

Contrafacture

A. General definition

The setting of a new text to an existing melody, which is the technical definition of contrafacture, was noticed early on in medieval lyric scholarship. The cultural significance of the phenomenon is still subject of much study and debate. From arguments concerning the very definition of contrafacture and the manner by which *contrafacta* may be discerned to wider cultural ramifications, work on the question has been considerable for well over a century. With questions of melodic borrowing come questions of shared metrical schemes, simplified or purposely complicated rhyme schemes, and semantic motivic borrowing and variation.

B. History of Scholarship

The fundamental work on contrafacture remains Friedrich GENNRICH's *Die Kontrafaktur im Liedschaffen des Mittelalters* (1965). The work represents the culmination of GENNRICH's work of the preceding decades, which was built upon his own first-hand experience with primary sources in various national traditions ("Der deutsche Minnesang in seinem Verhältnis zur Troubadour- und Trouvère-Kunst," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung* 2 [1926]: 536–66, 622, 632; "Internationale mittelalterliche Melodien," *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 11 [1929]: 321–48; *Grundriss einer Formenlehre des mittelalterlichen Liedes*, 1932; "Lateinische Kontrafakta altfranzösischer Lieder," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 50 [1930]: 187–207; *Lateinische Liedkontrafaktur: Eine Auswahl lateinischer Conductus mit ihren volkssprachigen Vorbildern*, 1956; and "Liedkontrafaktur in mittel- und althochdeutscher Zeit," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 82 [1948]: 105–41, and revised in *Der deutsche Minnesang: Aufsätze zu seiner Erforschung*, ed. Hans FROMM, 1961, 330–77). A contemporary of GENNRICH, Hans SPANKE, also worked on the question ("Das öftere Auftreten von Strophenformen und Melodien in der alfranzösischen Lyrik," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 51 [1928]: 73–117; "Romanische und mittellateinische Formen in der Metrik von Minnesangs Frühling," *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 49 [1929]: 191–235, rpt. in *Der deutsche Minnesang*, ed. Hans FROMM, 1961, 254–329).

GENNRICH's main interest in contrafacture lay in the typological: he wished to identify the various techniques of contrafacture and discover, where possible, which melodies were reused and sung to which texts. In the field of troubadour lyric, he had published what he deemed to be accepted *contrafacta* in his *Der musikalische Nachlass der Troubadours* (1958–1960). In *Die*

Kontrafaktor, he explains more explicitly the criteria by which he judged, delineating various categories of *contrafactum* such as those that share melody and rhyme scheme with their models (“reguläre Kontrafaktor”); those that show some variation (“irreguläre Kontrafaktor”); etc. GENNRICH backs up his categorizations with copious examples from the French, Latin, Occitan, Spanish, German, Dutch, and English traditions.

GENNRICH’s research offered both contemporaries and scholars who came after him the tools to continue his mainly typological work. Even before the publication of *Die Kontrafaktor*, István FRANK saw the possibilities of contrafacture as a helpful tool in discussing possible influence and published his *Répertoire métrique de la poésie des troubadours* (2 vols., 1953–1957). Guiseppe TAVANI followed suit in 1967 with his *Repertorio metrico della lirica galego-portoghese*, as did Ulrich MÖLK and Friedrich WOLFZETTEL in 1972 with their *Répertoire métrique de la poésie lyrique française des origines à 1350*. Scholars working on a given text in each of these traditions could consult one of these books and discover which other songs used the same metrical scheme and might be therefore evidence of contrafacture. J. H. MARSHALL is careful to point out that identical metrical schemes do not automatically indicate contrafacture as other criteria such as musical evidence and the rarity of the scheme in question must be considered (“Imitation of metrical form in Peire Cardenal,” *Romance Philology* 32 (1978): 18–48; “Pour l’étude des *contrafacta* dans la poésie des troubadours,” *Romania* 101 [1980]: 289–335). Hans TISCHLER considered just those very questions in his *Trouvère Lyrics with Melodies: Complete Comparative Edition* (1997). He orders song texts according to the melodies to which they were sung and includes song texts from other traditions, notably Latin, Occitan, and German, when evidence points to a melody being borrowed across a linguistic border.

In the wake of these typological works, more recent studies of contrafacture have been undertaken on a smaller, more focused scale, especially in regard to Occitan lyric and its relationship with other traditions. This is undoubtedly because Occitan lyric flourished so early among the vernacular traditions. William D. PADEN has recently published studies of contrafacture that relate Occitan lyric to Galician-Portuguese lyric (“Contrafacture between Occitan and Galician-Portuguese,” *Corónica: A Journal of Medieval Spanish Language and Literature*, 26 [1998]: 49–63 and “Contrafacture between Occitan and Galician-Portuguese: The Case of Bonifaci Calvo,” *TENSO: Bulletin of the Societe Guilhem IX*, 13 [1998]: 50–71). Similarly, Paolo CANETTIERI has offered “Para un Estudio Histórico-Xeográfico e Tipolóxico da Imitación Métrica na Lírica Galego-Portuguesa: Recuperación de Textos Trobadorescos e Troveirescos,” *Anuario de Estudios Literarios Galegos*, 1994, 11–50. In regard to

Catalan lyric, Dominique BILLY takes up the question of troubadour influence in “Contrafactures de modèles troubadouresques dans la poésie catalane” (*Le rayonnement des troubadours*, ed. Anton TOUBER, 1998, 51–74), as has Volker MERTENS in regard to German song (“Kontrafaktur als intertextuelles Spiel: Aspekte der Adaptation von Troubadour-Melodien im deutschen Minnesang” (also in *Le rayonnement des troubadours*, 269–83).

Medieval treatises such as the *Doctrina de compondre dictats* stipulate that certain lyric forms normally used existing melodies such as the *sirventés* and *cobla*. As true as that may be, the repertory that lies heavily on contrafacture and has provoked the most scholarly discussion is that of religious lyrics. It was often, but not always, the case that the melody of a secular love song was put to a new religious text, often Marian in nature. Paul MEYER discussed the question explicitly in an early, short study entitled “Types de quelques chansons de Gautier de Coinci” (*Romania* 17 [1888]: 429–37) in which MEYER called on philologists to consider publishing the 13th-century *Miracles de Nostre Dame* which contains, depending upon the manuscript, well over a dozen medieval Marian songs. Many of Gautier’s Marian songs were *contrafacta*, so once work began on his songs, it did not take long for others to broaden the focus of religious lyrical contrafacture. Edward JÄRNSTRÖM made particularly pertinent observations in the critical apparatus to the first volume of his *Recueil de chansons pieuses du XIII^e siècle* (1910).

The exchange of materials among secular and religious lyrics through contrafacture and, by extension, lyric citation, where not only formal properties but also semantic motifs are exchanged has led to a good deal of discussion about the cultural relevance of contrafacture. In his book, *La lyrique française au moyen âge* (1977), Pierre BEC posits that religious lyric, precisely for its use of contrafacture and lyric citation, belongs to a “parasitical” lyric register (“registre parasite”). Scholars since then, however, have taken issue with such a summary judgment of contrafacture as a process used only by composers who lacked originality. Again, in the case of Gautier de Coinci, Anna DRZEWICKA argues convincingly in her article “La fonction des emprunts à la poésie profane dans les chansons mariales de Gautier de Coinci” (subdivided into two parts within volume 91 [1985] of *Le Moyen Age*, 33–51 and 179–200) that Gautier intentionally borrowed elements meant to highlight his new conception of “bone amor” (“good love”) for the Virgin Mary over human women. Kathryn DUYS takes this line of argument a step further in her Ph.D. dissertation, “Books Shaped by Song: Early Literary Literacy in the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* of Gautier de Coinci” (New York University, 1997), in which she explores how techniques of contrafacture and lyric citation were used to serve sophisticated programs of *compilatio*. Finally, Daniel

O'SULLIVAN (*Marian Devotion in Thirteenth-Century French Lyric*, 2005) discusses contrafacture more widely in the French tradition and even touches upon its use across national boundaries (Latin and German) in a discussion of Jacques de Cambrai's lyrics. O'SULLIVAN discusses more particularly the performative aspects of contrafacture: in many instances, melodies were used and reused for several songs, both secular and religious, which results in a densely allusive semantic fabric whose significance would vary from listener to listener, depending upon a given listener's own experience with lyric performance.

In German studies, in addition to work on Minnesinger, studies of the poetry by Oswald von Wolkenstein has brought to light later medieval poets' use of earlier poetic sources and use of common melodies. In the late 20th century, Albrecht CLASSEN was especially productive in this area, not only in the pages he dedicates to Oswald in his *Autobiographische Lyrik des europäischen Spätmittelalters* (1991), but also in several journal articles, such as "Giannozzo Sacchetti's *Mentr'io d'amor pensava* as a Source for Oswald von Wolkenstein's Song-Poetry," *Monatshefte* 80 (1988): 459–68, and "French and Italian Sources for Oswald von Wolkenstein's Onomatopoeic Lyric Poetry," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 15 (1989): 93–105. Before CLASSEN, Herbert LÖWENSTEIN had shown that Oswald tended to use common melodies among songs that share a mood or tone (*Wort und Ton bei Oswald von Wolkenstein*, 1932).

Select Bibliography

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