

Prologue

*La harpe de melodie
faite saunz mirancholie
par plaisir
doit bien cescun resjoïr
pour l'armonie
oïr, sonner et veïr.¹*

With the prior verses begins one of the most fascinating musical works in the *ars subtilior* style, composed by the master musician Jacob de Senleches. This composer, as his name suggests, was a native of northern France whose scant biographical details indicate he was a valued musician at courts in the south at Castile, Navarre and possibly Avignon.² *La harpe de melodie* typifies several aspects of the present study. Firstly, its presence in a manuscript³ copied in the city of Pavia in Lombardy indicates the cultivation of ostensibly French music in the *ars subtilior* style in northern Italy. Secondly, its musical notation contains novel, experimental notational devices and note shapes that parallel intellectual developments in other fields of culture in this period.

¹ “The melodious harp made without melancholy to please, well may each person rejoice to hear, sing and hear its harmony.” (All translations are mine, unless otherwise specified.)

² The conclusion that Jacob de Senleches was a native of northern France is made on the premise that Senleches is the near-homophone of Senlecques, a village just south of Calais in the County of Artois. The only surviving archival evidence concerning Jacob de Senleches consists of a dispensation made at the Court of Navarre by Charles II of Navarre on 21st August, 1383 which specifies: ...100 libras a Jacomin de Senlaches, juglar de harpe, para regresar a donde se encontraba el cardenal de Aragon, su maestro (“100 libras for Jacob de Senleches, player of the harp, to return to where he was to meet the Cardinal of Aragón, his master.”), *vid.* Ursula Günther, ‘Zur Biographie einiger Komponisten der Ars Subtilior’, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 21, 1964, p. 197. Senleches’ contact with Navarre, based on the absence of further documentation from that court, was apparently brief. The Cardinal of Aragón in 1383 was Pedro de Luna, a key proponent in the French party during the schism of the Holy Catholic Church in 1378, and later elected as Avignonese pope Benedict XIII (1394). His presence at Avignon would have been frequent owing to the fact that he was also a papal legate for Clement VII. Senleches’ connection to Castile is proposed on the basis of his ballade *Fuions de ci* that laments the (post-parturient) death of Queen Alionor of Castile on 15th September, 1382. Previous archival evidence sought to indicate Senleches’ presence at the court of John of Aragón, but has since been discredited by the research of Maria Carmen Gómez in ‘Musique dans les chapelles de la maison royale d’Aragon (1336-1413)’, *Musica Disciplina*, vol. 38, 1984, p. 72, fn. 17.

³ Chicago, Newberry Library, ms. 54.1, f. 10r. Inventories and descriptions of this manuscript can be found in Kurt von Fischer, ‘Eine wiederaufgefundene Theoretikerhandschrift des späten 14 Jahrhunderts’, *Schweizer Beitrag zur Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1972, pp. 23-33; and Philip Schreier, (ed.), *Tractatus Figurarum*, Greek and Latin Music Theory Series 6, Lincoln and London, 1989, pp. 31-32. This is the *Codex cuiusdam ignoti bibliophili Vinobonensis* mentioned by Edmund Coussemaker who viewed a copy of it made by Ferdinand Wolf in 1856. The original appeared to be lost for almost a century (*cf.* Gilbert Reaney, ‘The Manuscript Chantilly, Musée Conde, 1047’, *Musica Disciplina*, vol. 8, 1954, p. 82, fn. 77) until it was purchased by the Newberry Library in 1955.

Like this source of *La harpe de melodie*, the majority of the scribal record for the *ars subtilior* repertoire is found in sources that are ostensibly from regions now designated as northern Italy.⁴ This situation presents certain difficulties in that many works demonstrate connections not only with southern France and northern Spain (particularly Aragón), but occasionally with Paris and the Lowlands. Furthermore, the Italian sources with origins in the early fifteenth century, are often temporally remote from those northern works which contain references to events and persons extending over the last quarter of the fourteenth century. While the survival of extant manuscripts is possibly a matter of chance, the cultivation of French music by Italian composers was not incidental, but represents achievements paralleling, if not possibly surpassing, those notational and artistic trends in the north. While this study will often resort to anachronistic terms such as 'northern Italy' or 'southern France', the ensuing chapters seek to demonstrate regionally based applications of the *ars subtilior*.

This study is an investigation of scribal practices in extant sources transmitting the music of the *ars subtilior*. Its goals are three-fold: to contextualise the two principal sources containing a shared repertoire of the *ars subtilior* style using newly-applied methodologies; to examine notational process within an historically derived framework which demonstrates the rich diversity of scribal practices; and, perhaps most importantly, to tie aspects of notational process to broader cultural/intellectual developments contemporary to the cultivation of the *ars subtilior* style. This investigation proceeds on the premise that the musical notation, as a record of the actual music, reflects values integral to the concepts embodied by that music. The strength of this premise lies in the observation that, at the time the *ars subtilior* aesthetic first appeared, the system of mensural notation was less than a century old. Additional variation of notational procedure, frequently present at an authorial level, further argues for the presence of an inherent novelty and innovation arising from contemporary concepts.

This study is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with two principal sources transmitting this repertoire: Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Musée Condé, ms. 564 and Modena, Biblioteca Estense e Universitaria, ms. α.M.5.24. The two chapters dedicated to these sources examine the role of scribal process in the works they transmit and include a

⁴ In particular the Emilia-Romagna, Veneto and Lombardy. In light of the subsequent discussion surrounding Codex Chantilly, we might include Tuscany in this category, although strictly speaking this is a central Italian region.

discussion of the origin of each manuscript. This investigation forms an important framework for the second part of the present study. This part of the study considers the development and nature of notational process. By couching this examination in terms of scribal process, I highlight the relationship that exists between the semiotic system of musical notation and elements discernible in other fields of intellectual culture in the middle ages.

In relation to the first part of this study, an adequate and comprehensive survey of the transmission of the *ars subtilior* is still lacking in its scholarship. I use the term transmission herein to denote the process by which the notated form of a musical composition and its text is preserved in various sources over time. An assessment of this process requires investigation of codicological and palaeographic issues, as well as detailed examination of variants found in respective sources. An ultimate result of this investigation is the construction of stemma in an attempt to demonstrate relationships between extant sources.

While some relationships between sources have been previously established or otherwise postulated, the study of transmission remains central to understanding the cultivation of the *ars subtilior* in Italy. Although sources from this period are plagued by uncertainties surrounding their origin and dating, one can argue that the investigation of variants and establishing of hypothetical stemma serves to delimit hypotheses concerning a source's chronology and geography. Moreover, the identification of direct relationships furthers this endeavour by demonstrating concrete instances within a repertoire's transmission. The attendant understanding of scribal process forms a key aspect of this investigation.

The notational practices of the *ars subtilior* still await full explication, and it is the aim of this author to demonstrate not only differing principles of notational devices but to also discern the effect of cultural values upon notational process. Through its rich diversity of notational practices, musical notation in this period suggests principles of thought based on cultural paradigms parallel to those also apparent in other fields of knowledge in this period. The nature of notational devices is intimately connected to these paradigms in that they form, consciously or subconsciously, delimiters to notational decisions made by scribes. The semiotic variation within the collective transmissions of a work is perhaps the most tangible illustration of cultural values that affect their decisions in the notation of music.

This study's investigation of notational practices of the *ars subtilior* is primarily concerned with the writing of musical rhythm. It does not discuss in any detail the equally important aspect of pitch notation and its corollary issues, such as counterpoint and pitch

inflections, which are manifest in polyphonic composition. This delimitation serves to focus the present study on issues, which are perceived, by the present author, to contain the greatest potential for establishing chronological, geographical and cultural distinctions in notational process. Issues of pitch notation, however, are seldom absent from my mind and play a vital role in assessing variant readings and editing the music of this repertoire. The premises for my consideration of pitch and pitch relationships are set out in the introduction to Appendix A in Volume 2 of this study.

Chapter 1 readdresses the definition of the term *ars subtilior* and argues for its retention by the present field of study not as an historically valid term, but a musicological/historiographical construct ostensibly based on available historical evidence. This definition is central to my position that the term defines not a period but a style or movement.⁵ Musical styles by their very nature are limited temporally to those cultures that created, adopted and/or modified them. Styles, however, are not mutually exclusive. While, from the point of view of the music historian, the period *c.*1380-*c.*1415 is marked by a proliferation of works espousing the *ars subtilior* aesthetic, the same period is witness to works which continue to practise the French *ars nova* style, see a cross-fertilisation of north Italian and French elements, or develop new stylistic aspects which, undoubtedly unknown to its innovators, were to become central aesthetics of musical composition in the subsequent period. The manuscript investigated in Chapter 2, for example, contains alongside works in the *ars subtilior* style works in a conservative polyphonic style, such as Solage's *Tres gentil cuer*, as well as the driving, modern homophonic style of Gacian Reyneau's *Va t'en mon cuer*. While others might be so bold as to attempt to subsume all these styles occurring in the last quarter of the fourteenth century under one broad definition, it is not my contention that the term and style *ars subtilior* is a style-periodic descriptor. Rather, it is but one (necessarily generalised) manifestation of a musical practice in the rich fabric of late fourteenth and early fifteenth century composed polyphony. In defining the term *ars subtilior* in Chapter 1, parameters for the definition of the style based on musical and notational indicators will be identified, forming a basis for the discussion in Part 2.

Chapter 2 investigates a central source of the *ars subtilior* style, *Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 564* (=CH 564). This source represents the highest concentration of works by composers with links to both northern and southern France. Of its 99 chansons, 58 are

⁵ On the value of style movements in art history, *vid.* Ernst Hans Gombrich, 'In search of Cultural History', in *Ideals and Idols*, Oxford, 1979, pp. 24-60.

ascribed to composers who are plausibly from, or have connections to, France. However, Italian composers are not absent in this source. Notably, no less than seven compositions (with a possible eighth attributable to him) are ascribed to the Italian Philipoctus de Caserta. Also possibly from the Italian peninsula is the composer of two works in CH 564, Guido. This aspect of CH 564 is perhaps the first clue to this manuscript's origin. Through the consideration of codicological, palaeographic and orthographic elements supported by detailed models of stemmatic filiation, it is argued that this anthology originated in a professional workshop in or close to Florence. The salient aspect of this conclusion resides in the understanding that this source represents for the most part a French repertoire transplanted into a new geographic and cultural realm. This transplantation in turn affects the transmission of its northern repertoire through a complex set of scribal practices and reception of the music itself by individuals perhaps adherent to some aspects of the music's original cultural milieu but also able to colour the scribal record with their own values and concepts.

Chapter 3 examines the second principal source of the compositions in the *ars subtilior* style, *Modena, Biblioteca estense, MS. α.M.5.24* (=MOe5.24). The importance of this source lies in the fact that it provides the most direct evidence for the cultivation of the *ars subtilior* style by Italian composers. Up to fourteen works⁶ (including four by Machaut) can be linked to composers active in France. In this group, works not by Machaut are in the *ars subtilior* style or attributed to composers otherwise known for their *ars subtilior* works. While the outer gatherings (1 and 5) consist of mostly 32 works by the Italian Matheus de Perusio (mostly *unica*) and one work by the northerner Nicholas Grenon, of the 68 pieces in the three inner gatherings, there are 40 works (26 in the *ars subtilior* style) which are ascribed to composers with Italian origins. By focusing on the inner gatherings, codicological, palaeographic and stemmatic indicators are assessed in tandem with the biographical and historical data to reargue a case for the origin of MOe5.24 in the curial orbit of the Pisan papal party during its sojourns at Pisa, Pistoia, Bologna and Florence. Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this chapter revolves around the proposition that the several Latin-texted chansons in MOe5.24 can be linked to the early humanistic culture in northern Italy in which the first Pisan Pope, Alexander V, participated. The importance of this conclusion lies in the shift of the *ars subtilior* aesthetic from French courtly modes to proto-humanistic modes in Italy. That MOe5.24, unlike CH 564, is a personal collection

of works by a musician closely connected to musical manifestations of this culture accentuates the importance of the former manuscript in the history of composed western polyphony.

Both chapters 2 and 3 progress by examining codicological and palaeographic aspects of the source in question which relate to scribal processes. In doing so, I demonstrate how a source was compiled over time, the working practices of its scribes and how scribal predilections affect the realisation of works. Select works transmitted in one or more other sources will be compared to their concordances in order to reveal further details regarding their transmission and to ascertain copying practices from the period. An underlying premise of this investigation, as suggested by Margaret Bent,⁷ is that the surviving sources of this repertoire are most likely first compilations of a series of works copied from diverse exemplars. This work-by-work approach to stemmatic filiation illustrates a need to move beyond previous scholarship and its hypotheses, which are frequently based on the assumption that sources, especially Codex Chantilly, are copies of a single exemplar.

The examination of transmission issues will also incorporate discussion of several lesser and fragmentary sources of the *ars subtilior* and related repertoires which nonetheless contribute immensely to our understanding of this repertoire's transmission. Lesser sources include: Codex Reina (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. frç. 6771), which consists of four gatherings of Italian *trecento* works, three gatherings of middle to late fourteenth century French works and two further gatherings of music by Guillaume Du Fay and his early contemporaries; the Paduan Fragments; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ital. 568; and, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Panciatichiano 26. The last two manuscripts are predominantly anthologies of Italian *trecento* music to which later scribes have added several works from the *ars subtilior* repertoire, but, in both cases, with little concern for the text and its underlay. Several fragmentary sources have come to light over the past thirty years, such as Grottaferrata, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia di S. Nilo, segn. provv. Kript. Lat. 224 (olim 197), and most recently Codex Boverio (Turin, Biblioteca Universitaria, ms. T.III.2). Both manuscripts transmit versions of works by the Italian Philipoctus de Caserta, as well as northern composers such as Johannes Suzoy in the case of Codex Boverio. This situation begs careful re-consideration of the transmission of these works.

⁶ Items 14, 25, 26, 29, 43*, 44, 46*, 51, 54*, 66*, 68, 78, 79, 80(?). * indicates works by Machaut.

The second part of this study is a study of scribal practices in relation to musical notation. At the same time, through the examination of semiotic devices and their semantic relationships, this part of the present study concerns itself with the cultural basis of mensural music notation in this period. In doing so, I demonstrate both the novelty of this still young symbol system and also its relationship to other branches of knowledge evident in the cultures of the middle ages. The benefit of this approach is that it sheds light upon possible conceptual processes, which might lie at the heart of the musical compositions of the *ars subtilior*. An understanding of these conceptual processes can only assist further in approaching the largely lost musical fabric of these compositions.

The division of materials for the three chapters in Part 2 is governed by the rationale set out at the beginning of Chapter 4. Here, I propose that modes of signification, which developed from medieval theories of metalinguistics under the influence of the writings of Aristotle and which were also employed in the musical theory of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, provide a useful means of discussing the processes of musical notation. Thus, Chapter 4 proceeds with an examination of intrinsic elements of notation, that is the actual note shapes. Chapters 5 and 6 continue this examination of notational and scribal processes by considering the use of extrinsic devices, that is mensuration signs and Indo-Arabic numerals, in the notation of the *ars subtilior*.

Chapter 4 also challenges assumptions concerning the ethnographic origins of particular notation-types by proposing that a sharp delineation between the concepts that lie behind notational practices and the actual note shapes employed. I propose that the nature of special note shapes, that is note shapes which exhibit a form beyond the five simple note shapes of French mensural notation found repeatedly in theory and practice, is essentially two-fold. Although I show a strong preference for the designation of all special note shapes as Franco-Italian, I demonstrate that there is contemporary evidence to suggest that one form of special note shapes, whose nature is *proportional*, evolved out of French notational concepts, while the other *arithmetic* form resulted from the adaptation of French concepts by Italian scribes and composers.

Chapter 5 continues the examination of notational issues in the music of the *ars subtilior* by moving from the intrinsic to the extrinsic modes of signification and considering

⁷ Margaret Bent, 'Some criteria for establishing relationships between sources of late-medieval polyphony', in *Music in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Patronage, Sources and Texts*, ed. I. Fenlon, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 295-317.

the use of mensuration signs, both from a theoretical and practical perspective. The use of mensuration signs, although already codified in theoretical literature on mensural notation early in the fourteenth century, is only evident in extant musical sources from the last years of the fourteenth century. Yet, even with their appearance in musical sources dating from the last decade of the fourteenth and first decade of the fifteenth centuries, mensuration signs deviate in many respects from standard theoretical definitions. I argue that this situation reflects a period of instability and experimentation in the use of mensuration signs, which can be reconciled to localised and often individual applications.

The examination of the occurrence and development of extrinsic elements is continued in Chapter 6. In this chapter, I examine the cultural basis that resulted in the introduction of Indo-Arabic numerals into musical notation. The discussion proceeds from Alexander Murray's observation that the period around 1400 marks a turning point in Western culture whereupon the symbol system known today as Indo-Arabic numerals and their associated calculative processes referred to as algorism began to be more widely accepted and used in medieval society. In their own right, musical sources strongly mark this turning point by the inclusion of Indo-Arabic numerals as extrinsic signifiers in musical notation. But the presence of Indo-Arabic numerals is not equivalent to the adoption of algorithmic processes. Instead, their presence in musical notation marks the final stage of the use of algorithmic processes in relation to proportionality, which occurred in the first instance without the explicit presence of the numerals themselves. The gap, which exists between the application of a concept and the application of an associated symbol system, permits a broad outline of the chronology of the *ars subtilior*. In relation to this last aspect, I conclude my discussion of algorism in the music of the *ars subtilior* by examining the dating of the works of the composer Baude Cordier. I suggest that, based on the presence of the most advanced proportional techniques using Indo-Arabic fractions as signifiers and the delay in the use of Indo-Arabic numerals in musical notation, the activity of this composer must have occurred after the first or second decades of the fifteenth century.

The significance of that which follows lies in the application of the concept of cultural studies to the investigation of the music of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It seeks to answer outstanding questions regarding the creative forces that lay behind this music and its reception. Most importantly, it argues that music could be transplanted into and modified/re-created by socio-cultural contexts other than those that originally created it. The exciting knowledge of this transformation also allows us to

understand how its artefacts might have come down to us as such today. It also results in an expansion of the boundaries occupied by music history by arguing the music of the *ars subtilior* reflects the many facets of late medieval culture.

Chapter 1 :

What is the ars subtilior?

The present chapter concerns itself with the term *ars subtilior*. Terms, which form a fundamental aspect of scholarship, may not be lightly brushed aside, nor their *status quo* be unquestioningly accepted. However, it is conceded that terms describing perceived historical movements are for the most part constructs of historians whose relation to historical “reality” may somewhat be abstracted from the truth, should such a concept be invoked. However, the following discussion seeks to circumvent objections to the application of terminology by the modern historian by formulating its definition on aspects containing an historical basis. While such a technique may not represent common historical reality, it does seek to interpret a contemporary perception of musical reality in the late fourteenth century.

In her article *Das Ende der ars nova*,¹ Ursula Günther proposed that the term *ars subtilior* be adopted to describe the music demonstrating features such as special note forms, cross-rhythms and *syncopa* with an approximate chronological correspondence to the Great Schism (1378-1417). By reference to contemporary theoretical treatises which are discussed below, she stated that “die Worte “*subtilitas*” <beziehungsweise> “*subtilis*” sind im späten 14. Jahrhundert bei französischen wie italienischen Musiktheoretikern nachweisbar”.² It is clear that Günther intended that the term denotes both a style and an epoch that was successor to what was then considered the *ars nova* period (c.1315-c.1370).³ This situation is paralleled by Apel who employed the phrase “manneristic style” as well as “manneristic period” as epoch designators.⁴ It is precisely the term “mannered” and

¹ *Die Musikforschung*, XVI, 1963, pp. 111-112;

² “The words ‘*subtilitas*’ or ‘*subtilis*’ are evident in French and Italian music-theorists in the late 14th century”; Günther, ‘*Das Ende der ars nova*’, p.112.

³ The use of the term *ars nova* as a periodic descriptor must be also considered a product of the earliest years of twentieth century musicology by which it was used to denote the period encompassing the music of Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361) to Johannes Ciconia (†1412), *vid.* Heinrich Besseler, ‘*Ars nova*’, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 1st edn, ed. F. Blume, Kassel und Basel, 1948-51, vol. 1, coll. 702-729; In the revised entry to this encyclopedia by Karl Kügle, Maricarmen Gómez and Ursula Günther (‘*Ars nova - Ars subtilior*’, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd edition, ed. L. Finscher, Kassel, 1994, vol. 1, col. 878-918), the influence of Hugo Riemann, despite the reservations of Ludwig and Besseler, is held responsible for the transferal of Johannes Wolf’s earliest use of the term as a notational descriptor to a periodic and stylistic descriptor (*ibid.*, col. 878). It is also noted that Günther’s style-chronological designator *ars subtilior* limited the extent of the *ars nova* from c. 1315 to c. 1370 (*loc. cit.*).

⁴ Willi Apel, *The Notation of Polyphonic Music*, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1953 (Revised 5th edition with commentary), pp. 403ff. For Günther’s criticism of Apel’s terminology which, she argues, emphasises the

“manneristic” which Günther sought to avoid on account of their perceived pejorative nature.⁵ However, the notion that the *ars subtilior* represents a new epoch is both absent in practical and theoretical evidence. Furthermore, as admitted by Günther in her article⁶ and as demonstrated below, the term *subtilis* was used in relation to music throughout the whole of the fourteenth century and not just towards the end of that century. This apparent deficiency necessitates a re-examination of the use of the term *ars subtilior*, in an attempt to redefine and to qualify further its significance.

In seeking contemporary attitudes, a resource available to scholars is the body of theoretical writings from the late fourteenth century, which are perceived to show close affinities with the extant musical record. The anonymous *Tractatus Figurarum* is one such treatise upon which Ursula Günther based her original thesis. The earliest source for this treatise is the Chicago manuscript held at the Newberry Library, shelf number MS 54.1 which was copied by a *frater G. de Anglia* in, or just after, the year 1391. The notational principles that it describes are found in a small number of works mostly by Italian composers. The only extant practical example of a note shape exactly the same as the novel shapes proposed by the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum* occurs in Bartholomeus de Bononia’s *Que pena maior*. Nonetheless, the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum* has some pertinent remarks concerning the development of notation during the fourteenth century. The treatise begins:

Et licet magistri nostri antiqui primum intellectum musicalem habuerunt, et hoc satis grosso modo sicut adhuc patet in motetis ipsorum magistorum, videlicet Tribum que non abhorruit et in aliis et cetera, tamen ipsi post modum subtiliorem modum considerantes, primum relinquerunt et artem magis subtiliter ordinauerunt ut patet in Apto caro. Sic nunc successive venientes, habentes et intelligentes que

negative aspects of the style (*betont...die negative Seite der Erscheinungen*), *vid* Günther, ‘Das Ende der ars nova’, p. 106.

⁵The negative connotations Günther sought to avoid are apparent when Apel writes: “Musicians, no longer satisfied with the rhythmic subtleties of the *ars nova*, began to indulge in complicated rhythmic tricks...”, *loc. cit.*; *cf.* Rudolf von Ficker, ‘Transition of the Continent’, in Dom Anselm Hughes & Gerald Abraham, *The New Oxford History of Music*, 1st edn, vol. III: *Ars Nova and the Renaissance*, London, 1960, p. 142. Günther’s views encouraged Jehoash Hirshberg to state in 1971 that “The earlier negative attitude was put aside in favor of careful and objective research leading to specialized studies of various aspects of the period.”, in “The Music of the Late Fourteenth Century: A Study in Musical Style”, Ph.D thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1971. More recently, Philip E. Schreur who writes in his introduction to the *Tractatus Figurarum*, p. 1: “...there is a yawning chasm between the subtlety of making fine distinctions and the wilful obscuring of interrelationships. The fourteenth century was an era of fine distinctions.”

⁶ Günther, *loc. cit.*

*primi magistri relinquerunt majores subtilitates per studium sunt confecti ut quod per antecessores imperfectum relictum fuit successores reformatur.*⁷

Clearly, the theorist divides music in the fourteenth century into three stylistic phases: the first and second styles which were the product of the old masters, and a third style which was produced by their followers. But the author of the treatise makes it clear that he is a witness to the third style that has already come to pass when he uses the perfect tense (*confecti sunt*) to refer to the *maiores subtilitates* achieved by the new generation of composers. Of greatest interest to the present discussion, however, is this theorist's use of the term *subtilitas* and its related forms. What indeed does this author mean when he uses the term *subtilitas*?

The two motets cited by the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum*, *Tribum que non abhorruit* and *Apto caro*, are both connected to a French-based repertoire. Both motets also survive in extant sources. According to the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum*, the first motet, which is possibly by Philippe de Vitry,⁸ represents the earliest style under consideration. The earliest version of *Tribum que non abhorruit/ Quoniam secta latronum/ Meritur hec patimur* is found as a musical interpolation in the recension of the *Roman de Fauvel* found in the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 146 (=Pn 146). In *Tribum* and other motets in Pn 146, groups of *semibreves* (or diamond-shaped notes) separated by a dot must be realised according to conventions demonstrated in the writings of Marchettus de Padua, Philip de Vitry and the Anonymous III of Coussemaker's *Scriptorium III*. This type of notation is henceforth referred to as undifferentiated *semibreves*.⁹

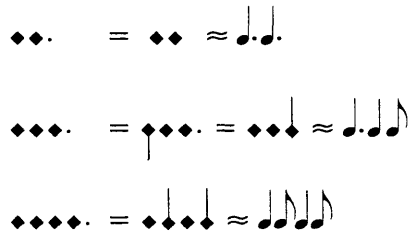
⁷“And granted that our ancient masters had the first musical understanding, and this was adequate in an unrefined manner as shown in the motets of those masters, namely *Tribum que non abhorruit* and in other motets, and so on. However, after carefully considering a manner to be a more *subtilis* one, they abandoned the first and constructed the art more *subtiliter*, as revealed in *Apto caro*. Thus those now coming later, possessing and understanding what the first masters have left, have accomplished greater *subtilitates* through study so that that which was left imperfect by predecessors might be reformed by their successors.”; Schreier, *op.cit.*, 66.5-68.5. I have intentionally modified the punctuation of this passage so that the grammatical ‘licet...tamen’ correspondence conforms to modern editorial practice.

⁸Leo Schrade proposed initially that this work and four others in the *Roman de Fauvel* be attributed to Philippe de Vitry with several other motets also possibly by the same composer in ‘Philippe de Vitry: Some new discoveries’, *Musical Quarterly*, 42, 1956, pp. 330-54. Ernest Sanders limited the number of Vitry motets in the *Roman de Fauvel* to four including *Tribum* in, ‘The earliest motets of Philippe de Vitry’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 28, 1975, pp. 36-37. Cf. Edward H. Roesner, François Avril and Nancy Freeman Regalado, *Le Roman de Fauvel in the Edition of Mesire Chaillou de Pestain: A Reproduction in Facsimile of the Complete Manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français 146*, New York, 1990, p. 40. For the quotation of material from this work by another motet in the *Roman de Fauvel*, *vid.* Margaret Bent, ‘Polyphonic texts and music in the fourteenth century motet: *Tribum que non abhorruit/Quoniam secta latronum/Merito hec patimur* and its “Quotations”’, in *Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. D. Pesce, New York - Oxford, 1997, pp. 82-103.

⁹The term undifferentiated *semibreves* is used here in relation to early fourteenth century French notational practices to describe strings of two or more *semibreves* enclosed by a dot of division which signifies that the

Often the first *semibrevis* in groups of three *semibreves* in Pn 146 has a downward stem. Rather than indicating another rhythm, this appears to be an attempt to clarify the intended realisation.¹⁰ Figure 1.1 gives examples of *semibrevis* groups and their realisation.

Figure 1.1: Interpretation of undifferentiated *semibreves* at the beginning of the fourteenth century.



In several instances, these realisations are verified by later transmissions of these works rewritten in later sources using *minime*.¹¹ Other features of *Tribum* include a short *talea* stated twelve times and a *color* repeated once. However, the work does not employ coloration,¹² syncopation or mensuration signs.

semibreves must be sung within the duration of a *brevis* or a *tempus* according to certain predetermined rhythmic patterns. This device is ostensibly descended from the visually identical device of Petronian *semibreves* employed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. This notational device, whose invention is attributed to a Petrus de Cruce (*vid.* Ernest H. Sanders, rev. Peter Lefferts, 'Petrus de Cruce', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd edn, ed. S. Sadie, London, 2001, vol. 19, pp. 521-523.), grew out of late thirteenth century mensural notation, frequently referred to as Franconian notation (in reference to the theorist Franco de Colonia who first codified/postulated its rules). Whilst the concept of Petronian *semibreves* formed an integral part of classic Italian *trecento* notation, its only legacy in French notation after c.1330 was the *punctus divisionis* whose application was extended to the *prolatio* boundaries.

¹⁰ It should be noted that there are some points of contention among scholars regarding the interpretation of these signed and unsigned note groups. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between later versions of this work and statements made by medieval theorists. One treatise suggests that this motet should be realised in minor prolation, *vid.* Leo Schrade, (ed.), *Commentary: The Motets of Philippe de Vitry and the French Cycles of the Ordinarium Missae*, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 1b, Monaco, 1956, p. 92.

¹¹ A version of *Tribum que non abhorruit / Quoniam secta latronum / Meritur hec patimur* using differentiated *minime* and *semibreves* is found in the *rotulus* Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 19606 (=Br 19606). Other versions occur in Rostocker Liederbuch, f. 43r; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Handschriften-Inkunabelabteilung, Latinus monacensis 5362, Kasten D IV ad [31]; Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Municipale (olim Bibliothèque de la Ville) 222 C. 22 [destroyed 1870], ff. 71-71v; *cf.* Ursula Günther, (ed.), *The Motets of the Manuscripts Chantilly Musée Condé 564 (olim 1047) and Modena, Biblioteca estense α.M.5.24 (olim lat 568)*, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 39, Amsterdam, 1965, p. xxv. The re-notation of *Garrit gallus / In nova fert / Neuma* as found in Pn 146 using a combination of undifferentiated *semibreves* and *semibreves caudate a parte inferiori* into mid-century *ars nova* notation in Br 19606 and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, coll. Picardie 67 (=Pn Pic 67) is discussed in Richard Hoppin, 'Some remarks a propos of Pic', *Revue Belge de Musicologie*, vol. 10, 1956, pp. 105-111. Here, Hoppin dates Pn Pic 67 slightly later than Br 19606 on account of the former scribe's apparent difficulties in translating early fourteenth century *ars nova* notation into its mid-century form.

¹² Coloration is, however, found in another motet in Pn 146, *Garrit gallus / In nova fert / Neuma*, also attributed to Philippe de Vitry. Hoppin notes the use of void black coloration in Pn Pic 67 in place of red coloration in other transmissions, notably in Pn 146 and Br 19606, in 'Some remarks a propos of Pic', p. 106.

Textual references¹³ and the approximate date of compilation for the *Roman de Fauvel* in Pn 146¹⁴ suggest that *Tribum* was composed between 1315-1318. In terms of its notation, *Tribum* as transmitted in Pn 146 represents a transitional style from the *ars antiqua* with associations with Petronian motets found in the 7th and 8th fascicles of the manuscript Montpellier, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire, Section Médecine, H. 196.¹⁵ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has convincingly argued, however, that the musical style of the works in Pn 146 is sufficiently removed from the style of Petronian motets to suggest that the *Fauvel* motets embody a new style - the *ars nova* style.¹⁶ This assessment is supported by the views of the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum* who sees the first generation of composers, in whose maturity the *ars nova* style becomes fully manifest, as initially practising an older type of notation.

The second motet cited by the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum*, *Apta caro* appears in six extant manuscripts from this period – a fact that may attest to its popularity.¹⁷ In all transmissions of this work, *minime* are clearly differentiated from *semibreves* by the superior stem. Furthermore, the use of isorhythm in this work is more complex when compared to

¹³ The text of this motet appears to refer the execution of Philippe IV's finance minister, Enguerran de Marigny on 30th April, 1315, *vid.* Ph. Aug. Becker, 'Fauvel und Fauvelliana', *Bericht über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-historische Klasse*, vol. 88, 1936, pp. 36ff; *cf.* Sanders, 'The Earliest Motets of Philip de Vitry', pp. 31-32.

¹⁴ The edition of the *Roman de Fauvel* in Pn 146 was compiled between c.1316-18, if not after the coronation of Philip V on 9 January 1317, *vid.* Roesner *et al.*, *Le Roman de Fauvel in the Edition of Mesire Chailluo de Pesstain*, p. 49. For a cautionary note on a too literal reading of the Marigny motets for the purposes of dating Pn 146, *vid.* Margaret Bent, 'Fauvel and Marigny: Which came first?', in *Fauvel Studies: Allegory, Chronicle, Music, and Image in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS français 146*, eds M. Bent and A. Wathey, Oxford, 1998, pp. 35-52.

¹⁵ For a recent reassessment of the nature and dating of the Montpellier Codex, *vid.* Mary Elizabeth Wolinski, 'The compilation of the Montpellier Codex', *Early Music History*, vol. 11, 1992, pp. 263-301. Wolinski dates the compilation of fascicles 1-7 to the 1360s and 1380s. The dating of the 8th fascicle on the basis of its illumination style remains uncertain, although Wolinski holds the view that it cannot be far removed from the dating of the earlier fascicles. In terms of their notation, fascicles 2-6 exhibit traits reflected in the reforms of the later thirteenth century theorist Magister Lambertus (*vid.* Gordon Athol Anderson, 'Magister Lambertus and nine rhythmic modes', *Acta Musicologica*, vol. 45, 1973, pp. 57-73). Fascicles 1 & 7 in the Montpellier Codex are Franconian, although Crucian elements are found in both fascicles 7 and 8. Based on her dating of the Montpellier manuscript, Wolinski dismisses the view that the Crucian motets mark a transition to the *ars nova*. Rather, they represent mature aspects of the *Ars Antiqua* (Wolinski, *op.cit.*, pp. 300-1).

¹⁶ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, 'The emergence of *ars nova*', *Journal of Musicology*, vol. 13, 1995, pp. 285-317. On the view that the Pn 146 is a transitional source looking both to the past (especially the last fascicles of Montpellier) and future, *vid.* Leo Schrade, 'The chronology of the *Ars Nova* in France', *Les Colloques de Wégimont II, L'ars nova: recueil d'études sur la musique de XIVe siècle (1955)*, Paris, 1959, pp. 46f.

¹⁷ The motet *Apta caro plumis ingenii/ Flos virginum decus et species/ Alma redemptor mater* is transmitted in Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale 1328, ff. 10v-11r; CH 564, ff. 60v-61r; Durham, Cathedral Library C.I.20, ff. 338v-339; Florence, San Lorenzo, Archivio Capitolare 2211 [palimpsest] ff. 61v,70; Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare 115 ff. 5v-6; MOe.5.24, ff. 18v-19, Pn 23190 (olim Serrant Château, ducs de la Trémoille)[index only] ff. 21v-22.

the previous motet, *Tribum que non abhorruit*. *Apta caro* also enjoys greater rhythmic sophistries with syncopation in the T and Ct, and the S using rhythms beyond the simple trochees inherent in the realisation of the undifferentiated *semibreves* of *Tribum*. According to Ursula Günther, the approximate dating of 1360 for this motet,¹⁸ and its presence in the older portion of F-Pn 23190¹⁹ index dated 1376,²⁰ suggests that, in conjunction with the *Tractatus Figurarum*, this motet is to be considered not “as the product of the young generation but rather of the advanced style of composition practised by their teachers who have progressed further than the old masters and achieved a more subtle art.”²¹ Or, perhaps better stated, the motet reflects notational developments that occurred as a result of the new musical style and its demands.

From prior analysis of the statements in the *Tractatus Figurarum* concerning the first and second styles of *ars nova* motets, it can be concluded that the theorist’s notion of *subtilitas*, as conveyed by the terms *modus subtilior* and *ars magis subtiliter*, refers to notational developments which can be typified as greater notational detail or precision in the representation of musical events. The notational style of *Apta caro* is more precise. Its notation contains finer distinctions because there is a progression in the realisation of notation based on neumatic processes found in *Tribum que non abhorruit* to a system in which individual musical durations, allowing for the conventions of imperfection and alteration, are directly associated with the individual *figure*. The consequence of this system was that composers now had the means to notate a greater range of rhythmic patterns. This second system of notation corresponds closely to our understanding of the French *ars nova* style whose most renowned representatives are Guillaume de Machaut and Philippe de Vitry. But it is also clear that the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum* perceives these notational developments to be motivated by stylistic demands.

The reading of *subtilitas* in musical notation of the fourteenth century as ‘precision’ or ‘precise signification’ is not new to scholarship. Anne Stone has also proposed the

¹⁸ Ursula Günther, *The Motets of the Manuscripts Chantilly Musée Condé (olim 1047) and Modena, Biblioteca Estense α, M.5,24 (olim lat. 568)*, p. XXVa.

¹⁹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. frç. 23190 [formerly Chateau de Serrant (Maine-et-Loire), ms of the duchess de la Trémoille].

²⁰ Günther’s dating remains valid even in light of Margaret Bent’s more recent observation that several items in the index of the Trémoille MS are later additions, in ‘A note on the dating of the Trémoille Manuscript’, in *Beyond the Moon: Festschrift Luther Dittmer*, eds B. Gillingham and P. Merkley, *Musicological Studies* 53, Ottawa, 1990, pp. 217-242.

²¹ Günther, *The Motets of the Manuscripts Chantilly Musée Condé (olim 1047) and Modena, Biblioteca Estense α, M.5,24 (olim lat. 568)*, p. XXVa.

difference between the notation of the two motets discussed in the *Tractatus Figurarum* is a degree of precision – a conclusion that closely follows that proposed by Philip Schreur.²² Both authors, however, scarcely substantiate their reading in the wider context of fourteenth-century literary and technical language. The adjective *subtilis* was used in classical Latin in both a literal and figurative sense. Used in a literal sense it signifies that which is thin, minute or materially fine.²³ Its figurative use pertained to judgements of taste or veracity with respect to something's preciseness, keenness, subtlety or refinement. It can also denote a plainness or simplicity when applied to orators or writing styles.²⁴ Overall, its figurative sense is connected with the notion that something is *subtilis* which is elegantly conceived and whose meaning is plainly or precisely perceived. The meaning of *subtilis* in Latin of the middle ages shows influences of its derivative form found in most Romance languages. In Old and Middle French, its derivative *soutil* is often employed to denote persons who are clever and, in the case of artifices, it describes “qui demande beaucoup d'industrie et d'habilité”.²⁵ In approaching its use in the musical treatises of the fourteenth century, *subtilis* is used predominantly in a figurative sense to suggest refinement or precision of persons, methods or ideas,²⁶ although it remains in its literal sense.²⁷ This usage also

²² Anne Stone, ‘Che cosa c'è di più sottile riguardo l'ars subtilior?’, *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 31, 1996, p. 4. Cf. Schreur, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

²³ For example, Lucretius in the fourth book (ll.115,122) of his *De rerum natura* describes the primordial essence as *subtilia et minuta*; *vid.* Cyril Bailey, *Titi lucreti cari De rerum natura*, Oxford, 1947, vol. 1. This sense is closest to the plausible etymological root of *subtilis*: *tela*, that is, cloth being woven or threads within the weave, *vid.* A. Walde (rev. J.B. Hofmann), *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg, 1954, pp. 619-620.

²⁴ *Vid.* P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1976, p. 1853 where the definition of *subtilis* is divided into 6 categories, the first being its literal sense pertaining to the nature of matter, the second being precision in execution or fineness of works of art, the third and fourth the refinement in persons and towards the senses, the fifth rhetorical style and the last exact legal argument. Cf. Charlton T. Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1879, pp. 1784-5. J. F. Niermeyer's *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1976, p. 1000 defines *subtilis* simply, and perhaps inadequately, as “cunning, crafty”, also mentioning the adjectival substitute of *subtile* to denote a subdeacon's garments as found earlier in Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et infirmae latinitatis*, 1883-87 (repr. Akademische Druck-Verlagsanstalt, Graz, 1956).

²⁵ “That which requires much application and skill”; Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue Française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*, Paris, 1892, p. 564.

²⁶ An example of its application to persons is: *...subtilis cantor...* (Aegidius de Murino, *Tractatus cantus mensurabilis*, in Edmund de Coussemaker, (ed.), *Scriptorum de Musica Medii Aevii: novam seriem a Gerbertina altera*, 4 vols, Paris, 1864, vol. III, p. 127), and *...musica, sicut libro primo tactum est, diversis hominum statibus se coaptet maioribus et minoribus, subtilioribus et rudioribus, minus peritis in scientiis et in philosophia magis imbutis* (Roger Bragard, [ed.], *Jacobi Leodiensis Speculum Musicae*, Corpus Scriptorum de Musica 3, Amsterdam, 1973, vol. 6, p. 7); To describe methods: *...modo subtiliore investigant...* (Ernst Rohloff, [ed.], *Die Quellen handschriften zum Musiktraktat des Johannes de Grocheio*, Leipzig, 1972, vol. 2, p. 44); *Pythagoras subtili quadam examinatione proportionem consonantiarum investigaverit et de Platone qualiter subtilissima divinatione monochordum ordinaverit* (G. Pannain, ‘Liber musicae. Un teorico anonimo del XIV secolo’, *Rivista musicale Italiana*, vol. 27, p. 436); *Hic modus vel ars dividendi monochordum vel disponendi litteras, claves vel chordas in ipso subtilis est...* (Bragard, *op.cit.*, vol. 5, p. 61).

occurred outside the sphere of music theory as shown in the example, given by Anne Stone, of the English philosopher John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) who was known as the *doctor subtilis* on account of the precision of his philosophic argument. Stone also mentions the term *subtilitates anglicanae* used by a fourteenth century Parisian author to describe the dialectic logic of especially William of Ockham.²⁸

Turning to the use of the term in other musical writings of the fourteenth century, one notes that *subtilis* and its related forms are found repeatedly in the *Speculum musicae* of Jacobus de Liège, but in varied shades of meaning. This treatise is not from the late fourteenth century, but from its first half. In it, Jacobus vehemently attacks Johannes de Muris' theories concerning the *ars nova* movement contained in his *Notitia artis musicae* (1321) and *Compendium musicae practicae* (1322). In the *Speculum*, *subtilis* is frequently used to denote preciseness (or similar to the sense in sixteenth century English of 'making plain'), although often Jacobus tends to use the same adjective in a pejorative manner with connotations of complexity.

Most recently, Dorit Ester Tanay has evaluated Book 7 of the *Speculum musicae*, which deals with *musica mensurabilis*, as an Ockhamite, metalinguistic attack on Johannes de Muris' theories of notational developments of the *ars nova*, which also re-conceptualises the *ars antiqua* according to the most recent philosophic developments.²⁹ The statement amongst Jacobus' arguments relevant to this present discussion is that the *minima* and *semiminima* used by the Moderns are redundant due to the perceived logic that similar durations in the *ars antiqua* could be represented using *minor semibreves* sung in a rapid tempo.³⁰ The consequence of this argument is subsequently revealed in the Chapter XLV of Book 7 where Jacobus compares the *ars antiqua* to the *ars nova*. He reports the following opinion:

Videtur forsitan aliquibus modernam artem esse perfectiorem quam sit vetus quia ipsa videtur subtilior et difficilius. Subtilior quia ad plura se extendit et multa super illam addit, ut patet in notulis, in modis et mensuris (subtile autem dicitur

²⁷ *vocum alia suavis est illa, scilicet quae subtilis, spissa, clara et acuta est* (Frederick F. Hammond, [ed.], *Walteri Odington Summa de Speculatione Musicae*, Corpus Scriptorum de Musica 14, s.l., 1970, p. 71)

²⁸ Stone, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

²⁹ Dorit Tanay, *Noting Music, Marking Culture: the Intellectual Context of Rhythmic Notation 1250-1400*, *Musicological Studies and Documents* 46, Holzgerlingen, 1999, pp. 146-181.

³⁰ Bragard, *op.cit.*, vol. 7, p. 36.

*quod est magis penetrativum attingens ad plura). Quod autem sit difficilior videtur in operibus Modernorum in modo cantandi et mensurandi.*³¹

This particular use of the comparative *subtilior* by Jacobus to compare the *ars antiqua* to the *ars nova* affords greater significance to the similar usage found in the *Tractatus Figurarum*.

Jacobus' statement leads to the conclusion that the new note shapes (especially the *minime* and *semiminime*), the mode or the division of time, and the mensurations are notational and conceptual elements which all give the new art greater precision. The first distinction concern note shapes accords well with the observable differences between the two motets cited by the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum*. As previously mentioned, *Tribum que non abhorruit* used undifferentiated *semibreves* while *Apto caro* makes full use of the *minima*. The statement recorded by Jacobus de Liège demonstrates that the concept of precision was closely connected to musical notation and that new note forms were especially indicative in the minds of the *moderni* as signifying greater subtlety or precision. *Subtilior modus*, as used by the author of the *Tractatus Figurarum*, describes the relationship of the second phase of notational development to the first in terms of greater significant precision.

This assessment is otherwise supported by documentary and literary evidence. The well known papal bull *Docta sanctorum patrum* (1324-25) of Pope John XXII censures the new musical notation and its practices by condemning *nonnulli novellae scholae discipuli, dum temporibus mensurandis invigilant, novis notis intendunt, fingere suas quam antiquas cantare malunt; in semibreves et minimas ecclesiastica cantatur, notilis percutiuntur*.³² While some practical aspects such as musical division (*notilis percutiuntur*) or embellishment are mentioned,³³ the statement is couched in notational terms whose potency lies in the suggestion that the new style was creating new note forms, least of all the *minima*.³⁴

³¹ "Perhaps it seems to some that the modern art is more perfect than the old because the former seems more subtle and more difficult. More subtle because it extends itself to more things and adds many things to the latter, as evident in the note forms, in the mode and the mensurations (however, subtle is said to be that which is more penetrating and affects many). However, it seems more difficult, in the works of the moderns, in the manner of its singing and measuring out (i.e. new note forms and mensurations)."; Bragard, *op.cit.*, p. 87, sent. 3.

³² "Several followers of a new school now pay attention to the measuring of time, concern themselves with new note forms <and> prefer to fashion their own <songs>, rather than sing the old ones; the holy office is sung in *semibreves* and *minimas* and it is divided into little notes"; the content of the bull can be found in Franz Xaver Haberl, *Bausteine für Musikgeschichte*, vol. 3: Die Römische "Scholae Cantorum" und die Päpstlichen Kapellsänger bis zur mitte des 16 Jahrhunderts, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1888, p. 22, fn. 1.

³³ The passage continues: *Nam melodias hoquetis intesecant, discantibus lubricant, triplis, et motectis vulgaris nonnumquam inculcant; adeo ut interdum Antiphonarii et Gradualis fundamenta despiciant, ignorent super qua edificant, Tonos nesciant quos non discernunt, imo confundunt, cum ex earum multitudine notatrum ascensiones pudice dicensionesque temperate plani cantus, quibus Toni ipsi secernuntur, ad invicem. Currunt enim et non quiescunt, aures*

One of the foremost composers during the middle two-quarters of the fourteenth century, Guillaume de Machaut reveals the same level of cultural self-awareness in his *Le Remede de Fortune*. Towards the end of the poem, Machaut describes a gathering of musicians:

*Et s'i ot musiciens
Melleurs assez et plus sciens
ens la viez et la nouvelle forge
Que Musique qui les chans forge...*³⁵

Based on these lines and a new reading of the work as a whole, Margaret Switten has interpreted the *Remede* as a conflict between *la viez et nouvelle forge* with the eventual triumph of the latter.³⁶ In the first part of the *Remede*, the lover is unsuccessful in attracting the favours of his lady, only succeeding in the second part. As suggested by Switten, the songs occurring in the course of the first section employ archaic genres typical of the troubadours (*lai*, *complainte*, *chanson roiale*) notated in *longe*, *breves* and some *semibreves* which are suggestive of the old school. Yet, in the second section of the *Remede* the song forms are those of the *formes fixes* (*balad(e)*, *chanson baladée* = *virelai*, *rondolet*) written in note forms which include many *minime*. These latter literary and musical forms are therefore indicative of the new style, at least within the secular realm. Based on the contrast between the reception of each respective style by the lady, the eventual triumph of the lover can be viewed as a metaphor arguing for the suitability of the new art to the courtly genres. By extension, one essential difference between *la viez et nouvelle forge* is the degree of notational precision as embodied by the presence of the *minima* in works cast by the *novelle forge*.

Hitherto, the focus of this discussion has been the relation of the first and second notational styles, that is the *ars antiqua* and the *ars nova*, in relation to the use of *subtilis*. The use of *subtilis* in relation to the development of the second style from the first leads to

inebriant, et non medentur; gestibus simulant, quod depromunt, quibus devotio querenda contemnitur, vitanda lascivia propalatur.

³⁴ Helmut Hucke emphasises that while this decree seeks to address abuses of the performance of ecclesiastical song, that is, plainchant (*ars musica*), it is actually an attack on the *ars nova*, but only in relation to the performance of its motets in church, in 'Das Dekret 'Docta sanctorum patrum' Papst Johannes' XXII', *Musica Disciplina*, vol. 38, 1984, pp. 119-131.

³⁵ "And there were musicians more skilled and more knowledgeable in both the old and new styles than Music who fashions their songs"; Ernest Hoepffner (ed.), *Le Remede de Fortune*, Œuvres de Guillaume de Machaut, Paris, 1911, v. 3999-4002. For the use of the term *forge* as a poetic metaphor, *vid.* Cerquilini, 'Un Engin si subtil', in *Guillaume de Machaut et l'écriture au XIVe siècle*, Bibliothèque du XV^e siècle 47, Geneva, 1985.

the understanding that the *majores subtilitates* achieved during the third period involve the evolution of notational devices to further quantify temporal durations and relationships. This association of notation and temporal preciseness continues to concern other theorists of the third phase of development as demonstrated in the Anonymous X treatise found in the third volume of Coussemaker's *Scriptorum*. The author states that his treatise is concerned with *minimis notulis artis mensurate quibus utuntur multi moderni subtililesque musici*.³⁷ The treatise then proceeds to describe the *minima*, *semiminima*, the *dragma* and a form called the *minima semiminimarum*, which is drawn as a *semiminima* with the addition of a tail descending from its lowest part. This association of smaller note values with *subtilitas* by Anonymous X is parallel to the previously discussed opinion of the earlier *moderni* reported by Jacobus de Liège. However, Anonymous X also permits the extension of the defining scope of *subtilis* in the third phase of notational development to include special note forms.³⁸ This aspect is perhaps integral to the definition of the third period of notational development described in the *Tractatus Figurarum*.

Advanced concepts in the division of musical time are a feature of the aforementioned *Tractatus Figurarum*. A concern for what is termed *polymensuralism*, or the simultaneous use of different divisions of musical time in each voice of a composition, is revealed when he writes:

*Et licet magistri instruxerunt nos in his figuris ac etiam in quatuor mensuris principalis, videlicet in tempore perfecto maioris prolationis et in tempore imperfecto ipsius, in tempore perfecto minoris prolationis et in tempore imperfecto ipsius, tamen non docuerunt quomodo super tempus imperfectum minoris discantare deberemus perfectum minoris et e converso, et sic de singulis temporibus quod clare singulariter inferius patebit. Quia esset multum inconueniens quod illud quod potest pronuntiari non posset scribi et clare ostendere tractatum hunc parvulum ordinare curauit.*³⁹

³⁶ Margaret Switten, 'Guillaume de Machaut: *Le Remede de Fortune* au carrefour d'un art nouveau', *Les niveaux de langue: musique et littérature jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle*: 1988, Société d'édition «Les Belles Lettres», 1989, pp. 101-118.

³⁷ "the smaller notes of measured music which many modern and deft musicians use"; Coussemaker, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 413.

³⁸ cf. Günther, 'Das Ende der ars nova', p. 111.

³⁹ "And although the masters instructed us in these figures in the four principal mensurations, namely in perfect and imperfect time with major prolation, in perfect and imperfect time with minor prolation, they, however, did not teach us how we ought to sing (discant) perfect time with minor prolation over imperfect time with minor prolation, and vice versa, and so on for the individual *tempora* which will be clearly and individually revealed below. Since it would be greatly unfitting that that which can be performed is not able to be written and clearly shown, I have taken care to compile this little treatise", Schreier, *op. cit.*, 70.5-72.2.

Again, it is also clear from the last sentence that the author is seeking to notate a pre-existing performance style. Just as the concern for mensuration was considered an indication of *subtilitas* in the early fourteenth century, the concern for the simultaneous use of different mensurations represents a stylistic progression beyond that of the *ars nova*. Furthermore, I believe that this observation supports an already-apparent shift in the definition of the *ars subtilior* to include works in which proportional relationships are represented through coloration and proportion signs as well as special note shapes.

The aforementioned Anonymous X also comments on a practice which is considered more precise when he writes:

*...notandum quod sepe aliqui cantus notantur aliquibus notulis ubi tamen notule sic semper cantande non sunt ut prima fronte apparent ut sic cantatur brevis pro brevis...sed patet ut talis cantus subtilius considerentur dimidiando sigulas notulas nulla excepta sic videlicet ubi ponatur longa, ibi cantetur brevis, etc...*⁴⁰

The author is referring to the device of diminution where the written notes are sung at half their written duration. However, it can be deduced from the *Expositiones* of Prosdocimus de Beldemandis on the early fourteenth century French theorist Johannes de Muris that diminution had a long history. In relation to de Muris' statement that *Diminutio motetorum semper fit in tenoribus*, Prosdocimus writes:

*Supra quam partem notandum quod ex hoc auctor dixit diminutionem reperiri in tenoribus motetorum <sic>, quia forsan suo tempore non fiebat nisi in tenoribus motetorum. Sed licet forsan sic fuerit tamen ad presens non solum diminutio reperitur in tenoribus motetorum, sed etiam reperitur in tenoribus baladarum et aliorum cantuum, et quod plus est reperitur etiam in discantibus quamplurium baladarum.*⁴¹

While diminution was considered a *subtilitas* throughout the fourteenth century, Prosdocimus' statement permits the suggestion that diminution's use in the upper voices of a composition was a later stylistic development. It is therefore appropriate to include this

⁴⁰ "It must be noted that some songs are often notated by other notes wherein, however, the notes must not always be sung as they appear on first sighting, so that a brevis is sung for a brevis...but it is plain that such songs should be considered more subtle by halving individual notes without exception so that namely where a longa is placed, there a brevis will be sung, etc."; Coussemaker, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 415a.

⁴¹ "From the passage above it is noted that the author said that diminution is found in the tenors of motets, since perhaps in his time diminution was not made except in the tenors of motets. However, granted this was so, today diminution is found not only in the tenors of motets, but is also found in the tenors of ballades and other songs, and what is more it is even found in the descant of many ballades."; F. Alberto Gallo (ed.), *Prosdocimi de Beldemandis Opera I: Expositiones tractatus practice cantus mensurabilis magistri Johannes de Muris*, Bologna, 1966, chap. XL, sent. 6-8.

device in the list of *ars subtilior* devices, especially considering the frequent use of diminution in compositions from the late fourteenth century.⁴²

The assessment of *subtilitas* in terms of significative precision in the representation of musical events has up to this point of time focused on its use in mensural notation in relation to rhythmic durations. However, the notion of significative precision also encompasses other aspects of the nexus between notated and actual music. Johannes Boen's *Ars musicae* written in the mid-thirteenth century expresses similar prophetic opinions concerning the use of hexachords in new position when he states:

*Moderni maiori ducti lascivia, quasi nani super humeros gygantum plus longe respicientes quam veteres, tamquam cotidiana positione clavium fastiditi, ad subtiliores positiones dictas litteras b-fa-b-mi etiam in aliis clavis statuendo, se rationabiliter profundarunt...*⁴³

It follows that an analogy exists between the representation of horizontal relationships (in time) and the vertical relationships in terms of relative pitch relations in music. This assessment has important consequences for the chromatic essays from this period such as Solage's *Fumeux fume* (Vol. II, App. A, No. 1), the anonymous *Le mont Aön de Trace* (Vol. II, App. A, No. 2) and Matheus de Perusio's *Le grant desir* (Vol. II, App. A, No. 3) which contain a great number of manuscript accidentals prescribing less usual hexachord-placement and tonal language.

In addressing the issue of whether the term *ars subtilior*, in relation to the *ars nova*, is a useful way of describing this music, I would like to conclude by referring to a recent re-assessment of the term *ars subtilior* by Anne Stone in which she proposes that the notation of the *ars subtilior* (which she reads as "the more precise art") can be read as a response to a conceptual problem residing in the invariability of durations which lay at the heart of the concept of *mensura* for both the Italian and French notational systems.⁴⁴ In as far as it concerns musical rhythm, I would agree with Stone⁴⁵ that a central focus of the *ars subtilior* resided in overcoming the invariability of the French *minima* through various devices such as special notes shapes, Indo-Arabic numerals, coloration and canons. For me, however, this

⁴² A survey of this device's use in Codex Chantilly is found in Ursula Günther, 'Die Anwendung der Diminution in der Handschrift Chantilly 1047', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 17, 1960, pp. 1-21.

⁴³ "Led by licentiousness, the moderns, like dwarves atop the shoulders of giants seeing much further than the ancients, as if loathe to the ordinary position of the hexachord syllables, meanwhile placing the aforementioned letters b-fa-b-mi at more subtle positions and on other hexachords, rush forth by virtue of reason"; F. Alberto Gallo, (ed.), *Johannis Boen, Ars (musicae)*, Corpus Scriptorum de Musica 19, Rome, p. 35.

⁴⁴ Stone, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁵ Stone, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

occurred in response to the conceptual role that the organising principle of proportionality⁴⁶ had in informing the new style. The very degree of separation in terms of the complexity of temporal subdivision which was finally achieved by the most advanced compositions in the *ars subtilior* style – for example: *Le sault perilleux* – from that occurring in Italian compositions, surely suggests proportionality and its clear representation was foremost in the minds of notators.⁴⁷ Much of Chapters 4 to 6 of this present study is devoted to discussing the very modes of representation of proportionality in notational process.

At issue here is not the appropriation of a historically evident term but the determination of a historiographic descriptor. If that term describes a historical concept then it is a useful historiographical device. There is little doubt that the concept of *subtilitas* existed in medieval culture on a broad basis. Its application to the music of the *ars nova* was made with reference to the broad set of contemporary cultural, intellectual and linguistic values that held this term to denote fine distinction. That contemporaries held that an extension of the *subtilitates* of the music of the *ars nova* occurred during the fourteenth century (which resulted in what today we might call the evolution of a new style), suggests that the use of the comparative *subtilior* is appropriate in relation to practical applications of the liberal art of music during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

⁴⁶ On the role of proportionality in the organisation and generation of artistic representations in the middle ages, *vid.* Stephen G. Nichols, 'The New Medievalism: Tradition and discontinuity in medieval culture', in *The New Medievalism*, eds M. S. Brownlee, K. Brownlee and S. G. Nichols, Baltimore and London, 1991, p. 5.

⁴⁷ One might question the centrality of Guido's *Or voit tout* in Stone's and Günther's accounts. The work makes no reference to *subtilitas* or its French derivative, although its special note shapes undoubtedly embody aspects of *subtilitas*. As I argue below (Chapter 4, p. 204), despite the fact that *Or voit tout* contains implicit proportional relationships in its use of special note shapes, its notation of is primarily concerned with one concept – the duration of half-a-*minima*. Stone's reading of this work does much to clarify the poet's choice of terminology based upon contemporary theory, but I believe the *nouvelles figures* that occur in the notation of this work are the key to an ironic reading of the work in so far as they rely on (and seek to extend proportionally) the invariability of the *minima* which exists in the De Vitry's/De Muris' system. Contrary to what is suggested by the text of *Or voit tout*, there is nothing Marchettan about its notation. Its wholly French notation is the basis of this piece of consummate *litotes* – the notation is the exact opposite of the literal text but perfect compliment of the ironic sub-text. The *nouvelles figures* that are so (ironically) blighted by the text are dependant upon this mensural context. One further cautionary note is also pertinent to this work and the current debate. Günther dates *Or voit tout* to the beginning of the last quarter of the 14th century based upon broad stylistic determinants ('Das Ende der *ars nova*', p. 111). But there is little to suggest that this work could not have been written just after the death of Philippe de Vitry in 1361. There remains some doubt as to whether *Or voit tout* can inform us fully of the many and varied notational developments of the 1380s and '90s.