13 Latin poetry and music

LEOFRANC HOLFORD-STREVENS

The Latin poetry set to music during the Middle Ages and discussed in this chapter may be divided into two main types, *metra*, based on syllabic quantity, and *rhythmi* (in the Middle Ages often spelt *rithmi* or the like), based on accent and syllable count, but from the fourteenth century often on the latter alone.[1] Not regarded are psalms and other texts of like form such as the Te Deum, based on paired phrases of parallel or quasi-parallel but unregulated structure.

The term 'verse' will be used throughout as a synonym of 'line', not of 'stanza', though 'verse-form' will be used to accommodate both the measures of single verses and their combinations into stanzas as a single concept. To avoid confusion, only quantitative measures will be called 'metres'.

It is on verse-forms that primary emphasis will be laid, the better to assist study of the relation, or lack of relation, between words and music. Some literary criticism will be offered, principally of motet texts, since these have been neglected by students of literature and only of late considered by musicologists. (This neglect is not only modern: the state of many texts in our manuscripts indicates that music copyists did not always take much interest in them; sometimes it was already a corrupt text that the composer set.)

Ancient and medieval *metra*

Although some surviving classical Latin poetry was written to be sung, notably the *cantica* of early Roman drama and the *Carmen Saeculare* of Horace (performed at a state occasion in 17 BC), and some dramatic passages were apparently delivered in recitative, we have no information about the music beyond for certain Plautine comedies the name of the slave who composed it. We are left to make inferences from metre, which as in Greek was based on syllabic quantity, that is to say the distinction between long and short syllables. The basic rule is that a syllable containing a long vowel or a diphthong is itself long 'by nature'; if the vowel is short, the syllable is nevertheless long 'by position' if the vowel is followed by two or more consonants, otherwise short. For this purpose *x* counts as two consonants ('makes position'), as does Greek *z* within a word (initially it ceased to do so

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

around AD 100) but not *qu*; *tr* and some similar groups do not always make position (hardly ever at the start of a word). Initial *s* + consonant does not make position in the early poets but does in Catullus; the Augustans and their successors, disliking both scansions, avoid placing such groups after a short final vowel, but they return in medieval (and Renaissance) writers, generally not making position. A final vowel, diphthong, or vowel + *m* is elided when it precedes an initial vowel, diphthong, or *h*; this was a feature of the spoken language at all levels, as it still is of Spanish and Italian. (Early medieval writers sometimes treat *h* as a consonant, especially in Germanic names.)

By the end of classical antiquity, vocalic quantity had ceased to be a feature even of educated speech; which vowels were long and which were short had to be learnt. Nevertheless, quantitative verse continued to be written with a greater or lesser degree of correctness. For the Middle Ages the most important metres are the dactylic hexameter, the dactylic pentameter, and the sapphic stanza; these and a few others are explained below. Note that – represents a long syllable, ◡ a short syllable, × an *anceps* position, where either is allowed, ⏕ two short syllables that may be replaced by a long, $\overset{\smile\smile}{\times}$ an *anceps* also admitting two short syllables, and that the final position of any verse, though counted as long, may be occupied by a short syllable.

The structures of the main metres are set out below.

Hexameter

– ⏕ – ⏕ – ⏕ – ⏕ – ◡ ◡ – –

In the tenth position ◡ ◡ is occasionally replaced by –. There must be a word-break (caesura) in at least one of three places: after the fifth position, after the seventh, or between the two short syllables of the sixth position, in this case commonly supported by breaks after the third and seventh. Short syllables ending in a consonant are occasionally admitted instead of long, mostly at the caesura; this licence is abused in the Middle Ages, and even extended to short vowels ending the word. There is a preference, which by Augustan times is a rule, that save in satire, or for special effects, the last two feet of a verse should have a word-break either between or after the short syllables of the tenth position, or two word-breaks if a monosyllable in ninth position is followed by two disyllables; monosyllabic prepositions and conjunctions count as one with the following word. Not all medieval writers respect this rule, though it was known.

Pentameter

– ⏕ – ⏕ – | – ◡ ◡ – ◡ ◡ –

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The pentameter regularly follows a hexameter to form an 'elegiac couplet'. In classical poets the syllable before the caesura tends to be long by nature, though this is far from a rule; by contrast, medieval writers admit short syllables – even those ending in a vowel. In Augustan poets the last word of the verse is usually a disyllable, or failing that, almost always comprises four or more syllables. Ovid rarely allows the verse to end in short *a* not followed by a consonant.

Sapphic stanza

This comprises three sapphic hendecasyllables (eleven-syllable lines of the form – ∪ – – – ∪ ∪ – ∪ – –) and an adonic (– ∪ ∪ – –). After Horace, the stanza is self-contained, and the hendecasyllable regularly has word-breaks after the third and fifth syllables. This is the metre, for example, of Paul the Deacon's *Ut queant laxis*; occasionally, as in verse 49 of that poem, 'Glori*a* Patri genitaeque proli' ('Glory be to the Father and the begotten offspring'), medieval poets adopt the licence of short syllable for long.

Iambic dimeter

(This is the metre of Saint Ambrose's hymns and of Venantius Fortunatus's *Vexilla regis prodeunt*.)

    ⨯ – ∪ – ⨯ – ∪ –

Iambic trimeter

    ⨯ – ∪ – ⨯ – ∪ – ⨯ – ∪ –

There is a caesura after the fifth or seventh positions; when the ninth position is the last syllable of a word, it is usually long (in contrast to Greek practice).

Trochaic tetrameter catalectic

(This is used as such in Venantius Fortunatus's *Pange lingua*):

    – ∪ – × – ∪ – × | – ∪ – × – ∪ –

In classical poetry, –, except in the last position, may be replaced by ∪∪; in Venantius's hymn, the only possible instance, *pretium*, which would also be the only instance of initial ∪∪ in *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, is probably to be pronounced *pretsjum*.[2]

In addition there is a metre known to ancient metrists but not attested in Latin poetry before the fifth century:

    – – – ∪ ∪ – | – ∪ ∪ – –

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

Since this metre was used in several hymns ascribed or attributed to Hucbald of St-Amand,[3] it may be called the hucbaldian in preference to its technical description of minor asclepiad catalectic. It regularly appears in four-line stanzas on the analogy of Horace's lyric metres (some of which are also used in chant). In the fifth century too we find 'stichic' pentameters (that is, pentameters used by themselves without hexameters), and likewise stichic adonics.

Although rhyme between neighbouring verses occasionally happens in classical poetry by accident or for special effect, it is not a structural principle; despite a few appearances in Christian poetry of earlier date it does not become a frequent feature until the sixth century, and is extremely rare in *metra* till the ninth. It then becomes frequent both between and within hexameters, or within both lines of the elegiac couplet; these internal rhymes are called 'leonine'. A precedent was found in Ovid's famous line 'Quot caelum stellas, tot habet tua Roma puellas' (*Ars amatoria* 1. 59: 'As many stars as the heaven, so many girls has your Rome'), which when originally written was less blatant because the *e* of *stellas* was long and closed (phonetically [eː]), that of *puellas* short and open (phonetically [ɛ]). Rhymed hexameters and pentameters are particularly frequent during the eleventh century, but continued in use throughout the Middle Ages. Rhyme may be monosyllabic (of final syllables only), disyllabic (of the last two syllables), or even trisyllabic (of the last three). Since Latin is not a difficult language to rhyme in (especially since distinctions of quantity are ignored), the requirement is rarely onerous.

Certain passages of classical and late antique poetry (for example, from Vergil, Horace, Martianus Capella, and Boethius) are notated for music in medieval manuscripts; the choice of texts often suggests educational purposes, as does the musical setting of a prose calendrical table that Bede, *De temporum ratione*, chapter 22 proposed for memorizing and reciting, but there is no overlap between the Horatian odes selected for setting and those included in anthologies.[4] However, whereas in antiquity the quantitative distinctions of *metra* were carried over into musical rhythm, and attempts were made to do so in the Renaissance, in the Middle Ages no such effort was made either in plainchant or in polyphony; at most, strong positions may be represented by higher pitches, but there is no uniform practice, either in this or in the treatment of elision, which (as later in vernacular texts) is sometimes respected by the setting and sometimes undone.[5]

In Vergil and his classical followers, the individual hexameter need not be the self-contained expression of a single idea; rather verses are combined as it were into paragraphs, with frequent enjambment from line to line and constant variation in the placing of sense pauses; this feature is not always replicated by medieval poets, but when it is it may induce medieval

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

composers to override their normal practice of respecting verse-structure in preference to sense. The most striking example is afforded by the six hexameters of *Alma redemptoris mater*, broken in the chant into four main parts (divided by vertical lines below) of which the first two end in mid-verse:

Alma redemptoris mater, quae pervia caeli
porta manes,| et stella maris, succurre cadenti,
surgere qui curat, populo.| Tu quae peperisti,
Natura mirante, tuum sanctum genitorem,|
virgo prius ac posterius, Gabrielis ab ore
sumens illud Ave, peccatorum miserere.[6]

Hail, mother of the Redeemer, who remainest the open gate of heaven, and star of the sea, aid the falling people that wishes to rise. Thou that, as Nature gazed in wonderment, borest thy holy begetter, a virgin before and afterwards, taking that famous 'Hail' from Gabriel's mouth, have mercy on sinners.

Medieval and even Renaissance polyphonic settings regularly follow the chant rather than the verse-structure; a striking exception is that for four voices by the apparently Coimbra-based composer Aires Fernandez (fl. ca1550), in which the top voice or *tipre* clearly marks the verse ends even where the chant does not.[7]

Syllabo-clausular *rhythmi*

In Latin, unlike Greek, verbal accent is regulated by syllabic quantity: if the penultimate syllable is long it is stressed, otherwise the stress falls on the antepenultimate; in consequence, according as words end at one place or another in the verse the accent will either coincide or conflict with strong positions in the metre. Accent, which inscriptions show to have been far more perceptible to uneducated ears than quantity, displaced it in poems written by (or for) persons without a literary schooling; such verses were known as *rhythmi*, first distinguished from *metra* by grammarians who assigned 'rhythm without metre' to the 'songs of low-class poets' (*cantica vulgarium poetarum*).[8]

Saint Ambrose's hymns soon inspired imitation by writers who no longer knew their quantities; after some irregularities, a standard accentual adaptation of the iambic dimeter was developed comprising eight syllables of which the sixth is stressed; such lines are notated 8pp, where 'pp' stands for *proparoxytone*, 'accented on the antepenultimate'. Compared with their metrical antecedents, these verses admit long syllables in place of short and

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

vice versa, but exclude the resolution of one long into two short syllables that Ambrose still freely used. A hymn in praise of Saint Patrick (*Audite omnes amantes Deum*) attributed to the Irish saint Sechnall (d. 447), but at any rate no later than the early seventh century, transforms the trochaic tetrameter into a fifteen-syllable verse divided by caesura into eight syllables with an accent on the seventh and seven syllables with an accent on the fifth (the thirteenth of the line); this is notated 8p + 7pp, where 'p' stands for *paroxytone*, 'accented on the penultimate'.[9] These four lines are grouped into quatrains beginning with all 23 letters of the alphabet in turn, affording an early Latin example of the 'alphabetic hymn' ultimately derived from Hebrew.

Although grammarians continued to parrot the reference to low-class poets, the *rhythmus* was not confined to them; moreover, even before the Carolingian reforms established a sharp distinction between the popular *lingua Romana* and the educated *lingua Latina*, the emergence of a reading pronunciation in which every word formed a unit by itself – and final *m*, now silent in the living language, was artificially rendered as a full consonant – is demonstrated by the rarity in *rhythmi* of elision, which remained the norm in *metra*, even though it undoubtedly continued to be a feature of everyday speech. (The exception that proves the rule is an 8p + 8p *rhythmus* in semi-popular language and pronunciation by Saint Augustine, the *Psalmus contra partem Donati*, in which elision is as freely and regularly used as in any classical poet.) When elision is found, it is almost always with identical vowels (*monstra te esse matrem* as 6p in the hymn *Ave maris stella*);[10] usually either the two syllables are left to stand in hiatus, or the collocation is avoided altogether.

Accentual *rhythmi* should be distinguished from quantitative *metra* with the occasional false quantity (e.g. *patībulo* in *Vexilla regis prodeunt*, verse 4); in the better-educated writers false quantities are mostly found in Greek words (*cātholicus*, *ecclĕsia*), though they are not unknown in Latin words, especially those not familiar from Vergil and Ovid. Errors in accentuation, though not unknown, are rare, since whereas quantity had by the end of antiquity to be learnt from books, the position of the stress was apprehended orally (even in France, an attempt was made to realize it by pitch);[11] nevertheless, some words acquired new stresses (*muliéres*, *erádicans*), and Greek words sometimes retained the Greek accent in defiance of Latin rules (*paráclitus, Iácobus*) but sometimes took a stress justifiable by neither criterion (*charáctere*, *epitríta*).

The earliest *rhythmi* showed no regularity of accent until the cadence; this freedom remains characteristic of the 8pp line, despite a tendency towards iambic rhythm with stress on the fourth and often the second syllable, but 8p from the seventh century onwards shows a strong tendency

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

towards trochaic rhythm, being divided by internal caesura into 4p + 4p or occasionally 5pp + 3p, relieved only by 3p + 5p; likewise 7pp, though freely admitting 3p + 4pp besides 4p + 3pp and 3pp + 4pp, generally eschews 4pp + 3pp, and 6p admits 3p + 3p but not 4pp + 2p. This is not to deny occasional exceptions, such as in the conductus *Mundus vergens* the 7pp line *quod explicit explicat*, admitted for wordplay's sake, or in *Gedeonis area* the 8p lines *radiat absque calore* and *liquitur petra liquore*, both 3pp 2p 3p.[12]

Other *rhythmi* include 12pp, divided either 5p + 7pp in imitation of the iambic trimeter or 6pp + 6pp, and accentual sapphics; these do not mimic the quantitative structure of the *metrum* but preserve the normal distribution of the stresses. The hendecasyllables thus become 5p + 6p, with an iambic pulse varied only by the possibility of stressing the first syllable of the line instead of the second; the adonic becomes 5p, with the same initial option:

Aures ad nostras deitatis preces,
Deus, inclina pietate sola;
supplicum vota suscipe, precamur
famuli tui.[13]

God, bend thy divine ears to our prayers in pure pity; receive the vows of suppliants, we thy servants beg thee.

This last verse-form apart, rhyme steadily becomes the norm in *rhythmi* during the early Middle Ages; in paroxytone lines it is regularly disyllabic, and from the twelfth century in proparoxytone lines too, though trisyllabic rhyme is sometimes achieved.

Far from suppressing *rhythmi* as the Renaissance would do, the classicizing movement of the twelfth century raised them to the same literary level as classicizing *metra* (Hildebert of Lavardin is a master of both) and a comparably disciplined technique; instructions are given in manuals either of poetics or of *dictamen*, which emphasize that – as hymns, sequences, and conductus bear out – *rhythmi* are especially suitable for setting to music. Many are written in regular six-, eight- or ten-line double stanzas comprising two lengths of line (in particular 8p and 7pp, or 7pp and 6p) and three rhymes distributed *aabccb*, *aaabcccb* or *aaaabccccb*, the *b* rhymes being the shorter lines. We also find monorhymed tercets and quatrains, characteristically 8pp or 8p + 7pp; but the most important monorhymed quatrain is the 'goliardic stanza' (*Vagantenstrophe*) comprising four 'goliardics' (*Vagantenzeilen*) of 7pp + 6p.[14] Despite the names, suggestive of wandering scholars and disreputable foolery, many writers in this verse-form were settled and respectable, including such eminent men as Walter of Châtillon and Philip the Chancellor; but they were scholars, who even when writing in satirical

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

vein or with less than total seriousness display their learning: a variant form of the goliardic stanza consists of *versus cum auctoritate* ('verses with an authoritative statement'), three goliardic lines preceded or followed by a hexameter (often from a classical or other prior poet) rhyming with them.[15] This principle was later extended to other verse-forms.

The goliardic, in which the 7pp elements do not rhyme, should be distingished from combinations of independent 7pp and 6p lines, for example in the conductus *Novus miles sequitur*, which is a ten-line stanza 7pp 6p 7pp 6p 7pp 7pp 6p 7pp 7pp 6p rhyming *ababccdeed*.[16] There also appear a 10pp line with caesura at the fourth syllable (usually 4p, but 4pp is not excluded), which is a Latinization of the French *décasyllabe* (and therefore not to be read with the iambic rhythm natural to English or German), and an 11pp line divided 4p + 7pp. This does not exhaust the verse-forms attested, and more irregular stanzas are found, for instance in the *Carmina Burana*. Likewise, there is a wide variety of rhyme patterns, often demonstrating the poet's ingenuity, for example in constructing long runs of lines on a single rhyme, or in the use of internal rhymes; short rhymed lines seem especially prominent in verses meant for singing.

Two points should be noted here. First, this versification, whatever the origin of individual verse-forms, is international; English-speakers accept the initial 3p inversions of stress that disrupt the trochaic flow, and good French authors respect the Latin accent. Second, musical setting takes no account of verbal accent either melodically or rhythmically.

It is difficult to correlate verse-form with poetic level: although goliardics are often used for light or satirical verse, John Pecham could employ them for his Passion meditation *Philomena praevia temporis amoeni*,[17] frequently ascribed to Saint Bonaventure; conversely the grandest of classical *metra*, the hexameter, could as in Roman times be used for poems less than serious. Many conductus (whose authors overlap with those responsible for goliardic poems) are preserved for their literary quality in poetical as well as musical manuscripts; most such texts concern religious or other serious themes, but there are exceptions such as *Consequens antecedente*,[18] a satire on venality that purports to be a lesson in logic:

Consequens antecedente	8p	*a*
destructo destruitur,	7pp	*b*
bene namque sequitur	7pp	*b*
nemine contradicente	8p	*a*
quod si dabis dabitur;	7pp	*b*
sed si primum tollitur	7pp	*b*
non cures de consequente,	8p	*a*
quoniam negabitur	7pp	*b*
si non approbabitur	7pp	*b*
auro viam faciente.	8p	*a*

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> Once the antecedent has been refuted, the consequent is refuted; for it properly follows, with no one gainsaying, that if you give, it shall be given; but if the first is taken away, do not worry about the consequent, since it will be denied [*or* your request will be refused], if it is not supported with gold making the way.

In the conditional proposition 'if the first then the second' or 'if *p* then *q*', *p* is called the antecedent, *q* the consequent; from it one may validly infer 'but *p*, therefore *q*' (the *modus ponens*, 'putting-there mode') or 'but not *q*, therefore not *p*' (the *modus tollens*, 'taking-away mode'). However, the text offers the inference 'but not *p*, therefore not *q*', which is invalid, since *q* may still be true: if Socrates is walking, he is awake; but even if he is not walking, that does not mean he is not awake. Written by the educated for the educated, *Consequens antecedente* wittily contrasts the manifest fallacy of the logical contention with the undeniable truth of its practical application: if you do not pay bribes you will get nothing. The same lightness of touch may explain the loose rhythm of the first two 8p lines, which do not conform to the regular patterns noted above.

In the *Carmina Burana*, we find a wide range of stylistic levels even in erotic poetry, from macaronic texts and such Latinized vernacular as *domicella* (meaning 'damsel', not 'little house')[19] to goliardic parody of Scripture, liturgy, scholastic philosophy, and devotional address to the Mother of God:[20]

> Si linguis angelicis loquar et humanis . . .
>
> Pange lingua igitur causas et causatum . . .
>
> Ave formosissima, gemma pretiosa.
> ave decus virginum, virgo gloriosa,
> ave lumen luminum, ave mundi rosa,
> Blanziflôr et Helena, Venus generosa.
>
> Though I should speak with angelic and human tongues [cf. 1 Cor. 13: 1] . . . Therefore recount, my tongue, the causes and the effect . . . Hail most beauteous one, precious jewel, hail ornament of virgins, virgin glorious, hail light of lights, hail rose of the world, Blanchefleur [heroine of romance] and Helen, noble Venus.

Syllabic verse

Besides quantitative and accentual verse, there is a third type governed purely by syllable count. This is found, with rhyming final syllables, in sixth- and seventh-century Irish Latin; but modern writers also reckon under this heading the texts composed from the ninth century onwards

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for sequences, known as *prosae* because they originated as art prose. The main body of a *prosa* consisted of successive couplets comprising two lines with the same number of syllables and set to the same melody. Accent and quantity played no part, nor in principle did rhyme, though many West Frankish *prosae* affected a final -*a* or -*ia* (as in *alleluia*) at the end of every couplet, all too often at the expense of syntax and sense. Such texts, more grandiloquent than coherent, contrast sharply with the elegant, complex and rational unrhymed diction of Notker Balbulus at St Gall. (Since prosae were sometimes sung as melismas, the term *prosa* was loosely extended to the *prosula*, a text composed to match a chant melisma syllable for note.) From ca1000 onwards, however, sequence texts moved in the direction of verse, becoming more regular in scansion and/or adopting rhyme; by the twelfth century most sequences are stanzaic *rhythmi*, though the form of the stanza may change in the course of the poem.

In the thirteenth century, the practice of adding texts to melismas in subordination to their phrase structure gave way to the addition of one, two, or even three texts over a tenor; the resulting composition is known as a motet ('little word').[21] At first these texts, mostly in the vernacular (outside England) but sometimes in Latin, were no more regular in their syllabic count than *prosulae*; an example is the following motet – a tour de force of rhyming – on the tenor 'et gaudebit', from the alleluia for the Sunday after Ascension:[22]

Non orphanum	4pp	*a*
te deseram,	4pp	*b*
sed efferam	4pp	*b*
sicut libanum,	5pp	*a*
sicut clibanum	5pp	*a*
ponam te virtutis,	6p	*c*
sicut tympanum	5pp	*a*
et organum	4pp	*a*
leticie	4pp	*d*
et salutis;	4p	*c*
auferam	3pp	*b*
Egyptie	4pp	*d*
iugum servitutis,	6p	*c*
conferam	3pp	*b*
me secutis	4p	*c*
post lacrimas gaudium,	7pp	*e*
premium	3pp	*e*
post laboris tedium;	7pp	*e*
cum iero veniam,	7pp	*f*
subveniam,	4pp	*f*
per graciam	4pp	*f*

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

tribuam veniam,	6pp	*f*
celestium	4pp	*e*
civium	3pp	*e*
gloriam,	3pp	*f*
mentem puram	4p	*g*
et securam	4p	*g*
efficiam,	4pp	*f*
carnis curam	4p	*g*
et pressuram	4p	*g*
seculi reiciam.	7pp	*f*
Inclitus	3pp	*h*
Paraclitus	4pp	*h*
divinitus	4pp	*h*
tuum cor docebit,	6p	*i*
et radicitus	5pp	*h*
tuus spiritus	5pp	*h*
Domino sic herebit	7p	*i*
tuus ut introitus	7pp	*h*
tutus sit et exitus;	7pp	*h*
cor penitus	4pp	*h*
gaudebit.	3p	*i*

I shall not abandon you to be an orphan, but exalt you like incense-smoke (?); like an oven of virtue shall I make you [cf. Psalms 20:10 Vulgate], like a drum and *organum* [in medieval Latin this may be a stringed or a wind instrument] of happiness and salvation; I shall take away the yoke of Egyptian bondage, I shall bestow on those who have followed me joy after tears, the reward after the weariness of toil; when I have gone I shall come, I shall assist, by my grace I shall grant mercy, the glory of heaven's citizens, I shall make your mind pure and free from worry, I shall throw back the care of the flesh and the oppression of the world. The renowned Paraclete in his divine wisdom will instruct your heart [= mind], and your spirit will be so rooted in the Lord that your going in and going out shall be safe; your heart will rejoice through and through.

This motet already has a degree of independence from the clausula – found also by itself – that serves as its tenor, since the setting is not entirely syllabic; in the Las Huelgas manuscript the music is so heavily reworked as no longer to fit the tenor, which is omitted. The same clausula is also used for a vernacular pastourelle, *El mois de mai*, which again does not match it syllabically but is also written in lines of varying length with insistent rhymes; a triplum, *Quant florist la violete*, of similar type is found with both the Latin and the French motetus.[23]

By the end of the thirteenth century, irregular versification had lost its charms and motet texts were subjected to the laws of measured verse just like

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

other forms of poetry. When written in Latin, they are generally written in *rhythmi*, in particular the decasyllable and the octosyllable, though in Italy we also find the native *endecasillabo*, an 11p verse with stress on the fourth and/or sixth syllable.

In both the irregular and the regular manners, French poets pay less heed to the distinction between p and pp than in the conductus; from successive centuries we find such rhymes as *trína* with *máchina* in the irregular motet *Benigna celi regina* / *Beata es, Maria* / *In veritate*,[24] *nóbilis* with *puerílis* in the decasyllables of *Servant regem* / *O Philippe* / *Rex regum*,[25] and *probarétur* with *pátitur* in the octosyllabic portion of Du Fay's *Iuvenis qui puellam*.[26] This is but one sign that French-speakers were finding the effort of reproducing Latin stress too great, along with monosyllabic rhymes such as *dixistis* ~ *honestatis*, *arguo* ~ *eo* ~ *unico* ~ *titulo* in the last text,[27] and irregular rhythms within the line such as *dum ángelo credidísti* and *inimicísque destrúctis* in the triplum of Machaut's motet *Felix virgo* / *Inviolata genitrix* / *Ad te suspiramus gementes et flentes*.[28] This is the versification not of Philip the Chancellor but of Baudelaire.[29]

Although some motets use pre-existing texts, the majority of texts appear to be newly written for the occasion, either by the composer or by someone else, who may be named at the end of the motetus as in *Argi vices Poliphemus* / *Cum Pilemon rebus paucis* (written in or after 1410 for the conciliar Pope John XXIII):[30] 'William wrote these words as a favour to Nicholas, who sang them, in order for the work to be complete.' Since composers are not necessarily any better as poets than poets as composers, the quality of the texts they write varies widely: some simply cannot be construed as rational human discourse, such as *Apta caro* (the triplum to a straightforward motetus, *Flos virginum*),[31] whose first five lines,

> Apta caro plumis ingenii
> desidie barrum et studii,
> laborisque foco mollicies
> et coniuga centro segnicies
> que pigrescit, plumbum consumito,

typical of the entire text, would have to be translated something like 'Let flesh fit for feathers consume the elephant of idleness of intellect and fervour, and let softness at the hearth of labour, and laziness conjugate with the centre, which grows sluggish, consume lead.' On the other hand Machaut, poet and musician, writes as fluently in Latin as in French; and texts of Philippe de Vitry's motets are found in literary manuscripts, one in a sermon collection from Avignon in the late 1340s, others in fifteenth-century humanistic anthologies compiled by German scholars who had been in Italy.[32] This is a testimony to his relationship with Petrarch, who called him

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'now the only poet of the Gauls'; his poetry certainly cannot be described as humanistic (though a few specimens are in metre), but they are ambitious, abound in classical and biblical allusions, and show considerable power of rhetoric. Some of Vitry's verse, as well as his music, may reside in the expanded recension of the *Roman de Fauvel*, some texts in which adopt the initial or closing *auctoritas*, and exploit classical quotations in a way that suggests knowledge of their context, rather than reliance on a florilegium.

Some motet texts praise music, or the musicians of the day, listed at length, a genre still practised by Compère in the fifteenth century and Moulu in the sixteenth. A widely disseminated example is Bernard de Cluny's motet *Apollinis eclipsatur / Zodiacum signis lustrantibus / In omnem terram*. The duplum is written in octosyllables forming five enjambed sestets with the rhyme scheme *aabccb ddeffe gghiih jjkllj mmnoon*:[33]

Apollinis eclipsatur
nunquam lux, cum peragatur
signorum ministerio
bis sex, quibus armonica
fulget arte basilica 5
musicorum collegio
multiformibus figuris:
e quo nitet I. de Muris
modo colorum vario;
Philippus de Vitriaco, 10
acta plura vernant a quo
ordine multiphario;
noscit Henricus Helene
tonorum tenorem bene;
Magni cum Dionisio 15
Regnaudus de Tiramonte
Orpheyco potus fonte;
Robertus de Palatio
actubus petulancia;
fungens gaudet poetria 20
Guilhermus de Mascaudio;
Egidius de Morino
baritonans cum Garino,
quem cognoscat Suessio;
Arnaldus Martini, iugis 25
philomena, P. de Brugis,
Gaufridus de Barilio;
vox quorum mundi climata
penetrat ad algamata,
doxe fruantur bravio! 30

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(In verse 11 *a quo* in French pronunciation = *aco*, and hence makes the requisite double rhyme with *Vitriaco*.) The sense is not always clear, but a tentative translation might be:

> Apollo's light is never eclipsed, since it is achieved by the service of twice six signs, whereby the church gleams with the harmonic art through the company of musicians in note-shapes of many forms, from which [company] shines Jean des Murs, with his varied manner of colours; Philippe de Vitry, several deeds by whom flourish in many kinds of order; Henri d'Hélène, who well knows the course of notes; with Denys le Grant, Regnaud de Tirlemont, who has drunk of Orpheus' fount; Robert of Aix, with actions and forwardness; Guillaume de Machaut rejoices when exercising poetry; Gilles de la Thérouanne, singing low with Guarin, whom may Soissons know; Arnaud de St-Martin-du-Ré, a perpetual nightingale, Pierre de Bruges, Godefroy de Baralle; may they whose voice pierces the zones of the worlds to the high places enjoy the reward of glory!

The contratenor (which describes the above text as the triplum), in decasyllables rhyming *aab aab bba bba*, also refers to music, and to these musicians;

> Zodiacum signis lustrantibus
> armonia Phebi fulgentibus
> musicali palam sinergia,
> Pictagore numerus ter quibus
> adequatur preradiantibus 5
> Boetii basis solercia,
> B. de Cluni nitens energia
> artis pratice cum theoria
> recommendans se subdit omnibus
> presentia per salutaria; 10
> musicorum tripli materia
> noticiam dat de nominibus.

Again, translation is at times uncertain:

> While the signs light up the zodiac and gleam with Phoebus's harmony, openly through musical cooperation – to which most radiant signs Pythagoras's number, taken thrice, is made equal by the ingenuity of Boethius's basis – Bernard de Cluny, illustrious as a practical musician who also understands the theory, humbly recommends himself to all by these present wholesome words; the subject matter of the triplum gives information on the musicians' names.

Much recent scholarship has sought to make all it can of thematic, verbal and numerical relations between the texts of a motet, and to relate the tenor phrase with its textual and liturgical context to them. Such an analysis would

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press

find, in the case of Bernard's motet, that the first word of the duplum text, *Apollinis*, begins with *A*, that of the contratenor, *Zodiacum*, with *Z*; but each text alludes to the other, for the duplum speaks of 'twice six signs' in the zodiac (cf. *Zodiacum*), and the contratenor of 'Pythagoras's number, taken thrice', which matches the signs that light up the zodiac and shine with Phoebus's harmony (cf. *Apollinis*). Pythagoras's number was 10, but called the *tetractys* as being the fourth triangular number; hence we have both 3 × 4, the number of musicians mentioned in the triplum, and 3 × 10, the number of verses. The duplum, in 30 octosyllables, contains twice as many syllables as the contratenor, in 12 decasyllables; together they comprise 360 syllables, which corresponds to the number of days in twelve 30-day months (as in the Egyptian calendar); the full year requires another five days, supplied by the five syllables of the tenor incipit, *In omnem terram*. This comes from Psalms 18:5 Vulgate. 'In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum, et in fines terrae verba eorum', 'Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the earth' (Reims–Douay–Challoner version), which is obviously appropriate for renowned musicians, some of whom were also theorists or poets; since this text furnishes the first antiphon at matins for the common of apostles, it might be thought to pick up on the number twelve as being that of the first apostles, and suggest that as all apostles, not merely the original twelve, ought to be venerated, so ought all musicians, not merely those mentioned in the triplum.

Such subtleties are, alas, compatible with ungrammatical or hypercontorted diction. They are also imperceptible to the listeners, though the singers may appreciate them if they pay attention to the sense of the words that not only they but also their fellows are singing; how far the fact should inhibit the analysis of the written texts is a matter of dispute, since poets and composers were and are capable of building in features that only they, and God, would notice. Moreover, echoes from one motet to another (such as the phrase *musicorum collegio*, which begins the triplum of another musician motet)[34] suggest that (as in the case of the Fauvel manuscript) we are dealing not so much with an elite (a term that darkens counsel) as with an in-group of persons who knew each other's work and competed to better it.

By contrast, it is evident that composers sometimes took care to match sound or indeed sense at certain places (particularly the beginning and the end) in simultaneous voice-parts, with an effect that even the untrained modern ear can recognize; thus in one anonymous motet of the thirteeth century not only do quadruplum, triplum and motetus all begin *Mors* ('Death'), but the word forms the tenor incipit (if indeed that was sung); every line but one ends in the vowel *o*, sung simultaneously in three voices on eleven occasions and in two on thirteen, five of them against a mid-word *o* in the third voice – including the close, where the triplum ends with

https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press
Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011

the words 'O Mors'.[35] In Vitry's *Vos quid admiramini / Gratissima / Gaude gloriosa*, the words *hec regina* ('this is my queen') in the triplum dovetail with *O regina* ('O queen', meaning the Virgin) in the motetus, set to the same music a fourth below.[36] Such effects, however, pertain to poetical technique only if planned before the texts were written, since they could be achieved by the judicious selection of existing poems.

On the road to the Renaissance

Vitry's motet *O canenda / Rex quem / Contratenor / Rex regum*[37] has a triplum in decasyllables but a motetus in hexameters; the setting respects the verse-ends even at the one place where the sense continues. In the mid-fourteenth-century motet *Degentis vita / Cum vix artidici / Vera pudicitia*[38] both triplum and motetus are written in what the poet fondly imagined to be hexameters with the occasional pentameter; the setting largely ignores line ends, but pays some heed to rhymes; hexameters of no better quality form the motetus of *Inter densas deserti meditans / Imbribus irriguis / Admirabile est nomen Domini*,[39] in which the composer respects the line ends both of the hexameters and of the decasyllables in the triplum.

Metra become commoner in the fifteenth century, not least in Italian ceremonial motets, though even there they do not oust the *rhythmi* with which the northern composers were familiar; Ciconia, despite the classical pretensions of his theoretical writings, sets only one metrical text, and that not faultless: *Ut te per omnes celitus / Ingens alumnus Padue* in Ambrosian iambic dimeters marred by false quantities.[40] For composers, and those who wrote their texts, *metra* were no more than another resource; thus Du Fay's Latin motets exhibit hexameters varying from the frankly medieval to the would-be classical, elegiac couplets, stichic leonine pentameters, and quatrains of stichic sapphic hendecasyllables, but also *rhythmi* of greater or less regularity, syllabic verses of various measures (including *endecasillabi*), irregular rhymed verse, and prose.[41] None of the classicizing texts approaches the correctness and elegance of the elegiacs set by Ockeghem, *Intemerata Dei mater*;[42] however, Du Fay's settings show respect for line endings even when the text is enjambed ('quamque | egregios', 'and how | excellent').[43] Towards the end of the fifteenth century we begin to find settings of classical poetry, which may be regarded as pertaining to the Renaissance.[44]

Cambridge Companions Online © Cambridge University Press, 2011
https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521846196.015 Published online by Cambridge University Press