In Support of 'Heresy': Manuscript Evidence for the 'a cappella' Performance of Early 15th-Century Songs

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Source: *Early Music*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 178-186+189-190
Published by: Oxford University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3127634
Accessed: 12-05-2017 19:18 UTC

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Most performances of early 15th-century chansons have until fairly recently featured a voice on the highest part (cantus), supported by instruments on the other lines (tenor and contratenor) of the typical three-voice texture. This convention has been questioned seriously only since the late 1970s, when it was suggested that *a cappella* performance of polyphonic secular songs may have been the favoured style during the late Middle Ages. Dubbed by Howard Mayer Brown the 'new secular *a cappella* heresy',[1] this theory is controversial not least because it results in radically new sounds. Whereas conventional accompaniment by instruments focuses attention on the highest voice and its words, all-vocal performance tends to sound more homogenous, and different rates of declamation can both diminish the intelligibility of the words and direct attention away from the 'melody'. Instincts tend to suggest that some songs benefit from emphasis on melody and text, others from more uniform sonority; but, of course, the *a cappella* theory rests on more than instinct. Supporting evidence appears in contemporary paintings, archival accounts and literary references, and the interpretation of this material is the subject of lively debate.[2]

Before the recent challenge, 15th-century songs were mostly performed with instrumental tenors and contratenors because the manuscripts that transmit those songs usually show the text only in the cantus part. This practice has generally been followed in modern editions, even though some manuscripts contain texted lower voices. (Such omissions may occur when, for example, a manuscript with texted lower voices appears to be less authoritative than one that texts only the cantus.) Perusal of modern editions might well lead to the conclusion that manuscripts contain texted tenors and contratenors only very rarely. Reviewing a recent recording, Howard Mayer Brown summarized the evidence thus:

> Suffice it to say that 15th-century scribes almost never added texts to the lower voices (although they did sometimes insert a word or two that might be interpreted as a cue).[3]

This perception probably accounts for much scholarly resistance to the recent challenges. Nevertheless, it is inaccurate: there are numerous examples of texted lower voices in 15th-century chansonniers. A survey of the largest and most important song collection from the first third of the century, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici misc. 213, reveals that nearly one quarter of the chansons contain text in at least one of the lower voices.[4] Several of the songs with texted lower voices are by Dufay, one of the most prolific composers of his day, and nearly one third of the songs in Besseler's Dufay edition appear with text in at least one of the lower voices.[5] It has already been noted that modern editors do not always follow the texting procedures of the manuscripts, but Besseler did not ignore tenors and contratenors that were texted in contemporary manuscripts; he included text in the lower voices even when the sources were not unanimous. On the other hand, Wolfgang Rehm, who edited the songs by Dufay's contemporary, Binchois, followed different criteria: only two chansons appear with text in either lower voice (both with partially-texted tenors). Those numbers would suggest that scribes 'almost never' texted the lower voices of Binchois' songs. However, when all the extant Binchois sources are collated, the number of works with text in at least one lower voice grows to seven, and in several cases the texting is complete.[6]

Two points emerge: first that scribes texted lower voices more frequently than is generally recognized, and second that the distribution of text varies from manuscript to manuscript, and indeed within the work of individual scribes. These observations lead to several obvious questions. Why is the same song transmitted in versions with different text distribution? Did scribes attempt to reproduce the distribution of text in their exemplars or did they add or eliminate text from lower voices? If the latter, was the distribution modified to accord with local practice or because of physical characteristics of the manuscript (for example, a generous layout might accommodate more text than a cramped

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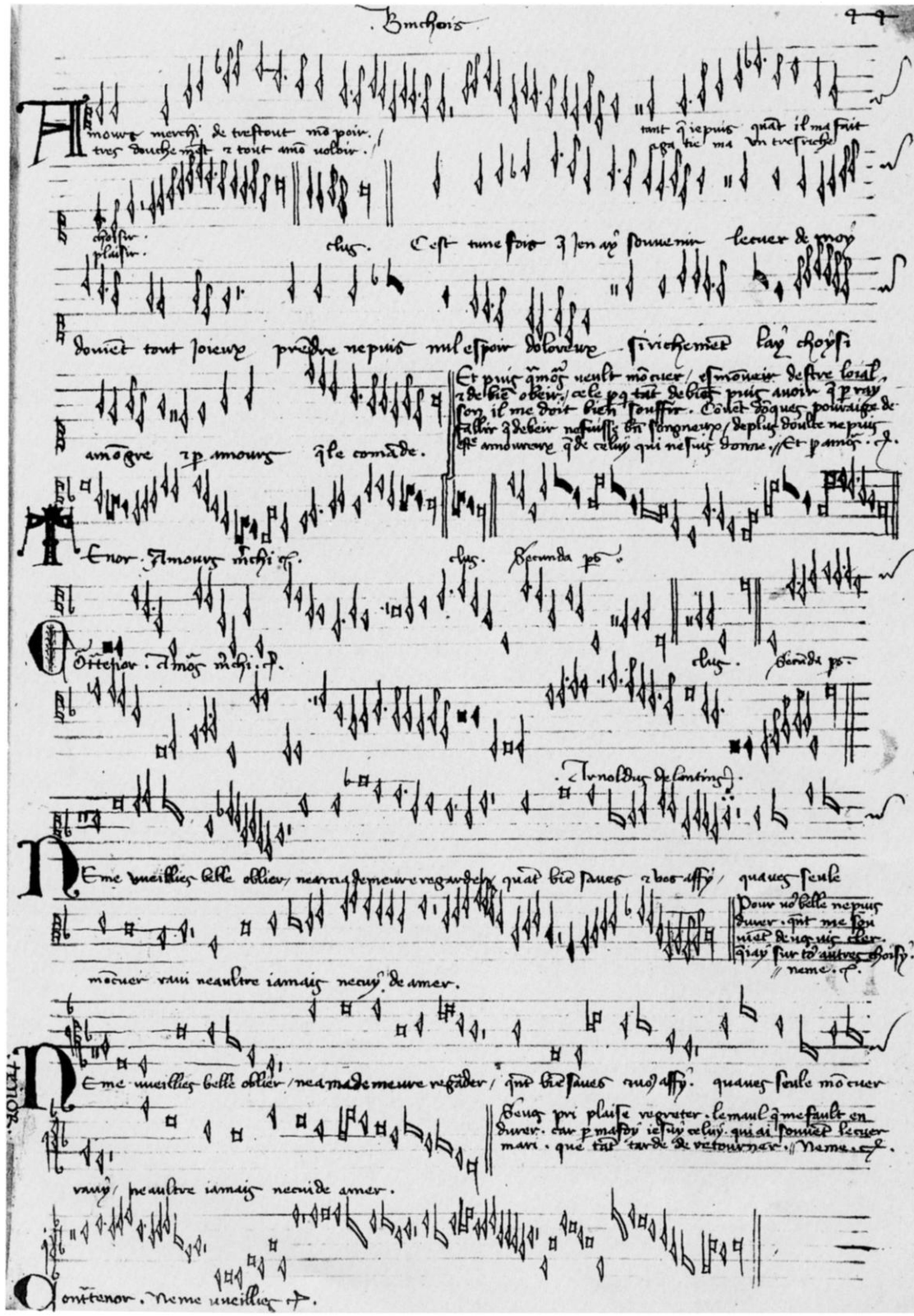


1 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici misc.213, f.44

one)? Ultimately, it must be asked whether, and to what extent, texting procedures can inform performances of 15th-century song. These questions can only be answered one manuscript at a time, scribe by scribe, even piece by piece.[7] The implications of two versions of a particular chanson and the scribal procedures in the manuscripts in which they appear will be examined below. Although evidence from manuscripts remains open to interpretation, analysis of the work of several 15th-century scribes lends strong support to the 'new secular *a cappella* heresy'.

Sometimes versions of a chanson that differ in scribal distribution of text also present notational and rhythmic variants linked to texting procedures. *Amours mercy de trestout mon pooir,* a ballade by Binchois that survives in two versions, provides representative examples of such differences. One version gives text only to the cantus; the textless lower voices move in rhythms consistently slower than those of the upper voice. In the other version all three voices are texted and the rhythms of the tenor and contratenor are closer to those of the cantus, especially at the beginnings of phrases, where text declamation is usually most rapid; there are also fewer ligatures. Since quicker rhythms and the absence of ligatures facilitate texting, these musical and notational differences are clearly related to the presence of text in the lower voices. (ex.1).[8]

Amours mercy is noteworthy not only because the differences between the two versions are unusually systematic, but also because the manuscripts that transmit them are closely related in geogaphic origin and repertory. The version with text only in the cantus appears in Canonici misc.213, while the version with text in the lower voices is preserved in the smaller collection that occupies ff.43–60 of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS n. a. fr. 4379 (hereafter *PC II*). Canonici misc. 213 and *PC II* both emanate from north-eastern Italy, probably the Veneto. Canonici misc. 213 was compiled *c.*1426–36; *PC II* was probably copied at about the same time.[9]

The impression that these two manuscripts are closely related is borne out by the extraordinarily high ratio of songs in *PC II* that are also in Canonici misc. 213: nine out of 13 French-texted songs, including six in a row, three of which are on the same leaf in Canonici misc. 213. Hans Schoop has suggested that *PC II* served as exemplar for Canonici misc. 213, while Graeme Boone argues that although some songs may have been copied directly from *PC II*, others display variants that would be 'revelatory of the freedom with which the scribe could treat his exemplars'.[10] Although *PC II* and Canonici misc. 213 seem to have been copied at about the same time and in close geographical proximity, and despite their shared repertory, the 'relationship' between them cannot be determined without comparing the versions they transmit. Writers on stemmatics have cautioned us to evaluate works individually, and to form detailed views of manuscripts based on the careful study of each piece, rather than to draw conclusions regarding the filiation of a song based on *a priori* conceptions of the manuscripts.[11] Therefore, in order to determine whether one of these versions of *Amours mercy* could have served as the model for the other, whether one scribe added text to the lower voices or the other removed it, the differences between them must be analysed in detail.

Ex.1 suggests that if *PC II* served as exemplar for Canonici misc.213, then *Amours mercy* would provide numerous examples of scribal 'freedom'. However, apart from the differences that are clearly related to text distribution, two features emerge that indicate a closer relationship than first glance might suggest.

1 In both MSS music for the second ending is missing from the cantus. (The tenor and contratenor are supplied with a full breve's worth of music labelled 'clos', while the cantus has only one semibreve of music, the last four notes of bar 12. The best solution is to repeat the rhythm of the beginning of bar 10 in bar 12, transposing the pitches down a tone. This is contrapuntally correct and provides the expected melodic rhyme with the cantus at the end of the ballade.) Since it is unlikely that scribes working independently would initiate the same mistake, the fact that both Canonici misc. 213 and *PC II* omit this music suggests a close relationship between these versions; the error must have been transmitted from one MS to the other, or to both of them from a parent source.[12]

2 The flats in bars 14 and 24 (respectively in the cantus and tenor) in both MSS also indicate related versions. Normally, shared accidentals carry little stemmatic significance, but both scribes have placed the flats in the same incorrect position—aligned with *C*s instead of the nearby *B*s.[13]

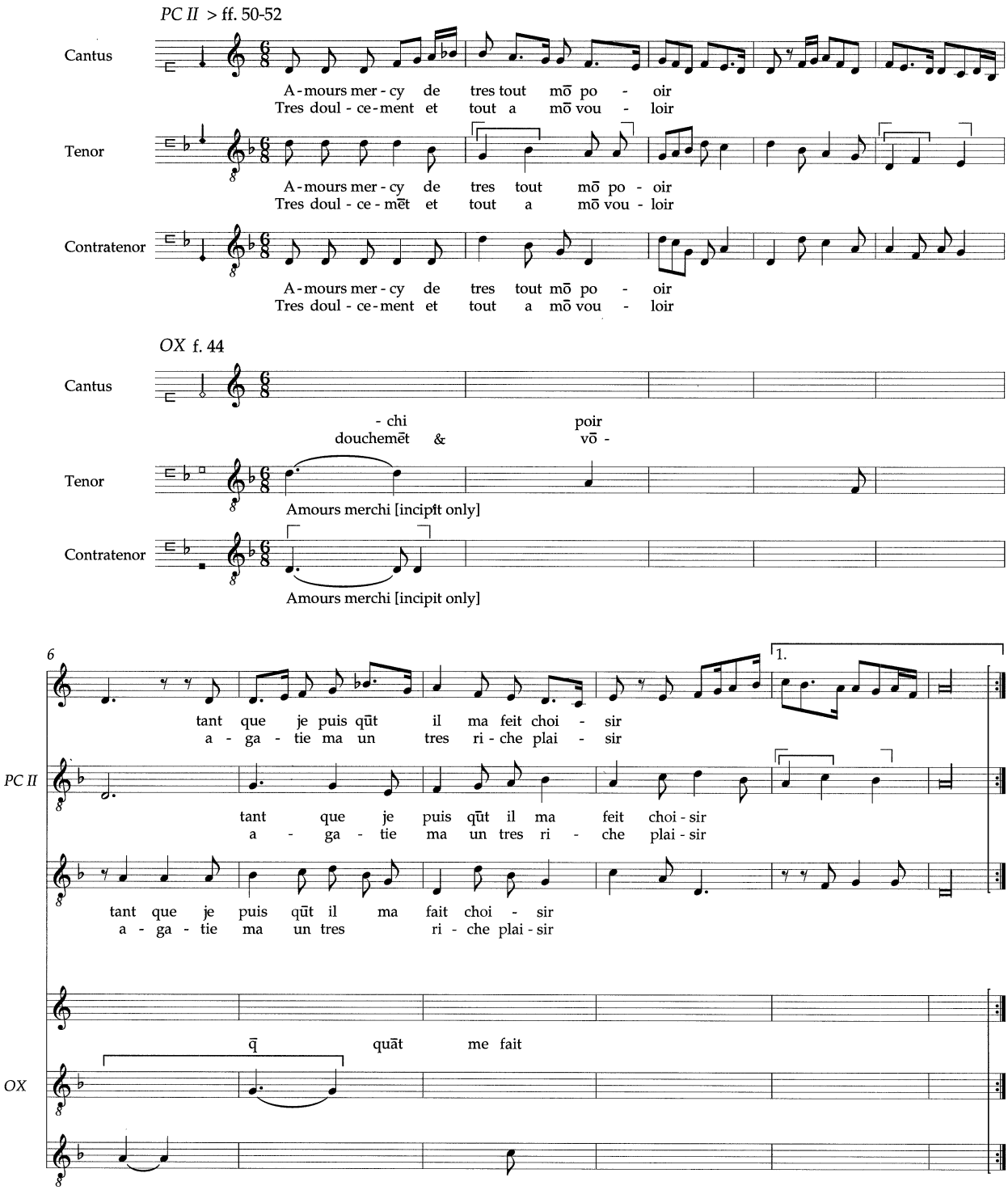
The differences between the versions of this chanson (again leaving aside those variants concerned with texting procedures) do not undermine a view of closely related readings:

1 The cantus parts are identical save for cadential decoration in bar 15. (Such differences might be attributable to the preferences of the scribe.)

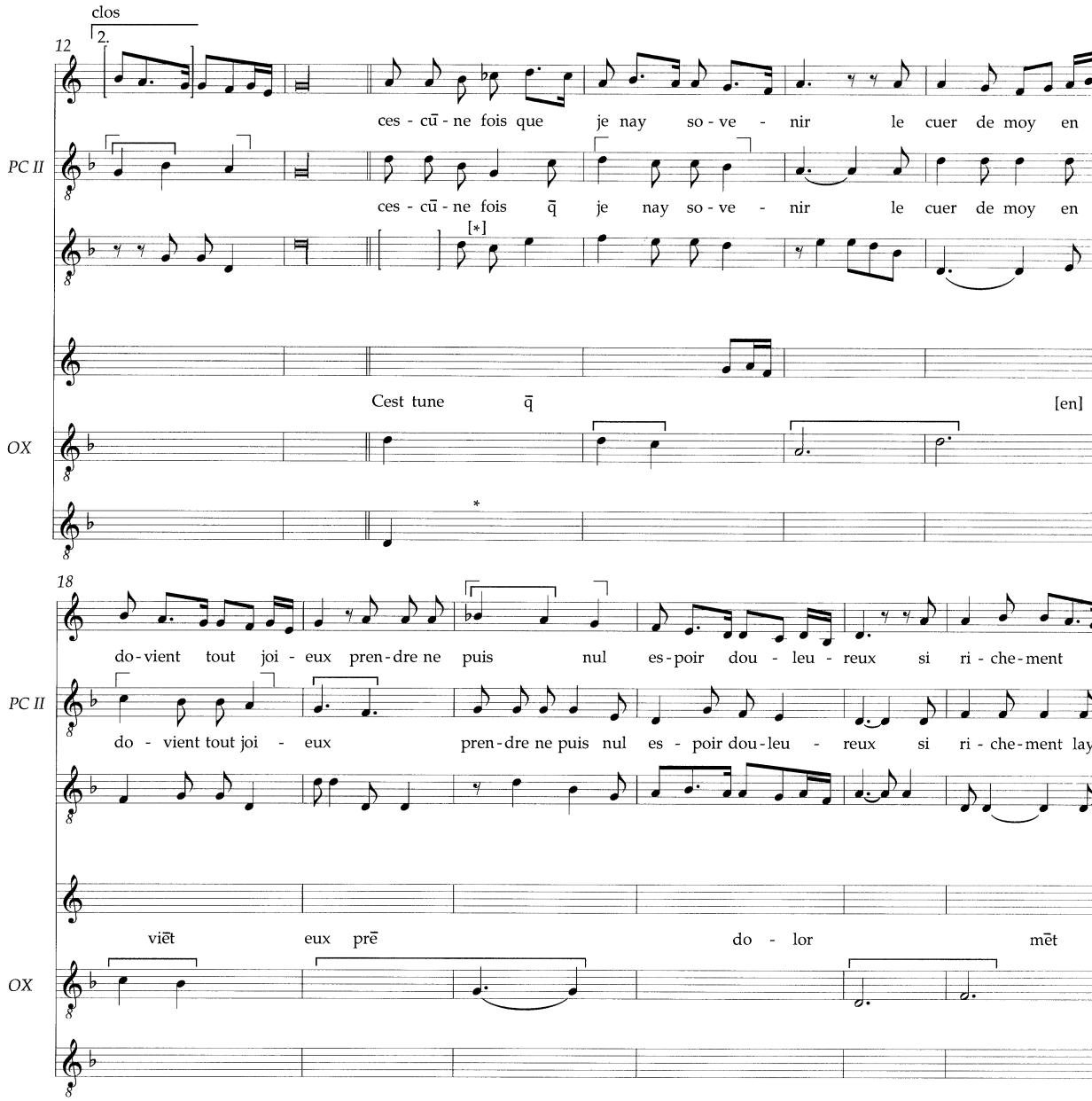
2 Tenor, bar 4, and contratenor, bar 8: these differences of a single pitch are probably miscopyings.

3 Contratenor, bar 14: the missing note is clearly an error.

Ex.1 Binchois, *Amours mercy* (variant score)*



*All departures in OX (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici misc.213, f.44) from the version in PCII (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS n.a. fr.4379, ff.50*v*–52) are recorded on the lower set of staves, including different ligatures and spelling. (The asterix in bar 14 represents a dot of division.)

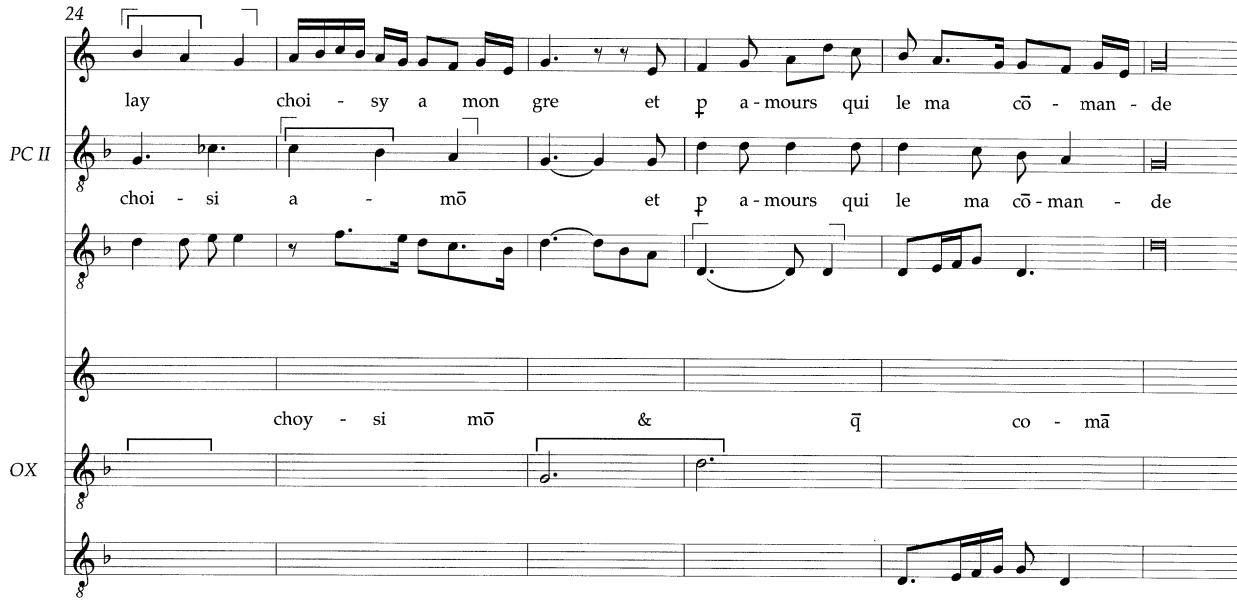


4 Contratenor, bar 28: in Canonici misc. 213 a reading identical to that in *PC II* was erased and emended to read as in ex.1. Both versions are musically correct; again, the differences may be ascribed to scribal preference.

5 Even at the level of notational detail represented by dots of division, the versions are almost the same, with all save one of the 15 dots in Canonici misc. 213 also present in *PC II*. The missing dot in the contratenor in bar 14, is probably associated with the error there; in Ex.1 the dot is indicated with an asterix.

These differences do not rule out a shared exemplar for the two versions, but the problems in bars 4, 8 and 14 suggest that *PC II* was not the exemplar for Canonici misc. 213. An alert scribe might have noticed the error in bar 14, but the weak-beat, minim dissonances in bars 4 and 8 are not stylistic solecisms, so scribal emendation seems unlikely. On the other hand, these variants could have been transmitted by scribal error to *PC II* from an exemplar that closely resembled Canonici misc. 213.

Boone has pointed out that the French spelling of the (Italian) scribe of Canonici misc. 213 is generally consistent within works, but not from one work to another. This suggests that he relied on his exemplars. Since there are several spelling variants between the two versions of



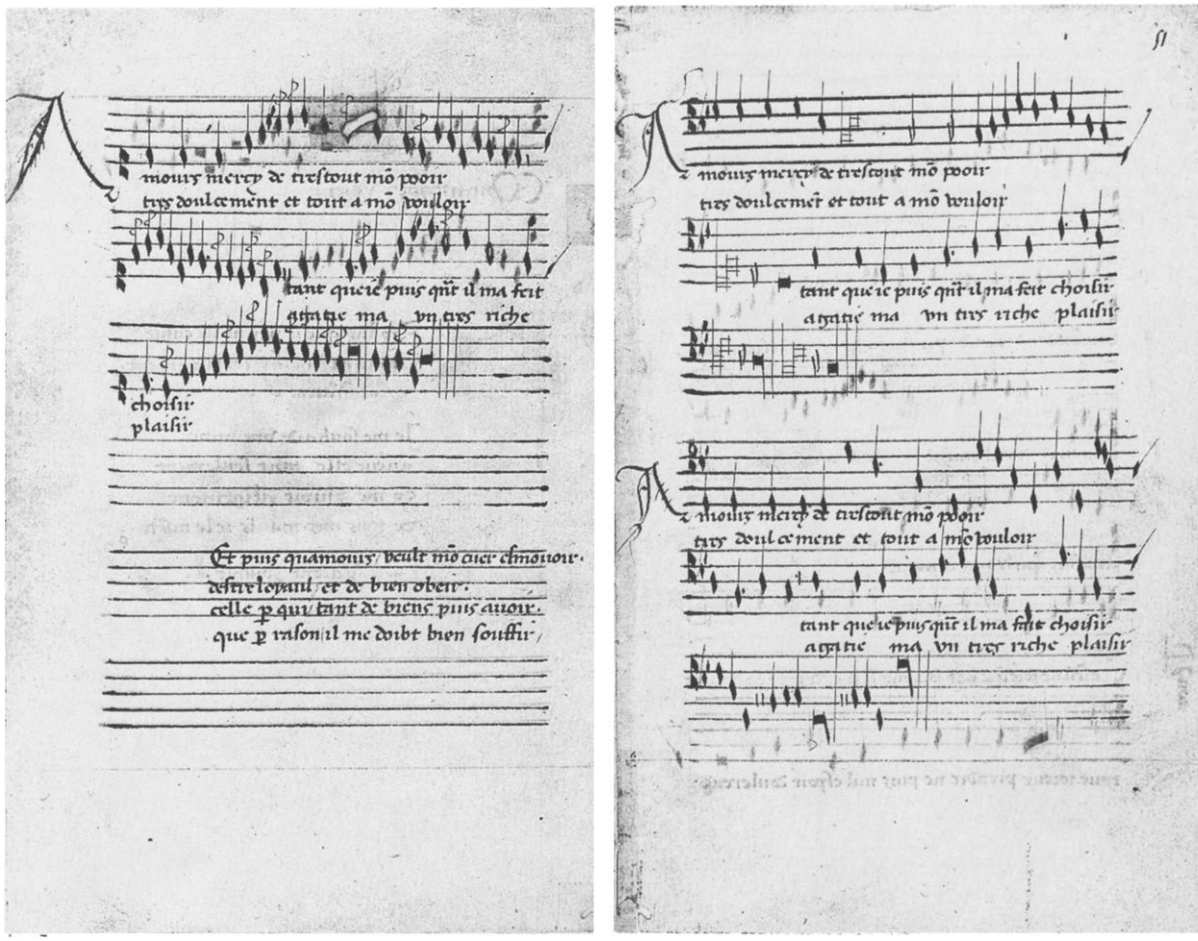
Amours mercy, the text in *PC II* was probably not the exemplar for Canonici misc. 213. The scribe of *PC II* was not as consistent; transmission from Canonici misc. 213 to *PC II* therefore remains possible.

Schoop called the version in Canonici misc. 213 an 'instrumental reduction',[14] implying that it was based on a version with text in all three voices. This may be true, but, as we have seen, the earlier version was probably not identical to the one in *PC II.* The opposite scenario is more likely: the scribe (or editor) of *PC II* fashioned a reading with text in all three voices based on an exemplar that resembled the version in Canonici misc. 213. (Again, apart from the differences linked to text distribution, the two readings are remarkably similar.)

Confirmation that the *a cappella* version was an 'enlargement' appears in *PC II* in the contratenor part, whose text ends in bar 14, the beginning of the second section; the new section coincides with a page turn. The reason the text ends is probably lack of space: a fully-texted contratenor would have taken up at least three and a half staves, leaving no room for the next verse of the ballade at the bottom of the page. Except for the missing music in bar 14 and the differences in bar 28, the two versions are identical in the second section. Significantly, this common reading would not easily bear text: there are not enough notes for the last line 'et par amours qui le ma comandé'.[15] If the scribes of both manuscripts were copying from a version with text in all three voices, it is extremely unlikely that they would independently 'reduce' their versions in precisely the same manner. Since *PC II* and Canonici misc. 213 agree so closely from bar 14 to the end—exactly the section in which the scribe of *PC II* had no room to text the lower voice—*PC II* must have been copied from a version that read as Canonici misc. 213: without text and without correspondingly quicker rhythms for its contratenor. On the basis of shared errors that have nothing to do with how the text is distributed it has been established that the versions in these two manuscripts are closely related, that is, that they are relatively near each other on the *stemma.* Although intermediate versions with text in only the cantus and tenor may have been lost, it is likely that the scribe of *PC II* worked from a version that resembled Canonici misc. 213 in this respect as well. For some reason he added text to both lower voices, repeating notes, altering rhythms and eliminating ligatures as he went.

The scribe of *PC II* clearly favoured text in the lower voices of polyphonic chansons. Although *Amours mercy* is the only one of the 12 French-texted songs that he copied with text in the contratenor,[16] nine of the others appear with text in the tenor; only two limit the text to the cantus. The ratio of texted tenors in *PC II* is unusually high (10:12), but, as I have indicated, the scribe of Canonici misc. 213 often copied lower voices with text as well. Of the nine songs common to *PC II* and Canonici misc. 213, four have tenors that are texted in both sources. All four reveal closely related readings (including several shared errors) that point to similar exemplars; in other words, both scribes probably worked from an exemplar that contained a texted tenor.

The other chansons shared by *PC II* and Canonici misc. 213 confirm the hypothesis that their scribes copied

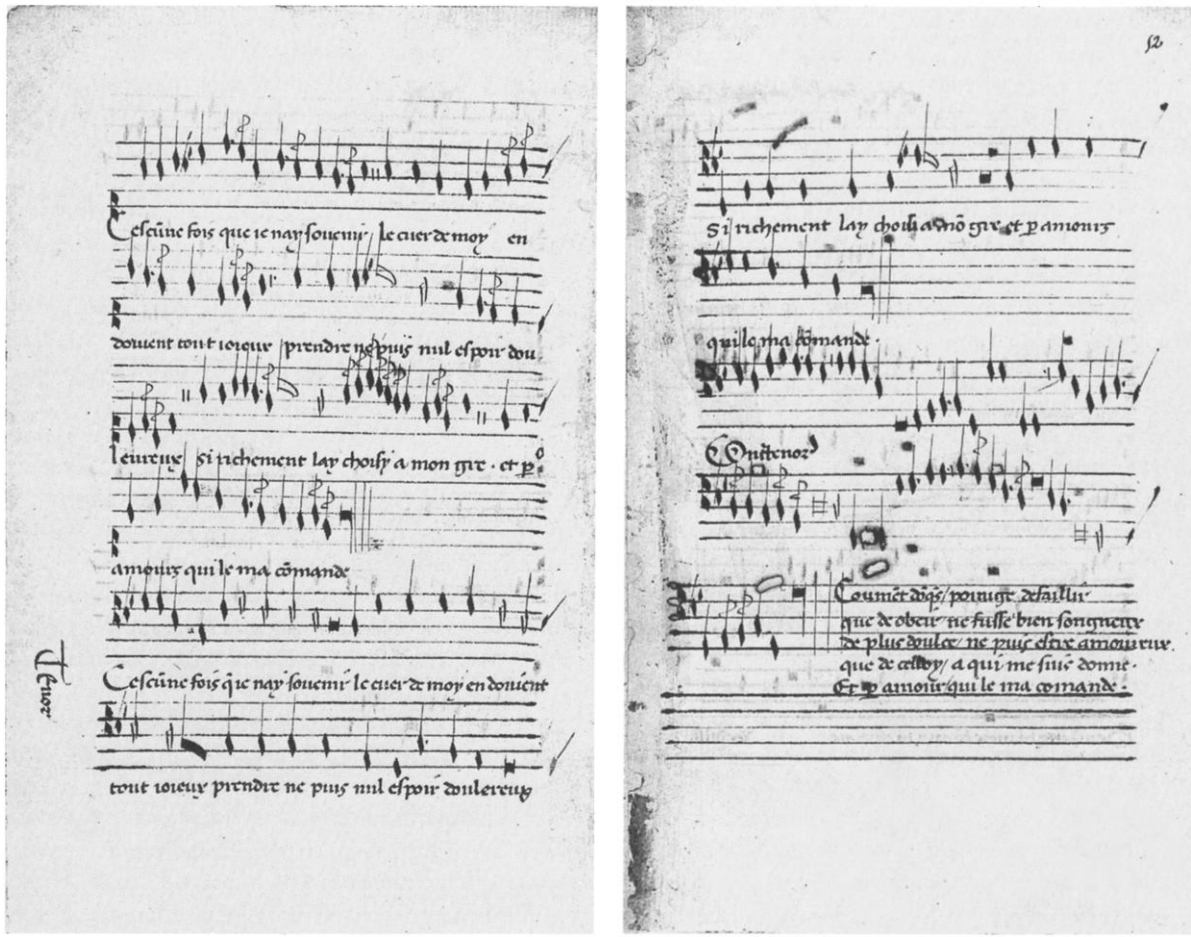


2 **Binchois, *Amours mercy* (first section) (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS n.a. fr.4379, ff.50*v*–51)**

from similar exemplars. The opposing views of Schoop and Boone may thus be reconciled, accounting for the similarity of some readings and the differences between others. Some of the latter are easily attributed to carelessness (for example, errors in one manuscript) or to what may be described as scribal preference (such as cadential ornamentation). More significant, however, the differences are related to texting procedures. Both chansons with texted tenors in *PC II* but only a texted cantus in Canonici misc. 213 reveal musical variants that are text-related: the tenors of *Dones confort a vostre amy,* an anonymous rondeau, and Binchois' *Adieu m'amour et ma maistresse* were apparently 'enlarged'; the scribe of *PC II* consistently removed ligatures and divided longer notes into repeated, shorter ones in order to accommodate the text.

Considerations of space probably influenced the amount of text a scribe would copy. In addition to being the only chanson in *PC II* in which text appears in the contratenor, *Amours mercy* is the only French-texted piece that takes up two openings, and also the only one in the manuscript with oversize initial letters (whereas it has oversize initials for each voice, the other chansons either have small initial letters or none). Together these factors indicate that it was singled out for unique presentation. Did the scribe save two adjacent openings for a chanson he wanted to 'enlarge' or did he add text *because* he had an extra opening to fill? In any event, his decision to text the lower voices was probably not shaped solely by considerations of space, since several other chansons in *PC II* have room for a texted contratenor. And yet, the generous space allotted for each song may have encouraged him to record text for so many of the tenors.

Considerations of space also may have featured in the ordering of songs in Canonici misc. 213, a manuscript



3 Binchois, *Amours mercy* (second section), ff.51*v*–52

whose larger size (298×215 mm, against 210×143 mm for *PC II*) allowed as many as three pieces on some pages. (Paradoxically, the tendency of the scribe to copy so many songs within an opening lends Canonici misc. 213 a more crowded appearance than many manuscripts whose physical dimensions are smaller.) When the scribe copied a song with text in more than one voice he usually entered it at the top of the page, allowing room to copy the text more than once. Those chansons with all three (or four) of the voices texted more often than not appear at the top of the page.[17] Again, it cannot be determined whether the scribe 'enlarged' some pieces, or simply copied those that came to him with more than one texted voice in this position. Although most of the chansons with three (or four) texted voices in Canonici misc. 213 are *unica,* four of the six that have concordances are similarly texted in other manuscripts. Most likely then, for some of those copied with texted tenors and contratenors, this scribe worked from exemplars that also contained text;[18] however, the relatively large number of such songs in Canonici misc. 213 (22)[19] suggests that he may have added some of the text himself.

Confirmation that this scribe sometimes 'enlarged' lower voices to carry text comes from a manuscript closely linked to Canonici misc. 213. *PC III,* a fragment bound next to *PC II,* is a tenor partbook. Its first 13 tenors (ff.61–4) were copied by the scribe of Canonici misc. 213.[20] Nine of these tenors belong to French-texted chansons, all of which also appear in Canonici misc. 213. In both manuscripts only three of the tenors are transmitted with text, but a further one in *PC III* bears clear signs of preparation for texted performance. Where there are ligatures in Canonici misc.213 for the tenor of Binchois' *Je me recommande humblement,* there are many fewer in *PC III* and long notes at the beginnings of phrases appear as quicker, repeated notes in the part-

book.[21] In other words, the *PC III scribe* (that is, the scribe of Canonici misc. 213) systematically enlarged the tenor of *Je me recommande* precisely in the same way as the scribe of *PC II* did for both the tenor and contratenor of *Amours mercy*.

What can be inferred from the fact that scribes sometimes texted lower voices when their exemplars gave words only in the cantus part, and that they made musical changes to accommodate the text? These texted tenors and contratenors could be said to lack the 'authority' conveyed by sources nearer the origins of the chanson, such as a version that came from the composer himself. However, the survival of many works with at least one texted lower voice represents a substantial portion of the French song repertory *c.*1435 and a practice widespread among scribes. Scribes were able to use initiative in adding text and making musical changes, but were also willing to copy more or less exactly. The pieces with texted tenors that are shared by *PC II* and Canonici misc. 213 were not copied from each other, but rather from similar exemplars.

The rich variety of texting procedures that is evident presumably reflects the many performance practices informed by contemporary conventions. The 'authority' for texting lower voices must have stemmed from a convention of *a cappella* performance for some part of the repertory. But constraints imposed by the writing process disguise the extent of the convention: having to copy the text only once would save time, as would the use of ligatures and sustained notes; and voices without text take up less space—an important consideration in an era when parchment and paper were used sparingly.[22] The consistency with which the scribe of *PC II* texted the lower parts was unusual; the scribal convention of leaving them without text may have opposed the performance practice. If the transmission process reflected a mixture of written and unwritten conventions it should not come as a surprise that texting procedures vary from one manuscript to another, or even among chansons within the same manuscript. While most scribes probably tried to reproduce faithfully their exemplars, which usually transmitted 'shortcut' versions without text in the lower voices, occasionally a fully texted or even 'expanded' version might be passed among the written sources. As the chansons common to *PC II* and Canonici misc. 213 show, versions with text only in the cantus as well as those with text in the tenor served as exemplars for surviving manuscripts.

A scribe could 'reduce' or 'enlarge' the versions he copied, according to his ability, preference and need. Insofar as singers learned chansons from written sources, manuscripts lacking text in the tenor or contratenor would not prove a barrier to vocal performance with text. The lower voices could learn their words from the cantus much as the latter learned additional strophes from the residual text written elsewhere on the page. Professional singers with time to rehearse could have made most musical adjustments easily, producing spontaneous 'enlargements' of the sort found in *PC II*, where the differences observed in *Amours mercy* are systematic, consisting of repeated notes at the beginnings of phrases and broken ligatures.

Exact matching of syllable to note presumably was less important in the lower voices than the cantus, which was itself often subject to careless text underlay. Tenors that survive with text reveal scribal decisions about where to place the syllables and sometimes where to make musical changes, decisions that were often reproduced in manuscripts further down the stemma. The relative paucity of texted contratenors may be due to their tendency to move in faster rhythms and to contain more repeated notes than tenors; the singer of the contratenor would need less guidance because he could usually find enough notes in each phrase for each syllable, altering the written rhythms minimally. When precise placement of words was important, such as when the voices moved in imitation, even scribes who otherwise texted only the cantus often provided incipits for the tenor and contratenor at the beginning of an imitative phrase.[23] The two surviving versions of Dufay's rondeau, *Ce moy de may,* lend support to this view: in Canonici misc. 213 all three voices are texted, while in the Reina codex (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS n.a. fr. 6771) there is no text for the contratenor except for an incipit at the one phrase that begins with imitation. For this chanson the unwritten convention is guided by written cues, exactly where imprecision would mask an important musical feature.

The rules that governed unwritten conventions are difficult to document, but even the otherwise explicit version of *Amours mercy* in *PC II* requires the existence of such conventions. Would anyone suggest that the contratenor stop singing in the second part of the ballade because the words are missing? The text gives out because there is no room for it; but surely the second part was also sung with words, even though they do not appear in any written source.

I do not suggest that all songs were performed *a cappella,* nor that the tenor and contratenor always sang

words when instruments were absent; text cues may imply wordless vocalization for untexted passages. In Dufay's celebrated ballade, *Resvellies vous* (composed for the marriage of Carlo Malatesta da Pesaro to Vittoria di Lorenzo Colonna in 1423), the tenor and contratenor ought not to compete with the virtuoso cantus by singing words throughout, but singers (as opposed to instrumentalists) are called for by the words 'Charle gentil' in all three voices towards the end of the piece.[24] Some vocalization is also suggested for Dufay's dialogue rondeau, *Estrinez moy,* where Canonici misc. 213 and *EscA* (El Escorial MS V.III.24) show text alternating between cantus and tenor, after the manner of a dialogue. When they are not singing their 'lines' the two singers must vocalize; the contratenor should also sing without words, because doubling the text first of the cantus, then the tenor, would undermine the spirit of dialogue.[25]

Since the surviving documents present a contradictory picture, differing explanations of the manuscript evidence are possible. The redaction of *Amours mercy* in *PC II,* as well as other 'enlarged' versions of 15th-century songs (and versions that transmit text for lower voices without corresponding musical enlargements) might be idiosyncratic renditions, crafted for specific, unusual occasions, preserved (and disseminated) by historical accident. According to this view, written evidence is interpreted as a precise set of instructions for performance.

The view I have advanced implies that the written record is an incomplete guide to performance practices, many of which remain partly hidden because they were informed by unwritten conventions. Scholars have long acknowledged the significant role these conventions played in such diverse areas as pitch, text underlay, instrumentation, tone production and improvisation—any of which could result in performances that might have diverged from what was written in the sources. Although the manuscript evidence for performing polyphonic songs with three texted voices may not be consistent, it exists in far more widespread form than has been admitted. I believe that the evidence appears inconsistent because documentation of the performing convention was cumbersome and usually unnecessary.

By examining some of the choices that faced musicians, scribes and editors in the 15th century, scholars can come closer to understanding certain conventions of the late-medieval period and what they might have meant to contemporary performers. This inevitably raises questions about editorial conventions today, when an increasing number of performances reflect growing acceptance of the *a cappella* 'heresy'. Editors should do more to suggest alternative texting possibilities for 15th-century chansons, given the increasing availability of manuscript facsimiles and editions that contain detailed source information.

By supplying text for the lower voices even where there is none in the manuscripts, editors will be calling on one of the unwritten conventions that would have been second nature to contemporary performers.

I am grateful to Andrew Tomasello, Dennis Looney and Victoria Jordanova for comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this article. I would also like to thank David Fallows for numerous helpful suggestions and corrections.

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[1]H.M. Brown, review of 'The Castle of Fair Welcome', Gothic Voices, Christopher Wilson (lute), directed by Christopher Page (medieval harp) *Hyperion* A66194, in *EM,* xv (1987), p.278. Brown distinguishes between theories of *a cappella* performance for songs and similar performance of sacred music, hence his phrase the '*secular* heresy'. Although he reserves 'heresy' for those who would argue that *all* late-medieval songs should be performed without instruments, I have adopted his label to refer more generally to current trends in performance practice.

[2]For an excellent survey, see S. Boorman, ed., *Studies in the performance of late mediaeval music,* (Cambridge, 1983). In addition, Page argues in favour of *a cappella* performance in several articles and record sleeves, including 'The Performance of Songs in Late Medieval France', *EM,* x (Nov 1982), pp.441–50.

Brown raises important questions regarding that position in the review cited above, in which he discusses potential conflicts between surviving evidence and the instincts of scholars and performers.

[3]Brown, *op cit,* p.277

[4]Fifty-four (23 per cent) of the 238 French-texted songs in Canonici misc. 213 contain text in at least one of the lower voices, not counting those with more than one text or those in which the texted lower voice(s) does not have a range at least a 5th below the cantus.

For a later repertory—songs of the last third of the 15th century—scribal texting procedures are matters of local preference. See L. Litterick, 'Performing Franco-Netherlandish secular music of the late 15th century', *EM,* viii (Nov 1980), pp.474–85. This does not appear to be the case in earlier manuscripts where scribes are often inconsistent in the number of voices they text. In addition, the smaller number of chansonniers from the early 15th century and their more limited geographical distribution militate against such generalizations.

[5]H. Besseler, ed., *Dufay Opera Omnia* vi, CMM 1 (Rome, 1964). Of the 64 French-texted songs that do not have canons, more than one text, or more than one cantus voice, 21 have text in at least one of the lower voices: 13 in the cantus and tenor, eight also in the contratenor. Thirteen of the 54 'texted' songs in Canonici misc. 213 are by Dufay.

[6]There are 54 songs for three voices in W. Rehm, ed., *Die Chansons von Gilles Binchois,* Musikalische Denkmäler II (Mainz, 1957) that the editor attributes to Binchois. In addition to the two partially-texted tenors, three others are transmitted with fully-texted tenors, one more

has text in both lower voices, and the scribe for another (discussed below) apparently assumed that the tenor would receive text. I have not counted *Files a marier* (a 4-voice chanson) because the second voice texted by Rehm—on the basis of its close resemblance to the only texted voice in the manuscript—is a high-range cantus. But the tenor of this chanson should receive text as well. As Martin Picker demonstrated in 'The Cantus Firmus in Binchois's *Files a marier*', *JAMS*, xviii (1965), pp.235–6, the tenor is based on the popular song *Se tu t'en marias*, the text of which easily fits the tenor for the polyphonic chanson.

[7]These questions were introduced over 20 years ago by Gilbert Reaney in his 'Text Underlay in Early Fifteenth-Century Musical Manuscripts', in *Essays in Musicology in Honor of Dragan Plamenac on his 70th Birthday*, ed., G. Reese and R. Snow (Pittsburgh, 1969), pp.245–51. Reaney noted (p.247) that manuscripts in which text appears in lower voices often originate in Italy, but also pointed out that very few contemporary manuscripts originate anywhere else. (This is particularly true for the chanson repertory.) More recently, Margaret Bent has linked scribal initiative in the texting of lower voices to local custom in 'A Contemporary Perception of Early Fifteenth-Century Style: Bologna Q15 as a Document of Scribal Editorial Initiative', *Musica Disciplina*, xli (1987), pp.183–201. *Q15* was partially dismembered by its scribe and a number of items were recopied. Bent demonstrates that while the early versions of some of the songs (as well as sacred pieces) present texted tenors (and sometimes contratenors), the recopies are textless and demonstrate greater use of ligatures. She attributes these changes to the scribe's 'growing northern taste' (p.190). My feeling is that in the light of differences among manuscripts from Italy, and without northern exemplars for comparison, associating these texting procedures with geographical custom may be premature. As suggested below, text for lower voices may have been the preference of specific scribes, perhaps for specific performers.

Both of the articles cited also discuss sacred music, in which disparate texting procedures pose questions similar to those for chansons. Although the present study focuses on songs, one difference between the two repertories should be mentioned: since the texts of sacred pieces would be more familiar than those of newly-crafted chansons, performers of lower parts would require fewer written cues in order to sing them.

[8]In ex.1 all departures from the upper version are recorded on the lower set of staves, including different ligatures and spelling.

[9]H. Schoop, *Entstehung und Verwendung der Handschrift Oxford, Canonici misc. 213* (Bern, 1971) established these dates, which have been confirmed and refined in G.M. Boone 'Dufay's early chansons: Chronology and style in the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici misc. 213', (diss., Harvard Univ., 1987), esp. pp.110–13.

[10]Boone, *op cit*, p.133

[11]See, for example, M. Bent, 'Some criteria for establishing relationships between sources of late-medieval polyphony', *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. I. Fenlon (Cambridge, 1981), pp.295–317.

[12]I have simplified for the sake of clarity; transmission from one of these manuscripts to the other might have been mediated by other sources, and the 'parent' source might have been several generations removed. In any event, general conclusions regarding the direction and pattern of transmission remain the same.

Rehm, p.44 noted the error in bar 12, but his solution (repeating the notes from bar 10) is unsatisfactory.

[13]In the 15th century flats did not signify the lowering of a pitch by a semitone, but rather the position of *fa* (a semitone above *mi*) within the hexachord. In neither bar 14 nor bar 24 would it make sense to solemnize the *c'* as *fa*. For an analysis of the uses of manuscript flats see M. Bent, 'Diatonic Ficta', *Early Music History*, iv, ed. I. Fenlon (Cambridge, 1984), pp.1–48.

[14]Schoop, *op cit*, p.72

[15]Even if the last line begins with the *b* flat in bar 26, one minim before the cantus and tenor enter, there are not enough separate notes for the decasyllabic line unless each of the semiminims in bar 28 is provided with a syllable, a solution without precedent and extremely uncharacteristic. Clearly the low *ds* in bar 27 would have been divided into shorter, repeated notes if the scribe had intended to text the phrase.

[16]The scribe actually copied 13 French-texted songs, but the page bearing the lower voices for the song that begins on f.60*v* (*De bien amer* by Fontaine) is lost.

[17]Of the 263 songs in Canonici misc. 213 with either French or Italian texts, 148 begin at the top of a page, and 115 further down. Fifty-nine of the ones at the top of the page (40 per cent) were copied with text in more than one voice, while only 30 (26 per cent) of the other songs have text in voices other than the cantus. More revealing is the distribution of songs with text in all three (or four) of the voices: 24 (16 per cent) of the songs at the top of the page receive text in all the voices; this occurs in only five of the songs (four per cent) that begin later on the page.

In addition to the French songs under discussion, these figures include Italian secular pieces and songs with more than one text. Space considerations would apply to those songs too—even if manuscript traditions for recording text might differ. (Italian songs, for example, more often appear with text in more than one voice.) These statistics do not include works such as canons, for which the text was not written out separately for individual voices.

[18]Among the nine chansons for two voices that text both cantus and tenor in Canonici misc. 213, only two have concordances. Interestingly, one of the two, *Ma seule amour*, attributed to Briquet, is also texted in both voices in Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q15, but in a third source, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS n. a. fr.4917 it appears with an untexted tenor with simpler rhythms. Numerous contrapuntal infelicities in the simpler version indicate that the one in Canonici misc. 213 is more authoritative. Although *Ma seule amour* was not simplified due to lack of room in Paris 4917, space considerations may have forced a 'reduction' in a manuscript that served as exemplar for the version there.

[19]Again, this number includes only chansons with one French text, in which the cantus lies at least a 5th above the tenor and contratenor.

[20]Schoop, *op cit*, pp.72–77

[21]The scribe did not text *Je me recommande*, but the fact that others added to the manuscript indicates that his work may have been interrupted. The later scribes of *PC III* copied three chanson tenors, each of which also appears in Canonici misc. 213. Two receive text in *PC III*; only one is texted in Canonici misc. 213. Thus five of the 12 chanson tenors in *PC III* are texted, and *Je me recommande* clearly indicates texted performance.

[22]Considerations of writing speed and physical space were also mentioned by Reaney, *op cit*, pp.245–6.

[23]Instances of such incipits even in manuscripts that otherwise offer no hints of an unwritten *a cappella* convention are numerous, and presumably are the sort of cues to which Brown refers (see above, n.3). Reaney, *op cit*, p.248, noted that incipits for imitative passages often correspond to those few moments when the same text would be sung at different times in each voice.

[24]Besseler, *op cit*, p.26, bars 50–3

[25]The tenor sings a two-syllable interjection in the first half of this rondeau (during the refrain and both stanzas) before taking over the text entirely after the first cadence of the second half. This interpretation of the first half is made clear in *EscA*, where the scribe wrote the first interjection beneath the tenor—albeit three notes too late. In later stanzas each interjection is set off from the rest of the line by diagonal strokes normally reserved for line ends. (Besseler (*op cit*, p.76) texted the tenor in the second half and placed the first interjection beneath that voice, but included the other interjections in the lines sung by the cantus.) I am grateful to David Fallows for clarifying the alternation of text described above and to Lawrence Earp for originally directing my attention to *Estrinez moy*.