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Song and the Esthetics of Sacrifice: Nature, the Divine,
and the Mimetic Theory in the Troubadour and Trouvère Repertoire

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The subject of text-music relationship has long been fascinating and elusive. No overarching paradigm has been advanced that functions satisfactorily in all examples. Drawing on René Girard's mimetic theory, on some thoughts of Eric Gans addressing the workings of esthetic form in instrumental music, and on some specific trouvère songs, I hope to sketch the outlines of a general framework for understanding music's relationship to text and vice-versa.

The poet-composers of this repertoire generally wrote of courtly love, with its implicit and explicit competition for a particular lady or for the ego enhancing triumph of besting a rival in the "game" of song writing and social preferment at court.¹ The inclusion of "higher," shared referents forms common ideals that transcend mimetic rivalry, at least in some examples. Two venues of transcendence -- nature and the divine -- intersect in curious ways in some troubadour and trouvère songs, providing evidence for the relevance of the mimetic theory to both the music and texts of this repertoire.

The conventional "nature opening" is well-illustrated in *La douce voix du rosignol sauvage* (R. 40), by The Châtelain de Coucy (Text Example 1).² Here the poet

¹ See Roger Boase, *The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love: A Critical Study of European Scholarship* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press; Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield), 1977.

² Texts and translations are available in the appendix. Score examples will be available at the Ghost Ranch conference.

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states that he has been inspired by the nightingale to mimic its voice, by expressing his thought and feelings in a song to his lady.

Lines 5 and 6 of the melody stand out by virtue of their higher range, and in the first stanza, these lines express the ideal of *fins amor*, the knight's vassalage to the lady.

I am bound to sing because it brings pleasure
To the lady whose vassal of the heart I've become;

The poet-composer's joy, however is conditional, dependent on the lady's will, as articulated in lines 7 and 8:

And I am bound to have a heart full of joy
If she cares to keep me and call me her knight.

The final two lines (lines 7 and 8) of the melody return to the range originally traversed in lines 1 and 2, providing closure in terms of range, but expressing a subtle uneasiness (echoing the condition of the lady's will) in the leap of a minor seventh (**c** to **b^b**) from the end of line 7 to the beginning of line 8. A further subtlety of expression occurs in line 8, the line with the highest "melismatic density" within the stanza (Table 1).

Table 1: Melismatic density per line in the melody of *La douce voiz du rosignol sauvage*

Line	# of syllables set melodically	# of pitches articulated in melismas
1	4	15
2	7	16
3	4	15
4	7	16
5	4	10
6	6	14
7	8	14
8	7	19

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Line 8 has a higher “melismatic density” than any other line of the poem because it contains the highest number of syllables set melismatically as well as the highest number of successively articulated pitches within its melismas. Such an increased density of melismatic expression serves to highlight the uncertainty of the knight’s position.

The higher melodic range of lines 5 and 6 of the melody emphasizes the strong negative emotions expressed in the these lines of the final stanza:

May God curse them!
They have angered and wronged many a lover;

In the same stanza the final pair of text lines are both conclusive and inconclusive, expressing the dilemma of *fins amors* in the context of the court with its ever present dangers to the lover-knight:

but I always face this disadvantage,
that I have to deny my heart and do their bidding.

The poetic persona is caught in the trap of courtliness, and must act courteously, denying his true feelings for his lady. The melody for lines 7 and 8 maintains the esthetic tension of the song by serving both to contain and express the dilemma stated in the concluding stanza of text. It comes to rest on the modal final, the pitch **d**, after a closing flurry of melismatic density, in the fourth and final stanza, the last repetition of the entire melody.

Eric Gans has characterized the esthetic experience as reflective of a collective “crisis that is brought to a conclusion,” and has noted that the “form” of an art work, is

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what “confines” desire within the esthetic experience. In other words, the desire inspired by an art work “is generated not in the first place by the subject, but by the form itself, by the internal coherence that forces the spectator to want it to remain in its frame at the very moment in which he desires to possess it outside the frame.”

According to Gans, “it is this oscillatory movement between the form-as-object-of-desire and the form-in-itself that defines aesthetic experience.”³ In instrumental music without a text or stated program, notes Gans, “formal closure is the sole “desire-object” and the paradoxical tensions of desire are aroused by the potential endangerment of this closure through the introduction of apparently discordant elements that require assimilation to the form.”⁴

Gans’s ideas shed light on the ideal of courtly love and its expression in the corpus of troubadour and trouvère song. Melody serves as both *temenos* and expressive vehicle for an individual text, for the ideal of *fins amors*, and, as the primary esthetic experience of courtly culture, for the actual constraints of the social order. An individual song has as its overall structure the same general structure of all cultural experience, in Gansian terms, a crisis that is brought to a resolution — a sacrifice — simultaneously containing and releasing the energy of the generative scapegoat mechanism.

A well-known trouvère genre, the pastourelle, is readily identifiable as the locus for a sacrifice, or victimizing of a young woman by a predatory knight. Kathryn

³ Eric Gans, “The Beginning and End of Esthetic Form” *Perspectives of New Music* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 10.

⁴ Ibid.

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Gravdal has characterized this genre as a cover for thinly disguised rape, since the story is told from the point of view of the knight, the person with social power in the encounter. Many pastourelles open with the conventional nature setting; the anonymous *Quant voi la flor nouvele* (R. 599) (Text Example 2) provides a good representative. The flowers and the bubbling brook in the opening lines of the text are echoed in the rosy complexion and blue eyes of the young maiden, singing, according to the knight, about her own state of physical arousal.

Perhaps it is significant that the setting of this piece sounds like the minor mode, typically associated with sadness in our era. Indeed, Hendrick van der Werf hypothesizes that “performers [of this repertoire] distinguished between only two scales in which the exact position of most tones had been fixed by tradition and which differed from one another primarily on one crucial interval: the distance between the basis or center tone and the tone a third above it.”⁵ Presumably, the association with sorrow held as true for this song in its own era as it does for modern ears. In this case, one could theorize that the minor mode of the melody hints at the young woman’s victimization, concealed, as is typical, according to Girard, of historical and narrative texts. The knight, the poetic persona, representing the point of view of the composer of the song, quotes the young woman as saying,

That was a fine escapade!
I am thirteen years old
As far as I can tell,
And never have I
Enjoyed a morning so well.

⁵ Hendrick van der Werf, *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères: A Study of the Melodies and Their Relation to the Poems* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1972), 55.

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The young woman herself is not present to dispute this quotation, nor the quotation of her singing that appears in the second stanza of the knight's song.

The melody of this pastourelle (R. 599) also appears with a contrafact (R. 598), beginning with the same words *Quant voi la flor novele* (Example 3). But instead of a pastourelle featuring a text of seduction (or rape) the contrafact is a *chanson pieuse*, addressed to the “worthy and pure” Virgin Mary, imploring her pity and intercession for forgiveness of sin. Here the minor mode of the melody functions, perhaps, as a vehicle for expressing contrition, or despair at the gulf separating human and divine. The poet-composer uses a metaphor, presenting himself, according to Marcia Epstein, as “a musical instrument, to be tuned by Mary,”⁶ but whom the devil attempts to “untune.” This suggests, perhaps, an intertextual repentance for the composition of the “discordant” pastourelle set to the same melody.

In other pastourelles, the shepherdess does not succumb to the seduction offered by the knight. *Quant li dous estez define* (R. 1381) (Text Example 4), a pastourelle from the early thirteenth century by the trouvère Simon d'Authie, was considered by Gennrich to be “symbolic of the decline of aristocratic song and the ascent of Northern bourgeois lyric” on account of the knight's lack of success with the young girl, and the uncharacteristic autumnal setting.⁷ Here the minor mode perhaps emphasized to the

⁶ Marcia Jenneth Epstein, “*Prions en chantant*”: *Devotional Songs of the Trouvères* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 174.

⁷ Friedrich Gennrich, quoted in Samuel N. Rosenberg, Margaret Switten, and Gérard Le Vot, eds., *Songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology of Poems and Melodies*. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 292.

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audience the knight's disappointment at his failure to possess the beauty of the young girl.

According to Gans a musical work is given its beauty by the collective desire mediated through the signs constituting the esthetic experience. And the inviolability of the esthetic form, provided by the text and the music, "both arouses desire and keeps this desire at a distance, thereby maintaining the desirer in the oscillatory relation characteristic of esthetic experience."⁸ The musical relations in the melodies of troubadour and trouvère song were experienced by their audiences as significant, and the melody of Simon d'Authie's pastourelle, like that of other songs of these repertoires was perceived as beautiful, contributing to the cultural significance of the song and its performance, and to the deferral of violence within the culture. The performance of these songs certainly partook of ritual, and as such, in terms of the mimetic theory, must represent some type of sacrifice. The performance of a pastourelle featured the performer and his performance at the center of attention, and the shepherdess of a pastourelle (or the lady, in a performance of a courtly chanson) at the center of his subject, replicating the "circle of actors designating a central object" in Gans's originary scene.⁹ Troubadour and trouvère song, themselves a form of sacrifice, helped to maintain the courtly culture of the era.

The *chanson d'amour* was often contrafacted as a *chanson pieuse*, in which a chanson melody carries a newly crafted Marian text. Gace Brulé's chanson, *Quant flours et glais et verdure s'esloigne* (R. 1779 = R. 2119) (Text Example 5), was the

⁸ Gans, 17.

⁹ Ibid., 13.

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model for the anonymous *Quant glace et nois et froidure s'esloigne* (R. 1778) (Text Example 6). Where the chanson opens with the departure of flowers (*flours*), sedge (*glais*), and greenness (*verdure*), signaling the onset of autumn, the Marian song reverses the seasons, indicating the opposite time of year by beginning with the retreat of ice (*glace*), snow (*noif*), and winter cold (*froidure*). In the chanson, the birds “do not presume to sound a word,” but in the pious contrafact, they “never stop singing.”

The text of the pious song is carefully fitted to the same melody, the form of which reverses the typical melodic trajectory.¹⁰ Usually, a chanson melody expands upwards in range during the first section of an AAB form. This melody, however, begins in the higher portion of its range and descends, reflecting the movement of the Incarnation, reaching its lowest point in the sixth of its seven lines. The general descent in range (Table 2) reaches a low pitch at the beginning of line 6, the pitch **f**, on the words *li rois des rois*, only to descend further to the nadir of the entire song, the pitch **d**, which occurs at mid-line with the words *les maus* (the sins).

¹⁰ The trajectory of the secular song’s melody is, of course, the same, but the different text pictures dying vegetation and a poet attempting to keep his lady’s memory alive by singing against the season.

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Table 2: Melodic ranges and melismatic density in R. 1778, *Quant glace et nois* and R. 1779, *Quant flors et glais*

Line	Melodic range	Lowest pitch of line	Melismatic density
1	c ¹ -f ¹ (4 th)	c ¹	17
2	b ^b -e ¹ (+4 th)	b ^b	13
3	c ¹ -f ¹ (4 th)	c ¹ ↓	17
4	b ^b -e ¹ (+4 th)	b ^b ↓	13
5	g-f ¹ (m7 th)	g ↓	16
6	d-c ¹ (m7 th)	d	15
7	f-d ¹ (M6 th)	f	18

The range of the final line of the melody remains generally lower than that of the first line, but closes on the pitch **g**, a fourth higher than the nadir, **d**.

In the second stanza, the descending melodic structure also serves the text well, with line 6, *et cuer et cors et vie sanz essoine*, expressing the surrender of the poetic persona, the wish to use in Mary's service his "heart, and body, and life without reservation." In the third stanza the low melodic point coincides with the word *toz* (all) in the line *li soudainz cui toz li mont resoigne* (the seducer feared by all), a stark image for the climactic moment in the stanza.

In the final stanza, line 7, "and lead us to your luminous realm," provides hope and closure, beginning at a higher pitch, descending to its lowest pitch (**f**) and ascending again to a **g** at the close on the word *cler*. In the second stanza, the final small descent/ascent (**a-g-f-g**) suggests a spatial gesture, since it coincides with the word *porter* (to carry).

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The melody contains the song appropriately, and even provides a subtle increase in melismatic density in the final two lines, with eighteen melismatically articulated pitches on six of the syllables in line 7. Previous lines contain seventeen (lines 1 and 3), thirteen (lines 2 and 4), sixteen (line 5), and fifteen (line 6) melismatically articulated pitches, a subtle detail that is hardly remarkable upon a first hearing.

“Wheels within wheels” may be seen in the fact that in the sacred contrafact’s subject, Mary’s womb serves as the container for the incarnation; the song is the metaphorical container of the expression of the idea, and is sung by a *trouvère*, the center of attention in the *temenos* of a sacrificial space. The central object of attention designated by the poet-composer and the performer is “the king of kings.” Here mimetic rivalry is undercut first by God’s self-sacrifice, expressed in the word *s’enclost* (he enclosed himself) in line 5 of the first stanza, and by the poet-composer’s self-sacrifice of heart, body, and life (line 7 of stanza 2). Stanza 3 also contains a subversion of mimetic rivalry in the acknowledgement that the seducer is “feared by all the world” (stanza 3, line 5). All of these textual subversions of the trap of the scapegoat mechanism, tellingly, occur at lines 5 and 6, the climactic lines of the melody, the lines containing the lowest pitches. Here the actual structure of the melody expresses the avoidance of the mimetic trap, paradoxically transcending it through humility and an awareness of the commonality of the human condition.

A final example, the unicum, *Cuers qui son entendement* (R. 670) (Text Example 7), a Marian song with a grand, highly melismatic, major-key melody has no

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contrafacts. The tune is through-composed, with no significant melodic repetition.

Each phrase contains both ascending and descending gestures within its subphrases.

The first stanza begins at the second-to highest pitch of the melody's large range (a twelfth), and significant words are articulated at the lowest pitch (in line 7) and at the highest (in line 8). Stanzas 3 and 4 address elements of nature, invoking their glorification of the Virgin. "Sky and earth, and sea and wind" are addressed in stanza 3, while stanza 4 addresses "sun, moon, and elements" as well as "angels and archangels" (lines 1 and 2). The poet-composer's self-conscious artistry communicates a sense of giddy joy, especially in the word-play in the last two lines of the first stanza:

Pour ce me vuil trafaillier: a worthy beginning is half the work
A hautement commencier. For this I wish to strive: to begin high.

The pun comments directly not only on the language in the opening metaphor of the next stanza (above the firmament, higher than anyone can imagine), but also on the opening of the melody of every stanza, the pitch g^1 , the second-highest pitch in the melody.

In this piece and in troubadour and trouvère song in general, as Leo Trietler has noted, the strophic melody is not a "throw-away" framework, composed only with the opening stanza of text in mind.¹¹ The melody is crafted subtly and artistically to carry the text of each successive stanza; or alternately, the successive stanzas of text are crafted to fit the melody. For example, in stanza 2, the actual words articulated at the

¹¹ See Leo Trietler, "The Troubadours Singing their Poems," in *The Union of Words and Music in Medieval Poetry*, ed. Rebecca A. Baltzer, Thomas Cable, and James I. Wimsatt (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1991), 15-48.

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lowest and highest pitches may seem inconsequential at first glance. *Qui* (whom, in line 7) and *son* (her) in line 8 occur at the melody's nadir and zenith, respectively. The dramatic placement of these serviceable, humble pronouns at the extremes of the melodic range emphasizes at one and the same time, the self-humbling of God in taking on human form, Mary's willing acceptance, and the mystery of the virgin birth.

Gans's thoughts on the esthetic form of postmodern, minimalist music are relevant to the discussion of strophic form in the troubadour and trouvère repertoires:

Minimalism's quasi-ritual repetition, in which nothing is ever exactly repeated, sums up the combinatorial dilemma of postmodern culture: the infinite variety of imaginable forms must be mapped upon the limited scope of human experience. This operation . . . brings the listener strangely close to religious awe.¹²

Strophic repetition, the typical form of twelfth- and thirteenth-century courtly song partakes of a similar esthetic, fueling the desire for the unattainable ideal, while maintaining the audience (and the culture) in the oscillating relationship Gans defines.

My hope is that the outlines sketched in these examples will hold true within this and other repertoires, and that the mimetic theory can open new hermeneutic windows for understanding courtly song in its historical, social, and ultimately its "human" context.

¹² Gans, 20-1.

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APPENDIX: TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

TEXT EXAMPLE 1: R. 40: The Châtelain de Coucy. *La douce voiz du rosignol sauvage*. (Chanson d'amour; Text & Translation from Rosenberg & Switten, *Songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères*, 245-5.)

1 La douce voiz du rosignol sauvage
 Qu'oi nuit et jor cointoier et tentir
 Me radoucist mon cuer et rassouage;
 Lors ai talent que chant pour esbaudir.
 Bien doi chanter puis qu'il vient a plesir
 Cele qui j'ai de cuer fet lige honmage:
 Si doi avoir grant joie en mon corage,
 S'ele me veut a son oés retenir.

1 The sweet voice of the forest nightingale
 that night and day I hear warble and trill
 brings sweetness and balm to my heart;
 then I cannot keep from rejoicing in song.
 I am bound to sing because it brings pleasure
 to the lady whose vassal of the heart I've become;
 and I am bound to have a heart full of joy
 if she cares to keep me and call me her knight.

2 Onques vers li n'oi faus cuer ne volage,
 Si me deüst por ce melz avenir;
 Ainz l'aim et serf et aor par usage,
 Si ne li os mon penser descouvrir.
 Car sa biauté me fet si esbahir
 Que je ne sai devant li nul langage;
 Ne regarder n'os son simple visage,
 Tant en redout mes euz a departir.

2 Never, for her has my heart been false or unsteady,
 which should make my chances much better;
 indeed, I love and I serve her, always adore her,
 yet I dare not confess the love on my mind.
 I am so abashed by her beauty
 that in her sight I am tongue-tied and mute;
 I dare not glance at her innocent face,
 so much do I fear then looking away.

3 Tant ai en li ferm assis mon corage
 Qu'ailleurs ne pens, et Deus m'en don't joïr,
 C'onques Tristans, cil qui ur le buvrage
 Si coriaument n'ama sanz repentir.
 Car g'i met tot: cuer et cors et desir,
 Sens et savoir – ne sai se faz folage,
 Ançois me dout qu'en trestout mon aage
 Ne puisse li ne s'amor deservir.

3 So firmly have I set my heart on her
 that I can think of no one else. God grant me success!
 Never did Tristan, for all the draught he had drunk,
 love so deeply and with no hesitation.
 For I give my all, body and heart, my desire,
 my mind and my learning; perhaps it is folly,
 but I fear that I may never in life
 come to merit her love.

4 Je ne di pas que je face folage,
 Nes se pour li me devoie morir,
 Qu'el mont ne truis si bele ne si sage
 Ne nule riens n'est tant a mon plesir.
 Mult aim mes euz qui me firent choisir:
 Lués que la vi, li lessai en ostage
 Mon cuer qui puis i a fet lonc estage,
 Ne jamés jor ne l'en quier departir.

4 I don't say what I am doing is folly,
 even were I to die for her sake,
 for nowhere else do I find such beauty and judgment
 and no other creature can bring me such pleasure.
 I love my eyes for first letting me see her:
 no sooner glimpsed than she held my heart hostage,
 and hers it has been all this while;
 nor would I ever tear it away.

5 Chançon va t'en pour fere mon message
 La ou je n'os trestorner ne guenchir,
 Que tant redout la male gent honbrage
 Qui devinent ainz que puist avenir,
 Le bien d'amors. Deus les puist maleïr,
 Qu'a maint amant ont fet ire et outrage!
 Mes j'ai de ce touz jorz mal avantage
 Q'il les m'estuet seur mon cuer obëir.

5 Song go now, carry my message
 to the place where I don't dare take my way
 for fear of the sinister knaves
 who ferret out love and its joy even before
 it has happened. May God curse them!
 They have angered and wronged many a lover
 but I always face this disadvantage,
 that I have to deny my heart and do their bidding.

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TEXT EXAMPLE 2: R599. Anonymous. *Quant voi la flor nouvele* (Pastourelle; Text and translation from Samuel N. Rosenberg, liner notes, *Chanson de Trouvères*, harmonia mundi, 907184).

1 Quant voi la flor nouvele
Paroir en la praele
Et j'oi la fontenele
Bruire seur la gravele,
Lors mi tient amors nouvele,
Don't ja ne garrai.
Se cist maus ne m'asouage
Bien sai que morrai.

2 "Je sui sade et brunette
Et joenne pucelete,
S'ai color vermeillete,
Euz verz, bele bouchete;
Si mi point la mamelete
Que n'i puis durer.
Resons est que m'entremete
Des douz maus d'amer.

3 "Certes, se je trouvoie
Qui m'en meist en voie,
Volentiers ameroie;
Ja por nul ne.l leroie.
Car bien ai oï retrere
Et por voir conter
Que nus n'a parfete joie
S'el ne vient d'amer."

4 Vers la touse m'avance
Por oïr s'acointance?
Je la vi bele et blanche,
De simple contenance.
Ne mist pas en oubliance
Ce que je li dis.
Maintenant sanz demorance
S'amor li requis.

5 Pris la par la main nue,
Mis la sus l'arbe drue;
Ele s'escrue et jure
Que de mon geu n'a cure;
"Ostés vostre lecheüre!
Deus la puist honir!
Car tant m'est asprete et dure
Ne la puis souffrir."

6 "Bele, tres douce amie,
Ne vos esmaiez mie;
Oncor ne savez mie
Con ce est bone vie.
Vo mere n'en morut mie,
Ce savez vos bien.
Non fera, certes, la fille,
N'en doutez de rien."

1 When I see the new flowers
appear in the meadow
and I hear the brook
purl over its gravel bed,
that's when a new love takes hold of me,
never to let go.
If the pain is not allayed,
I know I'll die.

2 "I am lovely and dark
and a dear young girl,
with a rosy complexion,
bright eyes, a fine little mouth;
my budding breasts tingle so much
I can't bear it.
It's time for me to know
The sweet pains of love.

3 "Oh yes, if I found
a man to start me on the way,
I'd gladly be in love;
no one could stop me,
for I've heard it said
and reported as true
that no one had perfect bliss
unless it comes from love."

4 I went up to the girl
to hear what she would say;
I found her lovely and fair
and simple of manner.
She did not ignore
what I told her.
At once, without waiting,
I asked for her love.

5 I took her by her bare hand
And laid her down on the thick grass;
she cried out an swore
that she had no care for my game:
"Away with your lust!
May God put it to shame!
It's so rough and hard
I can't bear it."

6 "Dear, sweet darling,
don't be distressed;
you're only beginning to know
what it is to have a good time.
Your mother didn't die of it:
you know that!
Surely, her daughter won't either;
don't be afraid of anything."

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7 Quant l'oi despucelee,
 Si s'est en piez levee;
 En haut s'est escrïee:
 "Bien vos sui eschapee.
 Treze anz a que je fui nee,
 Par mien escïent;
 Onques mes n'oi matinee
 Que j'amasse tant."

7 When I'd made a woman of her,
 She rose to her feet
 And cried out loud;
 "I've got away from you!
 I'm thirteen years old,
 as far as I can tell'
 I've never had another morning
 that I loved so well."

TEXT EXAMPLE 3: R.598 Anonymous, *Quant voi la flor nouvele*. (Chanson pieuse;
 Text and Translation from Marcia Epstein, *Prions en chantant*, 174-5).

1 Quant voi la flor novele
 florir en la praële
 lors chant chançon novele
 de la virge pucele
 qui dou lait de sa mamele
 li rois alaita
 qui de sa char digne et bele
 touz nos rachata.

1 When I see the new flowers
 blooming in the field,
 then I sing a new song
 of the virgin maid
 who nursed with the milk of her breast
 the king who came from her worthy and
 beautiful flesh
 to save us all.

2 Pucele digne et pure,
 qui de toz biens depure,
 qui de pechié nos cure,
 de moi te priagne cure:
 vers son chier fiz m'asseüre
 par tel covenant
 qu'es ceils en joie seüre
 soie parvenant.

2 Maiden worthy and pure,
 in whom all goodness is purified,
 who cures us from sin,
 take care of me:
 give me assurance through agreement
 from your dear son
 that I will be rewarded
 with certain joy in heaven.

3 Dame sainte Marie,
 de grace replenie,
 soiés nos en aïe,
 ne nos oubliés mie:
 qu'en iceste mortel vie
 puissons deservir
 qu'en la vostre compaignie
 puissons parvenir.

3 Holy lady Mary,
 full of grace,
 be ready to aid us,
 do not forget us:
 so that in this mortal life
 we are able to merit
 the reward of a future
 in your company.

4 Flor de misericorde,
 a ton chier fiz m'acorde,
 corde si bien la corde
 que jamés ne descorde,

4 Flower of mercy,
 put me in accord with your son:
 tune the string so well
 that it can never be made discordant,

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que deable ne s'amorde
a moi descorder
que me puisse par concorde
a Dieu racorder.

for the devil cannot apply himself
to untuning me so well
that I cannot be brought to concord
by accord with God.

5 Marie, douce mere,
onques ne fus amere,
de roi es fille et mere,
et si portas ton pere:
or te pri, tres douce mere
plaine de pitié,
que Dex qui est nostre pere
nos get de pechié.

5 Mary , sweet mother,
you were never bitter
you are daughter and mother of a king,
and thus bore your father:
now I pray, most gentle mother
full of pity,
that God who is our father
will cast us far from sin.

TEXT EXAMPLE 4: R. 1381 Simon d'Authie. *Quant li dous estez define* (Pastourelle;
Text & translation from Rosenberg & Switten, *Songs of the Troubadours and
Trouvères*, 293-4.)

1 Quant li dous estez define
Et li frois yvers revient,
Que flors et fueille decline
Et ces oisiaus n'en sovient
De chanter en bois n'en brueill,
En chantant si com je sueill
Toz seus mon chemin erroie;
Si oï pres de ma voie
Chanter la bele Emmelot:
"Duerenleu! J'aim Guiot,
Toz mes cuers a lui s'otroie."

1 As sweet summer was ending
and cold winter coming back,
when leaves and flowers had faded
and the birds no longer thought
to sing in woods and groves,
I, singing as I often do,
was riding all alone along my way;
near the path I heard
the song of lovely Emmy:
"Dorenlot! I'm in love with Guy;
my whole heart is his."

2 Grant joie fait la meschine
Quant de Guiot li sovient;
Je li dis: "Amie fine,
Cil ous saut qui tot maintient!
Vostre amor desir et vueill,
A vous servir toz m'acueil.
Se volez que vostres soie,
Robe vous donrai de soie,
Si laissez cel vilain sot,
Duerenleu! c'ainc ne vous sot.
Bien amer ne faire joie."

2 The girl was full of joy
at the thought of Guy.
I said, "True beloved,
God save you, the All-powerful!
I desire and want your love;
I am all ready to serve you.
If you want me to be yours,
I'll give you a silken robe –
and you leave that boorish dunce
-- Dorenlot! – who's never known
how to love you or bring you joy."

3 "Or parlez vous de folie,
Sire, foi que je doi vous,
Ja, se Dieu plaist, de s'amie
Ne sera mes amis cous.

3 "You're out of your mind, sir,
with all due respect"
never, please God, will my lover
be betrayed by his beloved.

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Tournez vous! Fuiés de ci!
 Ja ne lairai mon ami
 Pour nul home que je voie;
 Ne m'a pas dit que je.l doie
 Pour autrui entrelaissier.
Duerenleu! Pour un baisier
 M'a doné gans et corroie."

4 Hé, douce rienz envoisie,
 Cuers debonaires et douz,
 Recevez par cortoisie
 Mon cuer qui se rent a vous,
 En qui je del tout m'afi;
 Mains jointes merci vous cri,
 Mes que vostre amour soit moie
 Qui mon cuer destraint et loie
 Si que ne l'en puis sachier.
Duerenleu! Pour embracier
 Mes cuers au vostre se loir."

5 "Bien m'avez ore assaie,
 Mes pou i avez conquis.
 Mainte autre en avez proie:
 Ne l'avez pas ci apris,
 N'encore ci ne.l lairoiz.
 N'est pas li cuers si destrois
 Com il pert a la parole;
 Teus baise feme et acole
 Qui ne l'aime tant ne quant.
Deureneu! Alez avant~
 Ja ne mi troveroiz fole."

Turn around and ride away!
 I won't leave my Guy
 for any other man I see;
 he hasn't told me I should
 give him up for someone else
 -- *Dorenlot!* -- For a kiss
 he gave me glove and a belt."

4 "Ah, sweet smiling creature,
 sweet and noble heart,
 be courteous and accept
 my heart, which surrenders to you;
 to you I pledge my faith.
 I beg you, hands joined for mercy:
 let your love be mine,
 your love that so grips and binds my heart
 that I cannot pull it back,
Dorenlot! My heart, to embrace you
 binds itself to yours,"

5 "You have made a bold attempt
 but have gained very little.
 You have tried as much with many a woman:
 this was not your first time
 and it won't be your last;
 your heart is not so tormented
 as your words make it appear.
 Many a man kisses and embraces a woman
 who doesn't love her in the slightest.
Dorenlot! Away with you!
 You'll never find me a wanton fool."

TEXT EXAMPLE 5: R. 1779 (R. 2119). Gace Brulé. *Quant flours et glais et verdure s'esloigne*. (Chanson d'amour; Text from Han Tischler, *Trouvère Lyrics with Melodies: Complete Comparative Edition*.)

1 Quant flours et glais et verdure s'esloigne,
 que cist oisel n'osent un mot souner,
 pour la froidour chascuns doute et resoigne
 trusqu'al biau tanz que il soelent chanter.
 Maiz pour ce chant que ne puis oublier
 la douce reinz dont Deus joie me doigne,
 quar de li sunt et viennent mi penser.

2 Comment qu'Amours joie me guerredoigne,
 mout le m'a fait longuement desirrer,
 si com celui c'on delaie et pourligne,
 qui ele fait a son voloir grever.
 Je ne di pas c'on puisse trop emer

1 When flowers and sedge and greenness depart,
 and the birds do not presume to sound a word,
 for each one fears and dreads the cold
 until the beautiful time when it satisfies them to sing.
 But for this I sing: in order that I not be able to forget
 the sweet lady from whom God deigned joy to me
 for my thoughts concern her and come from her.

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ne qu'ele ja de mon cuer se desjoigne,
qu'ele a trouvé tel qui ne set fausser.

3 Vous amerai, dame, comment qu'il preigne,
si finement, et Deus m'en doint pooir!
Ne ja Amours n'iert, tells qu'ele se faigne
de moi aidier, s'ele me puet valoir.
Tant me convient vostre plaisir voloir
qu'assez aim mieuz que li merirs remaigne,
qu'avoir joie de vous par decevoir.

4 Pou prie nus que li cuers ne se faingne
plus qu'ele dit, ce set l'en bien de voir;
si me merveil que ma dme desdaingne
loial ami qu'autre ne puet avoir.
Por ce m'estuet morir en bon espoir
et j'ai un cuer qui si amer m'ensaigne.
Dame, merci, quant ne puet remanoir!

5 Bien cest raisons que longue atente creingne,
que c'est la riens qui plus m'avra grevé.
Quels costume ne quels maus q'en aveingne
envers Amors n'avroit nuns pöesté.
Por ce vos pri douce dame, por Dé.
que de mes maux vos remembre et soveingne,
que sanz merci ne püent estre osté.

6 En vous n'a riens, dame qui descouviegne,
tant a en vous sens et pris et biauté;
mais mout vous pri que vostre cuer retiegne,
selonc voz biens, grant devonairété.
Assez vos aing plus que rien n'ai amé,
ne ja sanz vous granz joie ne m'aviengne;
s'el me venoit ne l'en savroie gré.

6 In you there is nothing, lady, which is unseemly
so great is your grace and praise and beauty
but many entreaties that your heart retains
according to your goodness, great graciousness.
I desire you more than anything I have ever loved,
only without you neither great joy nor dishonour (carnal pleasure?)
unless she is satisfied with me.

7 Fins amorous, en vos sont me pansé;
gardez qu'amors et joie vos mainteigne
plus que les deux que tant ont demoré.

TEXT EXAMPLE 6: Anonymous. *Quant glace et noif et froidure s'esloigne.*
(Chanson pieuse; Text and translation from Marcia Epstein, *Prions en chantant*, 266-7.)

1 Quant glace et noif et froidure s'esloigne
que cil oisel ne finent de chanter,
lors est raison que toute reins s'adoigne
a la dame des anges honorer,
en cui s'enclost poue le monde sauver

1 When ice and snow and cold retreat,
and the birds never stop singing,
Then there is reason why all things
should give themselves to honouring the lady of the
angels

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li rois des rois, qui les maus nos pardoigne
dout nos devons es painnes redouter.

In whom the king of kings, in order to
save the world, enclosed himself
he who pardons the sins whose pains we ought to
fear.

2 Ja n'aver a grevance ne besoigne
ne mors ne vis, cui ele veut tenses.
Nus ne la sert qu'ele ne guerredonne
plus gentement qu'il ne savroit penser,
et por ce vuil en lui servir user
et cuer et cors et vie swanz essoine,
car trop m'est douz cis faissiaus a porter.

2 He who holds to her will never feel misfortune nor
need,
while dead or while living.
No one serves her who is not rewarded
more nobly than he can imagine,
and therefore I wish to use in her service
my heart, my body, and my life,
without reservation, for it is most sweet to carry this
vessel.

3 Mere a celui qui onc ne dit mençonge,
mieudre que nus ne savroit deviser,
deffendez nos de mal et de vergoigne,
et nos donnez tel cuer de vos amer
qu'en nos ne prendre n'atrapier
li soudoianz cui toz li mont resoigne
et nos menez en vostre regné cler.

3 Mother of the one who never told a lie,
more worthy than anyone could ever devise,
defend us from evil and shame,
and give us such heart to love you
that the seducer feared by all cannot
capture or trap us;
and lead us to your luminous realm.

TEXT EXAMPLE 7: R.670. Anonymous. *Cuers qui son entendement*. (Chanson pieuse; Text and translation from Marcia Epstein, *Prions en chantant*, 254-5.)

1 Cuers qui son entendement
Met en grant chose traitier
Ce doit a ce travailler:
Qu'il ait bon commencement.
Car, si com dient li saige,
Des que nos somes apris,
Commencement de haut ris
Est la moitie de l'ouvraige.
Pour ce me vuil travailler:
A hautement commencer.

1 The heart that wishes to give its
attention to important matters
ought to make this effort:
that it have a good beginning,
for, as the wise say – from whom we
have learned –
a worthy beginning is half the work.
For this I wish to strive: to begin high.

2 Pardesus le firmament,
Plus haut c'on ne puet cuidier,
Pour paradis esclairier,
Se siet honnoréement
E'l plus glorious estage
La siantiesme empereriz
De qui nasqui Jhesu Criz
Sans quasser son pucelage:
Porte close et cors entire,
[Se vint en li herbergier.]

2 Above the firmament, higher than
anyone can imagine,
in the most glorious place she sits in
honour in order to illumine paradise;
this most holy empress from whom
was born Jesus Christ
without destroying her maidenhood:
[he sheltered in her], a closed door and
intact body.

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3 Ciel et terre et mer et vent,
 Pensés de glorifier
 Clee qui se grant mestier
 Ot a nostre sauvement
 Quant, par le conseil folage
 D'Evain ou li anemis
 S; estoit par envie mis
 Dedenz la prison ombrage
 Ou soudoiant avresier
 Couvenoit chascn plungtier.

3 Sky and earth and sea and wind,
 consider how to glorify
 her who did such great service for our
 salvation;
 when, by the inconstant counsel of Eve,
 in whom the enemy was placed by envy
 within the shadowed prison
 into which the seductive adversary
 wishes to plunge everyone.

4 Solaus, lune, et element,
 anges et arcanges efforcier,
 vous devez de li prisier,
 Quar quant qu'on voit et entent,
 tout ait en son signoraige.
 Bon fu néz, ce m'est a vis,
 qui en s'amour est raviz:
 Conquis a [en] heritaige
 saint paradis de louier,
 Quil aime de cuer entiere.

4 Sun, moon, and elements, mighty
 angels and archangels,
 you should strive to honour her,
 for however much one sees and hears,
 she has it all in her realm.
 He who is lost in her love is fortunate;
 this is evident:
 He who loves her with his entire heart
 has won forever
 the holy paradise as his reward.

5 Dame, or vos viegne en talent]
 De vostre chier filz proier
 Qu'il nos destourt d'encombrier,
 Et doint tel entendement
 A cues qu'il fist a s'ymaige,
 Qu'il ne lor soi contrediz
 Li regné de paradis
 Au triste pelerinage
 Quant l'ame estoubvra lessier
 Le cors qui la fist pechier.

5 Lady, I come before you, desiring to
 pray your dear son
 that he turn us from suffering
 and may he give such understanding to
 those he made according to his image
 that the reign of paradise will not be
 forbidden to them
 at the sad pilgrimage when the soul
 must leave the body which made it sin.

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