CLEMENT MAROT AND MUSIC : TRANSGRESSIONS

- A lecture in *English* about a *French* poet
- by a *Dutchman* living in *Flanders*
- who is not even a *literary scholar*, but a *theologian*,
- whose scholarly interest in Marot only began in *2002*,
- and this on the occasion of the *14th* C.A. Mayer memorial lecture…

SO MANY TRANSGRESSIONS: HOW CAN THIS EVER COME TO ANY GOOD?

Most English dictionaries give a quite negative definition of this 'transgression'. They immediately refer to "violation of the law" etc. My associations however are the ones inherent in the Latin original: *transgressio*: go to the other side, cross over: explore new fields, venture; adventure. For me the 'illegal' aspect is only a marginal connotation in my mind: crossing boundaries, borders, is always a little risky, but also – at least that is my opinion – often a very fruitful way of researching. So, I will transgress into the field of music. It was what made me love Marot in the days of my *adolescence*. I have no academic or professional license to do so. I am an amateur in that field, a dilettante; two beautiful words: *amor* et *dilectio*, I *love* music… It gives me joy, *delight*. Of course I hope that in the end you will forgive me my transgression. Or to quote Clément Marot, who uses the word 'transgression' only once in his entire oeuvre:

> O bien heureux celuy dont les commises
> Transgressions, sont par graces remises..

So, it's on your grace that I count… when I – like a fool – will now rush in where angels fear to tread.

I am not the first to speak about this topic, fortunately. Most of it has been said already. We are standing on the shoulders of giants, that is the only reason why we can see farther, to quote – not Isaac Newton, who indeed and rightly said so – but a medieval Church father from the School of Chartres who while saying this referred to himself as a 'dwarf'.[1] François Lesure wass such a giant in this field. So is Frank Dobbins, not unfamiliar to this group I presume, since he has written on this subject in 2002 in *Renaissance Reflections, essays in honour of…* you know.[2] More

[1] Bernardus of Chartres (died 1124). The saying is attributed to him by Johannes of Salisbury (Metalogicon): "Bernard of Chartres used to say that we are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size." (Dicebat Bernardus Carnotensis nos esse quasi nanos, gigantium humeris insidentes, ut possimus plura eis et remotiora videre, non utique proprii visus acumine, aut eminentia corporis, sed quia in altum subvenimur et extollimur magnitudine gigantea).

[2] Frank Dobbins, 'Clément Marot and his musical collaborators", in Pauline M. Smith, Trevor Peach (eds), *Renaissance reflections. Essays in memory of C.A. Mayer* (Paris, 2002), p. 33-35.

specifically musicological: I refer to Lawrence Bernstein, Howard Brown,[3] and more recently Peter Woetmann Christoffersen.[4] Concerning the music of the Psalms Pierre Pidoux and Edith Weber should be mentioned, both continuing – but also heavily amending– the work of the 19th Century giant in this field: Orentin Douen. But even more than to these giants, I owe what I think to know about this subject to performing artists, to musicians, for

The proof of all statements about music is in the listening.

In my presentation I will organise what I want to say around a number of musical examples. Technical details and discussion of hot issues - *and they abound around 'the Parisian chanson'* and *the Geneva Psalter* - I will skip. I am an amateur.

WHY WAS MAROT'S SO POPULAR WITH MUSICIANS ?

This was not because he was himself a musician. He was not the last of the troubadours, as was he romantic thesis of Jean Rollin in the 1950s.[5] The merit of that book was that it provoked reaction, among others of François Lesure, who in a very polite way *made matchwood of* that thesis and at the same time took up the gauntlet to show the real importance of Marot as a lyricist. In an appendix he drew up a *real* not a fantaisiste *bibliography* of texts by Marot put to music.[6] In the 1990s Annie Coeurdevey published a bibliography of Marot's chansons[7] and now an electronic database can be consulted in which all extant musical settings of texts by Marot (including only those Psalmsettings which are published in secular chanson collections) can be found by entering Marot's name.[8] This database confirms that Marot was simply the poet most sought after by composers in the 16th Century. To give an impression of the number of musical settings based on texts of Marot[9]:

	Lesure 1951	***Coeurdevey 1997***	***CESR 2011***
Marot	234	371	423
Mellin de StG			143
Ronsard			395

[3] H.Mayer Brown wrote numerous articles and the monograph *The Parisian chanson* (Harvard, 1964). For an overview, see his contribution (together with Richard Freedman) in the *New Grove Dicitionary of Music*, sub 'chanson'.
[4] P. Woetmann Chirstoffersen, *French Music in the Early Sixteenth Century* (Copenhagen 1994). 3 vols.
[5] Jean Rollin, *Les chansons de Clément Marot* (Paris, 1951).
[6] François Lesure, 'Autour de Clément Marot et des ses musiciens,' *Revue de Musicologie* 30 (1951), 109–115.
[7] Annie Coeurdevey, *Bibliographie des oeuvres poétiques de Clément Marot mises en musique dans les recueils profanes du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1997).
[8] Ricercar, Programma de recherche en musicologie. Centre d'Etudes Superieures de la Renaissance : http://ricercar.cesr.univ-tours.fr/3-programmes/basechanson/index.htm. (Université Françàis Rabelais de Tours).
[9] Coeurdevey includes some Psalm settings (which Lesure didn't), but these Psalm compositions are only included in the count if they appeared in secular collections, which is a substantial, but relatively small number and very often it concerns the same Psalms.

This means that Marot surpasses Ronsard in respect of attraction exerted on musicians, and … not unimportant as well: his attractiveness began earlier and lasted longer: Marot still rules in the chansonniers at the end of the 16th century and outside France even afterwards.

Compared with his colleague and rival, Mellin de Saint-Gelais, he is thrice as popular. Even more telling is the comparison of the number of composers that took the challenge to put Marot to music, that is found by Coeurdevey (1997):

	different composers	***different texts***
Marot	90	151
Mellin de StG	?	75
Ronsard	43	112

And if you would take the time to investigate what poems of Marot are the most popular, then you would of course find the fixed form poems: rondeaux, ballads… (or parts of them) but especially his sizeins, huitains, dizains, or epigrams, occasionally an epistle or a few lines of an elegy, and - of course - his chansons, but by no means his chansons only, not even predominantly. In the end his epigrams are the winners.

What is attracted musicians to Marot's texts, and made them prefer his texts above those of other poets? This is my answer: It is the inherent musical quality of his poetic output, combined with the refinement of the traditional form of lyrical chanson, which leads to the paradoxical conclusion that their success was basically their conventionality.

I explain: Marot was not a musician himself, but he was *musical*. According to his own testimony he was a bad singer (he always sang out of tune, he confesses in a jolly epigram addressed to Maurice Scève), but nevertheless his words *sang*: sound, rhythm, the movement, tension in his lines (arsis-thesis), not only in his chansons. For a 15th-16th century man there was hardly a boundary between poetry read aloud and poetry sung. 'Chanter' could simply mean 'recite, celebrate'[10]. In the Platonist vision poetry is the first and most natural manifestation of music (= the result of the Muses in action), which then can take all kinds of forms. The inherent musical aspect *can* be made explicit when put to music, but it does not need to. Poetry *is* music, a form of *musica humana* , the instrument which expresses the universal *musica mundana*. Verse and music are one, separation between them is artificial. With regard to both his Chansons and his Psalms, we should not think that Marot constantly imagined them to be sung, either as simple songs or in a more elaborate way. They are 'read' recited, hopefully with enthusiasm, like the Orphic image sketched in his 1541 epistle accompanying his first Psalm collection. To Marot poetry itself is 'music' a gift from the 'Muses.'

In the musical idiom of Claudin de Sermisy Marot's words found their natural expression, making the inherent music explicit, audible and performable. The essence of vocal music in is

[10] "célébrer avec lyrisme". f.i. in the famous chanson 'tant que vivray'… the poet professes that he will never stop singing 'his love', i.e. not *about* his love, but sing out his love (in Dutch: bezingen; sing the praises of, like), Conter and chanter are akin. As in Latin: cantare = celebrate, recite. Marot appears not to have been particularly interested in the music to which his poems were put. This applies to his *chansons* and his Psalms. For many of his chansons (especially his later ones) no musical setting is known.

the melody… "hè melooidia" = the singing it self // "ho melooidos" is the lyrical poet. Music begins with the *invention* of a melody and sing it. And then others sing along, or perhaps they sing 'contra'; the tenor with the theme, the counter-tenor. Then you can put something below: bassus or above: superius.

So these two courtiers were a perfect match. Together they gave birth to what the musicologist call the 'Parisian chanson'. In it two tendencies merge: the popular and the courtly. And they blend seamlessly because of Marot's textual and Claudin's musical genius. Both – text and music – are characterized by an only *seemingly* simplicity. Or to quote a Marot scholar "we touch here upon the paradox of the chansons as a whole. They bear witness to the facility so essential to light lyricism, ... a facility so seldom easily achieved, being won by labour, restraint and the highest art. The triumph of the chansons is the triumph of art concealing art." (Smith, 1970, p; 140). In my opinion this is the secret not only of Marot's chansons, but also of his epistles and many of his epigrams, and the best of his Psalms. The injustice done to Marot being praised as an easy-going versifier (I won't quote Boileau) is thus rectified by the simple but true observation that "writing light verse requires heavy labour".

And there is something else: In the person, the soul of Clément so to speak, there is no contradiction between the old and the new. There is only good and bad poetry. The old and the new blend naturally. Son of a court poet, participator at rhetorical festivals ("les puys"), he easily combined tradition and when his talent began to bloom and bear fruit (during his *adolescence*) he found words in his lyrical poems that expressed universal human feelings of love, hope, despair, enjoyment. The plaintive register, melancholia, he supremely masters it. But also the exuberant and the ironical, the biting satirical, subtle eroticism and the jocular farce, though – for a 16th C poet – the latter in a surprisingly low quantity, and still quite 'tongue in cheek'. But the few he produced were instant and lasting successes.[11] Despite of all talking about the dawn of a New Age, the Renaissance, Marot did not really break with the past (nor did Francis, although they both used the rhetorics to celebrate his government). How could they? The past was their present and the old forms were the ones they had been taught to love and use. Especially in his chansons Marot more continues a longstanding tradition of 14th and 15th century chansons, to which not only explicit references can be found in his poetry, but which with his poetry simply continues and – perhaps – reaches its apex.[12] Learning begins with imitating and then interiorisation and when there is talent, the imitating will become emulating and when there is extraordinary talent the emulating will lead to the disclosure of new horizons, or – exceptional – a synthesis on a higher level. I think this has happened here:

« Le grand mérite de Marot (et De Claudin De Sermisy, j'ajoute) *est donc d'avoir donné droit de cite à la chanson. »* (Mayer, *OL*, p. 13 = *CM*, 67)

In short: the power of his chansons is that they *sound* familiar, but at the same time have that 'extra' which one can never define . The key to their success is that they are conventional and new.[13] Or to quote a musicologist: "All the words that are so good to sing ("cueur, douleur,

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[11] Martin menoit son pourceau / Frere Thibault.

[12] llusions, quotations of titles, mainly to songs present in Jardin de Plaisance (1509) – see PMSmith 127

[13] How conventional? The form: octosyllables or decasyllables with a *caesura* after the first four syllables (often dactylic) and a ornamented cadence at the end, the established form of the lyric chanson at least since middle 15th Century if not longer (see below). And then the topics treated and the tone: "Most familiar, because of the long and distinguished poetic tradition that they represent, are the courtly profession of amorous fealty and the generally subsequent complainte amoureuse, which gives expression-usually in a highly stylized and conventionalized vocabulary." (Leeman L. Perkins, 'Toward a

languir, regretz" etc.), are found there" [as they were in the 15th century songs (put to music by great composers, Ockeghem, Compere, Agricola], "but they are less pretentious and often have a lighter tone, a touch of the straightforwardness of the popular songs. To the popular tradition he brings the coherence and point that the confused anonymous songs sometimes lack. [14] Once more: What makes the work of a poet – and music – worthwhile is not so much that which distinguishes him from tradition, as we generally believe, or want to believe, but that which connects him to what went before, and which he – having internalised it, appropriated it – transmits to the next generation. It is the same, but different now.

> T.S. Eliot (TI, 1922)
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> " We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity."

"ONE SHOULD NOT TALK ABOUT MUSIC, BUT LISTEN TO WHAT IT SAYS."

L'Amour de moy

This 15th century chanson, a simple melody, an exquisite text, both of 'Anonymous' can serve as an example of 'a good French chanson'. Although dating way back to the 15th Century it is an eternal hit. It can be found in the famous Ms. de Bayeux (Ms. fr. 9346), and Ms. Fr. 12744 (text and music). It is also present in the famous collection *Jardin de Plaisance* of 1501[15]. The first polyphonic version I know of is in Petrucci 1504 (4vv). Pierre de la Rue (d 1518) used it as 'theme' for one of his Masses (only the Creed is extant). Some settings: 2vv Antoine Bruhier (d. ca. 1520) ; 3vv Jean de la Fage (fl. 1518-1530) ; 3vv Jean Richafort (d. 1480-1540?). After the publication of the abovementioned manuscripts it became popular again. Ralph Vaughan Williams arranged it in 1903 (cf. Greensleeves). This chanson can be used to determine the characteristics of [one type of] Lyrical chansons from 1450 onwards (until 2011)[16]

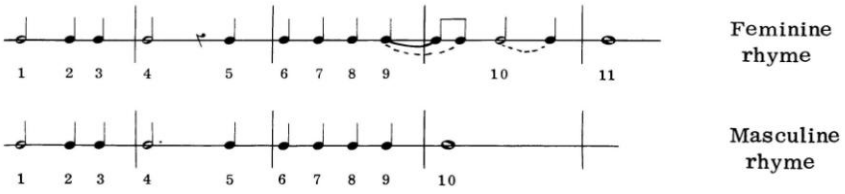
- The form: 8 or 10 syllables.
- a *caesura* after the first four syllables (often dactylic)
- An ornamented cadence at the end.
- Topics treated and 'atmosphere

Typology of the "Renaissance" Chanson', *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 421-447 (there p. 429). For the 'typography' of the chanson, see H.M. Brown, *The Parisian chanson*.

[14] ChristoffersenI, p. 225.

[15] Gaston Paris/Auguste Gevaert, *Chansons du XV siècle*.. (Paris,1875), n° XXVII.

[16] image copied Frank Dobbins, 'Jacques Moderne's 'Parangon des Chansons': A Bibliography of Music and Poetry at Lyon 1538-1543', : R.M.A. Research Chronicle, No. 12 (1974), pp. 1-90, there p. 9.



Pierre Attaingnant

Almost all chansons from *Ladolescence* (1532) were published first by Pierre Attaingnant, who began his career as a printer with one ecclesial imprint in 1527 and then with one sweep created, occupied and controlled the market with his chansonbooks. In his first book *Chansons nouvelles en musique a quatre parties* (around Easter 1528) Claudin de Sermisy dominates the scene: He is the composer of 17 of the 31 songs. And placed in front are five of his moving settings of lyrical poems, four of them by Clément Marot, total of 9. Almost a programmatic opening sequence of songs, really showing the lyrical quality and diversity : *Secourez moy* (opening Chansons nouvelles of 1528): plaintive longing of the lover; the distress experienced when no answer arrives: *"Dont vient cela, Belle, je vous* supply, or the celebration of a – at last – positive reply of the loved one: *Tant que vivray en aage Florissant*. All have the traditional scheme of a chanson, even the last-mentioned, *Tant que vivray*, although it is often suggested otherwise. It is only with the later chansons and in particular with the Psalms, that Marot revolutionizes poetical form. If you don't believe me: already in the 1980s Lawrence Bernstein has found a song in the same late 15th C collection of chansons as I used for *Amour de Moy*, which not only has almost a very similar metrical form, but also entire phrases and images in common with Marot's text… and last but not least: a very similar melodic pattern: Imitation, emulation, completion.

- Secourez moy, ma dame, par amours [7x10]
- Tant que vivray en aage florissant [6x10 / 6x4 / 1x8]
- Dont vient cela, belle, je vous supply [7x10]
- Joyssance vous donneray [6x8]
- Changeons propos, c'est trop chanté d'amours [7x10]
- J'atens secours de ma seule pensée [4x10]
- Languir me fais sans t'avoir offensé [4x10]
- Longtemps y a que je viz en espoir [5x10]
- J'ay contenté / ma volonté suffisamente [8x4 / 4x8]

To get an impression of the impact and work of Attaingnant, read the monumental monograph on this printer by Daniel Heartz. In a span of two years Attaingnant flooded the market with his successive editions, a total of 15 chanson collections with 468 compositions and - subtracting the reprints - 400 different chansons: an impressively large number. As Peter Woetmannn Christoffersen observes:

> "He must have collected a large stock of chansons before his printing press began production in earnest. Once success was assured and his stocks were perhaps depleted, he began publishing sacred music, instrumental music and dances, as well as chansons and motets arranged for the lute (and for voice and lute), and for keyboard instruments. The many arrangements for instruments are to a great extent based on the chansons

which had already appeared in the vocal collections; this way he made as much use as possible of his stock of music."[17]

One has to wait until 1532 to see a *new* collection of Chansons published by Attaingnant. In Marot's case one generally accepts that the texts predate the music but with not too long an interval in between. Heartz refers to documented examples of Marot writing a poem, f.i. the *blason du beau tétin* (late 1535) and then signals that is put to music by Clément Janequin and published by Attaingnant already in spring 1536.[18] Within half a year. But this example is not automatically valid for all chansons. I even suspect it to be rather exceptional, more a specimen of Attaingnant and Janequin's ability to capitalize on a trend. Purpose, planning. In the first quarter of the 16th Century things were different. Marot was still the 'son of', not the 'prince des poetes', and De Sermisy also was only at the beginning of his career. Marot entered the service of Marguerite in 1519, and De Sermisy was a cleric, first as a singer and later as Choir Master of the Royal Chapel. Music, song, dance though was omnipresent, in all layers of society. Look at the contemporary paintings and you can't miss it. Marot simply played his part as 'parolier', as did so many others, often anonymously. Many anonymous texts circulated and were put to music also by more often anonymous musicians than well-known ones. They were copied, adapted transformed, if necessary… The old songs of the past were still sung, the *florilegia* flourished and musicians intabulated the old, the more learned in counterpoint added voices; two parts, three, and then four. The very learned even combined tunes. All meant to be played, sung.

When Attaingnant began to publish his *chanson*books in 1528, as a good salesman he named them chansons *nouvelles* but they were not. This was the already popular repertory, until then circulating in manuscripts. This is nowadays – not without fierce discussion – the generally accepted view among musicologists. The *novelty* of Attaingnant's books is not their content but the fact that they are *printed*, to keep the price low in small books, two voices per partbook: containers to possess and to copy on sheets if needed, as in the pictures we will see. It leads to far to go deeper into this matter, but if we take into account not only the printed publications, but also the manuscripts that remain from that era, this becomes almost self-evident: Marot's chansons should be probably dated closer to 1520 than to 1530. Of course, manuscripts are often hard to date, and much about it remains uncertain. But to dismiss them as entirely irrelevant when drawing up a bibliography and a chronology, is not fair anymore. It was necessary to clear the field and start anew, as Villey and Mayer did.[19] But now it is time to advance. Science has given new tools of analyzing paper, ink, handwriting: palaeography, codicology, and estimations of the place and date can be made with satisfactory precision. The surprise of his research is that f.i. in completely analysed manuscript, now in Copenhagen (Cop1848), originating from Lyon, there are 6 three-part chansons in one of the fascicles, copied together, which appear for the first time in print in Attaingnant's first chansonbooks, among which *Secourez moy* and *Jouyssance* by Marot/DeSermisy: the time he copied them in Lyon was probably 1520, and at the latest 1522.[20]

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[17] Chirstoffersen, 217. The chansonniers are: Heartz nos. 2-10, 14, 15, 17-19 and 29; no. 29 is a reprint of no. 5, and no. 9 is a (revised) edition of no. 2. The tabulature and keyboard reductions: 22-24 (jan./febr. 1531).

[18] Heartz, *Pierre Attaingnant,* p. 103

[19] P. Villey, 'Recherches sur la chronologie des oeuvres de Marot' is the first one to restrain from attributing chansons and rondeauw and elegies to the 'amours' of Marot: Isabeau and Anne, as did Lenglet (28 of the chansons) and even in 1951: Rollin.

[20] "Around 1520 a professional copyist in Lyon came across a fascicle containing three-part songs which were current then, he copied them for his own use (a small fascicle). When he a little later got hold of another similar fascicle - containing six three-part songs - he at once copied these also into empty pages in

Attaingnant republished, other printers copied and took over and a kind of 'canon' of Marot's chansons is formed when in 1560 in Louvain *Pierre Phalèse* publishes his 'septiesme livre'. After its first edition it went through 20 editions in Antwerp and Louvain, by the Phalèse family and heirs, and was also copied by others later on. The last official edition appeared in Amsterdam, edited by Dirk Jansz. Sweelinck in 1644, with still the same corpus of French chansons, among which many by Marot.[21]

Let's listen to one of those tophits of the century: *Languir me fais*, the perfect expression of a languishing mood. I mixed different performances in one soundtrack, to give an impression how flexible music was in those days. But there is fulfilment, literally in the response form the Lady … *Jouyssance vous donneray*. In the 1530s this was already the oldfashioned way to perform this song. At that time it became far more popular to make it a soprano song with the rest of the music reduced to accompaniment (lute). The role of the Ladies at Court should not be underestimated as purveyors of culture, as we can read in Castiglione's *il Cortegiano* the Perfect Courtier. Marot's famous epistle to the Ladies of France, introducing his Psalms, breathes the same atmosphere. Even the *negative* words of Gaspare Pallavicino in the Castiglione's Perfect Courtier, illustrate the dreamt of image of a female courtier. "…. it ought to have been quite enough for you to make this Court Lady beautiful, discreet, chaste, gracious, and able (without incurring infamy) to entertain with dancing, music, games, laughter, witticisms, and the other things which we see used at court every day…"[22]

The paintings of 'The master of the Female half-lengths((Antwerpen): the ladies concert perfectly illustrate what happened in Marot's days and how his chansons conquered the hearts and reigned in the chansonniers of the 1530s. There are four versions known of this painting [LA, Rohrau, Leningrad, and Brasil (private)] from a painters collective, "shop" in Antwerp, generally referred to a 'The Master of the female Half-lengths'. In three the partbook is the tenor and the sheet is the superius. In one the partbook is the superius. Also interesting detail: in one there are *four part books* (Leningrad), the others only have three.[23] And once it was sung, why not change the rhythm a little bit and use the music (without singing) to get up and dance. [24] The

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one of his big stock fascicles (the series in Rfasc. 6) and made a note of its contents on the back of the big fascicle. For his business he of course was interested in obtaining the newest music, the most popular, but it was not often he could lay his hands on it. Among the newest and most attractive secular music around 1520 were two songs by Claudin/Marot: Secourez moy and Jouyssance. A little later, probably when the court adjourned to Lyon, he added some of the by then current four-part "Parisian" chansons to his collection (the last entries). Soon he realized that his whole collection of music was completely out-of-date, he had it (450 closely written pages) loosely bound and put it aside or gave to a pupil. It was just our luck that he did not sell it to the fish-monger or used it to light candles with (summary sent to me by Peter Woetman Christoffersen himself finalizing a long correspondence on this topic).

[21] Rudolf Rasch, 'The editors of the Livre Septième' *Yearbook of the Alamire Foundation* 2/1995, 279-306.

[22] Gaspare Pallavicino is the misogynist speaker (*Il Cortegiano*: book III, 11).

[23] H. Colin Slim, 'Paintings of Lady Concerts and the Transmission of "Jouissance vous donneray" in '*Imago Musicae I*, (Kassel, 1981), p. 51-73. The copies in Meiningen (now in Los Angeles), Leningrad and Brasil have the Tenor partbook and on the sheet of paper of the singer is a part of the Superius. In the Rohrau copy the part book is that of the Superius and the notes and text on the sheet are odd (in the other three it is clearly part of the Superius). The musical consistency is telling, since the flute has to be a 'German Flute' of about that size to play the Tenor voice without interfering with the Soprano. On the paintings with the Magdalene playing lute, the Music on the tabulatura is 'Si j'ayme mon amy', an amorous tophit dating back to the Fifiteenth Century. On one painting (where Brussels?) the lute tabulature covers another sheet of Music, which has the two main voices of Jouyssance on it: the Tenor and the Superius, a similar tophit but more contemporaneous to the painting. Lacma (former Meiningen) has four part books.

[24] 'Orchesographie' (Arbeau, 1589)

Basse dance Jouyssance can be found in Toinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie*, for there is 'la musique *et la Danse…*'

BIS, NON IN IDEM: THE PSALMS

I recapitulate (recall): Marot did not write poetry, chansons, with the direct intention that his texts should be put to music. No: a good poem *was* music. Well recited, and appreciated the Muses were completely satisfied. Of course, no one forbade that a composer, or a *phonascus*, tried to make explicit the music inside. But it was not necessary. These things don't change when Marot's began to work on the texts of the poet *par excellence*, David, the king-poet. F.i. Psalm 6, although circulating ever since ca. 1530, was not put to music as far as we know before 1542, when a wonderful melody was placed above the words to make it suitable for community singing in the churches of Strasbourg and Geneva.

These Psalms, Marot created them. Why? I suggest once more not being too explicit in identifying a particular impetus or someone who commissioned him to do it. Of course Marguerite will have encouraged him, and – surely – François will have supported him, or better, will have followed his sister, because they always vouched for each other, Marguerite even when her brother transgressed the boundaries of her own moral universe, François more pragmatically: when it did not cost him too much. With regard to theological issues Marguerite's *engagement* can not be doubted, Francis's his can. But that is not of great importance today. Marot's Psalm poems began to circulate, and they were copied like his chansons, especially after his return from exile, when he was restored in the favour of the king. It is sometimes suggested that this was his main project in the last years of the 1530s. I don't know. Voluminous project it was. Some Psalms – as you might know – are very long and many a Psalm is not very inspiring. With help from his Humanist friends and/or books by biblical scholars like Bucer, he began to master the problems, gained a coherent outlook on what a Psalm is, or better: how different all those psalms are – and his poetical hand became more secure and precise; He revisited, sometimes completely rewrote his first essays, *tyrocinia*… and in 1540 at the latest 30 of his translations – poetical transpositions – circulated in France in manuscripts.

They were printed – not in France…, too dangerous? but in Antwerp, by Antoine de Gois (the texts provided by the personal almoner of Mary of Hungary, the Habsburg regent of the Netherlands, Pierre Alexandre)… and in Strasbourg, a smaller selection, made by Jean Calvin, for the first French hymnbook to be used for praying and praise in a renewed liturgy.[25] That is the genius of Calvin, that he only accepted the very best as suited for communication between God and his people. So he rejected the habit of singing all kinds of mediocre texts to the first melody that fitted (around and about) the number of syllables, as was certainly done. The Antwerp edition of Antoine de Gois (1540) and MS BnF 2336 testify to this habit ('sus….'). He also rejected those poets/versifiers among his colleagues who deliberately chose an already familiar song, tune and then 'rhymed the biblical text' to fit in that mould ('contrafactum'). Both because the liberties they allowed themselves (in interpreting the text) and the wrong emotional association provoked by the music, are unwanted in Calvin's universe. Just two examples from the Antwerp edition : *L'Amour de moy* is suggested as tune for Psalm 130 : *De Profundis* and *Jouyssance* is to be used to sing a versification of Ps. 43 (*Iudica me*). Both not poetized by Marot, but versified by

[25] For this see Wursten 2010

two men (I presume), referred to as 'A' and 'C.D'. People will have tried to sing Marot's Psalm in this way as well, but they were not conceived to be sung that way. Many even resisted this practice, because of their peculiar metrical form.

Calvin's brilliant idea

The option Calvin chose is simple and efficient: a melody without ornamentations and spun out cadences, but building on the general concept of 'what is good to sing'. Always there must be a correspondence between the 'subject' sung about and the way the texts are put to music and sung (poid et majesté convenant au sujet – preface GE43)

The melody f.i. of *Estans assis* completely fits the 'mood of the text' (first part of course, always problems when the mood of the Psalm alters) lyrical melancholia. But as you will notice immediately: also the mould of the typical chanson: decasyllables, with a caesura after the fourth (dactylic). In the Strasbourg edition there is even a barline (a pause) after the first four notes of every line. But Calvin was not almighty, not at all: in 1540 he was only an ambitious protestant leader, who had no authority outside a small circle of friends. As a matter of fact, he was banned from Geneva – he had overplayed his hand - and had fled to Strasbourg, where he first got the idea of singing Marot's Psalms, probably inspired by – and opposing - a contrafact practice already in place in the Church of the French Refugees in Strasbourg, whose minister he became. From the perspective of Paris, a provincial matter. So it will not come as a surprise that –in the field of music – things in France developed independently from Calvin's vision on the music that befits a Psalm; As a matter of fact: Wihtin a year after he published his first Psalter (1539) the first musical setting of one of Marot's Psalm poems appeared in print in Lyon, published by Jacques Moderne in his sixth chansonnier (*Le Parangon des chansons. siziesme livre*). He placed this quite elaborated polyphonic Psalm motet in front of the secular chansons with which the booklet was filled. A nice edition, oblong with all 4 voices available when opened, to be sung and enjoyed 'ès maisons', sung or played on instruments, sitting around the table.

To cut things short: from this moment onwards the musical reception (or 'explicitation' of the 'music' inside the poems) of the Psalms developed along two roads, first independently of one another, later the two were often combined, influencing one another (see scheme below)

A. motet like polyphonic settings, independent from Strasbourg/Geneva

Marot's texts, before they were printed officially (as with his chansons) were picked up by sixteenth-century professional musicians, composers who made settings to it. They did not wait – did not have to wait – until a melody was proposed for the texts from Strasbourg or Geneva. They simply took the text as it was and 'made explicit the music sleeping inside the words'… *Estans assis aux rives acquatiques… melancoliques…* That is the first one that caught the attention of a professional composer (ps.137), known to us as Abel, an otherwise unknown musician. The second one to be put to music was the penitential Psalm, *De profundis clamavi*… (ps. 130). Enormously expressive in Latin, well known, and now available in the vernacular, I mean, not as a cripple rhyming adaption from the original, but as a true poem in French. *Du fons de ma pensée, au fond de mes ennuys.* It is not exactly the text as published by Roffet in 1541 (and even in 1564 Orlandus Lassus for his setting (published by Susato) still uses this 'faulty text'): musicians were renowned for their sloppiness in dealing with texts. They often began by copying the text (and often the voice as well) of a music edition. I have gathered the first 4 musical settings of the Psalms. There may have been more, esp. in manuscript, but the harvest is

already impressive since three out of these four are made by top composers of the time: Appenzeller, Manchicourt, Gentian.

1. 1540 : Abel (unknown whether a real name, or a pseudonym):: ps. 137: Estans assis (Jacques Moderne, *Parangon des chansons, siziesme livre*, Lyon)[26]
2. 1542 : Benedictus Appenzeller : Ps 130 : Du fons de ma pensée (Loys/Buus, *chansons a 4 parties*, Antwerpen)[27]
3. 1544 : Gentian : Ps 130 : De fons de ma pensée (Jacques Moderne, *le difficile des chansons, deuxiesme livre*, Lyon)[28]
4. 1545 : Pierre de Manchicourt : Ps 130 : Du fond de ma pensée (Tylman Susato, *neuviesme livre*, Antwerpen) [29]

These first musical settings were not in any way linked to the French court, but – if a court connection has to be the case – then they rather seem to have connections with the Habsburg court of the Netherlands (Appenzeller) and the Bishop of Tournai (Manchicourt).[30] Why not Paris? Because it was dangerous? Not if one was connected to the Royal Court. Had not the Psalms been published with Royal Privilege? I think there is a much simpler, less dramatic, explanation: the lyricism of Marot's Psalms is quite different from his chansons. The beautiful sounds are there, Marot is musical, but the texts he published, they don't *look* like a chanson. Some of them are very very long and contain long descriptive or narrative sections. Hebrew poetry has no stanzas but is entirely based on sound, metre, and esp. the parallelism of two consecutive lines, sometimes extended to three. So: how does a real *poetic transposition* of such a text look? Which form will it take? There will be verse; there will be metre, rhyme, rhythm, but stanzas? Translating Homer also does not necessarily lead to stanzas, does it? on the contrary. Most of Marot's Psalm have stanza form (repetitive after 4, 6, 8 lines). The fact however that one of Marot's last psalm translations (Psalm 18) has no fixed or rounded metrical form whatsoever, but looks like an epic poem, to me is the proof that – in the end – he realized that Psalms were not simply religious songs. These texts, even in Marot's poetic transposition, did not particulary appeal to the Parisian composers, who were so fond of the chanson: rounded texts, not too long. So it is not a coincidence, that the first musical settings of Marot's Psalms used the same form as the Latin Psalms are often put in: a motet. As already mentioned, these first polyphonic settings are musically invented completely independent from the melodies which were published for the first time in Strasbourg (1539) and later copied and adapted for the Geneva Psalter (1542

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[26] *Le parangon des chansons. Sixiesme livre : contenant xxv chansons nouvelles au singulier prouffit & delectation des musiciens*. BM Music collections, K.10.a.9.(6)

[27] *Superius [Contratenor/Ttenor/Bassus] Des chansons a quattre parties, composez par M. Benedictus: M. de la Chapelle de Madame la Regente, Douagiere de Honguerie.* Appenzeller was court composer of Mary of Hungary. The print is very neat but oldfashioned (not the Attaingnant technique, but printed in two separate runs): BM Music Collections, K.4.f.5

[28] *Le difficile des chansons. Second livre contenant xxxvi. Chansons nouvelles a quatre parties en quatre livres de la composition de plusieurs Maistres.* Of the four partbooks only three survive: Superius & Tenor are in the Bayerische Staatsbib; Altus in BnF (Fonds Goujet, Chantilly). On the occasion of the 14th C.A. Mayer memorial lecture, the Bassus was reconstructed/added by Willem Ceuleers.

[29] *Le Neufiesme Livre des Chansons a quatre parties, auquel sont contenues Vingt et Neuf Chansons nouvelles, convuenables tant a la Voix comme aux Instrumentz. Composées par Maistre Pier de Manchicourt*. Manchicourt had just become Choir Master in the cathedral of Tournai.: BM Music Collections, K.3.a.9

[30] One should be careful using geographical origins as style markers: What is Flemish? what is French? What is Italian? Ockeghem was the court composer of Louis XII and Josquin worked mostly in Italy, and Charles V was born in Gent.

onwards).[31] The way Abel treated his subject turned out to be trendsetting: The text is organized in separate movements, each with an own musical character (typical for a motet).[32] This multi-part Psalm motet was published in a non-religious *chansonnier*, a kind of 'serious contribution, often at the beginning (Abel) or at the end of secular *chansonniers* (Gentian), not seldom the longest contribution to the *chansonnier*. These publications are often overlooked, although musicologists like Howard Slenk and Frank Dobbins did signal it (the latter did transcribe Abel for his dissertation, the former Appenzeller and Manchicourt).[33] Howard Slenk did his research on this music already in the 1960s, while living in Antwerp. Gentian is not published, since only three of the four partbooks survive (the Bassus is missing).

> *ABEL – the first*
>
> *As far as I know, Abel, the very first, is never recorded. The existing modern edition is quite faulty, esp. in its texting.*[34] *The transcription by Dobbins I was not able to consult. Since this is the absolute first polyphonic setting of a Psalm poem by Marot, I thought it necessary to have it recorded and organised a home-recording (in a proper acoustic surrounding) with two singers and 4 gambists. This recording took place on a sunny Sunday morning (23/10) in the Vrieselhof in Zoersel, near Antwerp. We added together the Gentian version of Psalm 130, since it is a very fine compostion; Willem Ceuleers (www.ceuleers.eu), reconstructed the Bassus and in doing so discovered that the middle part was perfect as at is: a trio.*

B. Melody based homophonic or polyphonic settings

The second line of music originating in Marot's poems is the far more familiar one: it is the story of the Huguenot psalter. Calvin first gathered the texts by Marot and while Marot was in Geneva the collection of 30Pss augmented to 50 and the cantor of the Saint-Pierre, Guillaume Franc, provided melodies for it. The texts are treated as liturgical texts and the melodies are not based on popular repertoire – as is repeated over and over again – but have a melodic character of their own, *sui generis,* both with connections to the courtly chansons (melodies are more frugal, without ornamentation, and spun out cadences: there is intrinsic caution and dislike of 'fredons' and 'fringots'[35]). At the same time these melodies build on the music tradition of the catholic Church (Gregorian chant, hymns) combining it – as Luther did – with the structural demands of a 'song' (Lied). The tonality is modal, more strictly observed than in the contemporaneous chansons. Whereas no entire chanson melody can be found in it (of course there are reminiscences in melodic ideas, but that is happening all the time in the world of melody

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[31] The remark in Heartz "that it is possible that Mornable, in setting the Dauphin's favorite psalm had recourse as well to the royal melody" (p. 141) is gratuitous. Mornable and Certon use the melodies of the Strasbourg and/or Geneva Psalter, which were available by then. Simply erroneous is his observation that Abel used the melody from the Strasbourg Psalter (Footnote 4, p. 141) for his composition on ps. 137 (ibid. footnote 4). He did not.

[32] Abel set the entire text of Ps. 137 in three movements, the middle being a trio. Appenzeller organized the texts of Ps. 130 in four parts of equal length (stanzas), the last one with a canon in the uppervoices, expanding the structure from 4vv to 5vv; Gentian applied the formula of Abel to Ps. 130, also cutting it in three, and also composing the middle section as an intimate trio; Manchicourt simply cut Ps. 130 in two halves.

[33] In the work of reference concerning the Psalms by Pidoux only Manchicourt is signaled (45/II).

[34] *Chansons from the Atelier of Jacques Moderne,* Garland Publishing, NY, 1993, p. 107-119 . 16th Century Chansons vol. 26].

[35] These words appear together with 'musique rompue' and 'chose faite' (references to learned polyphony) as pejoratives in a unique gloss in Jean Calvin, *Institution* (1543-French version), book III,20,23.

making),[36] some melodies are almost complete musical borrowings from roman catholic hymns. Loys Bourgeois was responsible for this (and criticized for it by the church-goers who did not fail to notice this while learning/singing his new Psalm melodies in 1551) and also the last cantor who contributed the final set of melodies, among which a quite straightforward adaptation of the famous easter sequens "victimae paschali laudens" (Psalm 80).[37] But that is not really important: What matters is that they were so *well made* that professional musicians instinctively grasped the potential (the 'music' in the melody) to compose a polyphonic texture around these melodies… Which then functioned similarly to Gregorian chant in roman catholic masses: as a cantus firmus.[38] This however was not allowed inside the church service. So the link with the first current was quickly made: they were made to sing at home, like the chansons, both with voices and instruments.

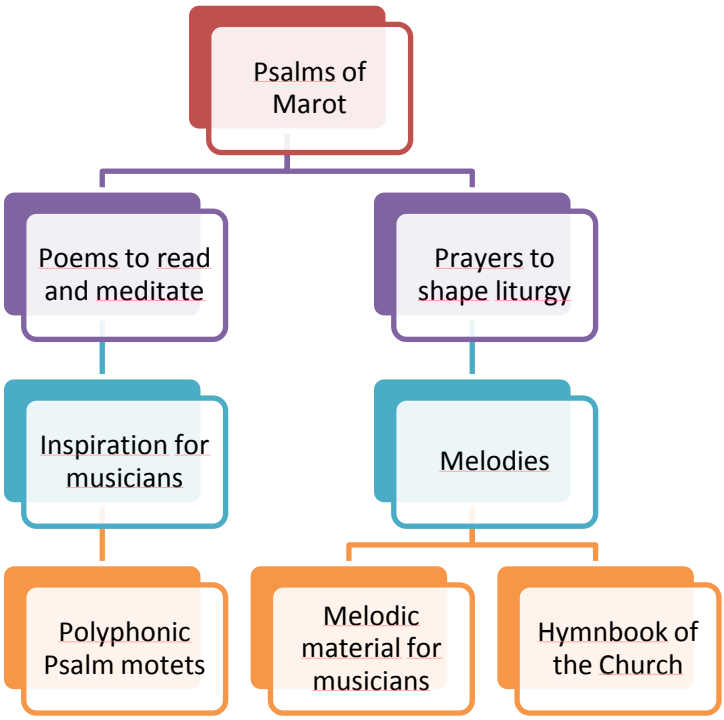
From the text	From the melody
• Inspiration: content or wording of the text • Motet as a model • Polyphonic settings • Horizontal conception • Plurality of musical motives • Dominant: imitative counterpoint	• Inspiration: Choralmelody from the hymnbook • Chanson as model • Homophonic settings • Vertical harmony • Cantus firmus with the other voices around: • Polyphonic settings

Or in a diagram:

[36] Douen claimed to have found 4 contrafacts, none stand scrutiny, all 37 examples of parts of chanson melodies which Bourgeois c.s. used as starting point to 'construct' a melody, are futile and superficial. They show that Douen did not really understand what melodies are, how they are invented, and how once a tonality chosen and a musical line started, there is an internal logic which explains lots of what happens in the rest of the melody. Emmanuel Haein, a very musically talented protestant minister, already set things right in his –unpublished – thesis of 1926 (published with a Dutch translation in 1995). For further discussion, see Pierre Pidoux (introduction to *Le Psautier Huguenot*) and the many studies by Edith Weber.

[37] The melodies are given to the texts, initially by an anonymous Strasbourg (1539) and then three successive Geneva cantors: Guillaume Franc, Loys Bourgeois, and Maitre Pierre (prob. the Humanist polymath Pierre Davantès).

[38] Where in popular chanson the melodic line after the 1530s moved definitively towards the superius, the psalm settings kept it where it lay in Church: in the tenor.



Only now Paris enters the scene: Pierre Certon, Choirmaster at the Sainte Chapelle, is the first to publish a polyphonic setting. Not the text of the entire psalm is the basis of this type of musical setting (like Abel, Gentian, or Manchicourt) but the Psalm as a song (the melody) provides the musical inspiration, composing music, texting only the first stanza. Certon (?) 1545/6: *31 Pseaumes*, published by Attaingnant. Antoine Mornable, choirmaster to the Count of Laval, added 17 more Psalms to it, also published by Attaingnant.[39] Quite unexpectedly for modern-day music lovers, Clément Janequin joined the club in 1549. But the one who really explored the possibilities of this genre was the Geneva Cantor himself, Loys Bourgeois, who published everything from simple (?) duos, trios to complex polyphonic compositions using the melodic material as musical motive, this from 1547 onwards. His fundamental role in defining and polishing the style of the Geneva tunes was obscured by Claude Goudimel, a prolific composer of Psalm settings. Later generations erroneously inferred from this that he had also written the melodies.

But when the first compositions on his texts, based on the Geneva melodies saw light, Marot was dead and gone (he died in Turin in 1544). The monophonic chant in Geneva he will have witnessed, live, for he lived there for about a year. That he ever heard the polyphonic version of Abel is quite possible, since that one dates back to 1540 and Lyon was not unfamiliar to him, but as he himself already claimed: *La mort n'y mord*… or to vary on his own epistle, *A ung sien Amy*

> Abandonné jamais ne m'a la Muse.
> *… Et tant que psaume ou chanson dira,*
> Par l'univers le monde me lira.

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[39] Pierre Certon, First book in 1545 (31 Psaumes). Antoine Mornable almost the rest (second book, 17). Confusion about the attribution of the music in both books has reigned for centuries, complicated because only parts of the books were extant, scattered over Europe. A resumé is presented by Olga Bluteau, *Pierre Certon..* in Melanges.. for E. Weber. Certon was cantor at the Sainte Chapelle in Paris. Mornable was linked with the count of Laval.