CHRISTIAN BERGER

Machaut’s Balade *Ploures dames* (B32) in the Light of Real Modality

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The most reliable basis for our analytical approach to musical works of the late Middle Ages is via their transmission as written texts. Since these texts are themselves part of an earlier culture, reading them as instructions by which to reproduce the music of this culture requires that we study the presuppositions of this cultural system – the ‘webs of significance’ in which any individual is suspended. As Geertz stresses, to explore this webs does not need ‘an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.’

Music history thus relies not only upon musical texts, but also upon the background of elementary music teaching against which to view the assumptions upon which those texts are based.

The consequences of such an assumption may be demonstrated by means of a short example of chant repertory. Figure 13.1 represents two versions of ‘et porta coeli’, an excerpt from the responsory ‘Terribilis est’, distinguished only by the leap of a fifth at the beginning. At about 1100 John of Afflighem criticised this leap as a corruption of chant resulting from ‘the ignorance of the fools’. The Bamberg-version would require an $E_b$, which the scribe was not able to notate within the Guidonian system. Only by a transposition upwards a fifth, replacing the $E_b$ by $b_b$, was he able to indicate its intention. At first this leap was only a makeshift solution, not to be sung. Later this written version gained independence from the problem whose temporary solution it originally represented. In the Salesbury source, with the emendation of the $b_b$ sign, the original intention had been lost, and it became a melodic expression in its own right.

Very few chant studies or general studies of medieval music have investigated this problem further, implying a resistance that might posit a

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1 I warmly thank Privatdozent Dr. Richard Matthews of the University of Freiburg and Dr. Elizabeth Eva Leech of Royal Holloway, University of London, for their invaluable help in correcting my first translation.


5 For further testimonies see C. Berger, _Hexachord, Mensur und Textstruktur. Studien zum französischen Lied im 14. Jahrhundert_ (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992), 115-17.
break in the tradition of occidental history, even in the relatively minor field of musical notation. Instead medieval sources are usually accessed by relaying on more recent readings, established during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, until the eighteenth century there was no concept of musical tradition at all, not even in chant. It was the Enlightenment which reinvented the past, ‘driven by a striving for self-discovery. The role of history was assured by the notion that collective memory, encoded in writing, was an essential precondition for civilisation.’ The study of medieval music cannot therefore assume an unbroken tradition. However, calling into question the ‘important characteristics of an advanced musical civilization’, namely ‘a rational system of pitches… as well as methods of transmitting music from one generation to the next’ should not imply a loss of cultural dignity. The seeming emendation of the pitch notation in Figure 13.1 is only indicative of the long development of the Western notational system, a process which lasted for centuries, and whose context-dependent workings are widely accepted for other parameters, such as rhythm.

The emendation of those pitches not part of the system became more and more important because such correction made it possible to sing ‘the word of God in accordance with the law, that is, the Gregorian Psalms in modal order.’ Modal unity, by which theory gained final control over the oral performance tradition, constituted the musical body of the vox Christi in accordance with the corpus mysticum of the Christian church. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the vox Christi was further decorated by the addition of polyphony, which relied from the start on written notation. These musical texts, for example the manuscripts of Guillaume de Machaut, seem to us so elaborated that they can obscure the cultural

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9 In the era of so-called postmodernism, it should be no longer necessary to look at the Middle Ages as a validation of the dignity of our present time. See Kirkman, ‘Under such Heavy Chains’, ‘, citing extensively the critical ideas of E. Hegar, *Die Anfänge der neueren Musikgeschichtsschreibung um 1770 bei Gerbert, Burney und Hawkins*, (Strasbourg: Heitz & Co., 1932, reprint. Baden-Baden: V. Koerner, 1974).
10 A. Diehr, *Speculum corporis*: Körperlichkeit in der Musiktheorie des Mittelalters (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2000), 126: ‘...das göttliche Wort in seiner gesetzmäßigen Form, d.h. als gregorianische Psalmen in modularer Ordnung.’
presuppositions which continue to guide even this notation. In contrast to modern scores, the notational system of the fourteenth century is part of the production process and does not in itself represent the work of art. Attempts must therefore be made to recover now lost but then elementary assumptions which guided the system.

Despite objections recently raised by Sarah Fuller, a basic cultural background can be found in the treatises of *musica plana*, which – from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries – present an eternal trinity of *litterae, voces* and *toni* (or *modi*).\(^{11}\) The litterae, the exactly measured notes of the monochord, are linked by the *voces* into the structure of the tone system, and these *voces* are joined by the modes to greater unities of meaningful melodies. By 1300 this system was so well established that the higher subjects of *musica mensurabilis* and *contrapunctus* could take it for granted. Jacques de Liège, for example, playfully uses shared terms to stress the connection between *musica plana* and these higher sub' Fritz Reckow has convincingly demonstrated.\(^{12}\) Reckow states that the musical culture of the late medieval ages is persistently shaped by the experience of monophonic vocal practice and by the theoretical discussion of this practice since the early medieval ages.\(^{13}\) Using texts ranging from the thirteenth-century Magister Lambertus to the late fifteenth-century Adam von Fulda, Reckow proves 'how close medieval authors judged the parallelism and connection, if not dependence of musica plana and

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\(^{11}\) S. Fuller, „Modal Discours and Fourteenth-Century French Song. A 'Medieval' Perspective Recovered?“, *Early Music History* 17 (1998), 61-108. Fuller states that "[g]iven the broad field of knowledge compassed under the rubric musica plana, comments on its preparatory function relative to musica mensurabills can hardly be credited as explicit reference for the validity of modal teaching for polyphony" (72). But musica plana is not only 'preparatory' but, as Franco of Cologne states, the 'principal' field in contrast to the 'subordinate' subject of musica mensurabilis (see G. Reaney, and A. Gilles, eds, *Franco of Cologne: Ars cantus mensurabilis*. Corpus Scriptorum Musicae, Vol. 18 (np: American Institute of Musicology, 1974), 23). Furthermore, Jerome of Moravia explicitly treats *musica plana* from the perspective of *musica mensurabilis*, and for Heinrich Eger von Kalkar the 'traditional character of modality remains the starting point' even though he was very familiar with the polyphonic practices of his time, citing Franco and even Vitry (see F. Reckow, "rectitudo – pulchritudo – enormitas,“ Spätmittelalterliche Erwägungen zum Verhältnis von materia und cantus," in *Musik und Text in der Mehrstimmigkeit des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, edited by Ludwig Finscher and Ursula Günther (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1984), 1-36 [19-22] ). Passages by Jacques de Liège which Fuller thinks should 'challenge Berger's claim' (73), are convincingly presented in the opposite sense by Reckow ("rectitudo – pulchritudo – enormitas,“ 22-27). Even the famous citation of Johannes de Grocheio can be read in the light of a special position for *musica mensurabills* (see Reckow, "rectitudo – pulchritudo – enormitas," 27 and 30 and Berger, *Hexachord, Mensur und Textstruktur*, 131). It is not a question of recontextualizing the text 'to serve our own purpose' but of looking critically at our own presuppositions which lie hidden in the history of re-invention of the Middle Ages (see Kirkman, „Under Such Heavy Chains“‘ and Stephen Hinton, "Ammerikanische Musiktheorie: Disziplin ohne Geschichte?" [American Music Theory: Discipline Without History?], lecture given in Basel, April 2001). This might really be a question of accepting a 'medieval perspective' over a modern, notation-based one, whose premises may not be too far away from a Schenkerian view (see E. Seidel. "Hans Leo Haßler's 'Mein gemüth ist mir verwirrt' und Paul Gerhards 0 Haupt voll Blut und Wunden' in Bachs Werk," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 58 (2001): 61-89 [66]).

\(^{12}\) For example, the word 'mode' is used as part of tonality and part of rhythm; see Reckow "rectitudo – pulchritudo – enormitas," 22-24. Concerning the consequences for the theory of hexachords see Berger, *Hexachord, Mensur und Textstruktur*, 129-34; see C. Berger, "Hexachord (1.-V.)," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, edited by Ludwig Finscher, vol. 5 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2nd edition, 1996), 279-86.

\(^{13}\) Reckow, „rectitudo – pulchritudo – enormitas,“ 1: „die musikalische Kultur auch noch des späten Mittelalters nachhaltig geprägt [ist] durch die Erfahrung einstimmiger vokaler Praxis und durch die Kontinuität der theoretischen Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Praxis seit dem frühen Mittelalter.”
musica mensurabilis.” Fuller's objections to the identity of the fundamental pitch assumptions of musica plana and musica mensurabilis were effectively already countered by Reckow nearly twenty years ago.15

In the course of the sixteenth century compositional developments dissolved the modal system from within, and theory finally reacted by fundamental changes, which Harold Powers speaks of not in terms of a modal system but in terms of ‘tonal types’ as a ‘class of polyphonic compositions minimally characterized by a particular combination of system signature, cleffing, and final sonority’.16 Such a ‘tonal type is minimally identifiable by its three markers and thus objectively observable completely apart from its musical or cultural context; [it is „scientific“, it is „etic“].17 Similarly, Sarah Fuller supports a ‘process-based approach’, which ‘does not take the existence of a systematic array of tonal or modal templates for granted.’18 However, Jean-Jacques Nattiez has pointed out that 'The musical work is not merely what we used to call the text. ... Rather the work is also constituted by the procedures that have engendered it ... and the procedures to which it gives rise.'19

Qualitative methods of musical analysis, such as those demonstrated by Bernhard Meier,20 are replaced by a quantitative method, which opens the way to exactly measurable, that is to say, statistical methods. But these methods have to renounce their dependence of the written records of the elementary categories of litterae, voces and modi. Whilst this may be legitimate in the sixteenth century, it is not really sensible in the fourteenth century, whose musical texts have much stronger cultural presuppositions.21 The question is not whether “modes” were originally thought of more as „a posteriori“ categories for grouping items in a repertory than „a priori“ pre-compositional choices or assumptions22 but rather, in what way did musica plana guide the writing and performance of music. This does not lead to a standardization or even a limitation of compositional possibilities, as I have been able to demonstrate with the Solages's balade Calextone and other pieces.23

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14 Ibid., 22 ‘belegen, wie eng spätmittelalterliche Autoren Parallelität und Zusammengehörigkeit, ja sogar Abhängigkeit von musica plana und musica mensurabilis gesehen haben.’
17 Ibid., 439.
22 Powers, „Tonal Types“, 435.
But it does exclude Margaret Bent's proposal of counterpoint as the leading compositional concept instead of the elementary parameters of musica plana.24 Without the qualitative criteria of modality musical analysis renounces much of the subtlety of its descriptive power. Under these circumstances, Yolanda Plumley's efforts to re-establish such qualitative aspects with regard to a presumed – correctly, in my view – 'tonal coherence', are admirable.25 The possibility of obtaining qualitative interpretations, but with the additional help of modality, will be demonstrated here using Machaut's Ploures dames (B32).26

At first glance the tonal style of Ploures dames (B32) does not seem to present any problems. According to Peter Lefferts it belongs to 'the α-minor-class with the finale d' and a natural Signature-system.'27 I would prefer to classify it as a piece in the Dorian mode, which gives rise to certain consequences that I will describe below. For the moment, however, one aspect of B32's normality should be noted. Throughout the piece presents a very regular alternation of clos- and ouvert-cadences, beginning with the first cadence formula on the final d at the caesura of the first line in bar 3, the half close at the end of line 1 in bar 8, and so on, exactly following the structure of the poem.

In spite of all these normal aspects, the piece starts in a rather strange way. No Dorian mode piece in the repertory of the fourteenth century starts with such a clearly pronounced major third. Plumley states that only 'two [of the secular] works [of Machaut] begin on the pitch below the finale in the cantus,' that is 'Se je me plaing' (B15) und 'Ploures dames' (B32).28 And because the Cantus of B15 centres on c

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24 M. Bent, „The Grammar of Early Music: Preconditions for Analysis,” in Tonal Structures, 15-59. On the basis of the tangible cultural context of 'elementary training shared by composers and singers' (25), Bent considers the contrapunctus as the 'functional musical grammar of the composition' (40). However, contrapunctus is not, as Bent would have it, part of the first level of the music's own hierarchies' (27) but an 'indeterminatio positio' (A. Seay, ed. Ugolino of Orvieto: Declaratio Musicae Disciplinae, Corpus Scriptorum Musicae, Vol. 7/2 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1962), 4). It offers various possible solutions to a problem without in many cases enabling a decision and decisions are only kept provisionally in places where contrapunctus has to adhere to other, stronger rules of musica plana, such as modality and, combined with it, the system of the hexachords (see Berger, Hexachord, Mensur und Textstruktur, 141, 142-3)


27 Lefferts, „Signature Systems and Tonal Types”, 145.

in the opening section’ instead of on g, the beginning of the cantus is a fourth below the reference tone. 29 Thus *Ploures dames* (B32) remains the only piece of its kind. In their *Index of Gregorian Chant* Bryden and Hughes list four pages of chants that begin with the same melodic line as the balade. 30 With very few exceptions, they all belong to the Lydian or Mixolydian modes. The few exceptions which are in the

first or second mode do not draw attention to the major third, but rather to the finale D, which is circumscribed by its two neighbour-notes (see Figure 13.2).  

The beginning of B32 not only ‘creates some ambiguity as to the identity of the tonal type’, it is a clear allusion to a mode other than la ter constituted by the final. It is a modal defect, which, according to the testimony of the Cistercians, should have been emendated; Hugo of St. Victor would have called it a monstrosity.  

This leads us back to MS A, the basis of my edition of the balade (Figure 13.3) where the cantus starts with two accidentals, neither of which is interpreted as a sign.

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Figure 13.3: (cont.)

of sharpening either the accompanying note $c$ or $d$ in any of the existing editions.\textsuperscript{34} Editors have either preferred their silent suppression, or have interpreted the second of them as a hint to sharpen the cadential $c$ in bar 2.\textsuperscript{35} However, within the framework of the hexachordal system, both these two signs can be meaningfully interpreted.

In the system of the overlapping hexachords spanning the ambitus of a piece which provide the basis of the singer’s solmization (cf. Figure 13.4a), we find two different semitones – mi-fa and la-fa – which are clearly differentiated by their solmization syllables and, consequently, by the signs $b$-durum (or $b$-quadratum), specifying $mi$ of the mi-fa semitone, and $b$-moll (or $b$-rotundum), specifying $fa$ of the la-fa semitone.\textsuperscript{36} This conforms with the rule of the anonymous Summa musice ‘...$b$ and $# are the names of the letters, but taken in diverse ways, for round $b$ is named $fa$ and square $# is named $mi$.’\textsuperscript{37} In connection with this citation we must consider the medieval connotation fo the term sign, which points more to the structure of the underlying framework than to the single note.\textsuperscript{38} A $b$-durum points to a conjunct combination of two hexachords, meeting at the point ut-fa above $mi$: (#)$b$-$mi / c$-$fa-ut$. A $b$-moll points to a fa-supra-la, which is at once the point of separation between two disjunct hexachords: $E$-$la$-$mi / (b)$F$-$fa$-supra-la. In this context $F$-$fa$ is part only of the naturale hexachord; the next deductio of the hard

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{hexachordal_system}
\caption{Hexachordal system}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{34} B32 is on f. 470v.
\textsuperscript{35} F. Ludwig, ed., Guillaume de Machaut: Musikalische Werke. 4 vols, Publikationen älterer Musik, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-1956): 38: ‘Cantus: A setzt $#$ irrig schon T.1’ (the cantus in A wrongly places $#$ early, in b. 1); see also L. Schrade, ed., The Works of Guillaume de Machaut. 2 vols, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century, Vol. 3 (Monaco: L’Oiseau lyre, 1956), 120-1, who silently omits the initial sign in A and uses the second one to sharpen the $c$ in m. 3.
\textsuperscript{38} See Christian Berger, Hexachord, Mensur und Textstruktur, 92. A modern accidental has an indexical function. As Charles Pierce defined it, an index ‘is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed’, see ‘Sign’ in J. Hoopes, ed., Peirce on Signs (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 239. In this sense the modern $b$ is immediately combined with its indicated object, the note. A medieval accidental instead functions as a symbol. Its meaning can only become accessible by the knowledge of the whole context of meanings in which its participates. Having a thorough knowledge of this context, the meaning of the symbol is accessible without a concrete object (a note) because it cues a structure (of hexachords). But it loses its symbolic function if it can no longer be interpreted, it is a sign which would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant’ (ibid., 240). As this is the current situation for us today with medieval accidentals, we should not be looking for an object pointed to by a supposedly indexical sign but looking for that structural context of a symbolic one.
hexachord starts on G-ut-sol. A $b$-durum sign at this point would provoke a conjunct combination of the two hexachords naturale and molle, where F-fa-ut represents the point of conjunction of these two hexachords: ($\#$) E-mi / F-fa-ut.

B32 tenor has an unusual ambitus, with C-ut instead of Γ-ut as the lowest note. Consequently, the hexachordal fabric has to be transposed up a fourth as in Figure 13.4b, leading to the semitones ($\#$) E-mi/F-fa and a-la / (b) $b$-molle-fa.\(^{39}\)

The singer, starting his solmization along this transposed hexachordal system, solmises the c of the cantus as a c-sol. But now the accidental requires further further solution since it cues a conjunct combination of two hexachords at this point. Starting with the soft hexachord, one consequenceis the hexachord on $b$b, leading to an $E_b$-flat in bar 2. Another way would be to read the $b$-quadratum as a cue to transpose the solmization of the following notes down a forth, starting with G-sol, a-la (instead of with C-sol, D-la) and, consequently, with $b$-fa-supra-la as third note. In both cases, the result can not be presented in a strongly diatonic notational system: the sound of the third note is $E_b$-flat as fa-supra-la above the soft hexachord. As a result of these considerations, the other voices, too, move to the Hexachord on $B_b$.

This reading is confirmed by another peculiarity. The tenor starts on the lower fourth G and leaps down another fourth to the final D. Without the countertenor, adding the lower octave C, the opening fourth G/c could not be regularly performed.\(^{40}\) In the sixteenth century, such a leap downwards would become a normal part of a Phrygian close, avoiding the tritone above the penultimate note of the tenor (here this would be the tritone $a$-mi – $E_b$-fa).\(^{41}\) Such a Phrygian close in

\(^{39}\) There are sixteen Machaut balades with C as the lowest note of the tenor, but only two of them are in the D-Dorian mode: Biaute qui (B4) and B32. Additionally, Je sui aussi (B20) is in G-Dorian, the transposed system of hexachords signified at the beginning by its $b_b$ signatures, prompting even Leo Schrade to add an editorial flat to the e in the cantus, bar 1. In all three examples the transposed system of hexachords is further signified by the presence of a Phrygian cadence on D at the first caesura. Although there is a $b$-molle sign on E-fa in the tenor of B4 and one on $b_b$ in B20, both starting with a G-Dorian fifth re-la (and consequently followed by a fa-supra-la $E_b$ in the cantus), in B32 there is only the $b$-durum sign, pointing to the necessity to solmize the cantus as c-sol ($c$-fa can be ruled out as selfevident, following jacques of Liège; see R. Bragard, ed. Jacques of Liège: Speculum Musicae, Corpus Scriptorum Musicae, Vol. 3 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1955-1973), vol. 6, 138: 'Alias signetur, semper usus fiat quadrati' ([except where] signed otherwise, always use the hexachord durum). I would like to confess that this interpretation is part of an experimental 'production process' that we have to undertake in view of our lack of secure knowledge concerning the notation of late medieval music).


\(^{41}\) Perhaps in Pas de tor (B30), another balade with such a tenor leap, this possiblitiy could be taken into consideration, too; cf. Plumley, The Grammar of 14th Century Melody, 196. Concerning the Aeolian close see Christian Berger, „Modalität und Kontrapunkt. Frescobaldis , Toccata cromaticha‘ (1635)”, Schütz-Jahrbuch (1999),: 17-28.
the frame of a Dorian piece is not unusual in Gregorian Chant. Gustav Jacobsthal presents the Communion 'Cantate Domino' of the Montpellier Codex, where such a Phrygian close, transposed a fifth upwards, is found at the end of the psalm-verse, and is then followed by the Alleluia ending with a normal Dorian close (see Figure 13.5 where it is re-transposed to the 'normal' final D to ease comparison), saying 'This modulation, and the formation of a cadence in another mode on the final of the main mode of the whole melody, is a highly recommended artful effect.'

This coincides with the observation of David Hiley, who in classifying the Communion as being 'among the most puzzling of chants' with 'inconsistencies and irregularities in almost every aspect of the repertory' cites a piece, where, similarly, 'in the absence of a notational sign for E♭, the whole chant is transposed up a fifth in some sources'.

Instead of the assumed Lydian or Mixolydian version of the notated beginning of Ploures dames (B32), this Phrygian close is one of the possibilities within the context of the normal Dorian mode, pointing very intensively to the plaintive mood of the text. Beside this modal peculiarity there is a point of relationship to the Mass, composed at nearly the same time as the balade. This interrelationship may be more exactly pinpointed than Daniel Leech-Wilkinson has already suggested.

In bars 81-83 of the Gloria (see Figure 13.6), we find the same contrapuntal fabric as at the beginning of the B32, merely extended to four voices. Besides the identical cantus-line, the tenor-leaps down a fourth from G to D (the fundamental tone of this sonority) leading to a cadence on D. The melodic formula of the upper voice is only differentiated by the technique of solmization. Apart from this difference in singing, emphasizing the plaintive character of the balade, the notated form is more than a vague reference, it is a real quotation, cued by means of the music the words 'miserere nobis', which are in complete agreement with the opening text of the balade: 'Ploures dames' (Weep ladies) and its Refrain 'Si dieus et vous ne me prenez en cure' (If God and
you do not attend to me), which is a request akin to „miserere’ (Have mercy on us). 45 Furthermore, both requests remain open until the end, just as the music of the balade with its Phrygian cadence formulation remains ‘open’.

There is a further quotation of the Mass. In the course of B32 one dissonance, which cannot be justified by contrapuntal rules, occurs twice. The ninth D\textsuperscript{e} comes first at the beginning of bar 4 between cantus and countertenor and is taken up again at a very decisive point, namely the beginning of the refrain in bar 36, now between cantus and tenor. Here it would be possible to argue that it is a result of a superimposition of different voices. The cantus starts up with its melodic line citing again the beginning of the balade at the last word of the foregoing line: ‘aventure’. As a result, the cantus takes up the sequential continuation of bar 4. 46 This is in agreement with the syntactical conjunction of the conditional refrain with its preconditions: it is ‘the danger of death’, ‘the agony’ or, in the third strophe, ‘nature’s debt’, which are threatening the poet, ‘if God and you don’t attend to me.’ Only the tenor marks the beginning of the refrain, leading to the sole regular cadence formula on D, reaching the final in stepwise motion. 47 But this superimposition can hardly justify the dissonance of the ninth.

Another look at the Mass can help us (see Figure 13.7). At the words ‘Crucifixus etiam pro nobis’ (was crucified also for us) in bars 83-85 of the Credo we can once more find the same contrapuntal fabric as in B32. The cantus has the same melody, where the e on ‘etiam’ collides with the lowest voice of this sonority, the D in the contratenor,

46 W. Dömling, "Aspekte der Sprachvertonung in den Balladen Guillaume de Machauts," Die Musikforschung 25 (1972): 301-7 (305) points out that the melodic sequence in bar 4 is an equivalent to the repeat of the word ‘ploures’.
47 The scribe of MS E no longer recognized this quotation and placed the word ‘Dieus’ on the high g; all the other manuscripts reserve the whole of bar 36 for the conditional pronoun ‘se’.
reached by a leap down from a. And, as may be seen in Figure 13.7, the continuation, too, corresponds to the balade, despite the balade having only three voices.

For Machaut such a dissonance was a ‘descort’, resulting from the inability of ‘Scens’ to guarantee the beauty of harmony: ‘Scens tout premiers a la charge et la cure / Que les cordes soient bien en acort, / Si qu'on n'i puis trouver aucun descort.’

Isabelle Bétemps cites En mon cuer (V28/24) where Machaut uses the same musical term to describe ‘the psychological troubles of the poet, caused by torments of love’: ‘En mon cuer ha un descort / Qui si fort le point et mort / Que, sans mentir, / S’Amours par son douz plaisir / N’i met acort / Aves ma dame, pour mort / Me doy tenir.’

It is not the ‘minimally identifiable’ tonal type, but the subtly differentiated description of modal melodies, which guides to the peculiarities of the musical structure. At the same time these peculiarities are the key to the interpretation of the balade as a close relation between music and text, the poetry of one of the last poet-composers, which is, as Dante expresses it, ‘nothing but a fiction that ist composed according to the rules of poetic and musicals art’.

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48 K. Young, "Guillaume de Machaut ‘Le Dit de la Harpe’," in Essays in Honor of Albert Feuillerat, edited by Henry M. Peyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 1-20 (10), lines 248-250 (Scens above all has the job to ensure that the strings accord well so that one is unable to find any discord there).

49 V. F. Chichmaref [Shishmarev], ed., Guillaume de Machaut: Poésies lyriques (Paris: Champion, 1909, reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 1973), vol. 2, 613, lines 1-7 (In my heart there is discord which pricks it so strongly that I truly will think to be dead if Love, by her sweet pleasure, does not bring it [my heart] concord with my lady); cited after I. Bétemps, L’imaginaire dans l’œuvre de Guillaume de Machaut (Paris: Champion, 1998), 104: ‘pour signifier le troble psychologique que ressent le poète éprouvé par les maux d’amour’ (to signify the psychological disturbance felt by the poet tested by the woes of love).