

# *Et pui conmencha a canter:* refrains, motets and melody in the thirteenth-century narrative *Renart le nouvel*\*

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In many surviving thirteenth-century romances, short segments of lyric poetry, called 'refrains'<sup>1</sup> by present-day scholars, interrupt the narrative with the implication of song. In the romance *Renart le nouvel*, attributed to Jacquemart Gielée (fl. 1290), refrains take their place among a wide variety of literary registers and forms. *Renart le nouvel* is a late derivative of a long and international tradition of adapting, elaborating and making reference to the stories from the *Roman de Renart*. The *Roman de Renart* refers to a collection of approximately fifteen Old French verse narratives, written between 1174 and 1205, that recount the exploits of the cunning fox Renart and various other anthropomorphized members of the animal kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

In Jacquemart's *Renart le nouvel*, allegory, exempla and animal fable consort with verse narrative, prose love letters, debates and lyric insertions. Given this rich literary salad, it is surprising that refrains are the only kind of interpolated lyric in this romance, and that they should number more than sixty-five in any one version, making *Renart le nouvel* the largest extant, exclusive collection of refrains from the thirteenth century. Furthermore, three of the four manuscripts that preserve this romance also contain music for the refrains.

While scholars have catalogued refrains and studied the literary function of their words,<sup>3</sup> few have grappled with their music or examined the effect of the

\* An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Fifty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Montreal, November, 1993.

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth I will not be following the convention of italicizing the word 'refrain' to distinguish the non-repeating quotation of an autonomous medieval French phrase from the use of such a phrase as a structural reprise. Scholars such as John Stevens, Christopher Page, Mark Everist and others use the italicized *refrain* when they mean to emphasize the words and their presumed autonomy as opposed to the structural function of the words. However, the pool of words and music for repeating and non-repeating refrains is the same, as the sources bear witness. Often a single refrain appears in both guises, as a refrain-reprise and as a refrain quotation. Thus to superimpose a distinction of type where no such distinction originally existed only distances us from understanding the nuances and relatedness of the various medieval refrain compositions.

<sup>2</sup> See Patricia Terry, Introduction to *Renard the Fox* (Berkeley, 1992), 3–23.

<sup>3</sup> Most notably, the important and exhaustive catalogue compiled by Nico Boogaard, *Rondeaux et refrains* (Paris, 1969), and the full-length study of refrains by Eglal Doss-Quinby, *Les refrains chez*

music on the listener's or reader's perception of an interpolated narrative. The three versions of *Renart le nouvel* that contain music – Paris, Bibliothèque nationale (henceforth *F-Pn*) f.f. 1593, *F-Pn* f.f. 25566 and *F-Pn* f.f. 372 – follow the two-column format that is standard for thirteenth-century chansonniers. Most of the refrains occupy two staves that more or less conform to the widths of the text columns. Nevertheless, to the reader of these manuscripts, the staves and notes disrupt the flow of words with a visual shift of genre that spotlights the two fundamental and distinguishing attributes of refrains, namely their music, and their brevity.

What, indeed, is a refrain? Do refrains always imply structural repetition? Do they cue longer rondeaux? Or is the medieval refrain a genre unto itself with discernible generic features? These comprehensive questions exceed the scope of the present study. What I offer here is a profile of the refrain as gleaned from the particular context of *Renart le nouvel*, where refrains neither function as structurally repeating elements nor cue longer rondeaux. Rather, refrains function simply as brief moments of music. These moments, however, create two distinct impressions relative to the independent processings of the intellect and the senses. On one hand the refrains can be *read* as a local poetic device, while on the other hand the refrains can be *heard* as part of a larger musical composition.

### I The refrains as a poetic device: an intellectual impression

The reader and listener of *Renart le nouvel* intellectually comprehend the interpolated refrain as a local poetic device – one of many literary gems in this text. I propose that the literary function of refrains in *Renart le nouvel* is that of synecdoche, the figure of speech where a part is named but a whole is understood, or vice versa. Consider, for example, the expression 'I'll put in a good word for you'; where 'word' clearly signifies an exposition comprised of many words. Similarly, the refrains in *Renart le nouvel* are miniature songs that signify longer songs. 'Cant,' 'cançon,' 'rondet' and 'motet' appear as seemingly synonymous terms used to introduce or conclude nearly every refrain, as in the following example:<sup>4</sup>

Chele **recanta** pié estant  
Che **motet** plaisant et joli:

*les trouvères* (New York, 1984), who attempts to uncover a finite set of parameters that define and describe refrains and their function in all genres of medieval literature. More recently, Ardis Butterfield has grappled with the relationship of music and words in the refrain repertory. See her 'Repetition and Variation in the Thirteenth-Century Refrain', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 116/1 (1991), 1–23.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from *Renart le Nouvel* are taken from Henri Roussel's edition in *Société des anciens textes français* 90 (Paris, 1961). Roussel based his edition on the text of *F-Pn* f.f. 25566 but included annotations for lines that appear with different wording in the other manuscripts. Unless otherwise specified, I have adjusted his edition to reflect the version that appears in *F-Pn* f.f. 1593.

*E Dex si très dous non en ami*  
 Après celi est descendue  
 Hersens, et Renars ses iex rue  
 Cele part et le descendi  
 Et puis **dist en cantant** ensi  
**Cler et haut**, bien fu escoutés:  
*A boine dame loiaus sui donnés*  
 Et quant Hersens chou entendi  
 De honte li frons li rougi  
 Lors **canta** a haute alenee:  
*Fausse amour, je vous doins congié*  
*J'ai plus loiaus trouvee. (vv.6740-53)*

[She [Wuate the monkey] sang, standing on her feet, this pleasant and pretty motet: *Ah, God such a sweet name in a friend*. Afterwards Hersens descended, and Renart cast his eyes on this paramour and he descended, and then he said singing thus, clear and loud, he was well heard: *I am given to a good loyal lady*. And when Hersens heard this, she blushed and frowned from shame. Then she sang in a loud voice: *False love, I must give you leave to go, I have found a more loyal love*.]

This same example also illustrates how verbs such as 'dist,' 'canta' and 'recanta,' and modifiers such as 'haut' and 'cler' describe the singing of these refrains as part of the narrative action. On the most local level, then, the reader and listener understand the refrain as representing the named whole. As Maureen Boulton has pointed out, however, the contents of the refrains in *Renart le nouvel* are meaningful within the narrative context.<sup>5</sup> The refrains just quoted illustrate this. The words of the second and third refrains appear as a musical *tête-à-tête*: Renart sings of his surrender to Hersens, and Hersens responds with a refrain that refutes and refuses his insinuation. Such sequences of appropriate refrains and sections of verse-narrative create large-scale musico-poetic compositions comparable to an operatic *scena*. Later in this article I will show how some scribes gave sonic re-enforcement to such a *scena* by composing strings of related melodic phrases. First, however, I wish to examine further the implications of the specific vocabulary Jacquemart uses to describe the refrains.

In the above quotation, Jacquemart introduces the first refrain as a 'motet' and he uses this term to introduce refrains on four occasions (vv. 2409, 6732, 6742 and 6778). Given that for present-day scholars 'motet' usually connotes a high-brow polyphonic composition, its use here and in other narrative contexts to introduce refrains discloses a second possible referent. The word 'motet' can be read (or heard) as the diminutive form of 'mot', meaning word or account. Thus to the list of four appearances of the cue 'motet' can be added a fifth introduction that shows a revealing variation. Verse 6912 introduces the refrain as 'ce mot en cantant' ('this word in singing'). The sound, etymology and sense of the word 'motet' compares to the English word 'motto' – a summarial sentence

<sup>5</sup> Maureen Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200-1400* (Philadelphia, 1993), 106-9.

appropriate to an object or circumstance.<sup>6</sup> In *Renart le nouvel*, then, the cue 'motet' both predicts the ensuing refrain's status as a diminutive song or summarial song, and at the same time connotes a larger piece, as do 'cant', 'cançon' and 'rondet'. Thus in thirteenth-century usage, the word 'motet' referred to either a refrain or a polyphonic composition – two musical genres which may, at first, seem remote from one another.<sup>7</sup>

Neither the manuscripts nor the narrative imply that every refrain cued the actual performance of a longer song. Indeed, the quantity, high density and propriety of the refrains in the narrative makes the expansion of refrains into full songs in performance very unlikely. Only three occasions suggest such an expanded performance: verse 4412 introduces a refrain as a 'chançon a carole'; verse 6769 introduces a refrain as 'che rondet' and, similarly, verse 6886 introduces a refrain as 'ce rondet a carole'. Instead, within the narrative, refrains function on the same poetic plane as do the animal characters that perform them. Refrains operate as reported musical moments – transcriptions, if you will, of a performance given by a single character. Just as the reader comprehends the behaviour of the anthropomorphized animals both superficially (for immediate humour) and metaphorically (as a commentary on court society), so the reader/listener comprehends the refrains as both local musical moments and as musical phrases implying a large-scale musical composition.

## II Refrains as musical composition: the sensory impression

If the context of *Renart le nouvel* defines a medieval refrain as a poetic device that expresses and occasions musical performance, then one may well ask, 'What music do the animals perform?' and 'What music does the audience hear?' Example 1a presents three refrains appearing consecutively in the poem, set with melodies found in the manuscript *F-Pn* f.f. 372. These melodies all begin and end on a, and use c as a medial melodic focus. In the other notated sources, the same three refrains appear in the same context, but with different melodies. Example 1b comes from *F-Pn* f.f. 25566, where the three melodies form a miniature ABA pattern. Note that the A and B melodies complement each other in range and tonal focus. In Example 1c, the three refrains appear with melodies from the manuscript *F-Pn* f.f. 1593. These three melodies show less tonal coherence but still are clearly related in an ABB' pattern. From one manuscript to another, therefore, the refrain melodies are not stable. Indeed, neither melodic outlines, tonal centres, nor small melodic gestures appear in common among the three versions of any one refrain. So while refrains necessarily combine words and music, they do not necessarily connect specific words with specific music. None the less, each of the three sets of refrains that comprise Example

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Page, *Discarding Images* (Oxford, 1993), 60, also uses this cognate as a modern-day analogue for the word 'motet'.

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive study of the various meanings of the word 'motet' see Klaus Hofmann, 'Zur Entstehungs- und Frühgeschichte des Terminus Motette', *Acta Musicologica*, 42 (1970), 138–50.

I show how the composer of refrain melodies (perhaps the scribe himself) could and did use a long-range musical logic to guide his choice of notes for the refrain at hand. In each set of three refrains, the melodies make sense as successive phrases in a larger musical idea. The notion of dialect is a useful one for describing the circumstance of the refrains in the *Renart le nouvel* sources,

♩..

Da-me et a - mours li - e - ment vous fais demon cours i pre - sent

De no - stre con - pai - gni - e ne soit nus s'ih'est a - mant

Pi - tes et amours pour mi pri - es a ma da - me merci

Ex. 1a Refrains from *F-Pn* f.f. 372, fol. 51v

♩..

A Dame/et a - mours li - e - ment vousfach de mon cours pre - sent

B De no com - pai - ni - e ne soit nus s'il n'ert a - mans

A Pi - tes et a - mour pour mi proi je ma da - me mer - chi

Ex. 1b Refrains from *F-Pn* f.f. 25566, fol. 166v

A Da - me et a - mours li - e - ment vous fais de mon corps pre - sent

B De no com - pai - gni - e ne fort nultz s'il n'est a - mours

B' Pi - ties et a - mours pour mi pri - ez a ma da - me mer - ci

Ex. 1c Refrains from *F-Pn* f.f. 1593, fol. 51r

for the very perception of a dialect relies on the perception of sound patterns that are unified and predictable – and, more importantly, distinct from other renditions of the same.

Most of the refrains in *Renart le nouvel*, appear in the last scene, where over forty refrains occur within 256 lines of poetry – a veritable flourish of music. The concentration of refrains challenges the reader with a visual onslaught of staves and notes that seem to outweigh the narrative text. Indeed, the staves and notes make ‘swiss cheese’ out of the narrative – music suddenly comes to the fore, and narration recedes into the background. The eye scans the page by hopping from refrain to refrain before focusing on the more compressed lines of narrative. This scene offers a unique situation in which music dominates the visual experience of the page. Is it not reasonable, then, to view or to hear this scene as primarily a musical composition, and to ask how the lines of music relate to one another?

Of the three notated sources, MS 1593 offers the ‘best manuscript’ for understanding the activity of composing refrain melodies by a single musical intelligence.<sup>8</sup> MS 25566, which carries the date 1289, as well as MS 372, which carries the date 1292, appear to have been professionally produced. In these two sources, the words and music are neatly and cleanly entered, and fine miniature pictures frequently illustrate the narrative. In stark contrast, MS 1593, which carries the date 1290, appears to be a rough-draft, or rather a work in process. Unlike the other two notated sources, it bears the marks of modest production and heavy traffic over time. The miniatures were never added, though space was provided for them. A total of four scribes participated in an effort to complete and update the narrative and the musical interpolations over the course of several decades.<sup>9</sup> MS 1593 thus provides a more transparent source, allowing us to view the process of accretion – the input of many creative minds – that is characteristic of the majority of extant medieval music and literature. The beautiful but opaque manuscripts 25566 and 372 present a misleading visual uniformity and apparent single-mindedness.

Of the four hands compiling source 1593, a single hand contributed some thirty-eight refrains, often adding refrains and introductory lines in the margins. Though using brown ink and cursive script common to fourteenth-century practices, this scribe chose to write his refrain melodies in undifferentiated note-shapes common to thirteenth-century chansonniers. Furthermore, the dia-

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the stemma of the sources for *Renart le Nouvel* see John Roberts, ‘*Renart le Nouvel* – Dates and Successive Editions’, *Speculum*, 2 (1936), 472–7. Roberts groups the four manuscripts into two pairs: group  $\alpha$  consists of the unnotated source *F-Pn* f.f. 1581 and *F-Pn* f.f. 372; group  $\beta$  consists of *F-Pn* f.f. 25566 and *F-Pn* f.f. 1593. Unlike Henri Roussel, who used MS *F-Pn* f.f. 25566 for his 1961 edition of the narrative, Roberts chose group  $\alpha$  as the superior versions, and *F-Pn* f.f. 1581 as the ‘best manuscript’ and ‘basic manuscript’ for the text. Obviously the notion of a ‘best manuscript’ depends on what you are looking for. Considering that my interest lies primarily with music, MS *F-Pn* f.f. 1581 without musical notation is clearly not the ‘best manuscript’ for my purpose.

<sup>9</sup> See Maria Veder Fowler ‘Musical Interpolations in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century French Narratives’, Ph.D. diss. Yale University (1979), 100.

lect of his tunes, as well as the dialect of his notation, is very distinct from the other scribes in the same and the other notated sources. The scribe's extensive effort, conscious choice of notation, and coherent strings of melodies offer evidence of a thoughtful process of writing music. Furthermore, the brown ink and cursive script suggests that this romance may have been performed well into the fourteenth century.

For the purposes of this study, I will focus on an excerpt from the last scene (fols. 50r–51r, vv. 6742–830) in which our scribe added music (and sometimes both words and music) for fourteen successive refrains. Though the words of the refrains often appear in common with MS 372, his choice of melodies differs dramatically and is unique among the three notated sources.<sup>10</sup> On average, four lines of narrative text separate each refrain, with the occasional extremes of as many as eleven lines and as few as two. In performance, the spoken text becomes attenuated in comparison to the more sensorially rich and impacting moments of music. A close succession of spoken and sung text and the tonal coherence of the refrain melodies creates a strong musical momentum that compels the ear to hear through the narration to the next phrase of melody. If music is the most salient feature of this scene both visually and aurally, an audience therefore experiences this and similar scenes as musical compositions with textual interpolations.

What is the musical composition heard by the audience over the course of the last scene? Does the composition look like a *trouvère* chanson, a dance song, or some other type of melody? Example 2 presents a series of fifteen refrains (including those of Ex. 1) not in their context, but rather as if they were phrases in a larger monophonic composition to see if the series shows melodic coherence comparable to that observed in Example 1a, b and c. The 'composition' comprised of the first fourteen refrains gives the impression of coherence and logic effected through a careful handling of tonal centres linked to the varied repetition of several key melodic ideas. Phrase 1, 3, 7, 10, 13 and 14, rework the same melodic idea (marked as A) – beginning and returning to c and descending to G or F. Similarly, phrases 4, 5 and 8, 9 form two pairs of melodic periods – the first pair emphasizes d with angular melodies reminiscent of phrase 2; the second pair (marked as C) uses a recitation tone (a) inflected with occasional melodic descents. Phrases 6, 11 and 12 (marked as B) emphasize f through several narrow melodic arcs that never rise above a nor dip below E. Most of the refrains end on G, and those that end elsewhere seem only a temporary foray into a complementary pitch set.<sup>11</sup> The ear as well as the eye can tell that another scribe added refrain 15. A B $\flat$  signature, the leap to and

<sup>10</sup> Occasionally the same melody appears in *F-Pn* f.f. 25566 and *F-Pn* f.f. 372, as in the case of *A ma dame servir ai mis mon cuer et moi* (v. 6778). *Dont vient li maus d'amer ki m'ochirra* (v. 6790).

<sup>11</sup> That the melodic similarities among these refrains may reflect 'norms of composition' can be easily dismissed by recalling the radically different melodic profiles of the refrains in Example 1, which show that scribes were capable of writing a wide range of tunes – starting on any note and following any contour. The 'norms' or rather 'dialect' of the *F-Pn* f.f. 1593 scribe are not replicated in *F-Pn* f.f. 372 or *F-Pn* f.f. 25566.

f. 60r-61r

1  
A E dex si tres dous non a en a - mi

2  
A boi - ne da - me loi - aus sui don - nes

3  
A Faus - se/a - mour je vous doins con - gie j'ai plus loi - aus trou - ve - e

4  
B He a - mou - re - tes m'o - cir - res vous dont

5  
J'ai a - me et tous jour a - mo - rai

6  
B De cha - pe - let de per - ven - che no - ve - let a - mi fe - rai

7  
A A ma da - me ser - vir ai mis mon cuer et moi

8  
C Diex je me ma - ri - ai trop tos de moi ma - ri - er fis que fois

9  
C Dont vien li maus d'a - mer ki m'o - chi - ra

10  
A Da - me et a - mours li - e - ment vous fach de mon cors pre - sent

11  
B De no com - pai - ni - e ne soit aus s'il n'ert a mans

12  
B Pi - tes et a - mous pur mi proi - ies ma da - me mer - chi

13  
A Je cui - doi - e/a - voir a - mi or - i or - i mais je ai a tout fail - li

Ex. 2 Fifteen refrains from *F-Pn* f.f. 1593



A

J'a pe - le - rai se diex me gart de tra - i - son vo - stre re - gart

Dous a - mis a vous le ai mes - di - sant sont no - stre a - ne - mi

Ex. 2 (continued)

from high e, and the unprepared cadence on g rupture the tonal coherence of the previous fourteen phrases. Not only does this phrase sound out of place, but the melody itself sounds rough, unfocused and ultimately unmusical.

As previously mentioned, the words of the refrains in this scene further the narrative, creating a coherent musico-poetic composition. The scribe that composed the first fourteen refrains in Example 2 re-enforced the dramatic integration of the words with a corresponding melodic integration. Refrains 11 to 14 in Example 2 best illustrate this musical response to the narrative impact of the words. In this segment, two female animals, Blere and Masquelee, together sing refrain 11, 'In our company, there is no one who is not a lover', using melody B. Bruians the bull responds by singing refrain 12 'Pity and love, pray mercy for me from my lady', which repeats the same melody as the previous refrain in an expression of deference and courtliness. Blere, upon finding out that Bruians is the lover of both her and Masquelee, sings refrain 13, 'I believed to have love, alas, alas, but I have been completely deceived' using melody A. Masquelee then asks Bruians to sing a song for her, and he replies with refrain 14, 'I shall call out if God keeps me from betrayal by your looks', which also uses melody A – the same melody that just communicated his infidelity and deception. Thus the melodies strengthen the integration of the refrains into the drama, and can even provide an interpretative spin on dramatic exchanges.

### III The context of musical experience

Scholars writing on thirteenth-century interpolated romances have traditionally viewed the music as an intrusion in what is primarily a non-musical text. To speak of lyric 'insertion' or 'interpolation', as is commonly done, is to further this view.<sup>12</sup> In her recent book on the subject, Maureen Boulton, writes:

What I shall call 'lyric insertions' are found in works of a variety of different genres: dramatic and lyric, as well as narrative, but the last are by far the most numerous. A narrative in which lyric poems or songs are inserted is essentially a hybrid creation, combining two disparate forms. . . . An examination of the whole corpus of such

<sup>12</sup> The following citations serve to illustrate this point: Anne Preston Ladd, 'Lyric Insertions in Thirteenth-Century French Narrative', Ph.D. diss., Yale University (1977); Fowler, 'Musical Interpolations'; Maria V. Coldwell, 'Guillaume de Dole and Medieval Romances with Musical Interpolations', *Musica Disciplina*, 35 (1981), 55–86; M. B. M. Boulton, *The Song in the Story*.

narratives ought to illustrate how medieval poets working within a tradition responded to and modified the conventions of that tradition.<sup>13</sup>

The 'tradition' Boulton refers to is, of course, the narrative tradition – the non-musical context and partner in the mix. Boulton goes on to say that 'the lyric insertion device introduces an element of disruption into the narrative work. . . . Perhaps the most acute problem confronting an author who used lyric insertions was the need to account for the song, since it was an extraneous element.'<sup>14</sup> However, this portrayal of 'intrusion' into a narrative is far too narrow a concept to account for the scope and creativity of these romances. Jean Renart, in his prologue to *Guillaume de Dole* (considered the first of such 'hybrid' compositions), compares his mixture of song and narrative to a fabric dyed a brilliant red ('com l'en met la graine es dras' ['as one puts scarlet dye into a fabric'] vv. 8–9).<sup>15</sup> This metaphor communicates the notion that the romance should not be considered 'disrupted' by song, or that the 'hybrid' was comparable to a mixture of oil and water, but rather that the blend of song and narrative were inextricable. Indeed, as Margaret Switten observes, not only do the songs 'become a source for the story' and a 'technique or characterization', but the 'songs are often literally woven into the narration by the use of rime, most characteristically when the narrative frame picks up the final rime of the song'.<sup>16</sup>

In his prologue, Jean Renart not only emphasizes the novel blend of song and narrative in his romance, he also emphasizes the four different but related activities of writing, singing, reading and recollection in three passages:

Cil qui mist cest conte en romans  
Ou il a fet noter biaux chans  
Por ramembrance des chançons (vv. 1–3)

[He who put this tale into romance, wrote down beautiful songs therein, in order to remember the songs.]

Ja nuls n'iert de l'oir lassez  
Car s'en vieult, l'en i chante et lit (vv. 18–19)

[Never will anyone tire of hearing it, for, as one pleases, it has singing and reading.]

Que tuit cil s'en esjoïront  
Qui chanter et lire l'orront,  
Qu'il lor sera noviaus toz jors (vv. 21–3)

[That all who hear it sung and read will rejoice, for it will always be new to them.]

<sup>13</sup> Boulton, *The Song in the Story*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> See Margaret Switten, *Jean Renart, The Romance of the Rose or of Guillaume de Dole*, Booklet I (translation) (Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass., 1993), 11, and Switten, 'Song Performance, Song as Quotation, Song Repertories in Renart's *Rose*' (henceforth 'Song Performance'), Booklet II (Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass., 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Switten, 'Song Performance', 20–1.

In his study of the reception of medieval German literature, D. H. Green makes the very familiar point that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, one important mode of encountering literary texts was through recital, and that authors composed their works with both readers and listeners in mind.<sup>17</sup> The anticipation of reading and hearing by the author appears in the use of double formulas that mention both singing and hearing (e.g. 'qui chanter et lire l'orront'), and in the texts where 'evidence for a reading reception is found alongside evidence for hearing'.<sup>18</sup> The inclusion of songs in *Guillaume de Dole* and Jean Renart's persistent use of the double formula anticipating both readers and listeners strongly suggests that the romance was intended to be recited.<sup>19</sup> It follows that some of the readers were also the literate performers who were expected to render the songs. Jean Renart's opening remark that he had written down the songs so that the songs would be remembered ('Ou il a fet noter biaux chans / Por ramembrance des chançons') seems directed to the literate performer. The performer no doubt had many songs committed to memory, and Jean Renart sought to control exactly the songs to be performed by writing down specific lyrics. For Jean Renart, the specifics of the musical experience were important enough to control, and not to be left in the hands and mouth of the performer.

In the case of *Renart le nouvel*, it is precisely the hands and mouths of literate performers whom we have to thank for the musical notation found in three of the four extant sources. The stability of many of the refrain words points to Jacquemart's initial control of the refrains. However, the variety of melodies across the three notated sources points to the obvious intercession of a 'music director' – either in the guise of the performer himself, who would chose from memory an appropriate melody to fit the words, or in the guise of a 'third party', who wrote down melodies to fit the words so that the performer (himself or another) could then render the melodies as he read them.

Unlike Jean Renart, Jacquemart did not offer any remarks about the inclusion of music in his narrative. However, the specific context of the last scene in *Renart le nouvel* greatly challenges the tendency to privilege the experience of the narrative over the experience of the music. This brings me to the main point of this article: to understand the refrains in the context of musical experience. As a back-drop I have chosen not the environment of other narratives with musical interpolations, but rather the environment of other musical compositions known by the scribe. The music scribe who composed the refrains in the last scene of MS 1593 faced a page of text frequently interrupted by empty staves. He fills

<sup>17</sup> D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading* (Cambridge, 1994), 170. As models for his work on medieval German reception, Green cites the preceding work of two Romance philologists: H. Lütke and P. Wunderli. Lütke and Wunderli both posited a recitational stage of reception for Old French literature.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>19</sup> The premise of Margaret Switten's 1993 video production of *Guillaume de Dole* is that the recital of romances that were highly theatrical and rich in dialogue could have tended towards drama, with role playing and staging. See the accompanying Booklet I, *Jean Renart*, 5-7.

in the staves one by one in succession. Does he stop to read the text in between? That seems doubtful. Is he thinking about other interpolated narratives? That also seems doubtful. More likely, his choice of notes is influenced by the music he has sung or heard. He frequently adds refrains in the margins and refrains unique to this source, so it seems he was not working from a written exemplar but from another redaction of the story. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the 'dialect' of his tunes and notation is very distinct from the other sources and scribes.

Hearing the first fourteen refrains as a continuous melody invites comparison to other thirteenth-century monophony, though this melody looks neither like a *trouvère* chanson nor a dance song. Where does one find melodies built from non-isometric phrases and melodic resemblances rather than exact repetition? Two possible models survive in thirteenth-century sources. The first is the monophonic *motet enté* found in the *trouvère* chansonnier N (*F-Pn* f.f. 845).<sup>20</sup> Example 3, *Or ai je trop demorer hors*, is one of fifteen monophonic pieces presented under the rubric 'Ci commencent li motet ente'. It is important to note that the rubric invokes the term 'motet' to identify a monophonic piece that uses a refrain or a refrain-like aphorism as an embedded rather than repeating compositional component. As with the series of refrains from *Renart le nouvel*, the varied repetition of melodic phrases indexes the flow of contours, though frequent cadences on *f* organize and unify the phrases into a more coherent continuous melody.

In Example 3, the letters in the left margin signal the four melodic phrases that are used more than once. Although the melodic repetition is not always exact, and does not suggest a predictable scheme, the final two phrases do create a melodic parallel with the first two, so that the piece is framed by the same two phrases, coming in the same order. Many of the *motet entés* in MS 845, however, show less constructivistic uses of repetition and more echoing of smaller melodic fragments or motifs. Exact repetition as one finds in *trouvère* chansons or *rondeaux* seems the exception in the melodic language represented by the refrain composition in Example 2 and the *motet enté* in Example 3.

The second possible melodic model comes from thirteenth-century polyphonic motets. Motetus and tripla parts provide a source of melodies distinct from *trouvère* chanson and dance songs. Indeed, motet melodies sometimes appear as monophonic pieces in chansonniers, pointing to an appreciation and cultivation of a 'continuous melody' monophonic song form.<sup>21</sup> Example 4 presents the triplum of a motet (No. 74) found in fascicle 5 of the Montpellier Codex

<sup>20</sup> For a thorough discussion of the *motets entés* in MS 845, see Mark Everist, *French Motets in the Thirteenth Century: Music, Poetry and Genre* (Cambridge, 1994), 75–89. The medieval theorist Johannes de Grocheio mentions the *motet enté* in his treatise *De musica* (c. 1300); see Christopher Page, 'Johannes de Grocheio on Secular Music: A Corrected Text and a New Translation', *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, 2 (1993), 27.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of 'continuous melody' songs, see Judith A. Peraino 'New Music, Notions of Genre, and the *Manuscrit du Roi* circa 1300', Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley (1995), 218–57.

A 

B 



C 

D 





D 

C 

A 

B 

Ex. 3 'Or ai je trop demore'

1 L'au - trier m'es - ba - toi - e

2 et touz seus pen - soi - e

3 a mon gre: s'en ai mieuz tro - ve

4 fe - sant mout grant joi - e

5 en - con - trai Ro - bin les en pre

6 ou Ma - rot a voit chan - te

7 J'ai une a - mou - re - te a mon gre

8 qui me tien jol - ie - te

9 re - gre - tot son be - ge - rot

10 qui mout li a - gre - e et coint et mi - gnot

11 ain - si Ro - bin so - vent re - gre - tot

12 Gran fo - lie est je t'en tieng pour sot a ce mot

13 quant f'a - mie as de - guer - pi - e Ma - rot

14  
quant o - ie ot la che - vri - e si chan - toit

15  
G'i - rai tou - te la va - lee a - vec Ma - rot

Ex. 4 (continued)

(Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l'École de Médecine, H 196, henceforth *Mo*); like many motet texts, it presents a narrative that includes the quotation of refrains.<sup>22</sup> As in *Renart le nouvel*, the quoted refrains are introduced with a description of singing. Thus they appear as 'songs within a song'.

(1) Encontraï Robin les en pre, ou Marot a voit chante: 'J'ai une amourete a mon gre, qui me tient joliete'.

[I met Robin beside a meadow where he saw Marot sing 'I have a love to my liking, who keeps me lighthearted'.]

(2) Quant oie ot la chevre si chantoit: 'G'irait oute la vatee avec Marot'

[When Robin heard the piping he sang 'I will travel the whole valley with Marot'.]

I have transcribed the triplum using undifferentiated note-shapes just as if the melody had appeared in a chansonnier.<sup>23</sup> Though perhaps a less well indexed melody than the *motet enté* and the string of refrains, the triplum none the less achieves a measure of coherence. This melody exhibits the same principles of composition as the string of refrains and the *motet enté*: it has short phrases of irregular length, overall tonal coherence with temporary shifts of tonal focus, the use of related melodic gestures to further organize the composition. Here a single melodic cell – a four-note descent from c to g – characterizes the upper register of the melody, while the setting up of cadences explores the low end of the central c octave. As with the string of refrains in Example 4, the first and the last phrases obsessively reiterate the primary melodic motif.

How do we make sense of the fact that a series of refrains composed as a large-scale piece resembles a motet melody, or that a motet melody resembles a series of refrains? Let us suppose that our scribe of MS 1593 had sung, perhaps even rehearsed, this triplum melody near the time that he filled in the refrains for *Renart le nouvel*. It is easy to imagine that the triplum melody, still ringing in his ears, could have influenced his composition of the string of

<sup>22</sup> See Christopher Page, *Discarding Images*, 106–10, for a discussion of the interplay and timing of the text of the triplum within the polyphonic environment.

<sup>23</sup> The vocal ensemble Gothic Voices, under the direction of Christopher Page, has recorded many thirteenth-century motets in 'layers', performing each part as monophony in prelude to the polyphonic performance. Page writes, 'This practice is not mentioned in any source contemporary with the music but it accords with the sequential nature of [some] texts. . . . This style of performance can be extended to motets whose poems do not call for sequential presentation; as the individual parts unfold by themselves, we delight both in them and in the anticipation of the final result'; *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (Hyperion CDA66423, 1990), Pamphlet, p. 5. Clearly both medieval and present-day musicians appreciated motet parts as melodies in their own right.

refrains. This comparison musically connects the two thirteenth-century referents for the word 'motet'. On a local level, the individual refrains compare to the individualistic phrases of the motet triplum. The succession of refrains is analogous to the non-isometric phrases and textual disjunctions of voice and discourse (narrative and implied song) common to motetus and tripla parts. But the analogy between refrains and motets goes still further. Both are unusually brief examples of music that originated as part of a larger composition – motets from the discant clausula of organum, and refrains from dance songs and chansons. I do not mean to imply that the motet from fascicle 5 was a direct descendant of a discant clausula. I am proposing that refrains and motets, taken alone, have an analogous aspect of incompleteness that provokes us to search for and posit a larger musical context. Within the original 'larger' musical contexts, then, motets and refrains represent songs within songs – a heightened musical event within a musical environment. As genres unto themselves, their brevity begs a larger context for intellectual comprehension and completion. In the narrative context of *Renart le nouvel*, refrains serve as a poetic device that articulates musical performance. Contexts and functions for the thirteenth-century polyphonic motet have yet to be understood. Early in the fourteenth century, however, we find polyphonic motets specifically composed for and interpolated into one version of the *Roman de Fauvel* (F-Pn f.f. 146).<sup>24</sup> Although these polyphonic motets clearly do not have the same synecdochic function as the refrains in *Renart le nouvel*, they do suggest the possibility that thirteenth-century polyphonic motets may have functioned as interpolated music – perhaps even substituting for refrains in certain performances of *Renart le nouvel* or similar narratives.

The word 'motet' is no less polyvalent in the *Roman de Fauvel* than in *Renart le nouvel*. One notable appearance of the word 'motet' in the *Roman de Fauvel* occurs on fol. 26v where the phrase 'Com cil dont ce motet acorde' introduces a piece comprised of verbally interlocking, spoken and sung verses.<sup>24</sup> Thus even in the fourteenth century, the word 'motet' retains an association with brief refrain-like musical interpolations into a spoken context.

Still, whether appropriate or coincidental, it is the music that most persuades us of a connection between the two referents for the word 'motet'. Divorced from intellectual justification, the sensory experience of reading, performing and hearing a wide variety of compositions brings to the fore unpredictable resonances. It is up to the intellect to reconcile incongruities and devise explanations. Given the select population of musically literate clerics and court musicians around 1300, refrains, motets, chansons – indeed, all genres of music, as well as their various designations – no doubt mingled and cross-fertilized in the minds of scribes and composers, resulting in foxy Renart-like entanglements.

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<sup>24</sup> Hans Tischler, *The Monophonic Songs in the Roman de Fauvel* (Lincoln, Nebr. 1991), 97, has transcribed the sung verses as a single continuous melody, much like my Example 2.