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Christina Lopez

Nathan Wylie

Augustana College, Rock Island Illinois

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An Analysis of Two Medieval Conducti
in the *Roman De Fauvel*

Nathan Wylie & Christina Lopez

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Abstract

The *Roman de Fauvel* has great importance to literary history and music history. The musical interpolations within BN fr.146 further the poetic narrative, while simultaneously conceiving a revolutionary music style, the *Ars nova*. In this study, we analyze two different conducti, to see how the genre developed, what role it played in BN fr.146, and how the interpolated conducti compared with the liturgical conducti of the era. When analyzing a conductus, we considered four open-ended guiding questions: What is it? What is it about? What are some noteworthy elements? Why is it important?

The *Roman de Fauvel* is an extended allegorical literary work in two books. The first section was completed in 1310, with the second portion being completed four years later. Due to speculation on handwriting between the two books, the true authors of the entire literary work are unknown. The only author attributed to writing at least the second book is 14th-century poet Gervais du Bus.

The bulk of the original *Roman de Fauvel* is a commentary on the corruption of church and state, social stratification, and a rejection of moral goodness. This literary work also partially follows a tradition of *admonitio regum*, or advice to kings.¹ Following further tradition, this work is categorized as an extended Beast Epic, which is a “moralizing satirical allegory in the tradition of the Renart tales of the 12th and 13th centuries”². It is said that the *Roman de Fauvel* was inspired by the *Couronnement de Renart* -- which is quoted in the work, and Jacquemart Gielée's *Renart le Nouvel*, which provided different narrative and allegorical models along with phrases that inspired the *Roman de Fauvel*.

The story goes that a horse named Fauvel, tired of living in his stable, moves into his master's house. Fortuna, goddess of fortune, takes a liking to him and grants him great influence and power. Eventually, rulers and clergy from all over Europe started making pilgrimages to see Fauvel. They would cater to him, brush him, and clean him. Fauvel then asks to marry Fortuna, but she instead offers her handmaiden, Vainglory. At the wedding of Fauvel and Vainglory, Fortuna reveals that Fauvel is to father many more corrupt rulers like himself, and eventually bring the coming of the antichrist.³ Fauvel is a stand-in for all of the vices, sin, and corruption to which most of the leaders of Europe had succumbed. This poem was banned at the time for being seditious and heretical.

The *Roman de Fauvel* is certainly important from a literary standpoint, but it also has an important place in music history. The most famous version of the *Roman* is BN fr.146; this is the second portion of the *Roman de Fauvel*. It contains an additional 3000 verses, and 169 musical interpolations, added by Chaillou de Pesstian.⁴ The interpolated *Roman de Fauvel* contains the most extensive and historically important collection of 14th-century

¹ Wathey, Andrew. “Fauvel, Roman De.” *Oxford Music Online*, January 20, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09372>.

² Ibid.

³ Dillon, Emma. *Medieval Music-Making and the "Roman De Fauvel"*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁴ Kibler, William W., and Grover A. Zinn. *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia*. New York City, New York: Garland, 1995.

polyphony, marking the development of the *Ars nova*.⁵ Of the 169 musical interpolations in fr.146, this paper will analyze and discuss two conducti from different points in the genre's development.

A conductus is a musical setting of a metrical, Latin text. The genre appears to have developed in southern France, in the late 12th and early 13th centuries.⁶ Texts can either be strophic, or through-composed. Unlike a motet, for example, the text of a conductus is not based on already existing material.⁷ A conductus will have between one and four voices, but two and three-voice conducti are the most common. Stylistically, multi-voiced (polyphonic) conducti are discant, however, single-voiced (monophonic) conducti could not utilize discant because more than one voice is needed to implement counterpoint.⁸ Initially, the conductus was non-metrical, however, after the implementation of mensural notation the conductus became defined by rhythmic modes.⁹ Now that some background information has been supplied, the first conductus to look at is *Clavus pungens acumine*.

The monophonic conductus *Clavus pungens acumine* is an example of one of the earliest conducti. Like most works in the *Roman de Fauvel*, this piece is written in the form of an *admonitio* (letter to the king). At this point in the poem, the clerical rulers of Fauvel's soon-to-be kingdom have given in to sin and corruption, turning their backs on Christian morality. The *admonitio* is specifically directed at those clergymen, warning them to be careful with the sacred keys (*claves*) to which they have been entrusted, lest they become nails (*clavus*) to re-crucify Jesus (Appendix 1).¹⁰ Using the similarly sounding phonemic devices, *claves* and *clavus*, to blur the line between salvation and damnation, is genius in that it makes the difference between two entirely opposing concepts minute in context.

⁵ Wathey, Andrew. "Fauvel, Roman De." *Oxford Music Online*, January 20, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09372>.

⁶ Knapp, Janet. "Conductus." *Oxford Music Online*, January 20, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06268>.

⁷ Everist, Mark. *Discovering Medieval Song: Latin Poetry and Music in the Conductus*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

⁸ Knapp, Janet. "Two XIII Century Treatises on Modal Rhythm and the Discant: Discantus Positio Vulgaris De Musica Libellus (Anonymous VII)." *Journal of Music Theory* 6, no. 2 (1962): 200–215. <https://doi.org/10.2307/842910>.

⁹ Everist, Mark. "Reception and Recomposition in the Polyphonic Conductus Cum Caudis: The Metz Fragment." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 125, no. 2 (2000): 135–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/jrma/125.2.135>.

¹⁰ Dillon, *Medieval Music-Making*.

Aside from serving as a warning to clergy about taking advantage of their congregations and acting on their earthly desires, *Clavus pungens acumine* may also serve as a warning about the abuse of music.¹¹ By the late Middle Ages, the term *clave* was also used to denote the letter names of pitches on the monochord (a plucked, single-stringed instrument from the Medieval era).¹² As religious leaders were warned about the corruption of their *claves*, so too were the *claves* of the monochord at risk of tainting the purity of liturgical chant through perversion of the musical lexicon. Church leaders were specifically concerned with the usages of long melismatic passages (*cauda*), of which there are several in *Clavus pungens acumine* (Appendix 2). They feared that the sensation of the music would overpower the message of the words therein.

Clavus pungens acumine begins with an 87-breve *cauda*, which is unusually long. This may be an attempt to satirize their usage in the actual liturgy. The time between the onset *cla-*, and the ending phoneme *-vus*, is long enough that the word itself becomes unclear. This rhetorical device is used five more times throughout the piece. These *caudae* are possibly to captivate the listener and obscure the distinction between *claves* and *clavus*. Ironically, church leaders feared that this was happening in the actual liturgy.¹³ The most dramatic example of the effect is in the final *cauda* on ‘*veritis*,’ the last word of the text. This melisma is 132 breves long (Appendix 2) and is literally meant to obscure the word, while metaphorically obscuring the word of God.

The second conductus to look at is *Mundus A Mundicia*. This 13th-century conductus follows the themes of corruption, filth, and the flipping of natural order.¹⁴ Below is the text both in its original language and translated into English.

<i>Mundis a mundicia</i>	‘World’ [<i>mundus</i>] derived from
<i>Dictus per contraria</i>	‘cleanliness’ [<i>mundicia</i>] by way of antiphrasis,
<i>sordet inmundicia</i>	is sullied by the filth of
<i>criminum</i>	sins.
<i>crescit in malicia</i>	It waxes in wickedness,
<i>culpa nescit terminum</i>	moral turpitude knows no limit.
<i>Nam seductrix hominum</i>	For the seductress of mankind,

¹¹ Tan, Hansel Shen-Wei. “Musical Beastliness in the Roman De Fauvel (BN Fr. 146): Chaillou's Additions and Sensory Danger.” *Digital Collections*, 2010. <https://digitalcollections.wesleyan.edu/object/ir-1297>.

¹² Mengozzi, S. *The Renaissance Reform of Medieval Music Theory Guido of Arezzo between Myth and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

¹³ Tan, “Musical Beastliness.” 41-42

¹⁴ Roesner, Edward H. “Labouring in the Midst of Wolves: Reading a Group of ‘Fauvel’ Motets.” *Early Music History* 22 (2003): 169–245. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3874750>.

favelli nequicia. the unforthiness that is Fauvel,
non habet hic dominum has no master here [in the world]¹⁵

Before diving into the actual notation of the piece, one must first look at the meaning behind the poem. The poem encompasses the theme of ‘filth’, referring rhetorically to not only how the world is turning upside down, but to the literal filth that is the stable dung that Fauvel has brought into the royal palace - that his servants must clean off his coat. This poem takes the concept of ‘filth’ one step further, as it outlines Fauvel being ‘criminal’ and at fault for immorality and fornication. Even further, the poem outlines Fauvel as a seducer of women, and how he is a traitor of mankind.¹⁶ This is also noted in other motets found throughout the *Roman de Fauvel*, making this idea not just a theory, but a statement that it is happening.

If there was still any question as to how sinful of a character Fauvel was, one can look towards the text-driven form of the conductus that outlines the word *crimum* (criminal). Due to the nature of a lyrical poem, there are brief pauses between ideas. Before and after the word ‘criminal’, there is a slight pause. This draws the listener into the word and really emphasizes what the text is trying to say. By putting this word in as its own stanza, the listener is required to really pay attention to how terrible Fauvel is being painted as, and make sure that it is not forgotten.

Now looking at the conductus itself, the motetus voice is the tenor line of the original conductus, with a new tenor line composed against the original. This new tenor line creates an entirely new texture of flowing homorhythmic ideas.¹⁷ This conductus typically is performed with voice and instrument. Looking at various modern interpretations of this piece, these performances ranged from a simple single voice and violin¹⁸ (or medieval fiddle), to a complex shawm introduction followed by duplum voice and harp¹⁹.

¹⁵ Roesner, “‘Fauvel’ Motets.” 169–245.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Unknown, “Le Roman de Fauvel - Mundus a mundicia”, YouTube video, Sep 23, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wqoIoKVflo>

¹⁹ Unknown, “Roman de Fauvel - Mundus A Mundicia”, YouTube video, Jun 19, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zFBzsW_PaU

Mundus a Mundicia is felt in a triple meter, most commonly noted as the current 6/8 meter. If we think of this piece's pulse in groups of three (aka 6/8), almost each stanza is given 4 beats, creating a constant pulse throughout the piece. This pulse is interrupted with stanza 4, which happens to be the single word "*crimum*" that was described earlier. Because of this shift in pulse, it again draws the focus to the word "criminal", but then goes back into the normal pulse, almost to serve as a reminder that Fauvel truly is a criminal.

Looking at the music alone, this piece never reaches a cadence point until the very end of the piece. Each stanza in the conductus typically ends a note away from the first note of the stanza. This causes each phrase to lead into the next and never quite reaches a conclusion until everything has been spoken of how horrible Fauvel is. The only exception to this is in the first stanza of the piece. This paints the text in the first phrase (which is also the title of the piece) as a solid idea. It is the absolute of the piece. The rest of the stanzas keep building off of each other, as they never reach a cadence point, but instead push onto the next stanzas.

All in all, the *Roman de Fauvel* was a major turning point in music history. The composed music was considered to be ahead of its time, which provided rich structure and depth while integrating the text into musical context.²⁰ The two conducti we analyzed in the paper barely scratches the surface of musical and literary techniques found in the other almost 169 pieces of music found in the *Roman de Fauvel*.

²⁰ Wathey, Andrew. "Fauvel, Roman De." *Oxford Music Online*, January 20, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09372>.

*Clavus pungens acumine,
Dum carnem Christi perforat,
Ex vulnerum foramine
Passionem commemorat;
Cuius dum madet sanguine,
Nos profundens dulcedine,
Christo crucis ymagine
Conformatos incorporat.*

*In istis foraminibus,
Ut Columba nidifica,
Tibi domum edifica
Quam intres istis foribus.
Nova curandi fiscia
Salutem de livoribus,
Medelam de vulneribus,
De morte vitam vendica.*

*O manuum confixio
[Et] pedum perforacio,
Quibus Christus confoditur!
Cuius dum caro scinditur
Et clavorum misterio
Regnum celorum panditur,
Celestis fabri studio
Clavus in clavem verti[tur].*

*Clavi quid est amissio,
Nisi quod Christi passio
Excidit a memoria?
Clavis quid est confixio
Que clavo fit contrario,
Nisi culpe malicia
Aut boni simulacio
Claudicans in iusticia?*

*Vobis loquor, pastoribus,
Vobis qui claves geritis,
Vobis qui vite luxibus
Claves Christi reicitis.
Vos lupi facti gregibus,
Membra Christi configitis
Et abutentes clavibus
Claves in clavos vertitis*

As the nail, puncturing with its sharp point,
Pierces the flesh of Christ,
It commemorates the passion
From the opening of the wounds.
As it drips with his blood,
Pouring over us with sweetness,
It embodies in Christ
Those shaped in the image of the cross.

In those openings,
Like a dove making its nest,
Build yourself a home
Which you may enter through those doors.
With this new drug of healing
Claim salvation from the welts,
Healing from the wounds,
[and] life from death.

Oh, fixing of the hands
And piercing of the feet
By which Christ is impaled!
While his flesh is gashed
And by the mystery of the nails
The kingdom of heaven is opened,
By the celestial craftsman's zeal
The nail is turned into a key.

What is the loss of the nail,
If not that the passion of Christ
Slips from memory?
What is this fashioning of the key
Which is made from its opposite, a nail,
If not the wickedness of sin
Or the affection of good
Limping along as justice?

I speak to you, pastors,
You who carry the keys,
You who because of the luxuries of life
Reject the keys of Christ.
Having become wolves to your flocks,
You nail down the limbs of Christ
And, misusing the keys,
You turn the keys into nails.

Translation of *Clavus pungens acumine* adapted from Rosenberg, Samuel N., and Hans Tischler. *The Monophonic Songs in the Roman De Fauvel*. Internet Archive. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

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