What Fortune Can Do to a Minim

ANNA ZAYARUZNAYA

“I shall not become involved in any of this, but shall return to my subject.”

Thus Lady Nature unceremoniously ends her long discourse on optics, a passage that has been called “the most notorious digression in a poem noted for its digressive tendencies.” Nature’s words might well summarize the bulk of the *Roman de la rose*. Though it is ostensibly a love story—a tale of a young man smitten by a rosebud and attempting to win her with the aid and hindrance of an army of allegorical characters—the *Rose* is famous in part for its encyclopedic asides on themes as diverse as the death of Seneca and the best way to fake tears.

But long digressions can present a challenge to the reader—especially a reader in search of underlying logic. Poet, composer, and Burgundian court chronicler Jean Molinet (1435–1507) was one such reader. In the closing years of the fifteenth century, Molinet was commissioned to clean up and modernize the *Rose*, by then no longer easily comprehensible in its original Old French verse. The result was his *Roman de la rose moralisé*, in which

This study has benefited from the help of Sean Gallagher, Dominique Gatté, Jason Jacobs, Alejandro Planchart, Michael Randall, Joshua Rifkin, Rob Wegman, and Emily Zazulia. The process of revision has been enriched by the suggestions of Michael Long and the anonymous readers for this Journal. Publication is made possible in part by a grant from the Barr Ferree Foundation Fund, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University. An early version of this paper was read at the 2007 meeting of the American Musicological Society in Québec City.


2. On Seneca, line 6211ff.; on tears, line 746ff.

3. Molinet’s compositional activity and musical connections are discussed below. For a general biography, see Dupire, *Jean Molinet*, 7–25.

4. His patron was Philippe de Clèves, noted bibliophile and Lord of Ravestain. On the dating of the *Roman de la rose moralisé*, see Dupire, *Jean Molinet*, 74–78; and Randall, *Building Resemblance*, 22. The work survives in two manuscripts and at least four printed editions: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, ms. 128 C 5 (1500); Paris, Bnf.fr. 24393 (30 April 1500); Paris: Antoine Vérard, ca. 1500 and 1511; Lyons: Guillaume Balsarin, 1503; Paris: Veuve Michel Le Noir, 17 August 1521. Here I cite the 1503 Lyons print, which is available on Gallica (http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k712753). A critical edition of Molinet’s *Roman* is currently being prepared by Jean Devaux.
prose translations of the *Rose* alternate with newly written “moralizations” that assign allegorical Christian meanings to the amorous and sometimes vulgar original.\(^5\)

These *moralités* do more than retell a thirteenth-century romance in a Christian and contemporary light (already no small feat). Taking themes and characters from the *Rose* as jumping-off points, Molinet often engages in flamboyant rewritings of the poem and its authoritative sources. This is especially true in those parts of his work that gloss digressions in the original. Lacking any tale to moralize, these sections gave the author free reign to digress both from the narrative of the *Rose* and from his moralized version of that narrative. The results are sometimes alarming.

The *moralité* to Molinet’s 86th chapter is ostensibly based on the famous optical digression with whose conclusion I began—a long-winded lecture on the effects of mirrors and lenses which ushers in a discussion of apparently related phenomena: the treachery of women, optical illusions, mental illness, and the veracity of visions and dreams.\(^6\) Just as Nature is about to return to her subject (the weather), Molinet ends his chapter and provides a *moralité* as digressive as his original. And it is in the midst of this text that we stumble upon a passage of great musicological interest when the author moves suddenly from mirrors to mensural notation:

If it seems to you that [a conjurer] does more than is possible in the mirror of this world by his magic art, I tell you that Fortune, indeed, does a still greater and almost incredible thing with her feigned music. For it often happens that she elevates a poor minim of little worth, and makes it rise in a short space by ruled lines, degrees, and joints of the hand, so far that it finds itself at the very top of the scale, so augmented and of such great value that this poor note that was only a simple minim becomes a big maxima with a very long tail, and there it sings in a loud voice: “*Le serviteur haut guerdonné*” (the highly rewarded servant). And when Fortune sees that it is boasting and glorying in its estate, which is not at all perfect [tempus] major [prolation], she says to her chambermaids: “*La la la faites-lui bon chière*” (La, la, la, make her welcome). But the shrewd trollop, knowing the times, the modes, the colors, the imperfections, the prolongations, the proportions, and the tones of music, suddenly brings it down from top to bottom by subtle changes of which she knows the tricks, so that she shoves it from its high nest and teaches it to descant in its humble minor [prolation] and to diminish so slightly and so low that its voice is no longer heard and it stops on a cadence named re–ut, near to la–mi but far indeed from the beloved (*l’amir*). And making great sighs, it laments with Jeremiah

\(^5\) Readers familiar with some of Molinet’s less savory poetry will be surprised that he felt the need to clean anything up. However, the *Roman de la rose* had been under attack for almost a century for its occasionally obscene language and negative portrayals of women. See the materials drawn together in McWebb, *Delating the “Roman de la rose.”*

\(^6\) Chapter 86 paraphrases lines 17988–18484 of the *Rose*.

\(^7\) Translation prior to this point modified from Hewitt, *Canti B*, 58. Where not otherwise attributed, translations are mine.
and says, in a hoarse voice and very astonished, “Terriblement suis fortunée” (I am terribly unfortunate). 8

There is much to wonder at in this explosion of musical imagery. The discussion of feigned music (“fainte musique”) has been interpreted as a reference to musica ficta, though in the context of Nature’s lecture on optics and illusion it may be functioning in the more general, theatrical sense adduced by Rob Wegman for the verb feindre (to feign). 9 More narrowly musical in their purview are the references to note-lengths (the minim and maxima), the organization of musical time (tempus and prolation), the gamut and Guidonian Hand, and such esoteric concepts as coloration, augmentation, and diminution.

This level of musical specificity should not surprise us coming from Molinet’s pen. His (in)famous poetic exchanges with Antoine Busnoys, Loyset Compère, and the singer Verjus attest to a person who moved in musical circles and was on intimate terms with some of the leading musicians of his day. 10 Compère, in turn, included Molinet in a list of composers that also features Ockeghem, Josquin, and Faugues. 11 And for good reason: the poet’s only securely attributed song, the frequently copied four-voice Tart ara mon cœur sa plaisance, shows every sign of an accomplished musicus. 12 But in musicological circles Molinet is perhaps best known for his lament on Ockeghem’s death, Nymphes des bois, set by Josquin, and for his practice of citing song incipits in his poetry. 13

8. The complete moralité is edited in Appendix A, pp. 372–75; the above is a translation of sentences 29–33.
10. Molinet’s musical connections are succinctly summarized in Fallows, Josquin, 433–34. For the poetic exchange between Molinet and Busnoys, see Molinet, Faictz et dictz, 2:795–801. This consists of a poem of praise from Molinet to Busnoys that uses “-bus” and “-nois” as alternating rhymes (795–96) and a pair of poems that takes both men’s sexual impotence as its theme—the rondeau “Reposons nous, entre nous amoreux” from Busnoys to Molinet (797) and the formally related but much more elaborate “Je solioie estre ung remboureur de bas” by Molinet (798–801). For a poem to Verjus (Jean Cornuel), see ibid., 781–94; to Compère, ibid., 779. On Compère and Molinet, see also Schavran, “Manuscript Pavia,” 34, 226–36.
11. See mm. 175–76 of Omnium bonorum plena, where Molinet is placed between Fauges and Regis; Compère, Opera omnia, 4:32–38.
12. The song survives in twelve sources of which two independently attribute it to Molinet, and there is no conflicting attribution. See Fallows, Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 382–83. See also the translation, commentary, editions, and facsimiles of Tart ara in Christoffersen, Copenhagen Chansonnier.
13. On Molinet’s practice of citing chanson incipits, see Fallows, “Jean Molinet,” 35–42. Fallows lists song titles cited by Molinet in five other poems (pp. 41–42), but does not include the Moralized Rose. See also Alden, “Reading the Loire Valley Chansonniers,” 20–25.
Molinet quotes three fifteenth-century chansons in the passage about the minim: Du Fay’s *Le serviteur*, Ninot Le Petit’s *Et la la la*, and the anonymous *Terriblement suis fortunée*.14 But if these citations and the writer’s level of musical knowledge are par for the course, the context in which they appear here is nevertheless highly unusual. How do we account for Molinet’s tale of a poor minim raised and puffed up by the goddess Fortune until it becomes a high maxima, only to be made low and small again?

Fortune plays an important role in the *Rose*, where over a thousand lines are dedicated to describing her person, actions, house, and grounds in disparaging terms.15 Manuscripts of the poem accordingly include illustrations of the goddess, which readily confirm that the acts of raising and lowering are well within her purview. The four characters usually drawn on her wheel stand for the changes in station that result from these vicissitudes. In the miniature from a fifteenth-century Parisian copy of the *Rose* reproduced in Figure 1, these four characters announce their status by means of scrolls, the speech bubbles of medieval illumination.16 “Regno” (I reign), says the man at the top, while the one at the bottom complains that he is entirely powerless (“sum sine regno”). The other two are in a state of transition: the ascending figure vows “regnabo” (I will govern), and the descending reminisces “regnavi” (I have ruled). That a character on Fortune’s wheel would be raised and lowered is thus not a surprise, and even the possibility that this person would be boasting or complaining about his state is easily supported by the iconographic tradition. But nothing in the *Rose* suggests that a victim of Fortune’s fickleness might be a note rather than a person.

The passage from Molinet’s *Rose* begs explanation, and it is the goal of the present study to provide a context for the unfortunate minim’s journey. Chapter 86 and its moralité must of course be the first frame within which we try to view the note’s activities, but doing so only emphasizes the parable’s strangeness, since nothing in the preceding chapter or the rest of the moralized *Rose* can justify the scope of this musical “aside.” And yet, a broader look at Molinet’s output confirms the deliberateness of the digression, since similar imagery linking Fortune with the manipulation of pitch and note value appears in another of his poems, the *Petit traictié sousz obscure poetrie*.17 This taken together with the poet’s well-attested musical competence suggests that the

14. *Terriblement* is cited in two other poems, and *Le serviteur* in four (Fallows, “Jean Molinet,” 41–42), thus the minim passage adds only Ninot’s *La la la* to the list. But this addition is interesting since, as Fallows noted, Molinet otherwise overwhelmingly cites earlier repertory—as early as the 1430s and “almost nothing . . after about 1470” (38). Christopher Reynolds (“Counterpoint of Allusion,” 229–31) has pointed to musical and textual links between *Terriblement* and another Fortune-themed song, *Fortune, n’as-tu point pitie*.

15. See especially Reason’s warning in lines 5483–6844.


Figure 1  Fortune turns her wheel in an illustrated manuscript of Augustin’s *De civitate Dei*. Maitre de l’échevinage de Rouen, third quarter of the fifteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 27, fol. 154.
minim’s rise and fall might make more sense within a context external to the moralized *Rose*—namely, the musical practices of Molinet’s contemporaries.

Masses built on a *cantus firmus* are particularly relevant in this regard, since they allow for exactly the kinds of transformations that the minim undergoes. Their borrowed material usually has a modal and often a mensural “original state,” the manipulation of which creates opportunities for every note of a *cantus firmus*—or the entire tune in synecdoche—to be subject to changes imposed from without. Indeed there exists a corpus of masses particularly germane to this discussion, based on a song whose text speaks directly to Fortune, calling her “unjust and cursed” and complaining about her inconstant nature: the masses based on *Fortuna desperata*. I suggest that the two earliest and most famous masses in this complex—those by Jacob Obrecht and Josquin des Prez—feature *cantus-firmus* manipulations that seem to respond to Fortune imagery in ways hinted at by Molinet. And that story, in turn, stands to clarify the broader functioning of those manipulations and suggest clearer meanings for enigmatic canons in both works.

If Molinet’s minim can have practical consequences for interpretations, editions, and performances of specific musical works, it is not necessarily because he was inspired by any particular piece, but because the level on which his hermeneutics functions is germane to Josquin’s and Obrecht’s compositional strategies. Thinking as Molinet does about the personification of notes will thus not only clarify the musical consequences of Fortune’s actions in these two masses, but also contribute significantly to recent discussions about musical representation in the Renaissance, in which analogical interpretations have served to relate minims (and their multiples) to theological truths. But analogies can be unstable. While it will be easy to link certain musical details in both masses with Fortune using Molinet’s minim as a guide, reading Fortune back into the theological and liturgical aspects of the masses will be harder. Molinet’s musical digressions can thus attest both to the possibilities and to the limits of musical representation.

---

18. The Italian text of this popular song belongs in the courtly world of the *Roman de la rose*, beginning “Fortuna desperata, / Iniqua & maladecta, / Che di tal Donna electa / La fama ha dinegr[j]ata” (Hopeless Fortune, / Unjust and cursed, / Who has [defamed] the reputation / Of so distinguished a lady). For the full text and translation, see Meconi, *Fortuna desperata*, xvii. The connection between Fortune and *musica ficta* has been debated in the body of scholarship around Josquin’s *Fortuna d’un gran tempo* (Lowinsky, “Goddess Fortuna in Music”; Benthem, “Fortuna in Focus”; and Cumming, “Goddess Fortuna Revisited”) discussed below.

Molinet’s *Moralités* and Musical Digressions

The moralized *Rose* is a complicated and highly original web of translation, commentary, and radical reinterpretation. With a stated goal of rendering Guillaume de Lorris’s and Jean de Meun’s thirteenth-century dream-vision “cler et net” (clear and precise) for a late fifteenth-century audience, Molinet translated the *Rose* into Middle French prose and divided it into 107 chapters. Between these, he inserted newly written *moralités* that subject the text of each chapter to a process of allegoresis intended to give the sometimes sexually explicit and often immoral *Rose* a Christian message. This is usually accomplished through what Claire Croft has termed a “substitution mechanism” which replaces the characters and events of the *Rose* with Christian symbols. In Molinet’s moralization of the Pygmalion story, for example, Pygmalion becomes Christ, his statue represents Ecclesia, her jewels are likened to the Pope’s precious raiments, and so forth. But Molinet’s moralizations are not limited to elements found in his original, nor solely to Christian themes. In the case of Pygmalion, the *moralité* tells how Christ rejected Synagoga in favor of Ecclesia, though no second statue is in competition with the first in the *Rose* or in Ovid’s original. Elsewhere, Molinet focuses on the illustrious persons of his day, borrowing his tone from “advice to princes” literature and wandering far from Lorris’s and de Meun’s images: the celestial bodies become the rulers of this earth, thunder is the clamor of the poor who envy the riches of the nobility, and the gold and azure hues that fill the sky after a storm are colors in the arms of Philip the Good. The *Rose*, then, prompts Molinet’s “moral” discussions, but it does not always set the terms.

In the case of chapter 86, whose *moralité* includes the minim’s journey, the question of what comes from the *Rose* and what is invented by Molinet proves particularly germane. The text subjected to moralization is already a digression from the main story. In the course of her long “confession,” Nature comes to dwell on the violence of thunderstorms. But the illusory character of rainbows causes her to change course. Using the refraction of light as a narrative...
pivot, she spends the next five hundred lines talking about “mirouers”—a term that encompasses not only standard mirrors, but other kinds of “looking-glass”: optical lenses, “burning glasses,” crystal balls, and warped, distorting mirrors. By making things look larger or smaller than they are, these instruments create a disconnect between perception and reality. From these optical illusions de Meun moves adroitly to those with poor eyesight (who see objects in duplicate), to the insane (who see things that are not there), to dreamers, wishful thinkers, and people who insist they have out-of-body experiences. This train of thought then ends as suddenly as it began when Nature, having given a long list of related questions she does not wish to discuss, suddenly announces the intention to return to her subject with which this study began. But before she has a chance to say anything more about the weather, Molinet ends his translated 86th chapter. A moralité follows.

Only by understanding the overall arc of this moralité can we appreciate the strange position the story of the minim holds within it. Molinet begins by likening the three types of looking glass mentioned by Nature—those that magnify, those that shrink, and those that show things truly—to three mirrors of human conscience (2–3). Some Christians “show their pea-sized sins before the mirror of conscience [where] they seem to them bigger and wider than tall mountains,” while others are deceived by the second mirror, whose distorting properties make their “heavy and detestable sins . . . seem small to them” (4, 8–9). But Molinet is most interested in the third kind, which is neither too long nor too wide and is thus able to show things as they are (13). Nature mentions this “true” mirror only in passing, since it does not distort reality. But it is crucial to the moralité, since it is the only mirror of human conscience that can lead to virtue. To explain this, Molinet turns to the Aristotelian notion of “virtus in medio,” where virtue is defined as the mean between two extremes. Describing this third mirror as a “point moyen entre . . . deux extremitez” (middle point between two extremes, 12), he recommends that those who wish to attain virtue “should choose the middle course” (16). After giving a list of the twelve virtues (also borrowed from Aristotle, 15–18), Molinet ends his extended discussion of the third mirror with a Latin sententia meant to summarize the whole: Medium tenuere beati ("Blessed are they who have kept to the middle course," 19). Here we see the kind of disconnect between source and moralité noted by Croft and others: though it takes its point of departure from the older text, Molinet’s focus on virtue is not precipitated by anything in nature’s discussion of optics.

28. See Appendix A.
29. All parenthetical references are by sentence to Appendix A.
30. His citation is explicit: “comme dit Aristote en son livre de ethicques” (15). See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, bk 2, secs. 5–9.
31. Proverb 2.10.176–78 in Singer, Thesaurus proverbiorum medii aevi, 8:133.
After this, the moralité hews closer to its source for a little while. Lenses that “set fire to everything that is set before them” represent the Holy Spirit, which enflames preachers with the grace of God, allegorized as the sun’s rays (20). The four eyes that someone with double vision might see while looking at a face are allegorized as two sets of eyes: the first corporal; the second spiritual (21–24). From here Jean de Meun’s text continues with a story about a man with poor vision who saw his face projected in front of him. Molinet will moralize this anecdote in due course, clearly signaling his return to the text (“furthermore Nature tells us that . . .,” 37). But first he swerves sharply away from the Rose into a digression.

He tells of a certain conjurer named Daudenarde who creates “phantasms and marvelous monsters” (26). His connection with mirrors is mostly rhetorical: Daudenarde makes phantoms appear “in the looking-glass of this world” (au miroir de ce monde), but his tools are alchemy and “vif argent” (“real money,” also a pun on quicksilver or liquid mercury) rather than optical illusion. In fact, he is a gambler and a swindler, turning coins into larger coins, as well as a conjurer who makes priests, “whether they be clerks [or] asses with mitre and cross, go on horseback with mules and wily foxes in [ecclesiastical] hats, singing the high mass” (28).

Improbably, it is here that the parable of the minim quoted above makes its appearance. It is framed as an aside: “If it seems to you that Daudenarde does more than the possible in the mirror of this world by his magic art, I tell you that Fortune, indeed, does a still greater and almost incredible thing with her feigned music” (29). The parable follows directly (30–33). Is the singing minim tangential to optics or to Daudenarde? On the surface, the note’s waxing and waning seem loosely linked to the discussion of magnifying and reducing mirrors. But the comparison does not hold up well: whereas the mirrors all act upon things that are unchanging, the minim itself, rather than its image, is subject to transformation when it becomes “a big maxima with a very long tail.” In this sense, the minim is more similar to the coins transformed by Daudenarde, and the brief mention of music that concludes that passage—a mass sung by foxes and mules—lends weight to this local link. But the Daudenarde passage is already a digression from Jean de Meun’s text. The minim’s story is thus twice removed, an aside to an aside. Far from serving to moralize anything in the Rose, it is arcane enough to require an explanation in its own right.

And it gets one. Lest those who are unfamiliar with musical terminology miss the meaning of his anecdote, Molinet quickly de-allegorizes the story:

Those who understand the notes of music can easily discern that the minim is a poor small character whom Fortune has raised up by her enchantment. And when it is on the top rung it dresses up like a prince and takes on the form of a maxima having after it a long tail of squires, valets and lackeys. And finally it

32. For an Italian account from the 1560s describing a mirror “in the form of a wheel” which the writer remembers as a wheel of Fortune, see Nelson, “Mechanical Wheels of Fortune,” 231.
becomes so heavy and cumbersome that the ladder upon which it climbs begins to break and cracks, whereby Fortune throws it out of court and then it falls below the hold, there making dolorous complaints. It would have served it better to know only its plainchant, or its simple counterpoint, than to endure such diminution. (34–36)

Thus the reader can see the minim turned back into a person (“ung povre petit personnage”) whose musical wanderings through the gamut or scale (Lat. scala) are reinscribed as a climb and fall from a ladder (escielle). But the explanation is only partially helpful to those who do not know “les notes de musique”: many of the terms in the parable (“les tempz, les modes, les couleurs, les imperfections, les prolations, les proportions et les tons de musicque”) are not clarified. And the final admonition—that the minim would do better to stick to plainchant and “contrepoint simple”—refers to a hierarchy of musical styles that would probably make sense only to those already in the know.33

No time to dwell on this, however: the musical interlude ends even more abruptly than it began when Molinet unceremoniously returns to glossing Jean de Meun: “Nature also says that mirrors make visible miracles, and cites Aristotle saying that a man was so sick that . . . everywhere he went he saw his face” (37). The story from the Meteorologica (iii, 4) describes a real psychological phenomenon (now called specular or autoscopic hallucination), but Molinet provides us with several metaphorical examples from his own time.34 The first is the King of France, Louis XII, who was “deprived of his noble light [by] the dark and dangerous prisons in which he was detained” in wartime, but is now free to see his face all over the world, “imprinted in paintings, gold coins, and seals” (39–40).35 The second is Philippe de Clèves (1459–1528), cousin to Louis and the dedicatee of the moralized Rose. By offering himself as hostage he risked the loss of life and limb as well as light, but now he sees his face reflected in the crown with which his cousin is adorned (41–44).

Molinet keeps with these two “tresillustres personnages” for the final part of his moralité, where he glosses Nature’s claim that optical illusions can cause the eyes to misjudge distance and size (45). Just as giants can seem as small as dwarves, so during the adversities faced by Louis and Philippe their contemporaries made little of their worth and rank (46); but now they have become

33. The distinction being evoked here is not between written and improvised polyphony, but between more and less florid styles—in his Diffinitorium Tinctoris talks of “contrapunctus simplex” and “contrapunctus diminutus”; Coussemaker, ed., Scriptorum de musica mediæ aevi, 4:180. See also Tinctoris’s discussion of the two in Liber de arte contrapuncti; Tinctoris, Opera theoretica, 2:107; and Bent, “Refecta and Cantare super librum,” 379–83. The irony, of course, is that plainchant and simple counterpoint do not use minims.

34. On contemporary exempla in the Moralized Rose, see Devaux, “Pour plus fresche memoire.”

35. The discussion is clearly of Louis XII, the then-current ruler, despite “Loys, unziesme de ce nom” in the printed text. On Molinet’s reversed analogies, see Randall, Building Resemblance, 40–57, discussed below.
giants, whose ruling arms extend as far as Brittany and Italy. God seems to
have allowed this to come to pass in accordance with the merits of the two
men, but also so that they might serve as an example and a “mirror” to other
“noble, brave, loyal and virtuous spirits heavily oppressed with anguished
hardship” (50). “Car dulcia non meruit qui non gustavit amara” (for he does
not deserve sweetness who had not tasted bitterness, 51). With this oft-cited
dictum the moralité ends, and the reader can proceed to chapter 87, where
Nature resumes her discussion of thunderstorms.

We might well have forgotten by now that the conversation began with the
weather, or how exactly we got from rainbows to the singing minim and back
again. The path is a winding one. While much in Molinet’s moralité takes its
cue from Nature’s speech, the tale of Daudenarde, and even more so the tale
of the minim, seem to come out of nowhere. Nor is this mere illusion. A
schematic diagram of the moralité and its relation to material from the Rose
reveals that these passages are indeed divorced even from Nature’s digression
(Fig. 2). While not everything in Nature’s speech receives a gloss, the bulk of
the moralité takes its points of departure from de Meun, preserving his origi-
nal order. Molinet makes this relationship clear by keying each new section to
de Meun’s text: “Encores dit l’acteur” (10), “Encores mect avant Nature ung
autre miroir” (21), “Et pource que Nature continuant ceste matière” (37),
etc. Daudenarde, on the other hand, is an aside only tangentially related to
what comes before, and not linked to the Rose text. The minim’s story, in
turn, is weakly linked to Daudenarde. The explanation of the minim’s story
for those not musically literate represents the material furthest removed from
Nature’s speech.

Considering the moralité as a whole thus yields only negative evidence. The
story of the minim is not an explanation, elaboration, or qualification of any-
thing in the Rose. On the contrary: it is a new allegorical fable that warrants its
own mini moralité complete with substitutions (a minim is a person; the scale
is a ladder; the maxima’s tail is a line of groveling courtiers) and even a con-
cluding moral—a warning about the dangers of overstepping one’s bounds.

If nothing in chapter 86 or the rest of that moralité explains this strange
musical digression, zooming out to consider musical references in the rest of
the moralized Rose only emphasizes the novelty of the minim’s story. In the
original Roman de la rose, music is usually mentioned in connection with
either courtly singing and dancing or birdsong. Molinet renders these pas-
sages faithfully in his chapters, exercising a translator’s license only to modern-
ize the names of genres and instruments that no longer had meaning for his
contemporaries.36 And although the format of his moralités gave the author

36. For example, “vieler” chez Guillaume de Lorris becomes “jouer a quelque instrument”
for Molinet, a “lai” becomes a more generic “chant,” and “fabliaux” are rendered as “rondeaux,
ballades.” Karen Elizabeth Benner has drawn together a number of passages which allow for com-
parison of musical references in the Roman de la rose with their analogues in the Roman de la rose
moralisé; see “Mellon Chansonnier,” 136–47.
infinitely greater license to expound upon musical topics, he did so rarely.37 In most cases, birdsong became angelic song, while courtly music making was reinscribed as liturgical.38


38. For birdsong compared to angelic song, see “et oyr les oyseaux chanter: qui sont les melodies des anges,” fol. 10, and, more explicitly: “Par la diversité des oyseletz du vergier
Only one other passage seems comparable at first glance. In his prologue Molinet describes physical, earthly love (amour fatuelle) with a rhetorical flourish that includes several terms associated with music:

Amour fatuelle est folle délectation; frequente cogitation; ardant feu sans extinc-

tion . . . de vray repos destruction; de melodie invention, de dons assuefaction,
de soz accumulation, de bonheur retrogradation, de sens adnihilation, de tris-
tesse augmentation . . . de couleur grant mutation, de lumiere privation, de
force diminution, d’espoir parturbation, de members desication, de vie abbrevi-

ation, de corps human perdition, et de l’âme damnation.

(Guilty love is mad delight, unending contemplation, bright, inextinguishable

fire . . . the overthrow of true repose, the invention of melody, habituation to
gifts, propagation of words, the reversal [retrógradation] of honor, destruction of meaning, increase [augmentation] of sadness, severe change of coloration, deprivation of light, diminution of might, perturbation of

spirit, desiccation of limbs, shortening of life, loss of the body, and damnation

of the soul.)39

The appearance of melodic invention, retrograde, augmentation, diminution,

and coloration in close proximity to each other is suggestive, but the terms do

nothing more here than add a musical flavor to a moralizing passage.40 Nor is

this unusual for Molinet. As Michael Randall has argued, the poet frequently

references musical terms and ideas to rhetorical ends which have nothing to
do with music.41 In his citations of chansons, this means transplanting song in-
cipits into sometimes bawdy and irreverent contexts that may well clash with

the courtly sentiments of the original.42 And as songs lose their meanings or

change poetic registers, so do musical terms. This is clearly the case in the defi-
nition of “amour fatuelle” quoted above. It is also true of the note-names that
appear as rhymes in Molinet’s Recommendation à Jehan de Ranchicourt:

Jehan Grignon, sçachiés que j’ay rechut
Une oroison de celle qui conchut
Le filz de Dieu, [afin] d’estre adorer;
L’ouvraige [dont] est fort bien fait, doré;

melodiesement chantans laitz, virelaitz et chancons amoureuses sont entenduz les devotz re-
ligieux, possessans, mendians, reformez, riglez chanoines et nommez enseignans, lisans et chan-
tans les louenge de dieu et des glorieux saintz,” fols. 10v–11. On conceptions of birdsong in the
Middle Ages and their relationship to and depiction in music, see Leach, Sung Birds.


40. There is an analogous use of two of these terms later on, in a description of the decline of

the nobility: “pour l’heure de maintenant . . . noblesse se diminue, noblesse tient chemin retro-
grade et est exorbitant de son juste train salutaire,” fol. 65v, emphasis mine. On the place of such
critique within Molinet’s oeuvre see Devaux, Jean Molinet, 359–430.

41. Randall, “‘Mon flaîollet ne vault plus rien.’ ”

42. See Alden, “Reading the Loire Valley Chansonniers,” 23–24; and Zayaruznaya,

“Chanson Mass as Analogy.”
In this context, Randall argues, Molinet is exploiting the sounds of musical words while leaving their sense behind: ut, re, mi, and fa are not really notes here, they just bring notes to mind.44

This insight into Molinet’s usual ways of incorporating musical citations and ideas further foregrounds the novelty of the minim’s story. To be sure, there too some of the rhetoric is more a matter of musical sound than musical sense, as when la minime finds herself on a cadence “pres de l’amie, mais fort loings de l’amie” (near la-mi but far from the beloved; 32). Such puns notwithstanding, the minim’s story as a whole does not fit the pattern identified by Randall. If in the definition of “amour fatuelle” the reader could be left wondering whether a musical allusion is even intended, no one could doubt the musical specificity of the world in which the minim dwells: it is a world that includes solmization syllables, hexachordal mutation, mensural notation, augmentation and diminution, and at least three real chansons. And it may be no accident that the chanson incipits in the moralité are set off as diegetic song rather than woven into the text in Molinet’s usual manner. Both musical terminology and the songs themselves would seem to be present here in forms that are narrative rather than exclusively discursive.

A final attestation to the deliberateness of this musical aside in his Rose comes from another of Molinet’s poetic works, the Petit traictié sous obscure poetrie (Short treatise on obscure poetry).45 This classically inspired address to Apollo in the voice of Phaeton is woven around verses 11–12 of Psalm 38, a source-text as seemingly infertile a ground for musical discussion as Nature’s lecture on optics:

11Cor meum conturbatum est; dereliquit me virtus mea, et lumen oculorum meorum, et ipsum non est mecum. 12Amici mei et proximi mei adversum me appropinquaverunt, et steterunt.
(My heart is troubled, my strength has left me, and the light of my eyes itself is not with me. My friends and my neighbors have drawn near, and stood against me.)

Because Phaeton is addressing his musical father, and perhaps also because singing is inherent to dolorous complaintes, the first prose stanza makes reference to music, or rather, to its cessation, when Phaeton asks that the muses

43. Molinet, Faictz et dictz, 2:804.
44. Randall, “‘Mon flaïollet ne vault plus rien.’”
45. The chronological relationship between the two poems is unclear. Like the moralized Rose, the Petit traictié (elsewhere titled Oeuvre de poetrie) is probably a late work, perhaps also from around 1500. It survives only in posthumous sources. See Dupire, Étude critique, 13, 35, 47, where the poem is listed by its incipit, “Voculant couvrir le fruict de mon labeur.”
leave off their singing and Orpheus stop playing his harp. Only the nightingale is instructed to continue because her cry (“ochy, ochy”) will slay (ocir) Phaeton’s enemies.46 After this music disappears for several folios while Phaeton details his grievances. Then in the lead-up to the words “proximi mei adversum me” (those near me [are] against me), Molinet once again links Fortune with music, using much of the same imagery that appears in the story of the minim:

Do you not see how Fortune, to terrify us, has shown us her dark face, and how those whom she made dance with her on a high note have turned their backs on us. But let the Gods decree, let the fates do what they will. He who sings in the high register and amuses himself with long pauses may well descant in the bass register and his times will diminish, not by long prolongations, but by a sudden transformation of B♭ into B♮. And then they will get what they deserve, those who have cast these clouds about me, so much so that for the moment proximi mei adversum me.47

The context is completely different, as is the source-text—a psalm as opposed to a thirteenth-century allegorical poem. And in accordance with the somber mood of the lament, Molinet’s allegorical personification is less cartoony: Fortune is still in attendance, but the one whom “she made dance with her on her high note” seems to be a person rather than a minim. Still, the resemblances are compelling, as is the deliberateness of the allusion. Once again Fortune is the cause of shifts from high to low, hexachordal mutation, augmentation, and diminution.

Thus a variety of factors coalesce to suggest that these accounts of Fortune’s musical actions might reward closer scrutiny. The level of Molinet’s musical training guarantees that he understands the meanings of the myriad terms he uses. Both passages stand out in his oeuvre, differing greatly in scope and specificity from his passing and rhetorical references to music elsewhere.48 Finally, the ways in which these episodes are not integrated into their texts must give us pause. Though the moralité to chapter 86 and the Petit traité both purport to be glosses of other texts, the musical passages seem to come out of left field in both cases.

46. Molinet, Les faictz & dictz de feu, 164r–v. On the nightingale’s “oci” see Leach, Sung Birds, 91.
47. “Ne voyez vous point comme Fortune pour nous espouventer nous a monstré sa brune face, et comme ceulx qu’elle faisait danser avec elle a sa haute note nous ont tourné le dos. Or laissez convenir les dieux, laissez faire les destinées. Tel y chante à la haute game et s’amuse a ses longues pauses, qui bien pourra deschanter en la basse nature, et diminueront ses temps non par longues prolongations: mais par soulaibaine muance de b mol en b dur. Et lors seront payez de leurs dessertes, ceulx qui m’ont brouillé ceste nuée, et qui ont tant fait que pour l’heure sont ‘proximi mei adversum me’ ”; Molinet, Les faictz & dictz de feu, 165v; ed. in idem, Faictz et dictz, 2:706–7. “En la basse nature,” is technically specific as an indication of register, but could also support the more metaphorical translation “in low style.”
But then, medieval literature is full of small stories that come out of left field—they are called “exempla.” In Quintilian’s definition, an exemplum is “the relation of a thing done or that might have been done, which is useful in the persuasion of that which you have claimed.”\(^49\) In the case of most medieval exempla, the claim is a moral one, and the tale—either of an event or of a famous person—is usually borrowed from classical, historical, or doctrinal sources. But exempla referring to contemporary events and people—what early fifteenth-century poet Alain Chartier called “exemples qui sont de fresche memoire”—gained popularity in the later Middle Ages.\(^50\) These newer stories were put on par with more time-worn tales by their formal contexts within texts.

The moralité to chapter 86, summarized above, includes several contemporary exempla. Improbably but virtuosically, the stories of Louis XII and Philippe de Clèves are made to support the truth of Nature’s claim that those who have been unwell may see their faces floating in the air. We may not believe this claim, but that is not the point. What we can certainly believe is that Molinet chose to tell the stories of his king and his patron because they would seem true or probable to his readers (Quintilian’s “a thing done or that might have been done”). An exemplum is convincing de facto.\(^51\)

The story of the minim in the chapter 86 moralité and the musical digression in the Petit traitié are both in the exemplary mode. They are in essence the same exemplum—a musical enactment of the instability of worldly affairs. Their moral (or “sententia”) is that we should not rise above our stations: “it would have served [the minim] better to know only its plainchant, or its simple counterpoint, than to endure such diminution” (36).\(^52\) Like the other exempla—stories about Mars and Venus, Pygmalion, or Philippe de Clèves—the minim’s journey does not grow out of the material which it is used to gloss, but exists independently of it. But Mars, Venus, and Pygmalion carry the weight of Ovid. The life story of Philippe de Clèves is a matter of public


\(^{51}\) Scanlon (*Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 35) notes that an exemplum expects readers to “put themselves in the position of its protagonists.” This process would have been uniquely complete when Philippe de Clèves, the commissioner of the moralized *Rose*, found himself reading of his own exemplary deeds in this moralité.

\(^{52}\) Exempla often end with a sententia that summarizes their main point. These punctuate Molinet’s moralité at regular intervals with their proverbial gravitas: “Trepidaverunt timore ubi non erat timor” (They have trembled for fear, where there was no fear), 7; “Chalcun doit son ennemy admirer” (One should appreciate one’s enemy), 11; “Medium tenuere beati” (The righteous should keep to the middle course), 19; “L’habit ne fait point le moyne” (The habit doesn’t make the monk), 24; “Dulcia non meruit qui non gustavit amara” (He has not deserved sweet things who has not tasted the bitter), 51.
record. As Larry Scanlon has argued, any exemplum is an enactment of auctoritas.\textsuperscript{53} Whose cultural authority does the tale of the diminishing and cast-down maxima enact? Did Fortune have an effect on some minim known to Molinet or his readers? In answering these questions I will move from Molinet’s writings to the musical environment in which he lived.

**Fortune, Song, and Mass**

The possibility that the goddess Fortune had a musical presence in the fifteenth century was first raised by Edward Lowinsky, who argued in 1943 that Josquin’s untexted three-voice *Fortuna dun gran tempo* requires some thirty-seven extra accidentals that allow it to modulate through six keys in a musical enactment of Fortune’s spinning wheel.\textsuperscript{54} This interpretation, according to which the song was “one of the first compositions to use all twelve tones of our chromatic system,” was so compelling that the study was reprinted by the *Musical Quarterly* in a 1991 retrospective “highlights” issue.\textsuperscript{55} Lowinsky’s editorial decisions were driven by a stated distaste for what he perceived as “unbearable cross-relations among the three voices.”\textsuperscript{56} Almost seventy years later, in the wake of much research on the question of musica ficta and a vastly greater availability of recordings of Josquin’s works, the cross-relations in *Fortuna dun gran tempo* sound idiomatic rather than harsh, and Lowinsky’s premises are harder to accept. His argument has also encountered resistance on technical grounds, most prominently from Jaap van Benthem, who noted in 1980 that fifteenth-century hexachordal theory does not support the chromatic interpretation.\textsuperscript{57}

Julie Cumming expanded the realm of inquiry to the song *Fortuna desperata* and its many settings, suggesting that other, nonmodulatory techniques might have been used to evoke the fickle goddess.\textsuperscript{58} Most recently, Honey Meconi has continued this discussion in the commentary to her edition of thirty-six *Fortuna desperata* settings.\textsuperscript{59} The upshot of all this is that while no one denies that Fortune or her actions could be at work in chansons, there is no agreement on whether such enactment would make itself known by means of musica ficta, changes in mode, pairing with other texts, astrological symbolism, or all or none of the above.

\textsuperscript{53} Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 34.
\textsuperscript{54} *New Josquin Edition*, vol. 27, no. 12, 18–19; Lowinsky, “Goddess Fortuna in Music.”
\textsuperscript{55} Lowinsky, “Goddess Fortuna in Music,” 58. Reprinted in *Musical Quarterly* 75 (1991): 81–107; Lowinsky’s was one of two early music articles included in the reprint volume.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{57} Benthem, “Fortuna in Focus.”
\textsuperscript{58} “Goddess Fortuna Revisited.”
\textsuperscript{59} *Fortuna desperata: Thirty-Six Settings of an Italian Song*. 
In bringing Molinet’s evidence to bear, it is not my intention to neaten the picture. The ways of expressing any given idea through music are as myriad as they are subjective, and this is not a problem. Indeed, Molinet’s musically charged discussions of Fortune are interesting insofar as they are subjective. Their quirkiness and deliberateness invite us to reconstruct the possible musical meanings that Fortune might have had, not “in the fifteenth century,” but for this particular musician. What repertories might Molinet have had in mind when he drifted inexplicably from mirrors, or from being surrounded by one’s enemies, to Fortune’s musical actions?

A clue to the possible genre involved lies in the musical procedures implicated: mensural manipulation and transposition. Fortune augments the minim until it is a maxima—the longest note in the system, having a value of up to 81 minims if it is perfect on all levels (Fig. 3a). But when the triumphantly augmented note sings Du Fay’s *Le serviteur*, Fortune realizes that it is not so big after all: in *Le serviteur*, a song in tempus perfectum (O), a maxima is equal to only 24 minims (Fig. 3b). And even that may be more than this maxima is worth, since its estate, as Fortune sees it, is “not at all perfect [tempus] major [prolation],” thus, imperfect on all levels (Fig. 3c). This disappointment begins the note’s journey back to its humble beginnings. The *Petit traictié* alludes to a similar change, warning that one who “s’amuse à ses longues pauses” (amuses himself with long rests, i.e., whiles away his hours) may soon find that his quality of life will degrade—literally, “his times will diminish” (diminueront ses temps).

In both texts, this temporal transformation is paired with a transpositional one. According to the *Petit traictié*, he who starts “in the high register” will “sing in the bass” before long. And in the moralized *Rose*, Fortune elevates La Minime by “ruled lines, degrees, and knuckles of the hand,” until it is “at the very top of the scale,” only to shove her back down again. The joints here are, of course, those of the Guidonian Hand, whose knuckles play host to the notes of the gamut. Thus the minim begins on a low note, goes up the highest note there is (presumably E-la a tenth above middle C), only to head down again to a low “re–ut” cadence. In the course of this journey, it is subject to hexachordal mutation when Fortune “brings it down from top to bottom by subtle changes, of which she knows the tricks.” This aspect of the minim’s fall is further reinforced by the citation of Ninot’s *Et la la la*, a song that begins with a scalar descent of an octave. Also connected with the Hand is Fortune’s last trick, most explicitly stated in the *Petit traictié*: to initiate a “sudden change of B♭ into B♮.” A certain amount of hexachordal mutation

60. That would assume perfection on the levels of prolation, tempus, modus, and maximus. The last was rare in practice, but still a theoretical possibility in the fifteenth century, and is discussed by Tinctoris in the *Liber imperfectionum notarum musicalium*; see Woodley, “At the Limits of Mensural Theory.”

61. As noted by Hewitt; see superius mm. 1–5 in Hewitt, *Canti B*, 166, and commentary on p. 58.
Figure 3a  Relationship of a maxima to a minim under major prolation and perfect tempus (Θ) with perfect modus minor and maior

Figure 3b  Relationship of a maxima to a minim in Du Fay’s Le serviteur (Θ: major tempus, minor prolation)

Figure 3c  Relationship of a maxima to a minim in minor tempus, minor prolation (C)
would be necessary for any minim moving though the gamut, but this
change—“sudden” in that it can startle a listener who expects B♭ but hears B♮,
or vice-versa—seems to allude to signed accidentals and *musica ficta* or *falsa*.

Molinet’s two accounts are not identical. Besides the different natures of
the characters subject to Fortune’s shenanigans—a minim representing a per-
son in one case, and presumably a person representing a note or a melody in
the other—there are differences in emphasis and in extent. The minim rises
before being cast down, while for the psalmist things only get worse. And the
latter seems to put more emphasis on the role of B♭ in tonal transformation,
while the moralized *Rose* is more focused on mensural effects, mentioning
prolation several times. But the similarities between the two passages far out-
weigh their differences, and both texts unquestionably refer to a common set
of musical techniques.

Transposition, augmentation, diminution, and hexachordal mutation:
these techniques can be found in any number of fifteenth-century musical
works and certainly do not identify any particular composition. But, signifi-
cantly, such musical manipulation is found much more frequently in masses
than in chansons.62 Chansons are too compact to allow for the kinds of vicissi-
tudes borne by the poor minim; we would not expect a chanson to have a
maxima in it.63 Moreover, as noted above, the idea of a note that retains its
identity but moves through different durations and pitches is evocative of
multimovement works based on preexisting material. Precisely the kinds of
transformations Molinet discusses—both mensural and transpositional—can
be found in polyphonic masses.

Late fifteenth-century mass *cantus firmi* are regularly subject to transposi-
tion, modal transformation, and temporal stretching and shrinking. In many
cases such transformations were effected “off the page” by the use of verbal
instructions (“canons”), which allowed the borrowed material to look the
same, but sound differently from one movement to the next. As a result suc-
cessive movements of a mass could see the same character (in both the narra-
tive and the graphical sense) sung quickly at one time, and slowly at another;
sound high in one instance, low the next.64 And if the minim’s journey seems
extreme, it is no more extreme than the most radical *cantus-firmus* manipula-

62. Motets occupy a middle ground between the two, though they do not usually involve
*cantus-firmus* manipulation as extreme as that described by Molinet.

63. The only one that does—the enigmatic *Guillaume se va chanter* sometimes attributed to
Josquin (*New Josquin Edition* 28:17)—creates a curious intertext with Molinet’s story, since its
“vox Regis” (according to Glareanus, a voice so simple that even the unmusical Louis XII could
sing it) consists of a maxima. Thus a note described as “high-status” by Molinet is imagined as
sung by a monarch. Fallows has argued for a date in the 1480s for this song, though its earliest
surviving source is dated 1510. See discussion in Fallows, *Josquin*, 87–90. I am grateful to Michael
Long for bringing this example to my attention.

64. The authoritative reference on *cantus-firmus* treatment in the fifteenth century remains
Sparks, *Cantus firmus in Mass and Motet*. 
What Fortune Can Do to a Minim

Rob Wegman has convincingly shown that singers performing the anonymous *Missa L’ardant desir* would in fact have been asked to turn minims into maximas and maximas into minims during the final Agnus Dei.65 There are also cases of *cantus-firmus* notes transposed by an octave or more, and of gradual or systematic transposition.66 Molinet’s description thus takes us to the heart of late medieval compositional practice, citing transformations that take place in a number of the fifteenth century’s best-known masses. But the similar narrative content of both of Molinet’s exempla suggests that a specific work or works may be behind their unusual imagery. I will suggest that in allowing the goddess Fortune to act as a musical catalyst, the passages from the moralized *Rose* and the *Petit traictié* may implicate the masses based on the popular song *Fortuna desperata* (Table 1).

---

Table 1  Masses and Mass Sections Based on *Fortuna desperata*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No. of Sources (MS/Print)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obrecht, <em>Missa Fortuna desperata</em></td>
<td>ca. 1488(^a)</td>
<td>6/3(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josquin, <em>Missa Fortuna desperata</em></td>
<td>ca. 1492–97(^c)</td>
<td>7/9(^d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac, <em>Sanctus [Fortuna desperata]</em></td>
<td>1490s</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?Periquin, <em>Missa Fortuna desperata</em></td>
<td>ca. 1500–1525</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous, <em>Misa de fortuna Disperata</em></td>
<td>before ca. 1525</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous, <em>Misan fortuna</em></td>
<td>before ca. 1550</td>
<td>1/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^a\) Barton Hudson has proposed that the *Fortuna desperata* and *Malheur me bat* masses were both composed during Obrecht’s trip to Ferrara in 1487–88; see “Two Ferrarese Masses by Jacob Obrecht.” This dating is generally accepted for *Fortuna desperata*, though Reinhard Strohm has questioned it in the case of *Malheur me bat*; see Strohm’s review of Jacob Obrecht, *Collected Works 7: Missa Malheur Me Bat; Missa Maria Zart*, 554. See also Wegman’s evaluation of the mass as one of Obrecht’s “most advanced,” *Born for the Muses*, 163, 283.

\(^b\) For full listings and descriptions of sources, see Jacob Obrecht, *New Obrecht Edition*, 4:xxvi–xxix. For the sigla, see Appendix B of this article, pp. 375–76.

\(^c\) The mass is copied in its earliest source, VatS 41, by Richard Sherr’s scribes B and F, in a fascicle he originally dated to ca. 1492–95 and more recently to the late fifteenth century; see Sherr, “The Papal Chapel ca. 1492–1513,” 223 and 225; and idem, *Papal Music Manuscripts in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries*, 148. More recently Jesse Rodin has dated the contributions of Scribe B to 1492–97: see notes to Table 2 in his “ ‘When in Rome. . . . ’ ” Cf. Bloxam, “Masses Based on Polyphonic Songs,” 168–72.


\(^e\) Four-voice mass attributed to “Perquin.” Kenneth Kreitner has questioned whether this could really be Pierrequin de Therache; see “Franco-Flemish Elements in Tarazona 2 and 3,” 2567–86.

---


66. In Josquin’s *Missa L’homme armé super voces musicales*, for example, the famous *cantus firmus* moves to a successively higher pitch in each movement. Transposition by more than an octave is rare; the Kyrie 1 of Josquin’s *Missa Fortuna desperata*, in which the song superius is transposed down by an 11th, is discussed below. The most extreme transposition of borrowed material in the fifteenth century would seem to be Japart’s *J’ay pris amours*, where the superius is transposed down a 12th to become the bassus. I am grateful to Bonnie Blackburn and Emily Zazulia for bringing the latter example to my attention.
The two anonymous masses and the one attributed to Periquin are probably too late for Molinet to have known them while moralizing the *Rose*; moreover all three are unica in non-French sources. Isaac’s setting, though labeled “Sanctus,” is probably not a movement from a *Fortuna* mass, but rather a song setting like at least three others composed by him. And although he does subject the paraphrased *Fortuna desperata* song tenor to mensural transformation and, briefly, transposition, these transformations are not particularly drastic. On the other hand, the two earliest surviving *Fortuna desperata* masses—those by Obrecht and Josquin—were widely disseminated and predate Molinet’s strange stories of a musical Fortune. Both involve large-scale transformations of the *cantus firmus* that are evocative in light of Molinet’s descriptions. Furthermore, these works seem to be related: as has been noted by several commentators, the *Osanna* of Obrecht’s Sanctus has musical material in common with Josquin’s final *Agnus Dei*. It is thus possible that these two masses would have functioned as a joint exemplum for Molinet.

**Obrecht’s Mediating Virtue**

If quirky *cantus-firmus* treatment is a likely attribute of the kind of composition that might have inspired Molinet, Obrecht’s *Missa Fortuna desperata* is an obvious candidate. While some movements of this mass leave the borrowed material untouched, the Gloria and Credo transform it almost beyond

---

67. The four-voice *Missa de fortuna disperata* is preserved anonymously in Bologna A38, a Bolognese source from ca. 1525. The four-voice anonymous Kyrie and Sanctus labeled *Missa fortuna desperata* survive anonymously in Herdringen 9821, a German source from ca. 1445–50. See Meconi, *Fortuna desperata*, xxxi–xxxii. A four-voice *Missa fortuna disperata* in Tarazona 3 is attributed to “Periquin,” whom Richard Freedman identified as Pierrequin de Therache in “Music, Musicians, and the House of Lorraine,” 155–64. Kenneth Kreitner has questioned this attribution, suggesting that the mass may be by Pierre de la Rue, who used “Pierrequin” as an alias; “Franco-Flemish Elements in Tarazona 2 and 3,” 2576–78.

68. The setting survives in Bologna Q17 along with other songs that are untexted or texted only with an incipit. See Staehelin, *Die Messen Heinrich Isaacs*, 1:47–48; see also Meconi, *Fortuna desperata*, 54–57. Reinhard Strohm suggests that the setting might be mislabeled “Sanctus” “as if it had been extracted from a mass” because Isaac’s masses were often mined for use in secular music making; Strohm and Kempson, “Isaac, Henricus.” See also the discussion in Meconi, *Fortuna desperata*, 172. Isaac’s other settings of the song include a three-voice version, which places the *Fortuna desperata* tenor in the discantus, another three-voice setting “in mi,” and a five-voice *Fortuna desperata/Sancte Petre*.

69. The song tenor is paraphrased in the “Sanctus” tenor throughout. Uniquely among the *Fortuna desperata* settings, the tune appears here in *tempus perfectum*; see Meconi, *Fortuna desperata*, xii. The setting is misidentified as canonic in Strohm and Kempson, “Isaac, Henricus.” In fact the tenor is in canon at the fifth with the superius only in mm. 1–13 (2–14 in the tenor) and 37–42 (38–43 in the tenor).

What Fortune Can Do to a Minim

recognition. Nothing in these movements will emerge as an exact musical analogue to the journey that Molinet describes for his minim, but some suggestive resonances do emerge. In Obrecht’s mass, Fortune acts as a force that can reverse the course of a note—not, in this case, through the manipulation of its pitch, but literally by retrograde. The mass also boasts an instance of an isolated note being stretched out to (by the look of it) an infinite length. Additionally, verbal canons in Obrecht’s Gloria and Credo help clarify the connection between Fortune and the concept of “virtus in medio”—a link lacking in Molinet’s moralité, though the goddess and the Aristotelian sententia both figure there. Obrecht’s mass can thus help explain some aspects of Molinet’s prose. And the reverse is true. When the mass movements are viewed through the lens provided by Molinet—a hermeneutics that allows individual notes to be raised, lowered, lengthened, and shortened by Fortune—an equally important and equally specific musical role for the goddess emerges. Acknowledging her centrality in Obrecht’s Gloria and Credo can also clarify the relationship between the two movements, which will in turn lead me to suggest small but potentially meaningful editorial emendations that may elucidate Obrecht’s original canonic notation.

Table 2 summarizes Obrecht’s cantus-firmus treatment. Several movements use the top voice of the song, in whole or in part. But most movements are based on the tenor of Fortuna desperata, given in Example 1 as Obrecht seems to have known it. In some movements (Kyrie II, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei I and III), it appears as written, or with only minor deviations. In the first Kyrie it is truncated to its first 20 notes, with additional rests inserted after note 6. In the Osanna it is transposed down an octave and placed in the bassus. But by far the most radical transformations occur in the Gloria and Credo. Here isolated pitches are repeated and reordered, several groups of rests are added, and retrograde is selectively applied.

Two kinds of notation survive for the tenor of the Gloria and Credo. The first uses verbal canons to effect changes that will be pertinent to the discussion below. The second is a longhand resolutio that represents the Gloria and

71. In focusing on cantus-firmus treatment my analysis necessarily excludes a number of other important aspects of the piece. For fuller analyses and evaluations, see Salop, “Masses of Jacob Obrecht,” 58–63; Wegman, Born for the Muses, 219–34; and Antonowytsch, “Renaissance-Tendenzen.”

72. This is still a relatively rare occurrence in the late 1480s. On some earlier masses that use multiple voices of a polyphonic song, see Burkholder, “Johannes Martini and the Imitation Mass,” 470–523. Note however that in no mass does Martini use any song voice other than the tenor in its entirety (482–83).

73. This reading of the tenor is identical to what seems to have been the original three-part version of Fortuna desperata in all details excepting a few brief flourishes (see the edition in Meconi, Fortuna desperata, 3–4). That this was Obrecht’s “unadulterated” version of the tune can be gleaned from the bassus of his Osanna, in which he transposes the material down an octave but leaves it otherwise unchanged. In all other movements he adds rests or small flourishes.

74. The numbers refer only to the melody as written in Ex. 1. Mensural notation allows for a flexibility in the number of notes it takes to notate a given line—a point to which I return below.
Credo tenor parts as they should be sung. Petrucci’s *Missa Obrecht* of 1503 gives both kinds of notation for each movement. This print’s version of the Gloria tenor is reproduced as Figure 4.75 The transformations the song tenor must undergo to become the Gloria and Credo tenor are easiest to see in the resolutiones, which I address first. I will then turn to the more cryptic canonic notation to see how these changes are effected.

The differences between the song tenor and its incarnation in the Gloria are marked in Figure 5, where line-breaks have been removed from Petrucci’s

75. On Petrucci’s printed resolutions, see Blackburn, “Canonic Conundrums.”
resolutio. To begin with, Obrecht has divided his cantus firmus into two parts: the first (labeled “section A” in the figure) consists of notes 1 through 35. The second (“section B”) encompasses notes 37 through 73, but with a slight modification: three extra breves of rest have been added after note 44. In the resolutio, section A is stated in retrograde, and section B in prime form. This scheme leaves out the F numbered 36 in Example 1. That note, stretched from a breve to a longa, is taken out of context and used for structural articulation: it sounds at the beginning of the movement, in the middle between sections A and B, and, in some sources (though not in Petrucci), at the end. In each case it is cordoned off from the notes of sections A and B by groups of rests alternately 10 and 12 breves in length, which also do not occur in the original song tenor. As the placement of Petrucci’s text incipits makes clear, this modified cantus firmus is sung twice, once for the Et in terra, and again for the Qui tollis. The Credo works similarly, but the sections switch places: after the first F longa and first set of rests, section B sounds in retrograde, followed by rests, the F longa, more rests, section A in prime form, more rests, and, in some sources, a final longa (Fig. 6).

The use of retrograde motion, the added rests, and the repetition of the F longa render the cantus firmus unrecognizable in the resolutiones, at least at a casual glance. The tenor of Fortuna desperata is much more easily spotted in the canonic notation, which survives in several of the mass’s sources, either in conjunction with a resolutio or on its own. The differences between the song tenor and Petrucci’s version of the Gloria (already reproduced above in the top half of Fig. 4) are marked by annotation in Figure 7. (The canonic

76. I use Obrecht 1503 for the sake of clarity and graphical economy only.
Figure 5. Annotated tenor resolutio for the Gloria of Obrecht’s Missa Fortuna desperata (Obrecht 1503, fol. 25v; line break digitally removed), Munich, Bavarian State Library, 4 Mus.pr. 160#beibl. 1; used with permission.

Figure 6. Annotated tenor resolutio for the Credo of Obrecht’s Missa Fortuna desperata (Obrecht 1503, fol. 25v; line break digitally removed), Munich, Bavarian State Library, 4 Mus.pr. 160#beibl. 1; used with permission.
Figure 7  Annotated canonic notation for the Gloria tenor of Obrecht’s *Missa Fortuna desperata* (Obrecht 1503, fol. 25r; line break digitally removed). Munich, Bavarian State Library, 4 Mus.pr. 160#Beibd. 1; used with permission.
notation for the Credo, not shown, is identical to that for the Gloria.) Despite the fifteenth-century tendency to maintain the graphical identity of quoted material, the Gloria’s canonic notation is not synonymous with the tenor of *Fortuna desperata.* The splicing of the song into two halves by a central F longa encased in rests is already present here, as are the three breves of added rest in section B.

Visually, this canonic notation is striking in its symmetry. Where in the *resolutions* 10- and 12-breve groups of rests alternate, here they are symmetrically arranged: 10-breve rests encase the F, and 12-breve rests sit on the outside. Furthermore, the isolation of the F serves as graphical commentary on the arc shape of the original song tenor, the internal phrases of which are higher in range than the outer ones. The addition of 3 breves of rest to the tenor’s second half achieves symmetry on another level: not only do these correspond to the three breves of rest that were already present in the song’s section A (between notes 20 and 21), but these rests make note 36 a temporal center, since the melodic sections A and B enclosed by long groups of rests are now each of 30 breves’ duration.

Why did Obrecht make these changes? It is possible that the presence of the *Fortuna desperata* tenor—and with it the person of the goddess—suggested that symmetry was in order. For Fortune is often discussed in symmetrical or chiastic terms (she raises the low and lowers the raised) and sometimes depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions. A fifteenth-century manuscript of Jean de Meun’s translation of Boethius’s *Consolatio* emphasizes this symmetry by posing her with perfectly balanced arms, a gesture that is in turn echoed by Regnavi (at three o’clock on the wheel in Fig. 8).78

I have argued that in some musical works of the fourteenth century, Fortune’s presence is marked by strongly articulated midpoints that fall between contrasting textures.79 The association of the central F with a marked midpoint could certainly be read as a continuation of this tradition. The canonic notation with its visual symmetry would perhaps serve as an analogue to the goddess’s split body, allowing its musical divisions to embody Fortune’s inconsistencies and discontinuities. But the tenor as sung and as represented by the *resolutio* may evoke the goddess even more neatly, since it is itself Janus-

77. Wegman (following Sparks, *Cantus firmus in Mass and Motet*) has called this approach “schematic” manipulation, arguing that “the notation of a melody was often seen as part of its identity” (“Petrus de Domarto’s *Missa Spiritus almus*,” 269–73; on Obrecht in particular, see 271–72). On the broader cultural context of the fifteenth-century penchant for such visual consistency see Zazulia, “Verbal Canons and Notational Complexity.” For a related discussion pertaining to an earlier repertory, see Margaret Bent on “homographism” in “What is Isorhythm?,” 122–23, 138–39.

78. On Fortuna and her medieval iconography see, most recently, the essays in *Nottingham French Studies* 38 (1999); and Foehr-Janssens and Métry, *La Fortune.*

79. Zayaruznaya, “‘She Has a Wheel That Turns. . . .'”
faced: it shows us the *Fortuna desperata* song with its first section looking backwards, and its second forwards (Figs. 5–6).

Verbal instructions help turn one kind of symmetry into the other. Since the canonic notation (Fig. 7) preserves the note order of the original song tenor, the extra Fs are not depicted, and the sections that will be sung in retrograde are stated in prime form. To effect these changes, two verbal canons are used. One is “cancriza,” the imperative of “to crab.” Crabs were believed to walk backwards, and reference to them was one way of prescribing retrograde; Credo and Agnus Dei settings of the fifteenth century, especially those of the *L’homme armé* tradition, are populated by such crustacean canons. However, this instruction alone does not make it clear where the “cancriza” section should begin or end. Nor does it account for the repeated Fs. Thus more directions are needed—ones whose meaning in the Gloria would have to be, roughly:
1. Sing the first section of the *cantus firmus* backwards beginning with the F longa
2. Return to the F longa and sing through until the end
3. Sing the F longa (Fig. 9a)

And in the Credo:

1. Sing the F longa
2. Sing from the end of the notated material back through the F longa
3. Sing the first section of the *cantus firmus* until the F longa (Fig. 9b)

But no instructions akin to these are present. The only indication that something besides retrograde must be done to the notated melody is the phrase “in medio consistit virtus” (virtue is found in the middle), written under the central F.80

This is the same “virtus in medio” from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* that we saw in Molinet’s *moralité*.81 In that context the phrase had an obvious referent: the neutral mirror stands between one that shrinks and one that magnifies. As such, it represents the mean between two extremes that can lead to virtue. Obrecht’s invocation of “virtus in medio,” on the other hand, is decidedly mysterious.

Granted, the musical import of verbal canons is not always clear, especially when they are borrowed from classical or scholastic literature. For example, there is no obvious way in which one might apply “a maiori debet fieri denominatio” (“the name should be taken from the greater part,” an Aristotelian rule for synecdoche) to the Credo of Obrecht’s *Missa De tous biens plaine*.82 But once we know that the phrase is meant to reorder the *cantus firmus* so that its longest notes are sung first, followed by progressively shorter ones, at least the reference to “the greater part” makes sense.

Not so in the Gloria and Credo of the *Missa Fortuna desperata*. Even in retrospect, when we know what changes the canon “in medio consistit virtus” has to effect, the presence of virtue in the middle of things does not seem to solve any problems. It hardly instructs the singer to sing the central (virtuous?) F, then the first 35 notes of the song (in retrograde), then the F again, and so forth. Nor does it suggest that any change need be made between the Gloria and Credo. Even within the often cryptic world of canons, this moral maxim is hard to interpret. Obviously the F is *in medio*, but one could probably divine that without the label, and canons don’t usually state the obvious. Just what kind of an instruction to a singer is “virtue stands in the middle”? And if the

80. Todd has identified the canon for this movement as “cancrizat in medio consistit virtus” (“Retrograde, Inversion, Retrograde-Inversion,” 61), but spacing and printers’ errors make it clear that “cancrizat” acts separately from the rest.


82. Ibid., 163.
phrase itself is not sufficient in explaining the tenor, is there any wider context to which it refers that can shed light on the curious construction of these movements?

Aristotle goes to some pains to explain the concept of the middle in numerical as well as moral terms: “for instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate . . . for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount.”

This center clearly sits on a number line. But a related tradition locates virtue or divine goodness not as the central point on a line between two extremes, but at the center of a circle or wheel. The sources for this are myriad. Ezekiel’s vision of a wheel within a wheel is echoed by medieval cosmologies, which consist of series of circles turning around the same center. The midpoint of such constructions, which remains still even as the circles turn, was an apt metaphor for God, the Aristotelian “unmoved mover.” These two definitions of center—the arithmetic and geometric—meet in circular diagrams whose axes chart extremes, a category that includes Fortune’s wheel. The synthesis of the wheel and the “virtus in medio” concept is eloquently summed up by Boethius in a stunningly visual passage from the *Consolatio*.

When the narrator asks Philosophy about the relationship between Fortune and divine Providence, she describes a diagram of the moral cosmos:

84. Ezek. 1 and 10.
85. This is especially true in the case of heliocentric cosmologies. On late-medieval views on God’s immobility and their relation to conceptions of place, see Duhem, *Medieval Cosmology*, 257–68.
86. Madeline Caviness has pointed to the common syntax shared by diagrams that “present, by graphic means, the Janus-faces of good and evil” and the “Christocentric” rotae first seen on Irish and Frankish burial brooches; “Images of Divine Order,” 103. For example, see the diagram that places life and death at the top and bottom of a circle in her fig. 9 (p. 102).
Of all the circles that turn about the same center point, the one which is inner-
most approaches the simplicity of the middle, and for all of the other circles
that lie outside of it it exists as a kind of center point about which they turn. . . .
If something could bind itself and join itself to that center, it would be forced
into simplicity and would cease to be dispersed and to dissipate itself. . . . A
thing is free from Fate to the extent that it seeks to gain ever more closely that
center point of things. And should it cling to the stability of the mind that is
above it, then, free from motion, it transcends the necessity of Fate as well.
Therefore: As is the relation of rational argument to knowledge; of that which
comes into being to that which is; of time to eternity; of the circle to its center
point—such is the relation of the moving sequence of Fate to the unchanging
simplicity of Providence.88

The relationships described by Philosophy are evocative in the context of
Obrecht’s mass. Most obviously, the location of Providence at the “punctum
medium circulus” is consistent with the placement of the canon “in medio
consistit virtus” on the central note of the Fortuna desperata song tenor.89 But
also worth noting is the emphasis on the stillness and eternity of this central
point. Such imagery may be at the heart of Obrecht’s decision to surround
the central F with lengthy rests. And while these evoke the stability and sim-
plicity of virtue, its eternity is suggested by the fermata that sits above the F in
its canonic notation.90 That we must read this sign in some extramusical way is
guaranteed by the impossibility of performing it as notated: the fermata can-
not be observed in the beginning or middle of each section, and is not neces-
sary for a final longa. The sign is therefore omitted in all of the resolutiones.
But in the canonic notation, a longa with a fermata surrounded by rests on
either side creates exactly the kind of still point that Lady Philosophy seems to
be describing.91 A note of indefinite (infinite?) length surrounded by silence
eloquently evokes stability and eternity.

88. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, 115.
89. There seem to be efforts on the part of printers and scribes alike to pair the note and the
concept, and in most cases it is clear that “in medio consistit virtus” belongs to the F specifically
rather than to the movement as a whole.
90. The fermata is included in the canonic notation in SegC s.s., Obrecht 1503, and
Obrecht [ca. 1510], but omitted in BerS 40021.
91. In the full polyphonic context of the mass, each of the four passages around this central F
responds differently to the absence of the cantus firmus. In the Gloria, Obrecht added long notes
in the altus voice when the tenor is not singing, with the effect of reduction to three voices at
m. 43, then two at m. 52 before the F at mm. 55–56, after which the altus again sings long notes.
The second passage of rests in the Gloria, beginning at m. 152, takes advantage of the absence of
the cantus firmus with a metrical shift at m. 154, then proceeds with a striking homorhythmic se-
quence on the words “tu solus Dominus” in the three remaining voices. In the Credo, both pas-
sages of rests accommodate increased rhythmic motion from the other three voices (mm. 45–68
and 154–77). Here, in the absence of breves as well as longs, the central “F” sticks out of the tex-
ture more than it did in the Gloria. Whether any of these passages can be said to evoke stillness is
debatable. The tenor’s symbolism is most striking in its canonic notation as seen on the page.
Thus the concept of God, Providence, or virtue as the point at the center of Fortune’s wheel stands to give useful insight into the cantus-firmus design of Obrecht’s Gloria and Credo. But the idea that this point sits at the center of a spinning wheel is even more potent when the Gloria and Credo are considered in tandem. For if the canonic notation of both movements is the same (a point to which I return below), their tenor voices as sung are not. The long groups of rests are in a different order, the Credo begins with section B and the Gloria with section A, and retrograde is applied in each case to the first-sounding section. These differences are not random. As sung, the Credo is a mirror image of the Gloria, which uses the F as an axis of reflection: what was retrograde in the one is prime form in the other; what began the former ends the latter. In other words, the tenor of the Gloria rotates around its central F to yield the tenor of the Credo (Fig. 10).

A structure that rotates the notes of a famous song about Fortune around its own center readily evokes the idea of a spinning wheel. Sections A and B of the tune, subject to interruption and reversal, illustrate the vicissitudes to which those on the outer reaches of the wheel are subject. Meanwhile, the unmoving central F, capped with a fermata and surrounded by rests, brings to mind the “still point” in the middle of Philosophy’s diagram: “it transcends the necessity of Fate.”

Molinet’s exempla can help us understand the importance of Fortune to Obrecht’s compositional design and to appreciate the fusion of Aristotelian and Boethian views of the goddess in the Gloria and Credo. But Fortune’s ability to affect specific notes is not exclusively allegorical. A full appreciation of the goddess’s centrality allows for three small but pertinent observations that can help fine-tune our own resolutiones and lead to a more complete understanding of the tenor’s canonic notation as it might originally have been written. The first of these concerns the final note of each section.

There is a point of discrepancy between Figures 5 and 6, which give Petrucci’s resolutiones for the Gloria and Credo, and the scheme of radial symmetry suggested by Figure 10. Where the latter has each section of both movements begin and end with an f longa, in the former that note is present only at the beginning.92 In fact the sources for Obrecht’s mass disagree as to whether there should be a final note in the tenor of these movements, and what that note should be. Related to this is an inconsistency in the number of rests notated at the end of each section. Table 3 summarizes the number of notated final rests and the pitch of the final longa, where there is one, in each of the five sources that transmit these movements.

SegC s.s. is the only source in which the question of a final pitch is allowed to affect the canonic notation: a final c’ longa is added at the end of the Gloria.

92. I use Helmholtz pitch notation to refer to specific tenor pitches lying within an octave of middle C (c–b, c’–b’) and capital letters to refer to pitch classes.
In the other sources, *resolutiones* present a variety of options. Sometimes the tenor ends with rests—a variant adopted by Hudson for his edition of the mass. In the Credo, where the strict scheme of interpreting the canonic notation would only leave ten breves of rest at the end, this means adding two extra breves of rest not prescribed by the canonic notation (see the readings marked † in Table 3). In the *resolutio* of Petrucci 1503, the Gloria tenor seems to end with rests, but the deficit is not made up, with the result that the tenor part is shorter than the other voices (marked * in Table 3). This error and the discrepancy between the number of rests given in the canonic notation and the number needed for a correct *resolutio* make the idea of a tenor that ends in silence unsatisfying.

Instead we can probably trust the majority of *resolutiones*, which place a longa at the end. The pitch of this note is sometimes c, sometimes f. Nor are the sources internally consistent: ModE M.1.2 has an f for both halves of the Gloria, rests for the “Patrem,” and a c at the conclusion of “Et incarnatus.” But no source transmits an f’—the pitch that seems to be the most obvious one when the symmetry of movements is taken into account. I have used this f’ to argue for that symmetry, and I here risk circular argument (to a circular

93. That is, the groups of rests, in order, would be 12 breves, 10 breves, 12 breves, 12 breves, as in Fig. 6 above. The canonic notation, however, includes only two groups of rests 12 breves in length, not three.

94. Hudson resolves this circumstance by the insertion of an extra rest—one that should probably be bracketed since it is found in no source: see measures 109 and 218 in both the Gloria and Credo; Obrecht, *New Obrecht Edition*, 4:59, 63, 67, 71.
### Table 3  Notated Final Rests and Longs in the Gloria and Credo Tenors of Obrecht’s *Missa Fortuna desperata*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Canonic Notation</th>
<th>Resolutio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gloria</strong></td>
<td>BerlS 40021</td>
<td>12 breve rests; no final longa</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SegC s.s</td>
<td>12 breve rests + c' final longa</td>
<td>12 breve rests + c' final longa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obrecht 1503</td>
<td>12 breve rests; no final longa</td>
<td><em>12 breve rests; no final longa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ModE M.1.2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>12 breve rests + f final longa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obrecht [ca. 1510]</td>
<td>12 breve rests; no final longa</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credo</strong></td>
<td>BerlS 40021</td>
<td>10 breve rests; no final longa</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SegC s.s</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obrecht 1503</td>
<td>10 breve rests; no final longa</td>
<td>†12 breve rests; no final longa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ModE M.1.2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>†12 breve rests; no final longa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | Patrem omnipotentem: |
| | | +12 breve rests; no final longa |
| | | Et incarnatus: |
| | | 10 breve rests; c' final longa |

---

**Note** that the end of each section of the Credo falls in the middle of the canonic notation, directly before the central F.

---

**Key:**
- * Tenor part ends before other voices
- † Tenor *resolutio* includes extra rests not prescribed by the canonic notation

---

* Provenance: "What Fortune Can Do to a Minim"
Still, the invocation of “medio” in the canon, the insertion of rests into section B, and the symmetry of all elements other than the final longa are incontrovertible, and I would suggest that none of the extant sources transmits the correct reading. It seems all but certain that there would have been a final longa in the Gloria and Credo tenors, and quite likely that the pitch of this final longa would have matched that of the central f\textsuperscript{95}.

The centrality of this note is also the theme of my second observation. Regardless of whether, and what, the tenor sings at the end of each movement, the note paired with “virtus” is medial in a temporal sense.\textsuperscript{96} And yet the complaint has been voiced that graphical symmetry is lacking still. Arnold Salop noted that although “in medio” seems to refer to the middle note of the chanson tenor, the F with the fermata is actually a few notes off-center. He saw this “problem of numbering” as characteristic of the era (“a time when Petrucci could entitle a publication of ninety-six chansons \textit{Odhecaton}”), and suggested that “the instructions may have been intended to call for the singers to start somewhere in the vicinity of the middle, rather than precisely on the middle note.”\textsuperscript{97} Strictly speaking, this kind of justification is unnecessary, since temporal symmetry may well preclude notational symmetry. And yet, some details of mass’s transmission suggest that Obrecht, too, may have noticed that his use of the F as a center made the second part of the chanson tenor visually longer than the first. Table 4 summarizes the number of notated symbols in sections A and B of the song as they appear in the surviving sources for the Gloria and Credo. The range of symbols used—anywhere from 32 to 38 for section A—is a function less of melodic variants than of the interchangeability, in this untexted voice, of dotted notes with their two-note equivalents (\(\text{Q N}\) for \(\text{Q} \cdot\) and \(\text{BS}\) for \(\text{B} \cdot\)).

In three of the sources examined, there is a close but not exact correspondence between first and second half, and the F indeed finds itself “somewhere in the vicinity of the middle.” By contrast, ModE M.1.2 has matching numbers of notes on either side of the F in both sections of both movements: 37 in each half of the Gloria and 38 in each half of the Credo. The canonic notation for the Et incarnatus in Obrecht [ca. 1510] also features two balanced sections with 37 notes each.

This is unlikely to be a coincidence. Section A of the song is usually notated with fewer symbols than section B, and it takes a sleight of hand to right the

\textsuperscript{95} Musical considerations do not help us in this case since the pitch of the central F is already present at the cadences concerned. The objection that the C is needed to make the fifth cannot be sustained when the other movements are considered: although most of the four-voice movements (Kyrie I and II, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei I and III) end with three Fs and a C, the four-voice Osanna ends with Fs in all voices. In the three-voice sections all voices end on F.

\textsuperscript{96} It is centered within both halves of the Gloria and Credo, with 54 breves preceding its entry and 54 more following it (counting the final longa as two breves; thus: 2 breves (longa) + 10 breve-rests + 30 breves for section A or B + 12 breve-rests = 54 breves).

\textsuperscript{97} Salop, “Masses of Jacob Obrecht,” 60.
imbalance. In both sections of the Gloria as transmitted in ModE M.1.2, section A is written entirely without dotted notes, thereby increasing the number of symbols. Figure 11a shows the Et in terra tenor as transmitted in that source. Arrows indicate places where one or more of the other sources has a dotted value. This makes up for the difference in notes in the Gloria, allowing both halves to have 37. In the Credo there are 38 notes on each side—an equality achieved by exactly one further subdivision of notes on each side: a dotted semibreve is renotated as \( \text{B S} \) in the retrograde section B (compare boxed areas in Figs. 11b–c), while in the Credo’s section A what was a long in the Gloria is split into two breves (boxed with dashed lines in Figs. 11a and 11d). The latter change seems particularly gratuitous since that same long is dotted in some sources and thus joined to its adjacent breve (as indicated by the second arrow in Figure 11a). What takes one note in Petrucci needs three here.

These changes are unlikely to have originated with the scribe, and they make little sense in the context of ModE M.1.2. Not only does this source lack a canonic notation for either movement (which means that the phrase “in medio consistit virtus” is nowhere present on its pages), but the splitting of each section over two openings removes even the possibility of visual symmetry. Thus the equal note-counts must flow from a canonic notation that encoded them. As Barton Hudson has observed, ModE M.1.2’s resolutio seems

---

Table 4 Number of Notes Used to Write cantus-firmus Sections A and B in the Gloria and Credo Tenors of Obrecht’s Missa Fortuna desperata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Canonic notation</th>
<th>Resolutio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Section A</td>
<td>Section B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BerlS 40021</td>
<td>Et in terra, Qui</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tollis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrem, Et</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incarnatus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SegC s.s</td>
<td>Et in terra</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qui tollis</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrem, Et</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incarnatus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obrecht 1503</td>
<td>Et in terra, Qui</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tollis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrem, Et</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incarnatus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obrecht [ca.</td>
<td>Et in terra, Qui</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1510]</td>
<td>tollis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrem</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Et incarnatus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ModE M.1.2</td>
<td>Et in terra, Qui</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tollis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrem, Et</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>incarnatus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Counts do not include initial or final F longs.
b Shading indicates that the same number of notes is used to notate section A and section B of the tenor.

---

98. If these passages are copied from a canonic exemplum meant to be read backwards as well as forwards, this renotation may be preferable because dotted semibreves in minor prolation are usually followed rather than preceded by the minims with which they make up a breve. But if that is the case, it is unclear why the second dotted semibreve in Fig. 11b is not affected.
Figure 11. Excerpts from the Gloria and Credo of Obrecht's Missa Fortuna desperata in ModE M.1.2, folios 99v, 100v, 103v, and 104v. Pairs of notes marked with arrows in (a) are written as one dotted note in at least one other source. On boxed notes see discussion in the text. Reproduced with the permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.
to have been copied from canonic notation similar to that preserved in Obrecht [ca. 1510]. Though the note-counts between the two sources do not match up exactly, this source uses more symbols than strictly necessary for section A and includes the telltale splitting of a dotted longa into three breves (starred in Figure 12, which reproduces this source’s canonic notation for the Patrem).99

A combined consideration of the extramusical dimensions added by Fortune’s associations with symmetry and orthographic details in ModE M.1.2 and Obrecht [ca. 1510] can point towards a reconstruction of the original canonic notation, which probably had 38 notational symbols on either side of the central F, for a total of 77 symbols. This notation seems to have avoided dotted values in all cases or in all but one. To be sure there are other explanations for this than a need for symmetry: for example, a lack of dotted values would ease the singing of a melody in retrograde, since for the singer scanning from right to left and attempting to create a mental mirror image, dots of augmentation are on the “wrong” side and can seem to belong to the wrong note. The metrical awkwardness associated with retrograde melody would further confuse things by placing dotted values in unfamiliar rhythmic contexts. But this does not explain the curious splitting of the final note in section A into three. That renotation would take place only if the aim were symmetry of notational symbols as well as of length.

The presence of Fortune—not just as a tune, but as an idea—in Obrecht’s Missa Fortuna desperata can help solve at least one other mystery: the canonic notation for the Credo. It is clear from the sources that transmit it that the

99. Obrecht [ca. 1510] does not split the dotted semibreve from section B that is boxed in Fig. 11c, but this could have been omitted due to spacing considerations. The scribe of ModE m.1.2 clearly had more space; it seems likely that this variant was a part of Obrecht’s canon (see the ossia notes in Fig. 12).
order of notes and rests in the Gloria notation is preserved in the Credo. The phrase “in medio consistit virtus” is also preserved. And indeed, as Hudson notes, “in each of the sources with canonic notation the Credo is confused by the placement of ‘cancrisa’ under the first section (as in the Gloria) or, in Obrecht 1503, by its complete omission.” In other words, the canonic notation for the Credo seems to be exactly the same as that for the Gloria. How can this be, when the movements are obviously different? Hudson implies that “cancrizat” would be better placed under section B for the Credo. But although this would ensure that the correct part of the melody is sung backwards, it would not produce the right result, since section A is still notated first. In other words, placing “cancrizat” under section B would result in

\[
F \mid \text{section A} \mid F \mid B \mid \text{not res} \mid F,
\]

while the desired order is

\[
F \mid B \mid \text{not res} \mid F \mid \text{section A} \mid F.
\]

There does not seem to be a simple way to effect the latter while still allowing the cantus firmus to retain the original note order of the chanson tenor in the canonic notation. Only an explicit verbal instruction would get the job done.

The idea that the central F stands in the middle of a wheel can help solve this riddle. I have suggested that a symmetry exists between the two movements, in that the Credo can be derived by pivoting the Gloria around its central F. In that sense, the instruction “cancrizat” might have a different function in the Credo than it does in the Gloria. In the Gloria, it indicates that section A should be sung backwards. In the Credo, it perhaps indicates that the Gloria should be sung backwards. Or perhaps it retains its original meaning with regard to section A, while the instruction about the center dictates the relationship between the two movements. This is certainly not straightforward: the composer could easily have been more explicit (and perhaps he was, but the instructions do not survive). Nevertheless, it is possible that the entire Gloria–Credo pair could conceivably, if whimsically, be derived from the same canonic notation.

But what of minims, and what of Molinet? What of notes raised up, stretched out, and cast down? There are a few connections between Obrecht’s Gloria and Credo and Molinet’s moralité. The most surprising link is the presence in both of references to the “virtus in medio” concept, which is central to Obrecht’s mass and occurs in Molinet’s prose shortly before the musical story. We could even imagine Molinet remembering this mass as he wrote about the mirror that represents the middle course. And there is an instance of a note being stretched in the mass. But these connections—particularly the latter—are not very compelling. It is clear that Molinet’s and Obrecht’s ideas about Fortune’s musical role are different and idiosyncratic. If Molinet were indeed thinking only of Obrecht’s mass as he wrote, his description of Fortune’s actions would probably have been quite different.
Josquin’s Fortune: Extreme Augmentation and Inversion as Retrograde

Josquin seems to have known Obrecht’s *Missa Fortuna desperata*, but the links between the two masses appear on the “surface,” in the shared use of a cadential ostinato and a short polyphonic complex. Where *cantus-firmus* treatment is concerned, Josquin’s approach differs from Obrecht’s—a fact significant to the present inquiry since Molinet’s stories feature a musical object that is manipulated. Indeed it is clear from even a cursory glance that Josquin’s *Fortuna desperata* mass does not depict Fortune in the same ways as Obrecht’s. There are no large-scale symmetrical structures here, no emphasis on any one note of the borrowed song, and no added rests. Nor does the *cantus-firmus* treatment in Josquin’s Gloria and Credo movements evoke the goddess or her actions in any obvious way. But a broader look at the placement of the song material over the course of the mass shows that Josquin does indeed raise and lower the pitch of his borrowed material in ways evoked by Molinet. His first Agnus Dei especially involves notes falling from a great height even as they are stretched out—to four times their original length—by an enigmatic canon that seems to anthropomorphize them. And Josquin’s mass contains examples of “sudden” shifts between $B^\flat$ and $B^\natural$, a trait Molinet connects with Fortune in his *Petit traitié*. I will suggest that an extension, not of Molinet’s actual exemplum, but of the hermeneutics that it presupposes, to Josquin’s first Agnus Dei yields another interesting insight. It shows how the notes of the bassus—like characters on Fortune’s wheel—are subject to rotation and prone to dangle upside down.

Where Obrecht uses mostly the tenor of *Fortuna desperata* in his mass, turning to the discantus only twice, Josquin employs all three voices of the song. For present purposes this is inconvenient in that it precludes the kind of direct comparison between the two masses that might show whether any of Josquin’s decisions about *cantus-firmus* placement in the *Missa Fortuna desperata* could have been programmatically minded. But a different kind of comparison is possible. Josquin’s *Fortuna* mass is closely related to his own later *Missa Malheur me bat*. Together the two are the only securely attributed masses in which Josquin quotes more than one complete voice of a chanson. Moreover, in both works Josquin tends to place each song voice in the corresponding one in the mass: the mass superius sings the song’s cantus, the mass tenor sings the song’s tenor, and the mass’s altus, the song’s contratenor.

101. As noted above, Josquin’s second (and final) Agnus Dei seems to quote the opening passage of Obrecht’s Osanna. Additionally, a cadential ostinato is shared between Obrecht’s first Agnus and Josquin’s Sanctus. See Pfisterer, “Zum Verhältnis der Fortuna-Messen,” 267–73; and Fallows, *Josquin*, 161–69.

102. Josquin’s *Missa Fortuna desperata* seems to have been copied into VatS 41 in the mid-1490s; the earliest sources for *Malheur me bat* are BrusBR 9126 (ca. 1504) and Josquin 1505. On the *Missa Fortuna desperata* as a formal model for the *Missa Malheur me bat*, see Fallows, *Josquin*, 263–64.
Because of these ties, *Malheur me bat* can act as something of a control, showing Josquin’s general approach to this kind of model when Fortune is not looking.

As Table 5 shows, the two masses have corresponding *cantus-firmus* placement in most movements, but their plans diverge at the Agnus Dei I. While *Malheur me bat* continues as before, placing the chanson tenor in the mass tenor, the *Fortuna* mass breaks the pattern: in the Agnus Dei I the superius of the chanson is transposed down an eleventh and sung by the bassus. This represents a significant departure from the rest of this setting and from the pattern in *Missa Malheur me bat*. Instead of sounding in the mass superius as is its due, the highest voice of the chanson suddenly finds itself at the very bottom of things. This descent is all the more stark since the Sanctus saw the *cantus firmus* (in that case the song’s contratenor) transposed up a fifth. Thus the tune—in its various manifestations—goes from being up a fifth to down an eleventh; it “falls” a fifteenth (Table 6).\(^3\) The placement of the song’s discantus in the bassus is also remarkable when this movement is compared with the corresponding one in Obrecht’s setting. In Obrecht’s Agnus Dei I the song’s discantus makes its most prominent appearance, being placed in the superius (Table 2). Not only with reference to the patterns set up by its own earlier movements (and reiterated by the *Missa Malheur me bat*), then, but also relative to Obrecht’s *Fortuna* mass, Josquin’s *cantus firmus* falls from a great height before his Agnus Dei I.

If the extent and suddenness of this descent are worthy of Molinet’s minim, its mensural vicissitudes can also be accounted for. Over the course of Josquin’s mass, the voices of *Fortuna desperata* are stated not only at *inte-

---

Table 5  *Cantus-firmus* Placement in Two Masses by Josquin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fortuna desperata</th>
<th>Malheur me bat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie</td>
<td>T → T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>T → T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credo</td>
<td>T → T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctus</td>
<td>CT → A(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei I</td>
<td>S → B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei II</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Agnus Dei</td>
<td>T → B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) In the two-voice *In nomine* of the *Missa Malheur me bat*, the song contratenor is sung by the mass superius, but all fully voiced sections of the Sanctus in both masses use the CT → A system.

---

103. Nor do things look up after that. The cantus firmus stays in the bassus for the second (and, in this mass, final) Agnus Dei, where the tenor of the chanson is plunged an octave “downwards” by the verbal canon “deorsum,” resulting in the lowest material of the mass.
ger valor, but also at double speed and in double and quadruple augmentation (Table 6). The last occurs in that very same Agnus Dei I that places the song superius in its bassus. There is no comparable stretching or shrinking of notes in the Missa Malheur me bat. In fact, the Agnus Dei I of the Missa Fortuna desperata constitutes one of only two instances of quadruple augmentation in Josquin’s securely attributed works.¹⁰⁴

Though resolutions in some of the mass’s sources allow us to see these long notes as sung, the succinct canonic notation for the movement effects their stretching-out by the verbal canon “crescite et multiplicamini” (Fig. 13). Like Obrecht’s “in medio consistit virtus,” this canon is a quotation, in this case of the famous directive “grow and multiply” that appears twice in Genesis.¹⁰⁵ Josquin’s choice of “crescite et multiplicamini” is less ambiguous than Obrecht’s “in medio”: “grow” and “multiply” seem to act as verbal multipliers, yielding a sort of “2x2=4.” But the instruction is still curious from a grammatical standpoint. Since the function of a canon is to give instructions to a singer, most canons, even unusual ones, address the performer in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Song voice</th>
<th>Placement in Mass</th>
<th>Mensural transformation¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie</td>
<td>tenor</td>
<td>at pitch in tenor</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christe</td>
<td>tenor</td>
<td>at pitch in tenor</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrie II</td>
<td>tenor</td>
<td>at pitch in tenor</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et in terra</td>
<td>tenor</td>
<td>at pitch in tenor</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cum sancto</td>
<td>tenor</td>
<td>at pitch in tenor</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrem omnipotentem</td>
<td>cantus</td>
<td>at pitch in superius</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et incarnatus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et in spiritum</td>
<td>cantus</td>
<td>at pitch in superius</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. 226 (“Confiteor”)</td>
<td>cantus</td>
<td>at pitch in superius</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctus</td>
<td>contratenor</td>
<td>75th in altus</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osanna</td>
<td>contratenor</td>
<td>75th in altus</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei I</td>
<td>cantus</td>
<td>11th in bassus</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei II</td>
<td>tenor</td>
<td>octave in bassus</td>
<td>$\Phi = \Phi$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ [notated length in cantus firmus] = [notated length in other voices]. In addition to the augmentation and diminution shown in the table, in Kyrie I and II the cantus firmus (originally in $\Phi$ is performed under $\Phi$ and $\Phi$).

104. The other is the motet Stabat mater/Comme femme desconsolée, in which Binchois’s song is written out in quadruple note values (New Josquin Edition, vol. 25, ed. Willem Elders, 36–48). A 4:1 relationship between the cantus firmus and other voices can also be observed in the Christe and Agnus Dei III of the Missa L’homme armé super voces musicales (Werken van Josquin des Prés, 9:109–10, 127–30), but this is the result of simultaneous augmentation and diminution in different voices rather than the quadruplicating of values in one voice.

105. God says the phrase first to Adam and Eve and then to Noah and his sons: see Gen. 1:28 and 9:1.
imperative or describe the transformation that should occur adjectivally or
adverbially; “clama ne cesses,” “verte cito,” “reverte citius,” and so forth.106
There are also instances of short, descriptive phrases such as “fuga ad mini-
mam” and “deorsum” (downwards).107 Even longer canons and quotations
still tend to fit into these categories, as when “duo seraphim clamabant alter ad
alterum” (two seraphim cried out, the one to the other) instructs two differ-
ent combinations of voices to alternate in singing.108 “Crescite et multipli-
camini” stands aside from these descriptive phrases because “crescere” and
“multiplicare” are both intransitive verbs. In other words, the canon speaks
not—as usually—to the singer, but rather to the notes, telling them to grow
and multiply. In this anthropomorphizing of musical symbols one could per-
haps hear another echo of the minim’s journey.

Another curious connection can be adduced between the mass and the
minim. In both of his musical exempla, Molinet makes reference to Fortune’s
tonal tricks. “Subtiles muances” mentioned in passing in the moralité
are made explicit in the Petit traictié, where she unseats the once-mighty by
“a sudden transformation of B♭ into B♮” (par soudaine muance de b mol en

106. “Cry without ceasing,” “turn [around] quickly,” and “turn [around] again more
quickly” from Josquin’s Missa L’homme armé super voces musicales; these canons prescribe the
skipping of all rests, retrograde with 2:1 (rather than 4:1) augmentation, and forward motion
without augmentation, respectively. See Sherr, “The Performance of Josquin’s L’homme armé
Masses,” 264; and Rodin, Josquin’s Rome.

107. In the Missa L’homme armé sexti toni and the Fortuna mass, respectively.

108. The reference is to Isaiah 6:2–3. See the Sanctus of the Missa L’homme armé sexti toni in
b dur). As noted above, a certain amount of movement between B♭ and B♮ is necessary in navigating the Gamut, and for transposition. But the suddenness of the shift suggests something more dramatic.

The original Fortuna desperata survives with partial signatures—B♭s in the lower voices, but not in the cantus. A large number of the song’s settings preserve this arrangement.109 Others, including Josquin’s three-part arrangement (if its source is to be believed) add a flat signature to the top voice to produce—essentially—an F-major ditty.110 But his Missa Fortuna desperata survives in its three earliest sources without signatures in any of its voices.111 To sing all of the Bs as naturals would be impossible.112 And although later sources add B♭ signatures to all voices, singing the mass through with B♭s is also untenable.113 Melodic context and occasional signed ficta can clarify some of the uncertainties, but not all. It seems, in fact, that there is no systematic way to resolve the modal ambiguity of the work, and that any performance that does not simply force the work into F major will be full of sudden and alarming “muances.” Measures 86–101 of the Gloria, reproduced in Example 2, are a case in point. Here, Hudson adds editorial flats in the New Josquin Edition for the notes marked with stars—all the Bs and several Es. But it is not clear that the beginning of the passage needs to have B♭s. Reserving this pitch for measure 94, where it is simultaneously signed in the superius and bassus, results in a poignant sweeping of the modal ground from beneath our feet.114 As for the cadence to A in measure 100, Hudson’s suggestion of a Phrygian approach is certainly the more obvious and less unsettling option, but given the lack of signatures, the use of a G-sharp is theoretically available to us, and the resulting “sudden transformation of B♭ into B♮” could be evocative of the imagery marshaled by Molinet.115

111. As Hudson notes, it is sometimes unclear whether the signs present are signatures or accidentals, but only in mm. 9–33 of the Gloria, 28–118 of the Credo, and 1–61 of the Agnus Dei do isolated voices carry what might be signature flats in BarcOC 5, ModE M.1.2, and VatS 41. No voice is signed for an entire movement. See the commentary in New Josquin Edition, 8.2:90–91 and 102–3.
112. See, for example, the B–E–B leap in the superius in the fifth measure of the Osanna (Sanctus, m. 130).
113. The opening of the Sanctus, with its cadential ostinato on C and F requires B♭s.
114. Technically the explicit flat in the bassus of m. 94 is redundant, since the leap down from F necessitates it. But this does not underscore the suddenness of the modal shift. Moments such as this one may have been inspired by several sudden turns to E♭ in Obrecht’s mass, for example in Kyrie, m. 125 and Gloria, m. 191.
115. This solution is admittedly unlikely, but if shifting modality was indeed a part of the mass’s intended effect then it is just possible that a performance could have featured the suggested cadence to A. There is at least one probable parallel in Josquin’s oeuvre for a sudden melodic shift from B♭ to G#: the end of the Osanna of the Missa Sine nomine. (I am grateful to Jesse Rodin for alerting me to this passage.)
Example 2  Josquin, *Missa Fortuna desperata*, Gloria, mm. 86–101 (*notes with asterisks are marked with editorial flats in Hudson’s edition in the Josquin New Edition*)
Figure 14  Boethius listens to the instructions of Philosophy while Fortune turns a wheel, cut miniature from a Consolatio manuscript copied ca. 1458–73. Wallace Collection, London. Reproduced with permission.
Josquin’s Agnus Dei I contains one other canon, located in Figure 13 between “crescite et multiplicamini” and the canonic notation: the letters “Agnus dei” written upside down. This curious graphic has been read as an indication that the singer should invert the melody. And indeed, the resolutio at the bottom of Figure 13 shows that the discantus of Fortuna desperata must be inverted even as it is transposed and doubly augmented.116

In flipping his melody on its head, Josquin may be referencing another aspect of Fortune iconography. The figures riding Fortune’s wheel are often turned upside down by its motions: Regno always sits upright at the top, but the others may be found in various states of rotation. Regnavi hangs inverted in Figure 1, and in Figure 14, which reproduces a magnificent 1460s miniature attributed to the Maître de Coëtivy, Sum Sine Regno dangles at the bottom of the wheel, his position emphasized by his falling crown.

If the maligned minim is as much subject to Fortuna’s iconography as it is to her narrative topoi, it would probably find itself hanging upside down as well. But upon closer inspection, the canon is not the only upside-down element on the page: there is also the matter of pitch. As the resolutio at the bottom of Figure 13 and any edition of Josquin’s mass will confirm, the bassus begins on a C. And yet the canonic notation places it on b♭ in the overwhelming majority of sources.117 This consistent discrepancy has been noted, but remains unexplained.

In fact, the clefs in the Agnus Dei I, like the canon “υφήμη δαί,” are notated upside down. If the page is rotated by 180°, the canon reads “ιςΔΙ υμναδ,” and the clef, now F5 and located on the right side of the staff, prescribes a correct starting pitch of C (compare Fig. 15a with Fig. 15b, which is derived by turning Figure 15a upside down).118 In other words, not just the canon but the notes of the bassus are upside down as written. Right-side up, the operation needed to turn the canonic notation into its resolutio seems to be inversion. But after the page is rotated, the singer must perform retrograde, which is naturally suggested by the location of the clef at the right and the direction of the letters in “ιςΔΙ υμναδ.” (Fig. 15b). In this new orientation, these words function not just as a canon but also as a text incipit. Indeed, this is the only incipit the bassus gets for this movement.119 The positioning of “υφήμη δαί” on the page cleverly foresees this possibility: in both the Barcelona source (shown here) and in VatS 41, the words are placed in such a

116. VatS 41, the other source to transmit this canon, leaves the words of “Agnus” and “dei” intact but turns both upside down to make (“ιςΔΙ υμναδ”). The meaning is clearly the same, and my analysis applies to this orthography as well.


118. I wish to thank Emily Zazulia and Jesse Rodin for bringing me to this solution with their observation that the clef as written gives a correct reading for the fourth note.

119. For all of the other movements in both BarcOC 5 and VatS 41, the bassus has at least an incipit, and sometimes more text.
way that they could plausibly be a text incipit on an inverted page. By contrast, “crescite et multiplicamini” is written higher in both sources and does not participate in the game.

But why play the game at all? Why pretend to turn inversion into upside-down retrograde? One answer might be that Josquin used this notational trick as another way of relating his mass to Obrecht’s. The earlier work makes prominent use of retrograde, and Josquin’s Agnus Dei manages to use inversion while also referencing retrograde—or indeed, to use both at once, depending on how we look at it. But the rotation need not necessarily have been a purely mental exercise. While it is difficult to invert a part while looking

120. In VatS 41, this text functions in the same way, but the level on which the reversal/inversion happens is that of the word, rather than of individual letters. Thus the canon reads “dei agnus” right-side-up, and “dei agnus” when rotated by 180° (this is the angle at which the scribe added the words to the page). In this case the order of the words—“agnus” on the right and “dei” to its left—could act as a retrograde canon.

121. The combination of inversion with quadruple augmentation also brings to mind the final Agnus Dei of Busnoys’s Missa L’homme armé. Perhaps the procedural similarity is not a coincidence—in referring to what was probably the best-known early example of inversion, Josquin may have been confirming that his upside-down retrograde is still true inversion. For a list of fifteenth-century works using inversion, see Todd, “Retrograde, Inversion, Retrograde-Inversion,” 71–75.
at the prime notation, singing the retrograde is not as challenging—an idea supported by the several sources for Obrecht’s Gloria and Credo that lack a tenor resolutio.122 To be sure, it would not be practical to turn a choirbook upside down. But singers gathered around a relatively flat lectern could position themselves so as to see their part from the appropriate angle. Figure 16 shows singers gathered around such a lectern, painted in the first half of the fifteenth century by the Bouicaut master, whose depictions of furniture tend to be detailed and realistic.123

I may be taking this too far. After all, the canon “γρηγορεῖ Ἰησοῦ” prescribes inversion, not rotation. Why then should anyone rotate the page to turn in-

122. Only one source without resolutio exists for Josquin’s mass: MunBS 3154. Singing the upside-down bassus produces the correct pitches, but the rhythmic augmentation would still need to be calculated. Furthermore, when viewed upside down the semibreve rest in the bassus becomes a minim rest, which is unhelpful. The upside-down notation thus pertains to pitch more than rhythm, which is understandable: the rhythm, though augmented, is the same as in the original song tenor, and singers would perhaps have needed less help to execute this aspect of the notation correctly.

123. See, for instance, the depictions of different styles of wooden lecterns in Meiss, Morand, and Kirsch, French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry, figs. 258 and 455.
version to retrograde, when flipping the image around its horizontal axis—
with a mirror, for example—would give us the right pitches written in the
right order?124 In the end the distinction may be moot. Whether directly
flipped upon its head by a mirror, mirrored in the imagination, or physically
turned 180° with respect to the viewer, Josquin’s notation clearly needs to be
rotated around some axis. In this it shares a conceptual link with Obrecht’s
mass and evokes, in a different but related way, the imagery of Fortune and
her wheel. If in Obrecht’s mass she acted to turn the Gloria around to pro-
duce the Credo, the canonic notation for Josquin’s Agnus Dei I invites us to
turn the very notes on the page upside down to produce the correct bassus
pitches.125

All told, the manipulation of the cantus firmus in Josquin’s mass could
make that work a candidate for the auctoritas that stands behind Molinet’s ex-
emplary minim, turning its unlikely story into “a thing that might have been
done.” Granted, the upside-down notation of the bassus in the Agnus Dei I—
arguably the most innovative aspect of the cantus-firmus treatment—has no
analog in Molinet’s moralité. And conversely, I do not need the moralité to
make this observation: I need only remind myself that the mass is built on a
song about Fortune in order to call to mind the related iconographic trends,
then look carefully at the unusual notation of the bassus. And yet it is no acci-
dent that Molinet’s stories, inspired by the notational system within which
Josquin wrote, help clarify this previously puzzling aspect of the movement’s
notation. In this case it is not the details of the minim’s journey that are ger-
mane, but the level on which the hermeneutics functions. The simple fact that
there are things Fortune can do to a minim is enough of a clue.

The upside-down notation is also the most inaudible aspect of the move-
ment’s cantus-firmus treatment: since it represents only a graphical transfor-
mation, this is the “trick” least likely to have been known beyond the smallest
circles around the composer. Our reading of other aspects of the cantus-firmus

124. Although such a solution is tempting in light of the importance of mirrors in the early
part of Molinet’s moralité, the kind of small, frameless mirror necessary to turn the bassus part up-
side down without obscuring the other parts was relatively rare. On the use of small plane mirrors
by painters, see Yiu, “Mirror and Painting,” 192–200. There were also small, concave hand-held
mirrors with decorated wood or ivory housings associated in iconography with the depiction of
vanity and of prostitutes. Whether an ecclesiastical singer would have had access to one of these is
a matter of conjecture. Most likely to be available to Josquin and his contemporaries were the
round, concave reading mirrors used to enlarge small text or help those with failing eyesight to
read or write. But these were usually mounted on stands, which means that it would have been
difficult to get a mirror close enough to the parchment. Furthermore, when positioned correctly
they did not invert the image as a plane mirror would, but only magnified it. See Ilardi,
Renaissance Vision, 43–46.

125. The canons discussed here have been drawn from the versions of Josquin’s mass trans-
mitted in VatS 41, probably the earliest source for the mass and the one closest to Josquin, and
from BarcOC 5, whose readings are very close to those of VatS 41 (see Hudson’s commentary in
or connection for BarcOC 5; see “Script and Print,” 505–11.
treatment does indeed benefit from the specifics of Molinet’s exemplum. Quadruple augmentation is rare for Josquin and inversion appears nowhere else in his securely attributed works.\textsuperscript{126} These novelties strengthen the possibility of a programmatic explanation. The extreme transposition of quoted material—stark by comparison to the \textit{Missa Malheur me bat} and Obrecht’s \textit{Fortuna} mass—calls to mind the ascents and sudden descents borne by Molinet’s “povre petit personnage.” The mensural transformations to which Josquin subjects his \textit{cantus firmus} are even more compelling. True, no minim quite becomes a maxima, but it comes close: over their multiple iterations in the mass, the semibreves in the song’s superius sound like minims in the Credo (after m. 226) and longs in the \textit{Agnus Dei I} (Table 6). Certainly this is a dramatic range of values for a single note to take on.

Was Molinet’s digression inspired by Josquin’s mass? It is certainly within the realm of possibility. The moralized \textit{Rose} was written sometime around 1500, and Josquin’s mass was copied into VatS 41 in about 1492–97.\textsuperscript{127} And even if it is not a given that musically minded contemporaries would have known Josquin’s name and work in the late 1490s,\textsuperscript{128} Molinet certainly did. He mentions Josquin by name in his “Recollection des merveilleuses advenues” (Recollection of wondrous happenings), a verse chronicle covering events through 1495, and the two men likely corresponded upon the heels of Ockeghem’s 1497 death, which occasioned “Nymphes des bois.”\textsuperscript{129} In the latter case, Molinet’s poetry shows some signs of being the result of collaboration, or at least anticipates musical setting by Josquin specifically.\textsuperscript{130} Finally,

\textsuperscript{126} On augmentation see note 104 above. The authorship of the \textit{Missa L’ami Baudichon} has been challenged. See Wegman, “Who Was Josquin?,” 31–33; and Just’s Critical Commentary to his edition of the mass in \textit{New Josquin Edition}, vol. 5.1.

\textsuperscript{127} See notes to Table 1, p. 333.

\textsuperscript{128} On the advent of Josquin’s fame, see Rodin, “When Josquin Became Josquin.”

\textsuperscript{129} The first 43 stanzas of the 148-stanza “Recollection” are by Molinet’s predecessor George Chastelain (1415–1475). Molinet mentions Josquin in passing when he recounts how he once saw a singer singing several parts of a chanson at once. See Molinet, \textit{Faictz et dictz}, 1:313; and commentary in Fallows, \textit{Josquin}, 210. It is not clear whether the “des Pres” listed along with Molinet before ca. 1474 in Compère’s motet \textit{Omnium bonorum plena} is Josquin; Rifkin argues that he is not (“Compere, ‘Des Pres,’ and the Choirmasters of Cambrai”), Fallows, that he is (Josquin, 25–29).

\textsuperscript{130} Not only does Molinet place Josquin’s name first in the list of mourners, but the phrase “changes vos voix” may speak to the transposition of the \textit{cantus firmus} to the Phrygian mode—a connection underlined by the fact that the Superius moves from F to E on these words. Interestingly, it seems that the lament, and likely Josquin’s setting, were still on Molinet’s mind as he wrote the conclusion of the moralized \textit{Rose}. Mourning the plucking of the rose (allegorized as the death of Christ), the poet instructs readers: “changez voz chans armoinieux en dures lamentaciones/si venez condoloir la mort de vostre bon père & patron,” \textit{Cest le romant de la rose}, fol. 152v; Compare to \textit{déploration} lines 3–4 and 12: “Changez vos voix fort claires et haultaines / En cris trenchans et lamentacions. . . . Perdu avés vostre bon père”; Molinet, \textit{Faictz et dictz}, 2:833. Paul Merkley points out that only Josquin used Molinet’s text, while other composers set Cretin’s \textit{déploration}; “Josquin Desprez in Ferrara,” 568–69.
Bonnie Blackburn has suggested that Molinet’s *Dictier des cinq festes Nostre Dame* could be a response to Josquin’s *Ave maria . . . virgo serena*. In this context it is not difficult to imagine that the passage describing the rise and fall of an unfortunate minim might be another such response.

To be sure, some caution is in order—many differences remain between the mass and the exempla. On the axis set up by Molinet, temporal augmentation is a positive development, while the move downwards in pitch is the result of bad fortune; the minim is long and high at the zenith of its happiness, short and low at the nadir. By contrast, Josquin drops the notes of his *cantus firmus* down while also stretching them out. How then can the mass depict the actions of Fortune’s wheel along a Molinean scale? This difference could be explained in any number of ways. One might note that inversion turns high to low, so that the dropped melody is paradoxically elevated while it is stretched out. One could observe that high pitch and long notes are still aligned in the mass because it is the discantus of the model that is subjected to augmentation—the dropped voice is indeed “such a one [who] sings on the high scale.” Or we could remember that the extreme ends of Fortune’s wheel are always moving in opposite directions: one side rises even as the other falls, and a musical moment could well conflate the two. But it may be more profitable to eschew so literal a reading of both Molinet and Josquin. I am not suggesting that Molinet intended to refer unambiguously to the first Agnus Dei of Josquin’s *Missa Fortuna desperata*. Had that been his intention, he would likely have cited the piece or its model by name, as he cited so many chansons in this and other works.

If Molinet had cited Josquin or Obrecht, we would prize the two passages linking Fortune with musical events as perhaps the earliest unambiguous statements on the question of music and meaning by a composer. But I suggest that Molinet’s two exempla are no less useful for failing to cite a particular work. In invoking a link between real compositional procedures and narrative events, but without reference to any specific composition, Molinet’s anecdotes transcend questions of local text-music relations and instead encourage us to engage more broadly in the exercise of musical allegoresis—or musical hermeneutics.

I believe I am justified in treating these passages as hermeneutic because they have explanatory power in both directions. In reading Molinet, the possibility that he was aware of real works in which the idea of Fortune has musical consequences for preexisting material helps us explain the seeming randomness of his tangentially related story (“if you think Daudenarde is great, wait ’til you hear this”). Keeping in mind the transformations to which *cantus firmus* notes are subject in the two earliest *Fortuna desperata* masses,

131. Blackburn, “For Whom Do the Singers Sing?,” 604–5. They would continue to intersect—at the time of his father’s death in 1507, Molinet’s son Augustin was a canon at Notre Dame de Condé, where Josquin was Provost beginning in 1504.

132. I am grateful to Joshua Rifkin for raising this question.
Molinet’s minim parable seems to come a little less out of left field. We can maybe even follow his train of thought: the mirrors that make small things large and large things small, when paired with the “virtus in medio” that the third mirror represents, might well have called to mind Obrecht’s Missa Fortuna desperata and, with it, Josquin’s setting. Once remembered, these musical works bring with them the idea of cantus-firmus manipulation and a host of specialized musical vocabulary. The free-association nature of a moralité would have allowed Molinet to pursue these connections. It may even be significant that the material directly preceding the introduction of the minim story makes reference to carnivalesque foxes and mules whom Daudenarde makes sing a mass (“chanter la grant messe,” 28).133

But in following this train of thought, the poet seems to have written himself into a corner. His final product, far from clarifying anything in the original Rose, occasioned its own explanation for the nonmusician—one that constitutes a mini moralité for a digression from a moralité of a digression from a speech about the weather. Keeping the two Fortuna masses in mind, the extent of Molinet’s digressions may remain remarkable, but their connections with his original subject matter become easier to chart.

In the other direction, taking Molinet at his word does even more work. In Obrecht’s mass, the possibility of Fortune’s musical involvement explains several aspects of the unusual construction of the Gloria and Credo. Not only is the symmetry of the Janus-faced canonic notation explicated by iconographic traditions associated with the goddess, but the enigmatic canon “in medio consistit virtus” and the unsingable fermata that stands over the tenor’s central F are explained when that note is taken to represent the center of a wheel.

In the case of Josquin’s Agnus Dei I, the extreme downward transposition of the song’s superius, its placement in the bassus, and the upside-down notation of pitch may all be related to the trope of Fortune casting down the mighty—or they may not. We can by no means assume that Josquin shared Molinet’s ideas about the goddess’s musical actions. But whatever Josquin’s thought process may have been, reading Molinet as a musically literate contemporary listener and composer has brought to light what is arguably Josquin’s most daring and extreme notational act.

In the final analysis, engaging in Molinet’s poeticized exercise in musical hermeneutics clarifies key aspects of two important works by two of the foremost composers of the late fifteenth century. In both masses, the idea of Fortune emerges as fundamental to understanding aspects of style, structure, and notation. This in itself is significant, since neither mass has been considered in discussions of the goddess’s musical manifestations—discussions that have so far been limited to songs. But the explanatory power Fortune holds for these works might also give us pause. Masses qua masses have played no role in my argument, participating only to the extent that they are expansive enough to allow for the extreme augmentation and transposition of minims.

133. A reminder that in-text references to the Molinet text in Appendix A are by sentence.
The same kind of seeming disconnect between sacred context and secular narrative would seem to exist for Molinet’s exempla. On the face of it, both passages linking Fortune and music emerge from sacred contexts: the moralités are meant to Christianize the courtly narrative of the Rose, and the Petit traité glosses a psalm text. And yet the stories themselves are not actually concerned with the exegesis of their texts, from which they digress exuberantly. By way of conclusion I would like to suggest that these parallel disconnects are not a coincidence.

Reversed Analogies (A Digression?)

The analyses that constitute the central section of this article anthropomorphize notational symbols or melodies and use the personages that result to create analogies between musical and nonmusical events: transposed minim and breves enact the ups and downs of daily life in an unstable world; the tenors of Obrecht’s Gloria and Credo are related by a symbolic rotational scheme; the notes of Josquin’s bassus dangle upside down like a Regnavori or Sum Sine Regno on Fortune’s wheel. I am far from the first to make claims of this sort. Indeed, the analogical mode is a favorite for explorations of meaning in Renaissance music. Craig Wright’s famous analysis of symbolism in Du Fay’s Missa L’homme armé turns the notes of that cantus firmus into a character—The Armed Man—and that character, the subject of a bellicose secular song, into Christ. More recently, Anne Walters Robertson has made a similar claim for the Caput masses of Ockeghem and Obrecht. Interpreting the “caput” melisma as referring to “the head of the serpent, namely Satan,” she has argued that Ockeghem’s low placement of the cantus firmus enacts a motion similar to that by which Saints and the Virgin step on the dragon’s head in victory: the transposition “seems to call for Satan’s head to be suppressed by requiring singers to ‘down’ the tenor by an octave.” Molinet’s personification of the minim would certainly seem to encourage this kind of reading. He, too, anthropomorphizes notational symbols or melodies, ostensibly to create analogies between musical and moral truths. Because of this, Molinet’s Marian poems citing courtly song incipits and his Roman de la rose moralisé have recently been cited as keys to understanding the role played by courtly chansons in masses. Just as Molinet creates analogies between the courtly lady and the Virgin, or the lover’s quest for the Rose and a spiritual

134. “The specter of the Armed Man rises from the tenor voice. . . . In the first [Agnus] . . . the Armed Man marches straight ahead in the tenor. In the second “Lamb of God,” he falls silent. But in the third and final supplication, the Armed Man proceeds backward and then forward, again in the tenor”; Wright, Mase and the Warrior, 175. On the Armed Man’s presence in the other voices see Planchart, “Origins and Early History,” 330–32.


But turning to Molinet may create as many problems as it solves. Although the stated goal of his *Rose* is indeed to “convert . . . the sinful into the virtuous, the corporeal into the spiritual, worldliness into holiness, and above all to moralize it,” the reality is much more complicated—a thing we can easily perceive if we ask ourselves, again, what Fortune’s musical actions have to do with the mirrors of human conscience. In fact, analogies and their narrative distillations into allegory are susceptible to at least two kinds of instability. The weaker of these is a sort of autonomy. The stronger is a reversal of referent and referee.

Michael Randall has argued that the former, weaker description applies to the *Roman de la rose moralisé*. In this work, complex and seemingly unrelated anecdotes such as the story of the minim share the page with the vitae of contemporary kings and patrons, and unstable parallels arise through substitution. Jesus Christ is at various times represented by Samson, Vulcan, Bel Accueil, the Sun, Cadmus the founder of Thebes, and the Rose. The plucking of the latter in the poem’s salacious conclusion is allowed to represent Christ’s crucifixion. And in the *moralité* to chapter 15, Molinet likens the body of the beloved when it is revealed during sex to Christ’s body, which he describes in affective and eroticized language, dwelling liberally on the natural wonders we might see “beneath his belt.” In these cases and many others, Randall argues, analogies do not actually point to a higher meaning. Instead, they take on distracting lives of their own.

Bloxam has pointed to a pictorial analogue for this state of affairs in depictions of the Virgin that dress her in the garb of a courtly lady. In the right panel of the Melun Diptych, where Jean Fouquet’s model for the Madonna with her pale, firm breast exposed erotically to the viewer is believed to be Agnès Sorel, the mistress of Charles VII, Bloxam sees a “point of collapse” for the analogical model. In a world where a royal concubine can pose for a painting of the Madonna and Child, should we be suspicious of the “shameless use of a secular genre as a liturgical trope”? Bloxam suggests that

---

137. Bloxam, “Cultural Context.”
139. On the analogical mode in recent discussions of masses based on secular models see my contribution to the forthcoming *Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music*, “The Chanson Mass as Analogy.”
140. Randall, *Building Resemblance*, 36
141. Ibid., 34; Molinet, *Cest le romant de la rose*, fol. 24v.
Molinet’s Marian poetry and his *Roman de la rose moralisée*, along with the mystical theology of Jean Gerson, offer a way out of these morally dubious implications for the genre.

But Molinet’s system of reference is highly unstable. Not only do many of his analogies fail to point to their divine referents, some actually switch the roles of perfect and imperfect, so that the divine points to its earthly analogue. This tendency, about which the poet is explicit, is especially clear in his 1478 *Chappellet des dames*. Here, he compares Mary the Virgin to Mary of Burgundy, not in order to facilitate our understanding of the former, but to glorify the latter: the courtly lady is not substituted by the Virgin; the Virgin is glossed as the courtly lady. *Le chappellet des dames* ends with a poetic feat of moral dubiousness—a “Hail Mary” that is ambiguous as to its dedicatee. Indeed, the poem may not be appropriate for the ears of either woman, since the writerly virtuosity on which such ambiguity depends distracts us from both Marys, turning our attention instead to the poetic feat itself.

I would suggest that some mass settings might be subject to similar analogical instability. Andrew Kirkman has recently argued that more complex *cantus-firmus* manipulations allow us to make more precise evaluations of how mass music responds to the theological and cultural contexts of the Mass ceremony. This is certainly true to a point: if a *cantus firmus* is simply placed in the tenor and sung from beginning to end repeatedly over the course of a mass, we can say no more than that this melody was chosen by composer or patron. But at the same time, more involved *cantus-firmus* treatment threatens to be more complex, at least in terms of what can be rationally said about it, than many a theological truth. The musical virtuosity and specificity involved in turning a tune’s notation upside down, singing it backwards, and stretching its notes to four times their written value has seemingly little to do with an appeal to Christ for mercy. It is not that a connection could not be built between the notation and the Agnus Dei text—it could. But that connection might seem as forced as some of Molinet’s *moralités*. Randall’s diagnosis of the latter applies equally well to both media: “[The analogies] claim to create a resemblance between the carnal love of the *Romance of the Rose* and a higher Christian form of love, yet they as often reveal the difference between the perfect and the imperfect in their flamboyant and sinuous shapes.” In its

---


147. One might, for example, focus on the retrograde motion that I am suggesting is “hidden inside” the call for inversion, and create a link between this and Christ, who is addressed directly in the Agnus Dei and whom Wright has linked with retrograde motion; *Maze and the Warrior*, 175–77. Or one could focus on those appealing rather than the one appealed to: what better words for the minim hanging upside down and discanting low in long, dolorous notes to be singing than “Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis?” But it would not be difficult to build an equally strong narrative for almost any excerpt from the mass text, which is full of pithy sound bites.

musical manifestation, this would mean that sometimes a mass setting intended for liturgical use could end up telling us more about music than its music can tell us about the Mass.

Such a reversal of analogical function is by no means a certainty, but it becomes more likely as the analogies themselves become more elaborate. We might perhaps see musical equivalents of two analogical modes—the one more traditional, and the other from beyond Bloxam’s “point of collapse”—in Obrecht’s and Josquin’s respective approaches to the *Fortuna desperata* tune. That Obrecht’s setting is moral is without question: the use of the maxim “in medio consistit virtus” brings with it Aristotelian injunctions against excess. And I have argued that the pairing of this “virtus” with a note surrounded by rests evokes a cosmology friendly to Christianity, in which Divine Providence has the better of Fortune, and the F with its fermata represents the still center of the moving wheel. This is analogy in its traditional sense: the notes, which we can see, hear, analyze, and describe, are evoking the indescribable and eternal stillness of the unshakable divine.

It is more difficult to extract a moral message from Josquin’s setting. His notes might be seen to undergo the smaller of the analogical transformations outlined here. Grouped together they seem to become an entity to which evocative things like rotation can be done, and which can to some extent be personified; they are told to multiply. But they stop short of pointing to a divine referent. If the minims (and semibreves, breves, etc.) of Josquin’s *cantus firmus* point to anything outside of themselves, it is to a Pagan goddess whose only feasible role within the Christian cosmos is that of negative comparand. And perhaps the notes do not even point this far: despite the fact that Molinet’s comments can help clarify Josquin’s choices, there is no way to know whether Josquin was thinking about Fortune or simply engaging in one-upmanship, subjecting the *Fortuna desperata* tune to more radical manipulation than did Obrecht. And of course, by choosing an Agnus Dei for his notational fireworks, Josquin may have been responding to the *L’homme armé* tradition, which from the beginning featured dramatic uses of the *cantus firmus* in this movement. It was there that Du Fay subjected the *L’homme armé* tune to retrograde motion, Ockeghem transposed it downwards by an octave, and Busnoys inverted it, placing it in the bassus. Josquin would respond more explicitly to this trend in the final six-voice Agnus Dei of his own *Missa L’homme armé sexti toni*, which combines the prime and retrograde forms of the song. Is the combination of transposition, inversion, augmentation, and hidden retrograde in the Agnus I of his *Fortuna desperata* mass a less overt re-

149. Boethius’s treatment of her is a good and influential example in this regard. It is telling that Fortune’s face was sometimes smudged out in miniatures that depict her by the owners of medieval illuminated manuscripts—a fate she shares with demons and other immoral or unsavory subjects. That may be what has happened to her in Fig. 1 above. For two isolated late-medieval counter-examples, see Hunt, “Christianization of Fortune.”

150. Retrograde features in Du Fay’s Agnus Dei III, downward transposition in Ockeghem’s Agnus Dei I and III, and inversion throughout Busnoys’s Agnus Dei.
action to the same phenomenon, or is it programmatically minded? Or could we imagine some combination of the above, with the theme of Fortune influencing the details of cantus-firmus treatment across the mass, and the L’homme armé tradition suggesting the Agnus Dei as a suitable locus for the fullest expression of this theme? We cannot know. What is clear is that Fortune explains much more about the musical workings of Josquin’s Agnus Dei than does the fact that it is an Agnus Dei. On their way to signifying something sacred the notes seem to get lost or distracted.

In this sense Molinet’s analogies may aid our broader understanding of the evolution of musical techniques. They create a continuum between meaning and abstraction, resemblance and difference. They show how something (an analogy, a melody, a thought) that begins in the service of a higher goal can take on a life of its own. In this new life the original idea can separate itself from the formal or institutional constraints that produced it, while nevertheless staying rooted in—and influencing—a broader cultural context. Like Molinet’s analogies, secular tunes in masses, especially when intricately manipulated or placed in highly audible contexts, “end up revealing far less about the invisible perfect they are supposed to expose than they do about the very visible [audible?] and highly imperfect term of comparison.”\(^{151}\) The Fortuna desperata masses would seem to be good examples in this regard; the L’homme armé tradition might be an even better example.\(^ {152}\) Here, a secular tune that likely had a sacred or institutional meaning to those who first wrote masses on it soon became subject to increasing compositional experimentation whose products, like Molinet’s ambiguous “Hail Mary,” point more to their own virtuosic forms than to any divine referent. That it is difficult to identify a precise point in the tradition at which the shift occurred is in itself telling: we are dealing with a spectrum. But that the shift did occur can hardly be doubted.\(^ {153}\) If the Armed Man and his musical signifiers initially pointed to Christ, Saint Michael, or some other Christian soldier, eventually the L’homme armé tune turned back upon itself, pointing to its music as form and allowing elements originally intended to transmit divine imagery or meaning to be swept up into compositional discourse, emulation, or competition. In short, musical analogies to theological truths can become musical truths. They can take center stage and overwhelm the framework upon which they ostensibly rely. This is not to impugn the spiritual efficacy of any mass setting. But we must allow for the possibility that, from a liturgical standpoint, the developments of musical structures, styles, and notations are indeed uncontrolled analogies—or lavish digressions.

152. For a recent identification of an early context for L’homme armé, see Gallagher, *Johannes Regis*, 84–98.
153. In Planchart’s judicious summary, “it is likely that some of the composers who used the tune did identify L’homme armé in their minds with [Charles the Bold or Christ], and it is equally likely that others did not”; “Origins and Early History,” 313.
Pour ce que les nues ont pris, comme dit l’acteur, leurs arcs et leurs saiettes pour elles solacier avant le monde et faire auncuns pelerinages, nous cesserions a parler de leur exploit iusques a ce que retournées seront. Mais affin que les amans grans gaudisseurs mignons et gorgias soient bien acoustréz, et que les gorrieres fort popines soient frisquement achemmées pour complaire a leurs parties, nous leur ferons mirer leurs faces en trois miroirs, dont l’acteur fait mention, lesquelz se peuvent referer a trois miroirs de conscience humaine. Desquels l’ung est trop large, l’autre trop estroit, et le tiers fort iuste et bien appoint.

Doncques quant auncuns pécheurs presentent leurs péchez fort menuz et de petit poix devant le miroir de conscience, mais ilz semblent plus grans et plus gros que ne sont hauttes montaignes. De ce miroir sont abusez et deceuz les yeulx des simples beguinettes qui sont devant ung confesseur trois heures d’orloges pour avoir marché par cas d’avanture sur ung festu croisé, ou pour avoir d’ung petit sonnet soufflé la pouldrette au monstier. De ce font elles grans extime et gros péchez abhominables & toutesuoyes ce n’est que vent.

Trepidaverunt timore ubi non erat timor.155

Autres mirent leurs grans péchez fort énormes et détectables dedans le second miroir, mais ilz leur semblent petis, que a paine se choisir les peuent si n’en sont ne mise ne compte. Ains dient que se péché y a purgé sera du billot qui asperge l’eau benoiste, et sont horriblement deceuz du miroir de leur conscience qui les aveuglit et bestourne mieulx que celluy qui chemine en tenebres.

Encores dit l’acteur que se le Dieu Mars eust filché ses yeulx au miroir qui demonstre les choses grandes alors qu’il fut trouvé couché avecques Venus damp Vulcanus, le faulx idaloux vieulx et chaus ne l’eust prins en ses latz plus delyez que fil de soye, mais par outlrecuydance ne si daigna mirer. Chacun doit son ennemy admirer.

Le tiers miroir est comme neutre et point moyen entre les dessusdilz, qui sont les deux extrémitez. Car il est tout cler et tout rond sans estre court ne trop long, ne trop [fol. 121v] large, ne trop estroit, ne trop avant ne trop longe.

154. Lyons: Guillaume Balsarin, 1503, fols. 121–22. This print is available for download on Gallica (http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k712753). Sentence numbers are indicated here in superscript. Punctuation and accents have been added insofar as they clarify meaning and parts of speech. Scribal contractions have been silently expanded. The following emendations have been made in favor of readings supported by the Paris edition of Antoine Vérard, 1511: sentence 2: “popines” for “popine”; 8: “ne mise” for “mise”; 24: “teste” for “ceste”; 25: “apparoit” for “apparoir”; 28: “crosséz et” for “crosse, et”; 32: “la” for “le”; 39: “detenu” for “deteuu”; 47: “geans” for “geant.” Additional emendations are 32: “reut” for “reus” and 33: “cassée” for “cassé.”

arrière, chacun peut voir et connoire clairement ses propriétés et semblance. En la chasse de ce miroir poly se mirèrent et acquistèrent les anciens philosophes qui volurent tenir le train de douze vertus morales pour venir à félicité. Ces vertus comme dit Aristote en son livre de Ethicques sont prudence, force, attrempanse, justice, liberalité, magnificence, magnanimité, amative d’honneur, debonnaireté, vérité, amyableté et entrapelé qui vaut autant comme iocondité, desquelles les quatre premières comme dit est sont denom- mées “cardinales.” Et quiconques veult praticquer tant les unes comme les autres, il doit choisir le millieu et habanderonner les extremitez. Celluy qui veult estre liberal ne soit aver ne prodigne. Et qui veult estre fort ne soit court ne estourdy.

20 Autres miroirs ardans qui bruslent toutes choses qui leur sont presentées moyennant que le soleil reflamboyant leur envoye ses rays sont les bons iustes et elegans prédicateurs enflammez de la grace nostre créateur, le trèrsplen- dissant soleil: lesquelz par le bénéfice de prédication ratisent, allument et es- prendent en l’amour de l’éternel Bel Acueil, les cuers de ceulx qui dignés sont de recevoir ses amoreux regardz.

21 Encores met avant Nature ung autre miroir faisant apparoir estranges ymages, lequel peut estre acomparé au monde, où diverses manières de gens se voyent. Il y a des testes a quatre yeulx, les deux qui sont corporelz se tien- nent au front devant, pour eulx conduire au temps présent; les autres deux yeulx sont espirituelz, l’ung se tient sur le derrière du cerveau pour avoir mem- oire du temps passé, et l’autre sur le sommet du chief pour faire le guet sur le temps advenir. Ceulx qui ces quatre yeulx ont en leurs testes sont reputez pour sages. Mais ceulx qui ont quatre aureilles, les deux en la teste et les autres sur chapperont, sont denommez pour folastres, combien que l’habit ne fait point le moyne.

25 Daudenarde fort subtil magicien et bien jouant de pâsse-pâsse fait appa- roir au miroir de ce monde plusieurs phantosmes et merveilleux monstres, tant par souffler au charbon d’alquimye que par force de vif argent. Et dient ceulx qui bien congoissent les lettres de l’a. b. c. qu’il fait d’ung .b. iaune ung .N. couronné, d’ung .N. couronné. ung. Lr. nonne, et d’ung Lr. nonne ung .e. vesque. Et touchant officiers, il les fait de boscailles, c’est assavoir maieurs de faux, advocatz de plane, eschevins de blanc boys, sergens de harcelles, et povres gens de tremble. Mais touchant dignitez il fait plusieurs prestres, ains qu’ils soient clerxs, les asnes crossez et mittrez chevauchier les muletz et fins regnardz enchappez chanter la grant messe a tout leurs faulx visages.

29 S’il vous semble que Dauenarde face plus que le possible au miroir de ce monde par son art magicque, je vous dys bien que Fortune fait encores plus fort, et chose quasi incredible, par sa fainte musicque. Car souvent advient qu’elle eslieve une povre minime de petite valeur, si la fait monter en pou

156. Sentence 19: “The righteous should keep to the middle course,” Aristotelian dictum. See discussion on pages 334–45 and notes 30–31 above.
d’espace, par règles, degréz, et jointures de la main, tellement qu’elle se trouve au plus haut de la game, tant augmentée de si grant value que ceste povere note qui n’estoit que simple minime devient une grande maxime portant une bien longue queue, et illec chante a haute voix “Le serviteur haut guerdonné.”

31 Et quant Fortune voit qu’il se degoise et se glorifie en son estat (qui point n’est de maier parfait), elle dit a ses chamberieres “La la la, faiectes luy bonne chiere.” 32 Mais la fine gaupe congnissant les temps, les modes, les couleurs, les imperfections, les prolaciones, les proportions et les tons de musique, soudainement la fait descendre de haut en bas par subtiles muances dont elle scet les tours, qu’elle la boute jus du nyd si l’apprent a deschanter son petit mineur et a diminuer et deschanter tant légierement et si bas que sa voix n’est plus ouÿe, et s’arreste sur une cadence qui se nomme re-ut, pres de la-my, mais fort loings de l’amy. 33 Et en faisant gros souspirs se lamente avecques Iheremie, si dit a voix cassée comme fort estonnée, “Terriblement suis fortunée.”

34 Ceuls qui congnoissent les notes de musique peuent facilement entender que la minime est ung povere petit personnage que Fortune tyre [fol. 122] en amont pour son enchantement, et quant il est au souverain escalion il se acoustre comme ung prince et prent la prosperité de la maxime ayant apres luy longue queue d’escuyers, varletz, et lacquetz. 35 Et finalement devient tant grave et pesante que l’eschielle parmy il monte commence a briser et se crocque, parquoy Fortune la boute ius du hourt et lors il chiet plus bas qu’en soute faisant illecques complaics doloureuses. 36 Mieulx luy vaulsist scavorir son plain chant seulement, ou son contrepoint simple que faire tant diminucion.

37 Encore dit nature que miroirs font miracles apparans, et allègue Aristote disant que ung homme fut tant malade que sa veue luy affoiblist, mais par la vertuz des miroirs bien luy sembloit qu’en l’aer et de place en place ou qu’il al last il veoit aller sa face. 38 Se nous voulons apparaicier ce miracle à l’oeil au près de nous sans le querir fort loings, regardons qui est celluy ou qui sont ceux qui par avoir sentu les trèsangoisseux et fort poignans esguillons de la guerre ont estre fort debilitez de leur veue, et puis reduys en telle convalescence qu’ilz voyent devant eulx leur face toute vive.

39 L’ong est la personne du tresvictorieux & treschrestien roy de France Loys, unziesme de ce nom, c’est celluy qui par les durs et terribles exploitz de guerre a esté comme a demy privé de sa noble lumière luy estantes tenebreuses obsurses & dangereuses prisons où il fut detenu. 40 Et maintenant, plus par grace de dieu que par la faveur de Fortune, il voyt devant ses yeulx sa treschere vive face royale resplendre glorieusement, non en son royaulme seulement, mais en loingtaintes nacions et provinces est son ymage emprainte en paintures, deniers d’or, et sigilatures.

41 Et se nous voulons avoir par deçà vraye apparance de miracle dessusdit, il nous souviengne de monseigneur Philippe de Cîèves, seigneur de Ravestain, au commandement du quel j’ay entreprins faire cest labeur, comment pour re-
dimer de detencion pereilleuse et tresour emprisonnement la maiesté royalle
nostre futur imperateur, du quel il est prouchain parent, il se mist en hostage
fort pesant entre mutins aspres aux hutins et en tresgrant dangier de perdre la
clarté du ciel, mais chief et corps et tous les membres. 42Puis fut assiégié par
mer et par terre d’amys, d’ennemys, de françois, de liegeois, de bourguignons,
de brebançons, de flamens, de valons, d’alemans et d’anglois, et de gens de di-
vers angetlez terriblement beraude de bombardes, de canons, de gros engins,
de bastons et de mortelle pestilence. 43Et qui pis luy fut courtes espees taillans
a deux lez agues fort trenchans et venimeuses comme sont langues des mesdi-
sans se desgainerent contre luy pour le touchier au cuer. 44Mais il se deffendit
moult vigoureusement de l’escu de pacience, tellement que après avoir oublié
toutes douleurs, et fait son marchepie d’enuye, il mire maintenant sa noble
face en la refugence et tresprecieuse couronne de france, et reçoit la saincte
 odeur et la reflambloyant splendeur des redoulentes fleurs de lys, dont le Roy
son cousin germain est triumphantment aorné.
45Et pource que Nature continuant ceste matiere dit que la distance des
lieux par aucuns phantosmes abusent les yeulx, que les hommes petis que nous
disons nains semblent estre à voir de loing aussi grans que sont dix géans,
laquelle chose se peut verifier en la promocion & glorieuse fortune des deux
tresillustres personnages dessus nommez. 46Car pendent leurs adversitez nous
faisons petite extime de leurs vertus et seigneuries. 47Et maintenant quant ilz
sont eslongez ilz sont grans et puissans géans, souverainement le Roy tres-
chrestien, car sa voix, son nom, et son bruyt sont tant haultains qu’ilz sont
ouÿs per les climatz du monde, et font trembler les mescréans & faulx turcqz
infidèles. 48Son dextre brach embrasse tout le royaulme de France. 49Il tient
Bretaigne en main, et son senestre brach s’estend par dessus toute Ytalie. 50Et
peut sembler que dieu permette estre ainsi, fait tant pour condigne retribucion
de leurs merites que pour estre miroir et exempler les nobles, preux, loyaux et
vertueux courages fort oppressez d’angoisseuse souffrance, afin qu’ilz ne
tombent en désespoir, et soient certains de mieulx avoir quant a dieu plaira.
51 Car dulcia non meruit qui non gustavit amara.157

Appendix B  Abbreviations of Sources

BarcOC 5 Barcelona, Biblioteca de L’Orfeó Català, MS 5
BerlS 40021 Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek (formerly Preussische
Staatsbibliothek), Mus. MS 40021 (olim Z 21)
BrusBR 9126 Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9126
Josquin 1502 Josquin, Missa Josquin. Venice: O. Petrucci, 1502

157. Sentence 51: “For he has not deserved sweet things who has not tasted the bitter.”
Catalogued in Strauss, Concise Dictionary of European Proverbs, 252.
Josquin 1505

Josquin. Missarum Josquin liber secundus. Venice: O. Petrucci, 1505

ModE M.I.2

Modena, Biblioteca Estense e Universitaria, Ms. α.M.I.2 (lat. 457; olim VI.H.1)

MunBS 3154

Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Mus. MS 3154

Obrecht 1503

Misse Obrecht. Venice: O. Petrucci, 1503

Obrecht [ca. 1510]


SegC s.s.

Segovia, Archivo Capitular de la Catedral, Ms. s.s.

VatS 41

Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Cappella Sistina 41

Works Cited


Des Prez, Josquin. See Josquin des Prez.


——. *Les faictz & dictz de feu de bonne memoire.* Paris, 1540.


——. “‘Mon flaïollet ne vault plus rien’: On Sex, Music, and Rhetoric in Jean Molinet.” Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Québec City, 2007.


Abstract

Among the numerous references to music in the writings of poet, composer, and Burgundian chronicler Jean Molinet, none is more puzzling than a passage from his *Roman de la rose moralisé* (ca. 1500) that describes the misadventures of a note—a minim—fallen victim to Fortune. As it rides her wheel, it becomes a maxima and then a minim again, while its pitch is raised, then lowered. Another passage linking Fortune with transposition and mensural change occurs in Molinet’s *Petit traictié sousz obscure poetrie*. Both stories are exempla divorced from their immediate contexts, raising the possibility that Molinet may have been influenced by specific musical compositions related to Fortune. Aspects of notational usage and *cantus-firmus* manipulation in the *Fortuna desperata* masses of Jacob Obrecht and Josquin des Prez make these works—especially the latter—likely influences for Molinet’s strange digressions. And Molinet’s exempla, insofar as they can help clarify previously misinterpreted aspects of both works, are an important early example of musical hermeneutics. The difficult relationship between Molinet’s musical stories and the ostensibly sacred texts from which they digress also offers insight into the devotional functions of secular mass models.

Keywords: Jean Molinet, Josquin des Prez, Jacob Obrecht, mensural notation, *Fortuna desperata*