

***Interactions between Conducti and Troubadour Contrafacta: the cases of Vite
perdite me legi and Quisquis cordi et oculi***

When approaching issues related to intertextuality in the Middle Ages, claims of authorship and originality often rest on dubious foundations. *Ars Antiqua* scholars commonly face issues of false attributions of authorship and lack of music sources copied earlier than the XIII century: this does not help at all when we study the origins of a song. We must also bear in mind that compilation from existing sources was frequently a crucial part of medieval writing. The *contrafactum* – a remarkable mirror of cultural interactions in the Middle Ages and beyond - represents one of the most interesting and fascinating topics related to authorship and music borrowing. One such group of musical connections has always been acknowledged but never fully explored. As Elizabeth Aubrey writes in her fundamental study *The Music of the Troubadours*:

There is some evidence that there were borrowings between the Latin and the Occitanian repertoires. But the exact relationship between the song of the troubadours and the products of the Aquitanian clerics remains an open question.

It is a related question, then, that I will discuss in this paper, taking into consideration the contacts between the troubadour tradition and the *conductus* repertoire. The peculiar character of newly composed musical material that separates the *conductus* from its coeval genres is the reason why I have decided to focus my paper on this particular repertoire. The monophonic and polyphonic *conducti* that present music shared with other repertoires are the exception to the composition of original – newly composed – music. Hans Tischler made a more-or-less complete study of the relationship between *conducti* and vernacular repertoires. Unfortunately, this quite recent work, published in 2001, mostly sheds light on northern-French and partly German repertoires, leaving the question of the Occitan tradition still open. Music borrowing between northern-French vernacular songs and *conducti* is in fact quite widespread, and reasons for such a solid interaction between *Ars Antiqua* composers and *trouvères* can probably be ascribed to geographical reasons; but we might want to take into account the possibility that some *Magnus Liber Organi* composers wrote vernacular songs as well. Far less abundant are the Occitan correspondences. A total of four *conducti* can be considered to have some Provençal parallels. The first is *Vite perde me legi*. It exists in both monody and two-voice polyphony and shares the same music with the monodic songs *Per dan que d'amor m'aveigna* by the troubadour Peirol and the French *A l'entrant del tans salvage* by Hue de Saint-

Quentin. The second, the well-known *Can vei la lauzeta mover*, remarkably records more than six *contracta*. The Occitan *contrafactum* is *Seyner mil gracias ti rent*, a song modelled after the Latin version, as its main source delivers in the rubric. The Latin *contrafactum* is instead the monody *Quisquis cordi et oculi*. Finally, 3 French songs.¹ The last examples are now considered by most scholars to be French-Occitan hybrids, however I have decided to include them to make my list as complete and thorough as possible. *A l'entrada del tens clar* is found in the Chansonnier St-Germain de Près,² which shares the same music with the *conductus Veris ad imperia*, and *Gent menais del cais* which is a *contrafactum* of *Veritas equitas largitas* and it is featured in two other Parisian sources – both are anonymous.³ Some scholars have already taken into account the issue related with *Can vei la lauzeta mover* by Bernard de Ventadorn and its *contrafacta*: this piece is mostly considered as the original among the long list of songs that shares the same music. I am not going to go too deeply into this subject as my talk will focus on Peirol's *Per dan que d'amor*, but a brief discussion will make later points easier to understand. The lyrics of *Quisquis cordi et oculi*, Ventadorn's Latin parallel, have been attributed to Philippe the Chancellor, as delivered by Salimbene de Adam in his Chronicles. The Latin song can be safely dated between the 1170's (the first datable piece attributed to Philippe dates 1174) and 1236, the year conventionally accepted as his death. On the other hand, *Can vei la lauzeta mover* was probably written in the second half of the XII Century, since Bernard de Ventadorn was born between 1130 and 1147, and he probably died in the last decade of the 1100's. The span of time in which the two songs might have been written overlaps by about 25 years. In his Chronicles, discussing *Quisquis cordi et oculi*, Salimbene mentions a singer, Henricus Pisanus. Salimbene says that he could "scriber, miniare [...], notare, cantus pulcherrimos et delectabiles invenire [...]" and that he actually wrote the music for *Quisquis cordi et oculi*. Was it an original melody? Was it a *contrafactum*? In a previous paragraph Salimbene also says that Henricus used the melody of an Italian folk tune for the song *Christe Deus, Christe meus*. Consequently we might be able to consider the possibility that he was aware of folk traditions, that he probably performed some of it, and maybe re-used some of those melodies. According to this hypothesis, *Can vei la lauzeta mover* can reasonably be considered the original and *Quisquis cordi et oculi* the *contrafactum*. The following case is unfortunately less clear as *Per dan que d'amor m'avegna* has been written by a troubadour who belongs to a later generation.⁴

¹ *Plaine d'ire et de desconfort, Li cuers se vait de l'ueil plaignant, Amis quelx est li mieuz vaillanz*

² F-Pn fr. 20050

³ F-Pn fr. 12615 (m) and F-Pn fr. 844 (W)

⁴ IV generation

Peirol's birth date is considered to be around 1160, and we assume that he composed most of his works between 1185 (shortly before the 3rd crusade, about which he composed a *tenso*) and 1221 or 1222, after which date he appeared to be in Italy. The Latin author, Peter of Blois, whom the *conductus* (and Peirol's *contrafactum*) *Vite per dite me legi* is attributed to, appears to have been older since he lived between 1135 and 1211; nevertheless he still shares a period of musical activity with Peirol. Being well aware that the attempt to outline a definitive chronology of this music could be easily criticised, and in addition, that multiple scholars have already attempted to solve this issue, I would like to analyse the piece in more depth to raise new questions and possibly cast new light on the issue. I will start by giving a brief historical background to layout the relationship between the *conductus* repertoire and the troubadours. Between 1209 and 1229 the cruel Albigensian crusade may be considered the main event that saw northern and southern French cultures interacting and influencing each other. In particular, the city of Toulouse can be reckoned as the core of such a cultural ferment. There, Johannes de Garlandia (c.1180-c.1250) taught for a few years between 1229 and 1231. As the possible author of *De mensurabili musica*, a crucial treatise for anyone studying the *Notre Dame* corpus, Garlande could have been a plausible medium between the two traditions, especially when he returned to Paris in 1232. In a 1997 article, Elizabeth Aubrey pointed out that southern tradition affected the northern tradition more than *vice versa*, finding evidence of the production and geographical dissemination of *troubadour* and *trouvère* sources. The fact that most of the main Occitan sources have been copied in non-Occitan regions, while manuscripts with French lyrics have been mainly produced in the *lang d'oïl* area should prove her claim. This statement may be agreeable since we are only focusing on the vernacular repertoire, but moving on to its relation with Latin productions, I would prefer to be more cautious in positing which tradition might have borrowed music from the other. Let's now move to the main focus of this paper. *Per dan que d'amor* is one of the 18 songs by Peirol that survives with music. The only source containing musical information is the manuscript housed in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana with collocation R 71 sup. (from now on the Chansonier G). Among the secondary sources, the only one that carries any further musical meaning is Paris, *Bibliothèque Nationale Fonds Fr.* 22543,⁵ where the staves ruled for the music above the first stanza are left blank. As previously mentioned, two *contrafacta* of this song exist with both French or Latin verses. The French version is *A l'entrant del tans salvage* by Hue de Saint-Quentin, the Latin song is the *conductus Vite per dite me legi*, with a

⁵ F-Pn Fr. 22543

poem by Peter of Blois. I am going to focus mainly on the comparative study of the Occitan and the Latin songs. The *Chansonnier G* was copied between 1300 and 1320. The well-known I-Fl Pluteo 29.1 (from now on Florence) was copied towards the end of the first half of the XIII century. In both cases the featured songs are considered to have been composed much earlier. Finally, the *Codex Buranus*⁶ dates from around 1230. It is the oldest manuscript among the group that I have taken into consideration for this talk. It also contains a repertory originating in the late XII century. First, let's have a look at how the songs have been graphically designed in these manuscripts. Each source presents a different *mise en page*. In the *Chansonnier G* [fig. 1] only the first two stanzas of *Per dan que d'amor* display the music, then the rest of them are text only. Considering that this song is musically strophic, this particular setting looks quite unconventional, as we would expect music either to appear once (for the first stanza) or throughout the piece (repeated for each stanza). This might lead us to the point that either: the copyist wanted to highlight the first two stanzas as they constitute a *coblas dobla*: literally *double stanza*, i.e. the rhymes change every two stanzas, the textual peculiarity of the song; or this manuscript had been copied from an older source. More conventionally, the French *contrafactum* offers just the first stanza with music and the rest is text-only. *Vite per dite me legi* [fig. 2 and 3], interestingly, delivers two different witnesses of the same song. The monody found in the *Codex Buranus* (that displays the whole poem) has been completely notated with staffless neumes. However this should not surprise us, since such idiosyncrasy is common throughout the whole manuscript. On the other hand *Florence* delivers just the first stanza, notated in two-voice polyphony. Concerning the textual analysis, Peirol's poem has an *abab baba* rhyme scheme; on the whole it represents a clear example of *coblas doblas*, as already said. [fig. 4] In the first two stanzas the rhymed syllables are in fact *-igna* and *-ai*.⁷ Moving on to the conductus, as previously mentioned it survived in two different versions, one polyphonic setting in Florence and as a monody, in the *Codex Buranus*. We cannot currently tell which version is the original, although some scholars have a propensity for the former. The conductus' rhyme scheme is far less established than its vernacular parallel. On one hand Gordon Anderson suggests a ten-line stanza reading. On the other hand Hendrik Van der Werf, in his critical edition *The Extant Troubadour Melodies*, gives to *Vite Perdite* an eight-line stanza interpretation. As a consequence we face two different stanza readings of the same song. One in ten lines, another one in eight lines. Such a difference is due to poetical and musical features that I will now

⁶ D-Mbs Clm. 4660

⁷ whilst in the 3rd and 4th stanzas *-ia* and *-atz*; finally in the last three stanzas *-atge* and *-es* alternate each other

describe. Concerning the poem [fig. 5], the main difference lies in the rhyme scheme. *Vite per dite me legi* displays an internal rhyme in the first line that does not appear proportionally in *Per dan que d'amor*. *Vite per dite | me legi* can be either read as a single line, rhyming *minus licite | dum fregi* or split into two different lines as they will still match (in both rhyme and number of syllables) the following verses [fig. 6]. If we try to split the same lines of *Per dan que d'amor* proportionally, we obtain no rhyme at all between the two split lines, therefore the tag of *coblas doblas* would be no longer appropriate for this poem. Further evidence of such a discrepancy comes from some notational characteristics. A first examination of *Florence* reveals a graphical division between the words *per dite* and *me legi*. There is a vertical stroke separating the two sections in both the upper part and the tenor. Whatever we consider this stroke – a breath, a rest or just a *Silbenstrich* – it highlights the importance of the rhyme between *per dite* and *licite*, giving them a sort of graphical recognition. Therefore we can reasonably separate the two lines at this point, accordingly with Anderson's textual edition [fig. 7]. Translated in musical terms, we obtain a regular sequence of 5/6 *neume*-phrases as shown in the picture above, which therefore follows the scheme *abc-a'b'c'-defg-d'e'f'g'*. Contrary to this interpretation, Aubrey suggests that *Per dan que d'amor* has an ABA'B' CDC'D' structure, where each letter corresponds to a line of the poem. These two musical readings clearly mirror the different interpretations of the poem. If we do not consider such different understandings, there is no specific musical reason to opt for either solution. Yet, there is a difference in the melody that Aubrey uses as clear evidence of Peirol's original authorship. The difference lies in the starting note: C in *Per dan que d'amor*, while in all of the other cases it is G [fig. 8]. She claims that, since the stanza ends on G and the music is strophic, that forms a melodic interval of a lower 5th when we start singing the following stanza, not uncommon - she says - in troubadour music. This G-C gap is featured in the troubadour version only, thus in none of the other *contrafacta*; neither in *A l'entrant del tans salvage* nor in *Vite per dite*. In *Florence* the first note in the tenor is G, and the first note in the duplum is D. The monodic, staffless version, obviously does not specify pitch, nonetheless it shows us the relationship between two consecutive notes. Focusing on the end of the first stanza we notice that the first *neuma* of the new stanza is a *punctum*; this tells us that the note is the same pitch as the last note of the previous stanza; consequently there is no gap between the two notes. I believe Aubrey's point is not sufficient to prove any Occitan antecedence, for two reasons. Firstly: such a melodic gap would not surprise us, if found in the troubadour repertoire as well as in a *conductus*. Secondly: if we put the troubadour version at the top of the stemma of this melody, then we would expect to find this C-variant in at least another source, in

another tradition. Now we know that none of the versions start on C except for Peirol's *Per dan que d'amor*. Among this group of *contrafacta*, *Per dan que d'amor* might therefore represent the exception, rather than the rule. On the other hand, if we are willing to agree that the composer of Florence's *Vite perdite* is borrowing the melody from Peirol to build a polyphonic setting, we should accept that he has deliberately changed the pitch of the very first note with the purpose to simplify the music for a tenor, who was able to sing within polyphony, but was not experienced enough to execute a jump of a lower 5th. At this point we would have a contradictory situation in which the authors of *Vite perdite* decided to: simplify the music borrowed from Peirol but at the same time make the rhyme scheme more complex bringing the lines per stanzas from eight to ten. Which author then modified the song? And to which purpose? Perhaps to meet the needs of a different language, or maybe to remedy some performers' inadequacy. At this point it is necessary to summarise the main points that the comparative analysis has raised so far. We have found: dissimilar *mise en page* of the songs; a quantitative difference in terms of lines per stanza; a melodic qualitative disparity (first note of the melody). These arguments disprove that Peirol's *Per dan que d'amor* has to be considered the first appearance of this melody. Unfortunately the evidence we brought out cannot demonstrate the contrary either, although a few elements might suggest it. This evidence merely asserts the existence of two separated branches in the stemma of this song. This study is in its infant-stage, however I am convinced that troubadours and *conducti* composers influenced each other; furthermore, the application of this comparative method may help to describe the borrowing process between the Occitan tradition and the *Ars Antiqua* corpus.

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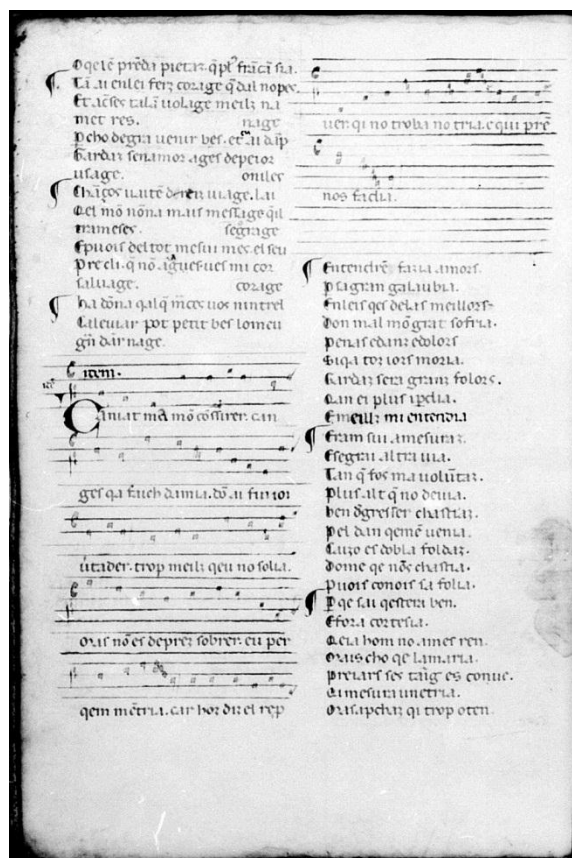


Figure 1 - Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana R 71 sup. (Chansonnier G), ff. 49r-49v

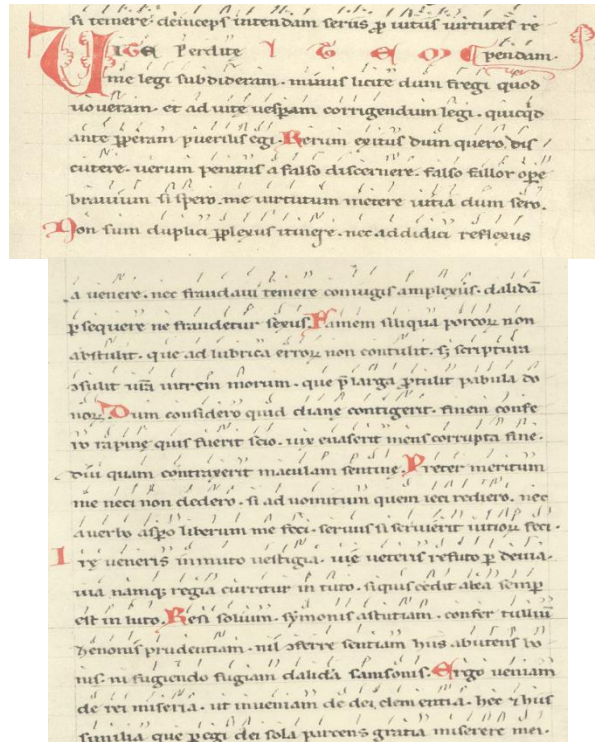


Figure 2 - München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4660 (Codex Buranus), ff. 4r-4v



Figure 3 - Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo 29.1, f. 356r

a	Per dan que d'amor m'aveigna
b	Non laisserai
a	Que joi e chan no manteigna
b	Tan cant viurai
b	E si.m sui en tal esmai
a	Non sai que.m deveigna,
b	Quar cill, on mos cors m'atrai,
a	Vei qu'amar no.m deigna.
a	Neguna bon' entresseigna
b	De lieis non ai
a	Que ja merces pro m'en teigna
b	Del mal qu'ieu trai.
b	Pero si la preiarai
a	Que de mi.l soveigna!
b	Que, s'amors no la.m atrai,
a	Merces la.m destreigna.

Figure 4 - *Per an que d'amor m'aveigna*, text

G. Anderson,
Notre-Dame and Related Conductus

H. Van der Werf,
The Extant Troubadour Melodies

vite perdit
me legi
subdideram
minus licite
dum fregi
quod voveram
sed ad vite vesperam
corrigendum legi
quidquid ante perperam
puerilis egi

vite perdit me legi
-
subdideram
minus licite dum fregi
-
quod voveram
sed ad vite vesperam
corrigendum legi
quidquid ante perperam
puerilis egi

Figure 5 - *Vite perdit*, different interpretations

vite perdit |
me legi
subdideram
minus licite |
dum fregi
quod voveram
sed ad vite vesperam
corrigendum legi
quidquid ante perperam
puerilis egi

Per dan que d'amor m'aveigna
-
Non laisserai
Que joi e chan no manteigna
-
Tan cant viurai
E si.m sui en tal esmai
Non sai que.m deveigna,
Quar cill, on mos cors m'atrai,
Vei qu'amar no.m deigna.

Figure 6 - *Vite perdit/Per dan que d'amor m'aveigna*, comparison



Figure 7 - Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo 29.1, f. 356r

G - C

punctus

C

D

D

G

Figure 8 - *Vite perditæ*, melodic discrepancies

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