.
Despite evidence that this manuscript was intentionally compiled, the interrelationships of its texts have not been considered at length. Although the primary scribe works fluently in Latin, French, and Middle English, scholarship has tended towards categorizing the works of Arundel 292 by language or by genre. The French texts and Middle English texts of Arundel 292 have been discussed in discrete linguistic studies.\(^6\) In addition, texts from Arundel 292 have been included in studies of genre and traditions, such as medieval satire and devotional texts.\(^7\)

Studies in single-language frameworks, or consideration of a single “genre” of text remove these works from their contexts in a diverse and multilingual setting and from the miscellany of works by which they were accompanied. That scholars have tended towards studying Arundel 292 in parts rather than as a whole may be for practical reasons insofar as linguistic barriers do not permit us the same trilingual fluency as the medieval scribe. Nevertheless, mixing occurs even within individual works such as, for example, in the ChL when the speaker recounts the rebuke of his French choirmaster:

> It is but childes game þat þu witʒ dauid dayles.
> Qwan ilke note til òper lepes and makes hem a-sawt
> þat we calles a moyson in gesolreutʒ en hawt.
> il hayl were þu boren þif þu make defawt.
> ðanne sais oure mayster ‘que vos ren ne vawt’ (48-52).\(^8\)

In addition to the code-switching involved in quoting the French choirmaster, the speaker also indicates knowledge of Latin in his reference to “dauid” (the psalms). The poem therefore records the testament of a speaker who writes in English, sings in Latin, and is spoken to in

\(^6\) For example, see discussions of French texts in Ruth Dean and Maureen Boulton’s Anglo-Norman Literature and of its Middle English texts in James Morey’s Book and Verse.

\(^7\) Elsewhere, the texts of Arundel 292 are discussed as stand-alone pieces (examples include Utley’s “The Choristers’ Lament”, Hanneke Wirtjes’ The Middle English Physiologus, and Robert Taylor’s “The Bele Alis Sermon”) or are anthologized with similar texts from other manuscripts (the Complaint Against Blacksmiths has for example been published in collections including Celia Sisam and Kenneth Sisam’s, The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse, A.C. Spearing and J.E. Spearing’s Poetry of the Age of Chaucer, and Maxwell Luria and Richard Hoffman’s Middle English Lyrics.

\(^8\) For references to the Physiologus, the Choristers’ Lament, and the Complaint Against Blacksmiths, I refer to the editions of Wirtjes, Utley, and Salter respectively. Where editions of texts of Arundel 292 have not been published, I refer to my own transcriptions. I have expanded abbreviations in the Latin texts and inscriptions with reference to Adriano The Elements of Abbreviation in Medieval Paleography, and The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources (www.dmlbs.ox.ac.uk).
French. Examination of the manuscript, as will be discussed below, reveals that the layout of text displays a graphemic continuity of scripts whereby the same style is used in both vernacular and Latin texts. This indicates an intentional compilation of multilingual works rather than a haphazard accretion of works as received or discovered by a compiler. On a more obvious level, in moments of linguistic mixing such as that of the ChL, the texts themselves indicate that Arundel 292 was produced in a fluently multilingual environment. In recent years, there has been substantial scholarship expanding understanding of multilingualism in medieval England.\footnote{For example: David Trotter, ed. Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain; Tim Machan “Medieval Multilingualism and Gower’s Literary Practice.”; Ardis Butterfield The Familiar Enemy: Chancer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War; Mary Davidson Medievalism, Multilingualism, and Chancer; Paivi Pahta and Arja Nurmi “Multilingual discourse in the domain of religion in medieval and early modern England”; and Judith Jefferson, Ad Putter, and Amanda Hopkins, eds. Multilingualism in Medieval Britain (c.1066-1520): Sources and Analysis; Susanna Fein, ed. The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript.} It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider the “whole” of Arundel 292. Framed by consideration of the politics of understanding music, I focus upon the Middle English Physiologus and ChL with reference to the French and Latin Sermo magistri Stephani, and the Latin Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri. However, I hope that by demonstrating the correspondences in depictions of music in French, Latin, and Middle English texts in the manuscript, further consideration will be encouraged.

I. The Manuscript and the Priory

Arundel 292 comprises 115 folios of parchment (+1 unfoliated leaf after f. 39 and 4 unfoliated paper flyleaves at the beginning and end). It measures 200 x 135 mm with moderate margin space. Writing space is 152 x 102 mm. It is ruled in pencil for 27 lines of text and pricking is visible. Several texts are written in two columns (such as the bilingual Disticha Catonis in which columns with Latin passages and French “translations” of the distiches appear side-by-side). Decoration of the miscellany is simple. It is not a deluxe manuscript but an everyday book. Latin headings are in red ink. Capital letters are touched with red, as are the first letters immediately following a punctus. Arabic numbers are used in mathematical tables on ff. 106v, 107v-108, 110v, and 112v. Annotations in lead point are visible on the inner margins of each folio, indicating important points and divisions. There is evidence that the manuscript was corrected, as a number of the texts are accompanied by contemporaneous marks denoting omission (dotted underline on folios 11 and 35v) and insertion of words (oblique double hairlines on folios 5v, 7v, 8, 9v, 10, 20v, 42, 47v, 48v, and 55).
Even though the quiring is irregular, we can tell that these quires were intended to accompany one another, as there is an index of contents in the hand of the primary scribe on f. 114 on the miscellany, and quires bear contemporaneous signatures “i” to “xii” (the first and final quires are unsigned). Wirtjes notes that a gap in signatures between quires “x” and “xii” indicates that “a quire is wanting”, and that this quire may have included De combustione ecclesie cath’ sancta trinitatis Nowic, a text chronicling the great fire at Norwich in 1272 that is listed in the index on f. 114 (ix). The listing of the De combustione text in the index offers a terminus a quo for the compilation of Arundel 292 (Wirtjes x). The designation of the manuscript to Norwich is further verified by the appearance of a pressmark of Norwich Cathedral Library (C.x.) from c. 1300 at the top of f. 3 and again amid pen-trials and inscriptions on f. 114v.

The original texts of the manuscript, are the work of one anonymous scribe, most likely from West Norfolk in a thirteenth-century large formal hand with a number of scribal idiosyncrasies. A punctus separates half-lines in the Pyhsiologus. ʒ is not used, and ð is used instead of þ. Latin texts employ superscripts and use a tironian note instead of ampersand. Whilst normal r’s are used for the most part, “2 shaped” r is used after o. Lower-case g is written with both open and closed lower loops; a hooked g follows n and is frequently found in the initial position and before a consonant or velar vowel (e.g. of the Dove in the Middle English Physiologus: “woning 7 groning is lic hire song” 597) in addition to in Latin words (e.g. Significacio). A hookless g is used for all other phonetic values (e.g. of the Dove: “ge ne liueð noʒt bi laʒt” 591). Johann P. Gumbert and and P. M Vermeer argue that the hookless g “requires comment”, stating that the hooked g “is used to represent the sound [g]” and that the hookless variant “a graphemic device to distinguish other sounds from this [g]…functions as yogh” (56). Considering this unusual feature of the script in addition to the scribe’s use of ð instead of þ, and a “u-like shape” of p, Gumbert and Vermeer conclude that the idiosyncrasies of this manuscript are the result of an attempt “to lessen the graphemic distance between vernacular and Latin script, by choosing or creating shapes for the typically English graphemes which are as close as possible to the Latin ones” (57). The graphemic proximity of vernacular and Latin texts creates a fluidity of materials included in the manuscript and a sense that these materials are intended to accompany one another.

50 “The quiring, in so far as it can be established, is as follows: i2, ii nine, iij12, iv̄4 + I leaf after 27 (f. 28), v 12, vi8, viii8 + 1 leaf before 49 (f. 48), viij8, ix̄6 + I leaf after 67 (f. 68), x8, xi6 + I leaf after 80 (f. 81), xii10, xiiij12, xiv seven (f. 115)” (Wirtjes ix).

51 See Jane Roberts Guide to Scripts 141-142.

52 Wirtjes transcribes this g as yogh in The Middle English Physiologus (i.e “ʒe ne liueð noʒt bi laʒt” 21)
John Scahill writes that “the consistency of script and layout suggests that the sections belonged together from the start” (30) and Arundel 292 is, therefore, a bespoke manuscript. Though its contents are diverse, they are patently grouped by language and genre as an overview of the order of texts transcribed by Hand 1 indicates:

- **ff. 3-10v** Middle English
  - Creed, Pater Noster, Ave Maria, In Manus tuas, Dinges ëre, If man him biðocte, Physiologus
- **ff. 12-24v** Latin
  - Fabulae Odonis
- **ff. 25-38** French
  - De quatre sorurs vus voil dire, Deu le Omnipotent
- **ff. 38-86** Latin
  - Sermo magistri Stephani, Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri, Merlini Ambrosii Vita, De purgation Sancti Patricii
- **ff. 87-104v** Latin and French
  - Disticha Catonis
- **ff. 105-113v** Latin
  - De compositione cylindri, De compositione quadrantis, De sortibus tractatus brevis, Ænigmata quaedam

The compilation of texts is at once instructional and entertaining. John Frankis observes that in comparison to other thirteenth-century anthologies, Arundel 292 “reflects a fairly relaxed humane approach to piety” (177). Though the miscellany contains a number of religious texts including a Middle English Creed and Pater Noster, the Anglo-Norman sermon Deu le Omnipotent, and the Latin Sermo magistri Stephani de Langedune, the remainder of the texts – romances, riddles, distiches, fables, treatises, etc. – though often instructional or moralistic, are not devotional. As Scahill observes, there is “some sense of linguistic decorum in its organization” and that it bears the signs “of a more educational, less pastoral milieu” (31). The signs of this educational milieu are manifest in the extensive evidence of use of this small, undecorated book. There are notate bene and manicules occurring on six different occasions in at least five different hands, underlining sections of the Fabulae Odonis (ff. 23 and 23v), of the Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri (ff. 49 and 55), of De Purgatio Sancti Patricii (f. 72), and of the Disticha Catonis (f. 101v). In addition, inscriptions appear in the margins of the Historia Apollonii (f. 56v),

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53 More detailed foliation of these contents and later additions is provided in appendix i. For this, I follow Wirtjes in using the corrected 1855 pencil foliation of the manuscript.

54 ff. 23, 23v, 49, 55, 72, and 101v. Further details provided in appendix iii.
Sermo magistri Stephani de Langedune (f. 39), and the Disticha Catonis (f. 100), and following two texts added by later scribes (ff. 11 and 71) in at least four different hands.55

In addition to marginalia, some readers of Arundel 292 have added complete texts on blank leaves between the works of the primary scribe. On the blank folios in between the work of Hand 1, four later texts have been added by four different scribes, referred to as Hands 2, 3, 4, and 5, for the order that their works appear in the manuscript rather than the likely dates of transcription.56 These later contributors have added:

- Hand 2: on f. 11, a Latin contemptus mundi beginning O Caro Carnea (mid-15th C)
- Hand 3: on ff. 68-70, a set of Latin instructions Quid agendum sit, si forte panis aut vinum in Eucharistia Domini caderat in terram (what to do if there are accidents at Holy Communion) (late-14th C)
- Hand 4: on ff. 70v-71, the Middle English poem beginning “Un-comly in cloystre” (ChL). (mid-14th C)
- Hand 5: on f. 71v, the Middle English poem beginning “Swarte smekyd smepes” (the Complaint Against Blacksmiths) (mid-15th C)

From the contents, format, and organization of this manuscript, we can infer that Arundel 292 was originally intended to be a vademecum useful for teaching, composing sermons, or as an aid to personal prayer. It was intended for senior members of the community – not as a learning tool for novices. Barbara Dodwell notes that “the friars had used the myths and fables of antiquity for moral ends in their sermons; so too did the monks, since the Norwich library contained Vincent de Beauvais’s De eruditione filiorum nobilium with its collection of fables” (“The Muniments and the Library” 336). The fables, histories, and riddles of Arundel 292 may have served a similar purpose. Siegfried Wenzel writes that the material “very probably was used for preaching” (Preachers, Poets 6). That the miscellany contains a sample of a sermon (ff. 38-9) and instructions for Eucharistic observance (ff. 68-70) as well as fables (often used as exempla) further affirms this. The two Middle English additions were not intended to be used as material for sermon writing, Wenzel notes the Complaint Against Blacksmiths “must not be automatically

55 I do not include here the inscription on the blank f. 113, which is repeated in the same hand on f. 112v (De sortibus tractatus brevii) as this appears to be a pen-trial, perhaps, done on this folio because of the lack of space amid various other pen trials on f. 114-114v.
56 See appendix ii for profile of the additional scribes.
associated with preaching on the ground of the general nature of the manuscript in which it appears” (6).

It is evident that this manuscript belongs in the context of the vast and diverse collection of books attributed to Norwich Cathedral library in the late thirteenth century. Dodwell writes that the period following the great riot of 1272 “was one in which the Norwich book collection grew rapidly” (344) as a result of the bequests of individual monks. Neil Ker estimates the total of books acquired between 1272 and c. 1325 to be between 400 and 500 (7). Norman Tanner’s assertion that “Norwich was one of the most important intellectual and cultural centres in medieval England” (270) is witnessed in the diverse contents of its library. In addition to the service books, psalters, breviaries, Bibles, homilies, and sermons that might be expected of a monastic library, there also survive copies of philosophical works, legal texts, histories, fables and romances. The records of materials kept at Norwich library suggest that more senior members of the community had access to a wider range of materials. Records of books being kept in the common in 1382-3 and of the use of the word “library” in 1386-1387, lead Dodwell to assert that “it seems a specially designated book-room existed in Norwich rather earlier than at Durham or Canterbury” (337).

Norwich was not only a site of intellectual development during the period in which Arundel 292 was produced, but also of musical supremacy. Susan Boynton emphasizes that liturgical performance “entailed such extensive preparation and rehearsal that it constituted the very essence of medieval monastic education” (Young Choristers 41). This emphasis on accomplishment in music making is apt, given Benedict’s assertion that liturgical singing and reading should be done only by those who are proficient:

Cantare autem et legere non praesumat nisi qui potest ipsud officium implere ut aedificentur audientes quod cum humilitate et gravitate et tremore fiat, et cui iusserit abbas.

[No one should venture to sing or read unless he can do it to the edification of his hearers. It is to be done with humility, gravity and reverence, and by appointment of the Abbot.]

57 See: Neil R. Ker, “Medieval Manuscripts from Norwich Cathedral Priory.”
58 See Barbara Dodwell, “The Muniments and the Library.”
59 Regula XLVII. Bruce L. Verarde’s edition (158), David Parry’s translation (76).
When considering the signs of this interest in musical training in Arundel 292, it is important to bear in mind the presence of boy singers in liturgical practice throughout the Middle Ages. Boynton affirms that “the donation of a child by parents was common practice in Benedictine Monasteries until c. 1200” (37). The practice then died out, partially influenced by competing religious orders who would only accept adults, and partially because of a number of papal bulls. In 1230 for example, Pope Gregory IX set the minimum age of admission to religious orders at 18 years. At this point, almonry schools began to open in the monasteries instead, but the children were not obligated to take religious orders from these schools. Child oblation was common practice at Norwich until the late-thirteenth century, at which point it emerged as the first cathedral recorded to establish an almonry school (Tanner 271). Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS 465, indicates that at the time of Arundel 292’s production, boy singers were included in the celebration of the feasts of St. Nicholas (6th of December), Holy Innocents (28th of December), Palm Sunday, St. John’s Eve (23rd of June), and All Souls’ Day (2nd of November).60 In addition to the records of Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS 465, Alan Mould cites evidence in Worcester Cathedral Muniment B 680 that Norwich Cathedral was the first to include boy singers in celebration of mass. Mould records:

from before 1290 … on Sundays and feast days, after lessons in school coincident with conventual mass in quire, the almonry boys were to go to the church of St. Mary in the Marsh, which lay within the cathedral precincts where they were to chant the psalms and assist with the readings, divided into decani and cantoris, one set being singers, the other set readers “secundum quod deus dederit eis facultatem”, that is, “as God has given them aptitude” (40).

There was a correspondence between changes in musical styles and policies of admission. As boy singers could add a higher vocal range, polyphonic textures became more intricate. Boynton argues that the presence of boy singers may have fostered experimentation, assisting with the formation of the “New Song” corpus of the fourteenth century (48). Conversely, with the development of more complex polyphony, new positions were made available to boys to fill in the voice parts.

The flourishing musical and reading cultures of Norwich undoubtedly intersected as reading and singing were both taught by the armarius whose responsibility it was to correct liturgical books, manage the library, and educate the almonry boys.61

60 See John B Tolhurst’s edition of Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS 465 (16-17, 35-6, 76-9, 135-6, 187-8).
61 See Boynton “Medieval Musical Education” (53).
II. “Manie & sille”: Siren Song and the *ME Physiologus*

The first reference to music in Arundel 292 serves as a useful starting point to consider the intersections of music, rationality, and understanding in discourses concerning spirituality. It appears in the description and subsequent moralizing of the Siren in the Middle English bestiary on folio 8v. Based on the metrical Latin *Physiologus Theobaldi* (eleventh century), the bestiary of Arundel 292 describes the Siren’s music as part of its specification of the creature’s physical and behavioural attributes:

Sipes ʒe sinkeð & scaðe Ɔus werkeð,  
Mirie ʒe singeð, Ɔis mere, & haueð manie stefnes,  
Manie & sille, oc it (ben wel ille.  
Sipmen here) steringe forʒeten for hire stefninge,  
Slumeren & slepen & to late waken:  
Þe sipes sinken mitte suk, ne cumen he nummor up. (397-402)

As with all other creatures categorized in the medieval bestiaries, the Siren’s characteristics were thought to provide moral examples to reinforce Christian teachings. In the *significatio* of the Middle English bestiary (hereafter referred to as the *ME Physiologus*), this singing is deemed to symbolize false speaking, flattery, and deception:

He speken godcundhede  
& wikke is here dede.  
Here dede is al vneuð  
Wið ðat spekeð here muð.  
…  
Mid here saʒe & mid here song  
He ðe swiken ðerimong (411-414, 419-420).

The allure of beautiful music is also employed as a metaphor for false speech in a similar warning towards the end of this Arundel 292 in the *Disticha Catonis* on f. 94 v. Again, this warning involves a non-human party:

Noli homines blando nimium sermone probare;
Fistula dulce canit, volucrem dum decipit auceps.

[Do not accept men who talk with meaningless words (have smooth on their tongue);
The pipe sings sweetly, when the fowler deceives the bird.]^62

That these creatures are not human implies that they are irrational and instinctive, and yet the warning is inverted. Whereas in the Siren’s depiction, the singer is the irrational creature, in the Disticha it is the listener. Both hearing and singing non-rational music are thus associated with immorality. Aside from the figurative significance of “sweet singing” as false speech, this music was representative of the literal danger that certain kinds of music posed in monastic communities. This section will provide context for both the spiritual and musical implications of the exemplum of the Siren in Arundel 292 for those involved in liturgical singing in the Middle Ages.

The Siren is the only fictitious beast that is catalogued in the ME Physiologus. Like the Centaur, alongside which the Siren often appears in bestiary traditions, the Siren’s hybridity is representative of a duplicitous nature.^63 Leofranc Holford-Strevens writes: “all these mixed creatures symbolize persons in the Church who are outwardly pious but harbour heretical or godless thoughts with which they mislead the innocent” (26). Whilst the human half of the Centaur is always depicted as masculine, the Siren’s is feminine.

Leach notes that the Siren is “usually treated in bestiaries among the bird entries” (Sung Birds: 259), however, in the ME Physiologus, the Siren does not appear amid avian creatures, but rather, between the Whale and the Elephant. The Siren, immediately following description of the Whale, is thus associated with aquatic rather than avian creatures. The Whale is similarly moralized as a treacherously enticing creature, luring small fish into its mouth with the sweet scent of its breath, and leading lost ships astray in stormy weather should they mistake the large creature for an island. Unlike the Siren however, the Whale’s deceptiveness is associated with the devil, rather than with human deceit:

(Wo so) him foleʒed, he findeʒ synde.
Do arn de little, in leue laʒe

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^63 Pairings of the Centaur and Siren in medieval bestiaries occur, for example, in the illustrations of London, British Library, Sloane MS 278 f. 47 (second half of 13th century), Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS Ludwig XV 3 f. 78 (c.1270) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 88 f. 138v (13th – 14th century).
Wo so listneð deules lore,  
On lengðe it sal him rewen sore (382-383, 387-388).

The likening of the Whale to the devil in the *ME Physiologus* can be understood in light of Woodcock’s observation that “the devouring mouth stood as a potent visual sign of the entrance to hell which reached its peak in the concept of the hell-mouth, usually depicted as the ferocious jaw of a great beast” (ch. 5). Mary Armistead notes that the ME redactor omits reference to the biblical Jonah (“Non sic, son sic jam sorbuit ille Jonam”) that appeared in Theobald’s edition, and that “in fact, the entire *ME Physiologus* omits any Biblical allusion or passage from scripture, which are frequent amongst the other versions of the *Physiologus*” (83-84). From Biblical and Classical aquatic images that appear at Norwich as visual prompts to the same ends, we can infer that the reader of Arundel 292 would have easily made this association. The Whale appears in engravings recently documented by the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey (*NMGS*) (*PLATE 1*). In addition, aquatic imagery appears in misercordia of the Cathedral, for example, in a depiction of a mermaid suckling a lion accompanied by supporters depicting a dolphin swallowing its young (*PLATE 2*).

The Siren’s aquatic nature is further underscored in the *ME Physiologus* by its physical description which differs from Theobald’s text. The *Physiologus* traditionally follows descriptions of the Siren from Classical antiquity, which depict the creature as half-bird:

Sirenae animalia sunt mortifera; quae a capite usque ad umbilicum figuram hominis habent, extrama uero pars usque ad pedes volatilis habent figuram. (B. XII)

[Sirens are deadly animals that from head to navel have human form, but their end-part down to their feet has the shape of a flying creature (volatilis).]^{64}

The ME redactor instead describes the Siren as half-human and half-fish: “Fro ðe noule nīðerward ne is ge (no man like), oc fis to ful iwis mið finnes waxen” (394-5). Holford-Strevens notes that although Sirens are given piscine features in visual art from the third century BC, it is not until the early-eighth-century *Liber monstrorum* “that the Siren is given fishtails in writing” (29). Beryl Rowland remarks that avian and piscine versions of the Siren co-existed in the Middle Ages as the respective features of sirens and mermaids tended to blur and become confused: “they might be all woman, part fish, part fowl, or even part horse” (140).

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^{64} Ed. Carmody (25), trans. Holford-Strevens (27).
The widespread mining of Christian lessons from contemplation of Sirens’ music in the Middle Ages is manifest in sculpture, painting, and other decoration contemporaneous to the aquatic imagery found at Norwich Cathedral.

Earlier examples can be seen in the late-ninth-century frescoes which decorate the Westwerk (873-885) of the Benedictine Abbey of Corvey, Germany. Figural decoration in the west end of the upper floor contains a depiction of Ulysses (Odysseus) combating the mythical sea monster Scylla. To the right of the Scylla, a Siren, half-human and half-bird, plays a harp. Charles McClendon notes that

the notion of the mysterious and dangerous sea as a symbol for the troublesome world through which every individual must navigate was a common theme in patristic exegesis … the depiction of Ulysses, which is virtually unknown in medieval church decoration, has … even more specific ties to the function of the westwork at Corvey. In monastic circles the Sirens and their alluring singing came to personify the temptations of the flesh, shunned by those following the claustral way of life (192).

McClendon notes the proximity of this figural decoration to fragments of musical notation transcribed in the western gallery of the upper level. The voices of boy singers, who McClendon suggests may have used this musical graffiti as a memory aid, provided a contrast to a dangerously seductive music of the Sirens depicted in adjacent figural decoration. The images served as a warning to auditors to listen to the music of devotion rather than the figurative music of worldly temptation (192). The images of the sea documented at Norwich Cathedral may have been used as similar visual reminders. The engraving of a Whale and ship appears in close proximity to transcription of musical notation (PLATE 3).

Sirens and Harpies are often used interchangeably – both are perceived as guides to the underworld in Classical myth and both take the form of a human female. However, in comparison with harpies, as Suzanne Leppe notes, “with Homer’s sirens, the idea of birdlike soul guide receives a sinister twist, for these malevolent demons used music to guide living souls rather than dead ones to the eternal abodes of the underworld” (361).

From an early stage, the moralization of Sirens was sexual, as Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s citation of Isidore of Seville indicates:

siren sunt serpentes cristati et alati. aute dicit sirene sunt pisces marini in specie muliebri.
ubi agit de portentis dicit Sirenes tres fingunt fuisse ex parte virgines et parte volucres
Sirens are particularly sexualized in their aquatic form, as according to Leach it “would have linked their sexual voraciousness and their ability to make music in the mind of medieval clerics” (197). In medieval physiology, lechery was thought to be stimulated by moisture. The moist ‘complexion’ of women supposedly made them more prone to it than the naturally dryer male and thus it was considered a feminine trait. Leach observes:

Many music theory treatises stress the fact that the word music derives from moys, that is, water, associating a feminine noun with an aspect of the feminine complexion, leaving the way open for an easy association with impropriety (“The Little Pipe Sings Sweetly” 197).

In this context, the alliterative attestation of the ME Physiologus that the Siren: “fro ðe noule niðerward ne is ge (no man like)” is loaded with innuendo. Examining common usage of the Middle English niðer, indicates that the word carries with it negative implications. The phrase niðer “to hell” appears frequently in reference to a subterranean “hell” in such texts as: the homilies of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.52 (c. 1200-1225), the Dialogue on Vices and Virtues (c. 1200), and the Life of St. Margaret of Antioch in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS 34 (c. 1225). The euphemism of Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s use of the phrase “nether-purse” to refer to male genitalia in the following century indicates that the word also carried some sexual connotations. “Yblessed be God, that I have wedded five of whiche I have pyked out the beste, bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste” (CT III. 42-4). In the ME Physiologus, the coupling of this word with the noule is pointed. In Middle English usage, the navel brings to mind

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65 See van den Abeele’s edition (118) and Steele’s translation (166-167).
femininity by association with the umbilicus and attachment of mothers to children in the womb. That this association was clear in the medieval mind is evinced by John Trevisa’s (1342–1402) translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus _De Proprietatibus Rerum_ (1398): “by þe nauel þe child is I-holde & I-fed in þe modir wombe” (60a). Again, Chaucer’s use of the term in the _Knight’s Tale_ suggests sexual innuendo where it is associated with Venus, sex, beauty, and fertility:

> The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
> Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
> And fro the navele doun al covered was
> With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas (CT I. 1955-1958).

The choice of words by the author of the _ME Physiologus_ to describe the anatomy of the Siren thus emphasizes both the monstrous and sexual nature of this hybrid feminine creature.

The church often compared Sirens to prostitutes by way of representing female sexuality. Isidore of Seville even goes so far as to assert that the Sirens of the _Odyssey_ were in fact, not supernatural beings, but rather “veritatem autem meretrices fuerunt, quae transeuntes quoniam deducebant ad egestatem” [“they were actually prostitutes who led travellers into poverty” (_Etymologies_ Book 11, 3:31)]. Noting the similarities between sumptuary laws imposed on prostitutes in the Middle Ages and the clothing of sirens in medieval bestiary illustrations, Debra Hassig comments that: “lay readers would have undoubtedly made the connection between the bestiary Siren and the town prostitutes” (81). Leach expands on the association of Siren music with immorality:

> The siren's sonic lure leads ultimately to the dark, gendered underbelly of music's powerful effects, suggesting, in terms inherited from the ancient Greeks, like the Sirens themselves, that certain aural dangers are feminine and potentially feminizing (“The Little Pipe Sings” 192).

John of Salisbury (c. 1120-1180) employs the image of the Siren in his work on political and ethical theory, the _Policraticus_. John denounces non-standard musical practices, including overly ornate melismas and the praise of boys and men singing beyond the natural vocal range of “masculine” principles, condemning those that do not conform to church standards:
 Ipsum quoque cultum religionis incestat quod ante conspectum Domini in ipsis penetralibus sanctuarii lasciuentis uocis luxu, quadam ostentatione sui, muliebris modis notularum articulorumque caesuris, stupentes animulas emollire nituntur. Cum praecimentium et succinentium, concinentium et decinentium, intercinentium et occidentium praemolles modulaciones audieris, Sirenarum concentus credas esse non hominum. (*Policraticus* I. 6, 75-82)

[The very service of the Church is defiled, in that before the face of the Lord, in the very sanctuary of sanctuaries, they, showing off as it were, strive with the effeminate dalliance of wanton tones and musical phrasing to astound, enervate, and dwarf simple souls. When one hears the excessively caressing melodies of voices beginning, chiming in, carrying the air, dying away, rising again, and dominating, he may well believe that it is the song of the sirens and not the sound of men’s voices.]*66

John of Salisbury thus conflates effeminate and monstrous, but emphasizes the danger is in reception of this music – that it is those who hear rather than those who sing who are at risk of perversion. John continues “when this type of music is carried to the extreme it is more likely to stir lascivious sensations in the loins than devotion in the heart”.67 The comparison dehumanizes these voices by making them less rational, as the authors of the *SumM* insist that human music comprises of measuring sounds with a judicious mind:

Hec modulare sonos discreta mente docebit
Verbaque subiungit; volucres nil tale decebit
Nam per Naturam volucres cantare docentur;
Nil rationis habent quoscumque sonos modulentur (492-495).

[Human music will teach us to measure sounds with a judicious mind, and it adds words; no such thing is fitting to birds for they are taught to sing by Nature; they have no power of reason, whatever sounds they sing (65)]

The depiction of the Siren in the *ME Physiologus* varies from the original, not only in species, but also in the description of their music. They were described as being “manie stefnes” (which Wirtjes glosses as “many voiced”) a phrase coined to imply a texture of a number simultaneous vocal sounds, much like the innovations in polyphonic music which John of Salisbury criticized:

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66 See Keats-Rohan’s edition (48) and Pike's translation (32).
67 Pike 32.
Musicum quoddam ac dulcissimum melodiae carmen canunt, ita ut per suavitatem uocis auditus hominum a longe nauigantium mulceant et ad se trahant, ac nimia suavitate modulationiiis porlaxiae aures ac sensus eorum delinientes in somnum uertunt. (B. XII)

[They sing a certain musical and very sweet song of melody; so that through the sweetness of their voice they delight the ears of sailors from afar and draw them to themselves, and by excessive sweetness of their long-drawn-out melody (nimia suavitate modulationis prolixae) they sooth their ears and senses and send them to sleep.]\(^{68}\)

John of Salisbury’s disdain concurs with the papal bull *Docta Sanctorum Patrum* issued by John XII in 1324 criticizing composers of *ars nova* music for the unintelligibility of their settings of sacred texts to polyphony. John XII feared that in the midst of the layering of voices in these new styles of composition, the meaning of sacred texts would be lost, and so prohibited such techniques from performance of the ordinary of the Mass writing:

currunt enim, et non quiescunt; aures inebriant, et non medentur; gestibus simulant quod depromunt, quibus devotio quaerenda contemnitur, vitanda lascivia propalatur.

[These musicians run without pausing. They intoxicate the ear without satisfying it, they dramatize the text with gestures; and, instead of promoting devotion, they prevent it by creating a sensuous and indecent atmosphere.]\(^{69}\)

Sensuousness and ornateness are feared to be improper for Church music. The anxiety lies primarily in whether what is heard will be heard properly and understood. Although it may be argued that the Sirens of the *ME Physiologus*, described as aquatic and with attention to their female anatomy, are sexualized allegories, the disorienting nature of their music may not be categorized simply as “seductive”. It is interesting that the bestiary describes sailors as being lulled rather than lured by the siren’s song: “Sipmen here steringe for3eten for hire stefninge, slumeren & slepen & to late waken” (400-401). Whereas in the Odyssey Ulysses is lured by the sound of the music, the sailors of the bestiary are instead put to sleep and forget to steer. Thus they are not explicitly drawn to danger but are disorrientated, and have no sense of the proper “way”. The danger of the Siren’s song therefore is that it is unintelligible. This perception of misleading music is similar to the description of musical innovations in the *Policraticus*. John of

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\(^{68}\) Ed. Carmody (25), trans. Holford-Strevens (27).

\(^{69}\) See Guéranger’s edition (396) and Hayburn’s translation (20-21).
Salisbury does not accuse wanton singers of attempting to seduce their listeners, but rather, uses the words *stupentes* and *emollire* (“astonish” and “enfeeble”) to describe the effect of this music upon its auditors. The rejection of rational consciousness for sensual pleasure epitomizes medieval understanding of sin. Favouring the sensuous music of Sirens, either figurative or literal, was an irrational and thus sinful act. Whilst John of Salisbury, the writer of the *ME Physiologus*, and perhaps, the graffiti artists of Medieval Norwich express anxieties about the effects of improper music upon the hearer, another text in Arundel 292 concerns itself more with the other dangers with regards to understanding music.

III. Animal, Irrational, Child: The *Choristers’ Lament*

The *Choristers’ Lament*, (*ChL*) which survives only in Arundel 292, recounts the grievances of Walter, an inept fourteenth-century singer telling of his difficulties reconciling music theory and practice. The text is notable for providing many of the earliest English occurrences of technical musical terminology.\(^{70}\) Walter is unable to connect the written symbols – the shapes and names of notes – to their appropriate sounds. He cannot seem to remember the names of notes in staff notation referring to notes that appear to have tails and are curved like fleshhooks: “Summe notes arn shorte and somme a long noke, somme kroken a-weyward als a fleshoke” (11-12). He struggles to reach high notes lamenting that “þe song of þe cesolfa . dos me syken sare” (3). He sings flat and his unlearned singing sounds like the howls of a cuckoo and roars of a rook: “I ga gowlende a-bowte also dos a goke…I gowle on mi grayel and rore als a Roke” (5, 9). Following a scolding by his French choirmaster, Walter seeks out his younger friend William to compare lessons and grievances. Whilst Walter spends his days learning mensurable music, William is learning psalms. William is equally unenthused about his lessons, as he responds to Walter’s complaint that he practices psalms, or “hammers on david” until his tongue falters: “Me is wo so is þe be þat belles in þe walmes, I donke vp-on dauid til mi tonge talmes” (29-30).

The musical vocabulary of *ChL* derives from methods developed by Guido d’Arezzo, whose *Regulae Rhythmice* was cited at the beginning of this chapter. Guido’s approach centred on speed and efficiency, allowing singers to learn chants quickly by learning staff notation in addition to the “ut–re–mi–fa–sol–la” mnemonic (solmization). Guido wrote to Brother Michael on his motivations to develop this pedagogy:

\(^{70}\) See Francis L. Utley’s edition (198-202) for glossary of terminology in *ChL*. 
ut quos ego et omnes ante me summa cum difficultate ecclesiasticos cantus didicimus, ipsos posteri cum summa facilitate discentes, mihi et tibi ac reliquis adiutoribus meis aeternam optent salutem… ut inauditos cantus, mox ut descriptos videris, competenter enunties, aut inindescriptos audiens cito describendos bene possis discernere, optime te iuvabit haec regula.

[so that those who come after us, when they learn with the greatest ease the ecclesiastical melodies which I and all my predecessors learned only with the greatest difficulty, will desire my eternal salvation as well as yours and that of my other helpers… This rule will be of great use to you either in the competent singing of an unknown melody as soon as you see it written down, or in the accurate transcription of an unwritten melody immediately upon hearing it.] 71

In his Prologus in Antiphonarium, Guido emphasizes the applicability of music theory to practice, stating: “manualis operis argumentum fiat certis diffinitum numeris” [“with manual work let the ordained proof come to light through certain numbers” (24-25)]. 72 Walter fails to achieve this however, bemoaning “I solfe and singge after and is me neuere the nerre” (34).

As Bruce Holsinger observes, the humour of ChL arises from the juxtaposition of “proficient use of technical terms for musical pitch and notation with an inability to comprehend their meaning and perform accordingly” (280). The materials of Guido’s pedagogy, intended to make musical training easier and quicker, are turned to nonsense and noise by Walter who, instead of crafting harmonies, creates inhuman and irrational noise. Instead of stepping and leaping between notes, Walter stumbles and sticks as his master rebukes him: “þu stomblest and stikes fast as þu were lame” (18).

Throughout ChL “the interval which proves his downfall is the semitone: fa, cesolfa (line 3), bequrarre and benol (20, 37), effaut and elami (39)” (Utley 201). Semitonal intervals were widely treacherous territory for singers. The irony of Walter’s comparison of himself to a cuckoo is pointed. The cuckoo’s call is monotonous, a repetition of a single tone (Leach, Sung Birds 122). If Walter is like a cuckoo that can only sing a single note, it is unsurprising that semitones (or “half-notes”) would prove difficult for him.

Descriptions of rhythmic values are uncertain. Walter states that he struggles with “a streinant wiʒ to longe tailes”, a phrase which Utley (in correspondence with Gustave Reese and Manfred Bukofzer) denotes a plica, but which Holsinger refers to as a breve (281), and Leach

72 See Pesce, ed. and trans., 328-331.
deems to be a “treyns”, a rhythmic device described by the author of the *Quatuor principalia* (138). It could be argued that this term is intentionally allusive, much like the reference to notes that are “curved like flesh-hooks”, embodying Walter’s difficulty with his lessons. Holsinger comments that although “most likely written as a humorous parody of student complaints”, *ChL* “nevertheless speaks volumes about the daily strains on the mouths, throats, eyes, and ears of young singers entailed in the learning of liturgical music” (281). He notes the younger chorister William’s complaint that there is as much sorrow in singing psalms as there is in the stories that the psalms recount: “I ne rendrede nowt sithen men beren palmes, is it also mikel sorwe in song so is in salmes” (31-32). Ben Parsons highlights the reversal of corporal punishment often associated with the medieval classroom, in that Walter’s singing is so poor that it pains the ears of his choirmaster (28). Parsons observes that Walter’s flat notes “mutate into weapons” so that the errant student and the master come to switch places in the exchange of corporeal suffering (28). What interests me about the language of the poem are the references which seem bestial or inhuman. As we will recall from consideration of depictions of birdsong and speech in Chaucer’s *BD, HF*, and *PF*, the authors of the *SumM* insist that human music comprises of measuring sounds with a judicious mind. Indeed, Guido himself makes a similar distinction in his *Regulae Rhythmicae*, declaring:

> Musicorum et cantorum magna est distantia
> Isti discunt, illi sciunt, quae componit Musica.
> Nam qui facit, quod non sapit, diffinitur bestia (8-10)

[There is a great difference between *musicus* and *cantor*. The latter say, the former know what things make up music. He who sings without theoretical understanding is termed a beast. (Trans. Pesce 331)]

In addition to Walter’s comparison of himself to a howling cuckoo and roaring rook, the untrained voice is made to seem inhuman on a number of other occasions. The master’s criticism that Walter sounds like “an old caudrun [that] bigynnest to clondre” (22), and William’s comparison of his misery to “the be that belles in the walmes” are two of the more obvious with

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73 *Plica*. “In Western chant notations the name used in the 13th and 14th centuries for liquescent neumes. It describes their usual shape: a single stroke doubling back on itself to make a ‘U’ or inverted ‘U’, thicker at the curve. The plica is a two-note neume, containing the pitch where the plica was placed on the staff plus a higher (‘U’ shape) or lower (inverted ‘U’) note. The second note was semi-vocalized to provide a passing or anticipatory note before the next pitch.” (*Grove Music Online*)
their evocation of droning and buzzing sounds. More subtle are some of the words used to describe Walter’s attempts to sing particular notes. Twice his master rebukes him: “thu bites hem on-sonder” (20, 23) whilst William “hammers” the notes (I donke vp-on dauid til me tonge talmes 30). The comparison of Walter to a cuckoo, a rook, and a kettle, and of William to a drowning bee, place their music-making in a category that is unskilled and irrational.

Jason Stoessel observes that in the Middle Ages, discourses of animality in relation to music-making can often have pejorative racial implications. The Dominican friar Simon of St Quentin’s (fl. 1245-1248) comparison of the singing of Mongols to the howling of wolves in his *Histoire des Tartares* provides an example:

> Cantantes mugiunt ut thori, vel ulalant ut lupi, voces inarticulatas in cantando proferunt et hanc cantilenam ‘alai, alai’ communiter ac frequentissime canunt. [singing, they bellow like bulls or howl like wolves, issuing forth inarticulate vocalizations (voces inarticulatas) in their singing and they sing this song “Alay, Alay” communally and very frequently (Trans. Stoessel 202).]

Discussions of the vocal qualities of various ethnic groups, comparing the sounds of singing to animal vocalizations was pervasive. A similarly uncomplimentary and unmusical example can be found in the fourteenth-century Irish friar Simon Simeonis’ description of the “shouting of the Lombards” and the “howling of the Germans” in his *Itinerarium ab Hybernia ad Terram Sanctam* (Trans. Esposito 27). Such pejorative descriptions of vocalizations would have been known to readers at Norwich. Simon of St. Quentin’s *Histoire des Tartares* was transmitted in Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum Historiale*, of which two copies were held in the Cathedral library (Twomey 349).

Yet the animality of music in *ChL* seems closer to medieval associations of animals with unlearnedness, such as in Peter of Abelard’s (1079-1142) complaint that “quasi enim asinus est ad lyram lector librum tenensa id ad quod” [“a reader with a book but without full capacity to fulfill its purpose is like an ass confronted with a lyre”]74. The irrational nature of Walter and William’s music-making is also, in a sense, gendered. The uncontrolled nature of the children’s music demonstrates that they have yet to fully become “men”, as rationality and control were perceived to be the domains of masculinity, whilst emotion and irrationality were considered feminine in the Middle Ages. Ruth Karras attributes some of the association of rationality with acquisition of masculinity to the revival of Aristotelianism in the later-Middle Ages, but notes

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74 See Luscombe’s edition (506) and Levitan’s translation (249).
that “the idea that men are rational and women emotional was not new to the Middle Ages any more than was misogyny” (89). That William and Walter have yet to demonstrate the logical aptitudes associated with acquisition of masculinity implies that they are not only intellectually, but also morally inferior.

The choice of animals by which our commentators compare these singers’ vocalizations are pointed. The comparison of William to a bee is especially ironic as Leach notes: “bees in bestiaries are usually moralized as signifying a perfectly ordered community (secular or monastic). The ability of ‘voice’, that is, song or musica harmonica, to move the bees, even though they do not hear it, is a deep reflection of music’s naturalness and universality” (204). Richard de Fournival’s Bestiaire D’Amour provides a more typical example of the orderly and perfect nature of bees:

Non por quant uns vaisseaus d’es est essamez, on les maine à sifflet et à chant, ne mie porce que les eis l’oïent, mais il pert à lor oeuvres signerius que leur nature est si noble et si ordenée, selon la manière qu’il ne peut mie estre que bons ordenemens et parfez, se trespast qu’eles ne le sentent mie; et cil qui ont leut et entendut les hautes phylosophies sevrent bien combien musique puet, et chaus ne puet mie estre celé qu’en totes les choses qui sont, n’a si fort ne si parfaite ordenance come en chant, ne s’i esquite.

[It is written in the books on animal properties that Bees have no hearing. Nevertheless, whenever a hive of bees has swarmed, they are led by whistle and by song. This is not because they hear it. It is clearly apparent by the mastery of their accomplishments that their nature is so noble and well-ordered in their way that good and perfect order cannot pass them without being perceived by them. And those who have read and understood the high philosophies know well what the powers of music are. It is evident to them that in all things that exist there is no order as perfect or as exquisite as in song.]

That William describes himself as a single bee, separated from the harmonious swarm, indicates that he is unable to follow the same cues as his brothers who may be “led by a whistle and a song”.

Given the frequent designation of animal sounds as irrational and unmusical by grammarians, theologians, and music theorists, this poem suggests deficiencies in musical pedagogy as the two young singers struggle to make sense of the methods. Indeed, Walter’s assertion that he was “wol bare” of the semitones until he began his lifte “lare” (37-38) suggests

75 Hippeau’s edition (21) and Beer’s translation (13).
that this knowledge complicates and thus makes singing more difficult than it had been to do so instinctively. Even with an attentive teacher, Walter and William cannot hit the right notes. They are unable to rationally apply their lessons in notation to practice. That the two choristers struggle may simply be an indication of their youth, and we might infer that eventually they will overcome these missteps.

**IV. Piety, Pedagogy, and Performance:**

*Chaucer's Prioress's Tale, Nun's Priest's Tale, and Second Nun's Tale*

The experiences of young choristers recounted in Arundel 292 shed light on another fourteenth-century depiction of a boy singer, the child of Chaucer’s *Prioress’s Tale (PrT)*. The action of *PrT*, a miracle of the Virgin, is ultimately driven by song. The Prioress tells of a seven-year-old school boy who incites anger by singing a hymn to the Virgin, the Marian antiphon *Alma Redemptoris Mater*, whilst walking through a Jewish district in an unnamed city in Asia. Affronted by the song, the residing Jews enlist an assassin to cut the child’s throat and throw him in a pit. The Prioress imagines the child’s soul singing “a song al newe” among the 144,000 virgin followers of Christ envisaged by John the Evangelist in the Book of Revelation (XIV), before she returns to the murder scene where, miraculously, the boy continues to sing. His body is uncovered by Christian townsfolk overhearing his song, the Jews are held accountable and executed, and a wondrous greyn, linked to the child’s exanimate singing, is removed from his mouth by an abbot. At the close of the tale, the sounds of the child’s singing are replaced by the silence of the abbot lying prone weeping at the phenomenon, and of the Prioress’s audience, the pilgrims of the *Canterbury Tales*, who are left “as sobre was that wonder was to se” (*CT VII. 692)*.

The inharmonious singing of *ChL* is grounded in conventional musical education, whereas the beautiful singing of the Prioress’s clergeon is not. The deliberate rejection of the conventional in *PrT* is made apparent when read alongside the account of *ChL*. Where the young choristers of Arundel 292 learn their psalms and solfege under the direction of a choirmaster, the clergeon of *PrT* learns the *Alma Redemptoris* “by rote” from an unnamed fellow school boy. His music-making is more public in nature than that of the young choristers – who are educated in private in preparation for public performance – as he sings whilst walking “scoleward and homward” (*CT VII. 549*) through the city, his music reaching an audience of both Christian and non-Christian auditors. The clergeon of *PrT*, like William of *ChL* has an older companion with whom he can compare his school lessons. However, the exchange between the young choristers of Arundel 292 does not move beyond comparison and complaint toward instruction. The
clergeon memorizes rather than learns, supervised not by someone qualified to do so, but by a child. The hymn is studied, to borrow the phrase from Guido’s *Regula Rhythmica*, “sine magistro”.

Notker (c. 840-912) in the *Proemium* to his *Liber Hymnorum*, verifies the difficulty for young singers to learn music without a framework, recounting: “cum adhuc iuvenulus esset et melodiae longissimae, saepius memoriae commendatae, instabile corculum aufugerent, coepi tacitus mecum volvere, quonam modo eas potuerim colligare” [“when I was still young, and very long melodies – repeatedly entrusted to memory – escaped from my poor little head, I began to reason with myself how I could bind them fast”].\(^76\) Though Notker refers to melismas which would have been textless, the young clergeon also lacks a framework to guide his music as he does not understand the Latin words of the hymn.

The significance of the child’s education is made prominent from the outset of the tale in that he first learns devotion to the Virgin Mary from his own mother (CT VII. 509). Indeed, even before the tale begins, childhood education is evoked in the liturgical allusions of the Prioress’s *Prologue*. The opening line of the *Prologue* begins “Domine Dominus Noster”, the first words of Psalm 8. This is followed by a paraphrase of verses 2 and 3 of the Psalm, which, as part of the Little Office of Our Lady, Laura Broughton notes “formed the first part of the Middle English Prymer” (585). Arguing that Chaucer’s *ABC* is intended not for private prayer but as a pedagogical text for learning English, Georgianna Donavin notes the general medieval association of the Virgin with the education of youth:

Chaucer – and every other medieval schoolboy – would have associated the Virgin Mary with ABCs… Overall, medieval pedagogy in Latin for children was saturated with the language of devotions, often specifically Marian devotions (34).

From the allusions of the Prioress’s *Prologue*, the tale’s concern with the relationship between learning, understanding and piety is foreshadowed.

The same *prymer* is mentioned as the “litel book” the clergeon sits reading when he first overhears the chant being sung “as he sat in the scole” (CT VII. 517). The child abandons his own lessons to begin his unorthodox musical education, eavesdropping on the older children so as to memorize the “firste vers” of the *Alma Redemptoris* himself. It is the music rather than the text which draws the child’s attention as the Prioress recounts: “noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye, for he so yong and tendre was of age” (CT VII. 523-524). It is only when he has learned this *vers*, by sound rather than sense, that he approaches his older schoolmate and learns

\(^{76}\) Von den Steinen’s edition (8) and Crocker’s translation (1).
that the chant is a hymn to the Virgin. His companion asserts that the song “was maked of our blisful Lady free” (*CT* VII. 532). This friend’s understanding is also limited, however. His education is focussed more on the sound than upon the content of the song. He concludes, stating his own ignorance: “I kan but smal grammeere” (*CT* VII. 536). In this way, the *fellawe* mirrors the apologetic posture of the Prioress herself who states:

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My konnyng is so wayk…
that I ne may the weighte nat susteene;
but as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse,
that kan unnethes any word expresse” (*CT* VII. 481-485).
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Upon this explication, the *clergeon* decides to pursue learning of the hymn, admitting that this will mean inattention to his own lessons, affirming “though that I for my prymer shal be shent” (*CT* VII. 541). Though he may have also found material in the psalms of the Little Office “Oure Lady for to honoure” (*CT* VII. 543) whilst learning to read his *prymer*, the *clergeon* resolves instead to express his devotion through singing. Rather than attending to the lessons of his own mother or of his school, he favours the instruction of his *fellawe*. It is a deliberate rejection of learning, opting for the sensory rather than the sense that lies beneath.

That the clergeon learns this song *outside* of a religious or educational setting differentiates Chaucer’s tale not only from *ChL*, but also from other versions of the *PrT*. A total of 38 analogues for *PrT* have been identified, 32 collected by Brown, divided into Groups A (13 tales), B (10 tales), and C (9 tales plus Chaucer’s) (447-485), and a further 6 by Broughton referred to as Group NA (New Analogues) (583-648). Unlike all the others, the child of *PrT* learned the hymn “outside of school hours and not as part of his school discipline” (Brown 465). Indeed in Group B the boy is a trained chorister and sings in regular service of the church (Broughton 588). Holsinger states that this modification:

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shows us that in his meticulous refashioning of the miracle story of the singing boy martyr, Chaucer sought to avoid entirely the problem of institutionalized musical learning, the ecclesiastical discipline that might make the Alma redemptoris somehow less miraculous to its listeners … The clergeon is ostensibly anything but a product of schoolroom disciplina (271).
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The song that the clergeon learns is also a variation on Chaucer’s behalf from conventional forms of this story. In the vast majority of versions of this miracle story, the song that is sung is not the Alma Redemptoris, but the tract Gaude Maria. Boenig links the choice of this Marian antiphon to the age of Chaucer’s clergeon, who, at seven years of age, is the youngest of all the child martyrs in various versions of this tale. He writes that Gaude Maria “is simply too difficult musically for a seven year old to sing” (323). A more simple explanation may be that Gaude Maria was not commonly used in England and would not have had any resonances there. This particular tract was used in Winchester and at Westminster Abbey, but beyond that it was not widespread. It is not found in the Sarum Gradual manuscripts – the dominant Use in secular churches – which Chaucer would have encountered in any secular church in southern England.

The Alma Redemptoris would be a straightforward text for the clergeon to learn, though this he must still do in parts, memorizing only the first vers himself before seeking the assistance of his comrade. Chaucer selects a song that is familiar to his readers and appropriate to be learned by his young clergeon, adding to the pathos of the story. Given the circumstances of the child’s musical “education”, however, the song is still beyond his comprehension.

This, we could argue, is indicated in the manner that the child sings the song once he has learned it. The authors of the SumM, dedicate an entire section of their treatise to warning students against the many ways one may go astray in Chant. The authors criticize singers who do not strain to reach the correct notes when they sing, who, because they are fatigued, bored, or ill-bred, sing “non cantui sed sibi parcentes” (2017-2018), sparing not the chant, but themselves, and those who sing obstinately to suit their own taste rather than the very strict melodic formulae of liturgical music. The anonymous authors affirm:

Modus itaque canendi et ipsus cantoris devotionem ostendit et in audiente, si bone voluntatis est, suscitat devotionis affectum, et propter hoc in ecclesia merito frequentatur humiliter ac devote. (346-350)

[The manner of singing reveals the devotion of the singer and arouses a feeling of piety in the listener if he is well disposed, and so music is deservedly and rightly used in the Church in a lowly and devout fashion. (59)]

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77 On Winchester see the lacuna in Frere’s edition of the Graduale Sarisburiense lxxxiii [83]; he notes its use in Winchester for the feast of the Purification (2nd Feb.) and Commemorations of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but not in Sarum. On Westminster see Timothy Shaw Reading the Liturgy at Westminster (133).
For these thirteenth-century theorists, the legitimacy of one’s faith was measured by vocal technique.

he song it wel and boldly,  
Fro word to word, acordynge with the note. 
Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,  
…  
This litel child, as he cam to and fro, 
Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie  
O Alma redemptoris everemo (CT VII. 544-548, 552-554).

The child sings boldly rather than in a “lowly and devout fashion” as encouraged of liturgical singers in the SumM (“et propter hoc in ecclesia merito frequenatur humiliter ac devote” 348-350). The child sings acordynge with the note rather than the text, passing briskly “fro word to word”. The child has learned the phonemes that comprise the chant as opposed to its words, sentences, or morphemes. In other words, he has memorized the linguistic sounds, but does not understand them and is unable to organize them into meaningful units. The sensuous nature of the song and the ease with which it passes through the child’s throte is reminiscent of the delicacies mentioned by the Pardoner, which cooks “stamp” and “streyn” and “grynd” until: “Out of the harde bones knokke they the mary, for they caste noght awey, that may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote” (CT VI. 541-543). In her comparison of the digestive allegory of the Pardoner’s preaching with the sweet singing of the clergeon, Niamh Pattwell notes:

The emphasis is on the rejection of ‘inner’ over ‘outer’, ‘spiritual’ over ‘physical’, and, therefore, his advocacy of relics and pardons is considered a ‘soft option’… Likewise, the song of the Prioress’s Tale, with its emphasis on sweetness and effect, lacks the ‘marrow’ of penance and adult theology so that it too might be easily imbibed or ingested. (42)

Though he has learned the melody, his lack of understanding of either the text or of liturgical performance means that he does not know how to sing appropriately. Bigley describes the clergeon’s performance as “lusty and bodily” (60). Holsinger notes that “as a student of grammar alone, then, the clergeon learns the antiphon incorrectly in both institutional and pedagogical

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78 “acordynge” could also mean “in accord” (i.e. in harmony) implying a multi-sororous/polyphonic sound to the child’s singing, which ties in the “unnatural” quality of his post-mortem singing later on.
Yet the improper nature of the child’s singing might also be related to the concentration on the child’s youth and innocence, which is Chaucer’s own modification. Reinforcement of the simplicity of the protagonist, accentuates the ‘power’ of God to work against ‘nature’. Chaucer’s young clergeon would not yet be of age to learn antiphons at school, and so, instead reads his prymer, relying on his older jellaw to educate him. Chaucer’s version of this tale strives to emphasize the pathos of the child’s smallness. The word litel is used twelve times throughout, and is accompanied by use of such words as yong, innocent, smale, and sely. The image of the small child singing a prayerful song in such a cheerful manner would emphasize his innocence and the miraculous nature of the tale. Barr suggests that “the word ‘litel’ connotes sentimentality, not sentiment; the boy sings the song he has learned by rote, not with devotion in heart, or with compunction, but ‘murily’” (60). Though his execution is misdirected, the clergeon’s intentions are pure, as he sings “murily”, the Prioress asserts “on Cristes mooder set was his entente” (CT VII. 550). Further, in the detail of his own realization that he may invoke corporeal punishment, that he “shal be shent” for serving the Virgin in this manner, the clergeon proves his piety. The child’s election to be beaten for singing the song shows some of his cognisance and desire to imitate adult martyrs in his choice to suffer for sanctity.

In Chaucer’s modification of the tale the clergeon’s singing is not contained. Although prompted by hearing within the limits of the “litel scole”, it is not controlled, and as such leads to disastrous results for the singer. The violence of PrT is unmitigated. There is no resurrection here; “justice” and revenge conclude the tale rather than mercy or salvation. The effects have much greater implications than the little child’s death.

The inappropriate nature of the child’s unlearned singing brings to mind questions about the appropriate teaching and performance of liturgical music. This matter is anticipated before details of the clergeon’s musical education are revealed. In the Prioress’s Prologue, she explores appropriate devotion and demonstrates a preoccupation with vocalization or verbalization of belief:

O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous
Is in this large world ysprad -- quod she --
For noght only thy laude precious
Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
But by the mouth of children thy bountee
Parfourned is, for on the brest soukynge
Somtyme shewen they thyn heriynge. (CT VII. 453-459)

The Prioress perceives speaking, hearing and “performance” of faith to be miraculous in itself. The verbalization of belief and of the Lord’s name is bestowed with transcendent power much as Louise Fradenburg observes that “divinity is linked with the concept of the marvellous, specifically with the marvellous capacity of the disembodied name of the Lord to spread throughout the “large world”, to achieve fully creative extension” (174). God’s transcendence of the worldly spheres is achieved through the performance of lauds by men and children. The Prioress again makes this link before detailing the miracle of the clergeon’s singing: “O grete God, that parfournest thy laude, by mouth of innocentz, lo, heere thy myght!” (CT VII. 607-608).

Fradenburg observes that by paralleling the voices of children and men of dignity, the Prioress “collapses the maturational narrative understanding proposed by Augustine” (175). The verb that the Prioress uses to describe this action, parfournen – to complete or to bring to perfection – is used in a religious context elsewhere by the Parson, who conversely prioritizes deeds rather than lauds to demonstrate one’s faith, stating “obedience generally is to parfourne the doctrine of God” (CT X. 676). The Prioress is then, in comparison, more concerned with performance of words rather than deeds. The focus can be seen in the preoccupation with speaking rather than any interior meditation or reflection on faith. This aligns her with the Pardoner who has learned his moral tale “by rote” (CT VI. 332) and is described in the GP as singing in a voice “as smal as hath a goot” (CT I. 688). Julia Holloway cites the Prioress’s opulent dress, possession of dogs, and courtly manners as indications that Madame Eglentyne is lacking in virtue (201). Richard Rex adds to these crimes the Prioress’s style of singing. In the GP, the Narrator remarks that “ful weel she soong the service dyvyne, entuned in hir nose ful semely” (CT I. 122-123). Recalling the criticisms of the authors of SumM of those who sing “non cantui sed sibi parcentes”, the Prioress’ “semely” singing of the divine service through her nose is indeed objectionable. She is guilty of “sparing not the chant” but herself by intoning through her nose rather than her throat. Rex suggests that this form of intonation implies vacuous faith, citing “the idea prevalent in monastic thought that nasal chanting was a sign of weak faith and lack of devotion” (77). Examining another of Chaucer’s liturgical singers, the effeminate Absolon of the Miller’s Tale, Leach notes that “courtliness in singing represented a form of impropriety when performed by clerics” (34). That the adverb “semely” suggests “courtliness” or “comeliness” rather than “appropriateness” in this context is suggested by use of the word in further descriptions by

Chaucer such as when the narrator praises other mannerisms of the Prioress as “semely”, declaring “ful semely after hir mete she raughte” and “ful semely hir wympel lynche was” (CT I. 136, 151). Elsewhere in the CT, another female figure is described as wearing a headdress in a “semely” fashion, the statue of Venus to which Palamon prays in the Knight’s Tale, of whom we are told “a citole hadde she and on hir heed ful semely for to se a rose gerland” (CT I. 1960-1961). The term is used to described two musicians elsewhere in Chaucer’s work, the subject of the light-hearted To Rosemounde: A Balade (“your semely voys that ye so smal out-twynye maketh my thoght in joye and blis habounde” (11-12)), and Phoebus in the Manciple’s Tale (“he was the semelieste man that is or was sith that the world bigan” (CT IX. 119-120)). Both of these figures are courtly. Phoebus is refigured as a knight and a lusty bachelor in the Manciple’s retelling of an Ovidian fable. The Prioress’s style of singing is less appropriate than either that of Phoebus or Rosemounde, as her place in society is not among these courtly characters. That her courtliness is superimposed is suggested in the use of the word “counterfete” to describe her manners, a word that is also used to describe the trained Crow’s unnatural singing in the Manciple’s Tale (CT IX. 134). The Manciple, as will be discussed in the next chapter, tells a tale which warns against the danger of misplaced speech. His thirty-line moralization advising his listeners to “keep wel thy tonge” (CT IX. 319) resonates with the outcome for the clergeon, as the artifice of the Prioress’s singing is recalled in the Manciple’s description of birdsong.

Indeed, a similar message occurs in close proximity to reference another child martyr in CT in the Nun’s Priest’s Tale. In defence of the significance of dreams, the protagonist rooster Chauntecleer offers the exemplum of St. Kenelm (CT VII. 3110), whereas his fox adversary, daun Russell takes away a message that is close to that offered by the Manciple: “God yeve hym meschaunce, that is so undiscreet of governaunce that jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees” (3433-3435). Kenelm, like Chaucer’s clergeon, was a seven year old musical martyr, whose body was miraculously discovered singing the Te Deum before his murder, as recorded in the South English Legendary: “he bi-gan ane saume þat men singuth : in holie churche a-day, þat was “te deum laudamus”: are þat he a-doun lay” (179-180). The mention of Kenelm in the NPT echoes the singing clergeon of the PrT, both of which appear in the same fragment of the CT and both of which are martyred for their singing. Instead of celebrating such singing which brings heavenly reward, the moral in the mouth of the fox stresses the dangers of uncensored speech. The NPT juxtaposes the world perspective of PrT. Whilst in the latter, martyrdom is preferred leading to religious salvation, in the former ‘staying alive’ is preferred and so silence is advocated. In one, we are looking at eternal values, in the other we are concerned with transitory, practical, quotidian wisdom. This clash of values also exists within each tale. Whilst Kenelm, singing the
celebratory *Te Deum* embraces his martyrdom, the miracle is undermined by the fox’s concern with earthly existence. In the former, the Prioress is more concerned with the dead body than with the soul. Pattwell notes that “earthly concerns disrupt the heavenly vision” (45) as the heavenly vision of the celestial throne occurs prematurely in the tale before the narrator turns to consideration of the grieving mother, the body in the latrine, and the persecution of the Jews.

Like the child of her tale, the Prioress’s singing is improper for religious music. Though she sings “ful semely”, she lacks the faculty of forming judgements according to speculation or reason. She is noted to speak French, but not Latin, the language of the Church. She herself proclaims her own “konnyng” to be “wayk” when introducing her tale (*CT* VII. 481).

If we take as literal the reference to her French rather than Latin and her nasal singing, it indicates to the musically sensitive reader that she, much like the incompetent young choristers of Arundel 292, fails to perform music appropriately in a religious environment. The young cantor of *PrT*, therefore, echoes her own limited understanding, as he learns the *Alma Redemptoris* from memory rather than understanding. That Chaucer was aware of Boethius’s distinction between *musicus* and *cantor* is patent in the ironic remark of daun Russel to Chauntecleer in the *NPT*: “ye han in musyk moore feelynge than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge” (*CT* VII. 3293-3294), thus praising Boethius for his ability to sing rather than for his theoretical understanding of music.  

Holloway reads the Prioress as pandering to convention and expectations of the female ecclesiast to be devout, but unlearned, stating that “the Prioress creates a persona for herself, a Jungian animus of herself, in the illiterate hymn-chanting school boy ... she is unforgivably both victim and victimizer” (204). The refusal to learn and engage is key as it perpetuates a cycle of violence. Madame Eglentyne therefore reinforces what Eileen Power, in her extensive study of female ecclesiastical life in the Middle Ages, refers to as “the whole trend of medieval thought against learned women” (238). It is possible, however, to ascribe the Prioress’s ineptitudes to standard depictions, in so far as her simple and conventional approach to both storytelling and to singing conforms to the medieval expectations of female education. Alternatively, the Prioress may be attempting to aspire to the perceived spiritual perfection of young children. Her sanctity nonetheless wanes at the expense of her demonstration of limited understanding of music or the importance of “proper” performance for religious music. Whether this is performed or genuine,

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80 See Emma Dieckmann “Moore Feelynge than Had Boece” on the irony of the word choice “feelynge”; and David Chamberlain “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale and Boethius’ *De Musica*” on the irony of praise of Boethius as a singer.

81 See Patrice Healy Wasyliw *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and Their Cults in Medieval Europe*. 
the Prioress places herself in the same uncritical tradition as the young cantor of her tale, celebrating sentiment and pathos over learning and doctrine.

Broughton notes that verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 8 were used in reverse in the Introit of mass of Holy Innocents (586). The Holy Innocents are again alluded to in the Prioress’s reference to the Book of Revelation 14: 1-5:

Of which the grete evaungelist, Seint John,
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon
Biforn this Lamb and synge a song al newe,
That nevere, flesshly, wommen they ne knewe (CT VII. 582-585)

Pattwell observes another ‘inversion’ of sorts: “in reversal of order, his singing brings him to the throne as a virgin, rather than his virginity bringing him to the throne as a singer” (45). What must also be noted is that the manner in which this feast of the Holy Innocents was celebrated.  

The ceremony of the boy bishop, like the clergeon’s ascension as a singer, involved reversal and inversion of religious decorum. The narrative of PrT, like the boy-bishop celebration, breaches the norm of religious practice. Both involve the procession of a small singing child to an abbey and both invert the social order of laity and clergy, mingling the sacred and profane. The boy bishop feast was a mixed class form of entertainment, temporarily subverting, but ultimately reinforcing the normative. As Carl Lindahl notes:

Relative freedom was indeed extended to the lower classes during carnival, but absolute, ungoverned freedom was not. The freedom of festival is based upon constraint and discipline … Even as, during the Feast of Innocents, choir boys marched down the aisles to proclaim the fall of the mighty (to the strains of Deposuit potentem), a new Bishop – a boy bishop, granted rank and privilege over his fellows – came forward to assume the miter and reinforce the paradigm of hierarchy. (552-553)

82 Correspondences with celebration of Holy Innocents have been documented at length by Hamilton (“Echoes of Childermas in the Tale of the Prioress”). In addition to the Introit, references to Rachel (CT VII. 627), St. Nicholas (CT VII. 505-509), and frequent use of the word “innocent” (CT VII. 538, 566, 608, 635) are noted. Hamilton suggests that Chaucer’s original source for the tale was a sermon preached on the Feast of Holy Innocents, and as such, delivered by a boy bishop (1).
The miraculous nature of the clergeon’s singing in PrT similarly allows for contained inversion of traditional religious practice, but ultimately reinforces the authority of the Church as, at the end of the tale, the focus is on the abbot who “takes away” the greyn linked to the child’s miraculous singing (CT VII. 671).

The outcome for this child might be related back to the dangers of uncensored speech or singing as outlined by the fox at the end of the NPT, and can be linked to the clergeon’s rejection of the institution inherent in his decision to bypass school instruction. Arguably, as a result of his refusal to learn grammar and to learn without understanding, both he and the Jews die a grisly death in a story that sees a grim outcome for both victim and victimiser. Such an ending relates back to the Prioress as teller, if we accept Fradenburg’s assessment of her character as “both victim and victimizer”.

It may be argued that he is part of an uncritical tradition – the laity teaching the laity – perpetuating ignorance, though Chaucer, as was evident in the previous chapter of this study, demystifies scholasticism in HF. We might link the Prioress’s uncritical approach to the overall trend of limited understanding throughout the tale. The Prioress, the clergeon, and his fellowe all demonstrate ignorance, failing to understand the meaning of the song, and the miracle. The demonized Jews also demonstrate ignorance in their inability to understand Latin and the meaning of the song. They are unaware that the Alma Redemptoris offends their beliefs, and only comprehend the song’s words when they are prompted to react by Satan:

Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
That hath in Jues herte his waspes nest,
Up swal, and seide, “O Hebrayk peple, alas!
Is this to yow a thyng that is honest,
That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest
In youre despit, and synge of swich sentence,
Which is agayn youre lawes reverence?” (CT VII. 558-564)

The association of Jews with limited understanding is standard of such medieval tales of ritual murder. As early as the thirteenth century, Jewish failure to comprehend the New Testament was given as a reason for suspicion of their practice of blood rituals. The Dominican friar Thomas of Cantimpré (c.1201-1276) wrote in his Miraculorum et exemplorum memorabilium sui temporis that the Jews had misunderstood the promise of salvation “solo sanguine Christiano” as the blood of any Christian rather than of Christ alone, believing as a result that Christian blood might be used as a
remedy for physical and spiritual ailments. Though the murder of the clergeon does not strictly fall into the category of a “blood libel” story, the Prioress’s address to “yonge Hugh of Lynecoln, slayn also with cursed Jewes” (CT VII. 684-685), recalls the association of such violence with ignorance and misinterpretation. Andrew Albin observes that “with the exception of the abbot, hardly anyone in the Prioress’s narrative has the Latin to parse the Alma’s text, and for this reason its semantic impact must hang in significant doubt” (94). The implications for the cantors of PrT are made even more severe as it places them on a parallel with the murderous Jews who also fail to comprehend the song. This is perhaps most evident in the Prioress’s own failure to understand a key message of the New Testament – mercy – as the Jews are offered no redemption in this telling of the tale. Unlike in sources and analogues where the miracle prompts the conversion of the Jews, the Prioress relates with relish how “with torment and with shameful deeth” (628) the Jews were punished. This is especially ironic in light of the Prioress’s donning of a brooch declaring “amor vincit omnia.” (CT I. 162) We may take this inscription, meaning “love conquers all”, as a message about eternal salvation and the mercy of God or as a more worldly, ephemeral sentiment from a past love. Indeed, the possibility that Prioress does not understand the Latin inscription may also be the case. Through rejection of learning, she fails to comprehend the spiritual significance, focussing on the exterior and superficial.

The clergeon, Jews, and Prioress are all guilty of misinterpretation through wilful refusal to engage with opportunities afforded them. The Jews are traditionally understood as the ones who had the opportunity ‘to see but refused’, they were offered salvation, but refused it. This may be linked to the refusal of clergeon to learn when he could, education which offers an opportunity for improvement is refused. This is especially pointed when we consider it in light of the other female ecclesiastical engagement with music in the CT, the SNT.

The association of PrT with the SNT is apparent based upon their close social relation to one another amongst the CT pilgrims, however, their narratives themselves bear resemblances that also invite comparison. Both begin with an invocation ad Mariam, both are written in rhyme royal, and both relate tales of musical martyrs having their necks/throats carved. Carolyn Collette asserts that the tales “share a common subtext focussed on the power of the Virgin to sustain the speech of those who venerate her” (128). The Second Nun tells the tale of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians and Roman noblewoman, who, along with her husband Valerian and brother-in-law Tiburce, was martyred in the late second century. Staley notes that in Chaucer’s treatment of the legend, Cecilia’s combativeveness, her reinterpretation of the marriage contract, and her courage are emphasized, as the Second Nun “places Cecilia centre-stage as the

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83 See Colvener’s edition 306.
spokesperson for the Christian faith” (325). Whilst the Prioress creates an animus for herself in the innocent, innocuous choir boy (not yet a man), the Second Nun’s identification with St. Cecilia who engages with men almost as an equal suggests a different approach to male authority in the church. Cecilia’s devotion is evinced in the attestation “to God allone in herte thus sang she” (CT VIII. 135), unlike the nasal Prioress or the “murry” clergeon. She is “lyk a bisy bee, withouten gile” (CT VIII. 195) (we will recall from earlier in this chapter that bees signified a perfectly ordered community in the medieval imagination, Cecilia thus harmoniously ingratiates herself into tradition).

The Second Nun, like Cecilia, sets herself to “bisynesse” in books to avoid idleness, introducing her transmission of Cecilia’s legend: “I have heer doon my faithful bisynesse after the legende in translacioun” (CT VII. 24-25). Chaucer quotes liberally from Jacobus de Voragine’s Legenda sanctorum (The Golden Legend, c. 1260), a compendium of hagiographies and liturgical instruction widely read in the Late Middle Ages. The discussion of the “etymology” of Cecilia’s name which precedes the Second Nun’s Marian invocation is directly taken from Jacobus’ Legenda. The Second Nun’s omission of the authority of Isidore, simply stating “right so as thise philosophres write” (CT VIII. 113) where Jacobus cites Isidore’s authority signals that this is not a reproduction of St. Cecilia’s legend, but an interpretation.84 Or perhaps a closer engagement by the reader, the Second Nun bypasses Isidore going straight to “the philosophers” (the Church Fathers), becoming an authority herself.

Lynn Staley views Chaucer’s decision to include the legend of St. Cecilia in his CT as subversive, writing: “Chaucer was a political and a social creature; thus the likelihood that he approached a life of Saint Cecilia with no thought to the ways in which her life might offer a means of exploring the political and spiritual realities of his own time seems small” (320). The subversive nature of the Second Nun’s learnedness can be perceived when placed in alongside the limited understanding of the Prioress. That Chaucer is aware of this challenge to the medieval “trend against learned women” emerges in Tiburce’s worried remark concerning the danger of “knowing”: “we seken thilke divinitee, that is y hid in hevene pryvely, algate ybrend in this world shul we be!” (316-318). We might then also read the SNT as a caution against uncensored speech and the subversion of tradition. Though Cecilia may indeed be appreciated as combative and courageous, everything she does is validated by a male – the angel vouches for her to her questioning husband; she sends Valerius and Tiburce to priests and a pope for instruction, and her final will and testament is executed by a pope. Her sanctity is still ultimately

84 CF Granger Ryan’s edition (704).
contained within a male institution. As with the spectacle of PrT, the miracle of St. Cecilia ultimately reinforces the normative.

The silence at the close of PrT provides stark contrast to not only the music of the tale, but also to the Prioress’s preoccupation with the vocalization of belief in her prologue. Albin considers whether “the Prioress’s audience is drawn into the same awestruck, reverent silence that has its origin in the clergeon’s silence as he gives up his soul and completes his saintly mission” (110). This assessment is upheld in Gregory Wilsbacher’s conclusion that the silence “confirms the unifying potency” of PrT (11). Yet this silence is unusual, unsettling, and ambiguous. Welch argues that the silence highlights “the pilgrims’ confusion about how to react to the tale’s ending” (147). The silence is thus open to interpretation and, conversely, misinterpretation. In other words, the silence and refusal of speech is a perpetuation of error central to the tale. In this light, Albin concludes:

the pilgrims’ speechlessness may not denote reverent awe but instead moral revulsion, prompting a search for other silences in the Prioress’s narrative that may be drowned out by the clergeon’s “louder” silence, but that are just as powerful and even more unnerving (111).

Such an interpretation of the reaction to the Prioress’ miracle story is apt given that both she and her tale warn against uncritical piety and bypassing the conventional. The silence further reinforces traditional religious practice in its vilification of the Prioress. Given the Church’s attitudes towards women preaching, the demonstration of the Prioress’s incompetence, and of her audience’s revulsion resonates with the antifeminism of St. Paul’s affirmation: “mulieres in ecclesiis taceant non enim permittitur eis loqui sed subditas esse sicut et lex dicit” [“Let women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak but to be subject, as also the law saith”] (1 Cor. 14.34) and with Chauntecleer’s ironic “mulier es hominis confusio” (CT VII. 3164) [woman is the ruin of man]. Conversely, there is productive, instructive speech in the Second Nun’s tale of St. Cecilia, and the emphasis is on learning and understanding. There is a considerable difference between the endeavour to understand and learn by the Second Nun and the uncritical performance of the Prioress. Yet the Second Nun and Cecelia still must appropriate and enact the same strategies of those in power (male clerics) through the use of rhetoric and philosophy.

85 Chauntecleer paradoxically translates this himself as “womman is mannes joye and al his blis” (CT VII. 3166).
V. Conclusion: Piety and Performance

The musical allusions of Arundel 292 and Chaucer’s religious tales allow us insight into musical practice supplementing the understanding of theory provided by medieval music treatises. The intersections of gender, spirituality, and education in perceptions of medieval devotional singing are revealed in the details of these texts. “For the most part” Boynton writes:

the medieval texts of music theory offer only limited insight into the social context and institutional setting of practical music training, the roles and responsibilities of teachers, and the practical organization of instruction or the times and places in which it took place. (39)

Customaries and charters can fill in many of these details, as can personal writing such as Guido’s *Epistola* and Notker’s reflection on his own musical education in his *Liber Hymnorum*, but, as *ChL* demonstrates, poetry can also provide a rich source of information about the practice of music in medieval religious communities. The texts of Arundel 292 are representative of the reality of monastic life—education and recreation being two dimensions as well as liturgy. As Frankis observes, what emerges from examination of medieval monastic miscellanies is “a picture of the clergy, at that date the literate section of the community, mediating vernacular writings, partly to other clergy and partly to the laity; in the latter case religious instruction shades off into provision of entertainment” (184). Arundel 292 offers evidence of the lived experience of monks that may not always be translated in the idealistic guidelines of customaries and ordinals.

Though I have considered in detail several examples of the association of appropriate understanding of music with virtuous living, there are more which invite similar examination, both in Arundel 292, and in *CT*. In the *Fabulae Odonis* of Arundel 292, we find another example of salvation through music in the account of a Raven demanding that a Mother-Dove sings as ransom to rescue her young. Another example of the salvational nature of music in Arundel 292 occurs in the Latin versified *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*. Apollonius is a musical hero celebrated for his wisdom and virtue. Loved for his intellect by Lucina, the princess of Pentapolis, Apollonius instructs her in proper or measured musical performance. By bestowing their

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86 John Gower provides an account of the tale in his *Confessio Amantis*: “He tawhte hir til she was certein of harpe, of citole, and of rote, with many a tun and many a note, upon musiqué, upon mesure, and of hire harpe the tempure, he tawhte hire ek, as he wel couthe” (8: 763-770).
daughter Tarsia with similar musical training, Apollonius preserves her maidenhead as, when captured by bandits she is not sold to a brothel as intended, but instead admitted to the court of a prince because of her cultivation. The readers of Arundel 292 show appreciation for this emphasis upon appropriate training, as a nota bene on f. 49 occurs at a moment of the text when Apollonius praises another of his students for their diligence: “Amo curam, apervos peritiam laudo diligentiam”.87 The emphasis in the narrative is again upon the salvational nature of proper training, as Apollonius’s protege saves a woman with his knowledge of medicine. The Sermo magistri Stephani de Langedune which was discussed in the introduction of this thesis is also of particular note for its association of music with virtuous living.

It is clear that ChL was not added to Arundel 292 by mere chance, but rather that a reader, noting the use of music as instructional in the Bele Alis sermon and the Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri, and, perhaps the depictions of animal music in the bestiary and fables, was motivated to transcribe this text. The poem directly following ChL, both in foliation and date of transcription – the Complaint Against Blacksmiths – further indicates this. The poem’s onomatopoeic translation of the clangourous noise of the beating of hammers and shouts of workmen produces a soundscape that is equally as discordant as the off-key singing of ChL. Schrader and Utley have both noted the use of musical terminology in the poem, for example, when the smith’s master hits a treble note: “The maister longeth a littil and lasheth a lesse, twineth hem twain and toucheth a treble” (17-18). It is possible that a scribe, perhaps of the identical Southeast Midland locality as the scribe of the Lament, was led by his example to copy on the back of fol. 71 another alliterative poem describing another kind of discord.

Throughout CT, Chaucer’s descriptions of his characters’ vocal techniques reveal aspects of their personalities in the same way as the clergeon’s “murry” singing and the Prioress’s voice “entuned in hir nose ful semely”. An example that might be understood better in light of these considerations is the description of Chauntecleer in the Nun’s Priest’s Tale whose “voys was murier than the mermayde on messe-dayes that in the chirche gon” (CT VII. 2851-2852) Later in the tale, the Nun’s Priest recounts that Chauntecleer: “soong murier than the mermayde in the see (For Phisiologus seith sikerly how that they syngen wel and myrily)” (3270-3272). Chauntecleer’s voice is likened both to church music and to the creature that the church used as metaphor for improper music and improper living. That this hypersexual animal who “fethered” his wife Pertelote “twenty tyme” (3177), would be described as having a voice that is gendered feminine is especially ironic in light of his association with “messe-days”. Nicolette Zeeman,

87 This is my own transcription from Arundel 292, the corresponding line is: “Pr obo artem, peritiam laudo, miror diligentiam” (Regis Apolloni Tyri RA 27, ed. Kortekaas 166).
considering the vulnerability of male singers in Chaucer’s later poetry, or rather, the “abjective and brutal things that happen to them”, notes that Chaucer, often to comic effect, highlights“the “self-dissolving” and boundary confusing nature of the language of emotional identification, frequently exaggerating its blurred distinctions between the erotic and religious” (144). His description of Chauntecleer, which draws both on the religious connotations of the church organ and the erotic identification of the Siren is a potent example of this. Chauntecleer, like the clergeon of PrT, takes great enjoyment in singing. Zeeman observes that:

Chaucer emphasizes the artfulness, and even “clericalism” of his singers. They tend to be full of self-delight, busily engaged, in the activity of song and self importantly identifying with its craft … for Chaucer the arts of affect – and in particular the performance of secular and religious love song – are a means of staging the unstable differentiations of sexual identity. (144-145)

In both the examples of Chauntecleer and the clergeon (and indeed, elsewhere the unmasculine Pardoner and the effeminate Absolon), this confusion of boundaries might also be linked back to contemporaneous musical practice. The comparison of Chauntecleer to a “mermayde in the see” resonates with John of Salisbury’s criticism of the “excessively caressing melodies” church singers who sound more like Sirens than men.

To conclude, I return to Guido’s dictum with which I began, “sine magistro nulla discitur antiphona”. Though these texts are diverse in their focus on human and inhuman music making, sacred and secular songs, singing and hearing, a common preoccupation in all texts is with teaching, learning, and understanding. This is most pointed in comparison of ChL and the PrT, but is also a factor in the other musical texts of Arundel 292 and in Chaucer’s religious tales. Both these practical and spiritual concerns with the proper use of music are frequently articulated in a juxtaposition of performing and learning, rational and irrational sounds, and human and animal music. The implications of these differences on a practical level express the same discrepancy as often occurs in treatises between musicus and cantor, and on a figurative level, they open up a distinction between moral and immoral music-making.
Chapter Four

Musical Nobility in *King Horn*, *Sir Orfeo*, and Chaucer’s *Manciple’s Tale*.

– Rede her bookes and ye shal fynde it so,
How this kyng, thys prudent Amphyoun,
With the swetnesse and melodious soun
And armony of his swete song
The eyté bylt that whilom was so strong,
Be vertue only of the werbles sharpe
That he made in Mercuries harpe,
Of which the strenges were not touched softe,
Wherby the walles reised weren alofte,
Withoute craft of eny mannys hond,
Ful yoor agon myd of Grekes lond.

(Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes* 200-210)

Introduction: Music and Governance

From Aristotle’s contemplation of the ethical implications of music education to debates on the role of music in religious worship in the writings of St. Augustine, Cassiodorus and Isidore of Seville, questions concerning “usefulness” permeated discussions of music in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The previous chapter of this study provided context of such concerns in religious setting and the use of music as a vehicle of praise and contemplation of the divine. In addition to these implications, the social and political significance of music’s power to civilize or to corrupt was a central concern of medieval music theory. In this chapter, following on from the exploration discourses concerning rationality and understanding in a religious context, I will consider the implications of such representations of music in medieval romance literature with regards to social stability. As music was understood to be an art of reason and rationality, it was often employed as a metaphor for governance and social stability. The myth of Amphion’s founding of the city of Thebes by guiding the stones to build the walls “with the swetnesse and melodious soun and armony of his swete song” evinces the medieval association of music with the very fabric of society.

Johannes de Grocheio’s assessment in his *Ars Musice* (c. 1300) of the reception of music as an accord of intellectual and sensual faculties embodies this concern with rationality, as he
states that sound “et potentie apprehensive obiectum est” [“is the object of our apprehensive ability” (42-43)]. De Grocheio attests that music is valued as “nam mores hominum corrigit et meliorat, si modo debito usi sint” [“it corrects and improves the practices of men if they use it in the way they ought” (42-43)]. This chapter will demonstrate that a similar sentiment permeated the musical allusions of Middle English poetry, often carrying with it a sense of social and political awareness.

Consideration of Chaucer’s PF earlier in this thesis demonstrated that musical concord was used as a lens through which to examine social order. In this chapter, the association of music with reason and governance will be considered instead in relation to the individual, as the same musical lexis of measurement and temperance was used to frame considerations of self-governance. The crowned-harper or minstrel-king serves as a potent figure through whom to examine aspects of the relationship between music and social order. Through examination of this figure in the Middle English romances King Horn and Sir Orfeo, and in Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale, I will explore the evidence of wider associations of music with social stability than those expressed in treatises from Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In consideration of music and individual ethos, my concern is in particular with leading men – in literary terms, the romance hero, king, prince, or knight. That the minstrel king was a popular figure in the medieval imagination is evidenced not only by these three texts and Lydgate’s reference to Amphion, but also in the frequent allusions to the biblical King David, to Apollonius of Tyre, and to Tristem. The signification of this musical symbolism thus becomes more layered, complex, through reworking of the conventional trope of the musical king. Dickson notes that “the harper is a problematic if attractive figure since the ability to harp is an attribute of the past, yet one that raises the heroes above their chivalric contemporaries” (205). As such, the figure of the harper king lends itself to discourses on governance through association with nobility and with heritage.

Sir Orfeo (SirO), King Horn (KH), and Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale (MancT) all offer literary depictions of musical kings, whose talents reflect strongly on their characters. In KH and SirO, the titular heroes’ abilities as musicians are commended by the anonymous poets and impact upon their fate. King Horn, who is accepted as a foundling into a court only when he is educated in music, employs the disguise of a minstrel to enter the domain of his adversary Fikenhild and restore his patrimony. Sir Orfeo through his prowess as a harper wins back his kidnapped wife Heurodis and is restored to power when recognized for his ability as a musician by his subjects. In Chaucer’s MancT, however, the protagonist Phoebus has a strikingly different relationship to music; he destroys his musical instruments in a fit of rage at the tale’s end. These three texts, written over the span of over one hundred years, offer very different depictions of the minstrel
king figure. Yet, there are similarities in the concerns which these representations reveal. The
depictions of musical heroes, and the rational and irrational nature of their music-making in
these texts, will be contextualized throughout by consideration of conventional criticisms of the
reigns of Henry III (1207-1272), Edward II (1284-1327), and Richard II (1367-1400). These
three kings were all maligned in their own time for their style of reign and the various
indictments levelled against these figures – favouritism, failure to adhere to social decorum,
impulsiveness, poor military leadership, abuse of power, and unstable leadership – are concerns
that are also manifest in medieval romances. This is not to suggest that any of the three figures
considered in this chapter (King Horn, Sir Orfeo, Phoebus) is a correlative any of these kings.
Rather, I wish to provide context for medieval perceptions of royal inadequacy so as to consider
how these representations of the harper king relate to not only literary tradition, but also to the
conventional political rhetoric. Understanding the background of these texts allows us to better
identify what is conventional and what is not in their respective representations of political
figureheads. By locating the portrayal of music and its relationship to rationality and governance
in each of the three stories – SirO, KH, and Chaucer’s MancT – this chapter will offer some
insight into the changing representation of the aristocracy and definition of stability. In addition,
this chapter will explore the sense of cultural identity associated with music making in the Middle
Ages, and demonstrate the continuing association of music and rationality from Classical
philosophy to the fourteenth century.

The contours of public attitudes to kingship in the Middle Ages were not static, but
malleable, and this is witnessed in the shifting representation of the kingly harper. On the
reception and audience of Middle English romances, Geraldine Barnes, explains:

The circumstances in which thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Middle English romance
was either read, recited, or sung probably ranged from essentially ‘private’ readings, either
silent, like that of Chaucer’s insomniac narrator of The Book of the Duchess (ll. 47-61) or
aloud, to performances by professional disours at large, public gatherings. (19)\(^8\)

The wide appeal of narratives such as that of SirO and KH indicates that these texts embody
something of “popular” attitudes and values of the period, as Karen Lucas argues:

\(^{88}\) On the audiences of Middle English romance see: Stephen Knight “The Social Function of the Middle English
Romances”, Carol Fewster “Romance’s Implied Audience”, Geraldine Barnes Counsel and Strategy in Middle English
Romance 1-28, Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance 1-38, Nicola McDonald Pulp
Middle English romances are suitable for determining more ‘popular’ attitudes to kingship because of their subject matter, the length of texts, their dissemination and their receptivity to contemporary opinion. These ‘popular’ attitudes were those belonging to the audience of the romances, being the large and increasingly politically influential group comprising knights and gentry. (3)

By portraying these powerful figures (King Horn, Sir Orfeo, and Phoebus) as musicians, these three texts implicitly reflect differing attitudes to authority in their employment of music. Close contextual reading will demonstrate how attitudes both to rulers and to musicians varied in late medieval England. My grouping of these texts is not because of some explicit connection between the three (i.e. they do not appear in the same manuscript, and are not analogous), but rests on the recognition that all employ the trope of the musician king. The real interest rests in the fact that the trope of the musician king is deployed differently, reflecting the values and issues of their cultural location.

Although I do not seek to attribute any specific occasion to any of these poems, the broad historical moment at which each of these works appears in manuscript form for the first time should be noted. KH (c. 1270) appears in the aftermath of the allocation of English lands and titles to migrating Savoyards and Poitevins following Henry III’s marriage to Eleanor of Provence in 1234 and failed military endeavours at Taillebourg (1242), SirO (c. 1330) emerges shortly following the deposition of Edward II, and Chaucer’s MancT, one of the poet’s final works, appears as the crisis of Richard II’s reign deepened following the events of the Peasants’ Revolt (1381) and the Merciless Parliament (1388). All three eras are characterized by tumultuousness, instability, and scandal. Morality, governance, and authority are key themes in

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89 This dating of King Horn follows recent scholarship rather than the date proposed in George McKnight’s edition of the text for the EETS of c. 1225. Rosamund Allen’s “The Date and Provenance of King Horn” raises issues with ascribing such an early date of composition to K.H. Allen notes that “this is far in advance of the period from 1280-1300 when other romances were translated into English, including Havelok, Guy of Warwick, Beves, Arthur and Merlin, and King Alisandour” (102). Citing the dates of the three manuscripts of King Horn, Geraldine Barnes writes: “the date of 1250 or 1270 is more probable, given the current dating of Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27(2) to 1300” (25). In light of Allen’s work, Herzman et al. have all dated the poem as “written in the last part of the thirteenth century” in their edition (11). Taking into consideration the dialect of the poem, that it is not until the late thirteenth-century that any other Anglo-Norman romances appear in English, and that the political events of the mid-thirteenth century that strongly correspond with the preoccupations of King Horn, I base my analysis on this later dating of the poem.
each of these texts. With this in mind, I will argue that the deployment of musical kings engages with conventional critiques of kingship in their times.

The trope of musical king allows for more discreet exploration of matters of governance, social order, and cultural identity than other types of kingly portraits as the association of music and rationality is so deeply rooted in medieval understandings of the art.

The analysis of KH, SirO, and MancT which follows will build upon the links made between music and rationality considered throughout this thesis. A brief outline of how this association relates to social stability is offered to explicate the significance of music in these three texts. In philosophy and speculative music theory of the Middle Ages and Antiquity, the connection of music to ethos – and consequently, of music to order, governance and social stability – was prevalent. This association informs the significance of the depiction of music in the portraits of the kingly protagonists of KH, SirO, and MancT.

Warren Anderson attests that “the writers of Greece who represent Hellenic thought on music supposed that it could express, and even generate qualities of good or evil” (2). The relationship of music and ἥθος (ethos) is considered by Plato in Book III of the Republic, and by Aristotle in Book VIII of the Politics.

Plato, offering detailed reflection upon the effect of music on the individual, considered the correlation of music and the welfare of the state in the Republic. He believed that, as a result of the deep influence of music upon the human soul, musical education should be regulated, as experimentation with new modes and styles of music could have corrupting influences not only on the individual but also on society as a whole. Subsequent to protracted dialogue with Damon of Oē on the subject, he concluded that “styles of music are nowhere altered without change in the greatest laws of the city” (Republic 4.424c, trans. Barker 140). Plato’s widely accepted association of music and order was transmitted to the Middle Ages in the widespread authority of Boethius on the subject of music.

In De ins. mus. Boethius propagates a Neo-Platonist understanding of the affinity of music and the soul, writing that music is the only art of the quadrivium which: “vero non modo speculationi verum etiam moralitati coniuncta sit. Nihil est enim tam proprium humanitas, quam remitti dulcibus modis, ad stringi contraries” (I.i) “is associated not only to speculation but to morality as well. For nothing is more characteristic of human nature than to be soothed by pleasant modes or disturbed by their opposites” (2). Boethius reaffirms the views of Plato’s discussion with Damon of Oē, that discipline should be exercised in musical practice to avoid corruption of both the individual and the state, asserting:
Unde Plato etiam maxime cavendum existimat, ne de bene morata musica aliquid permutetur. Negat enim esse ullam tantam morum in republica labem, quam paulatim de pudendi ac modesta musica invertere. Statim enim idem quoque audentium animos pati, paulatimque discedere, nullumque honesti ac recti retnere vestigium, si vel per lasciviores modos inverecundum aliquid, vel per asperiores ferox atque immane mentibus illabatur. (De inst. mus. I.i)

[Plato holds that the greatest care should be exercised lest something be altered in music of good character. He states that there is no greater ruin of morals in a republic than the gradual perversion of chaste temperate music, for the minds of those listening at first acquiesce. Then they gradually submit, preserving no trace of honesty or justice – whether lascivious modes bring something immodest into the dispositions of the people or rougher ones implant something warlike and savage. (3)]

For both Plato and Boethius, the effects of music upon the individual hearer had implications for society at large.

Addressing Plato’s association of music and ethos, Aristotle posits in the Politics, as in his Nichomachean Ethics, that virtue may be cultivated through pleasure, thereby justifying the enjoyment of music. Aristotle, on the subject of the influence of music upon the individual, perceived not only the potential for music to corrupt, but also to instil virtue. Discussing the use of music in education, and how it might be used by the state to shape the character of individuals he states in his Politics “music has indeed the power to induce a certain character of soul, and if it can do that, then clearly it must be applied to education” (VII.v 1340b, trans. Sinclair 466).

Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian perceptions of music as rationalizing appear and reappear in contemplation of music in treatises of the Middle Ages. The late-thirteenth century and early-fourteenth century Aristotelian revival, through the translations of Robert Grosseteste (Ethics, c. 1246) and William of Moerbeke (Politics, c. 1260), influenced late-medieval theorists’ understanding of the potential of music to cultivate virtue. The author of SumM for example, describes music as both utilis (useful) and dulcis (delightful) (222-3).90

90 The term dulcis, Carruthers writes, demonstrates in Christian use, “considerable ambiguity and range of meaning… Of all the items in the mixed lexical bag of Latin bequeathed to medieval Europe, ‘sweetness’ – dulcedo, suavitas – is among the most mixed and trickiest of concepts… The effects of dulce carmen, sweet song, remained a favourite medieval trope.” Dulcis, used in medieval Latin to describe experience of God, gained deeper and more complex associations, becoming linked such with healing and subsequently with persuasion. Healing and persuasion had been associated by both Plato and Aristotle who refer to rhetoricians as social healers (See Carruthers The Experience of...
De Grocheio, departing from the abstract contemplations of Boethius and his followers, employed Aristotelian empiricism to argue for the social usefulness of music. Observing everyday musical practice in Paris, he describes various forms of secular and ecclesiastical music and identifies appropriate social groups as performers and audiences for these forms. The *cantus coronatus* (“crowned” trouvère chansons), he says, for example, is “etiam coram regibus et principibus terrae decantari” [“sung in the presence of kings and princes of the land”], so that “eorum animos ad audaciam et fortitudinem, magnanimitatem et liberalitatem commoveat, quae omnia faciunt ad bonum regimen” [“it may move their spirits to boldness and bravery, magnanimity and liberality, which all make for good government” (68-69)]. As Carol Williams notes, de Grocheio “seems to be building a bridge between speculative theory and theory based on practice” (28). Foregrounding his own observations over *musica theorica*, his interests are often with the value of music within society. Grocheio asserts that secular music – which he coins *musica vulgaris* – is useful for improving social mores, whereas *musica ecclesiastica* is ordained to religious praise (thus, also instilling virtue through devotion). De Grocheio’s practical application of music theory to everyday life corresponds with a period of prevalence of Aristotelianism at medieval universities.91

It is clear then from the writings on music available to us from the Middle Ages that there was a keen awareness of the moralizing and rationalizing qualities of music. It is no surprise, therefore, that in Middle English poetry, in those works that depict musical kings as their heroes, questions of governance, authority, and self-control of monarchs are explored in the musical king’s use (and abuse) of this “useful” art.

Just as de Grocheio’s *musica vulgaris* is localized to the politics and social order of Paris, the music of these romances is localized to English society and politics. KH, SirO, and MancT, are focussed on the individual rather than the collective. However as the king was representative of the state realm, there are equally wide implications for the depictions of these musical heroes.

II. “Be seaxes ord”: Old “English” Music in *King Horn*

*King Horn* (KH) differs significantly from other versions of the tale – the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn* (RH) (c. 1170) and the Middle English *Horn Childe* (HC) (c. 1320) – in its

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Beauty 87-100). In this context, we might infer that the authors of the SumM consider music to be *utiles* because of its power of persuasion, that beauty (music) could be useful for the betterment of society.

91 See: Edward Grant *The Foundations of Modern Science* (127-167) and *The Nature of Natural Philosophy* (16-48) and John Haines and Patricia DeWitt “Johannes De Grocheio and Aristotelian Natural Philosophy”.
articulation of cultural identity. Close examination of the text, and comparison with these other witnesses will reveal that KH resonates with an imagined older “Anglo-Saxon” rather than contemporaneous Anglo-Norman world-view. This is evident in the portrayal of the musical hero Horn’s use of the harp. Details of the social setting and technique of his harping will be placed in the context of post-conquest perceptions of Anglo-Saxon culture, and contrasted with corresponding sections of the RH and HC. As in RH and HC, the depiction of music in KH draws upon a composite of classical, Celtic, and Biblical traditions, but differences in the function of music and the signification of the harp evoke a musical culture that is localized to a different setting than the other versions. To contextualize this, scholarly associations of the variant texts RH and HC with specific occasions and political concerns will be outlined, the manuscript context of KH will be discussed, and a brief outline of the anxieties about English identity and non-national political presence in England which were the backdrop to the composition of KH will first be offered.

Both the manuscript context and the narrative of King Horn (KH) are representative of promotion of “English” identity that can be connected to the representation of Horn as a musical king. The tale recounts the adventures of Horn, a young prince, who is unjustly displaced from his kingdom of Suddene by Saracen pagans. Horn avenges the murder of his father King Murry by these Saracens and regains his power in Suddene; in addition he demonstrates his military skill further in Westernesse and Ireland, defeating two rivals for marriage to Rymenhild (daughter of the king of Westernesse), and defeating Ireland’s invading enemies.

KH was composed in English when Anglo-Norman language and literature dominated the culture of the aristocratic ruling class. It is curious then, to see the poem eschew many of the mannerisms of Anglo-Norman courtliness. It was not the only work of this period, however, to favour English to Anglo-Norman. Citing Of Arthour and Merlin, in which the anonymous poet asserts: “Freynsche vse þis gentil man ac euerich Inglische Inglische can”, Turville-Petre notes that writing in English “is inclusive in that everyone who is English understands English, whatever other languages they may speak or read” (20), but that it is also exclusive as “the non-native gentil man uses French” (21). KH expresses Englishness not only in the chosen language of narration, but also thematically and in its portrayal of the hero, as will be discussed in detail below. However, as this tale exists in several variant tellings, a little must first be said about the manuscript contexts of this particular version.

KH survives in three manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud Misc. 108 (c. 1300), Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4.27 part 2 (c. 1300), and London, British Library, Harley
MS 2253 (c. 1340). In Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud Misc. 108 (hereafter: Laud 108), it is appended to a collection of saints’ lives (*The South English Legendary*) along with *Havelok the Dane*. It survives between fragments of *Floris and Blancheflour* and *The Assumption of Our Lady* in Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4.27 part 2 (hereafter Gg 4.27.2), and with religious texts, political verses, fabliaux, and secular lyrics in the trilingual (Latin, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English) London, British Library, Harley MS 2253 (Harley 2253). The diversity of materials with which *KH* appears does not necessarily indicate that we should read these three manuscripts as miscellanies randomly and arbitrarily combined. Current interpretations of both Laud 108 and Harley 2253 argue for readings of the manuscripts as compilations, purposefully arranged. Though it is more difficult to place the fragment of only fourteen folios, Gg 4.27.2, the collocation of religious and romance texts in each of these manuscripts reveal particular motivations on the part of their compilers. Surviving in two manuscripts are comprised of only Middle English texts (Gg 4.27.2 and Laud 108), and one which contains lyrics making specific reference to domestic politics (Harley 2253), *KH* has been transmitted in three manuscripts which collect materials that are, by subject matter and aesthetic, consciously “English”.

A recent collection of analyses of the intertextuality of the works of Laud 108, edited by Kimberly Bell and Julie Couch, forwards collective agreement of interpretation of the manuscript “as a whole book” (8). The intentional compilation of the works of Laud 108 is revealed in the correspondence of motifs and themes in religious texts and romances. The theme of exile and return, for example, present in *KH* and in *Havelok the Dane*, is depicted in the lives of St. Cuthbert and St. Thomas à Beckett. In addition, the portrayal of the hero employing a disguise which we encounter in *KH* also appears in the life of St. Andrew. Spiritual and political concerns are often conflated in Laud 108. Bell and Couch observe in their introduction of the study that:

> The narrator of *St. Wulfstan* sees the current state of England as a result of the death of Edward “De holie kyng” (72.58) in 1066, for soon after “Vnkuynde Eyres” [unnatural heirs] (72.90), “men of oþere londe” (73.93) under “willam bastard” (73.95) came into England. (17)

The articulation of such social commentary in hagiographical text lends “ideological value to a construct of England” (Bell and Couch, *Texts and Contexts* 18). Grouping of these hagiographies with *KH* and *Havelok* in the manuscript suggests close association of the romances with these concerns. Susanna Fein writes that
The juxtaposition of *Havelok* and *Horn* in the second part of that manuscript suggests a compiler or readership that viewed these tales of secular heroic chosenness as correspondent to some saints’ lives, especially those with nationalistic valence, as in the lives of the king-saints of England (*The Complete Harley 2253* 2: 448).

The construction of “England” in Laud 108 is revealed not only in the inclusion of a number of Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives (including those of St. Cuthbert, St. Oswald, St. Edmund the Martyr, St. Edward the Elder, and St. Wulfstan), and in the narratives of the heroes Havelok and Horn, but also in the remarkable detail that its works are written exclusively in Middle English. The language of this manuscript, a determining factor of its readership, is not only promoted in the selection of texts, but within the narratives themselves. Language, specifically English, is associated with political dominion when Horn, reclaiming his lands from Saracens, declares “we scholen hem teche to spoken oure speche” (1467-1468). In Laud 108, eleven Anglo-Saxon saints’ lives are transmitted in addition to the life of the post-conquest St. Thomas à Becket. Jill Frederick interprets the popularity of Anglo-Saxon saints in Middle English hagiographies as more than simply “an exercise in nostalgia”, but rather:

reflects the historical trends and tendencies that began to manifest themselves in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the need to consolidate the boundaries of England as well as the growing sense of English nationalism that appears to have been developing concurrently with the re-emergence of English as the dominant tongue. (72-73)

This employment of saints’ lives to such ends was prevalent in the later Middle Ages. Marcus Bull’s exploration of “Criticism of Henry II’s expedition to Ireland in William of Canterbury’s miracles of St Thomas à Becket” illustrates how Middle English hagiographers returned to the lives of English saints – Anglo-Saxon or post-conquest – to hold up a mirror to the inadequacies of their contemporary leaders. The manipulation of Anglo-Saxon hagiographies as a medium either to reinforce or deconstruct contemporary social and political circumstances in Laud 108 is patent. That *KH* first appears in this monolingual, intentionally compiled, and politically charged manuscript indicates that the tale itself has ideological significance.

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92 All quotations from McKnight’s parallel text edition by line number. This assertion appears in all three manuscripts (*Harley 2253* “Ant so we shulen hem teche to spoken oure speche!” and *Gg.42.7.2* “we schulle the hundes teche to spoken ure speche”. I follow McKnight’s use of abbreviated titlees of *KH*, *RH*, and *HC*.  

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Gg 4.27.2, is a fragment of only fourteen folios. It has not received as much attention as the other two manuscripts. It is all written in one hand, all written in Middle English; both Floris and the Assumption are fragments, Floris beginning abruptly and the Assumption ending abruptly. It would be unwise to speculate about the motivations of the compiler of this manuscript; however, it is worth noting that this fragment is monolingual and that spiritual and political concerns are conflated in the pairing of Floris and KH with the Assumption.

In Harley 2253, KH survives, bearing the title “Þe Geste of Kyng Horn”, in the section attributed to the compiler and principal copyist of the manuscript, the Ludlow scribe (fols. 49-140). Following the first 48 folios of assorted religious narratives written in French by an earlier scribe, the content of the section completed by the Ludlow scribe is remarkably diverse. Best known for its secular love lyrics, Harley 2253 also contains political songs, religious lyrics, fabliaux, saints’ lives, complaints, prayers, satires, debates, sayings, Biblical tales, pilgrimage tracts, and dream theory, in French, Latin, and Middle English. This trilingual manuscript has evaded comprehensive contextualization as a result of what Fein identifies as “the standard editorial” tendency “to extract and to categorize” (The Complete Harley 2253 1: 6). The recent three-volume METS edition of Harley 2253, publishing the texts as they are arranged in the manuscript and providing translations of the Latin, French and the more difficult Middle English dialects, offers new insight after numerous editors had published the lyrics and various texts by category and language, leading to limited understanding of the manuscript. The lyrics are not grouped in the codex, but, rather, are interspersed among various other texts. Latin, French, and Middle English texts are not grouped separately but juxtaposed and blended, and linguistic mixing often occurs within individual texts in macaronic style, such as for example in the invocation to Mary that precedes KH, Mayden, Moder Milde. Presentation in manuscript order allows for understanding of linguistic crossover in the manuscript and, by making accessible the original arrangement of texts, the METS edition, accompanying Neil Ker’s facsimile edition for the EETS (1965) and the British Library’s digitization of the manuscript, allows for more nuanced understanding of the compiler’s aims and achievements. Theo Stemmler’s examination of the arrangement of materials in Harley 2253 highlights the conscious grouping of particular texts. KH is, for example, connected to the prayer to Mary directly preceding it, Mayden, Moder Milde, by verbal association, as the closing lines of the lyric, in reference to Christ’s Passion (l 45-8; fol. 83r), use the exact same rhyme as the opening lines of KH (1-4; fol. 83r): kynge and synge (119-120). The evidence of compilation and arrangement in the layout of texts by the Ludlow

93 Harley items have been published, for example, in: Carleton Brown, ed. English Lyrics, Thorlac Turville-Petre, ed. Alliterative Poetry, David Jeffrey and Brian Levy, eds. The Anglo-Norman Lyric.
scribe suggests an impetus to anthologize, although the contents of Harley 2253 are miscellaneous. The diverse selection of texts in Harley 2253 demonstrates a much greater scope in the interests of the Ludlow Scribe than the compiler of the monolingual Laud 108, and the underpinning principles differ, as political matters are addressed far more explicitly. The verses of Harley 2253 engage with both local and national politics. The Ludlow scribe compiles popular reactions to decisive historical events in such texts as the Middle English *Song of Lewes* and Anglo-Norman lament for the death of Simon de Montfort *Chaunter m’estoit*, whilst such candid complaints as the macaronic *Dien, roy de magesté (Against the King’s taxes)* can be linked to events closer to the compilation of the manuscript, as John Scattergood connects these grievances with the financial crisis of Edward III’s war with France (“Authority and Resistance” 164). The manuscript does not display the same promotion of nationalism that we encounter in Laud 108. Marilyn Corrie, examining depictions of kingship in Harley 2253 in *KH*, the *Vita Sancti Ethelberti*, *Le Roi d’Angleterre et le jongleur d’Ely*, and the *Enseignements of Louis IX to his son Philip*, observes that:

The compiler of MS Harley 2253 apparently did not extend any nationalistic fervour he might have held to his treatment of the English kings included in the manuscript, since these are ironized as thoroughly as the French king Louis, if in fewer ways. (77)

The concerns of the Ludlow scribe differ from those of the Laud compiler. Though both are intentionally compiled, they reflect different environments of compilation and reception, with Harley being more sympathetic to the French. However, kingship and governance are still key concerns in Harley 2253 although these concerns are not as clearly localized as in Laud 108. The “tolerance of Frenchness” in Harley 2253, Corrie writes, “may seem surprising” in the context of the period of its compilation:

during the 1330s, when Anglo-French political relations were strained, and finally broke down, leading to the outbreak of the Hundred Years War in 1337. But then political hostility does not necessarily entail contempt for everything associated with the enemy, especially individuals from its past; nor does everyone feel a jingoistic desire to blacken such individuals. (77)

Two of the three manuscripts in which *KH* survives demonstrate a marked interest in kingship, identity and politics. As these are themes of the text itself, it therefore fits very well into these compilations. In the case of Laud 108, this association is much more explicitly with “English”
politics and identity. The materials with which *KH* has been transmitted in these manuscripts, of which two appear to be very deliberate compilations, reveal that the tale is associated with national identity and with political ideology. I will argue in this chapter that the particular portrayal of music in *KH* can delineate further the ideological construction of England in Laud 108 specifically. The depiction of music of *KH*, as I will demonstrate, is profoundly English in its cultural characteristics, expressing both a sense of national identity, and of rejection of Norman mannerisms in its evocation of a pre-conquest tradition of music which the audience may well have associated with the Anglo-Saxons.

To understand the difference in sense of cultural identity evidenced in the manuscript context and narrative differences of *KH*, it may be useful to consider the assessment of the chronicler Matthew Paris (c. 1200-1259) of the status of England at the time. In his *Chronica Majora*, Matthew laments the influx of these settlers to England:

> Vae Angiae, quae quondam princeps provinciarum, domina gentium, speculum ecclesiae, religionis exemptum, nunc facta est sub tributo. Concilaverunt eam ignobles, et facta est in praedam degeneribus. Sed haec Angiae flagella multiformes reatus procurarunt, irato Eo, qui regnare facit hypocritam propter peccata populi et tirannum dominari.

[Woe to England! Which once the chief of provinces, mistress of nations, the mirror of the church, and a pattern of religion, is now laid under tribute; ignoble men have trampled her under-foot, and she has fallen a prey to degenerate men. But the manifold offences of the English have brought these scourges on themselves, through the anger of Him, who, for the sins of the people, makes the hypocrite to reign, and the tyrant to bear rule.]

This criticism emerges in the years following Henry III’s allocation of English lands to his wife Eleanor of Provence’s Savoyard and Poitevin family. Connections to these Angevin courtiers had been cultivated by his father King John (1166-1216) and Henry’s marriage to Eleanor in 1236 brought a large delegation of Savoyard nobility to England. Between 1236 and 1272, at least 170 had settled, and, following marriages arranged by Henry to the English nobility, many became heirs to large estates. The Savoyards were sensitive to English affairs, and, supporting

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94 Ed. Luard (390), trans. Giles (51).

95 See Huw Ridgeway “King Henry III and the ‘Aliens.’”
Eleanor’s interests, integrated themselves well into baronial society. It was the second wave of settlers, arriving from Poitou, that were met with particular aversion.

Henry’s father-in-law, Hugh X de Lusignan, and a number of other Poitevin nobles rebelled against Louis IX of France in 1241, following the allocation of the fiefdom of Poitou to Louis’ younger brother Alphonse in 1240. When Henry’s military campaign in support of Hugh’s attempt to regain his autonomy, culminating in the Battle of Taillebourg (1242), failed, he invited his relatives to move to England, where, at the expense of the English barons, they were awarded large estates. Around a hundred Poitevins accompanied the Lusignans to England, and, although many were rewarded with annual revenues from the king rather than with lands, their rivalry with the well-established Savoyards caused tension in the following decade. “The evidence”, Michael Prestwich observes, “particularly that of Matthew Paris, suggests that the Poitevins were particularly resented. Their estate officials – ironically mostly Englishmen – were notoriously grasping” (English Politics 85). Matthew’s complaint in his Chronica Majora expresses the preoccupation with displacement from power in the minds of the English barons that were relegated by Henry. Though the two groups formed distinct factions, each competing for power and patronage, they were both disdainfully viewed as “aliens” by those who considered themselves to be “native” English nobility. Their discontent with the fact that household men were taking over the great offices of state manifested itself not only in chronicles, but in attempts to remove these “aliens” from Henry’s court.

In the revolt of 1258, the English barons, led by Simon de Montfort, sought to expel the Lusignans from court. Following the Provisions of Oxford to reform government and limit Henry’s authority by election of a council with members selected by both the crown and the barons, a proclamation was issued in Henry’s name confirming his observance of the Magna Carta, not only in Latin and French, but also in Middle English. Significantly, the proclamation was the first royal document issued in English since the Norman invasion. Turville-Petre notes that both Henry and the dissenting barons “recognized the value in the propaganda of patriotism of reaching beyond the constituency of royal officials and appropriating (however speciously) the language of the ‘loandes folk’” (England the Nation 9). Examining the dialect of this document, Seth Lerer observes that throughout the English text “the language seems reluctant to admit

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96 See Adrian Jobson The First English Revolution 1-14.
98 See Ridgeway 81-82.
French terms” and that “French idioms take on an Anglo-Saxon flavor” (57). There are no words borrowed from the Old French lexis (Fulk 215) and alliterative formulae are recalled in such statements as “and noan ne nime of loande ne of eȝte, wherþur þis besiȝte muȝe beon i-let oper i-versed on onie wise” (12-13). “What we have” Lerer writes “is a political statement about the English language and the English people” (58). The political significance of writing in English was thus firmly established in the late thirteenth century. The enmity and simultaneous interdependence of England and France in the Middle Ages had significant implications for the relationship between language and social structure in thirteenth and fourteenth-century England. As such, the construction of “Englishness” by advancement of the language and literature, which surged at the end of the fourteenth century, as will be evinced in consideration of the representation of music in KH, had precursors in manuscript culture and literary tropes of the previous century.

Alongside these three KH manuscripts, two significant variants of the tale survive from the Middle Ages, the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman Romance of Horn by Thomas (RH) and the fourteenth-century Middle English romance Horn Childe and Maiden Rimmild (HC). The relationship of KH to its Anglo-Norman and Middle English counterparts RH and HC is tenuous. Scholars agree that both KH and RH derive from an earlier version of the Horn romance, and, rather than reading either the English version as based upon the Anglo-Norman, (or vice versa), contend that both are original interpretations of a preceding source. Mildred K Pope writes that “the outline of the [RH] story is evidently based on an earlier work of which we have fortunately a version preserved in the Middle English poem King Horn” (20). To provide a context for the depictions of music in KH, I will compare episodes of music-making in both RH and HC. Discussion of KH, RH, and HC is based upon understanding of the works as independently derived.

In addition to differences in the use of music in these texts, there are numerous significant features that differentiate KH from either RH or HC. The Anglo-Norman RH is significantly longer and more elaborate than KH, which, Pope writes “is, in its terse simplicity, clearly much nearer to the original than the romance” (20). Thomas’ RH has a broader topography with the action taking place across continents, a greater scale of fighting, doubling of episodes, and a greater number of characters. In Thomas’ expansion and development of the Horn narrative, two key features distinguish RH: the Christian piety and courtly mannerisms of the protagonists. Thomas emphasizes the Christianity of the protagonists of RH more conspicuously than the anonymous author of the Middle English KH through his references to Matthew’s Gospel (4171-4174), Jonah and Daniel (1404-1405), and depictions of protagonists at
prayer (1255-1261). The inclusion of episodes of hawking (2202-2205) and chess games (2690-2717) gives an impression of the location of RH as more courtly than the sparse, militant world of KH. Donald B Sands notes that the KH poet “lacks chivalric ideas” and that “he does not, beyond conventional lip service, show deference to churchly matters” and asserts that “he intends to entertain a rough and naïve group of people who could be towns practically, soldiers, or farmers” (15). Dominique Battles has observed that the “geographic scope” of RH parallels that of Norman Conquest; drawing a distinction with the battlegrounds of KH, she writes that the Anglo-Norman poem:

is quite international in scope in that it presents an English hero who falls in love with a woman from Brittany and who fights a Muslim enemy while the poem includes further references to areas of France, Spain, and Italy, not to mention Ireland. (Cultural Difference 20)

KH, by contrast, is insular in its geographic scope and presents Horn’s love interest as English whilst he fights an enemy “bearing strong resemblances to the familiar Viking invaders of the English past, despite their Saracen name tag” (Battles, Cultural Difference 20). The various elaborations and embellishments in Thomas’ RH which differentiate the poem from the KH, articulate a cultural milieu which may be identified with post-conquest Norman society. The cultural differences between RH and KH highlighted here are also perceptible in the portrayal of music in the two poems, as will be discussed below. In KH the narrative preserves more of the ethos of pre-conquest England than the values of chivalry more commonly found in post-conquest English literature. The unique depiction of music in the KH text is, I argue, evidence of identification with pre-conquest Anglo-Saxon culture, expressing a sense of national English identity that is not the preoccupation of RH. This detail contributes to current scholarship and consolidates the argument that KH is not to be understood as an adaptation of the more complex Anglo-Norman RH, though based upon the same tradition, but is a work with its own particular cultural identity. Though written in Middle English, HC (c. 1320) is closer to the Anglo-Norman RH in style and narrative than to its English counterpart. Introducing his edition of HC, Maldwyn Mills notes that RH “if not the direct source of most of what we find in HC, quite certainly stands closer to such a source than does any other surviving version of the story; it is noteworthy that certain motifs offer striking parallels with HC against the thirteenth-

100 All references to RH cite Pope’s edition by line number and Weiss’s translation by page number.
century KH” (44). HC evokes the same courtly mannerisms as RH in scenes of hunting (553-558) and tournaments (662-681).101

Though noted by the pilgrim Chaucer as a romance “of prys” whilst recounting his own facetious Sir Thopas (CT VII. 897), HC has regrettably not been preserved as well as KH, surviving in a single imperfect version. Mills notes that: “unfortunately, the Auchinleck text of Horn Childe is at once unique, heavily defective (through loss of an entire bifolium) and considerably altered” (10). As HC is strikingly similar to RH, and survives in a less complete rendering, I will not offer detailed analysis of its musical allusions. The musical allusions of the single manuscript in which it survives will be revisited later in this chapter in considering Sir Orfeo. However, it is worth noting that in this altered and incomplete version, it can be argued that the Horn narrative is still used for ideological ends. HC survives in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.2.1 (hereafter: the Auchinleck MS), which, like Laud 108 and the Gg 4.27 KH manuscript, is a monolingual corpus of works in Middle English. The Auchinleck MS contains the earliest surviving versions of many texts, and for many, like HC, the only surviving version. HC appears alongside The King of Tars, Of Arthour and of Merlin, Liber Regum Anglie, and King Richard. Matthew Holford argues that this particular version of the tale is more explicitly concerned with patrimony and Horn’s recovery and consolidation of power. Though both RH and KH are, of course, also concerned with the hero’s recovery of his patrimony, in HC “love and marriage represent the pinnacle of Horn’s ambition and achievement, to which even the recovery of his patrimony is subordinate” (153). In RH and KH the marriages of these friends and relatives are used to unify the geographical action of the story; in HC, Holford observes that “it is Horn himself who gains much of this additional power and influence: he does not only recover, but enlarges, his inheritance” (155). Holford connects Horn Child’s expansion of his own kingdom with the expansion of “Britain” under Edward I, writing that “English imperial ambitions within the British Isles were asserted with unprecedented force and success” as Edward claimed lordship of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland (160). The shift in emphasis in KH to Horn’s rewarding of his loyal retainers with opportunistic marriages rather than expanding his own patrimony may be better understood in the context of Henry’s kingship.

Regarding the preoccupation with marriage in the Horn narrative, it is unsurprising that a romance would imitate common practice towards consolidation of power. We see that it was perceived that Henry III used the same tactic as the 1258 Provisions of Oxford explicitly criticized such marriages:

101 All references to HC cite Mills’s edition by line number.
In 1258 the barons demanded that heiresses should not be married off to foreigners by the king. Castles should only be entrusted to native-born Englishmen. In parliament, the earl of Norfolk demanded the expulsion of the Poitevins and all aliens from the realm. (Prestwich, English Politics 82)

The employment of the Horn story for ideological purposes elsewhere has been made patent in Judith Weiss’ connection of RH to Henry II’s visit to Dublin in 1171-1172 and Holford’s association of HC with Edward I’s expansion of the English empire. With an appreciation of this we may proceed to consider how the Horn narrative was shaped in KH to engage with conventional political rhetoric of the time. Weiss points out that “the principal names in it are Scandanavian/Germanic, and in its depiction of repeated raids by heathen invaders on Ireland and the south coast of England, it probably reflects the Viking Raids on England in the eighth to tenth centuries” (The Birth of Romance x). In the musical allusions of KH, English national identity is expressed in the extent that the poem’s depiction of music can be associated, not with the ideals of the ruling class, but with perceptions of earlier Anglo-Saxon society.

The protagonist Horn is in many ways a conventional hero in that he epitomises the qualities of the best of knights: he is fair, courageous, strong, intelligent, courteous, and pious. His worth is revealed, not developed, as the narrative of KH progresses through demonstration of these qualities in his episodic victory over pagans, love-rivals, and defectors. When he is exiled from his own kingdom, Horn arrives to Westernesse where he is fostered by King Alymar before he proves himself in feats of combat. Upon his admission to the court of Westernesse, Horn is instructed in music and “othere servise”, and his identity as a musician enables him to rescue Alymar’s daughter Rymenhild from a bad marriage to Fikenhild. Disguised as a minstrel, Horn infiltrates the wedding feast, defeats his foe and restores order to Alymar’s court. This use of disguise follows an earlier occasion when Horn, dressed as a palmer, saves Rymenhild from an equally disagreeable marriage, to King Mody (1129-1136).

Horn’s implementation of the minstrel disguise as an entry device has a longstanding tradition in folklore. Stith Thompson notes appearances in Irish, Icelandic, and Danish folklore of the motif of “disguise as musician to enter enemy’s camp” in his Motif Index of Folk Literature (K. 2357.1). If, however, we look at English literature and folklore, this motif is much more prevalent. Jerrianne D. Schultz in her compilation of references to employment of the minstrel disguise in Northern European literature from the twelfth through fourteenth century notes that
the motif is particularly popular in texts of English origin. Of the twenty-three examples which Schultz itemizes, she comments:

Three of the twenty-one texts are Scandinavian – Old Norse, Icelandic, Danish Latin. One is Old French. One is Provençal. And one is High Middle German. But as an overwhelming fifteen of these twenty-one tales could be classified as British (Middle English, British Latin, Welsh, and Anglo-Norman), the motif seems of particular interest within English culture. (7-8)

Schultz associates this frequent employment of the trope in “British” literature with the popularity of minstrels in the court of Edward I, as this flattering association with heroics elevated the status of the minstrel (9). Nevertheless, examples from earlier than the period Schultz examines indicate that the minstrel disguise entry device is also connected to securing political stability. William of Malmesbury includes two anecdotes of the minstrel disguise being used as a military tactic in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, by Alfred the Great and later by Anlaf, the Norse-Gael king of Northumbria, to spy upon Alfred’s grandson Æthelstan’s army. Geoffrey of Monmouth credits the feat to the Saxon Baldulf in his *Historia Regum Britanniae*. The settings and sources of these stories “suggest strongly that the figure of the pre-Conquest Insular harper appealed to post-Conquest authors and audiences” (Dickson 205). Hereward the Wake, the eleventh-century leader of local resistance against Norman Conquest of England, is noted in the thirteenth-century *Gesta Herewardi* for his employment of disguise. By association with this tradition, Battles writes, “Horn, therefore, in addition to being an Anglo-Saxon, becomes a resistance figure like Hereward and his followers” (*Cultural Difference* 115). It should be noted that these stories are all recorded in post-Conquest texts. Whatever about the reality of the stories in the Anglo-Saxon period, this motif was associated by post-Conquest authors with Anglo-Saxon England.

Of these figures, one has particular resonance, the Anglo-Saxon king Alfred the Great (849-899). In William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* Alfred infiltrates the military camp of the Danish invaders by disguising himself as a minstrel:

Regis enim Danorum sub spetie mimi subiens tentoria, unius tantum fidelissimi fruebatur conscientia. Ibi ut ioculatoriae professor artis etiam in secretiora triclinii admissus, nihil fuit archanum quod non exciperet cum oculis tum auribus. (II. 121. 5)
(Dressed as a minstrel he entered the Danish king’s camp, supported by one most faithful companion who knew the secret. Thus, gaining entry as a professional entertainer, even to the innermost quarters, there was no secret that he did not learn with both eyes and ears. (185))

William associates this infiltration with Alfred’s victory at the Battle of Edington (878), writing that once Alfred had acquired this information, he gathered a troop and overpowered the Danes, forcing the Danish King Guðrún (baptized Æthelstan) to convert to Christianity. The employment of the minstrel disguise entrance device is not the only element of KH which aligns the hero with Alfred. Horn adopts the name Cutberd (Gg 4.27), during his stay in Ireland. It is the Anglo-Saxon St Cuthbert (c. 634 – 687) to whom Alfred the Great attributed his victory over the Danes in William of Malmesbury’s account, as William recounts that the king and his mother had parallel dream visions of Cuthbert, inspiring Alfred to continue to struggle against the invaders:

Solebat ipse postea, in tempora felitiora reductus, casus suos iocunda hilarique comitato familiaribus exponere, qualiterque per beati Cuthberti meritum eos euserit, sicut plerumque mos est mortalibus ut eos illa iuuet meminisse quae olim horruerint exepisse. (II. 121.2)

[Years afterwards, when happier times returned, he himself would tell his friends in cheerful intimacy the story of his adventures, and how he had survived them by the merits of St Cuthbert – so common is it among mortal men to recall with pleasure experiences that were fearful at the time. (183)]

Alfred’s son Edward the Elder and subsequent members of the House of Wessex demonstrated particular devotion to St Cuthbert for political rather than spiritual reasons, as Luisella Simpson observes in her analysis of the Historia de Sancto Cuthberto:

The miracle of St Cuthbert for Alfred in the Historia seems thus to have owed its birth less to hagiographical endeavour than to the specific desire to uphold the rights of the English kings in Northumbria, at a moment in which the creation of the English realm was a prime military and ideological issue. (410)

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102 All references to Gesta Regum Anglorum cite Mynors’s edition and translation.
103 ‘Cubert’ in the Laud 108; ‘Godmod’ in Harley 2253, ‘Gudmod’ in RH, ‘Godoubonde’ in HC.
If the allusion to St. Cuthbert, an emblem of English kingship and victory over invading forces, were not enough to identify Horn with King Alfred, the employment of the minstrel entry device strongly implies identification of the hero with an Anglo-Saxon heritage.

What is more, Alfred’s recovery of his patrimony from the invading Danes, and indeed, his expansion of his kingdom involved unification of the kingdom under one language, promoting the English language over Danish and perhaps commissioning translations of Latin texts into English. Alfred was credited in the Middle Ages with personally translating texts, including Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy.* Alfred was not only a monarch associated with minstrelsy and defence against invaders in the post-Conquest imagination, but with the promotion of the vernacular and its link with nationhood. It is significant then that Horn, a figure that so clearly emulates Alfred, appears in manuscripts that also promote the English language at a time of pervasive anti-“alien” sentiment.

Although the employment of the minstrel disguise also appears in *RH,* the function of music within the text is very different. Where in *KH* music is associated exclusively with Horn’s recovery of political power from invading forces, the Horn of *RH* is a much more superlatively talented musician, whose talents are employed for other purposes as well. Whereas the Horn of *KH* is noted for playing only the harp, the hero of *RH* is proficient, or rather, superior to every other mortal man, in every musical instrument under the sun, as Thomas writes: “N’est estrument suz ciel, dunt sacet hom mortal, dunt ne past tute gent dan Horn, l’enperïal” (375-376) (“there was no musical instrument known to mortal man in which the princely lord Horn did not surpass everyone” (9)]. This superlative depiction of music is apparent in contemporary French chivalric literature, as Page notes, describing a depiction of harping in the *Livre d’Artus* as “gilded with hyperbole” (“Music and Chivalric Fiction in France” 3).

It is not only the superlative nature of the description of music in *RH* that aligns it more closely with French chivalric literature than the sparse *KH,* but also the change in the function of music within the narrative. In *RH,* the Irish princess Lenburc (Reynild in *KH*) performs the “lay of Rigmel” accompanying herself on the harp, unaware of the significance of the song to Horn (2791-2798). The lay reminds Horn of his pledge to Rigmel (Rymenhild in *KH*) “k’en sun quoe...”

*Though in contemporary scholarship there has been doubt cast on Alfred’s authorship, the attribution of Old English translations to Alfred certainly begins in Anglo-Saxon England as Aelfric refers to Bede’s *Historia Anglorum* “ða ðe Ælfred cyning of ledene on Englisc awende” (ed. Thorpe 118). For current assessment of Alfred’s authorship of these “translations” see Susan Irvine “Alfred and his Books” and Malcolm Godden “Did King Alfred Write Anything?”*
l’aveit bien remembré” (2817) [“who had kept it deep in his heart” (65)]. Jane Bliss notes: “the pathos of Lenburc’s situation is balanced and heightened by the momentary glimpse we are given of Horn’s face as he muses on his absent lover” (91). This scene resembles so many others in which intercalated lyrics are used to emphasize particular moments of pathos in the French dits amoureux. The scene, in addition, serves as foreshadowing for what is to come as the lay of Rigmel is said by Lenburc to have been composed by Baldof her brother, whose name closely resonates with Baldulf who uses the minstrel entry disguise in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae. Although we are given some very ornate details about technique (such as the tuning of the harp) and praise for Horn’s skill, what is most significant about the lay is its subject matter. The trope recurs to similar ends in Guillaume de Machaut’s Le Remède de Fortune (c. 1340), and is also evoked in Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess when the Dreamer overhears the Black Knight’s lament (475-86) and in the effect of Antigone’s song on Criseyde in Troilus and Criseyde (876-973). Page infers that music appears in French chivalric literature as aesthetically pleasing, and that there is greater space given to music in romance than in epic, and, using the specific example of RH, notes that music operates as an embellishment to the narrative. Page writes:

The story of Horn - and there are others like it - seems to mediate a contemporary interest in the composition of love-songs by well-born composers - we immediately think of trouvères such as Conon de Bithune and the Chastelain de Couci. These tales show how closely their lyric art must have been involved with the male narcissism which lies at the root of chivalry and “courtly love”. (Voices and Instruments 11)

The figure of the kingly harper, as we have seen, is not new to romance literature or even to the Horn story by the time it becomes a part of RH. What is new about the depiction in RH “is the tacit but unmistakeable admission … that refined love is the passion which music most readily stimulates and feeds” (Page 5). The close association of harping and courtly love in romances is a departure from the role of the harp in Old English literature, according to Page:

There are no love songs in Beowulf, only lays of the ancient epic heroes of the North; yet in the Roman de Horn there is a keen sense that Horn’s musicality is part of a disposition to be elegant and amorous which is the heart of courtliness as interpreted by secular individuals. (5)
The association of harping with winning the love of a princess is prevalent in medieval literature. The princess of Pentapolis is instructed in harping by Apollonius of Tyre in the Latin Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri and in the Old English prose text. In the later Middle Ages, the story is retold in book VIII of Gower’s Confessio Amantis. An even more infamous employment of the trope post-dating KH is in narratives of Ysonde being taught to harp by Tristrem:

The king had a douhter dere;
That maiden Ysonde hight
That gle was lef to here
And romaunce to rede aright.
Sir Tramtris hir gan lere
Tho with al his might
What alle pointes were,
To se the sothe in sight,
To say. (1255-1263)

Morgan Dickson argues that RH rejects the conventional association of harping with romantic love as Horn, instead of beginning a romance with Lenburc, is reminded of his pledge to Rigmel. This contrasts with the later depiction of Tristrem who uses his skill as a harpist to compete for Ysonde’s favour and for whom “the harp has the power to join the lovers, uniting them into a single identity represented by the instrument that defines, represents, and recounts their relationship” (Dickson, 214). Although preceding conventional employment of this trope, Thomas’ treatment of music is still nonetheless couched in similarly romantic connotations, unlike KH, which associates harping with military tactics.

Weiss, noting that it is likely that Thomas invented this episode of RH, links the depiction of peacetime pursuits to the occasion of the poem. She argues that Thomas composed and delivered his romance in Dublin at Christmas 1171-1172 “to an audience comprising Henry II, Richard FitzGilbert, Earl of Clare (alias Strongbow), and other Anglo-Norman barons who had come to Ireland at the request of the king of Leinster” (“Thomas and the Earl” 1-2). In the depiction of the Irish court, whose members are all skilled harpists outdone only by Horn, Weiss argues that RH was “intended as a kind of compliment to Strongbow, casting as it were, Strongbow as Horn” (7). In RH Thomas emphasizes that this is the standard of all noble men but stresses that it is an activity of the past “a cel tens sorent tuit harpe bien iër; cum plus fu gentilz hom e plus sout del mester” (2824-2825) [“in those days everyone knew how to play the
harp well; the higher the rank, the greater the knowledge” (65)]. Though harping is considered a “peacetime pursuit”, in the context of RH it gains political significance. As Strongbow’s marriage to Aoife MacMurrough secured him the succession to Leinster, the “romance” of RH, “casting as it were, Strongbow as Horn”, is political. As such, the association of harping with winning the love of a princess in RH is politicized.

In KH music is much more explicitly linked to the political narrative, as it is Horn’s employment of the minstrel disguise which enables him to restore order in Westernesse. In the sparse narrative of KH, in which details are kept to a minimum, music is not a superfluous “peacetime pursuit” associated with “restoration of courtly activities”, but rather, is a tool for restoring monarchical stability. Unlike in RH, which celebrates the mannerisms of the court in immense detail, the inclusion of music in KH is kept only to references related to Horn’s restoration of his patrimony, as Horn ambushes Fikenhild disguised as a minstrel. In KH, Horn’s education in music is not a mere detail, but rather, is fundamental to securing his political power by force through use of the minstrel entry device:

Harp he gan schewe,
And tok felawes fewe,
Of knightes swathe snelle.
That schrudde hem at wille (1475-1478)

Music in KH is not connected to romance or to moments of leisure, but to the hero’s recovery of power. In this way we can begin to explore how the harp in KH emulates a cultural identity that may be identified with an imagined Anglo-Saxon society by the post-Conquest audience rather than with contemporary Anglo-Norman culture.

The instrument which is associated with Horn’s initiation as a foundling in King Alymar’s court is the harpe. The KH poet’s reference to Horn’s instrument as harpe is among the earliest uses of the word form in the MED (in addition to references in the La3amon’s Brut and in The Owl and the Nightingale). The term, though it later was adapted in French literature (as is attested in Guillaume de Machaut’s Dit de la Harpe) etymologically derives from the Old English term bearpe. The instrument referred to in Old English as bearpe is not the harp as currently understood, but an instrument bearing greater resemblance to a lyre.105 In their extensive commentary on the excavation and reconstruction of the musical instrument recovered from the

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Sutton Hoo ship burial, Myrtle and Rupert Bruce Mitford demonstrated that the instrument referred to as *hearpe* in Old English poetry was in fact a kind of lyre (611-731). Tess Knighton notes that “even in the sixteenth century there seems to have been some confusion between the terms harp and lyre” (392). This triangular lyre was used across early medieval Europe, and was referred to by different names in different languages. In Old French it is referred to as *rote* or *route*, in Latin, *rota*, in Welsh, *crwth*, and in Old English it is referred to as *hearpe*. The KH poet rejects French and Latin names for the instrument, favouring the etymologically English *harpe*. There is no particular emphasis given to the harp in RH; instead, we are given an impression of Horn becoming proficient, or rather, superior to every other mortal man, in every musical instrument under the sun when Thomas writes: “N’est estrument suz ciel, dunt sacet hom mortal, dunt ne past tute gent dan Horn, l’enperïal” (375-376) [“there was no musical instrument known to mortal man in which the princely lord Horn did not surpass everyone” (9)]. The identification of Horn’s musical instrument as *harpe* in KH, not as the *rote, route,* or *rota* as this instrument was known on the continent, connects his music making to Anglo-Saxon traditions and the Old English *hearpe*.

The *hearpe* appears in a number of poems in the Old English “Exeter Book” (Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501, tenth century) including: *The Seafarer, The Fortunes of Men, The Gifts of Men,* and *Widsith,* as well as in a number of religious settings such as *Genesis* (transmitted in the late tenth- or early eleventh-century Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11), in the Old English translation of *Apollonius of Tyre* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi, MS D 201, eleventh century), the metrical *Psalms* of the Paris Psalter (transmitted in the eleventh-century Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS 8824). Jess B. Bessinger notes a total of twenty-one references to *hearpan, hearpe,* and *hearpera,* in *A Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records,* in addition to use of kennings such as *gléobéames, gomenwudu* (glee-wood).

Page notes the rarity in Old and Middle French references to protagonists as being skilled musicians. Page notes that:

> it is almost unknown for a male to be praised for instrumental skills; exceptions are *Florimont,* which is related to the *Alexander* material, the *Roman de Horn* and *Eracle* where, in both cases, the ability to play the harp is presented as a skill cultivated by the nobility of the past. (*Voices and Instruments* 27)

Page notes a trend of anti-intellectualism in French chivalric literature which, on the whole, looks askance upon the liberal arts:
When they are mentioned they may be surrounded by an unmasculine, unchristian and even unnatural aura, being studied by women, by Saracen children, or by visitors from the seductive and dangerous world of faery. Such is the reflection which clerical learning and the Islamic contribution to Western science finds in the mirror of chivalric narrative.

That Horn’s identity as a musician would not be typical of a hero of Old French literature is evident. What is even more remarkable is the emphasis on musical education in \textit{KH} when placed in context with the trend of anti-intellectualism in French literature. This may be understood in context of post-Conquest association of Anglo-Saxon society with learning, as Alfred was remembered for “translating” Latin and promoting education.\footnote{See for example, William of Malmesbury’s extensive list of works attributed to Alfred (ed. Mynors 279).}

Horn is taught to serve wine, carve meat, and “othere servise”, activities less leisurely than the courtly activities of his counterpart in \textit{RH} and \textit{HC} (who instead learns romances and games), or Chaucer’s Phoebus, who is commended (portentously) for his skill as an archer. The association of music and wine pouring in \textit{KH} recalls images of the \textit{healle} of Anglo-Saxon culture, perhaps best represented in the scenes of Heorot in \textit{Beowulf}:

\begin{quote}
þegn nytte behéold
sé þe on handa bær hroden ealowaége scencte
scír wered scop hwílum sang (494-496)
[a thane performed his office, he who in his hands bore an ornate ale-cup, decanted pure sweet mead; a bard sang from time to time.]
\end{quote}

It is in such a scene that the direction of the tale shifts, as Horn, in disguise as a palmer, engages with Rymenhild who is pouring wine at her wedding feast. In the first instance Battles notes “the revelation of the hero’s identity pivots around a distinctly Anglo-Saxon domestic object, a drinking horn, within the context of the Anglo-Saxon ritual of the lady circulating through the hall offering drink to guests” (119). On the second occasion of Rymenhild’s rescue from an unsuitable marriage, Horn disguises himself as a minstrel, and, differentiating himself from his minstrel-disguised predecessors, actually plays his instrument, causing Rymenhild to swoon. As George McKnight observes in the preface of his edition of \textit{KH}, that there is “noticeable lack of

\footnote{Benjamin Slade’s edition and translation, \textit{Beowulf on Steorarume}.}
unnecessary description inserted for embellishment” in *KH* (viii), it is significant that the harp is in fact mentioned twice by Alymar among the skills that Horn must learn.

Education plays a central role in *KH* whereas it does not in *SirO* and the *MancT*. Horn is the only one of these three musical protagonists of *KH*, *SirO*, and *MancT* to be noted for the involvement of external influences in his musical development. Phoebus of *MancT* is portrayed as naturally talented, and Sir Orfeo teaches himself to harp; however Horn is taught the art. When Horn first arrives to Westernesse, King Alymar enlists his steward Ailbrus to:

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tech him to harpe
With his nayles scharpe,
Bivore me to kerve,
And of the cup serve.
Thu tech him of alle the liste
That thu ever of wiste,
And his feirin thou wise
In to othere servise.
Horn thu undervonge
And tech him of harpe and songe. (235-243)
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The narrator then recounts that: “Horn in herte laghte, al that he him taghte” (244-248). This detail differentiates Horn from the naturally skilled Phoebus and the self-taught Orfeo, and also from the resistance to education depicted in French chivalric literature. The detail, which suggests that Horn is eager to learn and to retain his lessons, differentiates him from the heroes of contemporary French literature.

Horn is instructed to play the harp “with his nayles scharpe”. Herbert Myers associates the technique of playing the harp with sharpened fingernails specifically with medieval Ireland, writing that “Irish harpists traditionally played with sharpened fingernails, in contrast with players of gut string harps who used the fleshy part of the finger” (333). Simon Chadwick, however, suggests that this specification of location is “anachronistic”, asserting: “the older tradition was to sound the strings using long fingernails”, and that across Europe “medieval harps were played with the nails, while later harps were not” (524). By the late Middle Ages, Cheryl Ann Fulton asserts that “documentary evidence suggests that most harps used in Europe were gut strung” (46). The detail of Horn’s playing the harp with his nails connects him to an earlier age rather than contemporary performance practice, where the flesh of the fingers would
be employed. The evocation of earlier musical practice, in conjunction with the English harpe, emphasizes the poem’s setting in a pre-Conquest society, despite its date of composition. The technique was archaic rather than specifically English. However, linked to the minstrel disguise and in the use of the English name for the instrument, we can appreciate the poet’s association of the technique with Anglo-Saxon society.

In HC, the harp is also mentioned among those activities which the hero must learn in order to be admitted into the new community to which he arrives. In HC, the instrument carries connotations of courtly minstrelsy as we are told that Horn learned “al maner gamen & glewe” (276) and that “harpe & romaunce he radde ariʒt” (286). The differences in activities which are associated with harping in KH and HC find resonance with the numerous differences previously noted between the narratives of Thomas’ RH and KH, further indicating that KH is a poem culturally different from the Anglo-Norman version.

The evocation of the Anglo-Saxon hearpe in this Middle English romance evinces the same concern with national identity, with tradition, and with Englishness, that inhabits so many of the texts of Laud 108 and Harley 2253. The primary narrative of KH explicitly demonstrates preoccupation with invasion, and displacement. The subtext of the employment of music in this poem implicitly locates this preoccupation within the context of post-conquest Anglo-Norman presence in England.

We have plenty of evidence of this ambivalent attitude to the Normans in late-thirteenth-century England, and some context for the motivations for this ambivalence. It is clear, from the complaint of Matthew Paris, noted at the beginning of this section, against non-native presence “plundering” England in the mid-thirteenth century that an aversion to the presence of those who were “not English” endured long after the Norman Conquest.

In KH, not only the depiction of themes of invasion and political displacement, but the articulation of a specific cultural identity associated in Anglo-Saxon tradition through the employment of music, among other motifs, expresses an aesthetic that favours an imagined native pre-Conquest culture over current, Anglo-Norman culture.

The employment of the minstrel-disguise entry device connects Horn to Alfred the Great. This connection, further emphasized in Horn’s taking the alias “Cutberd” (evoking St. Cuthbert), gives Horn’s kingship both the authority of sainthood and of Anglo-Saxon heritage. By renewing the Old-English term hearpe to denote Horn’s musical instrument, rather than using a term derived from the French roue or Latin rota, the poet further aligns Horn with a cultural identity that resists Anglo-Norman culture. Finally, as music is so crucially associated with Horn’s recovery of power, and the restoration of political stability, in contrast to RH, where its
function is part of the “gilded hyperbole” of chivalry and courtly romance, the subtext of English disassociation with Anglo-Norman conventions patent.

III. “Tamquam alter Orfeus” – *Sir Orfeo*

The English chronicler Geoffrey le Baker (d. c. 1360), in his *Chronicon Angliae temporibus Edwardi II et Edwardi III*, described Edward II’s confinement at Kenilworth following his deposition at the beginning of 1327, writing:

Nullum infortunium in ima depressus deplanxit Dei servus, nisi quod uxor sua, quam non potuit non amare, nolebat ipsum videre, cuuis amplexibus plus quam per annum vixit viduatus, et quod nee ma permissit filium suum novum regem aut aliquem suorum liberorum sibi presenciale solacium prebere. Quot amorosa teleumata voce submissa tamquam alter Orfeus concinuit, set incassum!

[The servant of God, even when he had sunk into the depths, complained of no misfortune except that his wife, whom he was not able not to love, did not want to see him, although he had lived a widower from her embraces for more than a year, and that she did not allow their son, the new king, or any of their children to give him the comfort of their presence. Countless were the songs which this second Orpheus sang with pleading voice, but in vain.]

Edward (1284-1327) was considered a weak king who alienated his barons and his wife Isabella of France (1295-1358) through his negligence of his duties and attachment to favourites. The sympathies of le Baker do not reflect general opinion of Edward as *rex inutilis* [incompetent king] either during his own time or in current scholarship. Seymour Phillips observes that with the exception of le Baker, “the contemporary and near-contemporary chronicles were usually critical of him [Edward], when they were not openly hostile” (5). This section seeks to examine the idiosyncracy of le Baker’s reference to Orpheus in response to prevalent concerns with royal inadequacy in the context of the depiction of the hero of *Sir Orfeo* (hereafter *SirO*) and of other musical kings and princes in the Auchinleck MS (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1, completed c.1330).

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109 See Peters *The Shadow King*. 
Le Baker’s association of Edward with Orpheus is an interesting one. London’s ancestral ties to Troy, made popular two centuries earlier by Geoffrey of Monmouth’s (c.1100-c.1155) Historia Regum Britanniae (c.1136), were often used as literary mirrors in which the “ideal” societies of Ancient Greece and Rome were used to reflect upon medieval London.\(^\text{110}\) This trope flourished especially in the late fourteenth century, for example in the historical prologue to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (late fourteenth century), Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde (1380s), Gower’s Confessio Amantis (c.1386-90), and Lydgate’s Troy Book (1412-1420). It is interesting to observe then that le Baker – in the years preceding widespread examination of London as a “new Troy” – associates Edward not with the war-like heroes and kings of Trojan lore, but with the more peaceful and artistic Orpheus.

Edward was not the military success his father, Edward I (1239-1307), had been. The elder Edward had led a suppression of revolts during the Second Barons’ War (1264-1267) (being especially credited for his leadership at the Battle of Evesham in 1265), joined the Ninth Crusade (1271-1272), led a conquest in North Wales (1277, 1282-1283), and intervened in the civil war in Scotland arising from succession disputes upon the death of Alexander III of Scotland (1241-1286). Phillips writes: “whoever followed Edward I on the English throne would be hard put to match the glowing opinions of his predecessor, all the more so since they conventionally glossed over the many problems Edward I had bequeathed his son” (6). Edward I’s success as a war king left England facing a number of difficulties when his son succeeded the throne in 1308. There was tension in Gascony and the military campaign in Scotland was ongoing when Edward I died. Furthermore, opposition from the barons regarding taxations and requisitions for war resources meant that Edward II inherited considerable debt from his father. Phillips notes that although the administration of royal finances “had deteriorated under the pressures of war into a state of confusion”, “it is now estimated that the crown had debts of £200,000 at the time of Edward I’s death and that as much as £60,000 of this was outstanding as late as the 1320s” (129). Edward II did not enjoy the same military success as his father, suffering a considerable defeat to Robert the Bruce (1273-1329) at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314) which was followed by widespread famine (1315-1317). Le Baker’s comparison of this unwarlike king with Orpheus, who, in Apollonius Rhodius’ epic Argonautica (third century BC) is noted not for his ability in combat, but as an intercessor and mediator, is therefore all the more pointed.

Though he did not follow Edward I in his military success, Edward did uphold a similar reputation to his father as a lover of the arts and entertainment. In records of payments to royal

\(^{110}\) Edward himself owned a copy of Monmouth’s Historia, which was bought for him in 1301. See Hilda Johnstone, Edward of Carnarvon (18).
harpers and fools, Edward I is prominent as a patron demonstrating particular interest in music. From the reigns of William I (c.1028-1087) to Elizabeth I (1533-1604), no monarch is recorded to have employed more than two royal harpers with the exceptions of Edward I (who employed nine) and Edward II (who employed six) (John Southworth 159-161). Edward I employed musicians to entertain and possibly educate his children. One Martinet, a tabourer, is recorded as having received payment in 1304-5 for repair of his tabour “broken by the children” and in 1304 for “repairing the king’s son’s drums” (Southworth 77). The records suggest that the young Edward II would have been habitually exposed to minstrelsy. At his sister Margaret’s wedding in 1290, records show that his father paid 426 minstrels to entertain the guests (Southworth 57). Edward II, following his father’s lead, demonstrated “an inordinate fondness for minstrelsy” according to Southworth (83). In his own letters Edward II expresses appreciation for the Welsh *cwrth* (Jeffrey Hamilton 93). At a feast held in 1306 to celebrate Edward’s knighting, eighty minstrels were employed for entertainment, fourteen of whom, Phillips notes “were provided by Edward himself” (74). In light of this appreciation of music, it is no surprise that le Baker compares the king to the classical mythological figure most associated with music.

Furthermore, in classical mythology, Orpheus is credited not only with skill as a musician, but also with further “gifts”. Orpheus is sometimes credited with the role of Triptolemus in giving of Demeter’s knowledge (of agriculture) to mankind. Themistius, in the fourth century asserted in his *Orations*:

> In saying that Orpheus bewitches and charms everything, the myth hints that it was through the cultivated fruits provided by agriculture that Orpheus tamed the whole of nature and the behaviour of wild creatures and eradicated and tamed the wild elements of the soul. It was also believed that Orpheus bewitched the wild creatures by means of his music, while using the fruits of agriculture for all his sacrifices and rites in honor of the gods. (30.349)

Though it was befitting in Antiquity to associate Orpheus with the arts of agricultural labour, such activities were not considered appropriate interests of a fourteenth-century king. Yet

111 See: Constance Bullock-Davies *Register of Royal and Baronial Domestic Minstrels*, and John Southworth *The English Medieval Minstrel* 159-161.
112 See also: Richard Rastall “The Minstrels of the English Royal Households”.
113 Penella’s translation (185-186).
Edward was renowned for his unusual curiosity for physical work. Oren Falk writes that “Edward II’s irreverent fraternizing with rude mechanicals scandalized fourteenth-century chroniclers.” (263). John Trevisa (1342-1402), in his translation of Ranulf Higden (c.1280-1364)’s Polychronicon, recounts that:

Þis Edward was faire of body and grete of strengþe, and unstedfast of maneres and of þewes, 3if men schul trowe þe comoun tale. For he forsook þe companye of lordes, and drowh hym to harlottes, and brybours to syngers and to gestoures, to carters, to delveres and to dykers, to rowers, schipmen and bootmen, and to oþer craftesmen and ȝaf hym to grete drynkynge; he wolde liȝtlice telle out prive counseille, and smyte men þat were aboute hym for wel litel trespas, and dede more by oþer menis counsel þan by his owne.\(^{114}\)

Le Baker’s association of Edward and Orpheus might have been motivated not only by the king’s character, but also by the events which would eventually culminate in his downfall. Le Baker emphasizes the separation of Edward and Isabella as a cause for the deposed king’s grief in his account. Isabella, finding herself at odds with Edward’s favorite Hugh Despenser the younger, became increasingly isolated from the king and from power from 1322 onwards. She eventually made her own play for control, invading England with Roger Mortimer of Wigmore (1287-1330) in 1326. Isabella’s separation from the king was publicly displayed in her dressing in widow’s weeds, which she wore throughout the campaign to crown her and Edward’s first son king Edward III (Alison Weir 225). Edward, like Orpheus but in different circumstances, became renowned for the loss of his wife.

There is one final connection that might have be drawn in le Baker’s chronicle, namely the speculations that surround the sexualities of both figures. Orpheus, following the death of Eurydice, begins romantic affairs with young men. In his Metamorphoses, Ovid recounts:

\[\begin{align*}
omnemque refugerat Orpheus 
\text{femineam venerem, seu quod male cesserat illi,} 
sive fidem dederat. Multas tamen ardur habebat 
iungere se vati, multae doluere repulsae. 
\text{Ille etiam Thracum populis fuit auctor amorem} 
in teneros transferre mares citraque iuventam
\end{align*}\]

\(^{114}\) Babington and Lamby’s edition (299).
Edward was accused of having romantic affairs with his favorites, most notably Piers Gaveston (1284-1312) and Hugh Despenser the younger (c. 1286-1326). Adam of Orelton, the bishop of Hereford, allegedly referred to Edward as “tyrannus et sodomita” [“a tyrant and a sodomite”] in a sermon delivered at Wallingford on the 13th of January 1327 (Phillips 523). These denunciations must, of course, be considered in context of formulaic accusations of the time, as Phillips affirms that “suggestions of sodomy, which was considered tantamount to heresy, were a familiar method of blackening the character of one’s enemies” in the Middle Ages (523). William II of England (c. 1056-1100), Brunetto Latini (c. 1220 - 1294), Pope Boniface VIII (c. 1230-1303), Philip IV of France (1268-1314), and Enrique IV “the Impotent” of Castille (1425-1474), for example, were all subject to such insinuations by their political detractors. Though we cannot rely on the truth of such conventional accusations, Edward nevertheless was perceived in this way and he was generally portrayed as a weak king and a sodomite. As we have seen in consideration of KH, patrimony and continuity of lineage were fundamental concerns in relation to medieval kingship and thus such allegations carry not only considerable moral, but also, political weight.

The popularity of the myth of Orpheus in the Middle Ages is witnessed in the number of variations of the tale which include: the depictions in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Virgil’s Georgics (c. 29 BC), Boethius’ Consolation of Philosophy (c. 523), the Ovid Moralisé (c.1317-1328), an appearance in the limbo of noble pagans in Dante’s Inferno, Guillaume De Machaut’s Dit de la Harpe (c.1370), Robert Henryson’s Orpheus and Eurydice (c.1480), a fragmentary Child Ballad, the Middle Scots

115 Ed. Frank J. Miller (70) and trans. Martin (344).
King Orphius (c 1526), and, although there is no extant text, references in Floire et Blanceflor (c. 1250) and the Lai de l’Espine (late twelfth century) to a French twelfth-century Lai d’Orphey.

John Friedman writes that “each age has fashioned Orpheus in its own image, giving him new attributes, emphasizing certain of his deeds and even changing the course of the narrative to make the Orpheus myth conform to the values of the day” (1). Le Baker’s description of Edward as “tamquam alter Orfeus” [“a second Orpheus”] is significant in providing context for the use of Orpheus as a figure through which to explore kingship in the the Middle English romance, SirO. In this fourteenth-century Breton Lay, Orpheus is envisioned as an English king, his wife Heurodis stolen from “under a fair ympe-tre” by a Fairy King. Orfeo, in his sorrow, goes into a self-imposed exile, entrusting administration of the kingdom to a trustworthy steward. After ten years of wandering in the wilderness, Orfeo rescues Heurodis from the fairy kingdom by disguising himself as a minstrel and, by pleasing the Fairy King with his music so much, the king makes a rash promise to reward Orfeo who then claims Heurodis as his prize. Returning to his own court at Winchester using the same minstrel disguise, Orfeo restores himself to power after testing the loyalty of the steward left in command.

In addition to the numerous details of the classical myth which explicate le Baker’s association of Orpheus with royal inadequacy, there are several innovations in SirO which are pertinent to the conventional criticisms of kingship at the time. In the relationship between Orfeo and his steward, for example, we are reminded that in 1308 Edward II left his favourite Piers Gaveston as regent when negotiating his marriage to Isabella. Laura H. Loomis first drew connections between Orfeo and Edward in 1956, when she linked the reference to parliament in SirO with the 1327 deposition of Edward II (291). The similarities are enough for Falk to speculate that this poem may be a eulogy from the popular artists to whom Edward was patron (265). Association of the figure of Orpheus with Edward II is also suggested in the Middle Scots King Orphius when the king’s wife is renamed “Issabell”. This fragmentary text offers resonance for discussion of kingship and self-sovereignty in its own right, as Joanna Martin has noted that James I of Scotland was also known as “another Orpheus” by his contemporaries (85).116

SirO survives in three manuscripts; the Auchinleck MS (c. 1330), London, British Library, MS Harley 3810 (early fifteenth century), and Oxford, Bodleian, MS Ashmole 61 (late fifteenth century), suggesting a lengthy career as a popular romance (given the span of more than two hundred years between manuscript witnesses). In Ashmole 61, SirO appears alongside similar romances Sir Isumbras, Sir Cleges, Libeaus Desconus, and the Erle of Tolous. The range of texts with which SirO is presented in Harley 3810 includes both religious and secular texts, most notably

116 See, for example Walter Bower’s Scotichronicon (c. 1440-7) XVI. 28 (ed. Watt 8: 304-5).
Richard Maidstone’s *Penitential Psalms*. There are significant variations between the three Middle English witnesses of *SirO* leading Alan J. Bliss, in his introduction to his edition of the text, to conclude that “no critical text is possible” (xv). Often variation in manuscripts or between versions is a result of scribal error or errors of transmission. This does not seem to be the case with *SirO*. The differences of the Harley 3810 version, Robert Longsworth writes, represent “a divergence from the other versions that is too great to be explained by scribal whim” (3).

The three texts represent distinct and equally authentic realizations of the romance. Although the Ashmole and Harley manuscripts provide invaluable contextual comparison, for the purpose of this study, my concern is with the Auchinleck MS, where *SirO* survives alongside references to a number of other musical heroes including Horn Childe, King David, and Sir Tristrem. The evidence of compilation and of concern with English politics in this manuscript supports a reading of the poem as politically engaged, and the materials which accompany the text indicate that in this manuscript the figure of the crowned harper is of particular interest. We must also note however, that the narrative of *SirO* is not typical of other materials in the Auchinleck MS. As Anne Laskaya observes:

> If, given all the missing folios in what remains of the Auchinleck, we still decide to consider it an arranged, artful text, and if a crusading and martial program of emergent nationalism is represented in the longer romances of the manuscript, then *Le Freine* and *Orfeo* might be said to provide examples of (or yearning for) more peaceful conflict resolution. In *Orfeo*, violence occurs when Heurodis tears her hair and face overwhelmed by the threat of her upcoming abduction, but it is a grieving, self-directed violence, not martial; and while Orfeo does gather his military forces to battle the Fairy King, they are of no use against the world of Fairy. The power of music and love, rather than physical combat, resolves the struggle over Heurodis. (7)

The concern with expansion of patrimony which we saw to be evident elsewhere in the Auchinleck MS in the story of *Horn Childe* is not the key theme of *SirO*; rather, a discontinuation of lineage is evident. Consideration of Orfeo alongside other musical heroes of the Auchinleck MS will allow us to understand that this is not an anomaly, but rather, that music is often associated with disruption in this manuscript.

In *SirO* there are suggestions of an older setting. As in *KH*, the past is politicized. Winchester, Orfeo’s court, was the capital of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom Wessex. The affiliation of the Thracian hero with Roman pagan gods suggests a pre-Christian setting. The author tells us
that “his fader was comen of King Pluto and his moder of King Juno” (43-44); this genealogy differs from traditional portrayals of the Orpheus myth. Pindar (522-443 BC) relates that Orpheus is the son of Oeagrus the wine god (Threnos 3. 11-12), but in his Fourth Pythian Ode, asserts that “from Apollo’s home came Orpheus”, referring, as Bruce K. Braswell observes “not to the god’s paternity but to the way Orpheus became a musician” (256). Association of Orpheus and Apollo was conventional, emphasizing Orpheus as a monotheistic hero, and further underscoring his musical talent. The dissociation of Orfeo from the God of music and poetry, instead linking him to Juno and Pluto (marriage and the underworld), is therefore notable. The foregrounding of marriage and underworld so early in this narrative pre-empts the action of the tale, evoking romance and the supernatural.

In comparison to the learned musicianship of Horn, Orfeo is depicted as a more innately skilled musician. The poet relates:

Orfeo mest of ani thing
Lovede the gle of harping.
Siker was everi gode harpour
Of him to have miche honour.
Himself he lerned forto harp,
And leyd theron his wittes scharp;
He lerned so ther nothing was
A better harpour in no plas.
In al the warld was no man bore
That ones Orfeo sat bifo re –
And he might of his harping here –
Bot he schuld thenche that he were
In on of the joies of Paradis,
Swiche melody in his harping is.
Orfeo was a king (25-39).

Orfeo’s skill as a musician is so exceptional that it tames birds and wild beasts. The combat which Horn must partake in to “prove” his worth is replaced in SirO by the hero’s musical

117 See Swanson’s translation 89.
118 See John Friedman Orpheus in the Middle Ages 13-37, and Jamie Fumo The Legacy of Apollo 76-123.
119 All references to Sir Orfeo are to the Auchenleck MS witness, edited by Bliss (2nd ed.).
abilities. Whilst Horn simply uses his minstrel disguise to gain entrance into the wedding of Fikenhild and Rymenhild, and must then establish himself through combat, it is Orfeo’s musical rather than martial prowess that allow him to rescue Heurodis, and then reassert himself as king in Winchester. Orfeo does not have to take up arms. The Fairy King is so delighted by Orfeo’s musical performance that he pledges to reward the minstrel with whatever he requests (449-452).

John McLaughlin notes that both KH and SirO display “the complex of narrative elements” characteristic of a Return Song:

(1) Return after long exile (prison, the otherworld, various other adventures preventing speedy return); (2) Deceptive story, told to test the worthy (wife, steward, son); (3) Delayed recognition, through recognition token (ring, bow, talisman of some kind); (4) Restoration of ruler to throne (often involving massacre of usurpers), return to stability in kingdom. (305)

Use of recognition tokens (objects by which the hero is identified) is a popular trope in medieval romances. In the Auchinleck MS, there are a considerable number of examples; in Sir Tristem, Guy of Warwick, and in Floris and Blancheflour the heroes are identified by rings; in Amis and Amiloun, by golden cups; and in Sir Degare by a sword. Once again, we see a key difference between Horn and Orfeo – the token by which Horn is identified upon his return is the ring bestowed by Rymenhild; Orfeo, on the other hand, is identified by his harp. Crucially, Orfeo is the only hero of Middle English romance to have a musical instrument as his token of recognition as the poet recounts: “the steward biheld and gan y-se, and knewe the harp als blive” (530-1). Gail Ashton observes that the significance of Orfeo’s harp “alters in line with the variety of readings the tale prompts: Christian allegory, family drama, Breton lay focussed upon the construction of art and culture, or perhaps a poem about death and the failures of dynasty” (62). According to Ashton, the harp can respectively represent order of the cosmos, spiritual healing, penitence, a bridge between worlds, a recognition token, “the harp is, then integral to a minstrelsy that simultaneously marks civilization or culture and tips us into a strange other-world where anything is possible” (63).

The significance of Orfeo’s association with the harp becomes apparent much earlier in the narrative. When the hero enters his self-imposed exile he rejects all accoutrements of courtly, civilized life, except for the harp. The narrator recounts:

Al his kingdom he forsoke;
Bot a sclavin on him he toke.
He no hadde kirtel no hode,
Schert, ne no nother gode,
Bot his harp he tok algate
And dede him barfot out atte gate;
No man most with him go. (227-233)

Whereas the ring with which Horn is identified is a symbol of his love and loyalty shared with Rymenhild, the symbolism of Orfeo’s recognition token bears no relation to his wife Heurodis. This, it may be argued, downplays the significance of Orfeo and Heurodis’ relationship in this version of the tale. And yet, as we have seen in discussion of Apollonius of Tyre, the Romance of Horn, and Sir Tristrem in the previous section of this chapter, music is often associated with love and passion in medieval romance.

Examining the theme of exile in SirO, Dominique Battles argues that the focus of the text is not on romantic attachments, but political ones, writing:

the poet evokes for Orfeo the circumstances and mindset of exile from the earlier, Anglo-Saxon literary tradition, a tradition far more concerned with social and political bonds than with the bond between a man and woman, a tradition that treats exile not as an opportunity for self-improvement but rather as a threat of self-annihilation (“Sir Orfeo and English Identity” 211).

If we read SirO as Battles does, as a poem concerned with social and political bonds, we might still acknowledge that romantic ties are of importance in the text. The relationship with Heurodis does not necessarily need to be sidetracked for this to be a political commentary. Family has been used as a model for the state since antiquity with Aristotle asserting in his Politics:

There are, as we saw, three parts of household-management, one being the rule of a master, which has already been dealt with, next the rule of the father, and a third which arises out of the marriage relationship. This is included because rule over wife and children – over both as over free persons, but in other respects differently: over a wife, rule is as by a statesman; over children, as by a king. (I.v 1259b, Trans. Sinclair 92)
Marriage is symbolic of a man’s ability to rule, thus, Orfeo’s relationship with Heurodis is still central to the ideology of the poem.

If the concern of SirO is with political bonds, as Battles suggests, then the significance of the harp is undoubtedly to endorse rational and disciplined governance. R.H. Nicholson writes that: “the harp represents the individual, rational, quality in Orfeo’s life as a king, his sapientia especially as that is manifested in his royal eloquence” (178). The association of the harp with civilization, rationality, and social order, is nowhere better indicated than in the depiction of Orfeo’s taming of irrational beasts with his music:

And when the weder was clere and bright,
He toke his harp to him wel right
And harped at his owhen wille.
Into alle the wode the soun gan schille,
That alle the wilde bestes that ther beth
For joie abouten him thai tehth,
And alle the foules that ther were
Come and sete on ich a brere
To here his harping a-fine -
So miche melody was therin;
And when he his harping lete wold,
No best bi him abide nold. (269-280)

Through his music, Orfeo brings order and peace to the animals, acting as a sovereign over the wilderness. Willis Lee Templeton notes that “Orfeo’s skill translates into a display of prowess here” (126). In the absence of a kingdom, Orfeo’s leadership (embodied in rational music) is exercised upon the animals instead. In the Fairy Kingdom, Orfeo’s music again has not only a civilizing, but also a dominating effect, captivating its hearers and also subjugating them:

Bifor the king he sat adoun
And tok his harp so miri of soun,
And tempreth his harp, as he wele can,
And blisseful notes he ther gan,
That al that in the palays were
Com to him forto here,
And liggeth adoun to his fete -
Hem thenketh his melody so swete.
The king herkneth and sitt ful stille;
To here his gle he hath gode wille. (435-444)

I have previously noted that the poet describes Orfeo as using his “wittes scharp” when playing this instrument. The emphasis of the capacity of music to cultivate good judgment in the individual, which Aristotle notes in his Politics, is recalled in the fact that Orfeo’s harp is the only object to connect him to the civilized world when he lives in exile. Twice the poet uses the word “tempreth” to describe Orfeo’s instrumentation (437, 526), emphasizing further the significance of the harp as a symbol of rationality and reason.120

In terms of social status, harpists ranked higher than other minstrels according to Southworth, who writes that “while publicly the harper was required to celebrate his lord’s military prowess, privately he had to fulfil a very different function, that of soothing and healing the troubled mind and soul” (88). We can see that throughout the Middle Ages, the harp was associated with healing (calming) music, not only in the myth of Orpheus, but in Christian iconography of King David. David is noted by the author of the SumM for “sic David in Saule sedavit demonis iram, ostendens cithare virtutem carmine miram” (298-9) [“so it was that David calmed the raging demon in Saul, showing with a melody the miraculous power of his cithara” (57)]. Southworth notes that: “by providing this form of musical therapy for the men and women who employed him, as David had done for Saul, we see how the harper was able to escape that narrow definition of a minstrel’s function which critics like John of Salisbury might otherwise have used against him” (89).

A reading of consolation in music in SirO invites comparison with Chaucer’s BD, with it’s reference to the curative capacities of music mentioning Orpheus, along with Daedalus, Ovid, Hippocrates and Galen, as a healer (569). The grieving Black Knight, like Orfeo, seeks solace in removing himself from the courtly community (represented by the hunt) and retreating into the wilderness and turning to music as the Dreamer finds him singing “a lay, a maner song, withoute noote, withoute song” (471-472). The tuneless nature of the Black Knight’s music reflects his grief; however, there is a suggestion that in other circumstances the Man’s music

120 Among the definitions of “tempreth” in the MED are: “to calm (an angry person), soothe; moderate (harshness), assuage (wrath); alleviate (sorrow, suffering, etc.), mitigate (the horror of death); also, modulate (righteousness, mercy, etc.), “to restrain oneself, exercise moderation; control oneself emotionally; restrain oneself”, “To tune a musical instrument (in a certain way); adjust (a musical instrument, the strings of an instrument)”
would be rational and intellectually crafted. He recounts writing and singing songs for Lady White, demonstrating knowledge of Pythagoras (1167), thus associating music with its underlying mathematical structures, the rational organization of sound that represented the rational organization of the medieval universe. Laura L. Howes notes that the poem’s circular pattern “follows the romance convention whereby the hero returns to his own people after his adventures outside the boundaries of society have challenged and changed him” (176). In fact the place to which Orfeo retreats, Longsworth asserts, “in appearance resembles a *locus amoenus* - a setting of pastoral serenity-rather than a murky grove” (7), the same kind of site where the Dreamer of *BD* encounters the grieving Black Knight. Both Orfeo and the Man in Black are alone in an ungoverned forest with their music and their grief. There is even resemblance in the use of colour as Orfeo is described as having a beard “blac and rowe” (265-266). What is different about the Black Knight, however, is how he deals with his grief. Momentarily isolated from the hunt, his self-imposed exile is extremely brief in comparison to Orfeo’s ten year hermitage. The Black Knight seeks consolation in music without being lost to it, whereas Orfeo, to borrow a phrase from Holsinger, becomes something of a “musical ascetic” (299). In addition, the Black Knight returns to society in spite of losing his wife. Unlike Sir Orfeo who is unable to return without his wife, and rejoins society only when he has unnaturally retrieved Heurodis from the fairy kingdom, Chaucer’s Black Knight deals with grief in an appropriate manner, as he eventually returns to the community. In comparison of these portraits of grieving noble musicians, we can observe the importance of engagement with community in medieval constructs of ideal kingship. The return to “society” that is so crucial to the conclusion of medieval romance (c.f. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *KH*, *Havelok* etc.), is thus undercut in *Sir O* through the failure to handle grief in the more conventional way that is demonstrated in *BD*.

Though Lewis notes that “Orfeo is on some level comfortable with class-crossing through his performance as a harpist” (20), there is suggestion of the social marginalization of minstrels in the hero’s assertion that minstrels go where they are not welcome:

it is the maner of ous  
To seche mani a lorde hous -  
Thei we nought welcom no be,  
Yete we mot proferi forth our gle. (431-434)
Here the poet indicates tacitly an awareness of the stark social difference of “minstrel” and “king.” The nobility of the musician king is preserved in the association of Orfeo only with the harp. Further reminder of conventional distinctions in social classes is provided by the Fairy King’s objection to the match of the disguised Orfeo and Heurodis:

“Nay!” quath the king, “that nought nere!
A sori couple of you it were,
For thou art lene, Rowe and blace,
And she is lovesum, withouten lac;
A lothlich thing it were, forthi,
To sen her in thi compayni.” (457-463)

That a poor minstrel could win a fair lady’s hand allows the lower classes to be inserted into the idealized and predominantly aristocratic world of romance. Orfeo’s time in the wilderness may allow him to overlook conventional class distinctions. Whereas at the beginning of the poem he consults with barons and lords, at the end, he seeks information from a beggar. From Higden’s criticism of Edward for fraternizing with labourers, we know that such class-crossing is not typical of kingly decorum.

Unlike in classical depictions of the myth where Eurydice is lost, Heurodis is saved in SirO. This is the case not only of this Breton lay, but also of a number of other medieval interpretations of the Orpheus myth including the Ovide Moralisé and Henryson’s Orpheus and Eurydice. McDonald links the happy-ending with the popular romance’s will to resolution and satisfaction of desires. She notes:

Aventure, the essence we are told of romance, presumes in fact an unfolding of narrative that – because it is literally advenire, ‘to arrive at’ or ‘to reach’ – is inescapably mindful of its end. (13)

As Orpheus’ desire for Eurydice is what ultimately drives the narrative, they must be reunited even if the sources have to be changed to accommodate the new happy ending (McDonald: 14). If we read SirO as politically topical, however, it is not Orfeo’s love for Heurodis, but the significance of good governance that necessitates a happy ending. It is Orfeo’s good judgment of kinsmen, rather than his retrieval of Heurodis that seems to be the real victory. Orfeo and Heurodis do not have any offspring, perhaps implying failure in their marital life. The absence of
children and natural inheritors of the throne leaves room for further emphasis on the importance of trustworthy advisors in the monarch’s service. When Orfeo dies, the kingdom passes to his loyal retainer, further emphasizing the importance for monarchs to surround themselves with trustworthy advisors. Falk questions the persuasiveness of this ending, asserting that:


to regard the steward as a surrogate son is merely to gloss Orfeo’s personal and political defeat with euphemistic varnish … a concern with progeny was central to fourteenth-century political thinking … Listening closely to Orfeo’s disrupted succession reveals suggestive undertones of political and social tension embedded in the poem (248).

KH, examined earlier in this chapter, provides an example of how loyal retainers can be rewarded without encroaching on the King’s own power (1527-1552). In various details suggestive of passive disobedience, Falk reads Orfeo’s first abdication of the throne as deposition, asserting that it “appears eminently sensible in the light of mounting political strain” (253).

Association of music with anxiety concerning legitimate succession can be read elsewhere in the Auchinleck MS by the appearance of a Middle English metrical *David be King*, a version of Psalm 51 (Vulgate numbering: Psalm 50), *Miserere mei, Deus*, the biblical David’s prayer of repentance after the appearance of the prophet Nathan to reprimand him for his adultery with Bathsheba. Whilst *SirO* shares with a number of romances in the Auchinleck MS the trope of the loyal steward, it shares with the story of David and Bathsheba an anxiety about legitimate succession.

In the Book of Samuel, David commits adultery with and impregnates Bathsheba, the wife of one of his soldiers, Uriah. To conceal this, David encourages Uriah to leave his duty as a soldier and bed his wife (hoping that Uriah will believe the child to be his own). However, Uriah remains steadfast in his duties as a soldier, so David instead orders him to the frontline of battle, knowing that he will die, and weds the widowed Bathsheba. The offspring of this affair dies several days after birth, which David takes to be punishment from God.

Though Bathsheba later gives birth to Solomon, David’s successor, the narrative of an unnatural marriage that does not produce offspring or produces offspring who die, and that causes the king to neglect his duties, has resonance with *SirO*, especially as David is renowned for his skill as a musician. Longsworth notes several biblical allusions in *SirO* that further connect the two, including visions of Holy Jerusalem, references to the Song of Songs, and
comparISON OF David AND Orfeo. Longsworth writes that the expectations raised by these biblical allusions are thwarted rather than fulfilled:

The castle which Orfeo takes for Paradise conceals not tearless saints who forever sing the praises of God but a grotesque, silent, and motionless tableau vivant of the Fairy King’s victims. The orchard sleep of Herodis leads not to the fruition of love but to a nightmare in which love is broken by separation. And Orfeo’s single-minded devotion to his beloved Herodis is striking contrast to the polygamous habits of the Psalmist-King David’s. Thus, biblical allusion is abundant, but the uses to which it is put are somewhat surprising and unexpected. (10)

What is more, we are reminded of the discontinuation of lineage with regards to another musical hero of the Auchinleck MS in Sir Tristrem, who, because of his love for Ysonde, is unable to consummate his own marriage to Ysonde with the White Hand.

All three Breton lays in the Auchinleck MS are structured around loss and recovery; they provide consolation:

more than primarily a celebratory declaration of a new English nation (or proto-nation), the early fourteenth-century Auchinleck is a text that acknowledges loss and nostalgia as it simultaneously presents the need to develop a continuity, a resonance, between past and present, between Norman-French and English. (Laskaya 8)

Following Laskaya’s argument for appreciation of SirO as unconventional in comparison with other romances in the Auchinleck MS, it may be argued that the portrayal of Tristrem as a knightly harper, and allusion to King David may also provide context. These depictions of musical heroes whose patrimony is disrupted are especially pointed in light of Baker’s description of Edward as “tamquam alter Orfeus”.

IV. Music, Status, and Rationality in Chaucer’s Manciple’s Tale

Earlier in this study, the highly crafted and technical nature of Chaucer’s depiction of bird-music in his early dream poems was explored. It was demonstrated that, particularly in the PF, this association of music and order had political implications. Taking into consideration medieval perceptions of music as an art of good measurement, and as an art fundamentally
underlying the structure of the cosmos, music operated as a metaphor for rationality, order, and social stability. At the close of his poetic career, Chaucer returns to the subject of birdsong. Unlike the beautiful (albeit fragile) harmonies depicted in *BD* and in *PF*, however, the soundscape of the *Manciple’s Tale (MancT)* is one of disorder and irrationality. The Manciple tells of Phoebus, the Roman counterpart to Apollo, who keeps a white crow whom he has trained to speak and to sing beautifully, and when the crow, loyal to his master, reports seeing Phoebus’ adulterous wife to his master, the god of music and poetry, in a fit of rage, murders his wife, breaks his musical instruments, and curses the crow with black feathers and an unmusical voice. The destruction of musical instruments and stripping the bird of its song, a rejection of the art of good measurement, embodies Phoebus’ violent abandonment of his own rationality and restraint. Whilst in *SirO* the hero also strips himself of his nobility in his grief, he still retains his *sapientia*. Orfeo does remove himself from civilization, but keeping his harp is still connected to civilization through music. Phoebus’ rejection of his musical instruments is not merely a conventional depiction of grief or anger, but a demonstration of his abandonment of reason.

This Ovidian legend is regarded as the denouement of Chaucer’s poetic career, as in the Ellesmere sequence of the *CT* it is followed only by the Parson’s sermon on virtuous living, written in prose, and Chaucer’s own retraction, apologizing for any vulgarity in his work. The figurative quitting of music and poetry is often perceived to be Chaucer’s own, a rejection of the conventional tropes of poetic composition and withdrawal from the literary arts. David Raybin and Susanna Fein view Phoebus/Apollo as a figure for the poet himself, writing that, not Phoebus, but:

> the poet breaks his bow and instruments, bereaves his bird of song, abandons his muse, condemns speech, and, returning to his own person, surrenders poetic art in favour of the devout prose of the *Parson’s Tale* and the self-referential “I” of the *Retraction*” (229).

I will argue in this section that the relinquishment of music not only has personal and aesthetic connotations in *MancT*, but also engages with conventional contemporary iconography of royal authority. As Chaucer returns to, and terminates, birdsong, which in the *PF* signified stability and governance, a pre-occupation with social issues at the close of the poet’s career is manifest in the depiction of music in the *MancT*. As in the *PF*, the disruption of music in the *MancT* serves as a metaphor for instability. As Chaucer’s employment of birdsong to this end has been discussed at length earlier in this thesis, my focus here will instead be on the figure of the crowned minstrel and the obliteration of the musical instruments, the material signs of Phoebus’ power of reason.
The *MancT* is fraught with tension between power and domesticity, as the sun-god is portrayed as short-tempered and impulsive. Phoebus’ controlling nature is revealed in the fact that he cages both his domesticated white crow – which he has trained to *contrivete* speech – and (figuratively) his wife. The Manciple remarks: “jalous he was, and wolde have kept hire fayn” (*CT* IX. 144). Throughout the corpus of Chaucer’s works, depictions of Apollo are ambivalent. The God of *Love of LGW* is intimidating, impatient, and tyrannical. He is a herald to the Squire’s interrupted tale of Canace’s incestuous relationship with her brothers (*CT* V. 48), and of death in the *Monk’s Tale* (*CT* VII. 2740-2758), and treated irreverently in invocation in *HF* (1191-1109). In *MancT*, Apollo is finally dethroned before he is silenced in the rejection of poetry by the Parson who delivers a sermon in prose. Though Chaucer’s Phoebus is referred to as a knight rather than a king, as both Horn and Orfeo explicitly are, the *MancT* offers a portrait of a musical king that is equally suitable for such analysis.

Chaucer’s depiction of Phoebus as a young knight, a cuckolded husband, and a maker of minstrelsy, humanizes this deity. The most popular vein of Chaucerian scholarship regarding the depiction of Phoebus in *MancT* concerns itself with questions of aesthetics and Chaucer’s perceived anxiety regarding his own poetic voice. The depreciation of Apollo is interpreted as Chaucer’s rejection of the conventional tropes of poetic composition and his withdrawal from the literary arts. We have seen that elsewhere Chaucer takes an irreverent approach to association of Apollo with poetry in *HF*. The dreaming “Geffrey” of *HF* invokes Apollo as “god of science and of light” (not of music or poetry), and Glenn Steinberg asserts that Chaucer’s invocation “undermines the elevated, classical style of Dante’s lofty verses” (195). A return to this figure – a tool to undermine poetic authority earlier in his poetic career – is pointed in light of such an interpretation of the text.

In addition to questions of aesthetics and the voice of the poet, the subversion of Apollo in *MancT* has been interpreted as expressive of Christian philosophy, as a rejection of the pagan gods for the one true god. Kensak, for example, notes that Apollo is undermined in both Dante’s *Commedia* and Alan of Lille’s *Antieclodianus*, as appeals initially made to the Greek god are supplanted by appeals to the Christian God. Kensak writes: “each author must abandon Apollo and invoke the Christian God before poet and pilgrim can reach their destinations” (144), and argues that this is also how we should interpret the Manciple’s succession by the Parson’s sermon and the compunction of the *Retraction* as the pilgrimage of *CT* draws to a close.

In her analysis of the depiction of royal badges and symbols with relation to the God of *Love* (Apollo) in Chaucer’s *LGW*, Phillips suggests that Chaucer is making a direct allusion to Richard II. Noting the context of Richard’s use of the image of the rising sun, in addition to the
white hart, on badges, clothing, and in visual art (for example, in the Wilton Diptych), to create an image of himself as a divine ruler, Phillips writes:

Chaucer’s sun-king imagery is of interest not only because of possible iconographical links both to Apollo tradition and contemporary politics but also because it illustrates how his characteristic aesthetic of highly fluid, multivalent imagery, resistant to simple or single iconographic interpretations, can serve an attitude to power which combines praise and fear, deference and disapproval, splendour and tyranny. (91)

Like Phillips, I would argue that Chaucer’s “highly fluid” aesthetic resists “simple or single” interpretations. The depiction of Phoebus in *MancT* thus invites attention given the aspirations of Richard II to cultivate an image of the king as god-like.

Examining depictions of kingship in the works of Chaucer and his Ricardian contemporaries, Samantha Rayner notes that Chaucer “rarely comments on those kings whose lives he had the opportunity to observe from close quarters, or engages directly with ideas of kingship” (83). In comparison with Gower, Langland, and the Gawain-poet, Rayner remarks that what is striking is how Chaucer’s major poetic achievements push attention away from kingship and absorb it into the stories and themes he chooses to focus on” (84). Rayner observes that even in his early writings Chaucer is sensitive and oblique in his address of royalty. Following the tactful treatment of consolation of a royal mourner in *BD*, Rayner writes that *HF*, *PF*, and *LGW* “also show the poet’s skill at showing kings through the refracted lens of characters who are aware of their royal status, but who are still unmistakably human beings who face experiences common to everyone” (97). Rayner writes that Chaucer’s engagement with kings in this poem “illustrates their vulnerability to the human experience of love, and shows how this is complicated into matters that become tragic in outcome by their royal duties and obligations” (120). In her analysis of the depiction of kingship throughout Chaucer’s corpus, the continuing thread is sympathy, and portrayal of royalty in a manner that is both respectful of their status, but also implies that they are fallible to the difficulties of being human. In other words, they grieve, they face challenging decisions, they can fall prey to emotions and to poor judgment, and to poor counsel. On the subject of the *MancT* Rayner writes: “an allegorical interpretation of the god Phoebus can view him as a kind of ruler whose wisdom is so limited he can not discriminate between a trustworthy subject (the crow) and a disloyal traitor (his wife)” (138). Connection of *MancT* to Richard need not be explicit. However, we can proceed to consider the tale as an engagement with popular symbols of royal power at the time of its composition.
This tale of Phoebus and his crow ultimately derives from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (II 654-776), a work abundant in depictions of the classical gods as capricious, violent, and inherently imperfect. There is no one specific source for Chaucer’s telling of this story, but rather, as Donald Baker asserts:

It is far more likely, as most now recognize, that *The Manciple’s Tale* was in its imaginative conception an amalgam of the Phoebus stories with which Chaucer was familiar … an amalgam that probably originated not in Chaucer’s returning to any of the stories but to his recalling those details from his reading and listening that suited his own purposes in telling the story. (9)

Jamie Fumo observes that: “no precedent exists for this emphasis on the crow’s voice and its metamorphic deprivation or, for that matter, the cessation of Phoebus’ artistic designs; instead, the tale’s sources and analogues focus solely on the bird’s change of colour and the dangers of misplaced speech.” (205). The tale was contemporaneously depicted in John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (III 783-817). Gower makes no mention of Phoebus as a musician, of his silencing of the crow, or of his destruction of his musical instruments. These details added by Chaucer shift the focus of the tale; the destruction of music, and abandonment of reason, emphasizes the violent and imperfect nature of the tale’s protagonist. Consideration of these additions of Chaucer’s invention will shed light on the political purposes which they served in undermining a conventional iconography of monarchical power.

Robert Boenig, examining the “material semiology” of the psaltery of Chaucer’s *Miller’s Tale*, notes the poet’s play with the semiotics of physical objects. The psaltery, which is often depicted in medieval illuminations as the instrument of King David (and thus signifies kingship and the sacred), is played in the *Miller’s Tale* by Nicholas, a devious young cuckolder. Chaucer’s psaltery is associated with adulterous courtship rather than with reason and virtue. The irony is only apparent when we are aware of the context of customary medieval representations of the instrument. Boenig writes that Chaucer:

provides many significant (in the sense of “meaning bearing”) physical objects for his narratives – the Knight’s rusty armour, the Shipman’s monk’s portable sundial, the pan Mabely throws at the Friar’s summoner, and of course, the many musical instruments in the hands of the Canterbury pilgrims and their characters. (“Nicholas’s Psaltery” 96)
The particular instruments with which Phoebus is associated in *MancT*, like the Knight’s rusty armour and Nicholas’ psaltery, can also be read as details which were carefully chosen by the poet, and which bear meaning on how Phoebus is intended to be perceived. An examination of the performance practice and of the social significance of each of the instruments with which Phoebus is associated reveals subtle implications in relation to his character.

At the beginning of his tale, the Manciple does not specify which instruments Phoebus plays, but rather vaguely states “pleyen he koude on every mynstralcie, and syngen that it was a melodie to heeren of his cleere voys the soun” (*CT* IX. 113-115). The Manciple proceeds to compliment Phoebus on his singing voice, saying that he surpasses Amphion who – as noted at the beginning of this chapter – in one of the two myths of the foundation of Thebes guided the stones that formed the city walls into place with the music of his lyre. This mention of Amphion anticipates the ideas of “quitting” and of kingship/governance that emerge in the tale. Thebes is the setting for the very first of the *CT*, the *Knight’s Tale*, and the figurative return to the city here anticipates the conclusion of the pilgrimage. Furthermore, the mention of Thebes conveys a return to the themes of the *Knight’s Tale*, a text steeped in ideas of kingship, governance, and social stability, evoked particularly in the figure of Amphion who ruled Thebes with his twin brother Zethhus. It is only when Phoebus rejects his musical gifts at the tale’s conclusion that the Manciple notes which instruments the deity had played:

For sorwe of which he brak his mynstralcie,  
Bothe harpe, and lute, and gyterne, and sautrie;  
And eek he brak his arwes and his bowe,  
And after that thus spak he to the crowe. (*CT* IX 267-270)

It is significant that the combination of instruments which Phoebus is noted to play – harp, lute, gittern, and psaltery – is comprised exclusively of plucked string instruments. The Manciple’s statement that Phoebus could play “on every mynstralcie” is revealed to be an exaggeration. The god plays only instruments which produce sound by plucking strings, rather than demonstrating skill on every implement of minstrelsy (i.e. bowed string, wind, percussion, organ etc). We might infer that Phoebus’ technique as a musician is narrow and, therefore, deduce that his repertoire is limited. As the harp, lute, gittern, and psaltery would produce similar tones Phoebus would not be permitted great scope in the variety of styles and modalities of music that he could perform.

Though the timbre of plucked string instruments would have been distinguishable from that of bowed string (for example, vielles and rebecs), wind (such as flutes and bagpipes), and
percussion instruments (nakers and tabours), within this group played by similar techniques, the timbre of one instrument would be less distinguishable from another. Given the frequency of crossing of parts [intersection of melodic lines] in both vocal and instrumental music of the fourteenth century, it was typical to combine instruments (and voices) of different tonal qualities so that each part, or melodic line, could be distinguished. Boenig notes that a “good late fourteenth-century musician would, presumably, find it valuable to learn instruments of more than one timbre rather than ones of similar timbres like the psaltery and harp, so as to be flexible enough to fit easily into various ensembles” (“Musical Irony” 256). Those few Chaucerian characters that play more than one instrument show a preference for an ability to switch between various timbres. Boenig observes that Absolon, for example, plays “a smal rubible” (CT I. 3331) and the gittern (CT I. 3333) (256). Though both are stringed instruments, one is played with a bow whilst the other is plucked, producing different timbres. Unlike Absalon, who demonstrates some adaptability as a musician by mastering instruments from more than one timbral group, Phoebus plays plucked instruments exclusively. As was noted in discussion of KH, the medieval harp could be strung with wire or gut strung, though “documentary evidence suggests that most harps used in Europe were gut strung” (Fulton 346). The lute, psaltery, and gittern were all gut-strung instruments. Accordingly, Phoebus’ proficiency as a musician would be restricted by playing only instruments that would produce such similar qualities of sound.

In his analysis, Boenig notes that the nuance of ensemble musical performance, which heralds the opening of the Pardoner’s Tale, is lost as the instruments comprising the ensemble – “harpes, lutes, and gyternes” (CT VI. 465) – produce such similar tones. The various melodic lines would be unintelligible in comparison to a performance of, for example, an ensemble comprised of wind, plucked, and bowed instruments. Boenig perceives irony in the fact that the instruments, like the three nameless rioters, are “undifferentiated” (257). Whereas the

121 William Drabkin defines part-crossing as: “the rising of the lower of two parts above the higher or, conversely, the falling of the higher of two parts below the lower.” (Grove Music Online)
122 See Young, “Lute, Gittern, and Citole”.
123 Boenig writes: “the Pardoner ironically depicts his musicians as playing the wrong instruments for a successful performance of fashionable music … their performance has certain analogous connections with the Tale’s plot and meaning. Musicians playing together must cooperate; otherwise any performance – professional or amateur, fashionable or fashionless – is impossible. Yet for late fourteenth-century secular music to be successful, as we have seen, the individual lines must not compete; otherwise those parts will blend together, ruining the effect of multiple crossovers. To perform music of Chaucer’s generation with an ensemble composed of harp, lute, and gittern is to set up a musical paradox: attempted cooperation with inherent competition undermining the artistic success – a description of the whole careers of the Pardoner’s rioters.” (257)
simultaneous performance of harps, lutes, and gitterns in the *Pardoner’s Tale* results in homogeneity which corresponds to the indistinct morality of each of the tale’s three revellers, the timbre of Phoebus’ music has other implications.

Phoebus’ single-mindedness and obstinacy are revealed in the confinement of his music-making to one timbral group. Phoebus’ narrow concentration upon one instrumental type evokes the same sense of obsessiveness as the acts of caging his wife and bird, embodying poor judgment and egotism which most clearly manifests in the lines which follow the destruction of his instruments, as he addresses his crow: “traitour, with tonge of scorpions, thou hast me broght to my confusioun” (271-272). Phoebus’ short-sightedness and self-absorption surface as he “shoots the messenger” and passes blame for own actions onto others.

Developing the concept of Phoebus’ instruments as “meaning bearing”, it is interesting to consider each instrument individually, and what each might signify. Spring notes that, towards the end of the fourteenth century, “the association of gitterns with taverns and unruly behaviour was well established, not only in England, but also in France, where legal prosecutions resulted with some frequency” (14). In the *MED*, the only mention of the gittern in Middle English before Chaucer occurs in the rolls of London, when on the 22 of October 1381, three men:

> John Swetenham of co. Chester, William Garlthorp of co. Lincoln and John Pycard were committed to prison for making a disturbance with giternes at 11 o’clock on the night of 20 Oct. Afterwards, on 18 Nov. they were released on mainprise of £40 not to raise disturbances or wander about at night, and were likewise sworn to keep the City’s ordinances and to save their mainpernors harmless.\(^\text{124}\)

In Chaucer’s *CT* it appears in scenes of revelry such as when the Pardoner begins his exemplum of the three rioters:

> In Flaundres whilom was a compaignye  
> Of yonge folk that haunteden folye,  
> As riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes,  
> Where as with harpes, lutes, and gyternes,  
> They daunce and pleyen at dees bothe day and nyght,  
> And eten also and drynken over hir myght,  
> Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifise. (463-469)

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\(^{124}\) *Calendar of the Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London* (ed.Thomas 2: 297).
In Chaucer’s oeuvre, this reference is not the only occasion when the gittern is associated with drinking, gambling, and ribaldry. The only two other characters depicted as players of the instrument are the foppish Absolon of the Miller’s Tale, and the mischievous Perkyn of the Cook’s Tale.

Absolon, the would-be-suitor to Alisoun in the Miller’s Tale, is a parish clerk, impeccable in his dress, and effeminate in comparison to his rival, the psaltery playing Nicholas. The Miller recounts:

And pleyen songes on a smal rubible;
Therto he song som tyme a loud quynyble;
And as wel koude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visited with his solas,
Ther any gaylard tappestere was. (CT I. 3331-3336)

In the hands of Absolon, the gittern is an instrument of bawdiness, associated with the entertainment of “tappesteres” (barmaids) in taverns and brewhouses. In the downward spiral of seediness in the tales told by the Miller, Reeve, and Cook, the gittern is found in even less savoury possession. The tale of Perkyn the reveller breaks off when he takes up residence with a prostitute, but before this, we are told that he is a gambler, a thief, and would often play music in public processions leading criminals to Newgate prison. When commenting on Perkyn’s tendency to steal money from his master’s account, the Cook says:

For sikerly a prentys revelour haunteth dys, riot, or paramour,
His maister shal it in his shoppe abye,
Al have he no part of the mynstralcy.
For thefte and riot, they been convertible,
Al konne he pleye on gyterne or ribible. (CT I. 4390-4396)

In this instance, not only is the gittern associated with bawdiness, but minstrelsy in general is too as the Cook uses “mynstralcy” as a euphemism for gambling, revelry, and womanizing.

The selection of the instrument as one played by Phoebus in MancT is apt, given the depiction of the god as a lusty bachelor whose tale is set up to seem like it might venture into the
realm of fabliau. It would not be the only occasion where the gods of music were associated with such a tale, Orpheus and Amphion are both invoked in the description of music at the wedding feast of the *Merchant's Tale* (*CT* IV. 1716).

The psaltery, unlike the gittern, was associated with more polished music making, and appears in the records of royal patronage of minstrels; however, as Spring notes, it “seems to have been considered more suitable for queen’s entertainment” (11).125 The only other character to play the psaltery in Chaucer’s *CT* is the lusty Nicholas of the *Miller’s Tale*. Despite customary medieval perception of the psaltery as an instrument of sacred music, often depicted played by angels and by King David in iconography, the connotations of the instrument are less pure in the *Miller’s Tale*. Not content with simply employing the psaltery as an instrument of wooing, Chaucer euphemizes the very act of adultery in the description of Nicholas’ “music-making using the psaltery.” The Miller recounts that the young cleric: “thakked hire aboute the lendes weel, he kiste hire sweete and taketh his sawtrie, and pleyeth faste, and maketh melodie” (*CT* 3304-3306).

As in the *Pardoner’s Tale*, Boenig notes irony in the Chaucer’s selection of musical instruments in the *Miller’s Tale*. Nicholas, to allow himself the opportunity to spend time alone with John the Carpenter’s wife Alisoun, feigns prediction of a second flood. In the Book of Samuel, King David’s vision of Christ motivates him to build a temple; Nicholas therefore shares not only in the musical instrument of the biblical king, but also, in his gift of “prophecy”. Boenig writes “Nicholas has, in other words, chosen an ironically appropriate instrument for his amorous escapades. Associated with prophecy, visionary experience, and King David, it finds its way into the hands of a would-be-visionary” (105). The medieval audience would undoubtedly recall the story of David’s tryst with Bathsheba as the king’s instrument was associated with such illicit activity. Without the context of Nicholas’ melody-making, the psaltery would have different connotations in the hands of Phoebus. As both David and Apollo were musicians attributed with the gift of prophecy, the inclusion of the psaltery among the instruments owned by Phoebus might otherwise seem to complement his god-like attributes. However, given that the only other mention of the psaltery in *CT* is in another account of cuckolding, the instrument carries less of its kingly significance.

The harp is treated in a similar manner in the *CT*. Unlike the depiction of the harp in *SirO* and *KH*, the instrument does not carry the same noble connotations in Chaucer’s work. The Pardoner berates harpists: “syngeres with harpes, baudes, wafereres, whiche been the verray develes officeres” (479-480). Indeed, in his earlier work, *HF*, contemporary harpists, though they

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125 In an inventory of “Minstrels of the Royal English Household” compiled by Rastall, psaltators were employed by Eleanor of Castille, Isabella of France, and Phillipa of Hainault. (9, 14, 20)
are not quite so harshly criticized, are nonetheless belittled, when compared to Orpheus the superior musician, as the narrator recounts:

Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe
That souned bothe wel and sharpe,
Orpheus ful craftely,
...
And smale harpers with her glees
Saten under hem in sees,
And gunne on hem upward to gape,
And countrefete hem as an ape,
Or as craft countrefeteth kinde. (HF 1201-1203, 1209-1213)

The status of “smale harpers” in HF is marginal; rather than creating music craftily as Orpheus does, Chaucer’s narrator states that these musicians can but “gape”, “ape”, and “countrefete” the superior artist. In the moments when the harp appears in Chaucer’s œuvre, preceding its naming among Phoebus’ instruments, it is stripped of the conventional holding of the instrument in high regard. It is associated with sexuality in the portrait of the Friar: “And in his harpyng, whan that he had songe, his eyen twinkled in his heed aright, as doon the sterres in the frosty night” (CT I. 266-268). And also in the Wife of Bath’s recollection of her youth:

And I was yong and ful of ragerye,
Stibourn and strong, and joly as a pye,
How coude I daunce to an harpe smale
And synge, ywis as any nyghtyngale,
Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn! (CT III. 455-459)

In both the reference of HF and WBT, the word “smale” denotes music of the lower classes. Collectively, Phoebus’ instruments are referred to as his “mynstralcie”, a term which, as I have noted, was loaded with unsavoury connotations in the Cook’s Tale. Elsewhere in the CT, minstrelsy is the occupation of the lower echelons of society such as the servants of the Squire’s

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126 Smale: “[a] Of low estate, common; ~ and gret, gret and (ne) ~, everyone (nobody); ~ degre, low rank; ~ harpere, a less famous harper; ~ king, a petty king; ~ mol man, a lesser tenant; ~ prophete, one of the minor prophets” (MED)
Tale (CT V. 268-270) and the Merchant’s Tale (CT IV.1718). In the context of the works which precede the legend of Phoebus and his crow, we can explicate Chaucer’s manipulation of the material semiology of musical instruments in this final tale.

As his last poetic work (the Parson’s Tale being written in prose), it is significant that Chaucer returns to the avian imagery of BD, HF, and PF, and the opening lines of CT. The beautiful and heavenly music which the Dreamer of BD awakens to, and notes for its “craft”, and a sense of order and purpose as the birds pained to reach notes, is reduced to meaningless noise and then to silence at the end of MancT as Chaucer’s poetic career comes to a close. Not only does Phoebus destroy his own instruments, but he also deprives the bird of song. The birdsong idealised in Chaucer’s early work becomes unmusical and irrational. In light of the extensive analysis of MancT as a work spiritually and aesthetically concerned, this may indeed be interpreted as Chaucer’s withdrawal from poetry.

The preoccupations with poor counsel, with courtly mannerisms, and with violent outbursts expressed in Chaucer’s portrayal of Phoebus resonate with the conventional criticisms of royal inadequacy of the time, in the accusations made against Richard as he sought to assert his right to sovereignty and choose his own advisors. This portrayal of Apollo in the text quite incongruous with the one that Richard himself sought to cultivate and associate himself with as godly, distant, and infallible. The portrait of a musical king, set for consideration, becomes apparent in light of the importance of solar imagery, evoking Apollo’s majesty, in Richard’s cultivation of his own image. The humanization of this god of music in the MancT, and the breaking of musical instruments and thus rejection of rationality evokes an image of this figure as irrational and tyrannical. Chaucer’s domestication of a “god” resonates with conventional rhetoric around limitations placed upon the kings by the nobility. The result of such negotiations with power is a conflict between “distance” and “intimacy” such as that which Saul identifies in the public image of Richard II. Saul discusses the difference between the image that Richard sought to cultivate in visual art and pageantry and the reality of his public persona, writing that:

The image he presented was of a remote, almost god-like ruler, but the reality, as [his subjects] experienced it, was of extreme ‘intimacy’. Through the actions of his retainers, Richard had interfered more in their daily affairs than any previous king. The tension in these images of ‘distance’ and ‘intimacy’ was never properly resolved. (Richard II: 445)
The incongruity that Saul perceives between Richard’s public image and the experience of his subjects resonates with the inconsistency between Chaucer’s depiction of Phoebus as a skilled musician (and as such, a rational figure) and a jealous husband.

Richard’s authority as king was tested repeatedly throughout his reign. He succeeded his grandfather Edward III at just 10 years of age in 1377, and was heir to an unsettled kingdom. The effects of the Black Death of 1348-1349 and the financial drain of continuing war with France had left England in a state of political unrest. In efforts to establish both financial and social stability, Richard’s authority was nominal in the early years of his reign. Christopher Fletcher notes that:

The king’s ‘tender age’ made it possible to justify the imposition of mechanisms which would have been difficult to defend under an adult ruler. In such circumstances the changeable tendencies and moral malleability associated with youth gained a political charge. (63)

Richard’s premature ascension would lead to limitations of his power by the magnates well into his adult life. Rejecting both the king’s own choices of councillors and the influence of his uncle John of Gaunt, the magnates sought to appoint their own advisors to Richard from the earliest years of his kingship. Concerning the nobles’ discomfort at Richard’s selection of his own advisors, and appointment of lands and titles to his own favourites, Malte Urban writes:

In an important sense, royal advice does, of course, equal power, and thus emblematises much of the friction between Richard who tried to build an untraditional circle of associates and the magnates who tried to safeguard their traditional rights of access to the king’s ear. This led to repeated attempts at forcing the king to accept counsellors not of his own choosing, most notably after 1386, which Richard increasingly viewed with suspicion. (36)

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127 Depopulation affected the price of land and also the value of labour, weakening peasants’ obligation to stay on traditional holdings and leading to both social mobility and migration. In attempts to resist these changes, sumptuary laws were instituted and fixed rates of pay introduced. See Jim Bolton “The World Upside Down” detailed discussion of the social and political impact of the Black Death. On the fiscal impact of War in late-fourteenth-century England, see: Michael Prestwich The Three Edwards 219-244; and Scott Waugh England in the Reign of Edward III 93-96.
Christopher Fletcher notes the manipulation by parliament of the “association between the king’s youth and the cause of reform” right up to Richard’s deposition in 1399 (63). The events of the 1381 “Peasants’ Revolt” permitted the nobles an opportunity to oppose Richard’s chosen advisors and to curtail the king’s expenditure in patronage to his favourites. Increasing distrust in Richard’s circle of associates (in particular, Justice of Chester Robert de Vere, Chancellor Michael de la Pole, and Chief Justice Robert Tresillian) led to a power seizure by the Lords Appellant in 1387. With further purgation by the Merciless Parliament in 1388, the king’s favourites were exiled and executed, and “suitable” advisors assigned by the appellants. Fletcher writes that for those at the head of the regency of the late 1380s: “it was a good deal easier to blame everything on the king’s youthful changeability and susceptibility to bad counsel than to try to explain away his firm purpose to defeat his enemies” (78). Gradually regaining control in the early 1390’s, Richard sought to elevate the status of the king in England and reduce the power of potential opponents. He won favour by negotiating peace with France and reconciling with his adversaries. However, during this period of peaceful rule, the events of the 1380s had not been forgotten by Richard. In addition to policies promoting a more absolutist monarchy, a significant characteristic of this new style of kingship was Richard II’s cultivation of the royal image in visual art (most notably The Wilton Diptych and his portrait at Westminster Abbey), in his distribution of livery badges, and in the employment of insignia on his own opulent attire

(PLATES 4, 5, 6, and 7). Saul writes that:

The vigorous new kingship that Richard styled in the 1390s obviously originated as a response to the setbacks and humiliations of the 1380s. Richard’s general aim was to enhance the prestige and authority of his office – to raise himself above, and to distance himself from, his subjects. In that way he believed he could strengthen his claim to his subjects’ obedience. (“The Kingship of Richard II”: 49)

It is these events and anxieties which are the backdrop of the composition of Chaucer’s later works. Urban notes that “the volatile political climate of the late fourteenth century as a whole is echoed in the juxtaposition, questioning, and construction of authority in the texts of Chaucer and Gower” (39). The struggles for power during Richard’s reign provide a valuable background for treatment of the theme in Chaucer’s work.

Chaucer’s Phoebus’ limited instrumental scope has even further significance in light of associations of the figure with royal authority. This detail then communicates a similar inadequacy of the figure as would be levelled against an obstinate king who refused to take
counsel. Phoebus’ devotion to only one timbral group of musical instruments bears resemblance to favouritism, unwavering loyalty to unfavourable associates given the associations of the instruments elsewhere in Chaucer’s corpus. The limited scope, which Phoebus’ engagement with music implies unwillingness to fit easily into another “ensemble” or collaborate with other musicians. In other words, this kingly deity is portrayed as too stubborn “to change his tune”.

The instruments which Chaucer associates with Phoebus are, therefore, weighted with implications. In light of Richard II’s employment of the image of Apollo in pageantry, the Manciple’s account of Phoebus’ music-making reveals subtle insinuations that undermine contemporary language of royal authority. Phoebus’ limitations as a musician, dedicating himself to only one timbral group of instruments, embody an obstinacy similar to conventional criticism of royal inadequacy in overlooking of those figures that would traditionally have access to the king’s ear in favour of his own associates. The systematic degradation throughout CT of each of the instruments which Phoebus owns (as they appear in taverns and in the hands of carousers and adulterers), demeans the deity, as his music is reduced to that of the bawdy minstrel rather than that of a god. Through the selection of Phoebus’ musical instruments, Chaucer in a few short lines, both undercuts a prominent icon of Richard’s public image. Phoebus the minstrel, therefore, offers a less ideal version of an icon of royal power than idealised portrait that Richard sought to cultivate. That Chaucer would be concerned in this tale with the conventional language of royal authority is especially pointed given that Strohm associates his earlier Lak of Steadfastness (Sted) with the 1388 Petition of Commons to regulate the distribution, and subsequent abuse of livery badges (“The Textual Environment” 66). In light of Richard’s diplomatic offer to abandon his own insignia, the conventional language of Sted gains meaning:

O prince, desyre to be honourable,
Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.
Suffre nothing that may be reprevable
To thyn estat don in thy regioun.
Shew forth thy swerd of castigacioun,
Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,
And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse. (Sted 22-28)

This appeal, like the idiom of association of solar imagery with kingly power, is conventional. The criticism within the framework of decorum however rings close to that of the MancT against
unevenness and lack of balance. An ideal king should not show favour to one group over another, and the sigla of power – which medieval kings so often were accused of abusing to do so – is what is attacked in the *ManecT*.

**IV. Conclusion: “In its own image”**

The implications concerning kingship are not the central drive of these narratives, but are rather interwoven into larger stories. In all three texts, there is a distinct connection between music and rational thought. Horn’s initiation as a member of the community of Westernesse necessitates that he is educated in music; Orfeo’s harp is the only object that connects him to humanity during his self-imposed exile; and Phoebus’ ultimate destruction of his musical instruments epitomizes the changeable and irrational nature of his character.

An understanding of the nuances of the depiction of music in the Middle English romances *KH* and *SirO* brings home to us that works of this genre are not as homogenous and derivative as has been argued in much literary scholarship of the twentieth century. McDonald writes that the trend of devaluing popular romance: “so pervades academic discourse … that the identification of ‘the general run’ of romance as ‘rustic’, ‘primitive’ or ‘amateurish’, the product of (and for) ‘social aspirants’ who ‘lack understanding’ of ‘their social superiors’, is commonplace” (12). The subtlety with which conventional representations of royal inadequacy are alluded to in the depiction of music in *KH* and *SirO* demonstrates the capabilities of the romance poet to create original and sophisticated work. These works show motivation that can be considered as more politically conscious than simple personal social aspiration, and more discretion than could be credited to a poet who lacked understanding of their social superior. The significant variation from alternative versions of their tales, in particular with regards to the portrayal of music, indicates that these works offer more than the “general run” of romance. The anonymous poets’ adaptations of the adventures of Horn and the myth of Orpheus indicate as much poetic invention as Chaucer’s reworking of Ovid’s Phoebus.

Given the precedence given to pedagogy which we have encountered in the *SumM* and Boethius’ *De ins. mus.*, it is significant that Horn is depicted in making conscious effort to learn this instrument. This detail may be attributed to the depiction of cultivation of musical learning in Anglo-Saxon literature in contrast to the resistance to learning in Old French literature, but may also be connected to considerations of music and governance. The authors of the *SumM* remind us that “homo enim inter animalia cetera cum discretione cantat et alias operationes exercet” (464-465) [“man is the only creature that sings and performs other actions with rational
judgment” (64)], whilst other animals produce irrational sounds: “homo vero cum discretione cantat, sed cantui suo perfecte sentientie verba coniungit” (469-470) [“Man, however, sings with discretion, joining words to his song with well-formed sense” (64)]. As the study of music is so expressly associated with rational judgment in the medieval mind, Horn’s eagerness to learn demonstrates his suitability as a rational leader. The association of his music-making with learning and understanding reveals the quality of his character, foreshadowing his good kingship.

The shifts in the portrayal of the crowned harper, as reflective of attitudes to kingship, can be seen within the Horn narrative itself from the varying portrayals of the hero in KH, RH, and HC. Scholarship has tended frequently to associate these shifts with specific occasions. Paul Taylor, for example, cites Richard Coeur de Lion (1157-1199)'s relationship with his steward Hubert Walter (c.1160-1205) as both a historical and literary inspiration for Orfeo’s assignment of governance to his steward, and notes that “Richard’s popular sobriquet was, as was Adenet of Brabant’s a century later, Rex Menestrallus, “The Minstrel King”… as king of England, he was renowned as a patron of troubadours” (14). Taylor writes that: “this is what the “English” coda of Sir Orfeo is all about: a call to kings to secure their kingdoms while absent in the pursuit of the Church’s interests, and a call to magistrates to reward faithful stewards to assure the continuing fidelity of the king’s men” (15). The tendency of English kings to campaign overseas and leave the country at the hands of their stewards was a frequent source of inspiration for medieval romance. The narrative of Richard’s testing of his steward through use of disguise is transmitted alongside SirO in the Middle English romance Richard Coer de Lyon in the Auchinleck MS, indicating further the conventional criticisms of the “absence” of rulers. The steward testing scene of SirO is unique to this particular version of the Orpheus myth, though this is a stock trope of Middle English romances. SirO’s companion romances in the Auchinleck MS, Guy of Warwick, and Bevis of Hamtoun, both feature “good” steward characters, though neither rule on their lord’s behalf in his absence. Looked at from another angle, the focus in SirO and these other romances in the Auchinleck MS upon the importance of good counsel and reliable favorites is addressed not to the leader or ruler, but to those who are left in his stead. They, therefore, address not only the rhetoric of good kingship, but address those in a position to offer counsel. Falk observes that “unlike other monarchs of Middle English romance, Orfeo receives no consilium whatsoever; his men simply hold their peace” (253). Thus the figure of the crowned harper in this text at least might be excused to some extent for his failures as a ruler. It is not essential to make specific links to a historical figure as Taylor does to understand these representations of kingly figure. The political sphere in which medieval kings operated was
becoming progressively more public in the later Middle Ages, and as such, the rhetoric of scrutiny seen in medieval romances engages with prevalent discourse.

In Chaucer’s work we have further evidence of the continuities in perceptions of royal inadequacy in thirteenth and fourteenth-century England. Although the light-handed reign of Edward II contrasts starkly with Richard II’s close involvement in domestic politics, certain tropes in criticisms of kings endure over this lengthy period. There are parallels in the charges laid against Edward II and Richard II – in that they were both resented by the barons for having favourites, they both ignored typical decorum, and both had their power curtailed on various occasions. However, though Edward was criticized as a *rex inutilis*, a poor king for his passivity, Richard’s characterization bordered on something closer to tyranny. It is worth noting that Richard II attempted to have Edward II canonized (Goodman 86). In a number of ways, Richard’s kingship came under the same scrutiny as his great-grandfather’s. Like Edward II, Richard II inherited his own predecessor’s war debts, like Edward, he was criticized for his treatment of favourites. However, where Edward’s failure to adhere to social decorum was by association with the lower classes, the criticism levelled against Richard was that he sought to elevate himself and distance himself too much from others. Although concern about royal favouritism and factionalism was couched in anti-alien sentiments and hostility towards “outsiders” during the reign of Henry III, similar attempts were made to undercut Richard’s allocation of positions of power to his favourites a century later; however, these were framed with concern about the king’s “youth”. The continuing thread that connects the accusations against Henry III, Edward II, and Richard II is that all three were not perceived to adhere to expectations of an ideal king. In many ways the three crowned harpers considered in this chapter also challenge the expectations of conventional representation of such a figure.
Conclusion

Middle English poetry evinces the centrality of music to everyday medieval life, and also, the fluidity of intellectual exchange. What emerges in the shifting nature of figurative musical language is evidence of the flexibility of creative boundaries in the Middle Ages. This, however, as the employment of music in poetry demonstrates, is achieved through mastery of convention and idiom. The poetry considered in this thesis creates new meaning and new significance through reinterpretation of the idiomatic. Whether this is established narrative tradition – such as those of Orpheus, Apollo, or Horn – Biblical authority, or classical philosophy, these literary musical allusions engage with a semiotics of music that they expect their audience to be fully versed in. The Middle English texts considered in this thesis do not simply replicate the subject matter of treatises and literary tradition, but play upon their audience’s familiarity with this subject matter to new ends.

Ultimately this thesis has focussed on the construction of understandings of music in Middle English poetry, juxtaposing contextualization of everyday practice, theory, and the literary tradition in analysis. These facets are all components of how music is represented by medieval poets. The intersections of these influences upon medieval understanding of music are perhaps most apparent in approaching assessment of the musical allusions of Arundel 292. To understand these allusions, consideration of not only the texts of the manuscript is required, but also the evidence of readership, the specific location of use of the manuscript in both evidence from contemporary documents and from the physical object itself, the ways that these texts interact with one another and with literary tradition. The Siren for example – appearing in poetry, figural decoration, manuscript illuminations, classical mythology, sermons, instructive materials and a wealth of other locations – if only studied in a single representation, can only be understood narrowly. By framing such a representation in the context of the tradition into which it is written, we may better understand the significance of details which are characteristic of its cultural location. Synergistically, close attention to the details of such a single representation informs our understanding of wider convention. In the case of the figure of the Siren, the ME Physiologus reaffirms many of the conventional associations of the creature’s music – as irrational, effeminate, sexual – yet it demonstrates that localization of Siren song in contemporary practice is not as idiosyncratic as we might imagine when considering John of Salisbury’s comparison of unnatural vocal ranges to “sirenarum concentus.” The reference to the Siren as having “manie stefnes” and the omission of Biblical references localizes the reference to the Siren in Arundel
292 to contemporary musical practice at Norwich, where polyphony thrived under the admission of boy singers to the Priory.

That close attention to detail in single representations constructs broad understanding has been central to the examination of the medieval conceptualization of music in this thesis, through attention to nuances and details in the texts discussed. The objective, really, has not been to connect these diverse pieces of literature to one another, but to demonstrate the ways in which they inform one another. When bringing these details together and framing them in the context of theory, practice, and convention, several conclusions might be drawn towards understanding the perception of music in the Middle Ages. Under the framework of the “politics of understanding music,” several conclusions may be drawn on the implications of analysis under the themes of understanding the philosophical, the spiritual, and the political.

The Philosophical:

As is clear from consideration of the representation of music in Middle English poetry, the medieval understanding of *musica* is grounded in emphasis on proportions, numbers and structure. The perception of music as sounding number, evident in the ways that it is quantified in Middle English poetry – for example, the *multiplicacion* of sound in *HF* (although treated lightly in this instance) – evinces that it is understood as a manifestation of natural and consequently divine order. That music had philosophical, political, ethical, and theological implications arising from this awareness of its physical constitution, is unmistakable. Understanding of the manner in which music was linked to concepts of truth and perfection in medieval philosophy is, therefore, crucial to explicating musical allusions in Middle English poetry. It is evident that the frequent references to *musica mundana* [cosmic harmony] in Middle English poetry are not merely literary convention, but an expression of understanding of the universe as divinely ordered. This association is widely employed in literature through use of *musica mundana* to establish narrative resolution, affirmation of societal and spiritual values, and conversely, towards disruption by representation of musical disorder rather than order. Seemingly decorative details in references to *musica mundana* are used as a means of authority, and affirmation of the poet’s imagined ordering of their world.

Music, being so closely linked in the medieval mind to rational order, allows the medieval imagination a tangible subject through which to examine the otherwise ineffable. Such matters as the ordering of the cosmos, the relationship of human and animal sapience, the divine, and faculties of understanding in themselves, become discernible through consideration of a concrete
and perceivable object of understanding. We get a sense from both the poetic and theoretical sources of how music becomes tangible when it is written. The attempts to transcribe the sounds of an environ, in the onomatopoeic noises of Chaucer’s *PF* and of *ChL* and the *Complaint Against Blacksmiths* and in de Grocheio’s study of musical life in Paris indicate that as musical notation itself was becoming more widespread in the later Middle Ages, so too were other forms of documentation of practice. The period of literature studied here is one when musicians themselves were moving from reliance upon the ear to reliance on the written record, and it is patent that this move was one mirrored in the abundance of references to music in contemporary poetry.

I have stressed from the beginning that it was not my aim to read medieval music treatises as “source texts,” or to attempt to make specific and explicit connections of the treatises with references in Middle English texts. The correspondence, however, of ideas, language, and exemplum should make clear the prominence of such understandings as those evinced in the music treatises frequently cited. Works such as Boethius’s *De ins. mus.*, Guido’s *Micrologus*, Johannes de Grocheio’s *Ars Musice*, and the anonymous *SumM* can inform our understanding of the representation of music in Middle English poetry. These literary works express attitudes that are often in dialogue with the assessment of music offered in treatises. The treatises, as do as the Middle English texts considered in this thesis, ultimately write about the experience of music in the Middle Ages, and in doing so, play on many of the same philosophic and literary influences as the medieval poet (such as Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, Macrobius, and Isidore). This is evident when we acknowledge that De Grocheio’s *Ars Musice* communicates the same challenge of reconciling NeoPlatonism and Aristotelianism as can be seen in the scepticism of Chaucer’s *HF*. Both the musical treatise and the Middle English poem scrutinize the predominant crux of late medieval philosophy by attempting to apply conceptual and abstract theory to practical subject matter. As much as poetic form and genre is defined by its rewriting of tradition and convention, so too are these documents. Indeed, examining how these documents are written, from a literary analysis standpoint would undoubtedly provide further understanding. Jason Stoessel’s recent consideration of the influence of humanist rhetoric on not only the lyrics, but also the musical composition of the songs of Johannes Cicconia (c.1370–1412) is just one example of how medieval musicology and literary studies might intersect to inform one another.128

128 “Music and Rhetoric in Johannes Ciconia’s Late Songs” Paper read at the 2014 Medieval and Renaissance Music Conference
Chaucer’s philosophical musical allusions should be located within discourses of the time concerning theocentric and homocentric approaches to understanding music. It becomes extremely apparent in the depiction of religious singers in *CT* that there is a distinction in the poet’s work between educated and uneducated musicians, and this distinction resonates with differentiation between *musicus* and *cantor* in the canon of *musica theorica*. Chaucer’s relationship with this distinction is ambivalent. He both manipulates the trope of *musicus* to narrative ends (such as, for example, the representation of both the Prioress and the little *clergion* of her tale as *cantors*, and of St. Celia in the *SNT* as a *musicus*). And yet he also challenges this conventional view, in for example, the irony of Daun Russell’s praise of Chauntecleer’s father as having “mo feeling than had Boece” in *NPT*. Yet, in *BD* and *PF*, the material of study of the philosopher (Boethius’s “true musician”) is handled relatively deftly (though not without the occasional challenge such as the muddiness surrounding whether Jubal or Pythagoras discovered music). All of this indicates Chaucer manipulating convention as well as inventing and creating new meaning. This can be seen especially in his representation of traditional figures associated with musical authority. His treatment of Apollo is consistently in dialogue with not only music theory but with conventions of literary representation and contemporary practice – his Ovidian fable of Phoebus referencing London musicians, Dante’s invocation, and theoretical debates about rational and non-rational music. How he views these sources of authority on music in relation to practice in his own time is also significant. We might consider the “smale harpers” that ape Orpheus in the *HF*. These tie in interestingly with how “imitation” is a preoccupation of the poet’s work. That which is mimetic is continuously presented in a diminutive way. The birds who counterfeit human music and the humans who counterfeit behaviours that are not appropriate to their social status are presented as strained and artificial; in the case of the animals as irrational, and in the case of the humans as morally dubious.

*BD*, *HF*, and *PF* evince an aesthetic of intellectual curiosity in a diversity of fields of learning, among which *musica* is significantly present. The evidence of Chaucer’s knowledge of speculative music theory in *BD*, *HF*, and *PF* is something often overlooked in scholarship. Music is a crucial component of Chaucer’s navigation of boundaries between experience and authority, as he juxtaposes sounds from the natural world with conventional theoretical material and literary convention. The implications differ from one text to the next; this is not just a show of intellectualism so much as an experiment in the potential usages of this “science.” I have argued that in each case the use of speculative music theory allows Chaucer to test boundaries. In *BD*, NeoPlatonic *musica theorica* serves as a useful tool of consolation, both in reaffirming natural order and rationality, but also in the comfort which music itself provides. *Musica theorica*, like the
dream narrative mode itself, allows Chaucer/the Dreamer to transcend social boundaries to offer such consolation to a character (and possibly historical addressee) of higher social ranking. In HF the reductio of the substance of music theory to nonsense may be read as part of the wider experiment in challenging authority and tradition, and a consideration of the proper applications of scholasticism. In PF, again Chaucer applies the conceptual and idealistic to the everyday, this time, perhaps, indicating its inadequacies more explicitly as the idealized notion of "cosmic harmony" is incapable of regulating the imperfect society of the text. Through frequent references to music and to non-musical sounds, Chaucer manipulates the boundaries of language and literature to consider social order, philosophy, and learning in these dream visions. This in part relates to the suitability of dream vision as a mode of consideration of such matters, something that has long preceded Chaucer’s dream poems. As references to Cicero’s Dream of Scipio made clear, dream literature has a long tradition of examination of NeoPlatonic philosophy and music theory. As the dream space permits the poet some liberty with typical narrative measures, there is sometimes more room for consideration of matters which are symbolically or subjectively significant. This made the dream poem an ideal mode to engage with “knowledge” as the implications for assertion need not carry the same responsibility as instructional treatises. Close engagement with representations of speculative music theory delineates the allusions of other Chaucerian texts. Our understanding of the association of music with rationality and with natural order in BD and PF sheds light on the singers of CT and on the frequent references to avian musicians especially. Chauntecleer and Phoebus’s crow can be understood as more than merely fabulistic or anthropomorphic, but rather, carry with them associations that associate irrationality with mimesis, sexuality with spirituality, and imitation with ignorance.

The implications for the flourishing of literary bird poems in the Middle Ages are also significant. The Floure and the Leafe, considered in Chapter Two, with its representation of the effect which music has on the listener is just one example from a long tradition of bird debates in Middle English poetry that might be considered in such regard.129 What is also apparent from the frequent references to animal vocalizations in Middle English poetry is the close association of music with the natural world. In such references we see the medieval poet draw on experiences from their own surroundings, but also, employ these experiences to ideological ends. Take for example the prognostic verse:

Whan the Raven cryeth be for the Crowe

129 For example The Owl and the Nightingale, Dialogue between a Nightingale and a Clerk, The Thrush and the Nightingale, John Clanvowe’s Book of Cupid, John Lydgate’s Chorle and the Burde.
In these two couplets, if taken as a portent, we see the closeness of association of the natural world with rational order. In the fact that the vocalizations of birds are presented as wisdom concerning how humans should act, we see the potency of birdsong as a means of advice towards social conduct. The liminal space between rational and irrational that birds embody in the medieval imagination allows a platform to discuss things that could not otherwise be discussed. So many of the bird debate poems of Middle English mirror the rhetoric of legal debates of the time. As music is innately logical, representations of natural harmony can thus communicate something towards a resolution of concerns in society that could not otherwise be expressed in debates.

**The Spiritual**

What is deeply evident from the corpus of poetry examined here is that music had profound moral implications in the medieval mind. Our understanding of the centrality of music to religious practice can thus be deepened by awareness of the complexity of the moral implications of music making and singing as a vehicle of praise. We can now realize that the phrase attributed to Augustine - “bis orat qui bene cantat” [“he who sings well prays twice”] - is loaded in the medieval mind with significance in terms of the importance of understanding the message that is being sung, and the importance of appropriately expressing that message in terms of the style and occasion of singing. The importance of such understanding, and the way that it manifests in Middle English poetry and in contemporary sermon material (such as that of John of Salisbury and attributed to Stephen Langton), then informs the emphasis of Guido that “sine magistro nulla discitur antiphona” [“without a teacher there can be no antiphons”].

The complexity of perceptions of non-conventional singing evident in the writings of such figures as John of Salisbury resonate in the representation of “unnatural” voices in Middle English poetry, whether this be in the temptation of Siren song, the danger of untrained singing, or the disdain for improper singing (such as for example, the Prioress’s courtliness, the clergeron’s merriness, the religious and effeminate allusions of Chauntecleer’s singing in the NPT or the harpers that “ape” Orpheus in HF). Here there is a sense of discomfort with things not being as

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130 Added to the flyleaf of Lincoln, Lincoln Cathedral Library, MS 129, f. 87
they seem. As music was an art of rationality and order, undisciplined singing serves as a distinct signal for irrationality and disorder. In the medieval mind this had significant moral implications given that sin was understood to be the rejection of rational consciousness for sensual pleasure. What is more, and is especially significant in the case of understanding these allusions in Chaucer’s works, is that this is used in a pejorative way towards those who are mimetic.

In the case of Chaucer’s Prioress, the description of her singing is just one detail of many contributing to a complex series of disclosures about her character. Her dainty manners, possession of dogs, and opulent dress all betray the impropriety of her courtly affectations. In other cases, these details can be more crucially telling. Phoebus’s selection of instruments for example, placed in the context of their other appearances in the *CT*, would immediately have associated his behaviour with that of the lower classes. Yet we are only told that he plays the gittern *after* he has murdered his wife and thus disrupted audience expectations of a burlesque fabliau-like tale.

Examination of the distance between theory/instruction and everyday practice as might be evidenced in Chaucer’s portrayal of Church singers, allows us a lens through which to understand the motivations of control of music in religious settings of the period. And indeed in the case of *ChL* we can see that this may be the result of theory and practice being incompatible in ways.

The power of music to encourage devotion, to draw closer connections with the divine, and indeed, to corrupt in the medieval imagination cannot be overstated. Acknowledging the reverence with which music is consequently treated conventionally, we can better identify and understand those references in Middle English texts that are irreverent. We often find religious music appearing in less appropriate settings in Chaucer’s *oeuvre* such as for example, Nicholas wooing Alison with hymns and David’s psaltery. These misappropriations become all the more distinct when we acknowledge the reverence with which such subject matter is treated in the treatises.

**The Political**

Throughout the four years of this research project, when explaining the significance of combining musicology and literary analysis to new ends, I often found myself citing the adage of Irish singer and song collector Frank Harte (1933-2005): “those in power write the history and
those who suffer write the songs.”¹³¹ This plainspoken assertion expresses a realization of the political potency of music that is also evident in the representation of the art in Middle English poetry. Song as a politically potent tool is used not only by those who, to borrow Harte’s phrase, “suffer,” but can also be a tool of empowerment.

Music is a language of power in the medieval imagination and in Middle English poetry. The nuances of difference in references to practice of heroes, localized in the context of practice and understanding within the environment in which the poetry was read and heard, reveals interpretive details which are crucial: the distinction between Horn’s association with the more etymologically “English” harpe, rather than the Latin rota, French rote, or Welsh cruth; the identification of Orfeo as a harper (and all the connotations that come with this in terms of Biblical allusions and kingliness); the detail that Phoebus of MancT plays less courtly instruments; the Black Knight’s ability to compose songs is a distinction of his class, as is Fair Lady White’s ability to “daunce so comlily, carole and singe so swetely” (BD 848-849). Indeed, in the religious texts of Arundel 292 and in the PrT and its companion pieces, the fact that music is a language of power is most especially prominent. Harte’s assertion thus resonates with the potency attributed to music in the medieval imagination as a tool of subversion, but also of remembering, as history is so often politicized in the medieval imagination.

We might now reappraise Dante’s assessment of poetry in De Vulgari Eloquentia, as: “nichil aliud est quam fictio rethorica musica que poita” (56) [“nothing other than verbal invention composed according to the rules of rhetoric and music” (57)]. This statement indicates an understanding of the two as interrelated not only in an aesthetic sense, but also, as arts of persuasion. Thus, the interconnection of music and poetry becomes one that is politically potent. Music, like rhetoric in the Middle Ages, was viewed as having the potential to offer social healing. This is most apparent in the Middle English romances SirO whereby the hero’s patrimony is restored not through military action, but through music.

De Grocheio’s assertion in the Ars Musicie that music was utilis as “ut eis mediantibus mitigentur adversitates hominum innatae” (66) [“so that through their meditation, the innate trials of humanity may be softened” (67)] evinces the same association of music with social order as can seen in the texts considered in this thesis. The evidence of Middle English poetry is of a realization of the power of the social function of music, but perhaps a less idealized perception than that of the theorists. Where Plato argued that changes in styles of music could change society as a whole, this type of influence of music is seldom seen as lasting in its literary

¹³¹ Harte frequently reiterated this aphorism in interviews. It is first printed in the accompanying notes to the CD 1798: The First Year of Liberty.
representations. The order restored by music in Middle English poetry is often disrupted by “real world” concerns. The harmony of the birdsong at the end of PF breaks off when the birds revert to shouting, and although SirO restores himself to the throne, his lineage is not continued. It is thus, in ways, inadequate as a means for solving all the things that it is asserted to be capable of. This may be reflective of the “healthy dose of Aristotelian scepticism” which Thomas Christensen identifies in attitudes to speculative music theory in the Middle Ages (6).

Both The Edge and The Centre

The allusions to music evident in Middle English poetry are beyond the scope of a single discipline or field of research practice to understand. This thesis has examined the construction of the idea of music in the Middle Ages. To do so, it was necessary to examine the constructs of disciplinary boundaries in research. Recognition of the significance of these allusions can offer new perspective in understanding the greater structure and meaning of the poems themselves, and insight into the depths and interests of artistry in Middle English poetry. These texts show decisive evidence of the profound influence of music upon medieval culture. What emerges is a preoccupation with learning and craft, and a glimpse of how “understanding” was politicized and moralized.

Understanding of medieval musical practice may be drawn into dialogue with the uses of such instruments in poetry. And similarly, the details about practice in poetry itself, when considered carefully and critically (as opposed to being taken literally) can allow us an understanding that the treatises themselves do not provide. ChL, for example, provides us with understanding not only of the pedagogy of religious singing, but also the environment in which it was conducted, the repertoire learned, and sheer amount of time and effort dedicated to mastering such music.

I return thus to Strang and McLeish’s assertion with which I began this study, that interdisciplinary studies serve to strengthen the disciplines in themselves and “to tackle larger, more intractable problems” (5). This is especially the case for music and literary studies, both most often narrative in form, both auditory arts (in the Middle Ages). This research has sought to evince the value of crossing the traditional boundaries of the academy and venturing towards nonlinear appraisal of music and poetry within the context of the universe they were created in. Although this approach is novel, it perhaps is closer to the way that music and poetry were understood in their own time as the two arts are so evidently inextricably connected in, not only the medieval imagination, but in everyday life, in the careers of such figures as Machaut, de
Grocheio, Dante, and Chaucer. In the subsequent century, the boundaries between music and poetry as music, royal-service, religion, and art continued to intersect in the lives of such figures as John Lydgate (c. 1370 – c. 1451), John Dunstaple (c. 1390 – 1453), and John Skelton (c. 1463 – 1529). Understanding the implications of references to music in Middle English literature may enable consideration of how the legacy of musico-poetic intermediality inherited from Machaut and his French contemporaries was transmitted to Chaucer's successors, for whom music remained central to poetic invention.
Bibliography

Part One: Primary Sources:

I. Manuscript


II. Editions of Primary Middle English Texts


III. Editions of Primary Music Treatises


IV. Other Primary Sources


Part Two: Criticism


Appendix I – The Contents of London, British Library, Arundel MS 292

ff. 1-2 *Fragment of breviary, badly damaged and cropped by binder.

f. 2v Blank.

ff. 3-3v Middle English devotional texts:

- Creed
- Pater Noster
- Ave Maria
- In Manus tuas
- Dinges ðore
- If man him biðocte

ff. 4v-10v Middle English bestiary

- Lion
- Panther
- Elephant
- Ant
- Fox
- Stag
- Whale
- Eagle
- Spider
- Dove
- Turtledove
- Snake
- Mermaid

f. 11 Latin contemptus mundi beginning O Caro Carnea

f. 11v Blank

ff. 12-24v Latin Fabulae “Magistri Odonis de Ciringtonia.”

- De Corvus et cucula
- De formice
- De aranea
- De vulpes

132 All texts are the work of Hand 1, unless indicated by an asterix (badly damaged or fragmented) or by a double underline (the later additions of Hands 2, 3, 4, and 5).
De falcone et miluo
De pellicano
De lupo
De serpent
De panthera
De busardo et falcone
De Quadam Ave Sancti Martini.

ff. 25-38 French devotional poems
   De quatre sorurs vos voil dire (ff. 25-30v)
   Deu le Omnipotent (ff.31-38)

ff. 38-39 Latin Sermo magistri Stephani de Langedune incorporating the French song Belle Alis
f. 39v Blank

ff. 40-60 Latin Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri

ff. 60v-67v Latin Merluni Ambrosii Vita
   (fragment from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae)

ff. 68-70 Latin Quid agendum sit, si forte panis aut vinum in Eucharistia Domini caderat in terram

ff. 70v-71 Middle English poem the Choristers’ Lament
ff. 71v Middle English poem Complaint Against Blacksmiths

ff. 72-86 Latin De purgatio Sancti Patricii
f. 86v Blank

ff. 87-104v Latin and French Disticha Catonis

ff. 105-114 Latin Treatises
   De compositione cylindri (ff. 105-108v)
   De compositione quadrantis (ff. 108v-111v)
   De sortibus tractatus brevis (ff. 111v-112v)

f. 113 Blank

ff. 113v Ænigmata quaedam

ff. 114 Table of contents

ff. 114v-115v *Various pen-trials and inscriptions.
Appendix II – The Scribes of London, British Library, Arundel MS 292

Hand 1
Texts in French, Latin, and Middle English. The sole scribe of the main body of Arundel 292, in a late-thirteenth-century *textura quadrata*. Capitals are touched with red, and large capitals which mark major divisions in texts are all in red. New sections of texts introduced with two-line or larger capital.

Hand 2

Hand 3
Latin *Quid agendum sit, si forte panis aut vinum in Eucharistia Domini caderat in terram* ff. 68-70 in a late-fourteenth-century anglicana hand. No rubrication.

Hand 4
Middle English poem beginning: “Uncomly in cloystre” (*the Choristers’ Lament*), ff. 70v-71 in a mid-fourteenth-century anglicana hand. No rubrication.

Hand 5
Middle English poem beginning: “Swarte smekyd smępes” (*Complaint Against Blacksmiths*), f. 71v in a mid-fifteenth-century mixed hand. No rubrication.
# Appendix III – Marginalia of London, British Library, Arundel MS 292

## Notate Bene

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folio:</th>
<th>Text:</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f. 23</td>
<td><em>Fabulae Odonis</em></td>
<td>De busardo et falcone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 23v</td>
<td><em>Fabulae Odonis</em></td>
<td>De Quadam Ave Sancti Martini.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 49</td>
<td><em>Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri</em></td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. 55</td>
<td><em>Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri</em></td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>f. 72</td>
<td><em>De purgatio Sancti Patricii</em></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 101v</td>
<td><em>Disticha Catonis</em></td>
<td>IV 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plates

1: Engraving of ship and whale, Norwich Cathedral 15th C (NMGS)

2: Misericord Norwich Cathedral (15th C)
3: Two four-line staves, overlaid with a series of notes, Norwich Cathedral 16th C (NMG.)

4: “Sun behind the clouds” badge
5 and 6: Essen Brooch and All Souls’ Jewel from Richard’s treasury

7: Wilton Diptych