

CHAUCER AND PETER RIGA

By KARL YOUNG

CHAUCER'S one direct reference to Peter Riga's *Aurora* occurs in the following passage in the *Book of the Duchess*, in the course of which the sorrowing knight speaks of Tubal's invention of the art of music:¹

Trewly I dide my besynesse
To make songes, as I best koude,
And ofte tyme I song hem loude;
And made songes thus a gret del,
Although I koude not make so wel
Songes, ne knewe the art al,
As koude Lamekes sone Tubal,
That found out first the art of songe;
For as hys brothres hamers ronge
Upon hys anvelt up and down,
Therof he took the firste soun, —
But Grekes seyn Pictagoras,
That he the firste fynder was
Of the art, Aurora telleth so, —
But therof no fors, of hem two.

Since Riga's poem was among the most widely read and accessible of mediaeval writings, Chaucer's acquaintance with it would have been virtually inevitable, and his use of it altogether natural.² In the absence of a complete printed text of the *Aurora*, however, students of Chaucer have been imperfectly equipped for demonstrating that the English poet actually derived his information about the invention of music directly from Peter Riga rather than from other writers who might seem to provide the Chaucerian details with greater fullness and precision. Of the relevant part of the *Aurora* the Chaucerian commentators have found access only to the following four isolated lines, included among the excerpts from Riga's poem printed by Leyser two centuries ago:³

¹ Lines 1156–70. I use the text of F. N. Robinson, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Boston, etc., 1933), p. 327.

² Commenting upon the multiplicity of manuscripts of the *Aurora* extant in European libraries, the writer in *Histoire littéraire de la France* (xvii [Paris, 1832], p. 31) remarks, 'Aucun livre n'a jamais été si souvent copié.' Concerning this matter see also M. Manitius, *Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, III (Munich, 1931), 825–826; D. Reichling, *Das Doctrinale des Alexander de Villa-Dei* (Berlin, 1893) p. xix. These writers do not mention the dozen examples in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford, the ten or so in the British Museum, and one in the Cambridge University Library, all of which I have examined recently.

³ P. Leyser, *Historia Poetarum et Poematum Medii Aevi* (Halle, 1721), p. 728. From Leyser the lines are reprinted by Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, ccxii, 22; by T. Tyrwhitt in *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, v (London, 1778), 254, and in *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, II (Oxford, 1798), 544; and by W. W. Skeat, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, I (Oxford, 1899), 493. These four lines and the preceding eighteen are printed from Wolfenbüttel manuscripts by H. Oppermann, in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, cxxx (1925), 294; but this longer excerpt offered by Oppermann has not, I think, been cited by Chaucerian commentators.

Aure Jubal varios ferramenti notat ictus.

Pondera librat in his. Consona quaeque facit.

Hoc inventa modo prius est ars musica, quamuis

Pythagoram dicant hanc docuisse prius.

Although these lines are relevant to Chaucer's, they apply to his passage very inadequately, since, as the inventor of music they name Jubal, rather than Tubal, and they do not identify him as Lamech's son. To speak of smaller matters, the Latin lines also omit specific mention of the anvil, and of the Greeks as contending for the priority of Pythagoras. Information more ample and precise was available either in Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* (before 1179), which Chaucer may well have known,¹ or in Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Doctrinale* (ca 1260), with which he was undoubtedly familiar.² Peter Comestor writes as follows:³

Porro Henoch genuit Irad, qui Maviael, qui Mathusael, qui Lamech, qui septimus ab Adam, et pessimus, qui primus bigamiam introduxit, et sic adulterium contra legem naturae, et Dei decretum, commisit. In prima enim creatione unica unico facta est mulier, et Deus per os Adae decreverat: *Erunt duo in carne una* (Gen. II). *Accepitque duas uxores Adam et Sellam. Genuitque Ada Jabel*, qui adinvenit portatilia pastorum tentoria ad mutanda pascua, et greges ordinavit, et characteribus distinxit, separavitque secundum genera greges ovium a gregibus hoedorum, et secundum qualitatem, ut unicolores a grege sparsi velleris, et secundum aetatem, ut anniculos a maturioribus, et commissuras certis temporibus faciendas intellexit. *Nomen fratris ejus Tubal, pater canentium in cithara, et organo*. Non instrumentorum quidem, quae longe post inventa fuerunt, sed inventor fuit musicae, id est consonantiarum, ut labor pastoralis quasi in delicias verteretur. Et quia audierat Adam prophetasse de duobus judiciis, ne periret ars inventa, scripsit eam in duabus columnis, in qualibet totam, ut dicit Josephus, una marmorea, altera latericia, quarum altera non diluatur diluvio, altera non solveretur incendio. Marmoream dicit Josephus adhuc esset in terra Syriaca. *Sella genuit Tubalcain*, qui ferrariam artem primus invenit, res bellicas prudenter exercuit, sculpturas operum in metallis in libidinem oculorum fabricavit. Quo fabricante, Tubal, de quo dictum est, sono metallorum delectatus, ex ponderibus eorum proportiones, et consonantias eorum, quae ex eis nascuntur, excogitavit, quam inventionem Graeci Pythagorae attribuunt fabulose.

The resemblances between this passage and Chaucer's lines are obvious. Peter Comestor names as the inventor of music, not Jubal, but Tubal, and shows him to be Lamech's son, and Tubalcain's half-brother. This narrative, moreover,

¹ Whereas T. R. Lounsbury (*Studies in Chaucer*, II [New York, 1892], 372–375) and Robinson (*op cit.*, pp. 835, 860) doubt Chaucer's knowledge of Peter Comestor, Skeat (*Complete Works of G. C.*, v [Oxford, 1900], 255, 278) appears to take it for granted. Eleanor P. Hammond (*Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual* [New York, 1908], p. 101) is undecided.

² See Hammond, p. 105. For additional indications of Chaucer's indebtedness to Vincent of Beauvais see articles by Pauline Aiken in *SPECULUM*, x (1935), 281–287; *Studies in Philology*, xxxiii (1936), 40–44; *PMLA*, LI (1936), 361–369.

³ Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, cxcviii, 1078–79 (*Historia Scholastica*, Liber Genesis, cap. xxviii). The passage of the Vulgate which Comestor is elaborating is the following (Genesis iv, 18–22):

18. Porro Henoch genuit Irad, et Irad genuit Mauiael, et Mauiael genuit Mathusael, et Mathusael genuit Lamech.

19. Qui accepit duas uxores, nomen uni Ada, et nomen alteri Sella.

20. Genuitque Ada Jabel, qui fuit pater habitantium in tentoriis, atque pastorum.

21. Et nomen fratris ejus Jubal: ipse fuit pater canentium cithara et organo.

22. Sella quoque genuit Tubalcain, qui fuit malleator et faber in cuncta opera aeris et ferri.

attaches to Tubal, probably for the first time, two separate traditions concerning the origin of music: (1) the Biblical story, which merely describes Jubal as *pater canentium cithara et organo* (Genesis iv, 21), without specifying the manner of the discovery of music; and (2) the story of Tubal's observing the varying tones of hammers on the anvil of his half-brother, Tubalcain — a narrative which had been anciently associated with Pythagoras.¹

The essentials of Comestor's account are recorded in Vincent of Beauvais' encyclopedia as follows:²

Petrus Comestor in Historia Scolastica. Tubal, filius Lamech, qui fuit pater canentium cithara et organo, — non instrumentorum quidem, que longe post inuenta sunt, — sed inuentor fuit musicæ: id est consonantiarum, ut labor pastoralis quasi in deliciis verteretur. Et quia audierat Adam prophetasse de duobus iudicijs, ne periret ars inuenta, scripsit eam in duabus columnis in qualibet tota, vna marmorea, alia latericia, quarum altera non dilueretur diluuiio, altera non dissolueretur incendio. Marmoream dicit Iosephus adhuc esse in terra Syrica. Tubalcaym, frater eius, ferrariam artem primus adinuenit; res bellicas decenter exercuit; sculpturas operum in metallis in libidinem oculorum fabricauit. Que fabricante, Tubal, de quo dictum est, sono malleorum delectatus ex ponderibus eorum proportionones et consonantias, que ex his nascuntur, excogitauit. Quam inuentionem Greci Pythagore attribuunt fabulose.

Clearly, then, if the four lines of the *Aurora*, in the form quoted above, represented Peter Riga's account of the invention of music accurately and completely, we might pardonably suspect that Chaucer derived his information actually from Peter Comestor or Vincent of Beauvais, and that his mention of the *Aurora* was a literary flourish, reflecting, perhaps, a gloss in a manuscript of Comestor or of Vincent. Any such suspicion, however, may be put to rest, and Chaucer's straightforwardness fully established, by resorting to the complete text of the *Aurora* in the forms in which it circulated in Chaucer's day. The full passage of the poem containing Riga's story of the invention of music appears as follows, for example, in an unpublished manuscript of the thirteenth century:³

Vxorem(que) Caim cognouit, que parit Enoch;
Vrbs patris ex cuius nomine dicta fuit.

¹ The transformations and affiliations of the story of Pythagoras's discovery of music are abundantly traced by H. Oppermann, 'Eine Pythagoraslegende,' *Bonner Jahrbücher*, cxxx (1925), 284–301. As Oppermann explains (pp. 292–293), the attaching of the Pythagorean hammer-and-anvil story to Tubal (or Jubal) was made easier by the Biblical statement that Jubal's half-brother, Tubalcain, was a *malleator et faber in cuncta opera aeris et ferri* (Genesis iv, 22).

² *Speculum Doctrinale Vincentij Beluacensis* (Strassburg, Adolf Rusch, circa 1472), lib. xvii, cap. xxv. Brunetto Latini also is thought to have used Peter Comestor's *Historia* for his account of Jubal's (variant Thubal) invention of musical instruments (*Li Livres dou Tresor*, ed. P. Chabaille, Paris, 1863, p. 27). See F. J. Carmody, in *SPECULUM*, xi (1936), 361. Since Brunetto does not mention the Pythagorean tradition, however, his account of Jubal's discovery lies outside the literary sequence leading to Chaucer.

³ Cambridge University Library, *MS. Ll. v. 15.*, fol. 36^r–36^v. The manuscript is described in *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, iv (Cambridge, 1861), 99. Of the complete passage printed here, various parts, from various manuscripts, have been previously printed by the following: lines 15–22, 27–30 by Leyser, *loc. cit.*; lines 9–30 by Oppermann, in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, cxxx (1925), 294; lines 1–14, 23–26 by Oppermann in *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, xlvi (1927), 59, 60. In the texts of Leyser and Oppermann the proper name in lines 11 and 27 is *Jubal*.

Vnde patet multos homines tunc esse uigentes, Quorum subsidiis urbs ea facta fuit.	
Post hec Enoch Yrath, et Yrat (Mamail), Mamailque Matusese genuit, Matusaelque Lamec.	5
Septimus hic ab Adam, Sellam dilexit et Adam; Sic bigamus factus iunxit utramque sibi.	
Huic parit Ada Iabel; fraterque Tubal fuit eius. Seruabatque suos pastor uterque greges.	10
Iste Tubal cantu gaudens pater extitit horum Qui citharis psallunt organicisque modis; Musica dulce canens fuit ars inuenta per illum, Vt pastoraliter gaudeat inde labor.	
Et quia nouit Adam primum dixisse futurum Iudicium duplex: scilicet ignis aque,	15
In geminis artem scripsit posuitque columpnis; Extitit hec laterum, marmoris ¹ illa fuit,	
Vt non (hec) per aquam pereat, ² non illa per ignem, Si sit deficiens una, sit una manens;	20
Vt nobis Iosephi declarant ³ scripta, columpnam Marmoream tellus Scithica seruat adhuc.	
Sella parit Tubalcaim, qui primitus artem Inuenit ferri, bellica multa docens.	
Sculpturis ⁴ operum laudem dedit ille metallis, Delitias oculis arte metalla nouans.	25
Aure Tubal uarios ferramenti notat hictus; Pondera librat in his ⁵ consona queque facit. (fol. 36v)	
Hoc inuenta modo prius est ars musica, quamuis Pitagoram dicunt hanc docuisse prius.	30

In these verses appear the relevant data observed above in the prose of Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*: the inventor of music is named Tubal, he is Lamech's son, and with him are associated both the Biblical story and the Pythagorean. The reappearance of these characteristic details in Riga's verses arises from the fact that Comestor's *Historia* (before 1179) was a direct literary source of Riga's *Aurora* (before 1209).⁶

The manuscript of the *Aurora* from which I have quoted (Cambridge *MS. Ll. v. 15*) happens not to contain glosses or marginalia. From annotated manuscripts of the poem can be derived additional details found in Chaucer's lines. Thus the words 'Grekes seyn' (l. 1167) might reflect such a gloss as *Hec Greci dicunt*, found opposite line 30 in a thirteenth-century manuscript;⁷ and the words 'Upon hys anvelt' (l. 1165) might have been derived from such a gloss as the following, written opposite ll. 10–2 in a manuscript of the late thirteenth, or early fourteenth, century: 'Tubal inuentor fuit musice, audiens mallios similiter super incudem; notauit consonanciam ictuum.'⁸

¹ marmoris] mormoris (*Camb. Ll. v. 15*).

² per aquam pereat] pereat per aquam, with *direction for the transposition* (*Camb. Ll. v. 15*).

³ declarant] declararet (*Camb. Ll. v. 15*).

⁴ Sculpturis] Sculpturas (*Camb. Ll. v. 15*).

⁵ in his] adhuc (*Camb. Ll. v. 15*).

⁶ See H. Oppermann, 'Petrus Riga und Petrus Comestor,' in *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, XLVI (1926), 55–73.

⁷ British Museum, *MS. Harley 627*, fol. 16r.

⁸ British Museum, *MS. Sloane 1726*, fol. 11v.

There can be no doubt, then, that one or more manuscripts of the *Aurora*, glossed or unglossed, actually provided Chaucer with the information concerning the invention of music which he versified in the *Book of the Duchess*. The natural question, whether he used Riga's poem in other places, may, perhaps, be answered through further studies now under way.

YALE UNIVERSITY.