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## Prologue

Most of the research and writing of this book took place in England and France, in locations that were a short plane-ride, train-ride, or occasionally just a brief walk away from the manuscripts and sites that are its subject. The later stages of writing, however, were in Philadelphia, a geographical leap that has pressed me to confront questions of distance – spatial and historical – from the objects and cultures with which I am constantly engaged. At times, the Atlantic gap has mimicked the temporal, prompting me to revisit the sensation of longing to traverse historical space that first drew me to music and to history: it has reminded me of how those issues of proximity and remoteness, to and from the past, and, with them, issues of contact with remnants of the past, have shaped my thinking about the manuscript that is this book's subject. By way of preliminary explanation of my project, I would like to begin with two brief excursions.

### 1

My first expedition stands as a memorial to a site familiar to all travellers to Paris, medieval and modern: one that I have had cause to visit both literally and in my mind's eye over the last few years. Notre Dame de Paris has drawn visitors throughout its long history: early medieval pilgrims came to perform their habitual rites of devotion to the cathedral's Lady and relics; more recent visitors, camera in hand, are driven by a different kind of devotional fervour, coming to admire and gather mementos, to 'get close' to the past. As I fall into that well-trodden path towards the West End façade, I find myself caught up in a strange, compelling memory game – trying to recall things for which I have no primary experience. Nearly always, an anonymous thirteenth-century English visitor comes to mind, and, even less tangible, the musical culture he experienced. But whereas such a pilgrim trail may once have led me inside the cathedral, its spaces a kind of memorial prompt for those lost sounds, today the route would demand a detour: habit would now turn my thoughts downwards, underground, to a less well-known site of remembrance.

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The *parvis* is of course a modern construction: the expansive space was cleared by the nineteenth-century Haussmannian vision that reshaped Paris. In the fourteenth century, approaches to the cathedral would have been very different. Excavations in the 1960s and early 1970s revealed a complex network of remains, including ruins of some of the buildings and streets that had once jostled right up to the cathedral's façade. These are now a small archeological museum, hidden discreetly away beneath the grey stone approach and not so frequented by modern visitors. But I find myself descending these days when I visit Paris, in search of a few crumbling remains of a small street, its significance newly excavated by Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse. Archeologists brought the stones to light, but the Rouses' painstaking work on the Paris *tailles* has uncovered the names of those who lived and worked on that street.<sup>1</sup> Rue Neuve Notre-Dame hosted a thirteenth-century industry, not of the ineffable, mysterious kind to be sought in the cathedral, but of the *material*. The tiny street was once packed with parchment sellers, book-binders, scribes, illuminators and others engaged in the production of books, and all contributing to the establishment of a new culture of book-making and reading.

The dank, silent remains of a street of book-makers may seem an oddly muted locus in which to begin an exploration of music. But it is with such a community that this book is primarily concerned. The site, and its tantalizing geography, has come to embody the essence of my questions about music in medieval Paris in two important ways. The first rests on a point of topography. (I shall return to the second presently.) Rue Neuve lies in the shadow of a monument whose musical traditions marked a moment of change in Parisian medieval music, change that is intimately linked to writing. While Notre Dame polyphony probably survived from the early decades of its conception in the late twelfth century through oral rather than written modes of transmission, it comes down to us through a series of manuscripts produced from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, and inscribed in new, much more prescriptive forms of notation, ones that translate (and transform) early performance traditions in important ways. The interrelation of cultures of writing and cultures of performing were as close, then, as the two sites – rue Neuve and the cathedral – are

<sup>1</sup> Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse, 'The Commercial Production of Manuscript Books in Late-Thirteenth-Century and Early-Fourteenth-Century Paris', in Linda Brownrigg (ed.), *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence* (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, Red Gull Press, 1990), 103–15. Their more extensive study of the Parisian book trade appeared as this book was in the final stages of completion, and I have therefore been unable to take account of their more recent findings. See Richard Rouse and Mary Rouse, *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200–1500* (Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2000).

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physically proximate. Such proximity offers fresh contexts in which to understand the written tradition of Notre Dame's music. Musicology has, not surprisingly, sought to recreate some sense of the performance practice of the cathedral through the books, to explore what the written text captures of oral practice. Those same manuscripts, however, may also be responding to the wider habits of book-making: rue Neuve participated in the production of a new breed of book, in which order, design and decoration all contributed to the meaning of a text, reinventing and re-evaluating it even as it was inscribed. Viewed in that material context, the manufacture of Notre Dame's repertoires may be not so much a desire to transmit a performance tradition (to write music down) as a desire to write *about* music – using the new technologies of book-making evident on rue Neuve to recast the now long established musical traditions of the cathedral. The constellation of sites thus presses us to consider how writing itself transforms, reshapes and reinvents sonic worlds, in ways which are unperformable: what, in other words, does it mean to write music down at this moment in history, a moment of extraordinary inventiveness in the realms of book-making?

To begin to answer that, I must extend my map a little further, to embrace a manuscript born of an institution just a short walk away from Notre Dame, in the Palais de la Cité seat of the Capetian monarchy. Fr. 146 may in one sense respond to its political environment; but its abundant musical interpolations offer a unique response to the musical cultures around medieval Paris – among them, those of Notre Dame itself. Written some decades after those first codifications of Notre Dame polyphony, fr. 146 is at once more complex and less formalized in its treatment of music than those earlier manuscripts. It is moreover particularly elaborate in its physical arrangement of song: in its flamboyant page layout (particularly so in the interpolation of music into the Old French poem, the *Roman de Fauvel*), in the sheer boldness of the compilation as a whole, the manuscript seems to embody the question of how the physicality of the texts (music among them) may be implicated in their meaning. Fr. 146 is thus a unique opportunity to examine how music transforms in writing; simultaneously, the special case of this manuscript offers rich insight into the whole culture of music-making in medieval Paris.

At this point, it may help to explain a little of how such a project relates to other recent work on the manuscript, for throughout the 1990s fr. 146 has received unprecedented attention in medieval studies. That recent interest can be traced back at least to the publication of a complete facsimile in 1990;<sup>2</sup> in making fr. 146 more easily accessible, the facsimile also shapes the kinds of questions that may be asked of the manuscript

<sup>2</sup> Fauvel 1990.

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and its contents, serving to communicate more strongly the book's presence to those who explore its texts.<sup>3</sup> Most recently, a collection of essays devoted to fr. 146 offers a direct response to the possibilities laid open by the facsimile. *Fauvel Studies* is the fruit of a convening of scholars from different disciplines – art history, architecture, history, music, literature – and thus sets out a new interdisciplinary framework for study of fr. 146. The essays present important new information about the book's provenance, its audience, its creators, the political and literary themes of its contents, so creating a rich new cultural context for the book and its readers.

The present study began with the basic proposition to explore the role of music in fr. 146. However, while music has remained my subject, my understanding of what music is at the turn of the fourteenth century has over the years altered profoundly, in part in response to the possibilities opened up by the interdisciplinary climate of *Fauvel Studies*. While that collection broke new ground in bringing together scholars from across disciplines, it also underlined how modern artistic divisions operate according to criteria quite different to those at work in medieval manuscripts. While medievalists, more than those in many other fields, work across disciplines, we nonetheless remain defined by disciplinary boundaries. Fr. 146 knows no such divisions: those who conceived its texts were neither just poets, nor just musicians; nor were its authors necessarily separate from its manufacturers. In the wake of *Fauvel Studies*, we are now in the unique position of knowing a great deal about all the components that make up the whole book. In turn, it permits an approach that, building on that research, can try to collapse traditional boundaries, to examine music within its full material context. One outcome of such an approach is to press us to consider how, within a culture where boundaries between book-making, literary production and music production were so fluid, the material form of music may have a status that is different and independent from its function as a prescription for performance.

In developing an approach to music *in situ*, my thinking has been greatly influenced by current interest in the materiality of texts, an

<sup>3</sup> The facsimile was further greatly enriched by publication of three other major studies of the book and its texts. Joseph Morin's 1992 dissertation served as a timely counterpoint to the facsimile, offering a detailed palaeographic investigation into the manuscript's genesis; see Joseph Morin, 'The Genesis of Manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds français 146, with Particular Emphasis on the "Roman de Fauvel"' (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1992). Books on the *Roman de Fauvel* by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Margherita Lecco, respectively, greatly deepened the understanding of that particular part of the manuscript and its spheres of reference. See Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, *Fauvel au pouvoir: lire la satire médiévale*, Nouvelle bibliothèque du moyen âge, 26 (Paris: H. Champion; Geneva: Slatkine, 1994), and Margherita Lecco, *Ricerche sul 'Roman de Fauvel'*, Scrittura e Scrittori, 10 (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1993).

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interest that runs across the humanities, particularly those approaches developed by Jerome McGann, Donald McKenzie and Roger Chartier.<sup>4</sup> In the specific realms of medieval studies, I have also benefited from the recent blossoming of interest in book-production and the reception of texts in the field of Old French literature, particularly those studies instigated by Sylvia Huot, Stephen Nichols and Kevin Brownlee, and specifically those relating to the transmission and reception of the *Roman de la Rose*, a text to which *Fauvel* is closely related. Their work acts as a point of entry for reading fr. 146; but also raises important questions about how music may or may not function within a material aesthetic.

In exploring music's place in these theories of the book, one further influence will be evident, if less explicitly so than those other scholarly models mentioned so far. It can be best explained by returning to my original site of memory. Rue Neuve now stands amid the clutter and jumble of history, cheek by jowl in an archeological sense with, among others, fourth-century remains that are more distant to its reality than fr. 146 is to my own present. The careful labels and handy site maps furnished by the Ministère de la culture confirm what the site itself so vividly communicates: the random incompleteness of remnants of the past; the dense polyphony of history. Even here, at this seemingly most authentic moment of contact, history becomes impossibly elusive. As well as memorializing music-writing, the site thus also offers some reminders of our relationship to the past: while the artefacts of the past may conjure up affinity or connection, there is the danger of false familiarity – of finding not points of contrast and difference, but points of recognition; also, direct contact with the materials of the past – a site, or a manuscript – can silence other voices in history's texture, yet these moments where the source is laid bare offer cautions about the need to situate particular moments as just moments, mediated by their past and future.

In the 1990s, when most of the research for this project took place, such awareness of the multiple voices of history became central preoccupations in some quarters. In the move towards fresh historical views of the past, the need to see difference where once was familiarity, and to allow those other, mediating voices to be heard, was proudly advocated. In medieval studies, this was manifest in a move to re-examine the pragmatic skills of the discipline (textual criticism, codicology), and their connection to new critical approaches to texts; a by-product was to explore the nineteenth-century origins of those pragmatic skills, as a way of illuminating how those early pioneer scholars mediate our contact with medieval sources. In musicology, those aims translated into highly

<sup>4</sup> Full discussion of this work will follow in Chapter 2.

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contested debates about our definitions of music. Our notion of music, like the medievalist's contact with manuscript sources, might be biased by 'a priori ideological determinism': as a consequence, our most fundamental beliefs about what music is for, and how we reactivate it (through analysis and pragmatic historical research) were up for discussion.

At times, musicology's debates seemed far beyond what was relevant to a medievalist working in the discipline; not only that, they seemed to challenge our most basic methodological premises. The medievalist's work, often involving the quasi-scientific excavation of texts, seemed to run against the very grain of musicology's new commitment to preserve historical difference: we were thus in some cases seen as chasing the impossible, unattainable prize of 'fact' or 'truth' in a climate where scholars sought to pluralize such notions. Nonetheless, the persistent discussions in musicology and medieval studies began to resonate with my thinking about fr. 146. In developing an approach to manuscripts, and to music in manuscripts, these debates have constantly pressed me to rethink both my relationship to the manuscript source and, more importantly, my definitions of music in the Middle Ages: loosening the music of that single manuscript from the straitjacket of our scholarly preconceptions began to open up new vistas.

My purpose is not to linger over these now familiar debates, although there will be occasion to map out certain arguments along the way. On the other hand, it has been extremely fruitful to keep the recent developments in medieval studies and musicology in dialogue with one another, and those two voices in counterpoint with my central theme – the workings of music in one, intricate manuscript. I believe that the tried and tested philological approach to the physical object can bring our understanding of the dimensions of the work into sharper relief. Indeed, part of the work that follows is an attempt to use familiar palaeographic and philological practices to uncover layers of working method – the 'facts' of manufacture, if you like. But these facts are the starting point: they are strands in the 'narrative' of the book – a narrative that, nonetheless, demands to be interpreted. And that interpretation has turned me ever inwards, to the parchment: at the very heart of this book is the belief that, rather than trying to make fr. 146 yield information about musical cultures exterior to it, the pages themselves were a self-sufficient form of music – silent, to be sure, but nonetheless revelatory of how medieval writers, scribes, illuminators, readers – all those involved with making texts – shaped their musical experiences, how they explored music as a way of writing about their culture, a culture which, in its imaginative and expressive (material) music-making, was altogether different from our own.

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To explain my particular approach to fr. 146, I now turn to my second excursion, to the parchment edges of the manuscript. The accessibility of fr. 146 in facsimile has reduced the need for direct contact with the original, thereby ensuring its preservation for future generations; but the original still has certain things to teach us. I confine my remarks to two features. The first concerns the graphic ‘excess’ of the manuscript. ‘Excess’ is a word often used to characterize fr. 146: its bringing together such a complex confection of texts in a single manuscript; its abundance of music; for the multiple layers of allegory and reference in its texts; the flamboyance of its illuminations. Ardis Butterfield has eloquently drawn attention to visual excess – the way the texts physically stretch at the boundaries of the parchment – using the manuscript image as a powerful metaphor for the testing of generic boundaries in the use of the refrain.<sup>5</sup> The sense of strain suggested by that metaphor is striking in a first-hand encounter with the manuscript. With the turn of each folio the eye is challenged by the graphic effect of the complex processes used to make the lines. Text, image and music constantly collide on the parchment, its surface bumpy with the layers of activity. Red staves of music press in on, and expand into, text space, and are etched vigorously over gold capitals (sometimes with disastrous effects, red ink and gold leaf blurring in unruly smudges); intricate foliage decorating capitals flows onto and over words. From time to time the parchment surface thins – tangible evidence of where it has been scraped to efface errors. Just once, on folio 1r, a scribe’s frustration at such unbridled ink can be seen in faint fingerprints all down the margin. Opening the book is like opening the door on a hectic discussion of production, voices muted in the facsimile: what is striking is the sheer volume of the creative ‘noise’ of manufacture.

All these features are evidence of the processes by which the songs and poems came to find their place on the pages. Piecing them together, shadows on the parchment begin to outline a once crowded work space around the book, populated by many artists and scribes whose role it was to give a physical form to the texts. The moments of visual disturbance are echoes of debates that must have occurred just beyond the folios, as decisions were made about how to stage the textual and musical materials that lay on the workbench. It is these discussions that interest me, for they suggest what it means to make a book, and also something about the nature of reading ‘en livre’. Meanings are inscribed in the act of production: every instance of correction, every trace of a

<sup>5</sup> Ardis Butterfield, ‘The Refrain and the Transformation of Genre in the *Roman de Fauvel*’, in *Fauvel Studies*, 105–6.



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planning note, every occasion of a conflicting ink colour, is the residue of creative decisions around the parchment to determine how the texts will lie on the folio. More than this, the moment of production is simultaneously a moment of consumption; to make decisions about the 'staging' of the texts indicates that their inscribers were engaged in reading critically, their responses are etched in the moment of copying. I believe that this now-distant colloquium is worthy of attention: in studying the manuscript, we read through the mediation of another group of reader/writers, whose authority, distinct from the much later notion of a singular author, lies in creating and inscribing the visual text. In so doing, we gain invaluable insights into what those texts – music among them – represented to one constituency of its medieval audience.

Exploring how fr. 146 was made, through palaeographic study of the scripts and notes, has on occasion led me to believe that I understood the decision-making processes of the scribes, so much so that at times the imaginary *atelier* in which they once worked has seemed alluringly close. This leads me to a second point about the encounter with the artefact: fr. 146, testament to the care of its library host, is still remarkably robust. There are relatively few wounds in the parchment, and it has hardly faded over the years; nor do the colours of the inks and paints seem less than vivid. Indeed, were it not for that distinctive tangy odour that the manuscript exudes (the scent of its parchment), it would be hard to believe the distance it has travelled – its smell the trigger of another, more distant culture of book-making. In the face of such preservation, the path to the fourteenth century seems easily traversed.

The past seems thus seductively proximate. However, there is no better reminder of the distance that separates us from the past than to look up from the manuscript for a moment, and remember the physical context in which it is now read. Among plans for the Bibliothèque Nationale were those of Etienne-Louis Boullée, who envisaged the library's main reading room as a basilica, a huge, domed building with triumphal arches and open spaces: a quasi-sacred place, a place of communion for readers and books.<sup>6</sup> While those plans never made it into stone, they give some indication that buildings in which books were housed could, indeed do, shape the ways in which we read. Today's libraries carry not only the weight of their design, but also the mythology of the readers who have passed through them: the corridors on the approach to the manuscript room are lined with Roman-style busts – not only of great figures of literature, but also of monumental scholars. These days, there is something haunting about fr. 146's current home: the Département

<sup>6</sup> Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 62–3.



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des manuscrits remains in the old site of the Bibliothèque Nationale, which has in recent years largely relocated to its new premises – the manuscripts remaining still caught up in their older, nineteenth-century ideologies of reading while many printed books have moved into the high-tech spaces of the twenty-first century. The weight of the institution is thus felt at every turn: the library is a place where identity must be proven, institutional allegiance demonstrated, references displayed before admittance is granted. Then begins the negotiation for seats, request forms, acceptance placards. And then, at last, manuscripts are wheeled out, often in modern cardboard caskets, for yet another post-mortem. These procedures should not be trivialized: they ensure the preservation of books for future generations. However, they also illustrate how modern manuscript-reading is enshrined in ideologies foreign to the original activity. Indeed, the manuscripts themselves are tangible evidence that history leaves its marks: every reader leaves a trace on the parchment, as flesh meets flesh, skin mingles with skin. Recalling my own moments working on fr. 146, I am reminded of the sensation at the folio edges where the parchment has grown waxy and brittle with the residue of these encounters: palpable evidence that readers also, literally, become part of the object. In my pursuit of the earliest readers of fr. 146 – its creators – I have been constantly drawn to the realization that these later traces are part of the manuscript's texts. As a result, I have aimed to develop models for approaching fr. 146 and its music which are inclusive of these later layers of reception, and which, indeed, play them off against one another to generate new interpretative directions and additional subtexts for the manuscript.

Following a preliminary chapter contextualizing the manuscript and its contents, Chapter 2 explores more fully the proposition that the physical forms of a text may affect their meaning, drawing on recent discussions in literary studies and, in particular, on those in the field of medieval literary studies; it then explores how music might function with such a material aesthetic. Subsequent chapters explore issues of material authority via literary and visual representations of authorship – to see how the makers of fr. 146 represented their creative activity; and also through codicological analysis to shed light on how the scribes set about marshalling the materials on the folios. As interpolation to this discussion, I explore how the manuscript fared in the hands of later readers and scholars, and particularly those nineteenth-century French philologists who first brought fr. 146 into the scholarly arena. I consider how their scholarly priorities strike a note of dissonance with the information the book seems to supply about its meaning. The final two chapters offer ways of reading the book's design as expressive: first, exploring the compilatory shape of fr. 146 as a poetic form, concerned with issues of song and speech; and then the more local arrangement of

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music, image and text in *Fauvel*, suggesting numerous ways in which the book's makers made expressive use of what we might term 'song space'. The ensuing reading does not offer new 'hard' evidence to repaint the scholarly scenery. More modestly, it attempts to open up new interpretative possibilities in a manuscript that offers just one brief glimpse of a fabulously inventive and imaginative musical culture. I have sought to remain 'true' to the manuscript makers who first brought blank parchment to life in one particular respect: their creation invokes us to read – and in the course of devising new techniques for reading, to seek to find some ways of making sense of the music that they wrote so elusively of as being 'bien escrivez et bien noteez'.