

**Exploring circulation: ‘þe proporcions’  
in a fifteenth-century English miscellany  
and the vernacularisation of *musica  
speculativa***

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.  
University of Dublin  
2021

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## Summary

Dublin, Trinity College MS 516 contains both Latin and Middle English writings on a variety of topics. The manuscript belonged to John Benet, vicar of Harlington in Bedfordshire, England (1443–1471). Although the historical and literary texts in this miscellaneous collection have attracted scholarly interest, less attention has been paid to a rare treatise in Middle English on musical proportions. The subject matter of this treatise, hereafter referred to as ‘þe proporcions’, derives from Boethius’ *De institutione musica* (sixth century). Two related versions of the treatise survive, in London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763 and in New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12. This dissertation provides the first comparative analysis of all three versions and an assessment of the treatise’s circulation. It suggests that the audience for speculative music theory in late medieval England was broader than previously realised, encompassing readers of variable levels of musical literacy. That a vicar in a rural Bedfordshire parish chose to include a proportion treatise in his personal miscellany provides important insights into the circulation of vernacular music theory in the fifteenth century.

Chapter One provides an intellectual context for ‘þe proporcions’ by describing the transmission of ancient Greek music theory and the development of *musica speculativa*. Reviewing the place of music theory pedagogy in late medieval England, this chapter challenges the assumption that the dissemination of *musica speculativa* took place exclusively in universities. Indeed, the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in Benet’s miscellany demonstrates that Boethian learning took place in parochial contexts. This chapter argues that the treatise reflects a broader contemporary interest in technical texts in the vernacular. It draws on recent ‘cultural’ approaches in translation studies to assess the unusual place of ‘þe proporcions’ within the Boethian tradition of speculative music theory.

Chapters Two and Three employ the tools of both ‘old’ and ‘new’ philology. The text of the treatise is the focus of Chapter Two. A comparative analysis of its three copies allows for commentary on possible lines of transmission for ‘þe proporcions’ based on textual variances. It argues that John Benet could have copied his version of the treatise from Lansdowne MS 763 and assigns a copying date to his inscription of the treatise in MS 516. Chapter Three offers a codicological study of the three manuscripts containing ‘þe proporcions’ to elucidate divergent ways that different scribes represented the same

information. In doing so, it exemplifies the mobility of this text in a broader context of medieval transmission.

It is then possible to explore the circulation of ‘þe proporcions’ in specific contexts. The parochial context in which John Benet compiled MS 516 is the focus of Chapter Four. Extant biographical records and the known responsibilities of parish priests in fifteenth-century England help to explain Benet’s role in Harlington and how ‘þe proporcions’ could have related to his carrying out of duties. Chapter Five explores the treatise’s broader circulation and the expanded readership for speculative music theory that resulted from its vernacularisation. It suggests that the treatise circulated within an Augustinian textual community. It also assesses the evidence for a period of transmission lasting over fifty years and proposes a revised date of compilation for MS B.12. Chapter Six focuses on Chilston, the person to whom ‘þe proporcions’ is attributed in Lansdowne MS 763. The use of Middle English suggests that Chilston was writing for an audience outside of elite hubs of scholasticism. Building on the potential identification of Chilston with a contemporary compiler of a priest’s manual, this chapter advances a possible site of production for the treatise and the potential roles Chilston could have undertaken in communicating with his intended audience(s).

In taking a decentred approach, this dissertation follows work in musicology and other fields seeking to include narratives outside of the central tradition. The treatise’s translation into Middle English already challenges the predominant idea that the readership for music theory in late medieval England was Latinate. This dissertation uncovers an entirely new context in which speculative music theory was read and circulated in the late fifteenth-century: the English rural parish. Thus, a new kind of reader emerges, external to the traditional institutions of learning. Investigating the ways in which vernacular music theory circulated within and between communities moves us towards a deeper understanding of the diverse readership of music theory. The survival of three copies of a fifteenth-century treatise in Middle English necessitates re-thinking the circulation of vernacular music theory, alongside the Latin transmission. The vernacular transmission calls for consideration of ‘other’ voices.



## Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful to John Scattergood for sharing his discovery of the music treatise in Trinity College Dublin, for his conscientious transcription of the text, his willingness to share his knowledge of John Benet's hand, and for his ongoing support for this research project. I thank Jane Alden for starting me out on this research. Her passion for scholarship continues to be a source of inspiration and encouragement. I am indebted to both Ann Buckley and David Ditchburn for supervising this dissertation. It was tremendously helpful to be guided by the dual expertise of a musicologist and a historian. They gave generously of their time and their contributions are evident throughout. Thanks to their support, I was able to continue my research through the Trinity Medieval History Research Centre in the School of Histories and Humanities.

I am extremely grateful for the warm welcome that I received from scholars as I entered the field of medieval musicology. I thank Ruth DeFord for her insights, knowledge, and assistance. I also thank Peter Lefferts for sharing the Texts on Music in English catalogue and his experience in the field of vernacular writings on music. I thank David Bell for his generosity in sharing his vast knowledge of the medieval libraries of nuns and Charlie Kerrigan for his verification of translations. For sharing her extensive knowledge of and passion for palaeography, I sincerely thank Bríd McGrath.

I was honoured to be received as a guest in the town of Harlington by Reverend Stephen Williams and Jean Yates. It was a privilege to visit the places where John Benet lived, worked and compiled his miscellany.

To my family and friends, I am so grateful for all of your support. To my parents, thank you for never doubting that I would complete this challenge and for supporting every project that I choose to undertake. To Brian, thank you for not letting me give up and for doing everything possible so that I could do something that felt, at times, impossible and unimaginable.

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## Introduction

The library of Trinity College Dublin contains a fifteenth-century manuscript that once belonged to John Benet, vicar of the parish of Harlington in Bedfordshire, England. Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516 (*olim* E.5.10) is a collection of both Latin and Middle English texts on a variety of topics. While indications of ownership are rare in miscellaneous collections, John Benet identified himself and his location on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> with the following curse: ‘*Iste liber est Domini Johannis Benet de harlyngdon. Quisquis istem elongauerit de custodia sua absque sua consensu anathema sit marinatha*’ [This book belongs to Master John Benet of Harlington. Whosoever will have removed it from his care without his consent may he be cursed].<sup>1</sup> Such curses were not unusual in late medieval books, and indicate the value attached to book creation and ownership.<sup>2</sup> Benet also signed and dated various items within his manuscript and occasionally identified his location as Harlington.

Amid the various items that collectively constitute Trinity College MS 516 (MS 516), there is a vernacular treatise on music theory in Middle English, henceforth referred to as ‘*þe proporcions*’, that hitherto has not garnered substantial scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup> The treatise’s mathematical content contrasts sharply with the political and historical nature of the rest of the manuscript, making the inclusion of ‘*þe proporcions*’ in MS 516 intriguing. John Scattergood, in a comprehensive overview of the manuscript, chose not to delve into the music treatise in any detail but acknowledged that this is the ‘most

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by John Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516: A Clerical Historian’s Personal Miscellany’, in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A.S.G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 121–31 (p. 121).

<sup>2</sup> Marc Drogin, *Anathema! Medieval Scribes and the History of Book Curses* (Totowa, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fols 129<sup>r</sup>–31<sup>v</sup>.

interesting’ non-political and non-historical text in the manuscript.<sup>4</sup> The music treatise is at the centre of this dissertation.

While the treatise is mainly mathematical, there is no doubt that it is a display of medieval music theory. ‘þe proporcions’ provides rudimentary information on mathematical proportions, initially naming and describing different types of proportions and proportionality before concentrating on the following three means: arithmetic, geometric, and harmonic.<sup>5</sup> While the doctrine on proportions presented in MS 516 was widely known and included as introductory material in many Latin manuscripts concerned with various other aspects of music theory, it is rare to find it in a vernacular treatise. In the Latin context, further discussion of the implications for practical music regularly followed the introduction to proportions. Likewise, ‘þe proporcions’ states that the next step for the reader should be to explore the monochord, describing it as the instrument of plainsong.<sup>6</sup> A short Latin aphorism is provided and the treatise ends.

## **0.1 Discovering related copies**

The treatise on proportions in Benet’s miscellany is not unique. Versions of ‘þe proporcions’ survive in two closely related sources—London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763 (Lansdowne MS 763), compiled by John Wylde, and New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12 (MS B.12). Like MS 516, these are both composite manuscripts. Lansdowne MS 763 contains twenty music theory treatises, only three of which are in English: Leonel Power’s didactic treatise on discant, an anonymous treatise on discant (originally attributed to Chilston, now given to an anonymous Pseudo-

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<sup>4</sup> Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516’, p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 129<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 131<sup>v</sup>.



Chilston), and a version of ‘þe proporcions’, attributed here to Chilston.<sup>7</sup> MS B.12 is primarily a scientific, mathematical anthology that ends with two proportion treatises, one of which is in Latin and the other is concordant with the treatise in MS 516 and Lansdowne MS 763.<sup>8</sup> Finding a third copy of this rare Middle English music theory treatise invites comparisons of their multiple readers and contexts.

## 0.2 Reviewing previous studies of ‘þe proporcions’

Despite ‘þe proporcions’ being one of the earliest vernacular music theory treatises, it has attracted scant musicological attention. The copy in Lansdowne MS 763 has received the most attention, primarily because of its inclusion in a significant anthology of music theory treatises. Various parts of the manuscript were transcribed and described by Sir John Hawkins and Charles Burney.<sup>9</sup> The lack of subsequent scholarly attention is striking, given that Hawkins even included a transcription of ‘þe proporcions’.<sup>10</sup> Hawkins identified the treatise as one of many texts in a manuscript formerly from ‘Waltham Cross abbey’ and subsequently owned by a ‘Mr West’.<sup>11</sup> He attributed the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 to ‘Chilston’, based on the treatise’s *explicit*, but Hawkins was unable to provide any biographical information about the author. Burney also included a description of the texts found in the Waltham abbey manuscript, now Lansdowne MS 763, in his general history of music.<sup>12</sup> He described the manuscript as a ‘curious Volume of MS. tracts [...] which before the Reformation appertained to the Monastery of Waltham Holy-Cross, in

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<sup>7</sup> British Library Online, ‘Lansdowne MS 763’, in *Digitised Manuscripts* <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Lansdowne\\_MS\\_763](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Lansdowne_MS_763)> [accessed 12 July 2019]

<sup>8</sup> Morgan Library and Museum, ‘MS B.12’, in *CORSAIR Online Catalogue* <<http://corsair.themorgan.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=76798>> [accessed 13 February 2020]

<sup>9</sup> Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 5 vols (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776), vol. II, pp. 201–35; Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages of the Present Period (1789)*, ed. Frank Mercer, 2 vols (London: G. T. Foulis, 1935), vol. I, pp. 685–95.

<sup>10</sup> Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, vol. II, pp. 229–35.

<sup>11</sup> Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, vol. II, p. 229.

<sup>12</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, pp. 685–95.

Essex'.<sup>13</sup> In acknowledging the significance of 'þe proporcions', Burney declared that, to his knowledge, Chilston had made the first attempt to explain the philosophy of sound in English, while retaining Latin terminology, likening him to Cicero who retained Greek vocabulary when writing Latin philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to these two renowned historians of music, scholars from other disciplines have taken interest in the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12. In 1935 Sanford B. Meech published new transcriptions of 'þe proporcions' and the other two English treatises found in Lansdowne MS 763.<sup>15</sup> Meech, a literary scholar, criticised Hawkins's imprecise transcriptions and provided a new translation into modern English of the first two treatises on discant (those by Power and the figure now known as Pseudo-Chilston). He also explained the meaning of these two treatises but deemed an explanation of 'þe proporcions' unnecessary.<sup>16</sup> The version of 'þe proporcions' in Lansdowne MS 763 was the only known version of the treatise until the mid-twentieth century. Meech had thought the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 unique. In 1946 Curt F. Bühler identified a related source in MS B.12 and connected it to Lansdowne MS 763.<sup>17</sup> Thanks to the recent discovery of the treatise in MS 516, it is now possible to add this version to the list of known redactions of 'þe proporcions'.<sup>18</sup> Although this vernacular treatise from medieval England first came to light 250 years ago, the identification of a third source makes urgent a scholarly re-evaluation of its function and circulation.

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<sup>13</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, p. 685.

<sup>14</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, p. 695.

<sup>15</sup> Sanford B. Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English from a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript', *Speculum*, 10 (1935), 235–69.

<sup>16</sup> Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 237.

<sup>17</sup> Curt F. Bühler, 'A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions (sometimes attributed to Chilston)', *Speculum*, 21 (1946), 229–33 (p. 231).

<sup>18</sup> The openings statements of the three treatises were brought together by Theodor Dumitrescu in *The Early Tudor Court and International Musical Relations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 185–86.

### 0.3 Exploring evidence of an expanded readership

Current perceptions of the readership of music theory in fifteenth-century England, and the extent to which vernacular music theory treatises were part of broader intellectual enquiries, can be expanded through a close reading of the known versions of ‘þe proporcions’. Codicological studies of each manuscript containing ‘þe proporcions’ and a comparative reading of the three versions of the text help to elucidate how music theory was read and understood by fifteenth-century readers. By placing the manuscripts into the broader contexts in which they were created and used, both the known circulation and the potential reach of ‘þe proporcions’ can be considered. In particular, the discovery of the treatise in MS 516 helps to place music theory into a new context, not hitherto associated with the consumption of such material: the medieval rural parish. Knowing that the treatise was inscribed in this context makes the identification of a new readership possible, outside of the traditional institutions of learning. This discovery offers new insights into the circulation and reception of music theory in fifteenth-century England.

Chapter One explores the historical context in which ‘þe proporcions’ was created. The tradition of *musica speculativa* is traced from its Greek origins through to the later middle ages, accounting for its transformation into a Latin tradition primarily through Boethius’ *De institutione musica*. No direct Latin source for ‘þe proporcions’ has been identified. However, the mobility of the ideas found in the treatise places the text firmly within the Boethian tradition of music theory. This chapter uses historical records to explore communities in which Boethian music theory circulated in medieval England. The prevailing assumption has been that speculative music theory, deriving from the traditional quadrivium, was read in elite academic, clerical, or monastic institutions. In fact, the transmission seems not to have been as narrow as was previously thought.

Benet's role in the rural parish of Harlington encourages consideration of new contexts and new readerships for music theory in medieval England. Expanding the focus beyond traditional institutions also invites consideration of possible environments in which the enigmatic figure of Chilston might have compiled, redacted or edited 'þe proporcions'.

During the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, technical texts on a range of topics—previously almost exclusively copied in Latin—began to be translated into Middle English. This reflected changes in the readership of such texts and new pathways in the transmission of information. However, music theory in England was largely transmitted in Latin until the sixteenth century, when it became more commonplace to find treatises on music theory written in English. It was not until the late seventeenth century that anglophone texts concerned with speculative aspects of music theory became more prominent.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, Latin treatises dominate studies on the reception of music theory treatises in late medieval England, as elsewhere. This chapter investigates the expanded audiences facilitated by the vernacularisation of technical and instructive writings. Applying this specifically to anglophone treatises on music theory sheds new light on the history of music theory reception in England.

The proportion treatise in MS 516 has to date benefited neither from a philological nor a contextual study. The first step to better understanding 'þe proporcions' in MS 516 is to investigate the aspects that make it distinct from the two related copies. Chapter Two utilises traditional philological tools to undertake a comparative study of the texts of the three versions of 'þe proporcions'. It approaches the corpus of variants and paratextual

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<sup>19</sup> The theory, however, was fundamentally different and independent from the medieval or renaissance traditions of speculative music theory. See W. T. Atcherson, 'Symposium on Seventeenth-Century Music Theory: England', *Journal of Music Theory*, 16 (1972), 6–15.

features as evidence of an instructional purpose. Through both palaeographical and codicological analyses, the chapter offers new commentary on the dissemination of ‘þe proporcions’ and suggests multiple lines of transmission for this vernacular treatise. It offers a conjectural date of inclusion for the treatise in MS 516. This comparative study of the three extant versions of ‘þe proporcions’ concludes with speculation regarding the audiences for whom the treatise was perhaps originally created.

This dissertation also provides a comparative study of ‘þe proporcions’ in its three related manuscript contexts in order to ascertain the value afforded to the treatise in variable communities of readers. Taking a single text and comparing its various manuscript contexts serves to prove that ‘such a comparison can sometimes reveal diverging views of a text from one manuscript compiler [...] to another’.<sup>20</sup> Chapter Three situates each iteration of the treatise in relation to the surrounding texts in the various manuscripts to postulate possible functions for the text within the material contexts. What emerges are three discrepant roles that vernacular music theory played for three different fifteenth-century manuscript compilers in three different contexts, confirming that music theory did not have one fixed meaning for contemporary readers. The multivalence of the treatise illustrates the way in which medieval music theory sat at the intersection of music, numerology, mathematics, science, and philosophy and morality.

Although previous studies have gone some way towards explaining the contents of MS 516, almost no work has yet been done to place this manuscript within its broader social contexts. Chapter Four focuses on the parochial context in which MS 516 was created

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<sup>20</sup> Keith Busby and Christopher Kleinhenz, ‘Medieval French and Italian Literature: Towards a Manuscript History’, in *The Medieval Manuscript Book*, ed. Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 94 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 215–42 (p. 223).

and may have been used, and on John Benet, the compiler of this miscellany. As evidence of intellectual or pedagogical practice relating to music theory in fifteenth-century rural England, MS 516 is an important new witness. Its provenance sheds new light on clerical literacy and cultures of learning outside of known intellectual hubs, such as larger monastic and lay communities and universities. Biographical records help to flesh out John Benet's roles and responsibilities, in line with parish priests elsewhere in fifteenth-century England, and provide the backdrop to understand Benet's inclusion of a treatise on music theory in MS 516.

Palaeographical evidence confirms that MS 516 was read by readers beyond Benet. The identification of a community of readers and users of music theory in a rural parish expands the standard understanding of the reception of speculative music theory in fifteenth-century England. It invites consideration of how music theory might have participated in discourse in non-elite environments. Chapter Five probes how members of the community in Harlington might have interacted with a vernacular text on speculative music theory. It also investigates the broader readership for this material, witnessed by the presence of the treatise in three different manuscripts, from different times and places.

The colophon at the end of 'þe proporcions' in Lansdowne MS 763 attributes this treatise to Chilston. Although biographical documentation can only be inferred, Chapter Six investigates the intellectual and social factors that might have precipitated writing this treatise on speculative music theory in English. It draws together evidence amassed throughout this dissertation concerning changes in the readership of music theory and

uses it to propose a way forward for understanding the place of music theory in an increasingly vernacular culture of learning in fifteenth-century England.

#### **0.4 Identifying readership**

To gain insight into the milieu of particular readers, or kinds of readers, of vernacular music theory in late medieval England, it is helpful to use tools from across disciplines. The starting point remains the records of known readers, the intellectual contexts in which this particular treatise was read, and the broader historical context in which it circulated. It is also important to focus in and investigate the manuscript contexts in which the ‘þe proporcions’ treatise appeared. This dissertation applies tools that are traditionally associated with literary criticism to the three known versions of ‘þe proporcions’. Codicological and palaeographical examinations of the discrepant versions of ‘þe proporcions’ provide crucial information on their various manuscript contexts. An approach informed by the discipline known as the History of the Book leads me to consider the contents of any one treatise not as an isolated text but in relation to the other surviving copies. This forms the bedrock of further consideration of broader contexts in fifteenth-century England, which witnessed the dissemination and consumption of vernacular music theory. Materialist philology, or ‘new philology’, focuses on the processes of production, dissemination and reception of literature, and the ways in which cultural, historical and ideological forces were at work in these processes.<sup>21</sup> Over the last three decades, self-styled New Medievalists have continued to call for a ‘return to the entire cultural circumstances of a manuscript’.<sup>22</sup> Proponents of materialist philology

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew James Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New’, in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, The Viking Collection, 18 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2010), pp. 87–104 (pp. 88–89).

<sup>22</sup> Sarah Kay, ‘Analytical Survey 3: The New Philology’, in *New Medieval Literatures*, ed. David Lawton, Wendy Scase and Rita Copeland, 19 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), vol. III,

rarely claim to have developed a methodology for the investigation of a text; instead, Siegfried Wenzel, a self-proclaimed medievalist and historian of literature, described this more recent interpretation of philology as an ‘attitude’ through which the ‘love of the word’ urges the investigator to go beyond the language to include context.<sup>23</sup> This approach is indebted to Robert Darnton’s influential notion of the ‘communications circuit’.<sup>24</sup> Materialist philology places value on understanding how social, economic, and intellectual factors influence the form and meaning of a text and adopts a broader, contextual approach to understand the processes by which books, as physical objects, came into being.<sup>25</sup> How a text was transmitted and used was ‘socially, economically, and intellectually determined’ and, accordingly, these processes are part of the meaning of the text.<sup>26</sup> In the case of ‘þe proporcions’, a materialist-philological approach to the three extant versions of the text, in tandem with methods developed in historical musicology, sheds light on three different reading contexts, including that of a late medieval rural parish. By these means, this dissertation expands current perceptions of the audience for vernacular music theory.

Ideas of medieval textuality also call for the repositioning of the creation of ‘þe proporcions’ within its cultural and historical contexts and, in doing so, the translation of music theory into Middle English can be seen as part of a move towards the wider availability of technical texts in English. The cultural circumstances in which this text on music theory was brought into being, particularly in relation to its possible intended

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295–326 (p. 311). See also Marina S. Brownlee, Kevin Brownlee and Stephen G. Nichols, eds, *The New Medievalism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Siegfried Wenzel, ‘Reflections on (New) Philology’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 11–18 (p. 12).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books?’, *Daedalus*, 11 (1982), 65–83; Robert Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books Revisited?’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 4 (2007), 495–508.

<sup>25</sup> Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page’, p. 91.

<sup>26</sup> Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page’, p. 91.



audience, constitutes an important line of enquiry in Chapter Six. But throughout the dissertation, arguments are built on the belief that the production of ‘þe proporcions’ needs to be understood in its own cultural and historical context. It is certainly the case that the text bears witness to a time of transformation in music theory, or what Sif Ríkhardsdóttir calls ‘the spirit of a particular time and culture’.<sup>27</sup> The aim here is to show that ‘þe proporcions’ offers insight into conditions that necessitated or supported the emergence of an English language text on music, which in turn helps to assert the role that music theory played within vernacular culture.

Medievalists have been working in the domain of mobility studies since before ‘mobility studies’ was recognised as an interdiscipline and prior to the emergence of the ‘new mobilities paradigm’.<sup>28</sup> Mobility theories are important for understanding the temporal and geographical transmittance and transmutation of medieval texts. Rather than focusing on discrete objects or bodies, however, in Chapter One I apply this paradigm to the mobility of ideas as transmitted through written texts. This serves to highlight the journey from ancient Greek speculative music theory to Boethius’ Latin *De institutione musica* and on to the later Middle English manifestations of ‘þe proporcions’. What becomes clear in analysing this journey is that the medieval translation of *musica speculativa* was a highly interpretative process that was determined by and simultaneously affected the historical and cultural contexts in which this text was created and disseminated. The new mobilities paradigm has called into question the idea that human subjects think and act

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<sup>27</sup> Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Martin B. Shichtman, Laurie A. Finke and Kathleen Coyne Kelly, ‘“The World is My Home When I’m Mobile”: Medieval Mobilities’, *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies*, 4 (2013), 125–35 (p. 126). For more about the ‘new mobilities paradigm’, see Peter Adey, *The Handbook of Mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2014); Mimi Sheller and John Urry ‘Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm’, *Applied Mobilities*, 1 (2016) 10–25; and John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). For an overview of the application of mobility studies to the humanities, see Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce, ‘Mobility and the Humanities’, *Mobilities*, 12 (2017), 493–508.

independently of the worlds in which they create. To better understand this process, I draw on recent work in the field of translation studies, specifically post-translation studies which views translation as ‘fundamentally transdisciplinary, mobile, and open ended’.<sup>29</sup> Just as Homi Bhabha uses the term ‘translation’ in the sense of being carried from one place to another, as explained by Susan Bassnett, this research connects mobility studies and translation studies to understand the relationship between ‘þe proporcions’ and its Greek and Latin predecessors.<sup>30</sup> Following Edwin Gentzler’s suggestion that translation is a revolutionary act, bringing ideas across cultural boundaries and participating in social change, I position ‘þe proporcions’ within wider efforts in fifteenth-century England to appropriate Latin academic writing for a lay English-reading audience.<sup>31</sup> The text of ‘þe proporcions’ can thus be seen as a challenge to Latin cultural dominance, expanding conceptions of the readership for music theory in fifteenth-century England that go beyond the Latinate academic elite. Indeed, post-translation studies, with its central tenet of the mobility of ideas, reveals the entire tradition of Boethian music theory to be a re-contextualisation of ancient Greek speculative music theory. It follows that ‘þe proporcions’ was an extension of this process, making ancient material accessible to new audiences in late medieval England.

The paucity of medieval music theory written in English necessitates the employment of a microhistorical approach. Microhistory has emerged as one of the most interesting and innovative approaches to cultural history. It responds to Georg G. Igger’s claim that many of the traditional methodologies of the social sciences ‘do not hold up when tested against

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<sup>29</sup> Siri Nergaard and Stefano Arduini, ‘Translation: A New Paradigm’, *Translation*, 1 (2011), 8–17 (p. 8).

<sup>30</sup> Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 4th edn (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), p. 6, in reference to Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Edwin Gentzler, *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2017).

the concrete reality of the small-scale life they claim to explain'.<sup>32</sup> Close examination of the extant copies of 'þe proporcions', their contents, and the contexts in which they were created and used, offers the opportunity to reconstruct diverse histories, which adds depth to the breadth of existing narratives of medieval music in England. The English carol provides a useful case study. As David Fallows has demonstrated, this small fifteenth-century repertory is not necessarily the sign of an inconsequential phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> Fallows observed that previous scholars had considered this English genre to have been of little relevance to contemporaneous developments in music on the Continent because there were only four musical sources for English carols.<sup>34</sup> But as Fallows shows, it is possible to reconstruct important parts of the broader history of English music even from these few sources. Lisa Colton and Louise McInnes have also demonstrated how the English carol can contribute to a fuller understanding of both vernacular culture and intellectual discourse in England before 1450.<sup>35</sup> This dissertation adopts this logic and applies it to the three fifteenth-century examples of a vernacular music theory treatise in the belief that these manuscripts offer insights into and beyond the circulation of music theory.

By examining a treatise outside of the canon of medieval theoretical treatises, and in a language that was little used for music theory treatises, this dissertation is part of a wider movement in musicological research towards decentred histories of music theory. An author-centred approach has largely excluded treatises with no known authorial

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<sup>32</sup> Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Wesleyan University Press, 1997), p. 108. For an overview of the microhistorical approach, see Sigurdur Gylfi Magnússon, 'The Singularization of History: Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge', *Journal of Social History*, 36 (2003), 701–35.

<sup>33</sup> David Fallows, *Henry V and the Earliest English Carols: 1413–1440* (Oxford: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Fallows, *English Carols*, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Lisa Colton and Louise McInnes, 'High or Low? Medieval English Carols as Part of Vernacular Culture, 1380–1450', in *Vernacular Aesthetics in the Later Middle Ages: Politics, Performativity, and Reception from Literature to Music*, ed. Katharine W. Jager (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 119–49 (p. 132).

attributions, which has resulted in the neglect of a large corpus of anonymous writings. In recent decades music histories have tended to move away from the author- and composer-led approaches to elevate the importance of the vast corpus of anonymous writings, including theoretical treatises. In relation to medieval England, there have been significant attempts to construct the biographies and determine the corpus of works by Robert de Handlo, John Hanboys and Walter of Evesham.<sup>36</sup> However, almost no attention has been given to medieval writings on music theory in English. When they have been the focus of scholarly attention, the research has almost overwhelmingly been conducted by literary scholars or historians.

Contemporary historical research has enriched our understanding of past and present societies through increased investigation into non-elite institutions and less privileged populations. The high level of Latin literacy among scholars of medieval topics may have contributed to the assumption that in earlier eras music theory was read exclusively in Latinate contexts. However, the circulation of ‘þe proporcions’ provides contrary evidence. The focus, in Chapters Four and Five, on the rural parish of Harlington in Bedfordshire, far from the scholastics of Oxford and Cambridge and other affluent religious houses, suggests that such a venue may also have been a site for readership for speculative music theory. This investigation into the potential reach of ‘þe proporcions’ invites consideration of other communities in which music theory may have circulated or even been created in medieval England.

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<sup>36</sup> Robert de Handlo and Johannes Hanboys, *Regule and Summa*, ed. and trans. Peter M. Lefferts, *Greek and Latin Music Theory*, 7 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Elina G. Hamilton, ‘Walter of Evesham’s *De speculation musicae*: Authority of Music Theory in Medieval England’, *Musica Disciplina*, 58 (2013), 153–66.

## Chapter One

### Old texts, new contexts

Translation as a cultural phenomenon is a relatively new paradigmatic shift, described in translation studies as the ‘cultural turn’.<sup>1</sup> Siri Nergaard and Stefano Arduini have argued that ‘translation has to be considered as a transformative representation of, in, and among cultures and individuals’ rather than a strictly linguistic process.<sup>2</sup> Within this cultural approach, scholars have also begun to consider translation among cultural identities that are situated inside the traditional national borders, acknowledging that translations can occur in new spaces within shared places.<sup>3</sup> Such a development is significant when considering vernacular texts in late medieval England as they often occupied different cultural spaces without necessarily displacing Latin texts. Today, definitions of translation encompass the many processes that are involved in the transformation, adaptation and reshaping of a text in relation to the culture in which a text circulates. This aligns closely with the medieval conception of translation, or *translatio*, which makes contemporary cultural approaches in translation studies relevant for research into a fifteenth-century English vernacular text on an aspect of ancient Greek music theory.

This chapter places ‘þe proporcions’ within the Boethian tradition of music theory, while simultaneously considering the intellectual, historical and cultural contexts of late medieval England that surrounded its creation. Mobility and transformation have always

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<sup>1</sup> Siri Nergaard and Stefano Arduini, ‘Translation: A New Paradigm’, *Translation*, 1 (2011), 8–17. The phrase ‘cultural turn’ was first proposed by Mary Snell-Hornby, ‘Linguistic Transcoding or Cultural Transfer? A Critique of Translation Theory in German’, in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (London: Pinter, 1990), pp. 79–86. For more on the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies, see Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 4th edn (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014); Edwin Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Studies*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2001); and André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Nergaard and Arduini, ‘Translation: A New Paradigm’, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin Gentzler, *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2008).

been part of the textual tradition of *musica speculativa*. In order to demonstrate this, ‘þe proporcions’ is placed within a lineage of ideas, as witnessed through texts, that moved ancient Greek knowledge through time and space. ‘þe proporcions’ offers the opportunity to witness the translation of Boethian music theory and its movement into vernacular contexts. This study does not seek to evaluate the quality of the English-language ‘þe proporcions’ in comparison to Boethius’ Latin *De institutione musica*. Instead, insights into the audience for vernacular music theory are garnered from analysing the shifts of emphasis that occurred as speculative music theory moved from the Latin literary system into Middle English.

### **1.1 The mobility of *musica speculativa***

Ideas and knowledge spread over time and through space. As they spread, they are transformed by the people and the cultures with which they come into contact while simultaneously transforming the cultural context. Focusing on translation as a process of transformation through which ideas move between cultures conjoins the process of translation with notions of mobility. Therefore, the history of *musica speculativa* is essentially the ‘migration of knowledge’, whereby knowledge perpetually transforms in accordance with the context.<sup>4</sup> Extant texts show that aspects of ancient Greek music theory were transmitted through the Latinate Roman Empire and later circulated in medieval England, mainly in Latin but also in English, and in other countries in many different languages. Through texts, it is possible to witness both the geographical movement of the information and its interlingual transformations in response to the cultural contexts. The discipline also displays an array of intralingual transformations in

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<sup>4</sup> Rivka Feldhay and Gal Hertz, ‘Migrating Knowledge and the Mobility of Ideas’, *Translation*, 9 (2019), 62–74.

response to cultural phenomena, such as the development and proliferation of Christianity in the early middle ages and efforts to increase the accessibility of knowledge in the late medieval period. The following section charts the movement of music theory from ancient Greece to the Roman Empire and eventually to vernacular spaces, describing some of the most notable interlingual and intralingual transformations as evidenced in extant writings on speculative music theory. I argue that mobility has always been central to speculative music theory and that the discipline is perpetually in a state of flux in response to the cultural contexts in which it circulates.

### 1.1.1 Music as number: Greek music theory

The treatise on music theory at the centre of this research belongs to the medieval branch of philosophy known as speculative music theory. Speculative music theory, also known as *musica speculativa* is the consideration of proportional relationships from a viewpoint that intersected both mathematics and mysticism.<sup>5</sup> The origins of *musica speculativa* are found in writings referred to as ‘ancient Greek music theory’.<sup>6</sup> However, their contents do not necessarily correspond to modern Western understandings of the term ‘music theory’; the writings were primarily concerned with philosophical contemplation and were not necessarily sources of information for practising musicians. The literature of Greek theorists, such as Aristoxenus, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Claudius Ptolemy, Porphyrus, Aristides Quintilianus, Bacchius, Alypius, and Euclid, was essential to the

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Dyer, ‘The Place of *Musica* in Medieval Classifications of Knowledge’, *Journal of Musicology*, 24 (2007), 3–71.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Atkinson, *The Critical Nexus: Tone System, Mode, and Notation in Early Medieval Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Thomas Christensen, ed., *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Frieder Zaminer, ed., *Geschichte der Musiktheorie: Rezeption des antiken Fachs im Mittelalter*, 11 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), vol. III; Frieder Zaminer, ed., *Geschichte der Musiktheorie: Die Mittelalterliche Lehre von der Mehrstimmigkeit*, 11 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), vol. V.

work of medieval writers on *musica speculativa*.<sup>7</sup> As an ‘object of contemplation’ (*speculatio*), Greek writers on music theory believed that the contemplation of music would bring the soul and the mind towards moral and intellectual enlightenment. Greek music theory reflected the idea that everything that exists can be expressed in terms of numbers. Writers on music believed that proportional relationships between numbers underpinned all phenomena in the world, including sound. However, the actual sonorous aspect was less important than the underlying mathematical concepts. Ancient Greek music theory chiefly comprised two distinct but overlapping traditions: the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition and an Aristoxenian tradition based on Aristotelian principles.<sup>8</sup> The main distinction between these traditions was their opposed assessments of the value of sense perception.<sup>9</sup> There was also a third tradition, the scientific tradition of harmonics, as propounded in the writings of Harmonicists.<sup>10</sup> These traditions overlapped, and Greek writings almost invariably display aspects of different traditions within a single work.

The discovery of the numerical ratios that underpin musical intervals is masked in legend but, allegedly, they were revealed to the protagonist Pythagoras. The Neopythagorean story that was dominant in medieval Europe held that Pythagoras, the central and original figure in the Greek philosophical tradition of music, discovered that the science of music was represented in numerical ratios. According to the legend, Pythagoras came to understand mathematical proportions following a chance encounter with a blacksmith whose hammers of various weights produced different pitches and, when sounded

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas J. Mathiesen, ‘Greek Music Theory’, in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 109–35 (p. 113).

<sup>8</sup> Mathiesen, ‘Greek Music Theory’, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup> Dyer, ‘The Place of *Musica*’, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Mathiesen, ‘Greek Music Theory’, p. 114.



simultaneously in various combinations, created different musical intervals.<sup>11</sup> Nichomachus's *Manual of Harmonics* recorded this story, but its veracity and historical accuracy remain uncertain.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the exact role played by Pythagoras in the development of 'Pythagorean mathematics' is unclear.<sup>13</sup> Shortly before Plato's time, a group of thinkers called themselves 'Pythagoreans', and they may have been responsible for developing the functions that underpin the mathematics of Greek music theory, rather than Pythagoras himself.<sup>14</sup>

The *Division of the Canon* is one of the earliest treatises to have connected Pythagorean mathematics with a range of musical phenomena including consonance, the magnitude of consonant intervals, and the location of the notes of the Immutable System, the pitches of the Ancient Greek scale, on the monochord.<sup>15</sup> The anonymous treatise, alongside the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, Pseudo-Plutarch, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Theon of Smyrna and Claudius Ptolemy, preserved Pythagorean mathematics.<sup>16</sup> For Pythagoreans, who revered unity, a hierarchy of ratios emerged whereby the small-number ratios were considered preferable. When this idea was applied to the consideration of sonorous music in later Greek treatises such as *Division of the Canon*, theorists believed that simpler ratios would produce more consonant intervals.<sup>17</sup> For example, an octave is expressed as the ratio 2:1 and was considered consonant, second only to unison, 1:1. The ratios outlined in the introduction to *Division of the Canon* are consistent with those found in

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<sup>11</sup> Alexander Rehding, 'Instruments of Music Theory', *Journal of the Society for Music Theory*, 22 (2016), 1–22 (p. 2).

<sup>12</sup> Mathiesen, 'Greek Music Theory', pp. 116–17.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. E. L. Minar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 374–77.

<sup>14</sup> Richard L. Crocker, 'Pythagorean Mathematics and Music', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 22 (1963), 189–98 (p. 189).

<sup>15</sup> Mathiesen, 'Greek Music Theory', p. 115.

<sup>16</sup> Mathiesen, 'Greek Music Theory', p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Crocker, 'Pythagorean Mathematics and Music', p. 192.

‘the proportions’, i.e., those spanning the fourth, fifth and octave are expressed in the superparticular or multiple ratios of 4:3, 3:2 and 2:1 respectively.

Around two hundred years after Pythagoras’s death, his mathematics found future manifestation in Plato’s work. In *The Republic*, Plato appraised the Pythagorean doctrine and called for this mathematical science to be explored in relation to a higher truth.<sup>18</sup> In *Timaeus*, he connected ratios and musical intervals, writing that the ratios found in music represented a manifestation of the ratios that govern the highest order of the physical universe and the metaphysical world.<sup>19</sup> Using the harmonic and the arithmetic means, Plato constructed the musical soul of the universe and believed that studying these numbers allowed a person to contemplate eternal truths while steering away from sensuality.<sup>20</sup> The mathematical operations that were developed by Pythagoras and his disciples thus were bound up in mystical number theory and cosmology, as Plato and his followers continued to develop the idea that ratios were earthly manifestations of actual sonorous celestial harmony. The amalgamation of Pythagorean mathematics and Neoplatonic thought dominated early medieval conceptions of reality. Both Pythagoreans and Platonists warned of the deceptiveness of sense perception. While they admitted that the senses could recognise a consonance, they promoted the superiority of the mind in the quest for knowledge and maintained that consonances should be primarily determined by reason through a study of abstract mathematics.<sup>21</sup> This hierarchy justified the theoretical study of abstract numbers in the quest for knowledge rather than an aural or

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<sup>18</sup> Richard L. Crocker, ‘Pythagorean Mathematics and Music II’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 22 (1964), 325–35 (p. 331).

<sup>19</sup> Calvin M. Bower, ‘The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory into the Middle Ages’, in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 136–67 (p. 140).

<sup>20</sup> Mathiesen, ‘Greek Music Theory’, p. 117.

<sup>21</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music [De Institutione Musica]*, trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca, Music Theory Translation Series (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. xxiii.

practical engagement with sound, which they believed would be tainted by the human body.<sup>22</sup> The role of the senses inherent in the Pythagorean-Platonic conception of reality and the combination of mathematical functions and cosmology would underpin much of the Western writing on *musica speculativa* in the early middle ages.

In addition to Pythagorean-Neoplatonic thought, two other traditions of ancient Greek music theory also existed: the scientific tradition of harmonics that was associated with the Harmonicists and the Aristoxenian tradition based on Aristotelian principles.<sup>23</sup> The Harmonists overlapped with the Pythagorean tradition in their reliance on number. However, their interest in the appraisal of sonorous musical phenomena differentiated them from Pythagoreans.<sup>24</sup> By focusing on the sensory experience of sound, Harmonicists were aligned closely with the Aristoxenian tradition. Aristoxenus was the author of a systematic discussion of musical phenomena, which was underpinned by Aristotle's writing on speculative music theory.<sup>25</sup> Aristotle insisted that true knowledge was dependent upon having experienced any given phenomenon, which conflicted with Plato's insistence on a purely theoretical understanding as a means of knowing. For Aristotle, mathematics did not enjoy the privileged place it held in Plato's belief system, and he rejected the entire scheme of the Pythagorean-Platonic number theory. He refused to divorce the theoretical-mathematical aspect of music from its practical, sonorous side, as Plato had advocated. Furthermore, he would not accept the existence of cosmic music as purported by Plato, and his rejection of Plato's 'music of the spheres' is a significant aspect of the Platonic-Aristotelian dichotomy.<sup>26</sup> While the Platonic conception of music

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Mathiesen, 'Greek Music Theory', p. 114.

<sup>24</sup> Mathiesen, 'Greek Music Theory', p. 120.

<sup>25</sup> Mathiesen, 'Greek Music Theory', p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> Dyer, 'The Place of *Musica*', pp. 7–8.

maintained that the music of the planets was audible, even if it was not perceptible to human ears, Aristotle rejected the notion that the planets emitted sounds in a literal sense, believing it to be an allegorical idea.<sup>27</sup> Later writers, including one of the last Neoplatonists, Simplicius, would attempt to reconcile the Platonic and the Aristotelian models by describing hearing as an act of intellectual discernment of the harmonic ratios that govern all cosmic order.<sup>28</sup> The reconciliation of these opposing philosophies in music theory would become a recurring consideration at various times throughout the middle ages.

### 1.1.2 Migrating knowledge: From Greek to Latin

A cultural transfer occurred in both geographical and temporal terms as writers of late Roman antiquity took up the challenge of preserving surviving ancient Greek sources and transmitting them to future audiences. The Romans aspired to continue the Greek models and attempted to imitate the ideal Greek texts.<sup>29</sup> The translation of Greek learning led to a rise in Latin literature in Europe. About a dozen Latin writings on ancient Greek music theory circulated in late Roman antiquity by authors such as Censorinus, Fulgentius, Martianus Capella, Cassiodorus, Isidore of Seville, Favonius Eulogius, Macrobius and Augustine.<sup>30</sup> These sources shared a conceptual framework on which Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480–c. 524), probably the best-known transmitter of Greek music theory, built.<sup>31</sup> Boethius drew freely on the writings of Nicomachus of Gerasa and Ptolemy in creating his own *De institutione musica*, and he wrote a plethora of Latin

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<sup>27</sup> Manfred Bukofzer, 'Speculative Thinking in Mediaeval Music', *Speculum*, 17 (1942), 165–80 (p. 166).

<sup>28</sup> Chadwick, *Boethius*, p. 80

<sup>29</sup> Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, p. 51.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Christensen, 'Music Theory', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) vol. I, pp. 357–81 (pp. 358–59).

<sup>31</sup> Philipp Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis: Speculative Music Theory and Poetics, from Saint Augustine to the Late Middle Ages in France*, trans. Michael J. Curley and Steven Rendall (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 159.

works on a range of topics between the late fifth and early sixth centuries.<sup>32</sup> The Latin literature lacked an exploration of the quadrivial disciplines and higher studies of philosophical logic, so Boethius devoted most of his efforts to these.<sup>33</sup> He created philosophical writings and translated and commented on several of Aristotle's works on logic and natural science. Although he had planned to translate Plato's works, his untimely death prevented this.<sup>34</sup> He did not concern himself with writing on the linguistic subjects of the arts curriculum that constituted the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric). Boethius considered music to sit alongside the other disciplines of arithmetic, astronomy, and geometry in a grouping of mathematical subjects. Both Plato's *Republic* and Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* connected these four subjects, but Boethius was the first to use the term 'quadrivium'.<sup>35</sup> When studied together, the four subjects trained the mind to engage philosophically with concepts that transcend the physical world of sense perception.<sup>36</sup> Of his quadrivial writings, Boethius's treatises on geometry and astronomy are now lost, but *De institutione arithmetica* survives in full, and the greater part of *De*

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<sup>32</sup> Modern interest in Boethius's *De institutione musica* denotes his continued importance: Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*; Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *De Institutione Arithmetica Libri Duo*; *De Institutione Musica Libri Quinque*, ed. Godfredus Friedlein (Leipzig: [n.pub.], 1867; repr. Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva, 1966); Michael Bernhard, 'Das musikalische Fachscritum im lateinischen Mittelalter', in *Geschichte der Musiktheorie: Rezeption des antiken Fachs im Mittelalter*, ed. Frieder Zaminer, 11 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), vol. III, pp. 37–103; Michael Bernhard, 'Glosses on Boethius' *De institutione musica*', in *Music Theory and its Sources: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. André Barbera (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1990), pp. 136–49; Michael Bernhard, 'Überlieferung und Fortleben der antiken lateinischen Musiktheorie im Mittelalter', in *Geschichte der Musiktheorie: Rezeption des antiken Fachs im Mittelalter*, ed. Frieder Zaminer, 11 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990), vol. III, pp. 7–35; Michael Bernhard, *Wortkonkordanz zu Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius De Institutione Musica*, Veröffentlichungen der Musikhistorischen Kommission, 4 (Munich: Verlag der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979); Michael Bernhard and Calvin M. Bower, eds, *Glossa Maior in Institutionem Musicam Boethii*, 3 vols (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1993–1996); Calvin M. Bower, 'Boethius' *De institutione musica*: A Handlist of Manuscripts', *Scriptorium*, 42 (1988), 205–51; John Caldwell, 'The *De Institutione Arithmetica* and the *De Institutione Musica*', in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), pp. 135–61; Michael Masi, ed., *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays* (Las Vegas, NV: Peter Lang, 1981); and Alison White, 'Boethius in the Medieval Quadrivium', in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 162–205.

<sup>33</sup> Chadwick, *Boethius*, p. 70.

<sup>34</sup> Dyer, 'The Place of *Musica*', pp. 9–10.

<sup>35</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, p. xix.

<sup>36</sup> Chadwick, *Boethius*, p. 70.

*institutione musica* remains extant. This last emerged as the most significant Latin treatise in the same vein as the tradition of Greek music theory. Boethius drew heavily on a Greek text by Nicomachus of Gerasa.<sup>37</sup> He focused on the theoretical understanding of music, including the philosophical aspects, rather than the practice of music. He conveyed the Greek tonal system successfully, summarising the classical discipline of harmonics. Thus, Boethius transmitted the philosophical tradition of Greek music theory to a Latinate western readership, transforming the discipline in the process.

Boethius came to music through Pythagorean doctrine: number. His treatise displays a highly sophisticated discussion of numerical ratios and proportions. In addition to his Pythagorean explanations of the mathematical functions underpinning musical intervals, Boethius engaged in a philosophical contemplation of music that aligned with Platonic thought. Boethius codified a three-fold division of music into *musica mundana* (celestial harmony), *musica humana* (the harmony between the body and soul), and *musica instrumentalis* (instrumental and vocal music). Even though he was the first to classify music using this formal tripartite separation, his description of *musica mundana* had precedence in Plato's *Timaeus*.<sup>38</sup> The three-fold classification established *musica mundana* at the top of the hierarchy, in a superior position to human and instrumental music, concurring with Platonic teachings. In *musica humana*, Boethius connected the body and the soul to show that this kind of harmony was an earthly manifestation of a cosmic phenomenon. The connection between *musica instrumentalis* and universal harmony gave instrumental and vocal music philosophical meaning. Boethius' understanding of music was a Platonic one, in which *musica speculativa* was the abstract

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<sup>37</sup> Ann E. Moyer, 'The *Quadrivium* and the Decline of Boethian Influence', in *New Directions in Boethian Studies*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Philip Edward Phillips, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 45 (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 2007), pp. 479–517 (p. 479).

<sup>38</sup> Bukofzer, 'Speculative Thinking in Mediaeval Music', p. 167.

science of numerical relations. He warned that ‘we should not grant all judgement to the senses’.<sup>39</sup> He devoted a whole chapter of the first book of *De institutione musica* to the deception of the senses, but he endorsed the Aristotelian position that sense perception can provide the basis for intellectual abstraction.<sup>40</sup> Boethius provided an authoritative Latin text that legitimised music as a subject of philosophical contemplation within the liberal arts and helped to bring Greek learning to the Roman Empire.<sup>41</sup> Until the late fifteenth century, medieval knowledge of Greek music theory relied on a few Latin writings that continued to circulate, none more than Boethius’, and these writings allowed the Greek tradition of music theory to be the foundation upon which medieval music theory was built.<sup>42</sup>

### 1.1.3 Beyond Boethius: ‘The critical nexus’

The early middle ages in Western Europe saw the proliferation of Christianity. Psalmody and Christian choral music developed from the sixth century onwards.<sup>43</sup> The preservation of the tradition of ancient Greek music theory, which had been translated by Boethius and other Latin authors of late Roman antiquity, depended on its response to the cultural changes of Patristic times, specifically how effectively the abstract nature of *musica speculativa* could be connected to the practice of music, an increasingly important part of the liturgy.<sup>44</sup> In order for *musica speculativa* to survive, the tradition that had encouraged its students to rise above the experience of practical music-making since its inception in Greece underwent a significant transformation in the hands of scholarly churchmen. They imbued it with Christian meaning and set about carving out a place for

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<sup>39</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>40</sup> Dyer, ‘The Place of *Musica*’, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Christensen, ‘Music Theory’, p. 360.

<sup>42</sup> Christensen, ‘Music Theory’, p. 359.

<sup>43</sup> Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis*, p. 169.

<sup>44</sup> Bower, ‘The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory’, pp. 148–49.

Christian *musica vocalis*. The interaction of the philosophical and the performative eventually led to the emergence of medieval music theory.<sup>45</sup> This process—the increased theorising of the vast repertoire of chant using tools and language inherited from Greek music theory—has been described by Charles Atkinson as ‘the critical nexus’, and its importance in the history of music theory cannot be overstated.<sup>46</sup>

With the emergence of Western Christendom, two writers were crucial in the preservation of *musica*.<sup>47</sup> From the sixth century onwards, Cassiodorus (c. 485–c. 580) and Isidore (c. 559–636) cultivated an intellectual tradition that ensured the transmission of *musica speculativa* as part of a broader programme of learning throughout Patristic times. These two encyclopaedic writers began to connect the Platonic conception of music theory as abstract knowledge to ideas surrounding the practice of music.<sup>48</sup> Although they began to break down the barriers between the speculative and the practical, this was only the start of a long process of transformation for *musica speculativa*. In the Carolingian era, Charlemagne (c. 742–814) ordered monasteries and dioceses in the Roman Empire to establish schools to educate members in the liberal arts, which led to a revival in interest in the reading of ancient works.<sup>49</sup> *Musica speculativa* had a special place in Charlemagne’s educational reforms, which were grounded in the Platonic tradition and led by Alcuin of York (c. 735–804). Two works on speculative music theory were particularly significant at this time: Boethius’ *De institutione musica* and Martianus Capella’s *Marriage of Mercury and Philology*.<sup>50</sup> Although neither of these treatises attempted to connect the philosophical aspects of ancient Greek music theory to the

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<sup>45</sup> Bower, ‘The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory’, pp. 136–37.

<sup>46</sup> Atkinson, *The Critical Nexus*.

<sup>47</sup> Bower, ‘The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory’, p. 147.

<sup>48</sup> Bower, ‘The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory’, pp. 148–49.

<sup>49</sup> Atkinson, *The Critical Nexus*, pp. 49–50.

<sup>50</sup> Bower, ‘The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory’, p. 150.



tradition of liturgical chant, *musica speculativa* was now read in the context of secular learning within a Christian education, which had been established by Augustine and developed by Cassiodorus, and copies spread throughout the empire. Glosses of Boethius and Martianus Capella from the first half of the ninth century demonstrate the reception of ancient Greek music theory and how the gap was bridged between the writings of antiquity and the later ninth- and tenth-century treatises.<sup>51</sup> These glosses allowed Greek harmonic theory to be assimilated into medieval musical thought and eventually become part of a tradition that had practical implications.

Three treatises displayed pioneering status in the reception of Boethian music theory in early medieval Christian practice: Aurelian of Réome's (fl. c. 840–50) *Musica disciplina*, Regino of Prüm's (c. 842–915) *Epistola*, and the anonymous *Musica enchiriadis*.<sup>52</sup> These treatises incorporated Boethian concepts and recounted the myth of Pythagoras, but showed more concern for the connection of these concepts to singing rather than the contemplation of abstract truths in a quadrivial manner.<sup>53</sup> Writings emerged in which the numerical order of music was discussed less ontologically and more ethically in terms of the Christian life, whereby the invisible order of being, which for Christians was God, was considered to be manifested in the visible order of the acoustic phenomenon, consonance.<sup>54</sup> For Aurelian, Regino and subsequent music theorists, consonance could be observed through instrumental music that consisted of five tones and two semitones and was underpinned by numerical relationships that had been revealed to Pythagoras by

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<sup>51</sup> Susan Boynton, 'The Sources and Significance of the Orpheus Myth in *Musica Enchiriadis* and Regino or Prüm's *Epistola de Harmonica Institutione*', in *Early Music History: Volume 18, Studies in Medieval and Modern Music*, ed. Iain Fenlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 47–74 (p. 54).

<sup>52</sup> David Russell Williams and C. Matthew Balensuela, *Music Theory from Boethius to Zarlino: A Bibliography and Guide* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2007), p. 161.

<sup>53</sup> Bower, 'The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory', p. 152.

<sup>54</sup> Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis*, p. 30; Calvin M. Bower, 'Natural and Artificial Music: The Origins and Development of an Aesthetic Concept', *Musica Disciplina*, 25 (1971), 17–33 (p. 22).

God.<sup>55</sup> Although this Christian view seemed irreconcilable with the pagan beliefs of the medieval Platonists and the Pythagorean-influenced Boethius, the two philosophies began to resolve into the medieval tradition of music theory as theorists began to incorporate Boethius' writings on music into a new aesthetic theory that had originated with Regino.<sup>56</sup> The aesthetic framework classified music as either natural or artificial and made a place for the Christian chant theory, or *cantus*, within Boethian music theory. Monastic scholars drew on this framework to produce treatises that synthesised the ancient Greek tradition of *musica speculativa* and chant theory. While the glosses on Boethius' treatise show that his early audience largely comprised scholars and philosophers, those from the late ninth and the early tenth centuries reveal its use by practitioners, as evidenced by the presence of musical examples that were taken from chants to explain mathematical concepts.<sup>57</sup> The tradition of *cantus* began its long journey towards a theoretical understanding of the inner-workings of music while number moved towards reclaiming the authoritative position it had enjoyed in Greek thought.<sup>58</sup> The essential elements of Boethian music theory were preserved, and the Pythagorean mathematics that he expounded became introductory material for treatises on a range of practical matters. Scholars began to utilise plainchant melodies within their treatises to exemplify the theoretical precepts of Boethian *musica speculativa*, which began to circulate in new contexts and among new types of readers.<sup>59</sup> Thus, *musica speculativa* continued to transform in response to wider historical developments, ensuring the

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<sup>55</sup> Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis*, p. 30; Bower, 'Natural and Artificial Music', p. 178.

<sup>56</sup> Bower, 'Natural and Artificial Music', p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> Bower, 'The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory', p. 150–51.

<sup>58</sup> Bower, 'The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory', pp. 171, 174.

<sup>59</sup> David E. Cohen, 'Notes, Scales, and Modes in the Earlier Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Christensen Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 307–63.

preservation of ancient Greek musical thought and the continued reception of Boethius in Western Christian culture.

#### 1.1.4 Music theory in the middle ages

From the tenth century onwards, a diversity of texts on music theory emerged in Western Europe. Treatises ranged from those concerned with pitch notation and chant theory (*musica plana*) to problems of rhythmic notation and polyphony (*musica mensurabilis*). A new wave of theorists and texts emerged in the eleventh century and made significant progress towards achieving a reconciliation of theory and practice.<sup>60</sup> Although treatises continued to lean towards either the speculative or the practical side, speculative treatises in the late middle ages were very different from the treatises of earlier writers because, for music theorists, the main subject of theoretical engagement became contemporaneous music and issues arising from the practice of music.<sup>61</sup> From a consideration of abstract musical proportions, therefore, music theory treatises began to move towards the exposition of mathematical ideas that could have concrete, practical realisations. Treatises on mensural theory and rhythmic modes still looked to the knowledge acquired from ancient Greek writings. However, the metaphysical aspects of speculative music that had been inherited by the theorists of antiquity from the Greek tradition were increasingly lost as philosophical questions gave way to practical problems of tuning and interval generation. This transformation in music theory, where speculative contemplation gave way to empirical concerns, was reflected in broader intellectual shifts in Western Europe. Up to the twelfth century, medieval thought was predominantly Neoplatonic and through the work of popular authors such as Augustine, Christian

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<sup>60</sup> Dyer, 'The Place of *Musica*', p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Christensen, 'Music Theory', p. 368.

Neoplatonism circulated in Western Europe.<sup>62</sup> The increased availability of Aristotelian texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, owing to the growing awareness in Europe of Arabic translations largely acquired in Spain, gradually led to the development of scholastic Aristotelianism.<sup>63</sup> From the thirteenth century onwards, the empirical methodology of Aristotle began to affect the dominance of Platonic philosophy in discussions of speculative music theory.<sup>64</sup> Aristotle's criticism of the Pythagorean-Platonic concept of number made it difficult to reconcile these two philosophies. Eventually, the harmony of the spheres became generally accepted as an allegorical intellectual idea, just as Aristotle had propounded. Despite this, the relationship between arithmetic and music theory remained intact, and acoustic musical works were accepted as sonorous realisations of the numerical harmonic order that related to the order of creation. The Aristotelian revision of the Boethian tradition of music theory allowed the speculative concept of music to retain its generic concept of number and from the fourteenth century onwards, attempts to reconcile Neoplatonic and Aristotelian elements continued.<sup>65</sup> There was a renewed interest in Boethius from the early fourteenth century. In the fifteenth century, *De institutione musica* would feature as one of the required texts in the universities of medieval England.<sup>66</sup>

Philipp Jeserich has shown that many later theorists continued to reference the Neoplatonic conception of music, even when the Aristotelian arguments were known, which resulted in contradictory lines of argument in music theory treatises from the late

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<sup>62</sup> Sears Jayne, 'Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance', *Comparative Literature*, 4 (1952), 214–38 (p. 215).

<sup>63</sup> Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis*, p. 200.

<sup>64</sup> Bukofzer, 'Speculative Thinking in Mediaeval Music', p. 166.

<sup>65</sup> Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis*, p. 206.

<sup>66</sup> Nan Cooke Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), pp. 77, 90.

middle ages.<sup>67</sup> Prologues and introductory material from a range of late medieval treatises demonstrate the continued hegemony of Boethian propaedeutics at that time. Proportions, as outlined by Boethius, featured in the introductory material of many later medieval treatises on practical subjects, such as Johannes de Muris' *Notitia artis musicae* (1321).<sup>68</sup> He argued that musicians had to consider both number and pitch 'because music consists of pitch related to numbers and vice versa'.<sup>69</sup> Marchetto da Padova wrote in *Lucidarium in arte musicae planae* that 'truth in music lies in the numbers of proportions'.<sup>70</sup> Johannes Ciconia's *Nova musica*, written in the first decade of the fifteenth century, relied on the work of early medieval authorities for his explanation of consonances, modes, intervals, species, and proportions. Prosdocimus de Beldemandis also wrote treatises on the quadrivial subjects, placing music beside astrology and arithmetic and drawing on the work of earlier authorities. His *Brevis summula proportionum* (1409) was heavily reliant on the writings of Boethius.<sup>71</sup> For many theorists of the fifteenth century, including Ugolino of Orvieto, John Hothby, and Johannes Gallicus, Boethius retained his position as an authority on the mathematical aspects of the fundamentals of music theory in medieval Europe. The vitality of the discourse can be seen through the ways in which *musica speculativa* continued to attempt to adapt to theoretical and practical innovations and to integrate them with the traditional doctrine of the discipline. Despite the many transformations that speculative music theory underwent, the conceptual core of the

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<sup>67</sup> Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis*, p. 188. Jeserich selected passages from the writings of Jerome of Moravia, Johannes Aegidius Zamorensis, Engelbert of Admont, Marchettus of Padua, Johannes de Muris, Jacob of Liège, Ugolino of Orvieto and Adam of Fulda.

<sup>68</sup> Johannes de Muris, *Notitia*, ed. Ulrich Michels, *Corpus Scriptorum de Musica*, 17 (Dallas, TX: American Institute of Musicology, 1972).

<sup>69</sup> Jan Herlinger, 'Music Theory of the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries', in *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie J. Blackburn, *New Oxford History of Music*, 3 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 244–300 (p. 295).

<sup>70</sup> Herlinger, 'Music Theory of the Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries', p. 297.

<sup>71</sup> Evan A. MacCarthy, 'Transformations in Music Theory and Music Treatises', in *The Cambridge History of Fifteenth-Century Music*, ed. Anna Maria Busse Berger and Jesse Rodin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 602–14 (p. 604).

theory of *musica speculativa* remained stable; through the late middle ages, a speculative branch that had its roots in Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism persisted.

## **1.2 The place of Latin *musica speculativa* in late medieval England**

In addition to moving through time and space, knowledge is also embodied in a range of material channels, one of which is the written text. While knowledge moves to new contexts and transforms in the process, the production of a text means the demarcation of the boundaries of knowledge, situating it for example within a geographical place, a material object, or a social situation. In late medieval England, aspects of ancient Greek harmonic theory were circulating within Latin treatises alongside expositions of new practices. But where did the treatises on *musica speculativa* circulate and, beyond the theorists who produced them, who was reading them? This section looks for the spaces in which writings on *musica speculativa* were held in late medieval England in order to establish the intellectual milieu that comprised the readership for Latin *musica speculativa*. From library records and university statutes, it becomes clear that its readership in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was embedded largely in religious houses but that *musica speculativa* also featured in the elite learning environment of the English medieval universities, at least after the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Interestingly, although the university is identified commonly in literature as the environment in which most music instruction of a speculative nature took place, the records suggest that this generalisation is not entirely accurate when considering late medieval England.

### 1.2.1 *Musica speculativa* in the English universities

Generalised accounts of the history of medieval learning commonly claim that *musica speculativa* was studied in the universities along with the other three subjects of the four-fold quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry and astronomy). Nan Cooke Carpenter, Alan Cobban, Frank Harrison and John North all proposed that the study of speculative music theory took place within the university curriculum in medieval England.<sup>72</sup> Writing about the twelfth century, Robert Wason stated that ‘the earliest musical curriculum of the medieval universities drew heavily upon Boethius and his program of the seven liberal arts, in which music was included as one of the quadrivial sciences’.<sup>73</sup> Despite these claims, there is no firm evidence to confirm whether students in English universities were required to study speculative music in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

Statutory material is the best indication of what was taught. Statutes from 1268 show that determination for a bachelor’s degree would come after four years of study in Oxford and would require students to have heard logic, grammar, and natural philosophy.<sup>74</sup> Music was not mentioned. In fact, there is no statutory evidence that students at Oxford were required to study *musica speculativa* until a university statute of 1431 outlined the instruction of Boethius’ treatise, *De institutione musica* in what is considered to be the earliest record of formal music education at Oxford.<sup>75</sup> It is impossible to know about

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<sup>72</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance*; Alan Balfour Cobban, *English University Life in the Middle Ages* (London: UCL Press, 1999); Frank Harrison, ‘Music at Oxford before 1500’, in *The History of the University of Oxford: Late Medieval Oxford*, ed. J. I. Catto and Ralph Evans, 8 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), vol. II, pp. 347–72; and John North, ‘The *Quadrivium*’, in *A History of the University in Europe: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), vol. I, pp. 337–60.

<sup>73</sup> Robert W. Wason, ‘*Musica Practica*: Music Theory as Pedagogy’, in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 46–77 (pp. 49–50).

<sup>74</sup> Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages: English Universities—Student Life*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), vol. III, p. 153.

<sup>75</sup> North, ‘The *Quadrivium*’, p. 322; Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, p. 77.

curricular requirements before the late fourteenth century in Cambridge due to the ‘town and gown’ riots of 1381, during which most documentation was destroyed. The earliest extant statutes outlining a curriculum in Cambridge come from the late fifteenth century and outline the study of Boethius’ *De institutione musica* for one term.<sup>76</sup> There are no personal diaries or memoirs from either teaching staff or students documenting university life in the fourteenth or early fifteenth centuries, making it impossible to reconstruct with any accuracy the daily routine of anyone involved in an English university of the middle ages and thus compounding the elusive nature of the curriculum.<sup>77</sup>

*Musica speculativa* was one component of a propaedeutic group of four subjects known as the quadrivium, and one of a group of seven subjects collectively known as the ‘liberal arts’. Both Plato and Aristotle considered the liberal arts as preparation for advanced study in philosophy.<sup>78</sup> The historical concept of the place of music within a fundamental education in the liberal arts, which was adopted and adapted in the middle ages for the propagation of Christian ideals primarily by Saint Augustine, has led some scholars to grant music a place in the curriculum at medieval Oxford, without substantial evidence from either official statutes or unofficial documents to corroborate the theory. For example, in her significant work on music in the medieval universities, Carpenter proclaimed that ‘undoubtedly’ music would have been taught in Oxford along with the rest of the quadrivium for several centuries before the 1431 statutes, presuming that all seven subjects of the liberal arts had an equal part to play in the university in the middle

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<sup>76</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, p. 90; Damien Riehl Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge: The University to 1546*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; repr. 1994), vol. I, p. 143.

<sup>77</sup> Cobban, *English University Life*, p. ix.

<sup>78</sup> Gordon Leff, ‘The Trivium and the Three Philosophies’, in *A History of the University in Europe: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), vol. I, pp. 307–36 (p. 307).



ages.<sup>79</sup> However, more recent considerations of the place of the quadrivium in the medieval universities in England question the importance of quadrivial studies in the arts curricula. Damian Riehl Leader has argued that the quadrivial subjects were not as important to a university student's learning as has been believed.<sup>80</sup>

To demonstrate that Oxford scholars engaged with *musica speculativa* and that Boethius' *De institutione musica* was a standard Oxford text before the 1431 statutes, Carpenter cited Walter Burley and John Lydgate, who both referred to Boethius in their works. These examples are problematic, however. Burley, a fellow of Oxford's Merton College, had, by Carpenter's admission, also studied in Paris and so it is not possible to accredit his familiarity with Boethius' *De institutione musica* to his time spent in Oxford. It also is possible that he could have engaged with material outside the confines of the formal curriculum at Oxford. Carpenter attributed the *Courte of Sapience* to Lydgate, a poet who may have spent time at the Benedictine college in Oxford, later known as Gloucester College. However, after Robert Spindler discredited Stephen Hawes' attribution of the poem to Lydgate, modern scholarship denies the attribution of the poem to Lydgate.<sup>81</sup> There is also no proof that Lydgate studied in Oxford. Furthermore, the poem's reference to music is so fleeting that it proves only that its author was aware of the importance of Boethius for learning music, not that he had undertaken such study, '*But who so lust of Musyk for to wyt, For veray grounde of Boece I hym remyt*'.<sup>82</sup> Carpenter also claimed that the presence of the famed medieval theorist Robert Grosseteste in Oxford demonstrated that music was studied there, but this is also problematic. Grosseteste wrote

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<sup>79</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, p. 77.

<sup>80</sup> Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Spindler, ed., *The Court of Sapience*, (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz 1927); E. Ruth Harvey, ed. *The Court of Sapience*, Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations, 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

<sup>82</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, p. 78.

his *De artibus liberalibus* before he maintained a formal affiliation with Oxford, and little is known about his early years and education.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Carpenter claimed that Robert Kilwardby, who wrote about music in his *De ortu et divisione philosophiae* while lecturing on theology in Oxford in the early 1250s, was evidence of a growing interest in music in Oxford in the thirteenth century. However, this treatise, in which music features, does not demonstrate that there was widespread engagement with *musica speculativa* in Oxford as the inclusion of information in a treatise does not necessarily provide a description of a curriculum. Carpenter attempted to connect the writings of Bartholomaeus Anglicus with Oxford. However, in his *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus confessed to not understanding the *sesquialtera* proportion, one of the elementary species of inequality, thus further weakening the argument that Oxford students received a thorough education in the foundations of speculative music theory.

Although earlier statutes exist, some of which explicitly outlawed the performance of music within the university, the statutes of 1431 outlined the earliest known requirement in an English university for students to interact with all seven of the liberal arts subjects, including speculative music.<sup>84</sup> However, there is no confirmation that the courses of study outlined in the documents were implemented in reality. It is difficult to know whether students in Oxford fulfilled the requirement for engagement with *musica speculativa*. The statutes are limited in what they can offer regarding lived experiences of the students of Oxford as they do not indicate the quality of instruction, the extent of student engagement with the subject, or the breadth of reading undertaken by the students in addition to the

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<sup>83</sup> James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, Great Medieval Thinkers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 19–29.

<sup>84</sup> Edith Dudley Sylla, 'The Oxford Calculators', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy: From the Discovery of Aristotle to the Disintegration of Scholasticism 1100–1600*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 540–63 (p. 542).

recommended text, representing only the minimum requirement needed to qualify for the admission to the various degrees.<sup>85</sup> On the one hand, the writings of fifteenth-century Oxford graduates who were not primarily music specialists increasingly referred to Boethius' *De institutione musica*, which suggests that it may have been enforced to some extent by collegiate authorities. However, on the other hand, individual colleges at Oxford show no quadrivial works in their library catalogues at the end of the fifteenth century, suggesting that the course of study and the degree to which the 1431 statutes were implemented varied.<sup>86</sup> John Caldwell wrote that 'the statutes were more often honoured in the breach than in the observance', and that 'candidates could get by with the merest smattering of the subject'.<sup>87</sup> As only one book amid a dense reading list for those hoping to achieve a licence and undergo inception for the arts degree, Boethius was considered the authority on music, and students were required to study his treatise on *musica speculativa* for one term. By referring specifically to Boethius, the statutes showed a preference for the study of music theory instead of practical music-making. Rashdall suggested that the 'term' that was assigned to the various arts subjects in the curriculum that was prescribed by the statutes of 1431 did not represent a precise timeframe, but rather a considerably short course of lectures.<sup>88</sup> However, the statutes clearly state that the term should consist of thirty *dies legibiles*.<sup>89</sup> The students, therefore, were not expected to engage with *musica speculativa* for a prolonged period. Similarly, arithmetic was to be read over one term.<sup>90</sup> In comparison to the other subjects, one term does not suggest that speculative music held an important position in the fifteenth-century

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<sup>85</sup> Leff, 'The *Trivium* and the Three Philosophies', p. 324.

<sup>86</sup> Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, vol. I, p. 140.

<sup>87</sup> John Caldwell, 'Music in the Faculty of Arts', in *The History of the University of Oxford: The Collegiate University*, ed. James McConica, 8 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. III, pp. 201–12 (p. 203).

<sup>88</sup> Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, p. 154.

<sup>89</sup> Joseph Dyer, 'Speculative 'Musica' and the Medieval University of Paris', *Music & Letters*, 90 (2009), 177–204 (p. 200).

<sup>90</sup> Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, p. 155.

university in England.<sup>91</sup> Natural philosophy and moral philosophy were to receive three terms each. Metaphysical philosophy was assigned two terms or three terms for candidates who had not determined. When viewed in relation to these subjects, speculative music appears to have occupied a comparatively minor position in the curriculum. Abdy Williams argued that as the culture of awarding degrees developed, candidates for the degree of Master of Arts were required to possess a thorough knowledge of the seven liberal arts, which became a prerequisite for the study of higher degrees, namely law, medicine, and theology.<sup>92</sup>

Although the study of speculative music before 1431 is contentious, music-making in Oxford existed in both sacred and secular settings from the foundation of the university. When statutes earlier than 1431 mention music, they refer to the place of practical music in Oxford. Specific colleges provided for choristers. The statutes of Queen's College, Oxford, dating from 1340 forbade the playing of musical instruments by individual scholars as this was considered a distraction to those studying within the college, as well as inciting levity and arrogance in the owners.<sup>93</sup> While Cobban commented that such outlawing of music was severe by English collegiate standards, such a ban on musical instruments existed in colleges on the continent.<sup>94</sup> Although music as a recreational activity was considered a distraction, it was simultaneously of the utmost importance to the sacred activities of the new foundation. The same statutes that had outlawed recreational music also included a request for staff who could sing for services and *clerici capellae*, skilled both in plainchant and polyphonic music, who could instruct choristers

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<sup>91</sup> Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, p. 156.

<sup>92</sup> C. F. Abdy Williams, *A Short Historical Account of the Degrees in Music at Oxford and Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 9.

<sup>93</sup> Cobban, *English University Life*, p. 204.

<sup>94</sup> Cobban, *English University Life*, p. 205.

(young boys) in singing before these boys would study philosophy in the university proper.<sup>95</sup> Music appears to have been part of the students' early education, but not necessarily part of the university curriculum. Similarly, New College, which from its foundation in 1400 provided for sixteen choristers, would examine schoolboys in plainchant and Latin grammar before they were elected to vacancies.<sup>96</sup> All Souls specified in the statutes of 1443 that its founder, Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury, had stipulated that students should already possess a musical education before being admitted into the college so that the scholars could sing in the college chapel.<sup>97</sup> From these statutes and other college statutes that deal with the performance of music at religious ceremonies, it is clear that music was performed at services in Oxford. Knowing that performance occurred, however, does not imply that university students studied speculative music. Indeed, there are so few records in existence that it is impossible to know the exact course of study followed by students.

Just as this study questions the role played by the English universities in the provision of instruction in speculative music in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, modern scholarship has also begun to question the role of the arts faculty in Paris in the development of *musica mensurabilis* and the instruction of *musica speculativa*. Although earlier than the period in question in this research, Joseph Dyer concluded that music was not included in formal academic dispute nor were lectures presented on *musica speculativa* in the thirteenth century.<sup>98</sup> Dyer has challenged a commonly accepted narrative of quadrivial teaching in Paris, but an examination of college statutes has found that there is no evidence to confirm this. Numerous studies place speculative music

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<sup>95</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>96</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, p. 79.

<sup>97</sup> Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities*, p. 79.

<sup>98</sup> Dyer, 'Speculative 'Musica' and the Medieval University of Paris', p. 204.

outside of the university in the earlier years of the Parisian academic institution. Michel Huglo, using the library catalogues of the university in Paris concluded that from 1255 to the beginning of the fourteenth century, music was relegated to the background of university teaching at the Faculté des Arts of Paris.<sup>99</sup> He placed the study of Boethius primarily in provincial schools. Sarah Fuller was unable to find any single institution in fourteenth-century Paris that might have served as the central hub of music instruction, which led her to suggest that *musica speculativa* was of interest only to a narrow circle of clerics who studied the subject privately and who had a personal interest in the subject.<sup>100</sup> Two recent doctoral research projects have suggested that important speculative works were likely to have been read within monastic institutions in Paris and not necessarily in the context of the university.<sup>101</sup> Studies are now emerging that begin to place the tradition of speculative music outside of the established collegiate institutions in England. Elina Hamilton's doctoral research has suggested that the universities were of little importance for the transmission of medieval English music theory in the fourteenth century and instead posited the circulation of treatises among music theorists.<sup>102</sup> While studies investigating the place of *musica speculativa* in the English universities have focused on the thirteenth century, there is a dearth of evidence regarding the university curricula in the fourteenth century, which suggests that there might have been no significant change to the university curriculum in Oxford in the fourteenth century.

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<sup>99</sup> Michel Huglo, 'The Study of Ancient Sources of Music Theory', in *Music Theory and its Sources: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. André Barbera (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 150–72 (p. 172).

<sup>100</sup> Sarah Fuller, 'A Phantom Treatise of the Fourteenth Century? The *Ars Nova*', *The Journal of Musicology*, 4 (1985–1986), 23–50.

<sup>101</sup> Karen Desmond, 'Behind the Mirror: Revealing the Contexts of Jacobus's *Speculum musicae*', unpublished PhD thesis (New York University, 2009); Laura Weber, 'Intellectual Currents in Thirteenth Century Paris: A Translation and Commentary on Jerome of Moravia's '*Tractatus de musica*'', unpublished PhD thesis (Yale University, 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Elina G. Hamilton, 'Walter of Evesham Abbey and the Intellectual Milieu of Fourteenth-Century English Music Theory', unpublished PhD thesis (Bangor University, 2014).

Based on the evidence presented above, English universities do not appear to have supported the study of *musica speculativa* to the extent presumed in previous studies. Until 1431, there is no proof that *musica speculativa* was part of a programme of instruction. There is no reference to speculative music in the early university statutes, and when music was mentioned, it was to discourage practical music-making that was not connected to religious practice. Although the statutes of 1431 might indicate that theoretical music already had an assured place at Oxford, it is also possible that the study of speculative music was a new requirement. However, manuscripts indicate that treatises concerning music theory were written and copied throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. As it is not possible to attribute the responsibility for teaching and transmitting the tradition of *musica speculativa* to English universities in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries with certainty, it is necessary to identify alternative sites of instruction in which speculative music theory might have circulated at that time.

### 1.2.2 *De institutione musica*: A survey

Boethius' *De institutione musica* formed the basis of many arguments and new theories in music treatises through the middle ages. The elementary information found in the treatise offered a foundation of knowledge regarding the mathematical underpinnings of music. Boethius's writings maintained an important place in medieval intellectual circles through wide dissemination, preservation, and general acceptance.<sup>103</sup> As the recognised authority on *musica speculativa* during the middle ages, a record of *De institutione musica* in a medieval institution or a particular geographical location suggests that there was, perhaps, at some stage, a readership for music theory within a particular institution or area. Uncovering the location of copies of *De institutione musica* from medieval

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<sup>103</sup> Bower, 'The Transmission of Ancient Music Theory', p. 159.

England and Wales shines a light on the geographical areas, communities and institutions that had access to writings on speculative music theory and that comprised the medieval audience for Latin texts on speculative music theory.

Calvin Bower's handlist of extant manuscripts containing Boethius' *De institutione musica* provides a starting point for identifying complete copies and extracts of the text that were available in late medieval England and Wales.<sup>104</sup> Margaret Templeton Gibson and Lesley Smith drew on the work of Bower for their more recent conspectus of manuscripts that include the works of Boethius more generally.<sup>105</sup> In some cases, they were able to elaborate upon individual manuscripts for which Bower had limited information. From both of these reference sources, we can identify fifteen complete copies of *De institutione musica*, which are probably of English origin.<sup>106</sup> Three of the complete copies are held in libraries outside of England, and the rest are kept in English libraries. There are also excerpts of *De institutione musica* in four manuscripts that originated in England. Three of these manuscripts are kept in libraries in England, and one is held in Rome.<sup>107</sup> In total, therefore, nineteen known manuscripts that likely originated in England between the tenth and fifteenth centuries contain either complete copies or partial excerpts of Boethius' *De institutione musica*. There are also several manuscripts in English libraries whose origins are unknown at present, which could augment the corpus of extant medieval manuscripts that contain *De institutione musica*. Against this, however, the English provenance of two of the manuscripts included in the

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<sup>104</sup> Bower, 'A Handlist of Manuscripts', pp. 205–51.

<sup>105</sup> Margaret Templeton Gibson and Lesley Smith, eds, *Codices Boethiani: A Conspectus of Manuscripts of the Works of Boethius, I. Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland*, 4 vols (London: Warburg Institute, 1995), vol. I, pp. 37–253.

<sup>106</sup> Bower, 'A Handlist of Manuscripts', pp. 211–43; Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, pp. 205–51.

<sup>107</sup> Bower, 'A Handlist of Manuscripts', pp. 244–46.



list of English manuscripts below is speculative on Bower's part. A comprehensive analysis of the manuscripts containing Boethius' *De institutione musica* is yet to be conducted. Such a study would provide a more in-depth and richer understanding of the lines of transmission of medieval music theory.

| <b>Manuscripts containing complete copies</b>   | <b>Date of manuscript</b> | <b>Place/institution of origin</b>            | <b>Bower reference</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 260       | 900–1000                  | Christ Church, Canterbury, Kent (Benedictine) | 15                     |
| Cambridge, University Library, MS li. III. 12   | 1120–1150                 | Christ Church, Canterbury, Kent (Benedictine) | 18                     |
| London, Lambeth Place, MS 67                    | 1125–1150                 | Bury St Edmunds abbey, Suffolk (Benedictine)  | 48                     |
| Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 944 (R.15.22)    | 1130–1160                 | Christ Church, Canterbury, Kent (Benedictine) | 17                     |
| Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS Q.9 sup        | 1100–1200                 | Christ Church, Canterbury, Kent (Benedictine) | 53                     |
| Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 367 | 1100–1200                 | English, possibly Canterbury, Kent            | 55                     |
| Oxford, Balliol College, MS 317                 | 1100–1200                 | England <sup>108</sup>                        | 73                     |
| Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 118          | 1100–1200                 | England?                                      | 74                     |

<sup>108</sup> Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, p. 222.

|                                                                                |                               |                                                                    |                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Oxford, Jesus College, MS 4                                                    | 1100–1200                     | Pershore abbey,<br>Worcestershire <sup>109</sup><br>(Benedictine)  | 76                         |
| Oxford, Trinity College, MS 47                                                 | 1100–1200                     | England or France                                                  | 79                         |
| Wellington, Turnbull Library,<br>MS 16                                         | 1100–1200                     | Christ Church,<br>Canterbury, Kent<br>(Benedictine)                | 130                        |
| Oxford, Corpus Christi<br>College, MS 224                                      | 1200–1300                     | St Mary's abbey,<br>York<br>(Benedictine)                          | 75                         |
| Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS<br>Selden Supra 25 ( <i>olim</i> 3413)            | 1200–1300                     | St Augustine's<br>abbey, Canterbury,<br>Kent (Benedictine)         | 71                         |
| Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS<br>Auct. F.3.13 ( <i>olim</i> 2177, Dobl.<br>579) | 1200–1300                     | Kenilworth priory,<br>Warwickshire <sup>110</sup><br>(Augustinian) | 69                         |
| Oxford, Trinity College, MS<br>1 <sup>111</sup>                                | mid-fifteenth<br>century      | England                                                            | 78                         |
| <b>Manuscripts containing<br/>excerpts</b>                                     | <b>Date of<br/>manuscript</b> | <b>Place/institution<br/>of origin</b>                             | <b>Bower<br/>reference</b> |
| Oxford, Bodleian Library,<br>Digby MS 191                                      | 1200–1300                     | Oxford                                                             | X11                        |
| London, British Library, Harley<br>MS 625                                      | 1300–1372 <sup>112</sup>      | Simon Bredon,<br>Oxford                                            | X6                         |
| London, British Library, Harley<br>MS 957                                      | 1300–1400                     | England                                                            | X7                         |

<sup>109</sup> Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, p. 229.

<sup>110</sup> Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, p. 180.

<sup>111</sup> Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, p. 243.

<sup>112</sup> British Library Online, 'Harley MS 625', in *Digitised Manuscripts*  
<[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?Source=BrowseTitles&letter=A&ref=Harley\\_MS\\_625](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?Source=BrowseTitles&letter=A&ref=Harley_MS_625)  
> [accessed 12 July 2019]

|                                                         |           |         |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----|
| Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica<br>Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1146 | 1300–1400 | England | X15 |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-----|

**Table 1.1** English Manuscripts containing Boethius’ *De institutione musica*<sup>113</sup>

Most of the complete copies of *De institutione musica* were written in the twelfth century; of the fifteen known copies that are extant, ten can be dated to between 1100 and 1200, which is not surprising given the upsurge in intellectual activity that was evident in the twelfth century, often referred to as the ‘twelfth-century renaissance’.<sup>114</sup> Three full copies are assigned to the following century, and there are no surviving copies from the fourteenth century. There is one copy that is believed to be a mid-fifteenth century creation. Although the provenance of the fifteenth-century manuscript was classified as unknown by Bower, Gibson and Smith have listed it in their catalogue as an English manuscript.<sup>115</sup> The decline in the production of copies following the twelfth century does not necessarily signify that there was a decline in interest in *musica speculativa*; it could be that once an institution had a copy of the text in its holdings, it was not necessary to make further copies. It is also possible that copies made in later centuries were not preserved with the same dedication.

From the information contained in Bower’s list, one particular institution stands out for containing more copies than any other: it is possible to attribute five copies to Christ Church, Canterbury with certainty and another copy could be attributed to the same

<sup>113</sup> The contents of this table are largely taken from Bower, ‘A Handlist of Manuscripts’, pp. 205–51. Where other sources are used to confirm or supplement Bower’s survey, a footnote has been included.

<sup>114</sup> Richard C. Dales, *The Intellectual Life of Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. 186.

<sup>115</sup> Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, p. 243.

location, but further research is required. The records suggest that there was a substantial readership for *musica speculativa* in Christ Church, Canterbury, a Benedictine cathedral priory and one of the most important religious houses in medieval England. Furthermore, it appears that Christ Church, Canterbury, was integral to the earliest written transmission of music theory in England and that the copying of Boethius' *De institutione musica* flourished in south-east England between 900 and 1200. Later manuscripts show that Boethius circulated in the west and the north of England, which suggests wider dissemination of the information over time. However, Bower's handlist is limited to extant copies of the text. During the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, many texts and records were lost or destroyed, making it impossible to comprehend the circulation of *De institutione musica* fully.

Two of the four extant excerpts can be assigned to Oxford. In the case of Harley MS 625, the manuscript was owned by Simon Bredon, a physician and astronomer, who bequeathed his manuscript to Merton College upon his death in 1372.<sup>116</sup> His manuscript contains a collection of astronomical and mathematical treatises and tables, depicting the quadrivial connections between music and mathematics as understood by Bredon. The other manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 191, includes Euclid's *Elementa*, a treatise on arithmetic, treatises on geometry, and excerpts from *De institutione musica* in the first part of the composite manuscript.<sup>117</sup> Again, the quadrivial connection is evident. Bower believed that the manuscript originated in Oxford and that it was held for a time at Merton College.<sup>118</sup> However, he did not attribute it to any particular scholar.

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<sup>116</sup> British Library Online, 'Harley MS 625', in *Digitised Manuscripts*  
 <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?Source=BrowseTitles&letter=A&ref=Harley\\_MS\\_625](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?Source=BrowseTitles&letter=A&ref=Harley_MS_625)  
 > [accessed 12 July 2019]

<sup>117</sup> University of Oxford, 'MS Digby 191', in *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries*  
 <[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_4311](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_4311)> [accessed 13 February 2019]

<sup>118</sup> Bower, 'A Handlist of Manuscripts', p. 245

Merton College had a substantial output of texts concerned with natural philosophy, which at the time concerned the mathematical sciences. Those who contributed to the output earned the title ‘Calculator’, including Simon Bredon.<sup>119</sup> It is not possible to demonstrate whether the interest in *musica speculativa*, suggested by the excerpts of *De institutione musica* in two manuscripts, was anything more than a personal interest in *musica speculativa* by two fellows of Merton College, given the lack of statutory evidence that it was studied there as part of a curriculum in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The extant evidence strongly suggests that *musica speculativa* was not copied as frequently in Oxford as in religious houses. Most of the copies that can be attributed to a location with precision were copied in monastic institutions: Christ Church, Canterbury, Kent; Pershore abbey, Worcestershire; St Mary’s abbey, York; St Augustine’s abbey, Canterbury, Kent; and Kenilworth priory, Warwickshire.

In addition to Bower’s valuable survey, the recent publications of British medieval library catalogues reveal records of now-lost copies of *De institutione musica*.<sup>120</sup> Although the

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<sup>119</sup> John Jones, *Balliol College: A History*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Selected volumes of the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues: K. W. Humphreys, ed., *The Friars’ Libraries*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 1 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1990); R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, eds, *Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum ueterum, the Latin Text established by R. A. B. Mynors*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 2 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1991); David N. Bell, ed., *The Libraries of the Cistercians, Gilbertines and Premonstratensians*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 3 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1992); R. Sharpe, ed., *English Benedictine Libraries: The Shorter Catalogues*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 4 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1996); William P. Stoneman, ed., *Dover Priory*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 5 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1999); Teresa Webber and Andrew G. Watson, eds, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 6 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1998); James P. Carley, ed., *The Libraries of King Henry VIII*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 7 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2000); Karsten Friis-Jensen and J. M. W. Willoughby, eds, *Peterborough Abbey*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 8 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2001); Vincent Gillespie and A. I. Doyle, eds, *Syon Abbey with The Libraries of the Carthusians*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 9 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2001); P. D. Clarke, ed., *The University and College Libraries of Cambridge*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 10 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2002); R. H. Rouse and M. A. Rouse, eds, *Henry of Kirkestede’s Catalogus de Libris Autenticis et Apocrifis*,

corpus is incomplete at present, a synthesis of the information contained in the available resources assists in forming a better understanding of some of the places in England and Wales where *De institutione musica* was copied and maintained during the late middle ages.<sup>121</sup> The available catalogues record the presence of *De institutione musica* or texts that are likely to have been *De institutione musica* at sixteen different religious houses in England and Wales. *De institutione musica* also features in the library records from four colleges of Cambridge (Clare College, Corpus Christi College, King's College and Pembroke College) and three colleges of Oxford (All Souls College, Exeter College and Merton College). Bishop William Reed bequeathed a copy of *De institutione musica* to Merton College in 1374. The library records from all other colleges come from the fifteenth century or later. Therefore, it is not possible to use the library records to determine whether this important text on *musica speculativa* was available before the 1431 statutes in Oxford.

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Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 11 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2004); B. C. Barker-Benfield, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 13 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2008); Nigel Ramsay and James M. W. Willoughby, eds, *Hospitals, Towns, and the Professions*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 14 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2009); James M. W. Willoughby, ed., *The Libraries of Collegiate Churches*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 15 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2013); and R. M. Thomson and J. G. Clark, eds, *The University and College Libraries of Oxford*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 16 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 2015).

<sup>121</sup> A forthcoming volume on libraries of the secular cathedrals of England and Wales, edited by N. L. Ramsay and James M. W. Willoughby will hopefully establish the availability of writings on *musica speculativa*.

| <b>Identification<br/>in catalogues</b>         | <b>Location of library</b>                | <b>Order</b>            | <b>Medieval document,<br/>date</b>                          |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| A16.352<br>A16.357<br>A16.363                   | Llanthony priory,<br>Monmouthshire        | Augustinian<br>(canons) | Catalogue, late 14 <sup>th</sup><br>century                 |
| A20.1157<br>A20.1156 <sup>x</sup> =<br>A20.1158 | Leicester abbey,<br>Leicestershire        | Augustinian<br>(canons) | Catalogue, 15 <sup>th</sup> century                         |
| A38.42b                                         | Waltham abbey, Essex                      | Augustinian<br>(canons) | Catalogue, early 13 <sup>th</sup><br>century                |
| B13.65b =<br>B13.177b                           | Bury St Edmunds<br>abbey, Suffolk         | Benedictine             | Catalogue, late 12 <sup>th</sup><br>century and additions   |
| B39.269                                         | Glastonbury abbey,<br>Somerset            | Benedictine             | Catalogue, 1247, with<br>additions                          |
| B79.171a                                        | Rochester, Kent                           | Benedictine             | Catalogue, 1202                                             |
| B109.86b                                        | Whitby abbey,<br>Yorkshire                | Benedictine             | Catalogue, late 12 <sup>th</sup><br>century                 |
| B116.15                                         | Worcester priory,<br>Worcestershire       | Benedictines            | List of books at<br>Oxford, mid 15 <sup>th</sup><br>century |
| BA1.*1019 <sup>x</sup>                          | St Augustine's abbey,<br>Canterbury, Kent | Benedictine             | Catalogue, 15 <sup>th</sup> century                         |
| BA1.1115d<br>(probably)                         | St Augustine's abbey,<br>Canterbury, Kent | Benedictine             | Catalogue, 15 <sup>th</sup> century                         |
| BA1.1153e                                       | St Augustine's abbey,<br>Canterbury, Kent | Benedictine             | Catalogue, 15 <sup>th</sup> century                         |
| BC1.39–40                                       | Christ Church,<br>Canterbury, Kent        | Benedictine             | List of school texts,<br>c.1180                             |
| BC4.438–442<br>(5 copies)                       | Christ Church,<br>Canterbury, Kent        | Benedictine             | Prior Eastry's<br>catalogue, before 1331                    |

|                     |                                   |                    |                                                                                           |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BM1.3291            | Dover priory, Kent                | Benedictine        | John Whitfield's catalogue, 1389                                                          |
| BP21.123a           | Peterborough abbey, Northampton   | Benedictine        | Catalogue, late 14 <sup>th</sup> century                                                  |
| R164.58.4           | Durham cathedral priory, Durham   | Benedictine        | <i>Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum veterum</i> (early fourteenth century) |
| R161.58.4           | Guisborough priory, Yorkshire     | Augustinian canons | <i>Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum veterum</i> (early fourteenth century) |
| R43.58.4            | Woburn abbey, Bedfordshire        | Cistercian         | <i>Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum veterum</i> (early fourteenth century) |
| R79.58.4            | Butley abbey, Suffolk             | Augustinian canons | <i>Registrum Anglie de libris doctorum et auctorum veterum</i> (early fourteenth century) |
| FA8.638b            | York                              | Austin Friars      | Catalogue, 1382, with additions                                                           |
| UC11.27d (probably) | Clare College, Cambridge          |                    | Inventory, c. 1440                                                                        |
| UC14.1              | Clare College, Cambridge          |                    | Inventory of unbound books, 1496                                                          |
| UC19.69g            | Corpus Christi College, Cambridge |                    | Thomas Markaunt's bequest, 1439                                                           |
| UC29.137            | King's College, Cambridge         |                    | Inventory, c. 1457                                                                        |



|                       |                                |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UC47.114b             | Pembroke College,<br>Cambridge | List of benefactors,<br>compiled 1617                                                                                                                                   |
| UO8.*108 =<br>UO12.22 | All Souls College,<br>Oxford   | Inventory of books in<br>the library, <i>c.</i> 1450,<br>with later additions/<br>Books chained in the<br>library during the<br>wardenship of John<br>Stokes, 1466–1494 |
| UO35.21b              | Exeter College,<br>Oxford      | Books bequeathed by<br>Bishop Reed, 8 August<br>1400                                                                                                                    |
| UO49.35b              | Merton College,<br>Oxford      | Books given by Bishop<br>William Reed, 22 Oct<br>1374                                                                                                                   |

**Table 1.2**     *De institutione musica* in medieval libraries in England and Wales<sup>122</sup>

### 1.2.3 *Musica speculativa* in religious houses

By combining the information from the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues with data from Bower's list and the conspectus compiled by Gibson and Smith, it is clear that Boethius' text was kept in many religious houses in England and Wales. In particular, the text appears to have been most prevalent in Benedictine and Augustinian institutions. The dates of the library records, which record copies of *De institutione musica* and the manuscripts in which the text can be found, suggest that religious houses were substantially more active in the reproduction of treatises on *musica speculativa* than the universities in England before the fifteenth century. Elina Hamilton is one of the few to

<sup>122</sup> Selected volumes of the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues.

have addressed the matter of Boethius' *De institutione musica* in religious houses.<sup>123</sup>

Overall, my findings concur with her results.

|    | <b>Religious house</b>                           | <b>Order</b>          | <b>Years</b> | <b>Record</b>   |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1  | Christ Church,<br>Canterbury, Kent               | Benedictine           | 900–1200     | Complete copies |
| 2  | Bury St Edmunds abbey,<br>Suffolk                | Benedictine           | 1125–1150    | Complete copy   |
| 3  | Pershore abbey,<br>Worcestershire                | Benedictine           | 1100–1200    | Complete copy   |
| 4  | Kenilworth priory (later<br>abbey), Warwickshire | Augustinian<br>canons | 1200–1300    | Complete copy   |
| 5  | St Augustine's abbey,<br>Canterbury, Kent        | Benedictine           | 1200–1300    | Complete copy   |
| 6  | St Mary's abbey, York                            | Benedictine           | 1200–1300    | Complete copy   |
| 7  | Dover priory, Kent                               | Benedictine           | 1389         | Library records |
| 8  | Bury St Edmunds abbey,<br>Suffolk                | Benedictine           | 1100–1200    | Library records |
| 9  | Whitby abbey, Yorkshire                          | Benedictine           | 1150–1200    | Library records |
| 10 | Waltham abbey, Essex                             | Augustinian<br>canons | 1150–1225    | Library records |
| 11 | Rochester priory, Kent                           | Benedictine           | 1202         | Library records |
| 12 | Glastonbury abbey,<br>Somerset                   | Benedictine           | 1247/1248    | Library records |

<sup>123</sup> Hamilton, 'Walter of Evesham Abbey', pp. 34–38.

|    |                                    |                       |           |                 |
|----|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 13 | Durham cathedral priory,<br>Durham | Benedictine           | 1300–1350 | Library records |
| 14 | Guisborough priory,<br>Yorkshire   | Augustinian<br>canons | 1300–1350 | Library records |
| 15 | Woburn abbey,<br>Bedfordshire      | Cistercian            | 1300–1350 | Library records |
| 16 | Butley abbey, Suffolk              | Augustinian<br>canons | 1300–1350 | Library records |
| 17 | Peterborough abbey,<br>Northampton | Benedictine           | 1350–1400 | Library records |
| 18 | Llanthony priory,<br>Monmouthshire | Augustinian<br>canons | 1355–1360 | Library records |
| 19 | St Mary's abbey, York              | Benedictine           | 1372      | Library records |
| 20 | Leicester abbey,<br>Leicestershire | Augustinian<br>canons | 1450–1500 | Library records |

**Table 1.3**     *De institutione musica* in the libraries of religious houses<sup>124</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Selected volumes of the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues; Bower, 'A Handlist of Manuscripts', pp. 205–51; Gibson and Smith, *Codices Boethiani*, vol. I, pp. 37–253.



**Map 1** Boethius' *De institutione musica* in religious houses

While extant manuscripts and library records bring us closer to understanding the place of music theory in medieval England, they are also limited in what they can convey. First, it is possible that many copies have not survived, and it is probable that library records have also been lost throughout the centuries. Even where library records have survived, there are limitations on what we can glean from consulting such records. The absence of

books from the library records of a medieval university does not necessarily signify the absence of that subject from an environment, which is important to consider when utilising such records to assess the presence of Boethius' *De institutione musica* in medieval English universities. Given the form that lectures took in the university, undergraduates often did not require books because masters often read from their own copies of authoritative texts, explaining them and commenting on them.<sup>125</sup> It could also be that the information contained in Boethius' *De institutione musica* was so widely known and accepted that it was not necessary to copy the entire text and retain it within the university for consultation. Furthermore, as the first purpose-built library in either Oxford or Cambridge was not completed until 1386, library records cannot offer a full story of the texts that circulated or were used in the medieval English universities before the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.<sup>126</sup> Other texts were undoubtedly circulating in Oxford and Cambridge before the establishment of the libraries. Conversely, the presence of Boethius' *De institutione musica* in either religious houses or in the libraries of the medieval universities does not necessarily prove that members of these communities read the authoritative text on *musica speculativa*. Importantly, the records do not indicate how active the study of *musica speculativa* was in either the late medieval university or the great religious houses in England. However, the library records help to identify where *De institutione musica* circulated and where it could have been consulted, which will be important in Chapter Six when the research delves deeper into the authorship and intended audience of 'þe proporcions'.

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<sup>125</sup> Malcolm B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), p. 299.

<sup>126</sup> Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers*, p. 303.

To further complicate the issue of identifying the communities in which Latin examples of *musica speculativa* circulated, it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between the circulation of texts in universities and religious houses in late medieval England. Some colleges were founded as places for members of particular orders to pursue higher study. In total, there were five foundations developed by different orders for their members to study in a shared disciplined environment.<sup>127</sup> St Mary's College, Oxford, was founded as a house for Augustinian canons.<sup>128</sup> Gloucester College, Durham College, and Canterbury College were Benedictine establishments in Oxford, while St Bernard's College, also in Oxford, was a Cistercian foundation.<sup>129</sup> Between the late thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries, some monastic establishments built residences for the benefit of monks studying at Oxford. The presence of monastic orders in English universities further complicates any attempt to place the readership for *musica speculativa* either within the universities or within religious houses because book collections could move between religious houses and their associated colleges. However, the intention here is not to confine *musica speculativa* to either the medieval English universities or the religious communities exclusively. Instead, the objective is to identify the range of locations, institutions or communities in which *De institutione musica* circulated. From the records, it would appear that many religious houses, particularly Augustinian and Benedictine houses, possessed at least one copy of *De institutione musica*. Therefore, the survey of medieval library records and extant manuscripts confirms a widely accepted belief: knowledge of *musica speculativa* circulated in elite institutions (universities and religious houses) in medieval England, at least as long as the knowledge remained in Latin.

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<sup>127</sup> Anthony Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales, 1300–1500: Southern England*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. III, p. 151.

<sup>128</sup> William Page, ed., 'Houses of Augustinian Canons: St Mary's College, Oxford', in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 2* (London: Victoria County History, 1907), pp. 102–03. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol2/pp102-103>> [accessed 22 June 2019]

<sup>129</sup> Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses*, vol. III, p. 151.

### 1.3 The emergence of vernacular music theory

Studies of medieval English music theory have tended to focus on the Latin output, which admittedly constitutes the majority of surviving texts.<sup>130</sup> In writing about English music theory from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries Leofranc Holford-Strevens focused only on the output in Latin, stating that ‘writing on musical theory in Western Europe, on the Continent as well as in England, was almost exclusively in Latin’.<sup>131</sup> Describing the audience for music theory, he wrote that music treatises were often produced by clerics, particularly monks, for use by their colleagues or future clerics in their schooling.<sup>132</sup> By considering exclusively Latin outputs and omitting examples in Middle English, scholars inevitably limit conceptions of the audience for music theory. As studies emerge in other fields examining late medieval technical writings in English, it is apparent that the history of music theory is lagging behind. In 2004 Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta edited a collection of papers on the vernacularisation of medical and scientific writing in late medieval England.<sup>133</sup> The publication focused on people who wrote and read early medical texts, demonstrating new audiences that began to interact with the field in Europe as a result of the growing use of the English language for writings on scientific topics. A wider and more diverse readership for a range of scientific texts emerged, challenging conceptions of not only the types of readers but the sites of engagement. This encourages

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<sup>130</sup> See Margaret Bent, ‘The Transmission of English Music 1300–1500: Some Aspects of Repertory and Presentation’, in *Studien zur Tradition in der Musik: Kurt von Fischer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht and Max Lütolf (Munich: Musikverlag Emil Katz bichler, 1973), pp. 65–83; Bonnie J. Blackburn, ‘Properchant: English Theory at Home and Abroad, with an Excursus on Amerus/Aluredus and His Tradition’, in *Quomodo Cantabimus Canticum? Studies in Honor of Edward H. Roesner*, ed. David Butler Cannata, Gabriela Ilnitchi Curie, Rena Charnin Mueller and John Louis Nadas, Publications of the American Institute of Musicology: Miscellanea, 7 (Middleton, WI: American Institute of Musicology, 2008), pp. 80–98; and Robert de Handlo and Johannes Hanboys, *Regule and Summa*, ed. and trans. Peter M. Lefferts, Greek and Latin Music Theory, 7 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

<sup>131</sup> Leofranc Holford-Strevens, ‘English Music Theory in Medieval Latin’, in *Latin in Medieval Britain*, ed. Richard Ashdowne and Caroline White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 147–68 (p. 147).

<sup>132</sup> Holford-Strevens, ‘English Music Theory in Medieval Latin’, p. 147.

<sup>133</sup> Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, Studies in English Language, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

a re-examination of readers and users of music theory using vernacular treatises of music theory, which hitherto remain understudied. Accordingly, the following section focuses on the vernacular context, examining the increased availability of writings in English from the fourteenth century onwards.

### 1.3.1 The widening use of English

The linguistic landscape of medieval England was complicated because of the presence of many different languages, the many dialects and versions of each language that circulated, and the different though partly overlapping social functions that each language fulfilled.<sup>134</sup> The language(s) that people spoke depended on their social status, mobility, profession, location and education.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the situation was constantly changing and, as a result, the landscape in late medieval England was very different from that of the preceding centuries. In sociolinguistic terms, the situation can be described as polyglossia.<sup>136</sup> The three most prevalent languages in medieval England were, in descending order of perceived prestige, Latin, French and English, but Celtic languages and early Scandinavian languages were also present.<sup>137</sup> Latin was the language of the church, some aspects of administration and law, education and scholarship. It was the primary vehicle through which knowledge was transported, including *musica speculativa*, as detailed above. French had a mix of functions, spanning both

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<sup>134</sup> Ad Putter, 'The Linguistic Repertoire of Medieval England, 1100–1500', in *Imagining Medieval English: Language Structures and Theories, 500–1500*, ed. Tim William Machan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 126–44; Herbert Schendl, 'Linguistic Aspects of Code-Switching in Medieval English Texts', in *Multilingualism in Later Medieval Britain*, ed. D. A. Trotter (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 77–92.

<sup>135</sup> Herbert Schendl, 'Syntactic Constraints on Code-switching in Medieval Texts', in *Placing Middle English in Context*, ed. Irma Taavitsainen, Terttu Nevalainen, Päivi Pahta and Matti Rissanen, *Topics in English Linguistics*, 35 (Berlin and New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2000), pp. 67–86.

<sup>136</sup> Monika Otter, 'Contrafacture and Translation: The Prisoner's Lament', in *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Carolyn P. Collette (Cambridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 55–81 (p. 71).

<sup>137</sup> Putter, 'The Linguistic Repertoire', p. 126.



administrative and social roles. French language and culture remained persistent in English court and aristocratic circles, and manuscripts of French literary texts remained in circulation throughout the fifteenth century, enjoying an enthusiastic audience.<sup>138</sup> There is evidence that, well into the fourteenth century, the children of the landowning classes acquired the language as children in a way that afforded them native-like competence.<sup>139</sup> It was also used in public spheres, such as administration, commerce and law. In late medieval England, a knowledge of French continued to be necessary for those entering into the legal profession, which used law French.<sup>140</sup> Notably, as the prevalence of its use in social exchanges decreased after the thirteenth century in England, its significance as a formal and authoritative language increased in inverse proportion.<sup>141</sup>

Until the mid-thirteenth century, English remained peripheral to written culture. It was the least prestigious language of the three and was used mainly for more casual and domestic interactions.<sup>142</sup> Increasingly, Middle English encroached on the territory of both Latin and French from the mid-thirteenth century onwards and began to be used for different functions, which added a complex trilingual dimension to the linguistic landscape of late medieval England. Latin and English engaged in ongoing interaction and exchange, rather than conflict. The complexity of their relationship was compounded

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<sup>138</sup> Derek Pearsall, 'The Idea of Englishness in the Fifteenth Century', in *Nation, Court and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Helen Cooney (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 15–27 (p. 22); Carol M. Meale, 'Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 201–38 (pp. 207–09).

<sup>139</sup> See Marianne Ailes and Ad Putter, 'The French of Medieval England', in *European Francophonie: The Social, Political and Cultural History of an International Prestige Language*, ed. Vladislav Rjéoutski, Gesine Argent and Derek Offord (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 51–79; Richard Ingham, *The Transmission of Anglo-Norman: Language History and Language Acquisition* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2012).

<sup>140</sup> William M. Ormrod, 'The Use of English: Language, Law, and Political Culture in Fourteenth-Century England', *Speculum*, 78 (2003), 750–87.

<sup>141</sup> David Mellinkoff, *Language of the Law* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), pp. 95–135.

<sup>142</sup> See Margaret Laing, *Catalogue of Sources of a Linguistic Atlas of Early Medieval English* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993).

by the persistence of French in some contexts.<sup>143</sup> The movement of vernacular languages into domains previously dominated by Latin characterises much of late medieval Europe, not just England.<sup>144</sup> The use of English in professional writing emerged around the late fourteenth century as the language of legal proceedings, guild records, religious controversy, and instruction. By this time, English also played an important role in elementary education, as attested to by the prolific translator John Trevisa's often-cited statement that, by the 1380s, English had replaced French as the language of oral instruction in grammar schools.<sup>145</sup> Increasingly, Middle English instructional books were produced for use alongside Latin books of the scholastics. Informative and instructive texts on a range of highly technical and specialised subjects in English on topics such as hunting, grammar, cookery, and medical texts also emerged for use outside of a classroom. In many cases, texts in Latin and French were translated into English. Although English became more important within the literary culture, Latin did not lose its prestige. It retained most of its functions until the religious Reformation in the 1530s.

Before 1375 most medical and scientific books were in Latin, as they were associated with higher learning in the university.<sup>146</sup> By the end of the fourteenth century, however,

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<sup>143</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. x–ix.

<sup>144</sup> Linda Ehrsam Voigts, 'What's the Word? Bilingualism in Late-Medieval England', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 813–26 (p. 813).

<sup>145</sup> Ranulf Higden and John Trevisa, *Polychronicon Ranulph Higden Monachi Cestrensis: Together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Churchill Babington and Joseph Rawson Lumby, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 9 vols (London: Longman, 1869–1871), vol. II, p. 161. For more on the language of elementary education, see Richard Foster Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language: A Survey of Opinions concerning the Vernacular from the Introduction of Printing to the Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 3–67; Jo Ann Hoepfner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340–1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985; repr. 2014), p. 43; and Nicholas Orme, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen Publishing, 1973), pp. 71–75.

<sup>146</sup> Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta, 'Vernacularisation of Scientific and Medieval Writing in its Sociohistorical Context', in *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, ed. Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta, *Studies in English Language*, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1–22.

scientific writings were circulating outside of the universities. Medicine led the way towards the increased use of English for writings on scientific subjects, and other branches of science followed insofar as they had practical applications.<sup>147</sup> There was an ‘information revolution’, with the accessibility of technical and instructive texts increasing dramatically due to the utilisation of English.<sup>148</sup>

John Trevisa (c.1342–1402) was an almost exact contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer. His two most important translations are those of Ranulf Higden’s *Polychronicon* (*History of the World*, completed in 1387) and Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s *De proprietatibus rerum* (*On the Properties of Things*, finished in 1398).<sup>149</sup> Trevisa also translated Aegidius Romanus’s *De regimine principum* (*Concerning the Rule of Princes*), the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, William Ockham’s *Dialogus inter militem et clericum* and Richard Fitzralph’s *Defensio curatorum*. He may also have been one of the scholars responsible for the first complete translation of the scriptures into English: the Wycliffite Bible. The *Polychronicon* and *De proprietatibus rerum* were both encyclopaedic texts, the former a universal history and the latter a collection of traditional medieval knowledge regarding the natural world. Both compendia are inherently informative and cover a broad range of subject matter.<sup>150</sup> Their translation into English marked a significant step in the use of English for instructive writings on a wide variety of subjects.

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<sup>147</sup> Taavitsainen and Pahta, ‘Vernacularisation of Scientific and Medieval Writing’, p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> Peter Murray Jones, ‘Medicine and Science’, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: 1400–1557*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), vol. III, pp. 433–48 (pp. 433–34).

<sup>149</sup> For a detailed account of Trevisa’s English translations, see Ralph Hanna, ‘Sir Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage’, *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 878–916.

<sup>150</sup> Emily Steiner, ‘Compendious Genres: Higden, Trevisa, and the Medieval Encyclopaedia’, *Exemplaria*, 27 (2015), 73–92 (pp. 75–76).

Among the many factors that have been advanced for the emergence of a range of texts in English that were hitherto in Latin are the Hundred Years' War and the emergence of a new lay readership for vernacular theology. Some histories have subscribed to the myth of the inevitable 'triumph of English', and others have attributed a central role to Chaucer, but neither is sufficient to convey the complexity of the linguistic situation in late medieval England.<sup>151</sup> Nicholas Watson's comment on the enormity of the task of recounting the historical background of the increased emergence of texts in Middle English must be kept in mind: 'no account of a phenomenon as big as language change can explain everything'.<sup>152</sup> Instead, it is more helpful to look at the contexts in which specific examples of English texts, or genres, emerged in order to both understand the process by which any single text was created and the contemporaneous ideological beliefs, values and attitudes that they can articulate.

### 1.3.2 Writings on music in English

Writings on music in English emerged from the fourteenth century onwards. There are seven different texts on music in English contained in extant fourteenth-century manuscripts, including two encyclopaedias containing sections on music that were translated by John Trevisa. Trevisa's translation of the *Polychronicon* instructs the reader in the creation of a simple monochord by using a bridge to determine different ratios on

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<sup>151</sup> See David Burnley, 'Lexis and Semantics', in *The Cambridge History of the English Language: 1066–1476*, ed. Norman Blake, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), vol. II, pp. 409–99 (p. 428); Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers: 1350–1400* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 52; Basil Cottle, *The Triumph of English, 1350–1400* (London: Barnes and Noble, 1969), pp. 17–18, 91; John H. Fisher, *The Emergence of Standard English* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), pp. 18–19; Janel M. Mueller, *The Native Tongue and the Word: Developments in English Prose Style, 1380–1580* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 8–9, pp. 40–161; and John Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century, 1399–1485* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>152</sup> Nicholas Watson, 'The Politics of Middle English Writing', in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 331–65 (p. 334).

a piece of string.<sup>153</sup> *De proprietatibus rerum* references Boethian mathematics and lists the correlations between particular ratios in both arithmetic and musical terms.<sup>154</sup> *A Chorister's Lament*, contained in London, British Library, Arundel 292, fols 70v–71r, is an English-language poem that refers to music theory.<sup>155</sup> It tells the story of a monk who struggled with his understanding of Guidonian solmisation and the hexachordal system that were in use. The poem is linguistically significant for providing many of the earliest occurrences of technical music terminology in an English-language poem, but this terminology was presented in French.<sup>156</sup> The poet made frequent references to the *sofège* syllables, retaining the original Guidonian solmisation, and used French terminology within the English-language text, suggesting the continued importance of instruction through French in fourteenth-century England. The remaining four texts on music in English were previously attributed to John Wycliffe.<sup>157</sup> While each of the four mentions music in some capacity, the texts are not concerned with music theory.

| Author                                      | Title                                                          | Manuscript Source/ Printed Source                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anonymous                                   | <i>A Chorister's Lament</i>                                    | London, British Library, Arundel 292, fols 70 <sup>v</sup> –71 <sup>r</sup>                                   |
| Bartholomaeus Anglicus, trans. John Trevisa | <i>On the Properties of Things</i> , Book XIX, Cap. CXXXI–CXLV | <i>De proprietatibus rerum</i> , trans. John Trevisa and rev. Wynkyn de Worde (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1495) |

<sup>153</sup> Ranulf Higden and John Trevisa, *Polychronicon*, vol. III, pp. 209–11.

<sup>154</sup> John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum: A Critical Text*, ed. M. C. Seymour, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. II, pp. 1386–95.

<sup>155</sup> Francis Lee Utley, 'The Chorister's Lament', *Speculum*, 21 (1946), 194–202 (p. 194).

<sup>156</sup> Utley, 'The Chorister's Lament', p. 196.

<sup>157</sup> It is generally accepted that while nothing in English directly from Wyclif's pen is now extant, many vernacular works owe a large debt to Wyclif's ideas and terminology. See Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon, eds, *English Wycliffite Sermons*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

|                                        |                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Higden, Ranulf,<br>trans. John Trevisa | <i>Polychronicon</i>                               | Babington and Lumby, eds,<br><i>Rerum Britannicarum medii aevi<br/>scriptores</i> , 41 (London:<br>Longman, 1869–1871)                                                                          |
| Wycliffe, John                         | <i>Of Feigned Contemplative<br/>Life</i> (excerpt) | Frederic D. Matthews, ed., <i>The<br/>English Works of Wyclif Hitherto<br/>Unprinted</i> , Early English Text<br>Society, orig. ser., 74 (London:<br>Trübner, 1880), pp. 187–96 (pp.<br>191–92) |
| Wycliffe, John                         | <i>Of the Leaven of Pharisees</i><br>(excerpt)     | Matthews, ed., <i>The English<br/>Works of Wyclif Hitherto<br/>Unprinted</i> , pp. 1–27 (pp. 8–9)                                                                                               |
| Wycliffe, John                         | <i>Of Prelates</i> (two excerpts)                  | Matthews, ed., <i>The English<br/>Works of Wyclif Hitherto<br/>Unprinted</i> , pp. 52–107 (pp. 76–<br>77, 90–91)                                                                                |
| Wycliffe, John                         | <i>The Order of Priesthood</i><br>(excerpt)        | Matthews, ed., <i>The English<br/>Works of Wyclif Hitherto<br/>Unprinted</i> , pp. 164–79 (p. 169–<br>70)                                                                                       |

**Table 1.4** Texts on music in English from the fourteenth century<sup>158</sup>

A survey of the extant medieval writings on music in English has highlighted the significance of the discovery of a third source of ‘þe proporcions’ found in Trinity College MS 516. To date, a mere thirteen discrete writings on music in English in manuscripts from the fifteenth century are known to scholars—a relatively small corpus in comparison to extant music treatises in Latin from this period. The short list, all shown

<sup>158</sup> Peter Lefferts, ed., ‘Texts on Music in English: Fourteenth-Century Sources’, *Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University* <<http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/14th/>> [accessed 13 February 2020]

in Table 1.5 below, decreases further when literary texts that do not concern music theory are eliminated. By this count, Trinity College MS 516 is one of only seven extant fifteenth-century manuscripts that contain examples of texts on music theory in English (indicated with \*).

| Author    | Title                                                                | Manuscript Source/<br>Printed Source                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anonymous | Notes on discant and mensuration*                                    | Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lat. misc. d. 83, fols 63 <sup>r</sup> –64 <sup>r</sup>                                                                                |
| Anonymous | <i>Rosarium theologie</i> (excerpt)                                  | Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 354/581, fols 103 <sup>r</sup> –04 <sup>r</sup>                                                                        |
| Anonymous | <i>Court of Sapience</i> (excerpt)                                   | London, British Library, Harley 2251;<br>Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.21                                                                                   |
| Anonymous | <i>It es to myte</i>                                                 | London, British Library, Additional 21455, fol. 9 <sup>r</sup>                                                                                                   |
| Anonymous | <i>The Lantern of Light</i> (excerpt)                                | London, British Library, MS Harley 2324                                                                                                                          |
| Anonymous | A sermon on the three estates for the twentieth Sunday after trinity | Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 180; Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MSS 50 and 51; Gloucester, Cathedral Library, MS 22                                        |
| Anonymous | A short treatise on the rule of discant*                             | Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 410, fols 49 <sup>v</sup> –51 <sup>v</sup>                                                                                 |
| Chilston  | ‘þe proporcions’*                                                    | Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fols 129 <sup>r</sup> –31 <sup>v</sup> ;<br>London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 117 <sup>r</sup> –22 <sup>v</sup> ; |

|                               |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                               |                                                                                                                      | New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12, fols 63 <sup>r</sup> –68 <sup>v</sup>      |
| Cutell, Richard               | <i>Opinio ricardi cutell de London</i> (partly in English)*                                                          | Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 842, fol. 48 <sup>r-v</sup>                   |
| Gautier (or Gossouin) de Metz | <i>Mirroure of the World</i> (excerpt)                                                                               | Printed by William Caxton, 1480                                                   |
| Higden, Ranulf                | Musical portions of Ranulf Higden's <i>Polychronicon</i> (1357), in an anonymous 15th-century translation in London* | British Library, Harley MS 2261                                                   |
| Power, Leonel                 | Treatise upon the gamme*                                                                                             | London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 105 <sup>v</sup> –13 <sup>r</sup> |
| Pseudo-Chilston               | A little treatise on discant*                                                                                        | London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 113 <sup>v</sup> –16 <sup>v</sup> |

**Table 1.5** Texts on music in English in fifteenth-century manuscripts<sup>159</sup>

Among these seven surviving records of music theory in English from the fifteenth century, only four exemplars are in manuscripts devoted solely to writings on music. Lansdowne MS 763 contains twenty treatises in total: seventeen in Latin, two different treatises on discant in English and ‘þe proporcions’.<sup>160</sup> British Library Add. MS 21455 contains an anonymous short treatise in English that outlines the three degrees of discant

<sup>159</sup> This table relies largely on Peter Lefferts, ed., ‘Texts on Music in English: Fifteenth-Century Sources’, *CHMTL* <<http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/15th/>> [accessed 13 February 2020]. However, Lefferts has not included CCCC MS 410 in his database.

<sup>160</sup> British Library Online, ‘Lansdowne MS 763’, in *Digitised Manuscripts* <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Lansdowne\\_MS\\_763](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Lansdowne_MS_763)> [accessed 12 July 2019]



in addition to two treatises on music in Latin, *De mensurabili musica* and *De discantu et contranota*.<sup>161</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 410 contains Walter of Odington's *De speculatione musicae* and Johannes de Muris' *Libellus cantus mensurabilis*, in addition to a short treatise in English on the rule of discant.<sup>162</sup> Richard Cutell's interpretation of discant is contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 842 alongside musical miscellanea.<sup>163</sup> Charles Burney was perhaps the first to note that the discant treatise found in MS Bodley 842 is practically a transcript of the earlier part of the treatise by Chilston in Lansdowne MS 763; however, he was referring to the second English treatise on discant in the manuscript, now attributed to Pseudo-Chilston, and not to Chilston's treatise, 'þe proporcions'.<sup>164</sup>

In addition to featuring in anthologies of writings on music, treatises on music theory in English are found in two collections of scientific-mathematical writings. Robert Grosseteste compiled Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lat. misc. d. 83, which contains writings in both Latin and English. It is described in the catalogue of the Bodleian library as a 'commentary on Aristotle, *Posteriora Analytica*'.<sup>165</sup> A treatise on discant in English is contained on fols 63<sup>r</sup>–64<sup>r</sup> and displays the incipit, 'How many cordys be they of dyscant'.<sup>166</sup> A similar situation pertains concerning MS B.12, which is primarily a

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<sup>161</sup> British Library Online, 'Add. MS 21455', in *Digitised Manuscripts*

<[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_21455](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_21455)> [accessed 12 July 2019]

<sup>162</sup> Stanford Libraries, 'Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 410', in *Manuscripts in the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*

<<https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/wq027ng0617>> [accessed 3 January 2020]

<sup>163</sup> Falconer Madan, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford which have not Hitherto been Catalogued in the Quarto Series*, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895–1953), vol. II(a), p. 433; University of Oxford, 'MS Bodleian 842', in *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries* <[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_1832](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_1832)> [accessed 13 February 2019]

<sup>164</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages of the Present Period (1789)*, ed. Frank Mercer, 2 vols (London: G. T. Foulis, 1935), vol. I, p. 700.

<sup>165</sup> University of Oxford, 'MS Lat. misc. d. 83', in *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries* <[https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript\\_6628](https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_6628)> [accessed 13 February 2019]

<sup>166</sup> Andrew Wathey, 'Notes on Discant and Mensuration from Fifteenth-Century Oxford', in *Trent'anni di Ricerca Musicologica: Studi in Onore di F. Alberto Gallo*, ed. Patrizia Dalla Vecchia and Donatella Restani (Rome: Torre d'Orfeo, 1996), pp. 63–72 (pp. 69–71).

bilingual scientific-mathematical anthology. The manuscript context is relevant to its inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ and is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.<sup>167</sup>

A survey of surviving vernacular texts on music in fifteenth-century manuscripts provides some insights into the contents of music theory treatises known to have circulated in England. The extant sources suggest that treatises on music theory in English were rare, although extant sources cannot fully account for the popularity or the distribution patterns of texts in medieval England. Predominant among the surviving fifteenth-century treatises are writings on the rules of discant. Although discant in England generally followed the same rules and procedures as the discant tradition on the Continent at this time, specific characteristics distinguished the English tradition: the *cantus firmus* could be in the upper voice, the vocal ranges were differentiated, and the voices were designated as ‘mene’, ‘treble’, and ‘quatreble’. Several treatises in English are concerned with these characteristics, and discant is the most frequently addressed subject in fifteenth-century treatises in Middle English. Pseudo-Chilston’s treatise, which precedes the ‘þe proporcions’ treatise in Lansdowne MS 763, provides a detailed description of the interchangeability of the chant between the upper and lower lines while also discussing faburden.<sup>168</sup> In the same manuscript, Leonel Power’s treatise also concerns discant and was written in English. It begins by stating that for those who wish to be singers, makers, or teachers, they must know how many chords of discant there are.<sup>169</sup> Richard Cutell’s *Opinio* is concerned with discant and, despite the Latin title, the treatise is written in Middle English.<sup>170</sup> GB-Lbl Add. 21455 also contains a text in English

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<sup>167</sup> See Chapter 3.3 for more on New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12.

<sup>168</sup> London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 113<sup>v</sup>–16<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 105<sup>v</sup>–13<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>170</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 842, fols 48<sup>r</sup>–48<sup>v</sup>.

on discant beginning ‘it es to wyte’.<sup>171</sup> These treatises all survive in English manuscripts datable from the first half of the fifteenth century. Additionally, notes on discant and mensuration have survived from fifteenth-century Oxford, and they appear to be related to the pseudo-Chilston treatise.<sup>172</sup>

The majority of extant texts on music from the fourteenth century can be found within greater compendia of general knowledge or as part of religious writings that protest against clerical abuses. Meanwhile, many of the fifteenth-century texts on music in English are concerned with rules of discant. However, ‘þe proporcions’ appears to be an anomaly in that it does not fit neatly under the heading of *ars practica* like so many of the other fifteenth-century texts. The ratios and proportions are consistent with those outlined in Boethius’ *De institutione musica*. The relationship between ‘þe proporcions’ and *De institutione musica* requires further investigation.

### 1.3.3 Vulgate *musica speculativa*

The music treatise in MS 516 expounds, in Middle English, the classes of ratios and proportions in a manner that is consistent with Boethius’ Latin treatise, *De institutione musica*. Echoing the second book of Boethius’ writing on music, ‘þe proporcions’ defines proportion as the comparison of two things concerned with number before naming and describing the five proportions of inequality. The latter part of ‘þe proporcions’ is devoted to an exploration of the three types of proportionalities, mirroring the genera outlined in Boethius’ treatise: the arithmetic, the geometric, and the harmonic.<sup>173</sup> However, ‘þe proporcions’ only represents a segment of Boethius’ Latin work. Furthermore,

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<sup>171</sup> London, British Library, Additional MS 21455, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>172</sup> Wathey, ‘Notes on Discant and Mensuration’, pp. 63–72.

<sup>173</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, pp. 52–87.

speculative music theory, or *musica speculativa*, implies the philosophical contemplation of discrete relative numbers, but the philosophical aspects of *De institutione musica* are wholly absent from ‘þe proporcions’. The Middle English treatise does not include theoretical concepts like the tripartite division of music into *musica mundana*, *humana*, and *instrumentalis*, which represents the holistic nature of Pythagorean-Neoplatonic number theory, or any explicit reference to Pythagorean lore. Without the philosophical aspects that permeate Boethius’ *De institutione musica*, how can ‘þe proporcions’ be considered a text on speculative music theory, and how can we conceptualise the relationship between the two treatises?

Traditional conceptions of what constitutes a translation are not particularly helpful when trying to understand how ‘þe proporcions’ relates to *De institutione musica*. The form/substance dichotomy is not an appropriate framework to explain the relationship between ‘þe proporcions’ and *De institutione musica* because the Middle English treatise is neither a ‘word-for-word’ nor a ‘sense-for-sense’ translation, although at times the author has translated ideas in a ‘sense-for-sense’ fashion. The source/target dichotomy is not applicable because ‘þe proporcions’ does not attempt to replicate Boethius’ text, nor does it necessarily seek to displace it.<sup>174</sup> For this more complex association between the source text and ‘þe proporcions’, it is helpful to conceive of a different type of relationship that relies on more recent developments in translation studies. Those working in translation studies have sought to build on and go beyond the work of Roman Jakobson, upon whose tripartite model (intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic

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<sup>174</sup> Ivana Djordjević, ‘Mapping Medieval Translation’, in *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. Judith Elizabeth Weiss, Jennifer Fellows and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), pp. 7–24 (p. 8).

translation) translation studies had rested since 1959.<sup>175</sup> The ‘cultural turn’ in medieval textuality acknowledges the circumstances of textual production as a determining factor in the relationship between a translation and its source text.<sup>176</sup> Fundamental to this shift is the understanding that the medieval conception of *translatio* (translation) was synonymous with *expositio* (interpretation).<sup>177</sup> Consequently, English literary history has moved away from judging translations by how well (or not) they capture and replicate the source text, while also ceasing efforts to differentiate between traditional definitions of translations and adaptations.<sup>178</sup> This study draws on broader understandings of what constitutes a translation, which allows the conception of multiple types of relationships between surviving music theory texts in English and their ultimate sources and which takes into account the cultural and historical contexts in which the vernacular texts were created.

Pythagorean harmonic theory had circulated in Latinate spaces since Boethius created his *De institutione musica*. Through the creation of ‘þe proporcions’ and the vernacularisation of aspects of Boethian music theory, knowledge derived from ancient Greek began to circulate in vernacular cultural spaces. The interlinguistic translation of the text was not the only process by which Chilston transformed Boethian music theory, however. By eliminating the speculative aspects of the text, Chilston highlighted the

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<sup>175</sup> Roman Jakobson, ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’, in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Bower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 232–39.

<sup>176</sup> For more about translation in medieval textuality, see Sif Ríkharðsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>177</sup> For discussion on translation between Latinate and vernacular cultures in the medieval period, see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Laura H. Hollengreen, ed., *Translatio or the Transmission of Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Modes and Messages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008); and Michelle R. Warren, ‘Translation’, in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 51–67.

<sup>178</sup> Eugenio Refini, *Translation as Reception in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 2.

practical, utilitarian parts of Boethius' work and created an incomplete version of Boethius' text. However, by judging the Chilston's text as deficient, we fail to understand how 'þe proporcions' relates intralingually to *De institutione musica*.

Instead, I draw on the writings of Charles F. Briggs in an attempt to understand this complicated relationship of both interlingual and intralingual translation.<sup>179</sup> Briggs described the vulgarisation of texts on moral philosophy in late medieval England, whereby texts were produced to provide students with the basics of philosophical teaching that could be used for pastoral ends rather than to present them with the subtleties of philosophical thought. Vulgarisation was a common phenomenon in which 'an intralingual abridging, expanding, or simplifying of technical or abstruse matter' made it easier to understand.<sup>180</sup> In the field of moral philosophy, Aristotle's works emerged as 'derivative ancillary texts' that provided students with the basic elements of his works and highlighted their practical application rather than their speculative qualities.<sup>181</sup> When written in Latin, these texts presented Aristotle's writings in a more accessible way for scholars. When also written in the vernacular, such texts made scholastic writing more accessible to a lay audience. Briggs used the term 'vulgate moral philosophy' to describe this output.<sup>182</sup>

Following this precedent, I propose the term 'vulgate *musica speculativa*' to describe the way in which 'þe proporcions' derives from Boethian elements but eliminates the speculative aspects in favour of the elementary mathematical aspects. By describing the

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<sup>179</sup> Charles F. Briggs, 'Teaching Philosophy at School and Court: Vulgarization and Translation', in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), pp. 99–111.

<sup>180</sup> Briggs, 'Vulgarization and Translation', p. 99.

<sup>181</sup> Briggs, 'Vulgarization and Translation', pp. 103–04.

<sup>182</sup> Briggs, 'Vulgarization and Translation', p. 103.

treatise as ‘vernacular vulgate *musica speculativa*’, I acknowledge the two distinct but interconnected processes of translation that are evident when ‘þe proporcions’ is read in relation to *De institutione musica*: vernacularisation and vulgarisation. Neither ‘vernacular’ nor ‘vulgar’ alone is descriptive enough to acknowledge both the deep historical roots of the information and the broader cultural context that surrounded the creation of ‘þe proporcions’.

Situating ‘þe proporcions’ in the Boethian tradition as vernacular vulgate *musica speculativa* offers a new interpretative lens. It becomes possible to view the substantial omissions as evidence of the cultural embeddedness of the vernacular text, rather than a deficiency. Secondly, if the vernacular language is an indicator of the space in which ‘þe proporcions’ was intended to circulate, the omission of speculative material in favour of the practical mathematical elements suggests that cultivating speculative thinking was less important for the intended audience than understanding the practical application of the mathematical information. This suggests that the text might have been intended for a lay English-reading audience. By viewing ‘þe proporcions’ in this way, we can see that Chilston was not just a passive transmitter of an incomplete Middle English version of Boethius’s *De institutione musica*. Instead, he was an active agent who responded to wider efforts to increase the accessibility of classical knowledge while simultaneously being part of the cultural transformation in late medieval England. How Chilston actively participated in cultural formation will be evidenced by the ways in which his text was read and used, which will be explored throughout the following chapters.

## Chapter Two

### Copying ‘þe proporcions’

The discovery of a third copy of ‘þe proporcions’ in Dublin Trinity College MS 516 confirms that the circulation of the treatise on proportions was more extensive than previously thought. The survey of fifteenth-century texts on music in English in Chapter One highlighted the small number of writings on music theory in English in surviving medieval manuscripts, which underlines the uniqueness of ‘þe proporcions’ as the only known example of vulgate *musica speculativa* in Middle English. Therefore, the three copies of the treatise provide an unparalleled opportunity to gain insight into the circulation of music theory in late medieval England. Remarkably, the copies of ‘þe proporcions’ have hitherto remained unconnected. Earlier studies of MS B.12 and Lansdowne MS 763 did not take MS 516 into consideration.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation constitutes the first comparative study of all three copies of this rare treatise. It approaches the texts of ‘þe proporcions’ from the perspective of ‘new philology’ while also employing the ‘old’ philological practices of codicology and palaeography and integrating these with materialist and contextual approaches. Historians have warned of the dangers of discarding the ‘old’ practices, which remain essential to a holistic understanding of medieval manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Susan Yager has described the current state of research in medieval studies as embracing both ‘the painstaking work of philologists’ and ‘the creative work of critics’.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the following two chapters use a synthesis of traditional philological methods, including a close comparative reading of the three

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 0.2 for an account of previous studies of ‘þe proporcions’.

<sup>2</sup> See Keith Busby, ed., *Towards a Synthesis? Essays on the New Philology* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Susan Yager, ‘New Philology’, in *Handbook of Medieval Studies: Terms—Methods—Trends*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 999–1006 (p. 1006).



copies of ‘þe proporcions’ in this chapter and a codicological study of the three manuscripts in Chapter Three, alongside a consideration of the material embodiment of the treatises and their relationship to the broader contexts.

Materialist philology has attributed a new sense of value to the exemplars that previously had been disqualified in stemmatological studies or discarded in the search for the ‘best text’.<sup>4</sup> Instead of attempting to re-create an authoritative text by eliminating versions derived from earlier existing copies, a materialist-philological approach encourages the consideration of these exemplars as capable of holding the information that can offer insights into the cultural life of the work. A turning point in medieval textual studies occurred in 1989 with Bernard Cerquiglini’s argument that instability, or variance, is a fundamental feature of medieval texts.<sup>5</sup> His idea was heavily dependent upon Paul Zumthor’s *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* from 1972, which introduced the concept of ‘*mouvance*’, the essential mobility of medieval texts.<sup>6</sup> Later scholars such as Jerome McGann and Tim Machan advanced Zumthor’s argument by emphasising that the mobility of the text was socially constituted.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in what follows, each copy of ‘þe proporcions’ is considered as an individual testament to the processes of production, dissemination and reception of the earliest known example of a treatise in the English vernacular on vulgate *musica speculativa*. Furthermore, as historical artefacts, each version of ‘þe proporcions’ is capable of providing insights into a different context in

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<sup>4</sup> The ‘best text’ method is associated with Joseph Bédier, ‘La tradition Manuscrite du Lai de l’Ombre: Réflexions sur l’Art d’Éditer les Anciens Textes’, *Romania*, 54 (1928), 161–96.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la Variante: Histoire Critique de la Philologie* (Paris: Des Travaux, 1989); English translation by Betsy Wing, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Zumthor, *Essai de Poétique Médiévale* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1983); Tim William Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

which the treatise circulated.<sup>8</sup> By comparing multiple versions of the same treatise, and highlighting and considering the textual and paratextual differences, it is possible to identify different audiences for the texts and to expand what is known about the circulation of the treatise. Accordingly, the first part of this chapter compares the texts of the three extant copies of ‘þe proporcions’. A corpus of variants emerges (see Appendix I).<sup>9</sup> The second part of the chapter provides a comparative analysis of the paratextual features of the three copies. The copies and their material embodiment in the manuscripts allow for commentary on the transmission of the treatise, and I postulate two possible ways in which the text could have been transmitted to John Benet, ultimately the owner of one copy of Chilston’s text. At the end of the chapter, I speculate about the author’s intent in creating the treatise, as evidenced by the shared aspects of the text in its discrepant material contexts.

John Scattergood transcribed the version of ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516 in early 2016. Transcriptions of all three texts have become available online as part of the ‘Texts on Music in English’ (TME) database.<sup>10</sup> My research relies on John Scattergood’s transcription of the copy of ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516 and Peter Lefferts’ transcriptions of Lansdowne MS 763 and The Morgan Library, MS B.12. I am indebted to both scholars for allowing me to consult their transcriptions.

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen G. Nichols, ‘Philology in a Manuscript Culture’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 1–10.

<sup>9</sup> Ralph Hanna, *Editing Medieval Texts: An Introduction, Using Exemplary Materials Derived from Richard Rolle, ‘Super Canticum’ 4* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Lefferts, ed., ‘Texts on Music in English’, *Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University* <<http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/index.html>> [accessed 13 February 2020]. Following an attack on the CHMTL website in 2015, the contents of the database were unavailable until 2017.

## 2.1 Corpus of variants

This section compares the texts of the three known versions of ‘þe proporcions’. Textual variants yield information about the intended audience for each text and the text’s purpose in three different contexts and even those that might have resulted from factors such as scribal errors or carelessness can reveal information about the various scribes.<sup>11</sup> It is reasonable at present to consider the material shared by all three texts as the work of Chilston, the person to whom the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 is attributed. Therefore, the shared material is also of great importance for the insights it can offer into Chilston and his vernacular text.

### 2.1.1 The *incipit*

Although the latter part of the *incipit* is common to all three known texts of ‘þe proporcions’, the initial headings and opening addresses to the reader are different in each of the three copies. The Latin heading of MS 516, displayed in the top right-hand corner of the first folio of the treatise and written in Benet’s hand, describes the treatise as ‘*incipiunt proporciones discantis in lingua materna*’ (see Fig. 1, below).<sup>12</sup> This heading was not included in the other two copies of ‘þe proporcions’ and therefore is unique to MS 516. Given that Benet composed other parts of his manuscript, including a Latin anathema at the opening of the book, he appears to have attained a reasonable level of Latin proficiency. Therefore, Benet might have been the author of the Latin heading.

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<sup>11</sup> Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel, eds, *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 129<sup>v</sup>, ‘the proportions of discant begin in the mother tongue’. Note that ‘*discantis*’ was written as a contraction and transcribed by Marvin L. Colker as ‘*discantis*’ rather than ‘*discantus*’, opting for the genitive singular version of the noun. See Marvin L. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin Descriptive Catalogue of the Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), vol. II, pp. 976–1002 (p. 992).

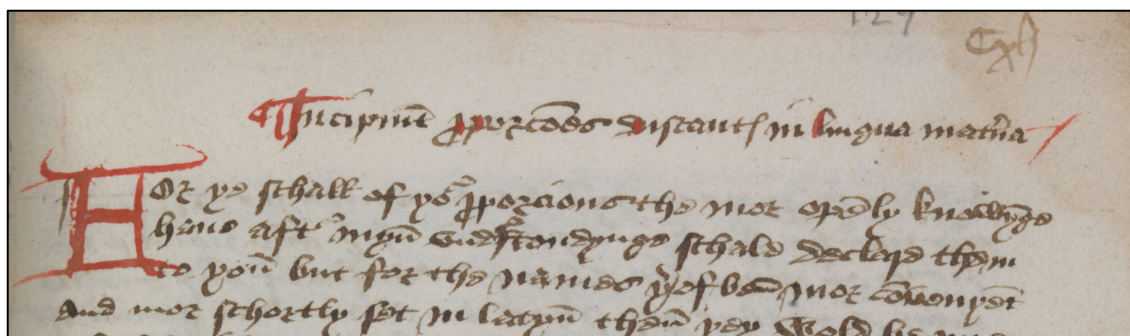


Fig. 1 Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 129<sup>r13</sup>

The short heading in MS 516 includes a reference to *discant*. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century, *discantus*, or *discant*, was a term used for certain types of polyphonic music in which a part was composed or improvised against a plainchant melody. Treatises on *discant* between the thirteenth and fifteenth century were preoccupied with the rules of consonance and voice-leading. In the fourteenth century, the word also adopted a connotation of counterpoint that was perpetuated by English and continental writers throughout the following century. For medieval counterpoint to be considered successful, it was necessary to adhere to rules that were determined by consonances, which were organised by the ratios that constituted them. Although ‘*þe pporcions*’ outlines the ratios that underpinned musical intervals, it does not connect this knowledge to the practice of *discant*. Despite this, the author of the Latin heading in MS 516 described the information in ‘*þe pporcions*’ as ‘*proporciones discantis*’. Therefore, it appears that the person who created the heading was aware of the importance of mathematical ratios for establishing the consonance of intervals and, therefore, the rules of *discant*. If Benet was the author of this heading, this would suggest that he understood the practical musical implications of the mathematical material in his treatise. However, there are other plausible explanations for the reference to *discant* in the heading of the treatise in MS

<sup>13</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, Manuscript and Archives Research Library, Digital Image

516. Wylde included a treatise on discant in Lansdowne MS 763 directly before ‘þe proporcions’.<sup>14</sup> If Benet had copied from the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763, the reference to discant in his heading in MS 516 could have occurred because the opening of ‘þe proporcions’ in Lansdowne 763 mentions the previous treatise on discant.

Although only three copies survive, this is not necessarily indicative of the number of copies that circulated in fifteenth-century England. Many sources have been lost over the centuries, and so it is essential to consider the possibility of unknown sources when attempting to comment on the circulation of a medieval treatise. Throughout this chapter, the idea that Benet might have been copying from a now-lost source recurs because none of the three known versions exactly replicate another. In the case of the Latin heading in MS 516, Benet might have copied from another exemplar that contained this heading. Consequently, it is not possible to extrapolate from the heading in MS 516 whether Benet understood the practical implications of the contents of ‘þe proporcions’.

The reference to discant is not the only notable feature of Benet’s heading. The heading also described the treatise as ‘*in lingua materna*’, or in the mother-tongue, which refers to the use of Middle English.<sup>15</sup> While Benet could have procured the same information contained in this treatise from better-known and more common Latin sources, such as Boethius’ *De institutione musica*, he might have included the treatise in his manuscript precisely because it was in English. If Benet composed the heading, his reference to the language of the treatise highlights it as a significant feature of ‘þe proporcions’. The other scribes referred to the language of the treatise in the main body of the text, as did Benet.

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<sup>14</sup> London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 113<sup>v</sup>–16<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> MS 516, fol. 129<sup>v</sup>.

However, the version in MS 516 is the only version to indicate the language in the heading.

John Wylde, the scribe of British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, presented an entirely different introduction to the treatise. Although he included the *incipit* in the body of the text, he rubricated the beginning of the treatise, delineating it from the previous treatise (see Fig. 2, below). The opening text introduced several treatises, all of which were connected by their preoccupation with proportions: ‘Here beginneth Tretises diuerse of musical proporcions. And of their naturis. and denominacions. Ferst in englissh. and than in latyne’.<sup>16</sup> These opening statements explain that the proportions will be explained initially in English and then presented in Latin. However, this does not happen in ‘þe proporcions’, in which the Latin nomenclature generally precedes the English explanation. Therefore, it is possible that the heading refers to both ‘þe proporcions’ and the separate Latin treatise on proportions that follows in Lansdowne MS 763.<sup>17</sup> The author of the heading, who was probably Wylde, likely understood that the two treatises contain information on the same topic, albeit in different languages. It appears that Wylde wrote the opening of the treatise specifically for Lansdowne MS 763. The treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 was also the only version to declare from the outset that the treatise was concerned with music, suggesting that Wylde valued this treatise for its musical connection—something to be expected in a musical anthology.

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<sup>16</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fols 123<sup>r</sup>–32<sup>r</sup>. For a list of contents of Lansdowne MS 763, see Table 3.3.

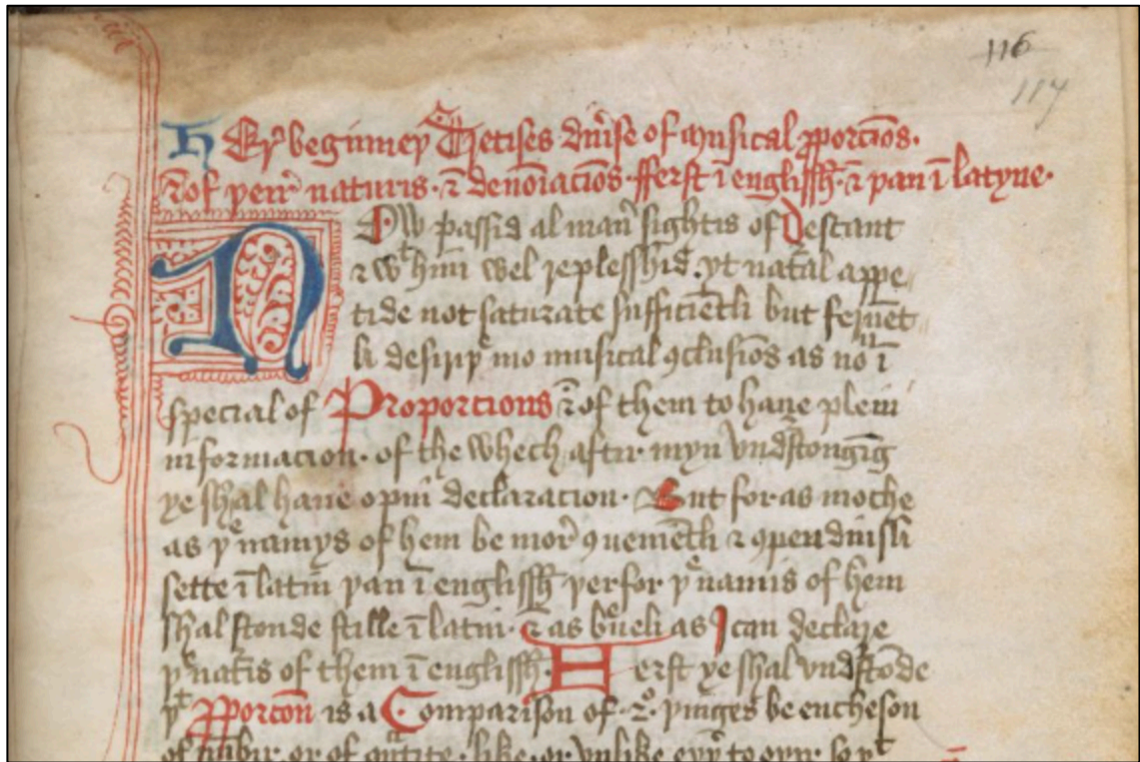


Fig. 2 London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 117<sup>r</sup><sup>18</sup>

Directly under the rubricated opening of Lansdowne MS 763, the next part of the treatise referred to the treatise on discant (fols 112<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>r</sup>) that was included in Lansdowne MS 763 directly before ‘*pe proporcions*’: ‘NOW passid al maner sightis of Descant and with him wel replesshid. yt natural appetite not saturate sufficientli but feruentli desirthe mo musical conclusions’.<sup>19</sup> It appears that Wylde was aware of the previous treatises in the manuscript when he copied ‘*pe proporcions*’ and that he copied the treatise specifically to include in Lansdowne MS 763. The reference to the preceding treatise (now attributed to Pseudo-Chilston) on discant in the opening of ‘*pe proporcions*’ in Lansdowne MS 763 suggests that these two Middle English treatises might have circulated together.

Lansdowne MS 763 contains a third English treatise, which preceded Pseudo-Chilston’s treatise. Pseudo-Chilston’s treatise opened with ‘Here folwip a litil tretise a-cording to

<sup>18</sup> London, British Library, Digital Image

<sup>19</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>.

þe ferst tretise of þe sight of discant, & also for þe sight of countir, for þe syght of the countirtenor & of ffaburdon'.<sup>20</sup> This statement connected the Pseudo-Chilston treatise with the treatise that preceded it, authored by Lyonel Power, which also concerned discant. Given the cross-references between treatises, the three English treatises might have circulated as a trio.<sup>21</sup> However, within the treatise, and throughout the manuscript more generally, Wylde referred to other items in Lansdowne MS 763, which suggests that he strived for organisation within his manuscript. Wylde, therefore, could have composed the introductory sections himself, situating the treatises specifically within his manuscript and demonstrating a deep understanding of the contents of the musical treatises.

The version of the treatise in The Morgan Library, MS B.12 began with an address to the reader that also featured in the other two versions. The heading, however, was unique to this copy of the text. The scribe of MS B.12 wrote '*De proporitonibus*' in red at the top of the first folio (see Fig. 3, below).<sup>22</sup> This was probably a spelling error; the next time that the scribe used this word in the main text, he used the spelling '*proportionibus*', suggesting that the spelling in the heading was unintentional. The heading in MS B.12 found at the top of fol. 63<sup>r</sup> was decorated with a simple drawing of a curved line shaped like a backwards 's', which preceded the text of the heading. This symbol was ornamented with three circles, two on one side of the curved line, and two on the other, forming a triangle. Given the connection between number and divine matters, specifically

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<sup>20</sup> The following modern English translation comes from Sanford B. Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English from a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript', *Speculum*, 10 (1935), 235–69 (p. 254): 'Here follows a little treatise which deals with discant in the manner of the first treatise and which also deals with the singing of the parts of counter, countertenor, and fauxburdon', in Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 113<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fols 105<sup>v</sup>–13<sup>r</sup>, Lyonel Power's treatise on discant; Lansdowne MS 763, fols 113<sup>v</sup>–16<sup>v</sup>, Pseudo-Chilston treatise on discant; Lansdowne MS 763, fols 117<sup>r</sup>–22<sup>v</sup>, 'þe proporcions', attributed to Chilston.

<sup>22</sup> New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12, fol. 63<sup>r</sup>.



the number three, it is possible that the drawing was a visual depiction of the connection between mathematics and mysticism that was inherent in *musica speculativa*. It suggests that the scribe understood that the treatise was a display of medieval numerology and was conscious of its connection to speculative thinking.

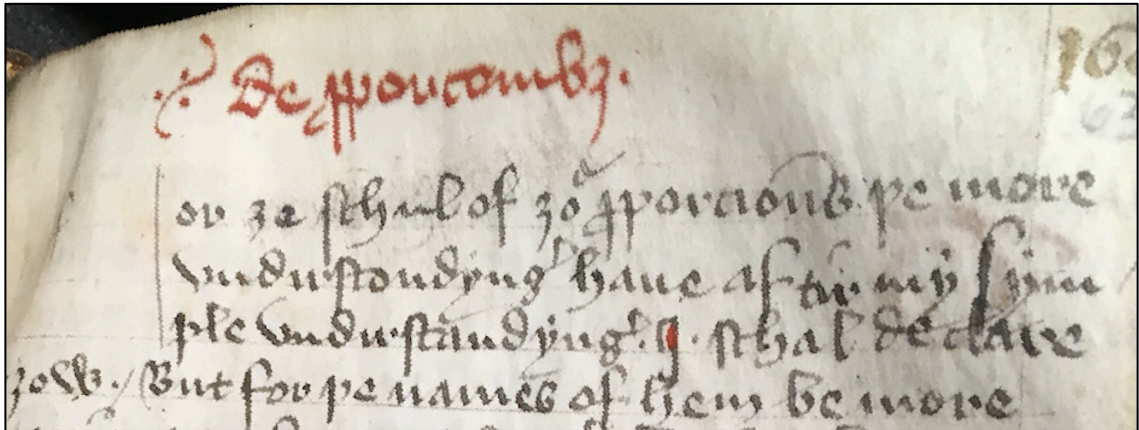


**Fig. 3** New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12, fol. 63<sup>r</sup><sup>23</sup>

Thus, there are three distinct openings to ‘*pe pporcions*’. MS 516 and MS B.12 display two different Latin headings, while the text in Lansdowne MS 763 contains an extended introduction in English that contextualised the treatise within the manuscript. Following the individual openings, all three versions of the treatise include a shared address to the reader. The material that features in all three copies of the treatise (or in both Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 during the extensive lacuna in MS 516) will be considered as the work of Chilston. The shared material in the opening asserted that it would provide the reader with information on proportions (see Fig. 4, below).<sup>24</sup> It is instructional in tone and reads as though a teacher is instructing a learner, with all texts referring to the anonymous reader, or readers, as ‘ye’. ‘Ye’ functioned as a plural and singular second-

<sup>23</sup> Author’s photograph

<sup>24</sup> MS 516, fol. 129<sup>r</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 63<sup>r</sup>.

person nominative pronoun in Middle English, so it is not possible to conjecture from this whether the author intended to address a single reader or a group of readers.

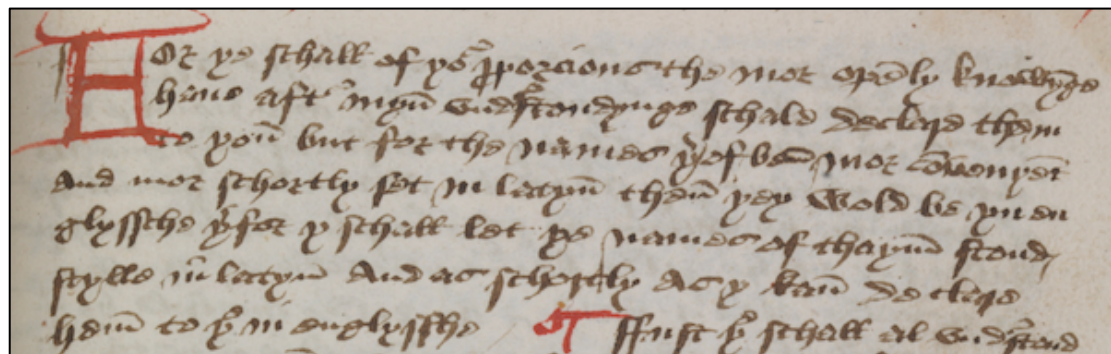


**Fig. 4** Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 129<sup>r</sup><sup>25</sup>

It was common in late medieval vernacular texts for the opening material to refer to the process of translation.<sup>26</sup> In ‘*be proporcions*’, Chilston commented on the linguistic choices within the treatise, stating that when the names of the proportions were more convenient and concise in Latin than in English, he would retain the Latin names and briefly explain the terminology in English. This claim suggests that there was an absence of appropriate technical terms in English on the subject of mathematical ratios and proportions. Furthermore, Chilston claimed that his task was to explain the various proportions as efficiently as he could in English, foregrounding the importance of his treatise as a translation of information that was more commonly found in Latin and suggesting that his use of English was notable. The survey of texts on music in English in Chapter One suggested that Chilston’s treatise might have been the first on music proportions in English.

<sup>25</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, Manuscript and Archives Research Library, Digital Image

<sup>26</sup> Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans, eds, *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. xv.

At this point in the treatise, it would have been usual for the author to refer to authoritative works from which he had derived his knowledge. This common feature in medieval texts was used to establish both the treatise and the author within a literary tradition.<sup>27</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, it is possible to find Latin predecessors for ‘*pe proporcions*’ in Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, Isidore of Seville and later writers such as Thomas Bradwardine and Prosdocimus de Beldemandis, to name just a few.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Chilston could have contextualised the treatise within the Boethian tradition of speculative music theory, but he did not refer to any other authority at the beginning of the treatise.

### 2.1.2 Proportion

An exploration of proportions begins the treatise proper, with all three versions of ‘*pe proporcions*’ defining proportion as a comparison of two things concerned with number or with quantity.<sup>29</sup> This definition is consistent with Boethius’ definition in *De institutione musica*, even though Bower chose to use the word ‘ratio’ in his English translation of Boethius’ Latin text, which highlights an issue with the translation of the nomenclature of mathematical proportions.<sup>30</sup> According to Bower, the verbal relationship that exists between the words ‘*proportio*’ and ‘*ratio*’ in Latin and Greek does not exist in English; *proportio* must be translated into English as ratio, and *proportionalitas* as

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<sup>27</sup> C. Matthew Balensuela, ‘The Borrower is Servant to the Lender: Examples of Unacknowledged Borrowings in Anonymous Theoretical Treatises’, *Acta Musicologica*, 75 (2003), 1–16 (p. 1).

<sup>28</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music* [*De Institutione Musica*], trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca, Music Theory Translation Series (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1989); Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Berney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and H. Lamar Crosby, *Thomas of Bradwardine: His Tractatus de Proportionibus. Its Significance for the Development of Mathematical Physics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955). Prosdocimus de Beldemandis, *A Short Summary of Ratios insofar as They Pertain to Music; and, A Little Treatise on the Method of Dividing the Monochord*, trans. and ed. Jan Herlinger, Greek and Latin Music Theory (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> MS 516, fol. 129<sup>r</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 63<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, p. 65.

proportion.<sup>31</sup> In Chilston's Middle English treatise, however, 'proporcioun' (MS 516 and MS B.12) or 'proporcion' (Lansdowne MS 763) was used to designate what Bower termed 'ratio' when translating Boethius from Latin into modern English. Similarly, 'proporciounalite' (MS 516) or 'proporcionalitas' (Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12) was used where Bower used the term 'proportion' in his translation. To be consistent with the treatise at the heart of this dissertation, I will use the word proportion where the copies of 'þe proporcions' have used 'proporcioun' or 'proporcion', and 'proportionality' where they have used 'proporciounalite' or 'proporcionalitas'. Ambiguous terminology was common in translations on this topic from Latin into English in early vernacular texts, leading to confusion throughout the middle ages regarding the distinction between ratio, proportion and proportionality.<sup>32</sup>

Most medieval texts concerned with proportions devoted a significant section to a comparable classificatory system, beginning with the division of proportions into equality and inequality and followed by an exploration of the five classes of the proportions of inequality. The introductory information contained in 'þe proporcions' was consistent with other Latin medieval treatises that concerned the doctrine of proportions. In keeping with the authorities, all three versions of the treatise stated that proportion could be divided into the proportion of equality and proportion of inequality and that the proportions of inequality could be categorised into five different species or kinds. Both Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 listed the species of the proportions of inequality as multiplex, superparticular, superpartient, multiplex superparticular, and

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<sup>31</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, p. 65.

<sup>32</sup> Oscar João Abdounur, 'Ratios and Music in the Late Middle Ages: A Preliminary Study', in *Music and Mathematics in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Philippe Vendrix (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 23–70, (p. 36).

multiplex superpartient.<sup>33</sup> Despite similar claims in MS 516 regarding the five species of proportions of inequality, the text in this manuscript proceeded to list only the multiplex superpartient proportion, the final species in the list.<sup>34</sup> The scribe of MS 516 did not name the other four kinds of proportion of inequality, regardless of the implication that a list of five would follow. The omission of the first four classes of proportion appears to have been a scribal error. In examining the other two examples of the text as possible exemplars for Benet, Lansdowne MS 763 listed the species over two lines with the first four on one line and ‘*multiplex superparciens*’ on the next line. If Lansdowne MS 763 had been the exemplar from which he was copying, it is conceivable that Benet’s eye could have skipped a line. When considering this particular error, it appears unlikely that MS B.12 was Benet’s exemplar. The scribe of MS B.12 spread the list of the five species over two folios, writing ‘*particularis multiplex superparciens*’, on the second folio to finish his list. If Benet had been copying from MS B.12, this would imply that he had finished copying the previous folio and turned to the new folio without transcribing the first four species of the list, which is possible. However, upon turning to the next folio, Benet should have noticed that the word ‘*particularis*’ preceded ‘*multiplex superparciens*’ as the first word on the page. Benet’s version of the treatise does not include the first word of fol. 160<sup>v</sup>, therefore suggesting that it is unlikely that Benet was copying from MS B.12 in this instance. It also remains possible that Benet was copying from an incomplete exemplar that is now lost. The omission of four out of five classes of proportions from Benet’s treatise is a considerable absence at the beginning of the treatise and leads to questions about Benet’s understanding of the contents, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

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<sup>33</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 117<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fols 63<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> MS 516, fol. 129<sup>r</sup>.

After listing the species of proportions, albeit incompletely in MS 516, the three versions of the treatise provided near-identical descriptions of the multiplex proportion. They were consistent in the numerical examples given to exemplify the proportion. From the shared material, it appears that the author was not concerned with the order in which he presented the numbers. At times, the author stated both the proportion and the reciprocal of the proportion, e.g. 2 to 4 and 4 to 2.<sup>35</sup> In other places in the treatise, he presented only the proportion or only the reciprocal. However, it appears to have been random as to whether he selected the proportion or its reciprocal. Other authors have indicated the position of the larger number by using the prefix ‘sub-’ to designate the reciprocal. However, in this treatise, the author did not differentiate between a proportion and its reciprocal. It could be that the author intended to minimise complexity in this introduction to proportions by not differentiating between the two and using them interchangeably.

After the section on multiplex proportions, the treatise describes ‘*aliquota*’ and ‘*non aliquota*’ parts. An aliquot is a number that can be divided into another multiple times without excess. Benet’s version of the text does not contain the word ‘non’. Instead, it lists the two different parts as ‘*aliquota*’ and ‘*aliquota*’, which was likely to have been a scribal error on Benet’s part. All three versions of the treatise then state that the number one is an aliquot part of every number, meaning that the number one can be contained in every number evenly and without excess. This definition is consistent with the medieval concept of number as only positive and whole integers that are greater than one, which was derived from the Greek restrictions placed on the definition of what constituted a

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<sup>35</sup> This mathematical phenomenon is more commonly known today as the reciprocal of the ratio. For a contemporaneous treatise on proportions that included a discussion of reciprocal ratios, see Prosdocimus de Beldemandis, *A Short Summary of Ratios*, p. 63.

number.<sup>36</sup> The text continued with the statement that the number two is '*pars aliquota*' of every even number, meaning that every even number is a multiple of the number two. This insistence on positive integers as the only valid definition of number embedded the contents of the treatise in the Pythagorean tradition.

Following the section on aliquot parts, the scribes of Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 continued to describe the species of proportion of inequality. However, Benet did not complete the section on the proportions of inequality in his manuscript.<sup>37</sup> He stopped copying during his definition of the superparticular proportion and did not resume copying until midway through the section on geometric proportionality. The other two manuscripts provided thorough explanations of the four remaining species of proportion of inequality: superparticular, superpartient, multiplex superparticular and multiplex superpartient. Therefore, it is possible to state definitively that, because of such an extended omission in MS 516, the scribes of the other two copies of 'þe proporcions' did not copy from the example in MS 516.

After the superparticular proportion, Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 both claimed that the superpartient proportion occurs when the larger number contains a smaller number once and there remains an excess. The author of Lansdowne MS 763 declared that this excess, the remainder, is not an aliquot part of the smaller number, while MS B.12 declared that the excess is an aliquot part of the smaller number.<sup>38</sup> In his treatise on arithmetic, Nicomachus of Gerasa stated that the larger number of a superpartient proportion contains within itself the whole of the number compared with it and more than

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<sup>36</sup> Peter Pesic, 'Hearing the Irrational: Music and the Development of the Modern Concept of Number', *Isis*, 10 (2010), 501–30 (p. 504).

<sup>37</sup> MS 516, fol. 129<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 118<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 64<sup>v</sup>.

one part of it.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Isidore of Seville, in his encyclopaedic work, *Etymologiae*, described the superpartient proportion as that which contains the whole of a lesser number and also two parts of it, or three, or four, or five, or other parts.<sup>40</sup> While neither Nicomachus nor Isidore specifically referenced the need to have an aliquot part as an exact divisor of the smaller number, neither specified that the part should be ‘*non aliquota*’. The answer was offered by Prosdocimus de Beldemandis, who summarised proportions insofar as they pertained to music. Prosdocimus wrote that a superpartient proportion occurs when ‘the greater quantity contains the lesser once and not several times, plus something beyond that is a non-aliquot part of the lesser quantity’, which confirms that the error occurred in MS B.12 through the omission of the word ‘non’.<sup>41</sup> Instead, the true definition of a superpartient proportion should describe an occurrence in which the larger number contains the smaller number and an excess that is not an aliquot part, as was written in the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763. Following this discrepancy, the copies of the text in Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 contain the same information on the superpartient proportion, including the same error.<sup>42</sup> Both copies incorrectly state that between seven and three is ‘*superquartiparciens tercias*’.<sup>43</sup> This computation is not possible, however, as three is contained in seven twice but for a proportion to be considered superpartient, the larger number must contain just a whole and a part of the smaller number. As both Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 contained the exact same error, it is possible that the exemplar from which the scribes were working, if one existed, also contained this error. In his commentary on this error, Curt Bühler cited other

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<sup>39</sup> Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Introduction to Arithmetic*, trans. Martin Luther D’ooge (London and New York, NY: Macmillan, 1926), p. 220.

<sup>40</sup> Edward Grant, ed., *A Source Book in Medieval Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Prosdocimus de Beldemandis, *A Short Summary of Ratios*, p. 55.

<sup>42</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 118<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 64<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 118<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 65<sup>r</sup>.



examples of errors in early mathematical works by English men and declared that the error was not the fault of the scribes of ‘þe proporcions’.<sup>44</sup> However, in Matthew Driscoll’s account of the problems associated with the stemmatic method, he warned that ‘it assumes, among other things, that no two scribes will ever independently make the same mistake, which they frequently do’.<sup>45</sup> Although it is plausible that both scribes could have made this mistake independently, it is more likely that they were both copying from the same source that also contained incorrect information. It is also interesting to note that the phrase ‘*superquartiparciens tercias*’ in Lansdowne MS 763 was crossed out and ‘*dupla sesquetercias*’ was written in the margin in a different hand. This shows that the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 was read by readers other than Wylde and that the reader recognised the error and could correct it.

The definition of the multiplex superparticular proportion was also copied incompletely into both Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12. Both manuscripts defined it as a proportion in which the greater number contains the smaller number and an aliquot part.<sup>46</sup> For example, five and two are ‘*sesquealtera*’, as are ten and four, and twenty and eight. Seven and three, however, are ‘*dupla sesquetercia*’, as are fourteen and six. The treatise does not specify that the smaller number should be contained in the larger number more than once, thus failing to differentiate the superparticular from the multiplex superparticular proportion. From the numerical examples, however, it would have been possible for the reader to have inferred that the defining characteristic of this type of proportion was the

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<sup>44</sup> Curt F. Bühler, ‘A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions (sometimes attributed to Chilston)’, *Speculum*, 21 (1946), 229–33 (pp. 231–32).

<sup>45</sup> Matthew James Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New’, in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, The Viking Collection, 18 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2010), pp. 87–104 (p. 89).

<sup>46</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 118<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 65<sup>r</sup>.

combination of the multiple proportion and the aliquot part. Similar to the multiplex superparticular proportion, the author did not state the multiple properties of the multiplex superpartient proportion. However, the examples depicted the multiple proportion that was inherent to the multiplex superpartient proportion and affirmed the importance of both the multiple aspect and the remaining non-aliquot part in the definition of such a proportion. Here, the treatise failed to explain the mathematics in question adequately, rather than necessarily containing errors, but this is in contrast to the other precise definitions throughout the treatise. Perhaps this time, the author's attempt at brevity resulted in an insufficient explanation.

The section on proportions concluded by stating that the rules of proportions and their denominations were complete and that the reader should understand that proportion is a comparison between diverse quantities or numbers, referring to the definition with which the treatise began.<sup>47</sup> At this point, the scribes of both MS B.12 and Lansdowne MS 763 turned their attention from proportion to proportionality.

### 2.1.3 Proportionality

The author of the text defined proportionality as a comparison of two proportions in at least three quantities and described the three manners of proportionality as geometric, arithmetic and harmonic.<sup>48</sup> Benet's version of the text did not express this tripartite division as he did not recommence his copying at the beginning of the section on proportionality. The copy of the text in MS B.12 made clear the start of a new section

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<sup>47</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 120<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fols 65<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 120<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fols 65<sup>r-v</sup>. This section was described as pertaining to proportionality in the three versions of the treatise, but the phenomena are known as geometric, arithmetic, and harmonic proportions in modern mathematics. As before, I will use proportionality in adherence with the author of 'þe proporcions'.

with the heading '*Alia regula*', another rule. In Lansdowne MS 763, the end of the section on proportions was delineated by '*Secuntur denominaciones*'. Both phrases signified the end of the section on proportions and the beginning of the next section. This would have been an obvious place for Benet to recommence his transcription of the treatise. Instead, he resumed his transcription of the treatise in the middle of the section on geometric proportion.<sup>49</sup> He omitted the beginning of the sentence that should have expressed the idea that geometric proportionality occurred between two things when the quantities of the two were equal in proportion, that is when the same proportion was found between the first and the second term as between the second and the third term. He began with an incomplete sentence, stating only 'between the second and the third' and leaving the reader unsure as to what he was referring. The other two extant versions of 'be proporcions' help to give context to this fragmentary sentence. Without an indication that the treatise was now dealing with the three manners of proportion, it would not be possible to acquire a thorough understanding of proportions from Benet's text alone. Indeed, without the other two examples as reference aides, a reader would be challenged to understand much of the content of Benet's treatise given the extensive lacuna. After this incomplete first sentence and for the remainder of the treatise, there are no noticeable omissions when compared with the other two texts. In the middle of this section on geometric proportionality, Benet included an additional list of numbers, which does not seem to pertain to geometric proportionality: 35, 42, 49, 56, 64, 72, 81, 98, 110, 144, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (see Fig. 5, below).<sup>50</sup> The other two extant copies did not include this list. Perhaps Benet compiled this list of numbers of his own accord. Alternatively, if he

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<sup>49</sup> MS 516, fols 129<sup>v</sup>–30<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>r</sup>.

had been copying from a now-lost version of the text, it might have also included these numbers.

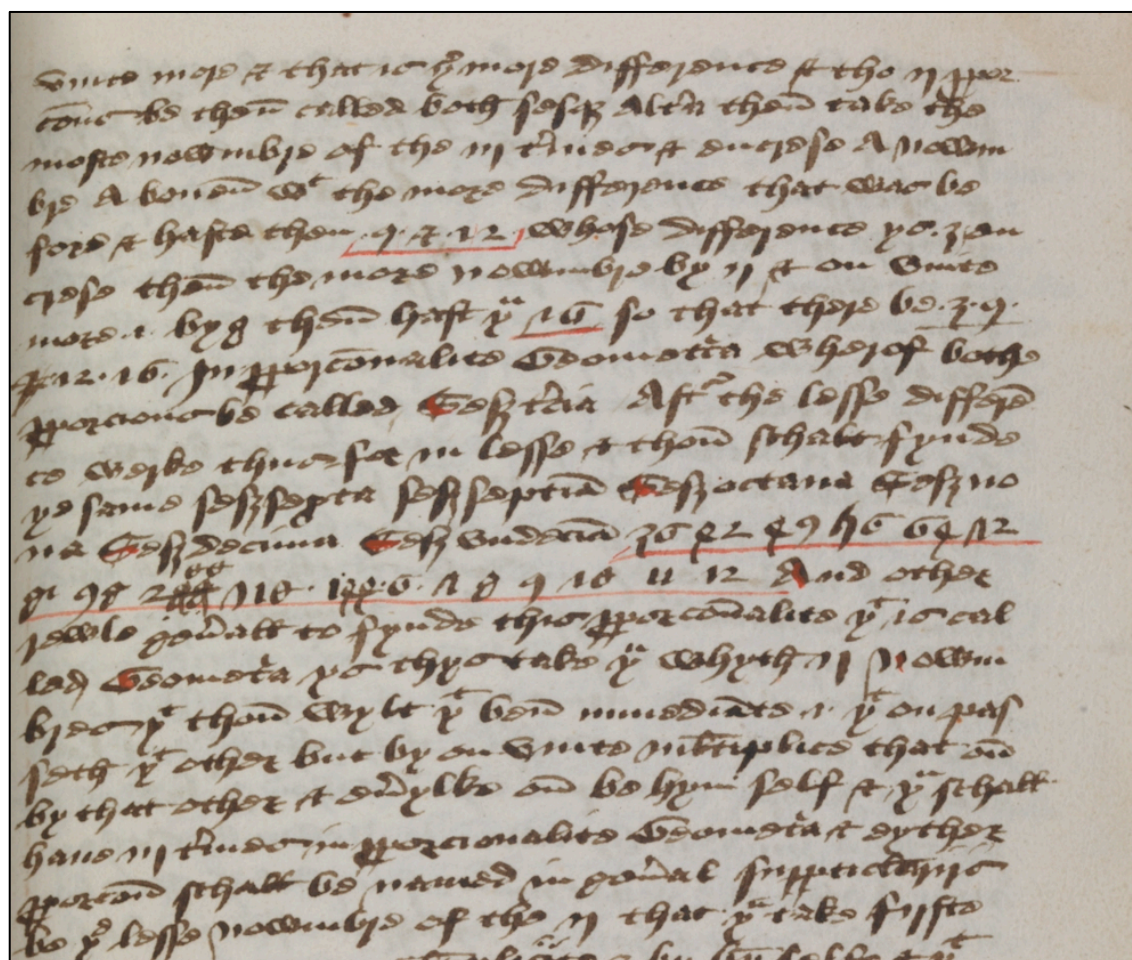


Fig. 5 Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 130<sup>r</sup><sup>51</sup>

After his unique list of numbers, Benet presented another rule for finding geometric proportionality: when the middle term was multiplied by itself, it was equal to the sum of the two extremes when they were multiplied by each other. The copies in Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 also included this rule. All three versions listed the numbers nine, twelve, and sixteen as an example of geometric proportionality, which is correct. However, when attempting to demonstrate that the multiplication of the middle term by

<sup>51</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, Manuscript and Archives Research Library, Digital Image

itself should equate to the multiplication of the two extremities, both MS 516 and Lansdowne MS 763 featured unique errors in their computations: Benet equated twelve times twelve to six times nine, while Wylde stated in Lansdowne MS 763 that fifteen times nine was equal to 144.<sup>52</sup> Despite the errors, all copies of the treatise finished this extended section on geometric proportionality by claiming that this rule never fails in this manner of proportionality.

As already discussed, all three copies of ‘þe proporcions’ describe ratios in the first section of the treatise as ‘proporcions’, and reserve ‘proporcionalitas’ for the second section, which deals with the phenomenon that modern mathematics describes as proportions. However, in turning the attention to arithmetic proportionality after geometric proportionality, all copies of the treatise begin to use the term ‘proporcion’ rather than ‘proporcionalitas’. Even though the scribe of MS B.12 wrote ‘*proporcionalitas armonica*’ as a heading, they also used the term ‘proporcion’ throughout the section rather than ‘proporcionalitas’.<sup>53</sup> This inconsistent usage of the terms relating to proportions was common in late medieval England and contributed to the confusion over terminology.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, all three copies of the text defined arithmetic proportionality in a way that relates to proportionality rather than proportion, given that it deals with the relationship between three terms and not two: when the largest number exceeds the second number by as much as the second exceeds the third, and so on if there are more terms to consider.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>r</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fols 121<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> MS B.12, fol. 66<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Abdounur, ‘Ratios and Music in the Late Middle Ages’, p. 36.

<sup>55</sup> MS 516, fols 130<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fols 66<sup>v</sup>–67<sup>r</sup>.

To conclude the section on proportionality, the treatise named harmonic proportionality and demonstrated it through the numbers twelve, eight, and six. The difference between the first two numbers is four, and between the second two numbers is two. The proportion between the two differences, four and two, is the same as that between the first and the third terms, twelve and six. While the texts in both MS 516 and Lansdowne MS 763 exemplified this proportion using correct numbers, the scribe of MS B.12 wrote that the difference between twelve and eight was two.<sup>56</sup> The scribe did not perpetuate the error in the next statement in MS B.12, which mirrors the other two versions of the treatise by comparing the numbers four and two, suggesting that it was an unintentional error on the part of the scribe of MS B.12.

#### 2.1.4 The three means

After naming the three types of proportionality and providing examples, the following section in all three manuscripts maintained a focus on means. MS B.12 included the heading '*De tribus predictis*', referring to the three proportionalities mentioned above (see Fig. 6, below).<sup>57</sup> The three extant texts all state that three means ('*medietates*' in Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 and '*mediatates*' in MS 516) were named after the three proportionalities. Here, Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 included an attribution to 'Boys', that is, Boethius. In late medieval England, statements attributed to a named authority were often considered more worthy of diligent attention.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, this attribution to Boethius helped to elevate the text of 'þe proporcions', insert it into the Boethian tradition and establish it as a text that could help to carry on Latin intellectual culture in a vernacular context. Boethius, in a similar vein to the ancient Greek thinkers,

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<sup>56</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> MS B.12, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 9.

considered there to be three fundamental middles, or means, between two terms—the geometric, the arithmetic, and the harmonic means. The reference to ‘Boys’ here confirmed that the author of ‘þe proporcions’ was aware that this nomenclature came from Boethius’ *De institutione musica*. The copies of ‘þe proporcions’ all defined geometry as treating length and breadth of land and arithmetic as concerning the study of numbers. Instead of listing harmony, however, they refer to music as treating the highness and lowness of the voice.<sup>59</sup> By using references to music and harmony interchangeably in this treatise, the author of ‘þe proporcions’ affirmed the connection between number and music that was prevalent in the fifteenth century.

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<sup>59</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>.



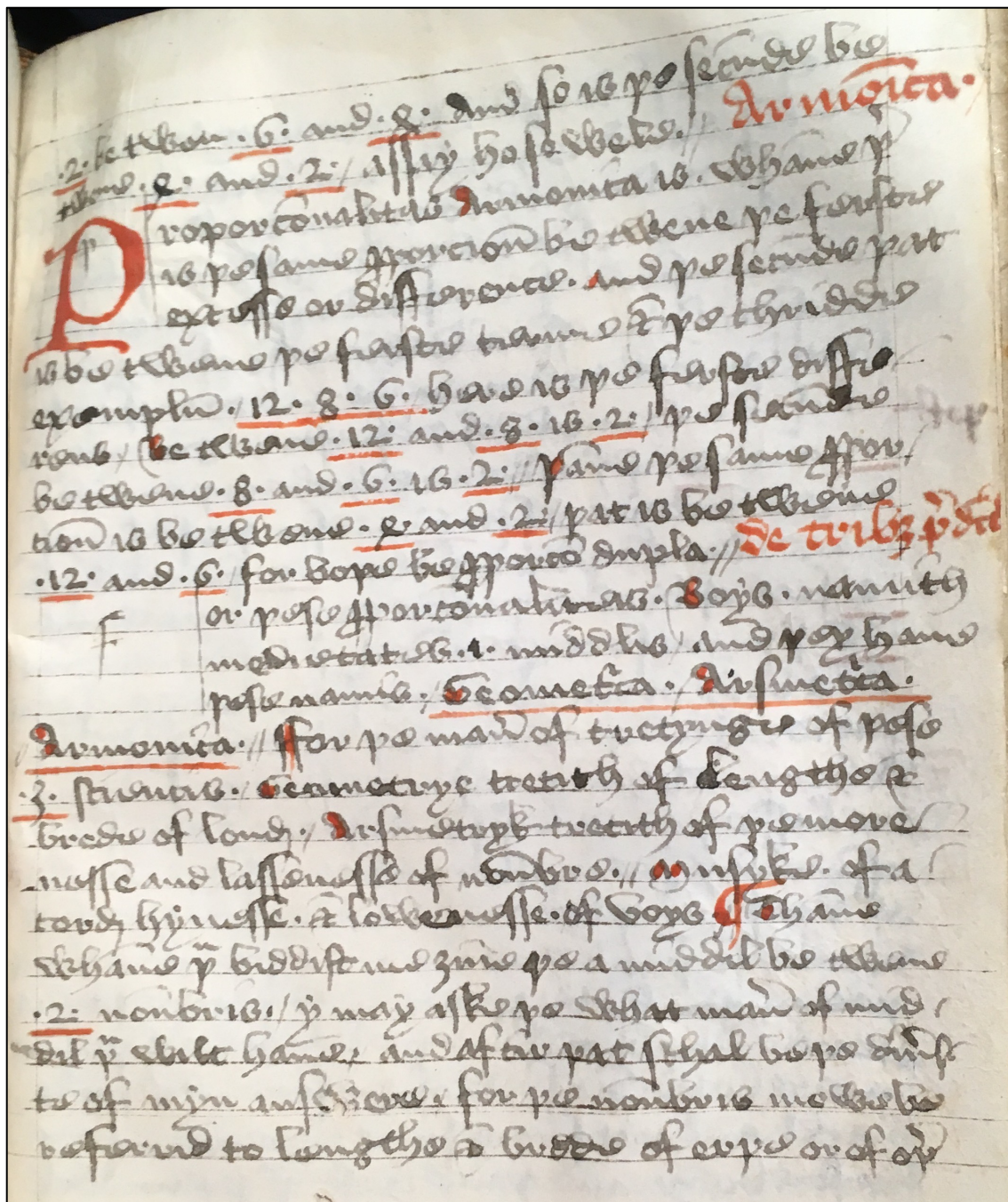


Fig. 6 New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12, fol. 67<sup>r60</sup>

The author employed a conversational tone in the next section, claiming that the reader had asked how to find the middle between two numbers. The author answered that the answer would depend upon the type middle to which the reader was referring: ‘Then

<sup>60</sup> Author’s photograph



when þou biddest me [g]yf the a myddil bytween ij nowmbres, then may I aske the what maner of mydil þou wilt haue & efter that schall be dyuersyte of myn ansure'.<sup>61</sup> If the numbers were referring to the length and breadth of land, they would belong to geometry. If they were considered numbers in themselves, they would belong to arithmetic. Finally, if the numbers in question were referring to the length, shortness, and measure of musical instruments that cause highness and lowness of voice, they belong to harmony and the craft of music.<sup>62</sup> This whole passage suggests a student-teacher relationship between the reader and the author. By anticipating that the reader would ask a question that lacked nuance (what is the middle between two numbers?), the author suggested that he was anticipating that the reader would be unfamiliar with the contents of the treatise. Just as a teacher would, the author then provided examples for finding each of the three means.<sup>63</sup> Arithmetic proportionality was described as 'opin' or 'opyn'.<sup>64</sup> The texts in both MS 516 and Lansdowne posed a rhetorical question, asking why the second proportionality can be considered 'opin' or 'opyn', which could be considered as an attempt to engage the reader as an inquisitive learner. It is not clear what Chilston meant by the use of the word 'opin' to describe arithmetic proportionality as he did not answer his own question, but as this Middle English term referred to something clear and well-known, it is likely that the author of the treatise was using it in this context.<sup>65</sup> This suggests that he was writing for an audience with some basic understanding of arithmetic.

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<sup>61</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fols 121<sup>v</sup>–22<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fols 67<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> MS 516, fols 130<sup>v</sup>–31<sup>r</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 122<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fols 67<sup>v</sup>–68<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> MS 516, fol. 131<sup>r</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 122<sup>r</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 68<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> Robert E. Lewis et al., 'Middle English Dictionary' (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000–2018) <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>> [accessed 14 March 2020]

The final section of the treatise is concerned with the harmonic mean.<sup>66</sup> According to Boethius, ‘this mean is derived in such a way that the largest term is related to the smallest in the same way that the difference between the larger terms is related to the difference between the lesser terms’.<sup>67</sup> In this section of ‘*pe proporcions*’, Chilston connected music to number theory in a way that reflected Boethius’ *De institutione musica*. He described diapason as ‘*proporcio dupla*’ and the next-best harmony after unison. A double proportion, with the ratio of 2:1, or 12:6 in Pythagorean terms, refers to the interval of an octave or, in Chilston’s treatise, the diapason.<sup>68</sup> By commenting on the hierarchy of consonances and placing the octave second only to unison, Chilston rooted this treatise in the Boethian tradition of *musica speculativa*. The treatise then named the extremes of the diapason as the treble and the tenor, which referred to the voice. Chilston divided the diapente, or the octave, into two intervals: diatessaron, or a fourth, and diapente, a fifth. He then exemplified the harmonic mean through the numbers 3:4:6, as Boethius did in Book Two, Chapter Twelve.<sup>69</sup> However, he used pipes to explain the means, connecting the abstract mathematics to objects. For further exploration of the harmonic mean, Chilston then guided the reader to the monochord, described in the treatise as the instrument of plainsong. In Lansdowne MS 763, Wylde also referred the reader to the first treatise in the manuscript, which concerned the division of the monochord (fols 1<sup>r</sup>–48<sup>r</sup>), demonstrating how the scribe of Lansdowne MS 763 adapted the treatise to suit his manuscript context. Neither MS 516 nor MS B.12 referred the reader to readings on the monochord as they did not contain a treatise on the monochord. The three copies then concluded that the reader had gained sufficient knowledge of the proportions.<sup>70</sup> This

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<sup>66</sup> MS 516, fols 131<sup>r-v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 122<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fols 68<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, p. 65.

<sup>68</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, p. 16. Diapason served as the name of an octave in antiquity and the middle ages.

<sup>69</sup> Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, p. 65.

<sup>70</sup> MS 516, fols 131<sup>r-v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 122<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fols 68<sup>r-v</sup>.

assertion reads like a teacher's summation, deciding for his students that they are sufficiently versed in a subject area.

### 2.1.5 The question of the *explicit* in MS 516

The text in MS 516 finished with what seemed to be an aphorism in Latin. It was transcribed by John Scattergood as '*perfeccio largarum constet in longis longarum in breuibis breuiumque in semebrevibus 4o set minimis probacio [sic] semper constat in semibreuibis*' (see Fig. 7, below).<sup>71</sup> The wording in Benet's treatise is close to an excerpt from *Libellus cantus mensurabilis*, which is attributed to the fourteenth-century theorist, Johannes de Muris.<sup>72</sup> Fifty-nine sources for *Libellus cantus mensurabilis* survive today.<sup>73</sup> The earliest source is dated as 1375 and the latest as 1526, showing an extensive copying period for the treatise. The treatise was copied and paraphrased throughout the fifteenth century, and some authors also adapted the work.<sup>74</sup> The excerpt in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1146 reads '*perfeccio largarum constat in longis. et longarum in breuibis. breuium in semibreuibis. et semibreuium in minimis Et nota quod prolacio semper constat in minimis et cetera*'.<sup>75</sup> There are some spelling errors in Benet's version. For example, although Benet wrote the word '*probacio*', the word should have been *prolactio*—prolation. This Latin segment occurred only in the copy of 'pe proporcions' that is found in MS 516 and, for this reason, it is unlikely that it featured in

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<sup>71</sup> 'Perfection/complete measurement of the *largae* notes consists in the *longae*, perfection of the *longae* in the breves, and perfection of the breves in the semibreves, but the prolation always consists in minims'. *Semibreves minimae* was the original name for the notes that were later called *minimae*. Translation verified by Charlie Kerrigan, Trinity College Dublin, and Ruth DeFord, Hunter College.

<sup>72</sup> Ruth I. DeFord, 'Diminution in the Theory of Johannes de Muris and His Followers', *Music Theory Spectrum*, 38 (2016), 58–84 (p. 58).

<sup>73</sup> Heinz Ristory, *Denkmodelle zur französischen Mensuraltheorie des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols (Ottawa: Institute of Medieval Music, 2004), vol. I, pp. 277–82.

<sup>74</sup> DeFord, 'Diminution in the Theory of Johannes de Muris and His Followers', p. 58.

<sup>75</sup> Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1146, fols 35<sup>r</sup>–46<sup>r</sup> (fols 39<sup>v</sup>–40<sup>r</sup>). Transcribed in 'Thesaurus Musicarum Latinarum', ed. Thomas J. Mathiesen, *Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University* <[http://boethius.music.indiana.edu/tml/14th/MURLIBR\\_MBAVR114](http://boethius.music.indiana.edu/tml/14th/MURLIBR_MBAVR114)> [accessed 15 March 2020]

the source from which Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 copied. As already stated, Benet might have been copying from a difference source than the ones extant today, which might have contained the Latin aphorism. Alternatively, Benet could have come into contact with *Libellus cantus mensurabilis* and included the idea at the end of ‘þe proporcions’, which would mean that he had access to a copy or to an adaptation of the treatise. If Benet synthesised parts of the two works, this would suggest that he understood the connection between the two texts.

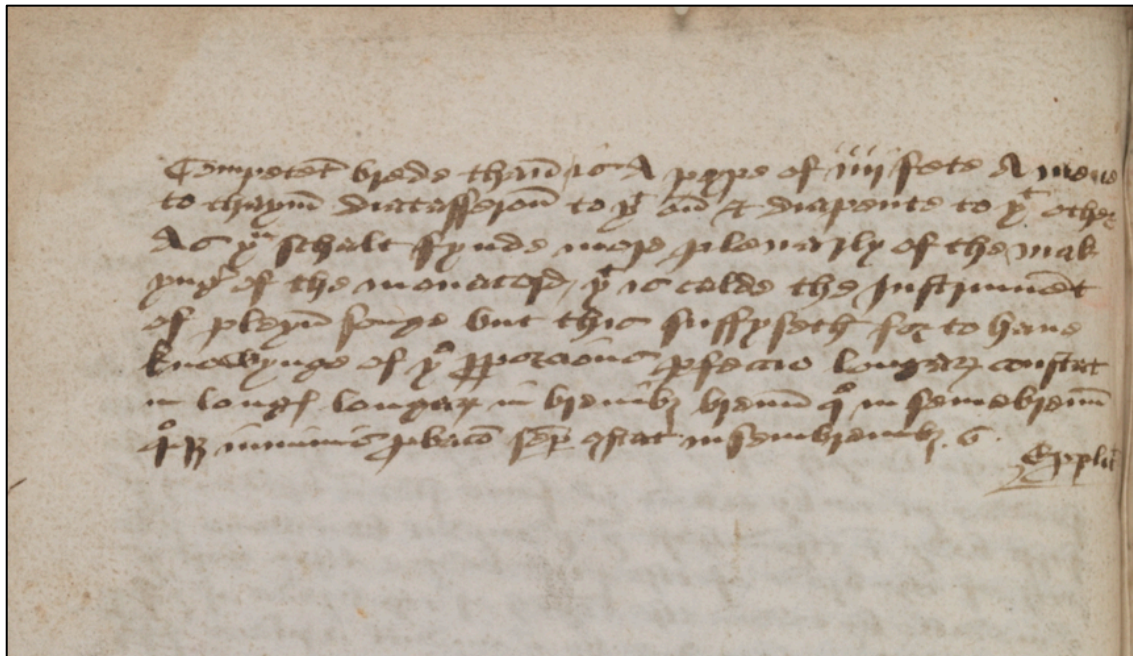


**Fig. 7** Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 131<sup>v76</sup>

Most versions of *Libellus cantus mensurabilis* contain the spelling ‘perfectio’. However, the version in MS 516 displays the word ‘perfeccio’. The excerpt that was included in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1146 also used this spelling. Although spelling was not standardised at that time, this could suggest a connection between

<sup>76</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, Manuscript and Archives Research Library, Digital Image

Benet's treatise and Reg. lat. 1146, which is thought to have circulated in England from the late fourteenth century.<sup>77</sup> Further research into this manuscript could confirm whether Benet likely accessed its contents. There are also many similarities between the contents of Reg. lat. 1146 and Lansdowne MS 763, but the manuscripts have yet to be connected. For now, it remains significant that an excerpt from the *Libellus cantus mensurabilis* circulated in Benet's parochial context.

#### 2.1.6 Marks of attribution

MS B.12 presents the treatise without attribution, which made it impossible to assign authorship from this treatise alone. However, Lansdowne MS 763 ends with '*secundum Chilston*', attributing the treatise to Chilston (see Fig. 8, below). A symbol follows the Latin aphorism at the end of the treatise in MS 516, preceding the final word, '*explicit*' (see Fig. 7, above). In his transcription of the text, Peter Lefferts interpreted this symbol as a number six.<sup>78</sup> Based on extensive knowledge of John Benet's hand, John Scattergood has confirmed that this symbol was more likely to have been a letter 'C' than the number six, which would denote the authorship of Chilston and concur with MS 763's attribution. Before the connection of MS 516 with Lansdowne MS 763, this symbol in MS 516 remained ambiguous and transcribed incorrectly. However, this dissertation has reassigned meaning to the symbol. The symbol also suggests that Benet was not copying from MS B.12, which has no attribution.

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<sup>77</sup> Anna Maria Busse Berger, *Mensuration and Proportion Signs: Origins and Evolution* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 58, 66, 166, 177. For more on the music treatises in Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1146, see Stefano Mengozzi, *The Renaissance Reform of Medieval Music Theory: Guido of Arezzo Between Myth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Peter Lefferts, ed., 'On the Three Manners of Proportions', in 'Texts on Music in English', *CHMTL* <[http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/15th/DEPRPC1C\\_MDTC516.html](http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/15th/DEPRPC1C_MDTC516.html)> [accessed 13 February 2020]

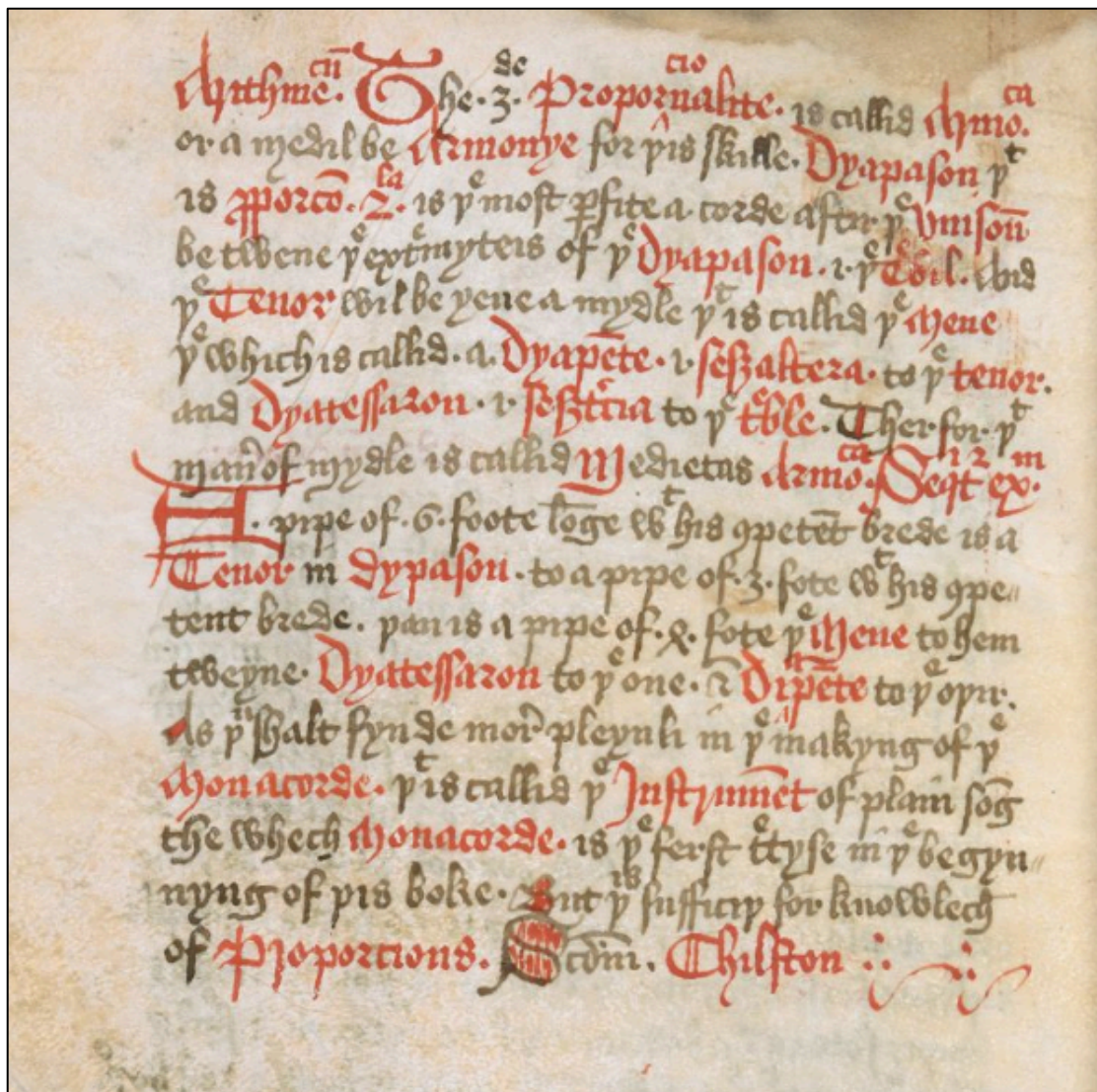


Fig. 8 London, Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 122<sup>v</sup><sup>79</sup>

### 2.1.7 Comparative readings

A comparative study of the texts of the three surviving versions of 'þe proporcions' has highlighted how the copies are the same and how they differ. Significantly, it has demonstrated that there is a large amount of shared material, particularly among Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12. This finding concurs with Bühler who suggested that, given their abundance of shared material, Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 were copied

<sup>79</sup> London, British Library, Digital Image

from the same original.<sup>80</sup> As has been demonstrated, it is inconceivable that either Lansdowne MS 763 or MS B.12 were copied solely from MS 516 because of the significant omissions in Benet's copy of the text. From the comparative reading of the texts, MS 516 was likely copied either from Lansdowne MS 763 or a now-lost source. It is unlikely, but still possible that Benet copied from MS B.12. These initial findings will inform the next section, which combines the results of the textual analysis with an investigation into the chronology and the paratextual of the three extant versions of 'þe proporcions' to speculate about the circulation of the text.

## 2.2 Circulation of the text

The discovery of the third version of 'þe proporcions' calls for the re-evaluation of the transmission of the text. I will examine the chronology of the manuscripts that hold a copy of 'þe proporcions' and then combine the findings with insights gained from the comparative textual reading. This in turn will help me to suggest possible lines of transmission for the treatise on proportions in English.

### 2.2.1 External evidence: Chronology

The British Library catalogue dates Lansdowne MS 763 as *c.* 1460.<sup>81</sup> Using the results of an in-depth study of its contents, Cecily Sweeny claimed that the manuscript was compiled between 1430 and 1450.<sup>82</sup> She believed that the later date was caused by Hawkins when he mistakenly dated a text included in Lansdowne MS 763, the *Quatuor*

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<sup>80</sup> Bühler, 'A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions', p. 231.

<sup>81</sup> British Library Online, 'Detailed Record for Lansdowne MS 763', in *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*

<<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7809&CollID=15&NStart=763>> [accessed 14 January 2020]

<sup>82</sup> Cecily Sweeny, 'John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis', *Musica Disciplina*, 29 (1975), 43–59 (p. 46); see also Johannes Wylde [pseudo-Wylde], *Musica Manualis cum Tonale*, ed. Cecily Sweeny, *Corpus Scriptorum de Musica*, 28 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler-Verlag, American Institute of Musicology, 1982).



*principalia musicae*, as 1451 rather than 1351.<sup>83</sup> There appears to be no other reason to date the manuscript later than 1450. Sanford B. Meech speculated that the text of ‘þe proporcions’ was created in the first half of the century, based on the dialectical features of the treatise.<sup>84</sup> However, Meech was writing at a time when the version of ‘þe proporcions’ in Lansdowne MS 763 was the only known example of the text. There are three known versions of the treatise at present, which frequently share the same dialectal features. While the dialectal features are important, they appear to offer an insight into the author of ‘þe proporcions’ rather than just John Wylde, the scribe of Lansdowne MS 763. It may not be possible to use the dialectal features of ‘þe proporcions’ to attribute an earlier date to the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in Lansdowne MS 763, but they identify the text as a product of late medieval England and thus may help to place the author in a specific time and space.

Bühler assigned a date of *c.* 1425 to the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in MS B.12 but acknowledged that the script is difficult to date with certainty.<sup>85</sup> He claimed that the characters of the script suited 1425, with the possible exception of the ‘r’, which he dated as 1454 but has been found in documents as early as 1401.<sup>86</sup> As the table of lunar eclipses in MS B.12 would have run out in 1462, Bühler gave 1462 as the *terminus ante quem* for the compilation of the manuscript but firmly believed that the manuscript attained its present form long before that, primarily based on his palaeographic study.<sup>87</sup> Given the uncertainty surrounding the date of compilation of both this manuscript and Lansdowne MS 763, it is not possible to say which copy of the treatise is older.

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<sup>83</sup> Sweeny, ‘John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis’, p. 48.

<sup>84</sup> Meech, ‘Three Musical Treatises in English’, p. 230.

<sup>85</sup> Bühler, ‘A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions’, p. 230.

<sup>86</sup> Bühler, ‘A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions’, p. 230.

<sup>87</sup> Bühler, ‘A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions’, p. 230.



I offer the late 1460s as a conjectural date of the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516. Benet had a habit of frequently assigning dates to the entries in his manuscript. As the final text in a section primarily consisting of texts from the 1460s, it would seem likely that Benet copied the music treatise at this time. One of the few exceptions to Benet’s consecutive compilation of his manuscript was in his inclusion of short verses in English about the rebellion of 1469 on fol. 113<sup>r</sup> of this gathering, but John Scattergood asserted that this was added at a later date to fill a blank space.<sup>88</sup> Fol. 121<sup>r</sup> was dated 1468. The blank section at the end of fol. 125<sup>r</sup> led Marvin L. Colker to conjecture a temporal break in Benet’s compilation of the manuscript.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, I suggest 1468 as the *terminus post quem* for the inclusion of the music treatise in MS 516. Although if Colker is correct in his speculation of a lacuna following fol. 125<sup>r</sup>, Benet could have included the treatise at a slightly later time, perhaps in 1469 or 1470. The next section ends in 1471, rendering it unlikely that the inclusion of the proportion treatise in MS 516 happened later than that. Therefore, it appears that Benet’s copy of ‘þe proporcions’ was created most recently. Although the chronological evidence offers limited information about the transmission of the treatise, internal evidence in the next section will offer further insights into the treatise’s circulation which, when combined with the external evidence and the comparative reading, will allow me to conjecture lines of possible transmission for the treatise.

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<sup>88</sup> John Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516: A Clerical Historian’s Personal Miscellany’, in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A.S.G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), pp. 121–31 (p. 123).

<sup>89</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 991.

## 2.2.2 Internal evidence

### 2.2.2.1 Scribal errors and omissions

The most notable inconsistency between the three extant versions of ‘*pe proporcions*’ is the omission of an extended section in MS 516. Although Benet omitted more than two folios that are found in the other two copies, this oversight is not immediately apparent when looking at MS 516. The continuation of the text in MS 516 without a line break or an interruption in the regular spacing of the text means that Benet’s error remains well hidden (see Fig. 9, below). Benet moved from ‘*totum*’, the final word before he discontinued the section on superparticular proportions, to ‘*betwene*’, in the middle of the section on geometric proportionality, without interruption. Therefore, without consulting the other two copies of ‘*pe proporcions*’, it would be difficult to ascertain the extent of Benet’s omission.

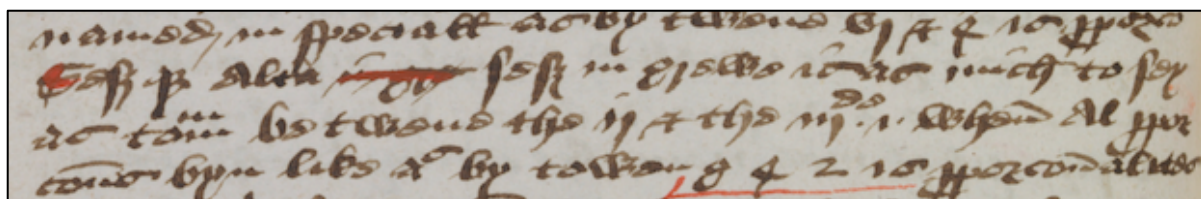


**Fig. 9** Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 129<sup>v90</sup>

It is not clear why Benet omitted such an extensive section of the treatise. It could be that Benet felt sufficiently equipped to explain the five species of the proportion of inequality without transcribing the information. It is curious, however, that Benet ceased his copying in the middle of a sentence and did not resume writing at the beginning of the section on proportionality as might be expected. Furthermore, he did not recommence at the beginning of the subsection on geometric proportionality. Instead, he omitted the first

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<sup>90</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, Manuscript and Archives Research Library, Digital Image

part of the sentence that stated that geometric proportionality occurs when the same proportion is between the first term and the second as is between the second and the third, resuming his writing to state the final part of this sentence only, ‘between the second and the third’. This *non sequitur* suggests that his movement from the section on the proportion of inequality to geometric proportionality was accidental.

Notably, Benet left out a section that constituted a little more than two folios in both Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12. Although it is conceivable that Benet might have turned two folios together, thereby missing this section, the position of the page breaks in either Lansdowne MS 763 or MS B.12 do not coincide with Benet’s omission. In the copy in Lansdowne MS 763, the section on superparticular proportions occurs at the beginning of fol. 118<sup>r</sup>, while in MS B.12 there is another line and a half on fol. 64<sup>r</sup> after Benet stopped his transcription. Therefore, he did not stop transcribing at the end of a folio in either manuscript. Neither did he resume copying at the beginning of a folio in either of the two manuscripts. Benet continued his writing in the middle of fol. 120<sup>v</sup> in Lansdowne MS 763 and the middle of fol. 65<sup>v</sup> in MS B.12. Based on the layout of the treatise in the other two manuscripts, therefore, it is not plausible that Benet unintentionally passed by the folios if he had been copying from either of the two known manuscripts. Benet might have been copying from another, and yet undiscovered, copy of the treatise, which may or may not be the source. If Benet had been copying from another exemplar, the quality of the exemplar from which he transcribed his text would be questionable, given the extended omission. Whether this omission and other errors contained in Benet’s version of the treatise were reproductions of an incomplete exemplar is unknown at present.

In itself, the extensive omission does not prove that Benet did not understand the text he was transcribing. Various factors might have caused such an error to occur, including distraction and tiredness. It is even possible that Benet deliberately omitted the earlier parts of the treatise. Perhaps Benet was familiar with naming basic proportions and was interested in the treatise for its detailed explanation of proportionality and means. However, if he had been familiar with ratios and the species of inequality, he would likely have at least indicated the omission of certain information in some way. Furthermore, the arbitrary point at which Benet recommenced his transcription suggests that the omission was not intentional and that he did not fully understand the text.

Another error in Benet's transcription warrants close attention and, coupled with the extensive omission, suggests that Benet was not well-versed in information concerning the doctrine of ratios that underpin musical intervals. As described above, although Benet's copy of the text in MS 516 concurred with Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 in its designation of five species of the proportion of inequality, his treatise revealed only the first kind. This list of proportions of inequality was cursory information, suggesting that Benet lacked even basic knowledge in this area. Even if Benet's had skipped some words, as suggested in a previous section, he would likely have recognised that this list was wholly incomplete after naming just one class of proportions instead of five. If he had been copying from an incomplete text, it seems likely that if he had a basic knowledge of proportions, he could have completed the list. Although it is possible to argue that this was merely a result of inaccuracy in transcribing, the extent of Benet's errors and omissions would suggest a more significant reason for his mistakes, perhaps a lack of thorough understanding of the contents. Closer inspection of the other texts in Benet's manuscript might illustrate whether this level of inaccuracy was typical for Benet. Given

his extensive and careful dating of the transcriptions in his manuscript and given the orderly chronological nature of his collection, it is curious that Benet would be so inaccurate in his transcription of this text.

There are other discrepancies between the three copies of the treatise that are less substantial but important for uncovering the transmission of the treatise. Both Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 incorrectly stated that '*superquartiparciens tercias*' occurred between seven and three.<sup>91</sup> This computation is incorrect, however, as three is contained in seven twice and for a proportion to be considered '*superparciens*' the larger number must contain just a whole and a fraction, or a part of the smaller number. A later hand corrected the mistake in Lansdowne MS 763 but the copy in MS B.12 remains unaltered. While one of these manuscripts might have been copied from the other, this was the only error shared by Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12, although both versions contain several unique errors. These two versions were probably copied from a shared exemplar, which also contained this error. This hypothesis concurs with Bühler's argument that neither treatise was reproduced from the other.<sup>92</sup> Instead, he claimed that both derive from a common original.

There are very few errors in MS B.12. Apart from the omission of the word '*non*' when writing about aliquot parts, as discussed earlier in this chapter, there was only one other minor inaccuracy when, in the section on harmonic proportionality, the difference between twelve and eight was written as two.<sup>93</sup> It appears that the scribe of MS B.12 was diligent and generally accurate in their copying. It also suggests that the scribe was

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<sup>91</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 118<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 65<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> Bühler, 'A New Manuscript of the Middle English Tract on Proportions', p. 231.

<sup>93</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>v</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 121<sup>v</sup>; MS B.12, fol. 67<sup>r</sup>.

familiar with the information contained in ‘þe proporcions’ and that they understood the mathematics of the treatise. This is not surprising, given the scientific contents of the manuscript, which I will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter.

In the section on geometric proportionality, both MS 516 and Lansdowne MS 763 contained two different incorrect computations. MS 516 equated twelve times twelve to nine times sixteen or six times nine, while Lansdowne MS 763 stated that nine times sixteen or fifteen times nine is equal to 144.<sup>94</sup> While these treatises failed to show the equality necessary to elucidate the geometric mean, the scribes had intended to show that multiplication of the extremities should equate to the multiplication of the mean by itself. As the theory was correct and concurred with Latin treatises conveying the geometric mean, the incorrect numbers were likely scribal errors. It is unlikely that they came from the source because no two copies have the same error.

Errors are potential indicators of the transmission of the text and the stemmatic filiation of the versions of the treatise. However, the errors that have been identified were not reproduced consistently across all copies of the treatise. Apart from the incorrect numbers given to describe a ‘*superquartiparciens tercias*’ proportion, all other errors were each confined to only one version of the manuscript. It is possible that the manuscripts were copied from each other. The scribe of the later editions could have corrected the errors of the earlier manuscripts and, in doing so, created new errors. However, the potential existence of another copy, and perhaps several other copies, must also be considered, which would mean wider circulation of the treatise than has been considered.

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<sup>94</sup> MS 516, fol. 130<sup>r</sup>; Lansdowne MS 763, fols 121<sup>r-v</sup>.

#### 2.2.2.2 Scribal additions

In addition to scribal omissions, Benet's text included some textual features that do not appear in either of the other two extant versions of the treatise. As discussed previously, the *explicit* found in Benet's treatise was not included in either of the other two manuscripts. There is also a list of seemingly random numbers that follow the section on geometric proportionality and that do not relate to geometric proportionality. While it is plausible that Benet was responsible for these additions, it remains possible that these features were included in a now-lost source from which Benet copied.

In Lansdowne MS 763, Wylde included two additional folios within the treatise, which contain tables that name various proportions.<sup>95</sup> The first page listed the different multiples of proportions, e.g. *dupla*, *tripla*, etc. The second page named each class of proportion. Neither of the other manuscripts contained these tables. It is possible that these folios were scribal additions and were created by Wylde as a more concise way to present the same information, suggesting that Wylde used the treatise after copying it into his manuscript and that his audience might have required it to be presented in a succinct format.

#### 2.2.2.3 Correction of scribal errors

Errors can help determine a line of transmission, either through their presence or through their correction by later scribes. Given the chronology of the manuscripts, MS 516 probably features the most recently created known copy of 'þe proporcions', yet it did not maintain any of the errors from either of the other known versions of the treatise. Benet resumed his transcription of the text in the section on proportionality but, unlike

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<sup>95</sup> Lansdowne MS 763, fols 119<sup>v</sup>–20<sup>r</sup>.

MS B.12, he used the correct numbers to describe harmonic proportionality, signifying that Benet either understood that the version in MS B.12 contained a wrong number or confirming that Benet did not transcribe his version from the one in MS B.12. Benet's failure to perpetuate the mistake in Lansdowne MS 763 concerning geometric proportionality, however, further complicates the situation. It is plausible that Benet could have corrected either of these mistakes, which would imply a degree of understanding on Benet's part. However, his extensive omissions have already suggested it unlikely that he understood the contents of the treatise to any significant degree.

#### 2.2.2.4 Layout and formatting

Although MS B.12 was likely compiled at an earlier date than the other two manuscripts containing 'pe proporcions', the version in MS B.12 displayed the most comprehensible layout of the text when compared to the other two extant copies. A range of headings, sub-headings and rubrication provides the text with a more precise format and is thus suitable for rapid consultation. Although not strictly falling under the consideration of *lectio brevior*, whereby the text is made more comprehensible and harmonised with every version, the organisation of the material would suggest that the scribe of MS B.12 either understood the contents enough to delineate the sections with sub-headings or that he was copying from a version that had a similar layout. While Lansdowne MS 763 and MS 516 do not share the same layout as MS B.12, this does not necessarily mean that they were not copied from MS B.12. Their layout might have been determined by limited access to folios, which may have necessitated the absence of clear sub-headings. Regardless, the result is that Lansdowne MS 763 and MS 516 are more similar in terms of layout.



### 2.2.3 Possible lines of transmission

Drawing on insights gleaned from the comparative reading, the chronological investigation, and the examination of the internal features of the treatises, I can now comment on the transmission of ‘*be proporcions*’. First, it is helpful to identify manuscripts that do not appear to have been copied from each other. Given its extensive lacuna, MS 516 was not the source from which either Wylde or the scribe of MS B.12 copied. Although unlikely, it is possible that Wylde copied from MS B.12 or that the anonymous scribe of MS B.12 copied from Lansdowne MS 763. Wylde could have corrected the errors in MS B.12 that do not occur in the version in Lansdowne MS 763. Equally, the scribe of MS B.12 could have altered the computational error in Lansdowne MS 763 when calculating the geometric mean of a ratio if he had been copying from Wylde’s exemplar. However, a manuscript common to Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 is more probable, considering both the concordances between the manuscripts and the errors unique to each copy, which affirms Bühler’s suggestion. Furthermore, it is not possible to identify any of the copies as Chilston’s treatise.

It is also unlikely that Benet copied from MS B.12. Benet’s omission of the list of proportions at the beginning of the treatise is inexplicable when the page breaks of MS B.12 are taken into account. Furthermore, while Benet could have corrected the mistake within the section on harmonic proportionality that occurs in MS B.12 but not in MS 516, Benet’s own errors and omissions throughout the treatise suggest that he might not have had the capacity both to identify and correct the error. Lastly, while the layout of MS B.12 was highly structured, complete with headings and rubrication, Benet’s text did not include the same sub-headings, nor did he include a similar heading to the one that opened the treatise in MS B.12. Although both of these versions of the text favour an English

phrase over the term '*scilicet*' that was used in Lansdowne MS 763, there are far more reasons to doubt Benet's use of MS B.12 as his exemplar.

Given the internal evidence, I propose two highly plausible lines of transmission for 'pe proporcions' to MS 516. First, Benet could have copied from Lansdowne MS 763. Secondly, Benet could have copied from an exemplar separate from Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12. Many factors support the suggestion that Benet was copying from Wylde's exemplar. Neither manuscript contains a mistake in the section on harmonic proportionality, unlike MS B.12. Furthermore, there are closer similarities in the layout between Lansdowne MS 763 and MS 516 than with MS B.12. If Benet had copied his text from the example in Lansdowne MS 763, a simple scribal error could explain his omission of four species of inequality from his initial list, given the layout of the text in Lansdowne MS 763. Benet's work is not so different that it could not be considered a partially re-phrased version of Lansdowne MS 763, with obvious omissions. Although the *incipits* are distinct, there is a possibility that the reference to '*discantis*' in MS 516's heading could have been a paraphrase of the reference to 'descant', which occurred in Lansdowne MS 763's opening. Benet may have misunderstood Wylde's reference to the previous treatises in his manuscript and believed that this treatise would also expose the rules of discant.

It is also conceivable that Benet was copying from an incomplete source, which could help to explain his omissions. Many of the errors in MS 516 were not consistent with either of the other two extant versions, which led me to suggest that Benet might have been working from a now-lost exemplar. The aphorism contained only in the *explicit* of MS 516 was also curious as it did not feature in any of the other treatises. While Benet

could have obtained the information from a different treatise and inserted it at the end of ‘þe proporcions’, it is also possible that Benet was copying from a version of the treatise that contained the excerpt from Johannes de Muris’ *Libellus cantus mensurabilis*. If Benet copied from a different and incomplete version of ‘þe proporcions’, this would show that there existed a more extensive network of circulation for the text than previously thought. It is possible that ‘þe proporcions’ circulated widely in fifteenth-century England. Indeed, it was significant enough to be included in Wylde’s compilation of important musical treatises, so wider copying is conceivable.

### **2.3 Textual insights**

A comparative study of the texts and an investigation into the paratextual features of the three versions of ‘þe proporcions’ have revealed several preliminary insights relating to the authorship, the intended audience, the envisioned purpose of the treatise, and the wider linguistic context. By connecting the three discrepant copies of the treatise, it has been possible to connect Chilston’s name to the treatise in MS 516. Beyond his name, these sources do not reveal any additional biographical information about Chilston. However, the close textual reading points to the possibility that Chilston created the treatise as a pedagogical tool. By utilising an imperative or instructional tone, the treatise reads as though the author was creating a didactic tool. All three copies of the text included the same address to the readers in which the author stated that he would enhance their understanding. By posing questions that the readers should answer and by anticipating questions that the readers might ask, it is conceivable that the author was drawing on Socratic questioning to encourage the readers, whom Chilston seemed to view as his students, to think more critically about the subject matter. Multiple examples for each phenomenon explored ensured that the readers could practice their

understanding and imbued the text with a didactic purpose. A recurring conversational tone suggests that Chilston was writing the treatise to instruct a particular cohort, rather than creating a general compilation of knowledge and propositions. So who were the intended readers of the text? There are many clues throughout the treatise that Chilston was writing for a young lay audience. First, he chose to convey the information in English, which suggests that he was not writing for a scholarly Latinate cohort. By creating 'þe proporcions', Chilston made it possible for a reader with little or no knowledge of Latin to read and potentially understand classes of proportional relationships. Furthermore, it appears that he wanted to present the information as simply as possible, which included omitting reciprocal ratios and providing extensive examples to ensure that readers could check their understanding of the text. As discussed in Chapter One, vulgarisation was a process by which highly technical texts were made comprehensible to a non-scholarly audience. 'þe proporcions' does not come close to providing the level of detail that can be seen in Boethius' text on the topic. However, according to the author, the information contained in 'þe proporcions' was sufficient for the readers, which suggests that Chilston's audience did not comprise scholars or learners who intended to advance to higher philosophical study. Therefore, although pedagogical, it was probably not intended for university students. These textual insights will help us to imagine the context in which Chilston created the treatise and his intended audience.

The texts also offer insight into the broader linguistic context surrounding the creation of the treatise. At the beginning of 'þe proporcions', Chilston claimed that he would leave the names of the proportions in Latin, the succinct option, but explain them in English, which suggests that there was an absence of precise and concise technical vocabulary in Middle English for the discussion of proportions. It indicates that the treatise was one of

the earliest vernacular sources on this subject, in concurrence with the survey of texts on music in English from Chapter One. Since the fifteenth century, English terms have emerged from the Latin terms, and it is possible to use English terminology when discussing mathematical ratios today. At the time of writing ‘þe proporcions’, however, it appears that it was necessary to use Latin terminology to fill the semantic gap.

Moreover, a close look at the three different texts has shed some new light on each of the scribes. In the case of MS B.12, the anonymous scribe prepared a copy that could be consulted with ease. The scribe’s use of sub-headings made this version of the treatise easy to navigate. The treatise in MS B.12 lacked any significant mistakes and contained only the occasional scribal error, suggesting that the scribe was conscientious and may have understood the contents of the treatise. John Wylde was the only scribe to refer specifically to music at the opening of his treatise. An examination of the other contents of Lansdowne MS 763 in Chapter Three will reveal his manuscript to have been a musical anthology. Finally, I have raised questions about how thoroughly John Benet comprehended the contents of ‘þe proporcions’ throughout this chapter and concluded a deep understanding of its contents is improbable. From a study of his copy of the treatise, it is not clear why Benet chose to include ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516. The next chapter will explore its broader manuscript context, including its contents and its overall organisation principles, in an attempt to understand the inclusion of the treatise on music proportion in MS 516.

## Chapter Three

### Understanding ‘þe proporcions’

Music historians have long engaged in locating, transcribing, editing, translating, and publishing commentaries on medieval texts. Studying individual treatises within manuscripts or comparing extant treatises to each other have been essential means by which to understand the development of practices in music theory and how they fit into the intellectual culture of societies. However, studies have tended to focus on the theorists who produced the treatises and the contents of their texts. This is not particular to the discipline of music theory. It has been prevalent across all subject areas for scholars to detach a text from its context in order to study it in comparison with other texts of similar contents, topics, or languages. By removing the text from its manuscript context and consider it in isolation, these studies fail to acknowledge both its materialism and its deep cultural-historical dimension. To warrant against this, the material contexts of the three manuscripts that contain ‘þe proporcions’ are the focus of this chapter. A proponent of more recent History of the Book approaches, Matthew James Driscoll listed among the key principles of material philology the belief that ‘literary works do not exist independently of their material embodiments’, justifying the need to look at the whole manuscript.<sup>1</sup> What follows is a codicological consideration of the material embodiment of the three versions of ‘þe proporcions’ for what it might reveal about each scribe and how they interpreted the vernacular text on vulgate *musica speculativa*. An examination

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew James Driscoll, ‘The Words on the Page: Thoughts on Philology, Old and New’, in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, The Viking Collection, 18 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2010), pp. 87–104 (p. 90). For more on material philology, see Ian Moulton, ed., *Reading and Literacy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004); Derek Pearsall, ‘The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters’, in *Imagining the Book*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 17–30; Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel, eds, *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

of the other texts in the three manuscripts reveals the place of ‘þe proporcions’ in three discrepant manuscript contexts. Three distinct ways to read and understand the same material emerge, demonstrating the polyvalent nature of speculative music theory in the fifteenth century in England and the interpretative process that was integral to the reception of medieval vernacular translations of ancient texts.

### **3.1 Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516**

This study provides the first philological and contextual study of ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516. Because of the multi-genre nature of the miscellany, it is understandable that hitherto particular texts within this manuscript have captured the attention of scholars from different fields. There has been a disproportionate amount of interest in the text of one item found in MS 516—a Latin chronicle documenting events that occurred between 1399 and 1462. This section explores previous studies of the manuscript, highlighting contributions by previous scholars to knowledge about the manuscript. It emphasises the benefits of employing a philological approach when trying to understand why Benet included the proportion treatise in MS 516. A possible function for the whole manuscript emerges by combining a codicological study of the manuscript and a detailed study of its contents, which in turn helps to suggest a place for ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516.

#### **3.1.1 Provenance**

MS 516 has been held at Trinity College Dublin since before 1670 because in that year its shelf-mark changed from EEE.28 to F.1.21.<sup>2</sup> Its arrival might date to Trinity College’s 1661 acquisition of Archbishop Ussher’s Library, as suggested by Gerald L. Harriss.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis, 1900), p. 8 of insert.

<sup>3</sup> G. L. Harriss and M. A. Harriss, ‘John Benet’s Chronicle for the Years 1400–1462’, in *Camden Miscellany 24* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1972), pp. 151–233 (p. 173).

However, Ussher manuscripts were kept on shelves A to D.<sup>4</sup> The reference F.1.21 suggests that Benet's manuscript was assigned to shelf F, but there is no description of how manuscripts on that shelf were acquired. There is no other information about the manuscript's provenance between John Benet's death and its arrival at Trinity College. Since at least 1670 it has remained in Trinity College and has been re-numbered four more times.<sup>5</sup> John Benet's manuscript was described as MS 516 in the 1900 catalogue, and this has remained unchanged in the most recent catalogue.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1.2 Previous studies

Although the version of 'þe proporcions' in MS 516 has not been the focus of any previous study, other texts in John Benet's manuscript have benefited from several studies and publications. No text has been studied more than the Latin chronicle, which occupies fifty-six out of a total of 214 folios, and is the largest single item found within his manuscript.<sup>7</sup> While the early years of the chronicle were compiled from a variety of identifiable sources, the entries after 1440 read as though the author witnessed first-hand the events described, particularly events in London.<sup>8</sup> It is doubtful that Benet was the author of this text, however, but Scattergood has demonstrated that it was copied in his hand. As the only known copy of this chronicle, English historians are indebted to Benet not only for his preservation of the text but also for the personal notes that appear in reaction to events which took place in his lifetime. The chronicle documented some

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<sup>4</sup> Abbott, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts*, p. iii.

<sup>5</sup> Previous classifications of the manuscript according to insert in Abbott, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts*: Foley – H.48; Bernard – 664; Lyon – E.5.10; Abbott – 516.

<sup>6</sup> Marvin L. Colker, *Trinity College Library Dublin Descriptive Catalogue of the Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Manuscripts*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), vol. II, pp. 976–1002.

<sup>7</sup> G. L. Harriss, 'A Fifteenth-Century Chronicle at Trinity College, Dublin', in *Offprint from the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 38 (1965), 213–18 (p. 213).

<sup>8</sup> John Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516: A Clerical Historian's Personal Miscellany', in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A.S.G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 121–31 (p. 124).



events that occurred between 1399 and 1462 that were otherwise unrecorded and, although no re-interpretation of the period is likely to result from these observations, according to Harriss, the chronicle's value lies in providing a more consistently detailed narrative than any other source for the last twenty years of the reign of Henry VI.<sup>9</sup> It also offers an accurate dating of each event recorded as well as unique chronological and political details.<sup>10</sup>

The Latin chronicle in MS 516 has been the focus of five publications by four scholars who have produced both transcriptions and translations.<sup>11</sup> Several other studies have also mentioned the inimitable historical document.<sup>12</sup> In 1965, Gerald L. Harriss addressed the biographical details of the compiler and provided a description of the contents, paying particular attention to the Latin chronicle.<sup>13</sup> He published a more detailed study in 1972, discussing how the chronicle contributed to existing knowledge of the historical period and gave some consideration to its authorship.<sup>14</sup> This study also provided the first transcription of the Latin text.

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<sup>9</sup> Harriss, 'A Fifteenth-Century Chronicle', p. 214.

<sup>10</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> See Harriss, 'A Fifteenth-Century Chronicle', p. 213–18; Harriss and Harriss 'John Benet's Chronicle', pp. 151–233; Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', pp. 121–31; Alison Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle, 1399–1462: An English Translation with New Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Including Lesley Ann Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000); Alison Hanham and B. M. Cron, 'Slain Dogs, The Dead Man and Editorial Constructs', *The Ricardian*, 17 (2007), 33–54; Rossell Hope Robbins, 'Victory at Whitby, A. D. 1451', *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 495–504; Alexander L. Kaufman, *The Historical Literature of the Jack Cade Rebellion* (London: Ashgate, 2009); John Scattergood, *Manuscripts and Ghosts: Essays on the Transmission of Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006); and David Scott-Macnab, *A Sporting Lexicon of the Fifteenth Century: The J.B. Treatise*, Medium Aevum Monographs, n.s., 23 (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2003), pp. 47–49.

<sup>13</sup> Harriss, 'A Fifteenth-Century Chronicle', 213–18.

<sup>14</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', pp. 151–233.

John Scattergood moved towards a more contextualised understanding of MS 516, offering both codicological insights into the book and palaeographic observations.<sup>15</sup> Following an initial commentary on the book's physical characteristics, Scattergood presented what was known about John Benet's bibliography, drawing on information from Harriss' study. He suggested that the manuscript was compiled in four major writing phases and provided details of when Benet inscribed different texts into the manuscript.<sup>16</sup> Scattergood also claimed that Benet compiled his manuscript chronologically as he gained access to the texts.

In 2015, Alison Hanham published a translation of the entire chronicle with a brief biographical account of John Benet, adding little beyond Harriss' article that was published over forty years earlier.<sup>17</sup> In the three appendices, Hanham explored copying errors in the manuscript, offered her thoughts on possible authors of the chronicle, and published Benet's copy of 'The Five Dogs of London', a poem that is also found in MS 516. Except for a short account of other texts, Hanham did not contextualise the chronicle in relation to the whole manuscript, or from a broader historical perspective. Scattergood has also included MS 516 in his forthcoming book on manuscripts containing Middle English in Trinity College Dublin Library, signalling a contemporary academic interest in the manuscript.<sup>18</sup>

The presence of a vernacular treatise on speculative music theory in MS 516 is one of the most curious aspects of the fifteenth-century manuscript. Known primarily for its variety

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<sup>15</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', pp. 121–31.

<sup>16</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', pp. 123–24.

<sup>17</sup> Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle*, pp. 10–53.

<sup>18</sup> John Scattergood, *Trinity College Library Dublin: A Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English and Some Old English* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, forthcoming).

of historical texts, some of which are unique to the manuscript, the treatise on the mathematical ratios underpinning musical intervals appears to be a curious addition to MS 516. The diversity inherent in the manuscript has earned it the frustratingly vague classification, ‘miscellany’. The term offers little insight into John Benet’s reason for compiling this unique collection of texts or how he might have used the book. An examination of the manuscript in greater detail will help to ascertain whether Benet was merely preserving texts, perhaps for posterity, of whether he was creating a book that he intended to use.

### 3.1.3 Language

The manuscript contains texts exclusively in Latin or in Middle English, while some texts are macaronic, displaying both languages. There are fewer English items than Latin, and often the English items include a Latin heading. There does not appear to be a connection between language and any particular subject area. As already asserted, it seems that Benet included the texts as he acquired them, rather than organising by language. Therefore, while the language of any particular text might have been important to Benet, he did not use language as a tool for categorising and organising the items in his manuscript.

There are twenty Middle English verses recorded in *The Digital Index of Middle English Verse* for MS 516.<sup>19</sup> Of these verses, nine are unique to MS 516 and concern a host of different topics, including a political prophecy on the fall of London (fol. 16<sup>r</sup>), words of comfort from the dead to the living (fol. 23<sup>r</sup>), political verses by a Lancastrian entitled ‘*Navi vel Puppe*’ (fols 32<sup>r</sup>–33<sup>r</sup>), a couplet on the rebellion of 1469 (fol. 113<sup>v</sup>), a political

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<sup>19</sup> Linne R. Mooney, Daniel W. Mosser, Elizabeth Solopova, Deborah Thorpe and David Hill Radcliffe, eds, *The Digital Index of Middle English Verse* <<http://www.dimev.net/Records.php?MSS=TCD516>> [accessed 24 May 2018]

prophecy on the wonders of England (fol. 114<sup>v</sup>), two couplets of nonsense rhymes between five Latin lines (fol. 115<sup>v</sup>), and twenty lines in eight stanzas of a description of the English naval victory over the French at Whitby Haven in 1451. ‘The Five Dogs of London’ occurs on fols 22<sup>v</sup>–23<sup>r</sup> and is notable because it is an English poem that is unique to MS 516.<sup>20</sup> It contains similar content to a prophecy, sometimes attributed to Chaucer and sometimes to Merlin, that has sixteen manuscript witnesses, one of which is found on fol. 118<sup>r</sup>. On fols 24<sup>r</sup>–25<sup>v</sup>, verses on religious observances include the refrain ‘And turne to god with al thyn herte’. Of the eleven verses in MS 516 that have multiple witnesses, the most popular verses come from John Lydgate’s *Dietary* (fols 27<sup>v</sup>–28<sup>v</sup>), parts of which are found in fifty manuscripts at present. The other Middle English verses that are contained in MS 516 but are not unique to the manuscript include verses on the Blessed Virgin Mary (fols 25<sup>v</sup>–26<sup>r</sup>), an instructional text presented in aphorisms about how to flee vices and pursue virtues (fol. 27<sup>r</sup>), other Lydgate verses on the kings of England (fols 28<sup>v</sup>–30<sup>r</sup>), macaronic verses on the evils of age (fols 108<sup>r</sup>–10<sup>r</sup>), the political poem entitled ‘The First Scottish Prophecy’ (fols 114<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>v</sup>), macaronic lines on the death of the duke of Suffolk (fols 116<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>), four mono-rhyming lines that were supposedly created by the Scots in the reign of Edward III against the effeminate English and affixed to the door of St Peter’s church, Stangate (fol. 118<sup>r</sup>), a political prophecy according to the throw of a dice (fol. 118<sup>r</sup>), and two couplets that are often ascribed to Reginald Pecock (fol. 193<sup>v</sup>). There are several lists of English vocabulary, including a list of collective nouns and other terminology in Middle English (fols 35<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>) and a list of vocabulary about animals used as food in English (fol. 36<sup>r</sup>). ‘þe proporcions’ is in Middle English with a Latin heading (fols 129<sup>r</sup>–31<sup>v</sup>).

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<sup>20</sup> Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 189–90.

### 3.1.4 Codicology

Building upon previous studies of MS 516, this section delves deeper into the manuscript's codicological features and contents in an attempt to understand Benet's intention in compiling his manuscript.<sup>21</sup> The physical attributes of MS 516 offer insights into how Benet used his manuscript. The structure of the manuscript provides information pertaining to the assembly of the manuscript. A physical description of the folios suggests the ways in which he sourced his materials. His markings throughout the manuscript show how he used his manuscript, and his penchant for signing various items within the manuscript helps to assign dates to the various gatherings of the manuscript. MS 516 also displays attempts at organising the manuscript. These codicological details collectively assist in identifying Benet's intended purpose for the manuscript.

#### 3.1.4.1 Structure

John Scattergood and Marvin Colker described the structure of MS 516 in two different ways. Scattergood divided the 224 folios of MS 516 into four copying periods.<sup>22</sup> His quadripartite structure (Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4) was determined by the gatherings and the dates present in the various items.<sup>23</sup> Colker's categorisation of the folios into three sections (Sections A, B and C) demonstrated a variety of ways to delineate the sections, including the usage of paper or parchment, usual folio size, the average number of lines on a folio, frame-ruling, hand, binding style, and rubrication.<sup>24</sup> According to Colker, Section A (fols 2<sup>r</sup>–75<sup>v</sup> and 108<sup>r</sup>–207<sup>v</sup>) constituted the main body of the manuscript, Section B (fols 208<sup>r</sup>–19<sup>v</sup>) was an interruption, and Section C (208<sup>r</sup>–19<sup>v</sup>) stood after the current fol. 118<sup>v</sup> until 1742 when it was transferred to the back of the manuscript.

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<sup>21</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, pp. 976–1002; Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', pp. 121–31.

<sup>22</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

<sup>23</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

<sup>24</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, pp. 976–1002. See Table 3.1.

Fols 2<sup>r</sup>–75<sup>v</sup> constituted the first section of the manuscript. Despite some additions in later hands, Scattergood argued that this section was complete, in its original form, by 1461.<sup>25</sup> This date recurred throughout the first section. A prophecy, on fol. 14<sup>v</sup>, concerned 1461. Extracts that are chiefly assigned to the *Polychronicon* were inserted from fol. 49<sup>r</sup> onwards. They featured Benet's signature, '*Quod Benet apud Harlyngdon' anno domini m'o cccc'o lxi'o dominical' littera C*', which also referred to 1461. This first quarter of the manuscript finished with Benet's signature and the year 1461 on fol. 75<sup>v</sup>: '*Quod Benet apud Harlyngdon Anno Domini MCCCClxj*'.

Following the first section Benet inserted an extract from John of Legnano's *De Bello* (fols 76<sup>r</sup>–107<sup>v</sup>). Presented in a different hand, Benet must have acquired this text and bound it directly into his manuscript.<sup>26</sup> Colker considered the insert of *De Bello* to have interrupted Section A of the manuscript, which resumed at fol. 108<sup>r</sup> and continued until fol. 207<sup>v</sup>.<sup>27</sup> He also considered the two short pieces on the evils of age that followed *De Bello* on fol. 107<sup>v</sup> to be part of the interruption.<sup>28</sup>

Scattergood acknowledged the presence of *De Bello* but did not include it in his four-part structure of the manuscript. Furthermore, he did not account for fols 108<sup>r</sup>–10<sup>v</sup> in his categorisation of the manuscript. According to Scattergood, the second copying period of MS 516 began with fol. 111<sup>r</sup> and continued to fol. 131<sup>v</sup>.<sup>29</sup> Benet signed the entry on fols 119<sup>r</sup>–21<sup>r</sup>, '*Quod Benet apud Harlyngdon anno domini m'l' cccc lx viii'o littera domini*', thus dating the inscription of the item as 1468, while also suggesting that Benet

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<sup>25</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

<sup>26</sup> Scattergood, *Manuscripts and Ghosts*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 996.

<sup>28</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 996.

<sup>29</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

was in Harlington at that time. While there are verses in English about the rebellion of 1469 on 113<sup>v</sup>, Scattergood believes these were added at a later date to fill a blank space.<sup>30</sup> The music treatise was the final text in the second section as designated by Scattergood, occupying fols 129<sup>r</sup>–31<sup>v</sup>.

The third section (fols 132<sup>r</sup>–92<sup>v</sup>) primarily consisted of the extensive Latin chronicle (fols 132<sup>r</sup>–88<sup>r</sup>).<sup>31</sup> The extended historical account ended abruptly in 1462, and nine folios at the end of this gathering were left blank. Benet was instituted to his new rectory on 4 October 1471.<sup>32</sup> He added a list of those who fell in battle near Tewkesbury or were beheaded there in 1471 to fol. 189<sup>r</sup>. On 13 November 1471 Benet wrote his signature on fol. 189<sup>v</sup>, '*Rome m'l' cccc lxxi 13 die Nouembris. Quod Benet*'. The signature is significant because it suggests that Benet travelled to Rome. If he had travelled there, it is possible that he acquired some of the texts in the later sections of his manuscript in Rome or during his journey. Furthermore, he might have brought his manuscript with him and circulated his texts further than England.

In the final section of the manuscript, some entries refer to the early 1470s. By this time, Benet would have taken up his position in Broughton, a position he retained until he died in 1474.<sup>33</sup> Although there was no signature or date included in the final section, Scattergood claimed that Benet included the contents of this final section (fols 193<sup>r</sup>–207<sup>v</sup>) between 1471 and 1474, right up to the time of his death.<sup>34</sup> There was also an emphasis on historical texts and older material in this section, including annals for the years 1306–

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<sup>30</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 122.

<sup>33</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 157.

<sup>34</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 124.

1464 (fols 201<sup>r</sup>–02<sup>v</sup>) and articles against Henry IV (fol. 200<sup>v</sup>) that related to 1405. This part of the manuscript included several texts in English, including a version of Pseudo-Aristotle's *Physionomia* that was almost entirely in English. The absence of a date and signature in this section prompted Scattergood to assert that Benet probably died before he considered this section complete enough to date and sign.<sup>35</sup>

Although Scattergood did not include a description of the manuscript after fol. 207<sup>v</sup>, MS 516 continues to fol. 219<sup>v</sup> in its current form. At fol. 208<sup>r</sup>, Colker deemed the rest of the manuscript to be Section C. His categorisation was dependent upon information gleaned from the list of contents, which occurs on fols 190<sup>v</sup>–91<sup>v</sup>. According to the list, Section C (now fols 208<sup>r</sup>–19<sup>v</sup>) stood after the current fol. 118<sup>v</sup> until 1742, at which time it was transferred to the back of the codex by John Lyon.<sup>36</sup> Colker noted that Section C appears fragmentary, and he believed that leaves were missing between folios.<sup>37</sup> It is unlikely that there are missing folios, however, as the number of folios match Benet's list of contents. There is some damage to this section and various entries display loss of text due to a tear in parts of folios. Scattergood did not consider these folios to be of the final copying period, aware of the list of contents provided by Benet that suggests otherwise. Given their original date of inclusion, these texts would have been part of the second copying period.

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<sup>35</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 124.

<sup>36</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 996.

<sup>37</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 996.



| Folios                             | Scattergood                | Colker | Notes                                                                 |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 <sup>r</sup> –75 <sup>v</sup>    | Section 1                  | A      | completed before 1461                                                 |
| 75 <sup>r</sup> –107 <sup>v</sup>  | <i>De Bello</i>            | B      | interruption in different hand                                        |
| 108 <sup>r</sup> –10 <sup>v</sup>  | unaccounted for            | A      | macaronic verses about the evils of age.                              |
| 111 <sup>r</sup> –31 <sup>v</sup>  | Section 2                  | A      | compiled c. 1468                                                      |
| 132 <sup>r</sup> –92 <sup>v</sup>  | Section 3                  | A      | largely consists of Latin chronicle                                   |
| 193 <sup>r</sup> –207 <sup>v</sup> | Section 4                  | A      | compiled from 1471 until Benet's death in 1474                        |
| 208 <sup>r</sup> –19 <sup>v</sup>  | not part of categorisation | C      | fragmentary until 1742, stood after the current fol. 118 <sup>v</sup> |

**Table 3.1** Structure of Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516<sup>38</sup>

#### 3.1.4.2 Folio description

Benet's manuscript measures approximately 22 x 15 cm. Benet included both parchment and paper folios in the manuscript. In total there are 224 folios contained in MS 516. Within the manuscript there is some unevenness in the sizes of the pages. In some cases single items are written on a mixture of paper and parchment, for example the chronicle of English history from Adam to 1462 on fols 132<sup>r</sup>–88<sup>r</sup>, which suggests that Benet did not have a continuous supply of either paper or parchment. It also implies that Benet was more concerned with including the text than unifying the materials on which he would write. There was a variety of watermarks on the pages, indicating that Benet obtained his paper from different stocks.<sup>39</sup> It appears that the miscellany developed over time depending on what was available to Benet, and that his supply of materials was variable.

<sup>38</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', pp. 121–31; Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, pp. 976–1002.

<sup>39</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 121.

However, he had ample access to both paper and parchment, as attested to by his sizeable manuscript.

#### 3.1.4.3 Hands

The earlier parts of the manuscript were almost exclusively in the hand of the scribe, John Benet. Colker described John Benet's writing as a fifteenth-century secretary hand.<sup>40</sup> However, in his more detailed study of the manuscript, Scattergood clarified that, while it was predominantly in a secretary hand, some anglicana features were also characteristic of Benet's script.<sup>41</sup> Anglicana script, often known as English cursive documentary script, was the English scribe's response to the growing market for books, royal documents, and other business documents.<sup>42</sup> By reducing the number of pen lifts and introducing loops, this script allowed for the copying of books with greater speed.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the re-emergence of cursive script, other European influences began to reach England in the third quarter of the fourteenth century; originating in Italy and significantly transformed in France, once the new cursive script reached England it was adopted for every kind of document, including formal purposes.<sup>44</sup> Known as the English secretary hand, by the sixteenth century it had become the dominant script in English manuscripts.<sup>45</sup> From the thirteenth century onwards, a cross-fertilisation of scripts resulted in hybrid scripts.<sup>46</sup> The plethora of 'compromise' book hands displaced the

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<sup>40</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 976.

<sup>41</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 122.

<sup>42</sup> Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> Clemens and Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, p. 160.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Roberts, *Guide to Scripts Used in English Writings up to 1500* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 161.

<sup>45</sup> Clemens and Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, p. 167.

<sup>46</sup> Michelle P. Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600* (London: The British Library, 1990), p. 81.

original hierarchy of scripts in all but the most formal or conservative works from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.<sup>47</sup> It was not unusual that MS 516 displayed a particular hybrid often termed as ‘later secretary’ because, in the fifteenth century, scribes frequently incorporated elements of the older *anglicana* script into their more recently acquired secretary hand, including the loops on ascenders and the use of macrons and tildes, all of which can be seen in Benet’s work.<sup>48</sup> If the exemplars from which Benet was copying had limited availability or if there was any urgency attached to his copying, Benet’s script enabled him to copy with speed. The problem with such fast-paced copying, however, was that it did not always guarantee accuracy, as is evident in ‘þe proporcions’.

The most salient features of secretary script included the use of a single-compartment ‘a’, a distinctively tight ‘s’ at the ends of words, the three strokes of ‘w’ producing an open-form letter, and a cursive ‘x’ written in a single stroke.<sup>49</sup> Instead of the single-compartment ‘a’, however, Benet used the double-compartment ‘a’ that is more commonly associated with *anglicana* script. The indistinguishable nature of ‘u’ and ‘v’ in Benet’s book was another feature of secretary hand. Benet’s use of three different forms of ‘s’ was consistent with secretary script: in addition to the long ‘s’ and the short ‘s’, Benet often used a tight ‘s’ at the end of words.

Many abbreviations and contractions that were devised for medieval Latin works were also used in English-language documents. The most frequent abbreviations and contractions included the common bar mark, tildes, macrons, the thorn (þ) to represent

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<sup>47</sup> Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts*, p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts*, p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> Roberts, *Guide to Scripts Used in English Writing*, p. 211.

‘th’, and the yogh (3) to denote ‘gh’ or ‘ch’. In Benet’s manuscript, it is possible to see the contractions and abbreviations most commonly associated with secretary script, including the omission of ‘er’ in the middle of words and the superscription of final letters. The thorn is also present in Benet’s hand. Scattergood confirms that right-sloping quality of Benet’s regular cursive script aligns with the secretary script.<sup>50</sup> Benet’s hand, a hybrid of anglicana and secretary scripts, was not a display of elegance. A mixture of two utilitarian scripts suggests that the function of Benet’s copying was not limited to the preservation of texts as a form of leisure. Benet’s functional hand allowed him to record texts of information at a considerable speed and, though not particularly beautiful, allowed him to create a considerable collection. It is conceivable that Benet was recording the information for consultation and later use, rather than as a purely aesthetic endeavour.

As was common in miscellanies, Benet did not copy every text that he included in his manuscript. There were fragments of Latin texts on civil law copied in a fourteenth-century Italian hand and John of Legnano’s *De Bello* was included in the manuscript but was not in Benet’s hand.<sup>51</sup> Apart from a few other texts, particularly in the fourth and final section of the manuscript (see fols 193<sup>r</sup>–207<sup>v</sup>), and some later minor additions and annotations that generally provide updated information for texts already copied, the manuscript primarily contains Benet’s cursive later secretary script.<sup>52</sup> Having copied most texts into the manuscript personally, Benet was an active participant in the selection of texts for his book. Therefore, MS 516 represented Benet’s choices and can offer insights into the vicar’s intellectual interests.

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<sup>50</sup> Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516’, p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516’, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516’, p. 122.

#### 3.1.4.4 Annotations

Benet annotated almost all of the texts in MS 516. This confirms not only his ownership but also the importance to him of engaging with these texts. His annotations provide important evidence that Benet's miscellany had an extensive working life, serving as much more than a mere repository for texts. Benet's markings in the margins are widespread. Benet also wrote what has been interpreted as 'le lo' on fols 13<sup>v</sup>, 17<sup>v</sup>, 53<sup>v</sup>, and 143<sup>v</sup>, and in some cases, he wrote this in red.<sup>53</sup> In Middle English, 'lo' meant 'look' or 'behold', and was used as an interjection to attract attention.<sup>54</sup> It is possible that this is an abbreviation referring to 'primo', if the second ascender of 'le lo' is a numeral. Either way, the inscription draws attention to sections that Benet considered particularly important. Either Benet wished to review these passages himself or he was signposting them for other readers or users of MS 516.

There are other markings throughout the manuscript that cannot be ascribed to Benet with certainty. Certain portions of the text were underlined, sometimes in red ink. In the music treatise, every list of numbers was underlined in red, making it easier to identify various sections within the treatise. If Benet made the markings, his use of finding aids would suggest that he intended 'þe proporcions' to be actively used, and that he was willing to take it upon himself to make the navigation of the treatise more accessible, possibly for a reader approaching this material for the first time. If another reader made the markings, this shows that, in Trinity MS 516 alone, 'þe proporcions' had a readership beyond just Benet.

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<sup>53</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fols 13<sup>v</sup>, 17<sup>v</sup>, 53<sup>v</sup>, 143<sup>v</sup>; see Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 1000.

<sup>54</sup> Robert E. Lewis, et al., 'Middle English Dictionary' (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000–2018) <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>> [accessed 14 March 2020]

It is plausible that the markings were made by another reader because there is firm evidence that Benet was not the only fifteenth-century reader of MS 516. Colker's catalogue records a number of inscriptions in different hands.<sup>55</sup> Two inscriptions on fol. 75<sup>r</sup> were written by an unknown late fifteenth-century or sixteenth-century hand: 'To his wel belovyde freind Will'am danbie'; and 'Georgii [Nevile] militis [dominus] Danby de Latimer' (Colker has identified this as the George Neville who lived from 1432 to 1469).<sup>56</sup> A different late fifteenth-century hand wrote another inscription ('Thomas/Thackwray') on fol. 192<sup>v</sup>. On fol. 222<sup>v</sup>, another sixteenth-century hand wrote '*ROBINSOI*'. This confirms that Benet's manuscript continued to be used after his death.

#### 3.1.4.5 Dates and signatures

Benet inserted dates onto several texts in his manuscript (1461 on fols 49<sup>r</sup>, 75<sup>v</sup>, 1468 on fol. 121<sup>r</sup>, and 1471 on fol. 189<sup>v</sup>). Due to Benet's frequent dating of texts and the datable nature of many of the items that he collected, Scattergood wrote that the multi-text codex developed chronologically, depending on when and where the compiler gained access to particular texts.<sup>57</sup> Benet also signed his work twelve times throughout MS 516, usually in the form '*quod Benet*'.<sup>58</sup> At various times throughout the manuscript, Benet indicated that he was in Harlington, signifying that he was a resident priest and that he did not spend extended periods away from his vicarage. This leads to questions regarding the availability of exemplars and the intellectual activities within the village more generally.

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<sup>55</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 1001.

<sup>56</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 1001.

<sup>57</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 123.

<sup>58</sup> MS 516, fols 26<sup>r</sup>, 27<sup>r</sup>, 39<sup>v</sup>, 43<sup>r</sup>, 75<sup>v</sup>, 112<sup>r</sup>, 118<sup>r</sup>, 118<sup>v</sup>, 121<sup>r</sup>, 189<sup>v</sup>, 195<sup>v</sup>, 204<sup>r</sup>.

#### 3.1.4.6 Organisation

A number of measures were taken to organise Benet's miscellany. After the manuscript was bound, a later fifteenth-century hand added foliation and a list of the manuscript's contents, with folio references, on fols 190<sup>v</sup>–91<sup>v</sup> (see Figs 10–12, below).<sup>59</sup> This demonstrates a later user's interest in overview as well as a wish to revisit and help others find certain texts. The indexer added a line connecting each entry to the relevant folio number, which facilitates the original ordering of texts in the manuscript.<sup>60</sup> The list of contents also contains some marginalia, but it is now very faded and not possible to read. Individual entries throughout the list of contents seem to have been counted off with an 'x' in the left-hand margin. The treatise on proportions, here labelled 'Of proportions' (see Fig. 12, below), is not preceded by an 'x'. The indexer could not have copied that from the head of the treatise itself, indicating not only that they understood the treatise's contents but also that they were compiling the list of contents for anglophone readers. The treatise is listed as beginning on fol. 141<sup>r</sup>, which was correct in the manuscript's original compilation, although in its current form, it begins on fol. 129<sup>r</sup>. The indexer's provision of foliation suggests that this person did not envisage future readers proceeding sequentially through the manuscript. Rather, the addition of the foliation and list of contents shows the wish to facilitate future readers jumping between texts. Already in the late fifteenth century, MS 516 was prepared for service as a compilation, intended for consultation.

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<sup>59</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 126–27.

<sup>60</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 126–27.

| In ista Columna continetur            |           |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| In prime pphed. Cym de Wydlyngton     | folio 1   |
| De rememoracione et notabilitate hunc | folio 2   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 3   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 4   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 5   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 6   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 7   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 8   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 9   |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 10  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 11  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 12  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 13  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 14  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 15  |
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| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 59  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 60  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 61  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 62  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 63  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 64  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 65  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 66  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 67  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 68  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 69  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 70  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 71  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 72  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 73  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 74  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 75  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 76  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 77  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 78  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 79  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 80  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 81  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 82  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 83  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 84  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 85  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 86  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 87  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 88  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 89  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 90  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 91  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 92  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 93  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 94  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 95  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 96  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 97  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 98  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 99  |
| De pphed. de Wydlyngton               | folio 100 |

Fig. 10 List of contents in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 190<sup>v61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Author's photograph





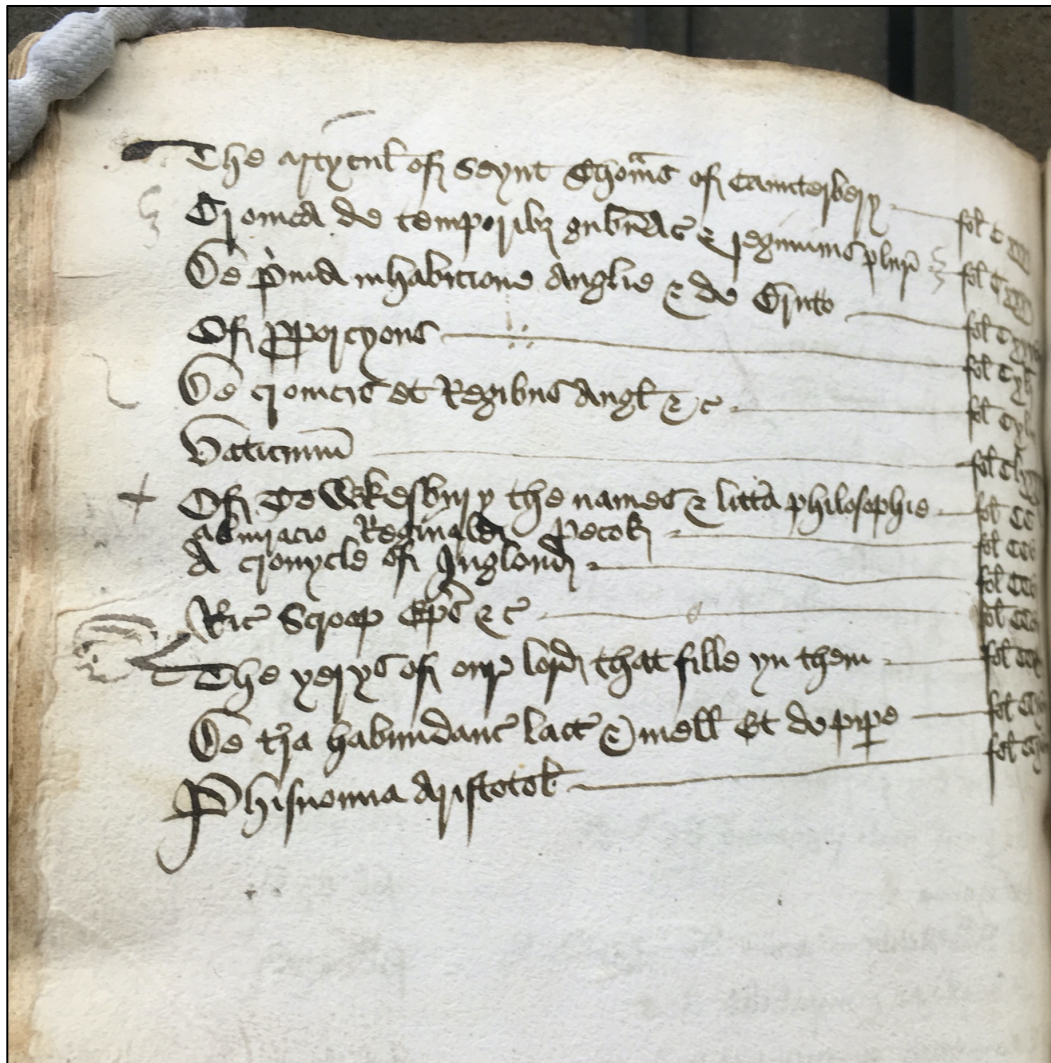


**Fig. 12** List of contents in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 191<sup>v63</sup>

Although the list of contents post-dates Benet, he already exerted agency in the arrangement of materials in the manuscript. The way that he grouped particular texts suggests that he employed some degree of planning while he was creating his manuscript. Certain parts of the manuscript appear to have been arranged by theme.<sup>64</sup> Fols 41<sup>r</sup>–49<sup>v</sup> and fols 111<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>v</sup> primarily contain prophecies. Apart from some interruptions, fols 48<sup>r</sup>–75<sup>v</sup> display various extracts from the *Polychronicon*. Although these parts of MS 516

<sup>63</sup> Author's photograph

<sup>64</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 126.



demonstrate planning, other parts of the manuscript appears to have been compiled as and when Benet was able to access particular texts.

#### 3.1.4.7 Blank folios

There are some blank folios in MS 516. Benet may have intended to add further commentary or additional texts. That they remain unfilled suggests that either time ran out or he lacked access to exemplars. At the end of his substantial Latin chronicle, eight folios were left blank. It seems likely that here he projected continuation of the commentary. Elsewhere, it is less clear why certain folios were left blank. But such practices were not unusual, particularly in working manuscripts, rather than presentation texts. What the presence of blank folios certainly suggests is that Benet had abundant access to the paper and parchment that comprise his manuscript, which indicates an unusually stable supply chain.

Colker's catalogue contains some errors and omissions in relation to blank leaves in MS 516. Colker did not record one of the blank folios in his catalogue; following fol. 113 there is a blank folio (blank on both the recto and verso), that has not been numbered or included in the catalogue. Conversely, fol. 192<sup>v</sup> was declared blank in Colker's catalogue. However, this folio includes a short tripartite verse. The text has faded to the extent that it is illegible to the naked eye, but modern digital imaging techniques could assist in recovering the text on this leaf in future studies.

Benet created MS 516 to engage in a vibrant process of information collection, inscription, and importantly, consultation. The functional script used by Benet allowed for his quick copying of texts, which span a multitude of genres and themes. The

annotations in Benet's hand read like instructions to a reader, newly approaching the information, to pay particular attention to specific passages that Benet has deemed valuable. Underlines would assist the reader in navigating large portions of text and draw the reader's attention to helpful aspects of the treatise, such as numerical examples in the treatise concerning proportions.

Although the organisation of the manuscript does not elucidate Benet's intended audience, it gives some insight into the compiler. From the extensive record of the contents that spanned three folios, it is clear that the scribe wanted the reader, whoever that was, to be able to find texts with relative ease. Benet's comprehensive index assisted the reader in finding the folio number of a specific text while also providing an overview of all the texts contained in the manuscript. However, it is not apparent whether Benet created the index solely for his personal use or to ensure that external readers could navigate his book with ease. Certain features of the list of contents suggest that he intended MS 516 to be comprehensible to readers other than himself. First, he did not employ a shorthand. Second, he connected the titles to their folio numbers using lines. These features give the impression that Benet was aiming for maximum clarity. Furthermore, other organisational tools within the manuscript, such as the occasional grouping of texts from the same literary genre and filling consecutive folios with material predominantly from a single source, show that Benet already wanted to facilitate the identification of particular texts with relative ease. This effort was realised with the addition of the contents list (fols 190<sup>v</sup>–91<sup>v</sup>) added by the indexer towards the end of the manuscript.

### 3.1.5 Contents

Colker recorded the contents of MS 516 in detail in his catalogue of the medieval and renaissance manuscripts in Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>65</sup> Using this information, this dissertation groups together entries of similar themes in an attempt to analyse the contents of the manuscript, which has allowed for a more thorough understanding of the miscellaneous manuscript. The manuscript contains a considerable amount of historical accounts and chronicles, some prophecies and other political texts, numerous Latin proverbs, lists of English kings, some religious texts but few that are connected to the practice of the liturgy, and one treatise on mathematical proportions. When these genres are explored in greater detail, an overarching theme emerges that connects many of the entries.

| Folio (entry number)                | Entry                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 <sup>r</sup> –14 <sup>r</sup> (1) | Johannes Erghome (attrib.), ‘ <i>Prophecies of John of Bridlington</i> ’                                                                                                                           |
| 14 <sup>r</sup> (2)                 | Verses<br>‘ <i>Pro regina nostra nota; Cum regnant milue, dicunt gentes simul ue ue</i> ’                                                                                                          |
| 14 <sup>r</sup> (3)                 | Verse, ‘ <i>apud Euborum: Anno milleno trecenteno medioque centum cum deus populo priuatur utroque</i> ’                                                                                           |
| 14 <sup>r</sup> (4)                 | Verse on the capture of Rouen by Henry V, 1418                                                                                                                                                     |
| 14 <sup>v</sup> (5)                 | Extracts assigned to the <i>Polychronicon</i> by Ranulf Higden about the periods of history                                                                                                        |
| 14 <sup>v</sup> (6)                 | Verses<br>‘ <i>H. patre sublato reget R. postque relicto H. per E. rex fit E. post E. postea mira. Quere plus postea in 8 fol</i> ’ (this refers to the political verses on fol. 22 <sup>v</sup> ) |

<sup>65</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, pp. 976–1002.

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14 <sup>v</sup> (7)                | Verses concerning 1461<br><i>‘Anno m’o domini dicto tibi plene quadringenteno<br/>sexagesimo simul uno. Insignita cruce uenit occidua ciuitate<br/>– Dampnatus culpis pendebit in arbore uulpis [...]</i><br><i>Secundum Brydlyngton’</i>                                                                        |
| 15 <sup>r</sup> (8)                | Gildas’ Prophecy<br><i>‘Cambria Carneyian Anglie natum dabit agnum - percipiet<br/>et fine tenebit’</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 15 <sup>r</sup> (9) recurs as (63) | Verses by Gildas<br><i>‘versus per quantum tempus regnabit sextus’</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 15 <sup>r</sup> (10)               | Verses<br><i>‘Resurget unus qui diues antea dictus - quasi mortuus<br/>antris. Explicit prophetia mirabilis’</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 15 <sup>r</sup> (11)               | Verses <i>De Wallia</i><br><i>‘Terra fecunda fructibus et carnibus et piscibus - phaleratus<br/>dicior’</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 15 <sup>r</sup> (12)               | Verses about Wales from <i>Polychronicon</i><br><i>‘Libri finis nunc Cambriam prius tangit quam Angliam. Sic<br/>proper ad Walliam ad Priami prosapiam – In hoc precintu.<br/>Wallie tres olim errant curie Ad Kaeremarthin pimaria, in<br/>Anglesyan alia, Tertia in Powisia Penwerus que nunc<br/>Solopia’</i> |
| 15 <sup>v</sup> (13)               | One sentence that might have been a heading for (14)<br><i>‘Anno millesimo quingentessimo cremabitur omnis caro’</i>                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 15 <sup>v</sup> (14)               | Verses about Wales<br><i>In menia Northwallie Que Anglesey est hodie - ubi quit scit<br/>[sit] hodie</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 16 <sup>r</sup> (15)               | Verses in English about London<br>This is the prophecy l’ thai have in Wales – best the prise                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 16 <sup>r-v</sup> (16)             | <i>Edwardus Tertius Rex</i><br>About genealogical descent from Edward III<br><i>‘Edwardis 3’us rex’</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 16 <sup>v</sup> (17)               | Sprichw. no. 13935                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 <sup>v</sup> (18)                   | Sprichw. no. 18839                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 16 <sup>v</sup> (19)                   | Verses<br>' <i>Cum sis, esto ciuis memor ipse per omnia finis - tibi finis obest</i> '                                                                                                                                                   |
| 16 <sup>v</sup> (20)                   | Sprichw. no. 25147                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 16 <sup>v</sup> (21)                   | Entry about the prospect of a university at Drogheda, Ireland<br>' <i>Apud uillam que est Trodayth erit uniuersitas in Hybernia</i> '                                                                                                    |
| 17 <sup>r</sup> –22 <sup>v</sup> (22)  | Galfridus Monemutensis, <i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 22 <sup>v</sup> –23 <sup>r</sup> (23)  | Verses about the five dogs of London (1456)<br>' <i>Colle, primus canis Lundonie, quinque in munere occisi fuerunt anno domini m'o cccc'o lci'to</i><br><i>Whan lorschype fayleth gode felowschipe awayleth – dyspyte of your hede</i> ' |
| 23 <sup>r</sup> (24)                   | ' <i>Regnaciones Regum a Conquestu Anglie</i> '<br>A list of English kings since the Conquest with the lengths of each reign<br>Edward IV was added by another hand                                                                      |
| 23 <sup>r</sup> (25)                   | Verses about English kings in Latin<br>' <i>Wil. Con. Wylllelmus Hen. Stephanus Henque secundus – En sextus regnat, felici tempore uiuat</i> '                                                                                           |
| 23 <sup>v</sup> (26)                   | Short list of English kings. Not in Benet's hand                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 24 <sup>r</sup> –25 <sup>v</sup> (27)  | Prophetic verse in English with Latin heading                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 25 <sup>v</sup> –26 <sup>r</sup> (28)  | Verse salutations to the Blessed Virgin Mary in English                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 26 <sup>r</sup> –27 <sup>r</sup> (29)  | Commonplaces in English regarding the way to flee vices and pursue virtues. Attributed to Isidore and Augustine                                                                                                                          |
| 27 <sup>v</sup> –28 <sup>v</sup> (30)  | Lydgate, <i>Dietary</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 28 <sup>v</sup> –30 <sup>r</sup> (31)  | Lydgate, verses about kings of England                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 30 <sup>v</sup> , 31 <sup>v</sup> (32) | Notes about English kings since the Conquest                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                                                               |                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 31 <sup>r</sup> (33)                                                          | <i>Reginaldus Col</i>                                                                                           |
| 31 <sup>r</sup> (34)                                                          | Verse<br><i>‘vulpes cum cauda periet dum cantet alauda’</i>                                                     |
| 31 <sup>v</sup> (32)                                                          | See above                                                                                                       |
| 32 <sup>r</sup> –33 <sup>r</sup> (35)                                         | <i>‘Navi vel Puppe’</i><br>verses about the ship of state                                                       |
| 33 <sup>r</sup> –34 <sup>v</sup> (36)                                         | <i>Mirabilia Anglie</i>                                                                                         |
| 34 <sup>v</sup> (37)                                                          | Short extract from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i> and verses on the same theme                                   |
| 35 <sup>r</sup> – <sup>v</sup> (38)                                           | <i>‘De uenatoribus in Anglis’</i> [for hunters in English]<br>Collective nouns and other terminology in English |
| 36 <sup>r</sup> (39)                                                          | Vocabulary about animals used as food in English                                                                |
| 36 <sup>v</sup> (40)                                                          | About the exodus from Egypt<br><i>‘Factum est uilis propter solitum’</i>                                        |
| 37 <sup>r</sup> –38 <sup>v</sup> (41)                                         | Apocryphal letter from Jesus about observing Sundays                                                            |
| 38 <sup>v</sup> (42)                                                          | Founding of Rome                                                                                                |
| 38 <sup>v</sup> –39 <sup>r</sup> (43–46)                                      | Short pieces of prophetic verse in Latin                                                                        |
| 39 <sup>v</sup> (47)                                                          | Extracts from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i>                                                                     |
| 40 <sup>r</sup> (48–51)                                                       | Short prophecies                                                                                                |
| 40 <sup>v</sup> (52)                                                          | Extracts from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i> against simoniacs                                                   |
| 41 <sup>r</sup> –49 <sup>r</sup> (53–73)                                      | Prophecies                                                                                                      |
| 49 <sup>r</sup> –53 <sup>v</sup> and 56 <sup>r</sup> –75 <sup>v</sup><br>(74) | Extracts from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i>                                                                     |
| 54 <sup>r</sup> (75)                                                          | Story about the cross in the church of St Gregory at Northampton                                                |
| 55 <sup>r</sup> – <sup>v</sup> (76–81)                                        | Short pieces<br>(76) About day and twilight                                                                     |



|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                           | (77) ‘ <i>Denarius S. Petri...</i> ’<br>(78–80) Sprichw.<br>(81) About the betrothal of Alexander III, King of Scots                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 56 <sup>r</sup> –75 <sup>v</sup> (74)     | Extracts from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 76 <sup>r</sup> –107 <sup>v</sup> (82)    | Johannes de Legnano, <i>De Bello</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 107 <sup>v</sup> (83)                     | Short piece                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 107 <sup>v</sup> (84)                     | Sprichw. no 15813                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 108 <sup>r</sup> –10 <sup>r</sup> (85)    | Macaronic verses about the evils of age                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 110 <sup>v</sup>                          | Blank                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 111 <sup>r</sup> –12 <sup>v</sup> (86–91) | Six prophecies:<br>111 (86) This appeared as (65)<br>111 (87) ‘ <i>Vaticinium Toleti</i> ’<br>111–12 (88) Iohannes De Rupescissa<br>112 (89) Verses in English, recurs as (113)<br>112 <sup>v</sup> (90) Verses about the war in Northampton<br>112 <sup>v</sup> (91) ‘ <i>Vaticinium paganorum</i> ’ |
| 112 <sup>v</sup> (92)                     | Extracts from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 112 <sup>v</sup> –13 <sup>r</sup> (93)    | Extracts from Higden’s <i>Polychronicon</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 112 <sup>v</sup> –13 <sup>r</sup> (94)    | About Edward IV                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 113 <sup>r–v</sup> (95)                   | Johannes Tesolanus, <i>Prophecy</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 113 <sup>v</sup> (96)                     | Verses in English about the rebellion of 1469                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 113 <sup>v</sup> (97)                     | Verse referring to 1469                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|                                           | <i>There is a blank folio that is not numbered or included in Colker’s catalogue</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 114 <sup>r</sup> (98)                     | Hermerus, <i>Prophecy</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 114 <sup>r</sup> –15 <sup>v</sup> (99)    | The First Scottish Prophecy, in English                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                         |                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 115 <sup>v</sup> (100–05)               | Six short verses<br>(102) Sprichw.<br>(103) Verse in English<br>A text on the traditional four stages of drunkenness |
| 116 <sup>r–v</sup> (106)                | Verses about William de la Pole, the first duke of Suffolk (1450) in English                                         |
| 117 <sup>r</sup> (107)                  | Extracts from Higden's <i>Polychronicon</i>                                                                          |
| 117 <sup>r</sup> (108)                  | Verses                                                                                                               |
| 117 <sup>v</sup> –18 <sup>r</sup> (109) | Extracts from Higden's <i>Polychronicon</i> about Frankish history                                                   |
| 118 <sup>r</sup> (110)                  | About <i>Policratica</i>                                                                                             |
| 118 <sup>r</sup> (111)                  | Verses in English about prophecy according to the throw of dice                                                      |
| 118 <sup>r</sup> (112)                  | Prophetic verses in English                                                                                          |
| 118 <sup>r</sup> (113)                  | Appeared as (89)                                                                                                     |
| 118 <sup>r</sup> (114)                  | Prophecy in English                                                                                                  |
| 118 <sup>v</sup> (115)                  | <i>De Manna</i>                                                                                                      |
| 119 <sup>r</sup> –21 <sup>r</sup> (116) | <i>Historia S. Neminis</i>                                                                                           |
| 121 <sup>r</sup> (117)                  | Against gallants                                                                                                     |
| 121 <sup>r</sup> (118)                  | Macaronic verse about gallants                                                                                       |
| 122 <sup>r–v</sup> (119)                | Articuli S. Thome Cantuariensis, <i>Episcopi</i>                                                                     |
| 122 <sup>v</sup> (120)                  | Short piece referring to the 1466 summa on indulgences and the summa on mass                                         |
| 123 <sup>r</sup> –26 <sup>v</sup> (121) | Chronicle focusing on biblical history                                                                               |
| 127 <sup>r</sup> –28 <sup>v</sup> (122) | Short chronicle of legendary British history                                                                         |

|                                          |                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 129 <sup>r</sup> –31 <sup>v</sup> (123)  | <i>On proporcyons</i> ('þe proporcions')                                                        |
| 132 <sup>r</sup> –88 <sup>r</sup> (124)  | Chronicle of English history from Adam to 1462                                                  |
| 188 <sup>r</sup> (125)                   | Verses about Edward IV                                                                          |
| 188 <sup>r</sup> (126)                   | List of English kings from Edward IV to Henry VII with information about their years of reign   |
| 188 <sup>v</sup> (127)                   | Verse, including the abjuration and confession of Reginald Pecock                               |
| 188 <sup>v</sup> (128)                   | Prophecy in English                                                                             |
| 189 <sup>r</sup> (129)                   | List of those who fell in battle near Tewkesbury (1471) and list of those beheaded at Tewksbury |
| 189 <sup>v</sup> (130)                   | Prediction of Hieronymus, 1472                                                                  |
| 190 <sup>r</sup> (131)                   | About Cambridge University as older than Oxford                                                 |
| 190 <sup>r</sup> (132)                   | Short piece about liturgy                                                                       |
| 190 <sup>r</sup> (133)                   | Short piece about liturgy                                                                       |
| 190 <sup>v</sup> –91 <sup>v</sup> (134)  | List of contents of the codex with folio references                                             |
| 192 <sup>r</sup> (135)                   | Genealogical descent from Edward III to Edward V                                                |
| 192 <sup>v</sup>                         | Recorded as blank but contains a tripartite verse                                               |
| 193 <sup>r</sup> – <sup>v</sup> (136)    | Abjuration and confession of Reginald Pecock, 1471                                              |
| 193 <sup>v</sup> (137)                   | Verses by Reginald Pecock                                                                       |
| 193 <sup>v</sup> (138)                   | Short piece                                                                                     |
| 193 <sup>v</sup> (139)                   | Sprichw. 3572                                                                                   |
| 194 <sup>r</sup> –95 <sup>v</sup> (140)  | Verses presenting an appeal for unity against the French                                        |
| 196 <sup>r</sup> –200 <sup>v</sup> (141) | Articles against Henry IV on behalf of Richard II by Ricardus Scrope                            |

|                                         |                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 200 <sup>v</sup> (142)                  | Articles against Richard Scrope                                                                                      |
| 201 <sup>r</sup> (143)                  | Verse                                                                                                                |
| 201 <sup>v</sup> –02 <sup>v</sup> (144) | Summary chronicle 1306–1464                                                                                          |
| 203 <sup>v</sup> –04 <sup>r</sup> (145) | Wonders of the World                                                                                                 |
| 204 <sup>v</sup>                        | Blank                                                                                                                |
| 205–07 <sup>v</sup> (146)               | Pseudo-Aristoteles, <i>Physionomia</i>                                                                               |
| 207 <sup>v</sup> (147)                  | Excerpt from Petrus Blesensis, <i>Compendium</i>                                                                     |
| 207 <sup>v</sup> (148)                  | About chronicles                                                                                                     |
| 208 <sup>r</sup> (149)                  | Summary chronicle of English history AD 60–689, partly based on Bede’s <i>Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum</i> |
| 208 <sup>r</sup> (150)                  | Short piece about history                                                                                            |
| 208 <sup>r</sup> (151)                  | Short piece about history                                                                                            |
| 208 <sup>r</sup> – <sup>v</sup> (152)   | Short pieces                                                                                                         |
| 208 <sup>r</sup> – <sup>v</sup> (153)   | About the plagues of England                                                                                         |
| 208 <sup>v</sup> (154)                  | ‘ <i>Mirabilia in Anglia</i> ’                                                                                       |
| 209 <sup>r</sup> (155)                  | Short piece about liturgy attributing the practice of chanting to different popes                                    |
| 209 <sup>r</sup> (156)                  | List of archbishops of York                                                                                          |
| 209 <sup>r</sup> (157)                  | List of counties, bishoprics, and archbishoprics in England                                                          |
| 209 <sup>v</sup> –12 <sup>v</sup> (158) | Brief notices of world events from various histories                                                                 |
| 213 <sup>r</sup> –14 <sup>v</sup> (159) | Chronicle of English history 1208–1249                                                                               |
| 213 <sup>r</sup> (160)                  | Commonplaces assigned to Josephus                                                                                    |

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 213 <sup>v</sup> (161)                  | Sprichw.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 213 <sup>v</sup> (162–64)               | Much of text is cut away                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 214 <sup>r</sup> (165)                  | Commonplace assigned to Gregory                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 214 <sup>v</sup>                        | see (159) above                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 215 <sup>r</sup> (166–71)               | (166) Plagues of England<br>(167) Notices for the years 1017, 1035, 1037, 1043<br>(168) About Dunstan and Alphege<br>(169) Diagram concerning Pelagian heresy and the arrival of Augustine of Canterbury in England. All ‘ <i>secundam Bedam</i> ’<br>(170) Entry largely illegible for AD 490<br>(171) Notes about early English history, chiefly Brutus |
| 216 <sup>r</sup> –17 <sup>v</sup> (172) | Chronicle of English history (1296–1298)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 218 <sup>r</sup> (173)                  | About epacts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 218 <sup>r</sup> (174–82)               | All short pieces that could be one piece about time-reckoning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 219 <sup>r</sup> (183–86)               | Chronometric tables<br>(183) <i>termini paschales</i><br>(184) <i>regulares lunares</i><br>(185) <i>regulares feriales</i><br>(186) <i>concurrentes</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 219 <sup>v</sup> (187–91)               | Short pieces<br>(187) Verses<br>(188) Horatius epistle<br>(189) Verses<br>(190) About great cycles<br>(191) About the reckoning of Easter                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

**Table 3.2** Contents of Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, pp. 976–1002.

### 3.1.5.1 Historical accounts and chronicles

Benet included many verses in MS 516. They were generally short entries of one or two lines and were more frequently in Latin throughout the manuscript, although he included some English verses. For the most part, in MS 516, the short verses pertained to various kings or particular battles. An entry on fol. 55<sup>v</sup> described the betrothal of Alexander III, king of Scots. The entries on fols 112<sup>v</sup>–13<sup>r</sup> concerned King Edward IV. On fols 122<sup>r</sup>–<sup>v</sup>, a fictitious work entitled *Articuli Sancti Thome Cantuariensis Episcopi* set out complaints against King Henry II and explained why they caused St Thomas of Canterbury to suffer martyrdom. On fol. 188<sup>r</sup>, verses about Edward IV appeared above a list of English kings from Edward IV to Henry VII and included information about their years of reign. The genealogical descent from Edward III to Edward V was charted on fol. 192<sup>r</sup>. Fols 196<sup>r</sup>–200<sup>v</sup> contained articles against Henry IV on behalf of Richard II, dated 1399, that were written by Richard Scrope, archbishop of York. Other entries listed English kings and their genealogy, without a narrative (fols 23<sup>r</sup>, 23<sup>v</sup>, 28<sup>v</sup>–30<sup>r</sup>).<sup>67</sup>

Alongside the short historical verses, Benet included several chronicles, some of which were complete, while others began or ended imperfectly. Some were unique to MS 516, while others were included in different manuscripts. The chronicle contained on fols 123<sup>r</sup>–26<sup>v</sup> was not unique to MS 516, appearing in at least four other manuscripts, but it was not transcribed completely into MS 516 and ended imperfectly.<sup>68</sup> This chronicle focuses on biblical history, while the chronicle that follows, fols 127<sup>r</sup>–28<sup>v</sup>, is concerned with the burial places of legendary kings and the cities which they supposedly founded. This short chronicle of legendary British history begins imperfectly and possibly ends

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<sup>67</sup> The list on fol. 23<sup>v</sup> is not in Benet's hand.

<sup>68</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 991.

imperfectly also. It is in both English and Latin, and this entry probably came from the *Polychronicon*.<sup>69</sup> Benet included an excerpt from Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, concerning the history of British kings. A large part of the manuscript contained several extracts assigned to the *Polychronicon* by Ranulf Higden (c. 1280–1364), a chronicle that enjoyed a particular vogue in the fifteenth century.<sup>70</sup>

MS 516 contained a Latin chronicle of English history from Adam to 1462 (fols 132<sup>r</sup>–88<sup>r</sup>). Often referred to as 'John Benet's Chronicle', this text was one of the most substantial items included in MS 516 and was unique to the manuscript.<sup>71</sup> Although the author is unidentifiable, Hanham asserted that Benet was not the author of the chronicle that bears his name.<sup>72</sup> She provided a list of possible authors instead.<sup>73</sup> Although the chronicle was predominantly in Latin, an account of the abjuration and confession of Reginald Pecock, bishop of Chichester, was included within the chronicle and was written in English (fols 179<sup>r</sup>–80<sup>v</sup>).<sup>74</sup> Scattergood argued that the chronicle was influenced by universal chronicles such as the *Polychronicon* rather than the more usual model of city chronicles.<sup>75</sup> Given Benet's frequent inclusion of extracts from the *Polychronicon*, it is not surprising that he chose to include a chronicle similar to Ranulf Higden's widely read fourteenth-century chronicle.

Not all of the chronicles in MS 516 were in Latin, however. A summary chronicle for the years 1306–1464 was included later in the manuscript and was almost entirely written in

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<sup>69</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 991.

<sup>70</sup> The full title of this work was *Ranulphi Casterensis, cognomina Higden, Polychronicon (sive Historia Polycratica) ab initio mundi usque ad mortem regis Edwardi III in septem libros dispositum*.

<sup>71</sup> Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle*, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle*, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle*, pp. 56–59.

<sup>74</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 992.

<sup>75</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', pp. 123–4.

English. Spanning fols 201<sup>v</sup>–02<sup>v</sup>, this short chronicle was amended at a later date by two other hands to include events such as the deaths of John Broughton II and III and Thomas Peynre.<sup>76</sup> The chronicle indicated that John Broughton II died in 1403, confirming that it was referring to the grandfather of Benet's patron who owned Broughton Manor, Buckinghamshire.<sup>77</sup> Upon his death in 1403, the manor passed to his son, John Broughton III. He married Mary, daughter and heir of Thomas Pevre. It is likely, therefore, that the 'Thomas Peynre' inscribed into the chronicle was a reference to Thomas Pever of Toddington, Bedfordshire. John and Mary had a son and heir, also John. John Broughton III died in about 1408. Upon Pevre's death in 1429, both the manor and the advowson at Broughton and the manor in Toddington, Bedfordshire, passed from his grandfather to John. Sir John Broughton presented Benet to the vicarage of Broughton in 1471. He died in 1489. The inclusion of these local characters suggests that MS 516 remained in the same geographical location, likely in Broughton, and shows that the manuscript continued to be consulted and annotated following the death of Benet.

The final section of the manuscript contained some smaller chronicles, including a chronicle of English history from 1208 to 1249 (fols 213<sup>r</sup>–14<sup>v</sup>) and one from 1296 to 1298 (fols 216<sup>r</sup>–17<sup>v</sup>), six short chronicle-type notices about English history before the eleventh century (fol. 215<sup>r</sup>), and a summary chronicle of English history from the years 60 to 689, which appears to have been based on Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis*

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<sup>76</sup> Colker, *Catalogue*, vol. II, p. 994.

<sup>77</sup> The information in this paragraph comes from L. S. Woodger, 'Broughton, John (bef. 1331–1403), of Broughton, Bucks.', in *The History of Parliament: The Houses of Commons 1386–1421* <<http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1386-1421/member/broughton-john-1331-1403>> [accessed 21 March 2020]; and William Page, ed., 'Parishes: Broughton, in *A History of the County of Buckingham: Volume 4* (London: Victoria County History, 1927), pp. 303–08. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/bucks/vol4/pp303-308>> [accessed 21 March 2020]



*Anglorum* (fol. 208<sup>r</sup>). Benet did not write these items but they were originally included earlier in the manuscript. Many of them were written on larger folios and folded in half to be bound within the manuscript.

### 3.1.5.2 Prophecies

Political prophecy was related to both moralising and chivalric discourse, and also to public affairs and public policy.<sup>78</sup> Benet included many political prophecies in MS 516, both in English and Latin. MS 516 opened with the ‘Prophecies of John of Bridlington’, one of the six most important texts of the genre according to Rupert Taylor, who coined the term ‘political prophecy’.<sup>79</sup> Such prophecies commented on the political, social, and moral problems of contemporary society, expressing political statements in metaphorical descriptions, often based on animals, that required intellectual rigour from the audience.<sup>80</sup>

Benet included an English version of ‘The First Scottish Prophecy’ in MS 516 (fols 114<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>v</sup>). Also known as ‘The Cock in the North’, Karen Moranski added this text to Taylor’s list of the ‘monumental’ texts of the genre of political prophecy.<sup>81</sup> The repetition of the word ‘ryght’ indicates that the poem was discussing a moral and political conflict.<sup>82</sup> A dice prophecy was included on fol. 118<sup>r</sup> in which the faces of the die were drawn into the text. The text explained how dice-casting could be used to tell fortunes, describing a social game of the late middle ages.<sup>83</sup> Not all of the prophecies in MS 516 were related to England, however. There was one prophecy attributed to Hermerus (fol. 114<sup>r</sup>), who

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<sup>78</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Rupert Taylor, *The Political Prophecy in England* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 48.

<sup>80</sup> Karen R. Moranski, ‘The *Prophetie Merlini*, Animal Symbolism, and the Development of Political Prophecy in Late Medieval England and Scotland’, *Arthuriana*, 8 (1998), 58–68 (p. 59).

<sup>81</sup> Moranski, ‘The *Prophetie Merlini*’, p. 59.

<sup>82</sup> Moranski, ‘The *Prophetie Merlini*’, p. 64.

<sup>83</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 36.

was supposedly the European equivalent of Merlin.<sup>84</sup> This reference to the legendary continental past was a rarity in MS 516, which tended to be predominantly anglocentric.

### 3.1.5.3 Political texts

In addition to political prophecies, other texts in MS 516 were concerned with politics, particularly the contemporary political upheaval that was taking place in England. Whether Benet was pro-Lancastrian or pro-Yorkist has been much debated.<sup>85</sup> Although his political allegiances remain unclear, there was evidence of his keen interest in poems on contemporary, or near-contemporary, political subjects.<sup>86</sup> Two examples are ‘The Five Dogs of London’ (1456; fols 22<sup>v</sup>–23<sup>r</sup>) and ‘Ship of State’ (1458; fols 32<sup>r</sup>–33<sup>r</sup>), both unique to MS 516.<sup>87</sup> In ‘The Five Dogs of London’, the moral of the poem was politically charged as it called for its readers to support King Henry VI.<sup>88</sup> The poem focuses on a group of men who were hanged because of their participation in a riot in London in 1456. With the War of the Roses raging in the background, Rossell Hope Robbins believed that the poem took advantage of a serious but non-political riot to win over Londoners, who were traditionally Yorkist supporters, to the Lancastrian side.<sup>89</sup> The image of a ‘ship of state’ was possibly related to a 1421 sermon in which Henry V was described as the steerer of the ship which contained the English people.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 39.

<sup>85</sup> For discussion of Benet’s political allegiances during the War of the Roses, see Hanham and Cron, ‘Slain Dogs, The Dead Man and Editorial Constructs’, 33–54; Robbins, ‘Victory at Whitby, A. D. 1451’, 495–504; Kaufman, *The Historical Literature of the Jack Cade Rebellion*.

<sup>86</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 220.

<sup>87</sup> Robbins, *Historical Poems*, pp. 189–93.

<sup>88</sup> Rossell Hope Robbins, ‘The Five Dogs of London’, *PMLA*, 71 (1956), 264–68 (p. 266).

<sup>89</sup> Robbins, ‘The Five Dogs of London’, p. 264.

<sup>90</sup> Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 24. For a detailed description of the sermon, see Roy M. Haines, ‘Church, Society and Politics in the Early Fifteenth Century as Viewed from an English Pulpit’, in *Church, Society and Politics*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1975), pp. 143–57 (pp. 149–51).

Gransden argued that throughout the manuscript it was possible to see Yorkist sympathies in many of Benet's choices of text; while Suffolk was 'the wicked duke' (fols 195<sup>r</sup>–98<sup>r</sup>), the duke of Gloucester was that 'most faithful prince' (fol. 192<sup>r</sup>).<sup>91</sup> An entry at the end of Benet's extensive Latin chronicle he described King Henry VI to have ruled with tyranny, while the coronation of Edward IV was considered to be a blessing of God.<sup>92</sup> Clearly, Benet was not immune to the political situation in England. However, it is possible that, given the different political leanings on display throughout his manuscript, Benet was not including political texts to show support to any particular side of the war or any cause.

### 3.1.5.4 Proverbs

Throughout the manuscript, Benet inserted proverbs. Where possible, Colker numbered them according to Hans Walther's collection of Latin proverbs and sayings of the middle ages.<sup>93</sup> A medieval proverb collection was 'a text which gives advice on conduct, expressed in brief sentences paratactically arranged' and a proverb was considered to be 'an authoritative truth concerning conduct'.<sup>94</sup> It is important to note that proverbs specifically concerned behaviour and that general truths that did not concern behaviour were excluded from the genre.<sup>95</sup> By the later middle ages proverbs were often found in the company of preaching aids, suggesting that they were used by preachers to inform the moral considerations of those to whom they were preaching.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1370 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 257.

<sup>92</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II*, p. 257.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Walther, *Proverbia Sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi: Lateinische Sprichwörter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters in alphabetischer Anordnung*, 6 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963–1969).

<sup>94</sup> Barry Taylor, 'Medieval Proverb Collections: The West European Tradition', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55 (1992), 19–35 (p. 19).

<sup>95</sup> Taylor, 'Medieval Proverb Collections', p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> Taylor, 'Medieval Proverb Collections', pp. 32–33.

Proverbs were also used in education and were considered useful for learning Latin in late medieval England. When used in the education of schoolchildren, single vernacular proverbs were often found presented with more than one Latin version.<sup>97</sup> When used as an educational tool, the central message of the proverb was less important than its value as an academic exercise. However, in MS 516, each proverb existed only in one language at a time and they were included throughout the manuscript, rather than all together in one section. It is likely that Benet included them because of the wisdom they were perceived to have contained, rather than to teach Latin.

#### 3.1.5.5 Religious texts

Non-liturgical texts far outweighed texts on religious themes in MS 516. However, it is not surprising that John Benet, a vicar, included some religious texts in his manuscript. Fol. 207<sup>v</sup> contained an excerpt from the *Compendium in Iob* by Peter of Blois. A French cleric of the twelfth century, Peter produced this work at the request of Henry II of France who sought an abridgement of Gregory's *Moralia*.<sup>98</sup> In his *Compendium*, Peter focused on the moral application of the book of Job. He specifically applied moral teachings to his criticism of the corrupt clergy of his time.<sup>99</sup> This entry was not the only item concerning corruption in the Church in MS 516; Benet included an item against simoniacs on fol. 40<sup>v</sup>. He also included a reference to the *summa indulgenciarum* of 1466 and to a certain *summa missarum viii* on fol. 122<sup>v</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Bartlett Jere Whiting, 'A Collection of Proverbs in BM Additional MS. 37075', in *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.*, ed. Jess B. Bessinger and Robert P. Creed (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 274–89 (p. 274).

<sup>98</sup> Choon-Leong Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), p. 205.

<sup>99</sup> Seow, *Job 1-21*, p. 205.

On fol. 121<sup>r</sup> Benet included an item in Latin that warned against gallants. The author of the item noted that the letters used in the word could be used to spell out the sins of gluttony, greed, extravagance, and apathy, and argued that these vices turned a person away from all that was essential, namely God and the saints. The macaronic verses on fol. 121<sup>v</sup> were also concerned with gallants.

There were also many religious verses included throughout the manuscript. They were generally a line or two in length and ranged from salutations to the Blessed Virgin Mary to short pieces about liturgy. One short piece on fol. 209<sup>r</sup> attributed the practice of chanting to various popes. Another short piece on fol. 107<sup>v</sup> claimed that the future was revealed through the revelations of God. Benet included two short pieces about liturgy on fol. 190<sup>r</sup> and a short chronicle-type notice about Dunstan and Alphege on fol. 215<sup>r</sup>. While Dunstan was attributed with the restoration of monastic life in England, Alphege allegedly furthered the cult of Dunstan and furthered learning. There were some longer entries on religious themes, including an apocryphal letter from Jesus about observing Sundays on fols 37<sup>r</sup>–38<sup>v</sup> and a story about the cross in the church of St Gregory of Northampton on fol. 54<sup>r</sup>. Some of the chronicles already mentioned also focused on biblical history.

One of the more substantial items in MS 516 was *De Bello*, attributed to John of Legnano (fols 76<sup>r</sup>–107<sup>v</sup>). While Benet did not copy this, he deemed it important enough to include the large item in his manuscript. Regarding the laws of war, the treatise was one of moral philosophy and at times relied on quotations from the Bible in support of the author's

statements.<sup>100</sup> The author was both a theologian and moralist. He expounded the rights and duties of troops who served in a war, discussed the justifiability of war, and listed those who were allowed to wage war and those against whom war should be waged.<sup>101</sup>

### 3.1.5.6 Texts on music

Apart from the treatise on music proportion, which concerned the mathematical proportions underpinning music, there was no other example of a text on music in MS 516. Furthermore, there was no text concerning the application of the proportions found in the treatise to practical music-making, as might have been expected. The author of the treatise directed the reader to the monochord to further understand the topic. However, Benet did not include a separate introduction to the monochord or an explanation of how to apply the theory of proportions to the monochord. Instead, the treatise on *musica speculativa* stood alone as a text concerning music in this manuscript.

Benet included many religious verses in MS 516, both in English and in Latin and while it is likely that some of these verses had melodic renderings, it is not possible within the scope of this research to investigate whether these verses have been set to music or whether Benet would have been aware of their musical renderings. The absence of any form of notation in the manuscript, including neumatic notation on the folios that contained verses, suggests that, for Benet, the texts of the verses were his primary concern in copying them into MS 516.

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<sup>100</sup> Giovanni da Legnano, *Tractatus de Bello, de Represaliis et Duello*, ed. Thomas Erskine Holland, trans. James Leslie Brierly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), p. ix.

<sup>101</sup> Giovanni da Legnano, *Tractatus de Bello*, pp. xxx–xxxii.

From an analysis of the contents of MS 516, it appears unlikely that John Benet had a particular interest in music, given the absence of other texts relating to music. It seems unlikely that he intended to attain a high level of musical understanding, speculative or practical, given that there is only one incomplete speculative music treatise in his manuscript and no indication that he was concerned with the practical application of the text. It is curious, therefore, that Benet chose to include the treatise on proportion in his collection of texts.

#### 3.1.5.7 Quadrivial texts

At the end of MS 516, three entries relate to the treatise on musical proportion by way of the quadrivium. However, these were originally included in the manuscript during Benet's second copying period, when he also included 'pe proporcions'. There is a treatise about epacts on current fols 218<sup>r-v</sup>. On fol. 218<sup>r</sup> there are also nine short pieces, including one piece about time reckoning. On fol. 219<sup>r</sup> there are chronometric tables. Given the mathematical connection between music and astronomy, these entries suggest that Benet had an interest in other subjects of the quadrivium. However, the inclusion of these few quadrivial texts do not suggest a substantial level of curiosity on Benet's part. He did not concentrate on any single aspect of any particular subject within the quadrivium, nor did he delve into any of the four areas in great detail.

#### 3.1.6 Towards a purpose for MS 516

In recent years there has been much interest in the term 'miscellany' and its usage, particularly among medievalists. Although it is not possible to find a single standard definition of the term 'medieval miscellany', it is commonly accepted that it refers to a collection of texts that vary in language, style, and discipline. From the Insular Books

Conference in 2012, one of the few generic definitions of the miscellany which emerged was that of ‘multi-text manuscript’.<sup>102</sup> Although miscellanies do not constitute a large proportion of manuscripts containing English vernacular writing, they receive a disproportionate amount of interest relative to the number that survive.<sup>103</sup> Questions surrounding the arbitrary nature of the miscellany persist and the term remains contentious. One theory is that the term miscellany implies unplanned, random heterogeneity, and that it does not imply that the multi-genre texts have been carefully selected and anthologised according to clear organisational principles.<sup>104</sup> Susanna Fein stated that in its broadest senses, a miscellany is a collection of texts miscellaneous in genre, style and languages, and not selected for a single discernible purpose.<sup>105</sup> Although Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu have warned that there is not always a clear relation between the contents of a miscellany, unlike in an anthology, they have not dismissed the possibility that there was often some organisational system employed. They postulated that the contents of a miscellany are dependent upon the habitus of the person responsible for the production of the manuscript; that is, the manuscript producer will select the texts to include and, while the contents might not relate to each other thematically or linguistically, the common factor is that each text was chosen for inclusion by the manuscript producer.<sup>106</sup> Similar to Connolly and Radulescu, Barbara Shailor has argued that miscellaneous manuscripts are in fact not as mixed or diverse as

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<sup>102</sup> Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu, eds, *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> Pearsall, ‘The Whole Book’, pp. 17–18.

<sup>104</sup> Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman, ‘Texts in Conversation: Charlemagne Epics and Romances in Insular Plural-Text Codices’, in *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 31–48 (p. 47).

<sup>105</sup> Susanna Fein, ‘British Library MS Harley 2253: The Lyrics, the Facsimile, and the Book’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2000), pp. 1–15 (p. 7).

<sup>106</sup> Connolly and Radulescu, *Insular Books*, p. 3.



they may first appear.<sup>107</sup> She has argued that each miscellany should be placed within the context of its cultural milieu in order to understand or to move toward an understanding of the principles of organisation, maintaining that ‘miscellaneous manuscripts were seldom “miscellaneous” for the audiences or individuals that produced, read, and used them’.<sup>108</sup> Ralph Hanna’s conception of a synthesis of the planned and the random constituting a miscellany, whereby a planned anthology may be disrupted by the unforeseen acquisition of a text, is a reconciliation of both sides of the argument, positing a picture of oscillation between the planned and the random.<sup>109</sup>

Although scholars disagree about the fundamental nature of a miscellany, it is widely accepted that the term should not be used as a way to conceal a failure to understand the manuscripts.<sup>110</sup> Although it is challenging to ascertain why Benet chose to include the texts that he did in his manuscript, the contents of a personal manuscript are a reflection of the compiler’s choices. As such, the contents of MS 516 have the potential to offer information about Benet and what he considered was the purpose of his collection of texts. The texts have the potential to offer an insight into his intellectual pursuits, his personal interests and his duties as a vicar. Therefore, it is essential to look beyond the unhelpful categorisation of ‘miscellany’ in order to understand better the compiler of MS 516 and his intellectual interests, and a thorough analysis of the contents of Benet’s manuscript has revealed many things about the compiler. While a preliminary assessment of the contents depicted Benet as a clergyman with a great interest in the history of

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<sup>107</sup> Barbara Shailor, *The Medieval Book* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 153.

<sup>108</sup> Shailor, *The Medieval Book*, p. 167.

<sup>109</sup> Ralph Hanna, ‘Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions in Literary Production in Late Medieval England’, in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 37–51 (p. 47).

<sup>110</sup> Susanna Fein, ‘Review of “The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany”’, *Speculum*, 75 (2000), 962–67 (pp. 963–64).

England, many items in the manuscript remained unexplained. By investigating the contents at a level deeper than the apparent thematic content of various items, a unifying impetus has emerged for MS 516's creation. A detailed examination of the contents of MS 516 suggests that Benet was compiling a collection of texts that would assist him with considerations of morality. The majority of the texts in MS 516 provided Benet with examples of good behaviour, exposed the principles of conduct, and advised him how to cultivate traits that would allow him to live a virtuous life. The range of texts offered Benet the opportunity to consider morality from a mix of spiritual and secular perspectives. Serendipity and exemplar availability must have been factors in the compilation of MS 516, yet this does not mean that Benet was devoid of choice in the compilation of his personal collection of texts.

By far the most numerous texts included in MS 516, chronicles were not merely accounts of events that took place at various times in history but concentrated on the behaviour of humans. Medieval chroniclers believed that a record of historical events should have didactic significance; while a factual account of the historic event was necessary, chroniclers were concerned with the universal truths that could be deduced from the account, thus imbuing chronicles with a moralising function, while also recording historical events.<sup>111</sup> They provided examples for the reader of men who displayed sound moral judgements throughout history and it was through their emphasis on human behaviour that chronicles revealed universal truths.<sup>112</sup> MS 516 displayed significant interest in the history of England through the genre of the medieval chronicle. However, Benet's extensive inclusion of chronicles suggests that he was explicitly interested in the

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<sup>111</sup> Christopher Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London and New York, NY: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 2–3.

<sup>112</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 3.

way in which chronicles conveyed the information, which went beyond an exhaustive account of historical events to reveal human behaviour. In addition to chronicles, Benet included multiple political prophecies in MS 516. The genre of political prophecy offered commentary on the moral state of society. In his commentary on St Matthew's gospel, Thomas Aquinas identified two purposes of prophecy: confirmation of the faith and the correction of morals.<sup>113</sup> Moral writings were part of a wide range of didactic writings in medieval England that sought to improve behaviour, including verses on virtues and aphorisms of wisdom, which appeared throughout Benet's book.<sup>114</sup> The many proverbs throughout the manuscript offered Benet advice on behaviour, as did the moral poems that he included. He included religious texts and *summae* dealing with morals and good behaviour according to the Christian faith and specifically commented on concerns such as indulgences and the corruption of the clergy. Other verses depicted virtuous characters from the Bible, which Benet could use as an example of good behaviour. Having taken an oath upon their coronation that included elements that could be described as moral obligations, it is plausible that Benet's preoccupation with English kings came from their purported status of virtue.<sup>115</sup> The commonplaces on fols 26<sup>r</sup>–27<sup>r</sup> offered a list of tasks to which the reader might have adhered if he wished to flee vices and pursue virtues. Benet included texts that advised on the health of the body, thus focusing on practical ways to live well: Lydgate's *Dietary* (fols 27<sup>v</sup>–28<sup>v</sup>) concerns the governing of human nature and instructs the reader on how to stay healthy. Both spiritual and the physical health were therefore considered throughout MS 516. Interestingly, Benet did not turn solely to

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<sup>113</sup> Mishtooni Bose, 'Prophecy, Complaint and Pastoral Care in the Fifteenth Century: Thomas Gascoigne's *Liber Veritatum*', in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, ed. Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 149–62 (p. 149).

<sup>114</sup> Vincent Gillespie, 'Moral and Penitential Lyrics', in *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), pp. 68–95 (p. 69).

<sup>115</sup> Henry G. Richardson, 'The Coronation in Medieval England: The Evolution of the Office and the Oath', *Traditio*, 16 (1960), 111–202.

religious texts to expand his moral integrity, but synthesised different texts from a range of genres, employing a multi-disciplinary approach in the creation of his manuscript.

Not all texts appear to have concurred with the overall moral focus of the manuscript. For example, Benet included a list of vocabulary about animals used as food in English (fol. 36<sup>r</sup>). These texts, though more difficult to rationalise in the content of MS 516, represent other intellectual interests of the vicar. Chapter Four will examine Benet's range of roles, responsibilities and intellectual endeavours.

How was 'þe proporcions' connected to the development of moral judgement? Ann E. Moyer reminded the modern reader that the moral aspect of quadrivial study is 'most distant from modern expectations of mathematics, so much so that its importance can be difficult to appreciate'.<sup>116</sup> Mathematics as part of the quadrivium was preparatory study for philosophy and, as such, had a fundamentally moral character that facilitated an understanding of the order of the world.<sup>117</sup> Speculative music was concerned with moral responses to music and how to differentiate them from an emotional response.<sup>118</sup> In his introduction to *De institutione musica*, Boethius dealt with sense perception and the importance of forgoing this in order to engage with the knowledge underlying the phenomenon, the 'speculative' aspects. He described the listener's pleasure in ordered sounds as being a result of the underlying proportionality, which corresponded to the harmony of the soul and the body. According to Boethius, the study of these proportions, therefore, allowed for the contemplation of the divine order of creation. This belief

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<sup>116</sup> Ann E. Moyer, 'The *Quadrivium* and the Decline of Boethian Influence', in *New Directions in Boethian Studies*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Philip Edward Phillips, Studies in Medieval Culture 45 (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 2007), pp. 479–517 (p. 485).

<sup>117</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Boethian Number Theory: A Translation of the De Institutione Arithmetica*, trans. Michael Masi (New York, NY: Rodopi, 1983), p. 12.

<sup>118</sup> Moyer, 'The *Quadrivium* and the Decline of Boethian Influence', p. 483.

imbued music with a great responsibility to heal, elicit an emotional response and even change character. A study of the mathematical proportions underpinning music, as outlined in *De institutione musica* in Latin and in ‘þe proporcions’ in Middle English, could transform a person from a *cantor* to a *musicus*. The extent to which Benet would have understood the moral significance of the text will be discussed in Chapter Four, following a detailed investigation of his biography and experiences of learning.

Although a priest would have been expected to interact with Latin liturgical texts, Benet included texts in both languages, suggesting that he had a particular reason for including Middle English texts. Benet did not reserve any particular language for any particular genre, length, or style of text. The mix of languages might have been a result of exemplar availability or an intentional decision made by the compiler. However, Benet did not consider the languages of the texts notable enough to differentiate between them in his list of contents, suggesting that he might have expected his intended reader, whoever that was, to be able to comprehend texts in both languages. It is possible that Benet was compiling the manuscript chiefly for his own use, given his proficiency in both languages.

In seeking to make sense of a multi-text codex, codicological features, thematic unity, and intentionality require attention.<sup>119</sup> Together, these analyses help to move closer to an understanding of Benet’s intentionality in compiling his manuscript. The codicological evidence suggested that the manuscript was created by Benet to be used and consulted. The annotations and the underlines imply that Benet intended his manuscript to be functional and accessible. The markings on the manuscript, the fifteenth-century

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<sup>119</sup> Nichols and Wenzel, *The Whole Book*, p. 6.

annotations in a different hand and the list of contents that were added posthumously confirm that Benet's manuscript was consulted not only by Benet but also by other readers. MS 516 emerges as a collection of texts that could have been consulted to develop a comprehensive understanding of morality. It is not clear whether Benet intended the readership of his manuscript to be external or whether he was compiling the manuscript just for him. Furthermore, it is not clear whether Benet intended to create a moralising collection of texts when he began to create the manuscript as his attempt to organise the materials by creating a list of contents did not occur until late in the manuscript's production. However, the texts of MS 516 appear to have been more carefully selected and coherently organised than has hitherto been considered. Undoubtedly, there is a moral thread throughout the manuscript even if, at times, it is subtle. The examination of the manuscript has not revealed why Benet, a vicar, desired such a varied collection of mostly non-liturgical texts. It is unclear if he was compiling a book relating to his intellectual interests and solely for his own use, or whether it was connected to his responsibilities as a vicar. The next chapter will focus on these questions.

### **3.2 London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763**

The following section explores London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, which also contains a version of 'þe proporcions'. This well-known anthology of treatises on various aspects of music has been little studied as a whole book. Various studies have focused on individual treatises or the three English-language treatises as a set.<sup>120</sup> However, this manuscript promises to provide one of the most fruitful insights into fourteenth-century music education in one of the most important Augustinian houses in England. The

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<sup>120</sup> See Sanford B. Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English from a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript', *Speculum*, 10 (1935), 235–69; Cecily Sweeny, 'John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis', *Musica Disciplina*, 29 (1975), 43–59.

manuscript is an anthology of texts on music, and the contents range from practical to speculative. This section explores the provenance, production and the contents of the manuscript. By considering the whole manuscript, it is possible to suggest why Wylde might have included ‘þe proporcions’ in his collection of texts.

### 3.2.1 Provenance and production

Biographical details for the compiler of Lansdowne MS 763 are limited. An inscription on fol. 2<sup>r</sup> of the manuscript, which immediately precedes the first treatise, states that the book was written by John Wylde, the former precentor of the monastery of Waltham Holy Cross: ‘*Hunc librum vocitatum Musicam Guidonis scripsit domnus Johannes Wylde quondam exempti monasterii sancte crucis de Waltham precentor. Quem quidem librum vel hunc titulum qui maliciose abstulerit vel deleverit. Anathema sit.*’<sup>121</sup> Following an anathema on fol. 2<sup>r</sup>, the same inscription was copied out in black ink in another fifteenth-century hand, but ‘precentor’ was replaced by ‘preceptor’, the term used to denote a teacher. Wylde’s name was also recorded in fol. 51<sup>v</sup> and his initials, J.W., were written after the words ‘*Explicitint Regulae Magistri Johannis Torkesey de 6 Speciebus natarum*’.<sup>122</sup> His signature, therefore, did not acknowledge his authorship and modern scholarship generally accepts that Wylde was the copyist of the manuscript and not the author of any of the texts.<sup>123</sup> Works by a range of medieval theorists have been identified, including Thomas Walsingham and Richard Kendale.

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<sup>121</sup> Meech, ‘Three Musical Treatises in English’, p. 235; Sweeny, ‘John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis’, p. 43.

<sup>122</sup> William Winters, ‘Historical Notes on Some of the Ancient Manuscripts Formerly Belonging to the Monastic Library of Waltham Holy Cross’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (1877), 203–66 (p. 255).

<sup>123</sup> Sweeny, ‘John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis’, pp. 44–45.

Whether Wylde was a precentor or preceptor, to work in the esteemed religious house of regular canons, it was probable that Wylde had Augustinian connections. Richard Newcourt's *Repertorium* listed only one John Wylde who, according to Brian Trowell, was both beneficed in London and had the connections expected of a servant of Waltham abbey.<sup>124</sup> The Augustinian prior and convent of Thremhall, Essex, nominated a certain John Wylde for presentation by the bishop of London to the vicarage of Stansted Montfichet on 9 January 1442. Wylde later exchanged that benefice on 12 December 1447 for the rectory of Stapleford, Nottinghamshire and was presented by the influential Viscount Beaumont, constable of England.<sup>125</sup> If this John Wylde had spent time at Waltham abbey before obtaining a benefice in 1442, this would assist with the dating of Lansdowne 736 and would also confirm that Wylde, as a secular priest, was a preceptor, rather than a precentor. If ordained at the usual age of twenty-four, Wylde would have been born in about 1396, and likely compiled Lansdowne MS 763 at some point between 1420 and 1442, which concurs with attempts to date the manuscript.

The comprehensiveness of Lansdowne MS 763 was likely related to the importance of Waltham abbey.<sup>126</sup> Only fifteen miles north-east of London, this was one of the most important religious houses in England on account of its size, royal patronage, and proximity to London; it was undoubtedly the most significant Augustinian house in England. Before the Dissolution, the library of Waltham abbey stored many manuscripts but after 1540 many were destroyed, and Lansdowne MS 763 is the only known music

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<sup>124</sup> Brian Trowell, 'John Wylde', in *Grove Music Online* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.30637>> [accessed 8 February 2020]; Richard Newcourt, *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense*, 2 vols (London: B. Motte, 1708–1710), vol. I, p. 520; vol. II, pp. 2, 308–09, 550, 610.

<sup>125</sup> Trowell, 'John Wylde'; Episcopal Register of Bishop William Alnwick (Register XVIII), fol. 168<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>126</sup> Sweeny, 'John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis', p. 43.



manuscript from this house.<sup>127</sup> The early provenance of the book is of great interest to musicians as Thomas Tallis owned it during his time as musician, composer, and lay employee of Waltham abbey.<sup>128</sup> It is possible to see the ownership inscription of Thomas Tallis (d. 1585) above the same name in large capital letters on modern fol. 124<sup>v</sup>. It has been suggested that the manuscript passed from Tallis to Thomas Morley (1557/58–1602), author of the *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*, sometime after the dissolution of the abbey in 1540, but there is no evidence to substantiate this.<sup>129</sup> At the very least, Morley probably consulted the manuscript.<sup>130</sup> The provenance of the manuscript has been recorded in a catalogue of Lansdowne manuscripts as having passed from Mr Powle, speaker of the House of Commons and master of the rolls under William III, to Lord Chancellor Somers, Sir Joseph Jekyl, and finally to James West, president of the Royal Society.<sup>131</sup> From West, it passed to the earl of Shelburne, whose coat of arms is now of the flyleaf.<sup>132</sup> The book was purchased in 1807 by the British Museum.<sup>133</sup>

### 3.2.2 Contents

The catalogue of the British Library entitled the manuscript, ‘Musical miscellany, including the *Musica manualis cum tonale*; Thomas Walsingham’s treatise on mensural music (ff. 97<sup>v</sup>–104<sup>v</sup>)’.<sup>134</sup> The manuscript contains both Latin and English entries. The

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<sup>127</sup> Teresa Webber and Andrew G. Watson, eds, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 6 (London: The British Library in association with The British Academy, 1998), pp. 429–42; Montague Rhodes James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, n.s., 21 (1933), 34–46; Winters, ‘Waltham Holy Cross’, 203–66.

<sup>128</sup> British Library Online, ‘Detailed Record for Lansdowne MS 763’, in *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts* <<https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7809&CollID=15&NStart=763>> [accessed 14 January 2020]

<sup>129</sup> Sweeny, ‘John Wylde and the Musica Guidonis’, p. 44.

<sup>130</sup> British Library Online, ‘Detailed Record for Lansdowne MS 763’.

<sup>131</sup> Henry Ellis and Francis Douce, *Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1819), p. 169.

<sup>132</sup> Winters, ‘Waltham Holy Cross’, p. 254.

<sup>133</sup> British Library Online, ‘Detailed Record for Lansdowne MS 763’.

<sup>134</sup> British Library Online, ‘Detailed Record for Lansdowne MS 763’.

manuscript was written in John Wylde's elegant script throughout. It is evident from the twenty treatises on music in this manuscript that Wylde was interested in both the theory and the practice of music.<sup>135</sup> William H. Cummings commented that the book combines an 'odd admixture of learning', including mathematical science, religion, astronomy, and music.<sup>136</sup> However, when music is considered as a quadrivial science, this does not appear as peculiar as Cummings suggested.

Wylde gave his book the title of '*Monacordum*' and subsequently divided it into two parts: '*musica manualis*' and '*tonale*'.<sup>137</sup> The first part contained treatises that deal with the staff, clefs, and the practice of solmisation. The treatises of the '*tonale*' considered intervals, counterpoint, and the modes and tones used in liturgical repertoire. Wylde expressed in his preface that he intended to follow the rules of Boethius, Macrobius, and Guido.<sup>138</sup> Lansdowne MS 763 also contained the only known copy of the '*musica manualis*', a chant treatise that provided a full account of the rudiments of solmisation and utilises Guidonian syllable in place of letters to designate pitch.<sup>139</sup> The following table describes the twenty entries in Lansdowne MS 763.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 235.

<sup>136</sup> William H. Cummings, 'Tallis: Waltham Abbey', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 17 (1876), 649–50.

<sup>137</sup> Winters, 'Waltham Holy Cross', p. 255.

<sup>138</sup> Winters, 'Waltham Holy Cross', p. 255.

<sup>139</sup> Stefano Mengozzi, *The Renaissance Reform of Medieval Music Theory: Guido of Arezzo Between Myth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 52–53.

<sup>140</sup> British Library Online, 'Detailed Record for Lansdowne MS 763'.

| Title                                                                                                                                   | Description                                                                                                                                                                        | Folios                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. ' <i>Monacordum</i> '                                                                                                                | This work was also called ' <i>Musica Guidonis</i> '. It is divided into two parts: the ' <i>musica manualis</i> ' and the ' <i>tonale</i> '                                       | fol. 1 <sup>r</sup> –48 <sup>v</sup>  |
| 2. ' <i>Tractatus de octo tonis</i> '                                                                                                   | A short treatise in which the musical tones are assimilated to the sun and planets<br>Unknown authorship                                                                           | fol. 49 <sup>r</sup> –49 <sup>v</sup> |
| 3. ' <i>Musica de Sancta Magdalena</i> '                                                                                                | A short work in hexameter verses containing a mystical gamut in which all musical perfection is said to be concealed<br>Possibly written by a certain Kendall, a monk of Sherborne | fol. 50 <sup>r</sup> –52 <sup>r</sup> |
| 4.                                                                                                                                      | A resolution of tones and semitones set to music                                                                                                                                   | fol. 53 <sup>r</sup>                  |
| 5. ' <i>Anti ona, per quam ascendit a Gamma usque ad Delasol</i> '                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                    | fol. 54 <sup>r</sup>                  |
| 6. ' <i>Tractatulus de effectu musice speculative</i> '                                                                                 | Anonymous work                                                                                                                                                                     | fol. 54 <sup>v</sup> –58 <sup>r</sup> |
| 7. ' <i>Speculum cantantium sive psallentium, scil. de affectu musice moralis secundum traditiones antiquorum et sanctorum patrum</i> ' | Satirical verses about chanters who corrupt singing psalms                                                                                                                         | fol. 58 <sup>v</sup> –59 <sup>r</sup> |
| 8. ' <i>Metrologus liber</i> '                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                    | fol. 60 <sup>r</sup> –67 <sup>r</sup> |
| 9. ' <i>Octo tonorum tractatus metricus</i> '                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                    | fol. 67 <sup>v</sup>                  |
| 10. ' <i>Tonale</i> '                                                                                                                   | An account of the discovery of the consonances by Pythagoras, and much relating to the nature                                                                                      | fol. 68 <sup>r</sup> –86 <sup>r</sup> |

|                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                     | of tones, plagal modes. Likely extracted from the ' <i>Micrologus</i> ' of Guido                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                       |
| 11.                                                                                                                                                                 | An illuminated page with figures of four pots containing flowers that resemble the form of a chandelier with several branches. Appears to be connected with the next treatise                                                                                        | fols 86 <sup>v</sup> –87 <sup>r</sup> |
| 12. ' <i>Distinctio inter colores musicales et armorum heroum</i> '                                                                                                 | Included under the title ' <i>Regule Magistri Jobannis Torkesey</i> '<br>The author is otherwise unknown, but is likely to have been connected to the priory of Torkesey in Lincolnshire                                                                             | fols 87 <sup>v</sup> –88 <sup>r</sup> |
| 13. ' <i>Declaracio trianguli superius positi et figure de tribus primus figuris quadratis et earum speciebus ac etiam scuti, per Magistrum Johannem Torkesey</i> ' | Included under the title ' <i>Regule Magistri Jobannis Torkesey</i> '                                                                                                                                                                                                | fols 89 <sup>r</sup> –89 <sup>v</sup> |
| 14. ' <i>Octo tonorum proporcio et Grecorum vocabulorum ad predictos tonos pertinencium expositio</i> '                                                             | Included under the title ' <i>Regule Magistri Jobannis Torkesey</i> '                                                                                                                                                                                                | fols 90 <sup>r</sup> –93 <sup>r</sup> |
| 15. ' <i>Regule Magistri Johannis de Muris</i> '                                                                                                                    | Listed in the British Library Catalogue as an abridgement of De Muris's doctrine on <i>Libellus cantus mensurabilis</i> . However, according to RISM B/III/4, the manuscript's attribution to Johannes de Muris is not accepted by modern authorities <sup>141</sup> | fols 94 <sup>r</sup> –97 <sup>r</sup> |

<sup>141</sup> Michel Huglo, Christian Meyer and Nancy C. Phillips, *The Theory of Music: Manuscripts from the Carolingian Era up to c. 1500 in Great Britain and in the United States of America: Descriptive Catalogue B/III/4* (Munich: G. Henle, 1992), pp. 87–91.

|                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                             |                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16. ‘ <i>Regule Magistri Thome Walsingham de figuris compositis et non compositis et de cantu perfecto et imperfect, et de modis</i> ’                                              | Authored by the precentor of the abbey of Saint Albans      | fols 97 <sup>v</sup> –104 <sup>r</sup>                                              |
| 17. ‘This treatis is contrived upon the Gamme for hem that wil be syngers, or makers, or techers’                                                                                   | Lyonel Power                                                | fols 104 <sup>v</sup> –11 <sup>r</sup><br>(fols 105 <sup>v</sup> –13 <sup>r</sup> ) |
| 18. ‘Her folwith a litil tretise according to the ferst tretise of the sight of descant; and also for the sight of counter, and for the sight of the countirtenor, and of faburdon’ | Treatise on discant, commonly attributed to Pseudo-Chilston | fols 112 <sup>r</sup> –15 <sup>r</sup><br>(fols 113 <sup>v</sup> –16 <sup>v</sup> ) |
| 19. ‘Her beginneth tretises diverse of musical proporcions and of their naturis and denominacions, ferst in Englissh and than in Latyne’                                            | Treatise on proportions by Chilston                         | fols 116 <sup>r</sup> –21 <sup>r</sup><br>(fols 117 <sup>r</sup> –22 <sup>v</sup> ) |
| 20. ‘ <i>Proporcio est duarum rerum equalium vel inequalium</i> ’                                                                                                                   | Treatise on proportions in Latin                            | fols 122 <sup>r</sup> –31 <sup>r</sup>                                              |

**Table 3.3** Contents of London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763<sup>142</sup>

Treatises 17, 18, and 19 are all in Middle English. Treatise 17 (fols 104<sup>v</sup>–11<sup>r</sup>) was written by Leonel Power to teach ‘syngers, or makers, or techers’ the practice of extempore

<sup>142</sup> The information in this table of contents comes from British Library Online, ‘Lansdowne MS 763’, in *Digitised Manuscripts* <[http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Lansdowne\\_MS\\_763](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Lansdowne_MS_763)> [accessed 12 July 2019]. Throughout this dissertation, I have used Lefferts’ folio references when referring to the three treatises in English in Lansdowne MS 763, which differ from the foliation described in the British Library online catalogue. This table indicates the foliation as described in the British Library online catalogue but also includes Lefferts’ foliation for treatises 17–19 (the Middle English treatises) in italics.

counterpoint in singing, also known as discant.<sup>143</sup> Treatise 18 (fols 112<sup>r</sup>–15<sup>r</sup>), Pseudo-Chilston's treatise, also concerned improvised counterpoint. Wylde's contribution to the preservation of information regarding performance practices in fifteenth-century England is undoubted as his manuscript is the only extant source that documented how English faburden was performed.<sup>144</sup> Treatise 19 is Chilston's treatise, 'þe proporcions'. There are numerous inconsistencies in the literature concerned with the contents of Lansdowne MS 763, particularly regarding the authorship of the three vernacular treatises. As mentioned in an earlier part of this chapter, confusion has ensued over who authored the treatise preceding the proportion treatise in Lansdowne MS 763, primarily because of Hawkins's additional attribution of Treatise 18 to Chilston.<sup>145</sup> Riemann perpetuated this inaccuracy in his history of music theory.<sup>146</sup> Burney, however, did not attribute the discant treatise to Chilston. He considered the treatise to be a supplement to the preceding treatise by Power.<sup>147</sup> The text is not ascribed to any author, however, and Meech clarified that there is no evidence to substantiate either claim.<sup>148</sup> Klaus-Jürgen Sachs acknowledged that earlier researchers had connected Chilston's name with the preceding treatise on discant but clarified that there was no proof.<sup>149</sup> Given the failure to assign the treatise on discant to any particular author, modern practice attributes the treatise to Pseudo-Chilston.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 236.

<sup>144</sup> Trowell, 'John Wylde'.

<sup>145</sup> Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 5 vols (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776), vol. II, p. 227.

<sup>146</sup> Hugo Riemann, *History of Music Theory: Polyphonic Theory to the Sixteenth Century*, trans. Raymond H. Haggh (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 119.

<sup>147</sup> Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages of the Present Period (1789)*, ed. Frank Mercer, 2 vols (London: G. T. Foulis, 1935), vol. I, pp. 685–95.

<sup>148</sup> Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 236.

<sup>149</sup> Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, 'Chilston', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, 21 vols (London: Bärenreiter Kassel, 2000), vol. IV, pp. 938–39 (p. 939).

<sup>150</sup> Andrew Hughes, 'Pseudo-Chilston', in *Grove Music Online* <<https://doi-org.elib.tcd.ie/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22503>> [accessed 14 March 2020]

Meanwhile, Andrew Hughes' entry on Chilston in the 1980 edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* provided more incorrect information regarding Lansdowne MS 763. Although he acknowledged that Hawkins' attribution of the discant treatise preceding the proportion treatise to Chilston was presumptive and unsubstantiated, Hughes blamed Burney for this possible misattribution.<sup>151</sup> Burney did not, however, suggest that this treatise was the work of Chilston.<sup>152</sup> In addition, the numbering of the tracts in Lansdowne MS 763 is incorrect in Hughes's entry. Hughes stated that treatises 17–20 formed a coherent unit, with 17 being Chilston's proportion treatise and 16 being the Pseudo-Chilston treatise. Hughes might have obtained this information from Riemann's history of music theory, which also numbered the proportion treatise as the seventeenth treatise in the manuscript.<sup>153</sup>

Burney's book offered a different interpretation of the contents of Lansdowne MS 763, in which only nine treatises were considered. This concurred with the flysheet on which the contents of the volume are given.<sup>154</sup> According to Burney, the eighth treatise was Leonel [Lyonel] Power's 'The Cordis of Musike' and the ninth treatise is Chilston's 'Treatise of Musical proportions, and of their Naturis and Denominations, first in English then in Latyne'.<sup>155</sup> Just as the text between Power's and Chilston's treatises was considered a supplement for the preceding rules for discant, the Latin text which follows Chilston's treatise was considered by Burney to be an appendage to the proportion treatise that considers the length and duration of the notes.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Andrew Hughes, 'Chilston', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. IV, p. 241.

<sup>152</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, pp. 685–95.

<sup>153</sup> Riemann, *History of Music Theory*, p. 119.

<sup>154</sup> Winters, 'Waltham Holy Cross', p. 255.

<sup>155</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, p. 686.

<sup>156</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, p. 695.

Neither of these descriptions of Lansdowne MS 763 concurred with the current catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts, however.<sup>157</sup> In a careful assessment of the three vernacular texts of Lansdowne MS 763, Meech stated that the vernacular texts were to be considered as the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth texts of the manuscript.<sup>158</sup> He confirmed that the seventeenth treatise was attributed to Leonel Power and the nineteenth to Chilston, while the eighteenth treatise remained anonymous.<sup>159</sup> The British Library's catalogue concurred with Meech's assessment of the contents of Lansdowne MS 763.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, the Latin text following Chilston's treatise was considered to be a tract in itself and was not attributed to Chilston.

### 3.2.3 A possible purpose

The distinction between 'precentor' and 'preceptor' is important for determining the impetus behind John Wylde's collection of a wide range of treatises concerning both practical and speculative music. As a precentor, Wylde would have been a member of the community of regular canons at Waltham abbey, the most important Augustinian house in England and the wealthiest religious house in Essex.<sup>161</sup> He would have been responsible for the musical activities in the monastery but his book, devoid of references to liturgical music, would probably have represented his own musical interests. It would tell us very little about the context in which he was working. However, as a preceptor, Wylde would have been a lay musician or a secular priest who had assumed a teaching role within the abbey. In this case, his manuscript would have been a reference tool that

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<sup>157</sup> Ellis and Douce, *Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts*, pp. 169–71.

<sup>158</sup> Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 235.

<sup>159</sup> Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 236.

<sup>160</sup> British Museum, *Catalogue*, pp. 169–171.

<sup>161</sup> Rosalind Ransford, ed., *The Early Charters of the Augustinian Canons of Waltham Abbey, Essex, 1062–1230* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989).



he employed in his teaching, implying that there were students for Wylde to teach at Waltham abbey.

Through a close reading of the texts chosen by Wylde for insertion in his compilation, it is possible to conjecture some of Wylde's responsibilities in Waltham abbey. Wylde's creation of an anthology devoted to musical-pedagogical texts suggests that he assumed responsibility for musical instruction within the monastery, thus affirming the title of 'preceptor'. Without a proper record of his position at Waltham abbey, it is difficult to discern who Wylde was required to teach, but some of the treatises specifically suggest that Wylde was responsible for teaching young boys. The treatise on the Guidonian hand showed the adaptation of the gamut to the hands of boys.<sup>162</sup> Wylde's inclusion of Thomas Walsingham's '*Regulae magistri Thomae Walsingham de figuris compositis et non compositis*' also clarified that his anthology aided with teaching basic musical notation. Most significantly, Wylde's inclusion of Leonel Power's 'Treatise...upon the Gamme, for hem that wilbe syngers or makers or techers' is a treatise on the performance of discant, specifically for boys' treble voices.<sup>163</sup> Power limited his treatise to dealing with the two highest forms of discant, quatreble, and treble, eliminating any explanation of the meane sight which, according to the treatise, was sung by a man's voice.<sup>164</sup> Power's treatise was a didactic teaching manual and showed a concern for the increasing demand on young choristers in the fifteenth century to be able to improvise discant at sight.<sup>165</sup> The preoccupation with teaching the unchanged (unbroken) voices throughout Power's

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<sup>162</sup> Winters, 'Waltham Holy Cross', p. 255.

<sup>163</sup> Roger Bowers, 'Some Observations on the Life and Career of Lionel Power', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 102 (1975–1976), 103–27 (p. 125).

<sup>164</sup> London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 104<sup>v</sup>; Meech, 'Three Musical Treatises in English', p. 242.

<sup>165</sup> Roger Bowers, *Choral Institutions within the English Church: their Constitution and Development, 1340–1500*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of East Anglia, 1975), pp. 85–88.

treatise strongly suggests that Wylde was responsible for teaching music not only to beginners but specifically to young boys who still possessed treble voices and thus were unlikely to have already taken holy orders. Had Wylde been responsible for teaching improvised discant to novices or junior monks, who almost certainly would have had changed (broken) voices as a result of their age, it would have been more helpful for Wylde to include a treatise on discant of ‘meane’ sight.

### 3.2.4 Including ‘þe proporcions’ in Lansdowne MS 763

Given the musical nature of Lansdowne MS 763, an anthology of musical treatises, it is not entirely unexpected to find ‘þe proporcions’ in this manuscript. However, it is notable that Wylde chose to include an English version of the text as many texts in Latin were circulating or in religious libraries at this time, as illustrated in Chapter One. The function of the manuscript offers some clues as to why Wylde may have chosen to include a vernacular text containing this information. It has been suggested that Wylde created his manuscript as a teaching aid for carrying out the music education of young boys within a religious context. In Lansdowne MS 763, the instructive nature of ‘þe proporcions’ was highlighted, particularly in the incipit. Wylde possibly consulted this treatise while carrying out pedagogical duties at the highest-ranking Augustinian house in medieval England. The decision to include a vernacular edition of the Boethian text might have been connected to the linguistic proficiency of the young students for whom Wylde was responsible. As a mathematical treatise, Burney suggested that the clarity of its English text would render it intelligible to those wholly ignorant of mathematics, making the science more accessible than a work by a more learned and technical modern writer.<sup>166</sup> While the other treatises are more obviously connected to practical music, Wylde’s young

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<sup>166</sup> Burney, *A General History of Music*, vol. I, p. 695.

students would have benefitted from the straightforward nature of a text that was not written for a learned scholar, but rather an early vernacular attempt to convey an aspect of speculative music to an inexperienced audience. If Wylde had been responsible for the musical education of young boys and if he had employed Lansdowne MS 763 as a teaching aide, it is likely that they lacked sufficient command of Latin to interact with the ultimate source of ‘þe proporcions’, Boethius’ *De institutione musica*, or any of the many Latin treatises on the same topic. This could explain Wylde’s decision to include the vernacular text.

### **3.3 New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12**

The Morgan Library, New York (formerly the Pierpont Morgan Library), acquired MS B.12 at the bequest of Curt F. Bühler (1905–1985) upon his death.<sup>167</sup> There are no marks of ownership, but the manuscript contains an insert with a description of the contents. This list was created by E. P. Goldschmidt, London, from whom Bühler purchased the manuscript in 1942.<sup>168</sup> The manuscript’s earlier provenance remains unknown. Goldschmidt’s list of contents attributed the first treatise to Nicholas of Lynn. Correspondence between Bühler and Sigmund Eisner, contained in a file on MS B.12 in the archives of the Morgan Library, show that Eisner was permitted to borrow the manuscript in order to inspect the first treatise.<sup>169</sup> Eisner concluded that the opening treatise was not the work of Nicholas of Lynn, but probably based on John Somer’s calendar, even though there are extensive omissions in the text, including the identification of Somer. Somer was a contemporary of Chaucer, who mentioned these

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<sup>167</sup> Charles Ryskamp, ed., ‘Twenty-First Report to the Fellows of the Pierpont Morgan Library, 1984–1986’ (New York, NY: The Morgan Library, 1989), p. 30

<sup>168</sup> Ryskamp, ‘Twenty-First Report’, p. 30.

<sup>169</sup> Sigmund Eisner, Letter to Curt F. Bühler, 27 November 1973, 8 January and 4 February 1974. New York, The Morgan Library.

calendars in his treatise on the astrolabe, declaring ‘the third partye shall contene divers tables [...] after the kalendars of the reverent clerkes frere J. Somer and frere N. Lenne’.<sup>170</sup> The online catalogue of manuscripts now entitles MS B.12 as ‘Calendar’, in reference to the manuscript’s first item, ‘*Kalendarium cum tabulis planetarium et eclipsium*’ (fols 1<sup>r</sup>–32<sup>r</sup>).

This scientific-mathematic anthology gathered together an array of texts on the topics of astronomy and music, both of which were considered quadrivial subjects in medieval England. After a blank page, which followed the first treatise, fols 34<sup>r</sup>–50<sup>v</sup> contain Pseudo-Ptolemy’s treatise on the seven planets and the connection to the zodiac. Peter of Saint Omer’s ‘*Tractatus composicionis instrumenti ad inveniendum vera loca omnium planetarum*’ shows the reader how to find the position of the planets. The first three astronomical treatises are grouped together at the beginning of the highly organised manuscript that related to the computational sciences.

The final two items in MS B.12 are concerned with proportions. The vernacular treatise, ‘þe proporcions’, is followed by ‘*Epistola de proporcionibus*’, which the Morgan catalogue simultaneously attributes to Gerbertus and defines as an anonymous extract in Latin on musical and harmonic theory (fols 68<sup>v</sup>–76<sup>r</sup>). The attribution to Gerbertus refers to Pope Sylvester II (930–1003) and the modern insert in B.12 describes this entry as one of the letters of the pope that dealt with musical problems. In between the texts on astronomy and proportions, the manuscript contains a short invocation to the angels. While this appears to be somewhat out of place given the scientific and mathematical

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<sup>170</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *A Treatise on the Astrolabe*, ed. Sigmund Eisner (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), pp. 64–65.

treatises surrounding it, Clare Fanger has suggested that medieval writers associated the angelic worlds and the worlds of human knowledge, combining the scientific with the spiritual.<sup>171</sup> It is in the absence of a clear separation between science and the spiritual world that the treatise on angels finds its place in MS B.12.

| Title/Description                                                                                                                       | Folios                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. John Somer/Nicholas of Lynn, ' <i>Kalendarium cum tabulis planetarum et eclipsium</i> '                                              | fols 1 <sup>r</sup> –32 <sup>r</sup>  |
| Blank                                                                                                                                   | fol. 33 <sup>r-v</sup>                |
| 2. Pseudo-Ptolemy, ' <i>De significationibus septem planetarum, et capitis et caude draconis per 12 domos zodiaci ubi reperiuntur</i> ' | fols 34 <sup>r</sup> –50 <sup>v</sup> |
| 3. Peter of Saint-Omer, ' <i>Tractatus compositionis instrumenti ad inveniendum vera loca omnium planetarum</i> '                       | fols 51 <sup>r</sup> –58 <sup>v</sup> |
| 4. ' <i>Invocatio proprii angeli</i> '                                                                                                  | fols 59 <sup>r</sup> –61 <sup>r</sup> |
| Blank                                                                                                                                   | fol. 62 <sup>r-v</sup>                |
| 5. ' <i>De proporcionibus</i> ', in English (' <i>þe proporcions</i> ')                                                                 | fols 63 <sup>r</sup> –68 <sup>v</sup> |
| 6. Gerbertus, ' <i>Epistola de proporcionibus</i> ', anonymous extracts in Latin on musical and harmonic theory                         | fols 68 <sup>v</sup> –76 <sup>r</sup> |

**Table 3.4** Contents of New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12<sup>172</sup>

### 3.4 The mobility of '*þe proporcions*'

The identification of MS 516 as a reference book concerned with moral issues has proven crucial for understanding the place of '*þe proporcions*' in the context of a manuscript

<sup>171</sup> Claire Fanger, ed., *Invoking Angels: Theurgic Ideas and Practices, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), pp. 2–3.

<sup>172</sup> Morgan Library and Museum, 'MS B.12', in *CORSAIR Online Catalogue* <<http://corsair.themorgan.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=76798>> [accessed 13 February 2020]

chiefly concerned with historical and political themes. In their quadrivial Platonic-Boethian sense, proportions were numerical relationships that demonstrated the harmonies that ‘govern the moral, physical, and psychic equilibrium of the human resonate with the macrocosmic harmonies that ensure cosmological perfection’. This quadrivial definition helps to connect the contents of ‘þe proporcions’ to the contemplation of morality and a higher purpose.<sup>173</sup> Just as Boethius’ texts provided the key to Latinate audiences to unlock the entire force of nature, ‘þe proporcions’ could have been conceived as the key for an English-reading audience.<sup>174</sup>

How a compiler interpreted a text determined the inclusion of a text in a manuscript.<sup>175</sup> In Lansdowne MS 763, the importance of the treatise on proportion for the insight it offered into musical intervals was evident; John Wylde probably intended to collect musical treatises and bind them together in a single manuscript that he could use as a teaching tool. It is highly probable that Wylde taught young boys and, therefore, it is probable that he used Lansdowne MS 763 in the instruction of young choristers in both practical and speculative matters relating to music. The overtly pedagogical texts, such as the ‘*musica manualis*’, in addition to the instructive texts on counterpoint in English, confirm that this was a manuscript for didactic purposes relating to the musical demands of the religious community. While the practical application of ‘þe proporcions’ is less obvious, the information contained in the treatise regarding the ratios underpinning intervals could inform practical tasks such as extemporisation and counterpoint. Far more than just learning which intervals were consonant, the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in

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<sup>173</sup> Andrew Hicks, *Composing the World: Harmony in the Medieval Platonic Cosmos* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> Hicks, *Composing the World*, p. 32.

<sup>175</sup> For more on the relationship between reception and interpretation, see Eugenio Refini, *Translation as Reception in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 1–16.

Lansdowne MS 763 suggests that Wylde might have taught his students why certain intervals could be considered consonant, encouraging them to contemplate the theory behind the practice. After learning the rules of discant in treatises 17 and 18, ‘þe proporcions’ offered the students the opportunity to take part in the construction of their own knowledge and understanding of the rules of composition that had already been taught. In this manuscript context, the treatise functions as a didactic text within a musical-pedagogical anthology.

Unlike Wylde, for the unknown scribe of MS B.12, it is unlikely that the application of the treatises on proportion to the practice of liturgical music was the impetus for his inclusion of the treatise in this manuscript. In the absence of other musical treatises in this manuscript, besides the Latin epistle on proportions, an analysis of the entire contents suggests a mathematical-scientific preoccupation. It is not just numbers that connect the treatises, but specifically the connection between mathematics and the cosmos. In the case of MS B.12, therefore, Pythagorean numerology connects ‘þe proporcions’ to both the scientific and the spiritual items in the manuscript.

Therefore, the idea of mobility can be extended to the copies of ‘þe proporcions’. Although the three copies of ‘þe proporcions’ share most of the same content, the treatise is more accurately described as a polyvalent text, with fluctuation of function and meaning according to the context in which it was read and used. Consideration of the manuscript contexts, sites of production, and manuscript compilers, where possible, has helped to elucidate the different ways in which the treatise was understood in the fifteenth century. The identification of three different contexts for ‘þe proporcions’ facilitates expansion in present conceptions of the users of music theory treatises in late medieval

England and encourages the consideration of the impact that the increased vernacularisation of music theory had on the dissemination of the information to new audiences. That a treatise on Boethian music theory was included in a manuscript concerning music that was compiled by a precentor in Waltham abbey (Lansdowne MS 763) or a manuscript devoted to other scholastic quadrivial texts (MS B.12) is not particularly astonishing. It is the inclusion of an English treatise on music theory in a parish priest's manuscript that has the potential to expand current conceptions of the circulation of *musica speculativa* in the fifteenth century. Chapter Four will explore the biography of John Benet and how the inclusion of 'þe proporcions' in MS 516 might have related to an environment of pedagogical engagement in Harlington.



## Chapter Four

### Reading ‘þe proporcions’

Current conceptions of the reception of medieval music theory must inevitably shift with the discovery of a third source of a proportion treatise in Middle English from the fifteenth century. That three copies of ‘þe proporcions’ are now known suggests that the readership of vernacular music theory at that time was broader than has previously been recognised. Andrew Taylor called for a greater effort to piece together the story of readership in medieval England through many disciplinary perspectives by capturing as much information as possible about specific people who are known to have used particular books or manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> In response to Taylor’s call to action, this chapter investigates one pocket of activity concerning vernacular *musica speculativa* in England, specifically the readers and users of the copy of ‘þe proporcions’ in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516. This immediately places a spotlight on John Benet, the compiler and first known reader of MS 516. Biographical records for Benet are incomplete, and correct identification is made more challenging by the prevalence of his name in late medieval England. The approach taken here juxtaposes fragmentary details about this particular vicar with a broader knowledge of the responsibilities of priests in a fifteenth-century English parish. This combination provides some insight into the roles that Benet likely assumed in Harlington parish.

Benet’s inclusion of a treatise on speculative music theory in his collection of texts is not easily explained. An analysis of the contents of the treatise in Chapter Two suggested

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and their Readers* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 8–9.

that the text could have functioned as an instructional guide for a reader who was unlikely to have a deep background of knowledge regarding speculative music. The vernacularisation and vulgarisation of knowledge that was previously and exclusively found in Latin texts suggested that the intention was to make the information available to lay readers or to readers for whom Latin would have constituted a barrier to engagement. The codicological study of Benet's entire manuscript in Chapter Three showed a prevailing concern in his manuscript for the consideration of morality. This chapter seeks to explain the rationale for Benet's inclusion of 'þe proporcions' in MS 516. It brings together findings from the previous chapters and situates them in relation to the parochial context in which Benet compiled his manuscript, shedding light on how he and others may have used this book within a parish community.

#### **4.1 John Benet: A reader for 'þe proporcions'**

The Dunstable and District Local History Society is active in disseminating information about John Benet and services are still held for John Benet in The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Harlington, on significant anniversaries. In 2012 a plaque was erected in John Benet's memory on the front wall of the 'Old Schoolhouse' on Church Road, Harlington Village. Despite interest from local historians, however, little is known about Benet before his appointment to Harlington. The following section explores records of biographical information for men named John Benet. It conjectures a role for him at Lincoln minster previous to his appointment to Harlington, challenging the long-held belief that the vicar choral was also the fifteenth-century composer. Statutes, syllabi and manuals for priests provide a description of the expectations of a vicar in late medieval England, which indicates the roles and responsibilities that Benet might have assumed once presented to his benefice in Harlington. This section moves us closer to

understanding as much as possible about the compiler of MS 516. The insights from this section, combined with the codicological study of the manuscript, suggest ways in which Benet might have used his manuscript in Harlington.

#### 4.1.1 Records of biographical information

Apart from the name of the compiler of MS 516 and the two positions that he occupied in Harlington (Bedfordshire) and Broughton (Buckinghamshire) from 1443 until his death in 1474, nothing is known with certainty about this John Benet. Who was this man, a vicar who included the earliest known treatise on speculative music theory in the English language in a personal and eclectic collection of texts?<sup>2</sup> Records survive for multiple men called John Benet in medieval England (see Appendix II), which further complicates efforts to identify the man who was responsible for compiling MS 516. Indeed, several men called John Benet were active in various religious institutions throughout the fifteenth century. Therefore, it is difficult to know what evidence relates specifically to John Benet, vicar of Harlington. Nothing is known with certainty about Benet's whereabouts before his presentation to the perpetual vicarage of Harlington by the patrons, the prior, and the convent of Dunstable, on 17 March 1443.<sup>3</sup> He remained there until he was presented to the vicarage of Broughton in 1471 by its patron, Sir John Broughton, just three years before his death.<sup>4</sup> Given the paucity of specific biographical evidence for this John Benet, it is useful to consider documentation of any John Benet (or any variant spelling of 'Benet') to ascertain if it could relate to the vicar of Harlington.

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<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register of Bishop William Alnwick (Register XVIII), fol. 183<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> For details of John Benet's life, see G. L. Harriss and M. A. Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400–1462', in *Camden Miscellany* 24 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1972), pp. 151–233; and John Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516: A Clerical Historian's Personal Miscellany', in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A.S.G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 121–31. I am indebted to these accounts of Benet's biography, which provided a starting point for my investigation.

<sup>4</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 158.

Two men named John Benet were ordained as subdeacons, deacons, and then priests between March and September 1435.<sup>5</sup> Of the two men named John Benet who were ordained by Bishop William Grey in 1435, one was from North Cotes (Lincolnshire) but, according to G. L. Harriss, later references prove that he was not John Benet of Harlington.<sup>6</sup> It is impossible to substantiate whether the second John Benet was the vicar of Harlington or whether he was the John Benet that was eventually presented to the living of Souldrop, Bedfordshire, in September 1441.<sup>7</sup> As the former remained in Souldrop until 1444, when his same patron presented him to the church of St Audoen or St Ewin in Newgate Market, London, John Benet of Souldrop could not be the same person as John Benet of Harlington, according to Harriss' account of John Benet's life.<sup>8</sup> Benet of Souldrop moved from Newgate Market to the rectory of St Mary Woolchurch, London, in 1454 and retained his position there until 1485.<sup>9</sup> The positions occupied by John Benet of Harlington between his ordination and his institution to Harlington in 1443 remain a mystery, as do Benet of Souldrop's whereabouts between his ordination and his institution to Souldrop in 1441. It is plausible, therefore, that records relating to 'John Benet' between 1435 and 1441 could refer to either Benet of Harlington or Benet of Souldrop. Furthermore, we cannot be certain that only two men named John Benet were ordained in Lincoln. Bishop Alnwick's register for the years 1436–1449 does not contain an ordination list, so this is impossible to substantiate. There is also no record of ordination for anyone named John Benet in Bishop Fleming's register (1420–1431).<sup>10</sup> In

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<sup>5</sup> Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register of Bishop William Gray (Register XVII), fols 212<sup>v</sup>, 215<sup>r</sup>, 217<sup>v</sup>, 219<sup>v</sup>, 220<sup>v</sup>, 221<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 158.

<sup>8</sup> George Leyden Hennessy, *Novum Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense* (London: Swann, 1898), pp. 97, 317.

<sup>9</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 158.

<sup>10</sup> N. H. Bennett, ed., *The Register of Richard Fleming Bishop of Lincoln 1420–31*, 2 vols (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1984), vol. I; N. H. Bennett, ed., *The Register of Richard Fleming Bishop of Lincoln 1420–31*, 2 vols (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2009), vol. II.

the earliest known attempt in modern scholarship to uncover the biographical details of John Benet of Harlington, Harriss wrote that of the two men ordained as priests in 1435, one was instituted to Bourne.<sup>11</sup> However, he did not provide a reference for this claim, nor did he provide specific details of the religious establishment in Bourne to which John Benet allegedly was instituted. Alison Hanham claimed that one of the two men named John Benet who took holy orders in September 1435 was appointed to the church of Bourne End, Bedfordshire, but she did not substantiate her evidence.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, a vicar choral named John Benet was in Lincoln minster from 1437 to 1441.<sup>13</sup> Roger Bowers has conjectured that this might have been a role occupied by the fifteenth-century composer John Benet.<sup>14</sup> However, no extensive research has been conducted into the prosopography of the vicars choral. It is, therefore, possible that this vicar choral was John Benet of Harlington, but it is not possible to eliminate from consideration the John Benet who was instituted to Souldrop in 1441—or someone else of the same name.

The inclusion of a treatise on music theory in Benet's miscellany would not appear quite so remarkable if John Benet of Harlington parish could be connected to one of the two men named John Benet who were celebrated as composers. However, other evidence argues against either of these composers having compiled MS 516. The renowned madrigal composer John Bennet was born a century later, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, making it impossible that he compiled the Benet miscellany. Very few

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<sup>11</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 158.

<sup>12</sup> Alison Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle, 1399–1462: An English Translation with New Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Bowers, 'Music and Worship to 1640', in *A History of Lincoln Minster*, ed. Dorothy Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 47–76 (p. 56), citing Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Archives of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, A.2.32, fol. 126<sup>v</sup>; A.2.33, fol. 45<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Bowers, 'Music and Worship to 1640', p. 56.

details are known about the fifteenth-century English composer John Benet beyond his compositional output.<sup>15</sup> This John Benet was responsible for composing three motets, including ‘*Lux fulget ex Anglia*’.<sup>16</sup> His three motets are isorhythmic in all voices, and he regularly employed compositional techniques that are associated with John Dunstaple, leading Brian Trowell to speculate that Benet was at least a student of Dunstaple, a key figure in the English school of composition.<sup>17</sup> At one time Trowell even proposed that these two composers were the same person, claiming that ‘Benet’ was not his name but an indicator that Dunstaple was a Benedictine monk.<sup>18</sup> It is perhaps more plausible that Benet was a composer in his own right and, at most, a student or protégé of John Dunstaple. The fifteenth-century composer could have been the John Benet who was appointed master of the choristers of St Anthony’s Hospital, London, in 1443.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the master of the choristers died in 1458, as indicated by the probate for his will that was dated 4 December of that year.<sup>20</sup> There is, therefore, no firm evidence to associate the John Benet of Harlington with the accomplished fifteenth-century composer. Furthermore, given the absence of any musical notation or other music treatises in MS 516, coupled with the treatise’s incompleteness and significant errors, the evidence from the manuscript itself in no way suggests that the compiler of MS 516 possessed musical training.

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<sup>15</sup> Brian Trowell, ‘Some English Contemporaries of Dunstable’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 81 (1954), 77–92 (p. 86).

<sup>16</sup> Trowell, ‘Some English Contemporaries of Dunstable’, pp. 91–92.

<sup>17</sup> Brian Trowell, ‘Benet [Benett, Bennet, Benmet, Bonet, Bonnet, Jo. Benet Anglicus], John’, in *Grove Music Online* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02677>> [accessed 12 May 2019]

<sup>18</sup> Trowell, ‘Some English Contemporaries of Dunstable’, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Martha Carlin and Joel T. Rosenthal, eds, *Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M. Barron* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2017), p. 456, citing London, Guildhall Library, MS 9531/6, fols 205<sup>r</sup>–v.

<sup>20</sup> Carlin and Rosenthal, *Medieval London*, p. 456, citing London, Guildhall Library, Commissary wills 9171/5 fol. 263<sup>v</sup>.

#### 4.1.2 Evidence of learning

The education of parish priests in medieval England varied widely. Rather than a homogenous stratum of society, parish priests seem to defy generalisations and instead, they represented a multiplicity of intellectual capabilities. Medieval canon law does not elucidate educational qualifications or courses of study that priests were required to have completed in order to obtain ordination. Instead, there are just general statements that priests should possess an education. The Third Lateran Council (1179) summarised the requirements for ordination, according to canon law, as maturity of age, gravity of morals and knowledge of letters. These requirements eventually entered the *Liber extra* (1234), which became the authoritative book of church law for the remainder of the middle ages.<sup>21</sup> Canon 27 and Canon 30 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) were both concerned with preventing the ordination of unsuitable men, placing the responsibility on bishops to ensure the promotion of well-instructed and well-informed men to the priesthood.<sup>22</sup> The *Liber extra*, repeating these canons, specified that bishops should only ordain suitable candidates and that there was a need for candidates to be examined, in order to assess their suitability. All that is specified is that the candidate's learning was to be evident in these examinations.<sup>23</sup>

The legislation mentioned above influenced the subsequent synodal constitutions that were produced by English bishops.<sup>24</sup> The care of the souls brought with it an examination to ensure that the ordinand had a thorough knowledge of the articles of faith, the ability

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<sup>21</sup> F. Donald Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy in Medieval England: The Lincoln Diocese, c.1300–c.1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2014), p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Concilium Lateranense IV*, const. 30. Cited in Kirsi Salonen and Jussi Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career at the Roman Curia, 1458–1471* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 9–10.

<sup>23</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> William Abel Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 189.

to instruct parishioners according to canonical injunctions, and a grammatical understanding of letters and scriptures, all of which were considered necessary in order for a priest to be able to engage with scripture and liturgy and carry out his pastoral responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the *Liber extra* decreed that anyone unsuitable, because of knowledge, morals or age, should not obtain a benefice.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the *Liber extra* stated that a candidate's suitability was determined at the discretion of the individual bishop. As F. Donal Logan noted, however, the meaning of literacy would have 'varied from place to place, from time to time and, ultimately, from bishop to bishop'.<sup>27</sup> This led to varying degrees of literacy among priest in medieval England, which could help to explain why a Middle English translation of a treatise on Boethian proportions might have been necessary, even within clerical circles in the fifteenth century.

According to Vivian Galbraith, being 'fully literate' meant having the ability to read and write Latin.<sup>28</sup> Such literacy was associated with schools, universities, and church and state administration. Besides full literacy, there are varying degrees of understanding a language, which does not necessarily imply the ability to compose in the language. This 'middle-level literacy' was much more common than full literacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> A common aphorism of a Latin grammar book calls to mind the lowest form of literacy, whereby the reader can pronounce the words but does not understand that they are saying: 'to read without understanding is to neglect'.<sup>30</sup> In 1387 Bishop Wykeham of Winchester criticised the monks of the monastic cathedral of St.

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1969; repr. 2007), p. 76; John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973; repr. Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Vivian H. Galbraith, *The Literacy of the Medieval English Kings* (London: H. Milford, 1935), p. 250.

<sup>29</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Katherine Zieman, *Singing the New Song: Literacy and Liturgy in Medieval England* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 74.



Swithun's for not understanding what they were reading and therefore making mistakes in their execution of the Latin texts, both while reading and singing.<sup>31</sup> Given the varying degrees of linguistic competence, it is difficult to know where the vicar of Harlington would have fitted on the scale.

The bishops of the diocese of Lincoln repeatedly demanded a higher standard of learning from candidates seeking ordination and the presentation to a benefice within their constitution.<sup>32</sup> While no bishop of Lincoln provided a list of those who failed the exam, evidence of conditional passes to candidates who were required to study before obtaining admission to order or admitted candidates on the condition that they would pursue a year's study, signify that bishops demanded a certain level of academic attainment.<sup>33</sup> Bishop Oliver Sutton declined to ordain candidates who could not say the words of the Mass and required them to study further.<sup>34</sup> Admittedly, this does not demonstrate that a particularly demanding level of learning was required. However, building on revisionist histories of the quality and abilities of the late medieval clergy, a recent analysis of the fifteenth-century records of the Apostolic Penitentiary and Apostolic Chamber concluded that the ordination exam was taken more seriously than previous scholars have assumed.<sup>35</sup>

It is difficult to gain insights into John Benet's earliest educational experiences. The mix of languages found in MS 516 suggests that he was able to read and write in Latin, but also interested in vernacular items. It seems reasonable to presuppose a foundational

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<sup>31</sup> Zieman, *Singing the New Song*, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 15.

<sup>33</sup> Heath, *The English Parish Clergy*, p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Salonen and Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career*.

education and basic literacy, in Latin and Middle English. Furthermore, the manuscript appears to have been compiled by someone with a high level of erudition and a genuine interest in learning, particularly concerning historical events. The range of Benet's intellectual interests, as evident from the contents of MS 516, could indicate that he spent some time studying at a university.

The later middle ages saw an unparalleled expansion in opportunities for education, both in terms of local schools and universities.<sup>36</sup> Peter Heath noted that graduates formed a significant proportion of the parish clergy; a fifth of all clergy instituted or already beneficed in the Canterbury diocese in the mid-fifteenth century were graduates.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, an analysis of clerics instituted to livings in different dioceses would probably reveal a gradual increase in the number of graduates assuming roles as beneficed parish priests in England.<sup>38</sup> However, the institution lists that recorded this information did not account for the number of absentees, and it is difficult to determine how frequently the parishioners came into contact with a graduate vicar. While the numbers of graduates holding parochial livings rose after 1400, cure of the souls was often left to other clergymen with less academic training and less doctrinal experience, meaning that tenure did not guarantee the transmission of a beneficed priest's knowledge to the parishioners.<sup>39</sup> Among other clues, the frequent signatures in MS 516 that describe his

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<sup>36</sup> Heath, *The English Parish Clergy*, p. 77.

<sup>37</sup> Heath, *The English Parish Clergy*, p. 81.

<sup>38</sup> Heath, *The English Parish Clergy*, p. 81.

<sup>39</sup> Robert N. Swanson, 'Pastoral Revolutionaries? Parish Clergy and Religious Leadership in Late Medieval England', in *Episcopacy, Authority and Gender: Aspects of Religious Leadership in Europe, 1100–2000*, ed. Jan Wim Buisman, Marjet Derks and Peter Raedts (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 114–26 (p. 119). On this point, see also Virginia Davis, 'The Contribution of University-Educated Secular Clerics to the Pastoral Life of the English Church', in *The Church and Learning in Later Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of R. B. Dobson, Proceedings of the 1999 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Caroline Barron and Jenny Stratford, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, n.s., 11 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), pp. 255–72; Robert N. Swanson, 'Problems of the Priesthood in Pre-Reformation England', *The English Historical Review*, 105 (1990), 845–69.

location as Harlington suggest that Benet remained primarily in his cure. In his anathema on fol. 2<sup>v</sup> of MS 516, John Benet asserted his ownership of the manuscript and described himself as ‘*Domini Johannis Benet de harlyngdon*’.<sup>40</sup> This title generally referred to a man of education and status, but it did not necessarily indicate a university graduate. Although the term ‘*dominus*’ was used in academic circles to denote a bachelor of arts, it could also imply the entitlement of beneficed clerks in clerical orders and, therefore, cannot be regarded as designating academic status.<sup>41</sup> It is rare for episcopal registers to have recorded the description of bachelor of arts, and so its absence does not necessarily indicate that John Benet did not hold a degree.<sup>42</sup> The uncertainty surrounding Benet’s presence at either Oxford or Cambridge is part of a prevailing and widely acknowledged inability to identify both a large number of medieval parochial clergy who left university after obtaining the bachelor’s degree and the many clergymen who attended either institution but never qualified for a degree at all.<sup>43</sup>

There is a possibility that the vicar of Harlington parish might have attended Merton College, Oxford, from 1420 to 1421 as an account roll states that, as a portionist, one John Benet received seven shillings.<sup>44</sup> A portionist was a new category of undergraduate scholar that developed as a result of Dr John Wyliot’s benefaction in the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>45</sup> The years 1420–1421 appear to be very early for the compiler of MS 516 as John Benet of Harlington probably took holy orders in 1435. The Council of Vienne (1311–1312) confirmed the long-standing practice of ordaining priests at the age of

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<sup>40</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fol. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Emden, Alfred B., *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), vol. I, p. xviii.

<sup>42</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. xviii.

<sup>43</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. xviii.

<sup>44</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. 166.

<sup>45</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. xxiii.

twenty-four.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, by the early fifteenth century, it appears that the seven years that traditionally transpired between ordination as a sub-deacon and as a priest, as decreed by the Council of Vienne, was no longer necessarily observed. Two men named John Benet who were ordained as priests in September 1435 were previously ordained sub-deacons in March of the same year. This discrepancy between legislation and practice in the Lincoln diocese was a lingering consequence of the Black Death, which saw the deaths of over 40 per cent of the beneficed clergy of the diocese and led to a shortage of priests until the Reformation.<sup>47</sup> It served to expedite the delivery of qualified priests, in an era when the death rate (of priests, as well as the population more generally) remained significant.

There is another John Benet listed in Alfred B. Emden's Oxford register. John Benet of Exeter diocese was ordained as a sub-deacon in 1422, a deacon and then a priest in 1423.<sup>48</sup> The ordination records indicate that he was connected to Rewley abbey.<sup>49</sup> Emden's register confirms that he became prior of Rewley abbey, Oxford, in 1423.<sup>50</sup> Given that Rewley abbey was a Cistercian house and given the high status that he enjoyed in Rewley abbey, it is unlikely that this John Benet was later presented to the vicarage of Harlington by the Augustinian Dunstable priory.

It appears from the extant records that John Benet of Harlington did not attend Oxford University, despite the apparent interest in knowledge and learning that is demonstrated by his miscellaneous collection of texts. However, proper matriculation records for the

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<sup>46</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup> G. R. Dunstan, ed., *The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, 1420–1455*, 5 vols (Torquay: The Devonshire Press, 1963–1972), vol. IV, pp. 81, 83.

<sup>49</sup> Dunstan, *The Register of Edmund Lacy*, vol. IV, p. 83.

<sup>50</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. 166.

university do not survive until the later sixteenth century, so Emden's records must be treated necessarily as an incomplete account of the register of students at Oxford.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, although it is difficult to connect the vicar of Harlington to any of the men recorded on the registers, Benet might have spent some time in Oxford before assuming his role in Harlington. A lengthy eyewitness report in the Latin chronicle that is contained in MS 516 reports on a riot between students in Oxford in 1440 and a notice of the gift of Duke Humphrey's books to Oxford in the same year. The inclusion of this report led Harriss, in his innovative account of the chronicle in MS 516, to suggest that Benet spent time in Oxford.<sup>52</sup> It is now generally accepted that Benet was not the author of the chronicle and the identity of the original writer remains a matter for guesswork.<sup>53</sup> A marginal note in Benet's hand on fol. 160<sup>v</sup> of the Latin chronicle reveals Benet's connection with Oxford. Beside an account of an incident on the night of 29 August 1441 between the northern English students of White Hall and a group of southerners is written, '*Interfui ibidem illo tempore*' [I was among them there at that time].<sup>54</sup> It is possible, therefore, that Benet may have been one of the many students who attended Oxford as an undergraduate student but left without a degree.<sup>55</sup> However, this does not necessarily prove that Benet undertook any study in Oxford whatsoever.

In the records of the University of Cambridge, although the name John Benet is listed on multiple occasions, it is unlikely that any of the men described were the resident vicar of Harlington.<sup>56</sup> The will of a fourteenth-century student named John Benet was dated 1374.

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<sup>51</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. xix.

<sup>52</sup> G. L. Harriss, 'A Fifteenth-Century Chronicle at Trinity College, Dublin', in *Offprint from the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 38 (1965), 213–18 (p. 216).

<sup>53</sup> Hanham, *John Benet's Chronicle*, pp. 2, 56–59.

<sup>54</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 122.

<sup>55</sup> Emden, *Register of the University of Oxford*, vol. I, p. xviii.

<sup>56</sup> This paragraph relies on Alfred B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 54–55. See Appendix II.

Three men called John Benet were admitted to study in Cambridge during the fifteenth century. The first John Benet (Benett) was of Lincoln diocese, as was John Benet of Harlington. However, he was ordained as a deacon in 1472 and a priest in 1473. He became rector of St Margaret's, Lothbury, London in 1480 and remained there until his death which occurred before 1498.<sup>57</sup> The status of another John Benett was described as questionable by Emden. Although he was admitted to Cambridge in 1471, he was recorded as having failed to determine in 1473. From 1471 to 1474 the compiler of MS 516 had been presented to Broughton, and there is no evidence of a papal dispensation being granted to John Benet to spend time away from Broughton.<sup>58</sup> It is therefore unlikely that he attended Cambridge as a student during those same years. Finally, the third John Benet listed in the Cambridge biographic registers was rector of Ditchington, Norfolk, and rector of Monk Soham in Suffolk until death, which occurred by August 1473. This man could not have been John Benet of Harlington.

From the records it emerges as unlikely that John Benet of Harlington attended Cambridge University. If John Benet of Harlington was ordained in 1435, however, his activity from 1435 until his appointment to Harlington in 1443 remains undocumented. It is possible but unverifiable that he attended Oxford University, and conceivable that he was there during the incident of 1441, but then left without a degree. It is also possible that John Benet attended a university on the Continent as many English scholars spent

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<sup>57</sup> Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge*, p. 54.

<sup>58</sup> Harriss and Harriss, 'John Benet's Chronicle', p. 158. In the 1448 papal registers John Benet, rector of St Ewin, is recorded as being in Rome. See <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-papal-registers/brit-ic/vol10/pp22-38>> [accessed 4 December 2020]

time at European universities, but surprisingly little research has as yet been undertaken into records of English students abroad.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Vicar choral at Lincoln minster, 1437–1441

The name John Benet was not uncommon in fifteenth-century England, which poses significant problems when attempting to understand more fully the biographical details of the vicar of Harlington in the years preceding his appointment to Harlington vicarage. Without sufficient information, it is challenging to move towards an understanding of the intellectual interests of the vicar of Harlington. In an attempt to understand more about John Benet's life before his appointment to Harlington, and ultimately to bring about a better understanding of the manuscript, the hypothesis that the vicar of Harlington had previously been a vicar choral at Lincoln minster from 1437 to 1441 will be evaluated.

Bowers justified Trowell's connection of the vicar choral at Lincoln minster to the fifteenth-century composer using negative evidence, which hitherto has been accepted as a likely correlation, writing that he was unable to find anything in the composer's output to contradict this tentative suggestion.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, neither Trowell nor Bowers provided evidence beyond the shared name and the musical association to confirm this connection. It has been possible to rule out a connection between John Benet of Harlington and the composer, based on the probate for the composer's will (dated 1458), which predates the death of the vicar of Harlington (in 1474). However, it is plausible that the vicar choral was not the famed composer and that, instead, John Benet of Harlington occupied the role of vicar choral at Lincoln minster from 1437 to 1441 before

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<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485–1603* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); Hilde de Ridder-Symoens and John M. Fletcher, eds, *Academic Relations between the Low Countries and the British Isles 1450–1700* (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1989).

<sup>60</sup> Bowers, 'Music and Worship to 1640', p. 56.

he obtained his position as the parish priest in Harlington. Therefore, it is possible to offer an alternative, though no more assured, biography of the vicar choral at Lincoln minster. In comparison with the canons of secular cathedrals, Barrie Dobson has asserted that the prosopography of the medieval vicars choral has been neglected, which increases the difficulty in obtaining sufficient evidence to connect the vicar choral with either the vicar of Harlington or the composer.<sup>61</sup> This section argues for the possibility of a shared biography between the vicar choral and the vicar of Harlington while conceding that the connection postulated by Trowell and Bowers remains conceivable. Furthermore, a connection between the composer and the vicar choral is more likely given the substantial musical experience that would have been afforded to a composer by the rigorous liturgical commitment of a vicar choral in Lincoln minster and the high level of musical understanding that was required of some vicars choral who were responsible for performing polyphony at the Lady Mass in the secular cathedral.<sup>62</sup> However, it is imperative to consider all possibilities when attempting to reconstruct a largely lost biography.

John Benet served Lincoln minster as a vicar choral for only five years, which was unusual as most vicars choral remained in their cathedral for the full extent of their clerical service.<sup>63</sup> However, under the leadership of Dean John Macworth (1415–1451), Lincoln minster saw an increase in absenteeism and general discontentment.<sup>64</sup> It became increasingly difficult to attract able clergymen to positions in the cathedral, and many

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<sup>61</sup> Barrie Dobson, 'The English Vicars Choral: An Introduction', in *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals, Cantate Domino: History, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. Richard Hall and David Stocker (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), pp. 1–10 (p. 9).

<sup>62</sup> Bowers, 'Music and Worship to 1640', p. 53.

<sup>63</sup> Dobson, 'The English Vicars Choral', p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> Dobson, 'The English Vicars Choral', p. 7.



vacated their appointments.<sup>65</sup> There was a reduction in numbers of vicars choral in Lincoln throughout the first half of the fifteenth century.<sup>66</sup> While there is little evidence of the career trajectory of the minor clergy who left positions at Lincoln minster at that time, the records of Exeter Cathedral demonstrate a large number of vicars choral leaving to play an influential life outside of the cathedral college. Between 1380 and 1548 seventy-three men vacated their positions as vicars choral of Exeter Cathedral and the majority assumed positions as parish priests.<sup>67</sup> There is nothing to suggest that Lincoln diocese failed to offer such opportunities to vicars choral who vacated the minster within the same period. There is precedence, therefore, for vicars choral assuming positions as parish clergy following some time in a secular cathedral, thus increasing the plausibility of a connection between the vicar choral and the vicar of Harlington. That Benet was probably ordained as sub-deacon, deacon, and priest in the diocese of Lincoln and given that he was eventually presented to Harlington, a parish in the same diocese, it is conceivable that Benet also held a position at the cathedral in Lincoln. However, clergy were mobile in the fifteenth century and moved between dioceses.

Unfortunately, given the scarce documentation of vicars choral at Lincoln from the thirteenth century until 1558, it is not possible to assert firmly that John Benet of Harlington was a vicar choral in Lincoln minster. However, at the very least there is sufficient evidence to question the acceptance of Bowers' connection between the vicar choral and the composer, an assertion that appears to have been based solely on the shared

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<sup>65</sup> Bowers, 'Music and Worship to 1640', p. 56.

<sup>66</sup> John Harper, 'The Vicar Choral in Choir', in *Vicars Choral at English Cathedrals, Cantate Domino: History, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. Richard Hall and David Stocker (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), pp. 17–22 (p. 22).

<sup>67</sup> Dobson, 'The English Vicars Choral', p. 9.

musical connection. The presence of the treatise on music theory in MS 516 has justified a reappraisal of Bowers' correlation, which now appears tenuous.

#### 4.1.4 The presentation of Benet to Harlington, 1443–1471

In 1443 Benet formally began his career with his presentation to the benefice in Harlington by the community of regular canons at Dunstable priory, thus acquiring the *cura animarum*.<sup>68</sup> The status of his appointment as vicar in Harlington was a result of the appropriation of the parish church by Dunstable priory. An appropriation was usually undertaken by a religious house to increase its revenue. Some of the priory's many appropriations were recorded in the *Annals of Dunstable*, a chronicle which covers the years 1200–1297.<sup>69</sup> The means by which these appropriations occurred were often contentious. That of Bradbourne in Derbyshire, for example, involved acts of simony by both canons and bishops.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, the dispute surrounding the appropriation of Dunstable priory was not unique.<sup>71</sup>

A rector would have usually assumed responsibility for the cure of the souls. However, since Harlington was appropriated, Dunstable priory assumed the responsibilities of a rector.<sup>72</sup> Rather than assuming direct responsibility, however, religious houses appointed a substitute vicar in each appropriated parish to carry out essential religious and ecclesiastical duties.<sup>73</sup> The appropriation of parish churches and the subsequent

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<sup>68</sup> Lincoln Record Office, Register XVIII (Alnwick), fol. 183<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Harriett R. Webster, ed., *The Annals of Dunstable Priory*, trans. David Presst (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), p. ix.

<sup>70</sup> Egerton Beck, 'Regulars and their Appropriated Churches in Medieval England', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 9 (1923), 205–16 (pp. 207–09).

<sup>71</sup> Beck, 'Regulars and their Appropriated Churches', pp. 208–09.

<sup>72</sup> Edward L. Cutts, *Parish Priests and their People in the Middle Ages in England* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1898), p. 96.

<sup>73</sup> Reginald A. R. Hartridge, *A History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930; repr. 2013), p. 129.

appointment of vicars to fulfil pastoral responsibilities within the parish had initially remained unregulated; clerics attached to the religious houses and stipendiary priests, who were paid by private agreement, were initially permitted to serve the parishes. However, it became apparent that many religious houses were not maintaining sufficient pastoral work in their appropriated parishes and, in order to ensure that the spiritual duties of the parish would be served, perpetual vicarages were established.<sup>74</sup> In 1215 it was decreed that vicars were to be perpetual in an attempt to ward against the issue of monasteries failing to appoint effective vicars.<sup>75</sup> In the diocese of Lincoln, Bishop Hugh of Wells (1209–1235) set about ordaining perpetual vicarages. This work was taken up by his successors, including Robert Grosseteste. The ordination of the vicarage of Harlington is recorded in John Dalderby's episcopal register of 1310.<sup>76</sup> Following the ordination of the perpetual vicarage, it became a responsibility of Dunstable priory to maintain a vicar in Harlington who would exercise the cure of souls in that parish.

As a perpetual vicar, John Benet would have been compelled to reside in Harlington permanently and, although there is evidence of non-resident vicars, not least in fifteenth-century England, there is no reason to doubt that Benet remained there continuously until 1471.<sup>77</sup> In the late fourteenth century, in a bid to reduce the abuses connected with appropriations, Pope Urban VI had ordered that monks and canons regular would not be permitted to serve any parish church, perpetual vicarage, or other benefice with cure of souls.<sup>78</sup> However, in the fifteenth century, there is evidence of canons being granted papal

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<sup>74</sup> Cutts, *Parish Priests and their People*, p. 99.

<sup>75</sup> Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2 vols (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), vol. I, p. 250.

<sup>76</sup> William Page, ed., 'Parishes: Harlington', in *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 3* (London: Victoria County History, 1912), pp. 379–82. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol3/pp379-382>> [accessed 24 May 2019]

<sup>77</sup> Hartridge, *A History of Vicarages*, p. 129.

<sup>78</sup> Beck, 'Regulars and their Appropriated Churches', p. 210.

dispensation to hold benefices.<sup>79</sup> In the absence of a papal dispensation to institute a canon-vicar in Harlington, it is unlikely that Benet was a regular canon.<sup>80</sup> It follows that John Benet was almost certainly ordained as a secular priest before the year 1444, one year after being instituted to Harlington vicarage, as it was a requirement that vicars were already ordained or that they would become a priest within their first year of obtaining a benefice.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.1.5 The roles and responsibilities of the vicar

Once granted the *cura animarum* in a parish, beneficed priests were required to administer the sacraments, celebrate masses, hear confession, and grant absolution.<sup>82</sup> The legislation outlining the roles and responsibilities of parish priests was the product of the movement for ecclesiastical reform of religious life that culminated in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), which subsequently influenced the synodal constitutions of the English bishops that followed and revolutionised the pastoral landscape in England.<sup>83</sup> The famous decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), '*Omnis utriusque sexus*', made annual confession obligatory and stipulated that confession must be facilitated by the parish priest, officially confirming earlier legislation and customs.<sup>84</sup> With this statute, Pope Innocent III placed the parish at the centre of lay spirituality and simultaneously called

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<sup>79</sup> Allison D. Fizzard, *Plympton priory: A House of Augustinian Canons in South-Western England in the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 182.

<sup>80</sup> J. A. Twemlow, ed., *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1955).

<sup>81</sup> Cutts, *Parish Priests and their People*, p. 100.

<sup>82</sup> Swanson, 'Problems of the Priesthood', p. 846.

<sup>83</sup> Relating specifically to England, see Christopher R. Cheney, *English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941); Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 189; F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, *Councils and Synods, with other Documents Relating to the English Church, A.D. 1205–1313*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), vol. II. Activity in the fifteenth century has not yet received comprehensive attention. On pastoral manuals, see Leonard E. Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. T. J. Heffernan (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1985), pp. 30–44.

<sup>84</sup> H. G. Pfander, 'Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction in England and Observations on Chaucer's Parson's Tale', *The Journal of English Germanic Philology*, 35 (1936), 243–58 (p. 243).

for the increased effectiveness and devotion of parish priests in order to carry out the requirements. Although the degree to which each of the decrees of the council was implemented varied, there is evidence that ‘*Omnis ultrisque sexus*’ did have a considerable effect.<sup>85</sup> The statute required priests to cultivate a deep understanding of moral theology, specifically on how to hear confessions and administer penance, if they were successfully to facilitate confession for their parishioners.<sup>86</sup> Parish priests were also expected to instruct parishioners on the articles of the faith and required to examine penitents on their religious knowledge during their confessions.<sup>87</sup> Confession and preaching emerged as the two primary tools through which priests could further their parishioners’ understanding of the faith. The responsibilities that the parish priest was expected to fulfil, therefore, were primarily liturgical and instructive, with the edification of the parishioners a priority for parish priests. The decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council remained relatively flexible in terms of what should be studied by parish priests and subsequently expounded to their parishioners.

In accordance with the council, Bishop Robert Grosseteste specified the basic syllabus of essential learning for the parish priests of Lincoln diocese in statutes datable to 1239.<sup>88</sup> He prescribed articles of faith to assist priests in his diocese in instructing their parishioners. While he proclaimed that everyone should be familiar with the fundamental articles of faith, it was important that priests, who had the cure of souls and were responsible for instructing others, would have a more profound knowledge of faith,

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<sup>85</sup> Alexander Murray, ‘Confession before 1215’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1993), 51–81 (p. 63).

<sup>86</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 192.

<sup>87</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 192.

<sup>88</sup> Colin Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981), p. 53.

morals and church law.<sup>89</sup> Grosseteste outlined the specifics that were to be taught to the laity by the parish priests. His list included the ten commandments, the seven deadly sins (pride, sloth, envy, greed, lust, wrath, covetousness), how to distinguish between vices and virtues, and the sacrament of penance. He claimed that only basic knowledge of the more complex sacraments and creeds was required for priests.<sup>90</sup>

In order to assist priests in carrying out their responsibilities as specified in the constitutions, thirteenth-century bishops produced technical literature in the form of treatises and *summae*.<sup>91</sup> Later in the thirteenth century Archbishop John Peckham, in a provincial council held in 1281, issued the legislation '*De informacione simplicium*', which is commonly referred to as '*Ignorantia sacerdotum*'. In this, he outlined a programme of religious instruction for priests, structuring it around the main articles of faith: the fourteen articles of the faith (statements in the Apostles' Creed), the ten commandments, the two laws from the gospel (love God and love thy neighbour), the seven principal virtues (faith, hope, charity, justice, temperance, prudence, fortitude), the seven deadly sins, and the seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, ordination, matrimony, extreme unction).<sup>92</sup> He wrote that these were to be expounded to the parishioners in the vernacular four times a year. '*Ignorantia sacerdotum*' became the standard legislation on the topic.<sup>93</sup> Preaching was to be used by priests to edify parishioners, and priests were required to hear confession on an annual

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<sup>89</sup> Roy M. Haines, 'Education in English Ecclesiastical Legislation of the Later Middle Ages', in *Councils and Assemblies: Papers Read at the Eighth Summer Meeting and the Ninth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 161–75 (pp. 161–62).

<sup>90</sup> Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England*, pp. 53–54; Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 193.

<sup>91</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 194.

<sup>92</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 193.

<sup>93</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 53.

basis.<sup>94</sup> There was a concerted effort within the church to ensure that prospective priests would be able to carry out their roles and responsibilities sufficiently within their parishes.

One of the main objectives of the Fourth Lateran Council had been to stamp out vices and foster virtue among the laity. This theme continued to dominate subsequent pastoral literature. Although decreed long before Benet's time, Archbishop Peckham's Constitutions became the standard legislation on the subject of pastoral care for parish priests and its influence spread throughout England and remained influential until the Reformation.<sup>95</sup> Archbishop Peckham's schema of instruction for the laity was adapted and translated into verse at the request of Archbishop John of Thoresby. His *Lay Folks' Catechism* (1357), written in Latin and later translated into English, specified that the clergy were to expound to the laity the creed, the commandments, and the fundamentals of faith and practice.<sup>96</sup> By translating the information into verse, this meant that the work could be more easily committed to memory and, by rendering the catechism in the vernacular, it could be disseminated widely. With an indulgence of forty days for those who learned or taught it to others, the *Lay Folks' Catechism* was used in dioceses all around England.<sup>97</sup> However, the black death impacted standards of clerical learning and morality by creating a need to fill cures 'at any cost'.<sup>98</sup> These pastoral challenges continued for the next century as bishops struggled to find worthy men to serve parishes.

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<sup>94</sup> Haines, 'Education in English Ecclesiastical Legislation', p. 172.

<sup>95</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 194.

<sup>96</sup> John Thoresby, *The Lay Folks' Catechism, or the English and Latin Versions of Archbishop Thoresby's Instruction for the People; Together with a Wycliffite Adaptation of the Same, and the Corresponding Canons of the Council of Lambeth*, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth (London: English Early Text Society, 1901), pp. xv–xvi.

<sup>97</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters*, p. 54.

<sup>98</sup> William J. Dohar, 'Since the Pestilence Time: Pastoral Care in the Later Middle Ages', in *A History of Pastoral Care*, ed. G. R. Evans (London and New York, NY: Cassell, 2000), pp. 169–200 (p. 184).

Thirteenth-century bishops produced technical literature in the form of treatises and *summae* to help priests carry out their responsibilities.<sup>99</sup> In the following century pastoral manuals began to emerge. The ‘*Oculus sacerdotis*’ is one such manual that was designed in part as a manual for confessors but more generally as a programme of instruction that specified what a parish priest should teach to his parishioners.<sup>100</sup> It drew heavily on Peckham’s Constitutions, stating that the priest must expound to his parishioners in the vernacular four times a year and reiterating the articles of faith with which the people must be acquainted. Many of the manuals for parish priests that followed took the ‘*Oculus sacerdotis*’ as their starting point and supplemented it with information that the various authors deemed necessary. They provided instructions on how to teach penance, Christian doctrines, and exhortations to virtue. These guides were written mainly in Latin, but also in the vernacular, from the early fourteenth century onwards.<sup>101</sup> The flexibility inherent in the manuals suggests that while there was a certain ‘set’ syllabus of the articles of faith, priests could respond to the contemporary questions or concerns of their parishioners.<sup>102</sup> Although preaching had been a tool for instructing parishioners, this became problematic with the rise of Lollardy. Restrictions on preaching that were outlined in Archbishop Arundel’s early fifteenth-century constitutions were created in response to growing anti-clerical sentiment.<sup>103</sup> Despite this, preaching remained part of the cultural landscape in the late middle ages and parish priests engaged in this activity, as demonstrated by the surviving manuscripts relating to sermons.

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<sup>99</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 194.

<sup>100</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 196–99.

<sup>101</sup> Heath, *The English Parish Clergy*, p. 86.

<sup>102</sup> Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, p. 204.

<sup>103</sup> H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Nicholas Watson, ‘Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel’s Constitutions of 1409’, *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 822–64.



How priests carried out their duties probably differed from parish to parish, depending on the diocese, on the priest's abilities and intellectual rigour, and on how strictly the priest chose to adhere to the legislation. While the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council and the subsequent episcopal statutes constituted set guidelines and information for the priest in support of his required activities, they can only depict what was expected of parish priests and not necessarily account for the day-to-day practices of any given priest. Although Benet would have been expected to undertake the pastoral care of his parishioners, it is impossible to know the extent to which he observed this in the absence of visitation records. However, Benet was allowed to maintain his cure for most of his life, suggesting that he duly carried out his liturgical responsibilities in the village and administered the sacraments to his parishioners, including confession, to an adequate standard.

#### **4.2 John Benet and his book**

An overview of recent scholarship surrounding book-owning and book-using priests in medieval England emphasises that, because evidence of priests owning books is limited, any example warrants our close attention for the valuable insight it can offer into the intellectual history of parochial life in medieval England.<sup>104</sup> This section thus brings together the biographical information concerning John Benet that was gleaned in the previous section of this chapter with the findings from Chapter Three in order to understand how Benet might have used his book in his parochial context. MS 516 is a

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<sup>104</sup> Gerald P. Dyson, *Priests and their Books in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, Anglo-Saxon Studies, 34 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019); John Shinnars and William J. Dohar, *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1998); Stacey Gee, 'Parochial Libraries in Pre-Reformation England', in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 199–222; Arnold Hunt, 'Clerical and Parish Libraries', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. I, pp. 400–19; Matthew Wranovix, *Priests and their Books in Late Medieval Eichstätt*, Anglo-Saxon Studies, 34 (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017).

testament to his reading practices and to his own interpretation of his duties in Harlington. Therefore, his book speaks to his cultural experiences and intellectual interests. This section will explore the role of MS 516 in Benet's life. Of particular interest in this study is his interest in and his use for a text concerning *musica speculativa*. As one of a paucity of extant non-liturgical books created by medieval parish priests, a consideration of MS 516 facilitates a nuanced understanding of the intellectual activities that occurred in a late medieval English parish.

#### 4.2.1 Bookish habits of priests

Hitherto, a dearth of evidence has often been taken as proof that parish priests were uninterested in intellectual pursuits beyond the liturgy.<sup>105</sup> There has been little research into parish libraries and the reading habits of parish priests in the fifteenth century in England as most studies in the area of book ownership concentrate on larger centres of religious activity such as religious houses and secular cathedrals.<sup>106</sup> Top-down cultural models have neglected a thorough evaluation of the intellectual lives of parish priests, allowing generalisations and unfounded stereotypes to persist. In his important work on libraries in medieval England, Ernest A. Savage claimed that parish priests who were not affiliated with any cathedral or collegiate church almost certainly possessed no books besides their office books before 1400 and very few books after.<sup>107</sup> This claim was perpetuated by John Shinnars who, in providing an overview of parish libraries in England just two decades ago, advised against continuing the futile search for book-

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<sup>105</sup> Heath, *English Parish Clergy*, p. 75; Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370–1532* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1984), p. 41.

<sup>106</sup> For example, the Corpus of British Medieval Catalogues includes volumes dedicated to the friars, the Cistercians, the English Benedictines, the Augustinian Canons, Dover priory, King Henry VIII, Peterborough abbey, Syon abbey, Cambridge, Oxford, Collegiate churches, and St Augustine's abbey, Canterbury. The series does not include any reference to the book collections of parish priests.

<sup>107</sup> Ernest A. Savage, *Old English Libraries: The Making, Collection, and Use of Books During the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1912), pp. 189, 232.

owning priests.<sup>108</sup> Undoubtedly, many books did not withstand the religious tumult in sixteenth-century England, but it is worth noting that a lack of evidence does not necessarily signal that there was a lack of activity. Where books have survived, an absence of prosopographical and biographical records documenting book-owning and book-using priests has meant that their stories, and that of their books, have been largely ignored. The reading habits of medieval priests have been ‘oddly absent from the history of the book’.<sup>109</sup>

Many factors have contributed to the image of the medieval parish clergymen as ‘ignorant country priests’ who were barely able to carry out their pastoral duties.<sup>110</sup> The medieval literary tradition of goliardic poetry and stories contributed to the emergence and persistence of this image in England and texts such as Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* helped to shape this theme.<sup>111</sup> Subsequent studies of these texts, including recent studies, have perpetuated the cynical and simultaneously satirical image of the medieval parish clergy.<sup>112</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century studies of medieval sermons written by scholars of literature emerged. In their fascination with *exemplum* literature, sermons and other moral theological tracts, these scholars often published anecdotes on the shortcomings of priests. However, Kirsi Salonen and Jussi Hanska have pointed out that these texts were created to demonstrate and correct failures, and were not necessarily

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<sup>108</sup> John Shinner, ‘Parish Libraries in Medieval England’, in *A Distinct Voice: Medieval Studies in Honor of Leonard E. Boyle*, ed. Jaqueline Brown and William P. Stoneman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 207–30.

<sup>109</sup> Wranovix, *Priests and their Books*, p. xii.

<sup>110</sup> Salonen and Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career*, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup> See Wendy Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 17–54.

<sup>112</sup> Salonen and Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career*, p. 1.

indicative of real situations.<sup>113</sup> In his article on the education of the pre-Reformation clergy in Germany, Reinhold Kiermayr accused the writings of renowned humanist Erasmus and Sebastian Brant of influencing modern scholars in their simplistic interpretation of a highly complex period, specifically for the satire they included concerning clergymen.<sup>114</sup> Caricatures and literary exaggerations have been taken as factual accounts of parish priests, therefore. These false views have been relied upon to account for the paucity of extant written sources that were created or used by parish priests and, more importantly, have discouraged scholars from trying to find contradictory evidence.<sup>115</sup> By studying manuscripts that are known to have belonged to medieval parish priests, rather than relying on the inherited, stereotypical image of the ignorant bookless priest, it is possible to achieve a more accurate appraisal of the intellectual life in the medieval English parish.

H. R. Plomer, the first scholar to undertake an extensive study of late medieval book-ownership through the mention of books in wills before 1600, noted that ‘even the humblest priest possessed at least a breviary of some sort and a missal which, upon his death, he sometimes left to his church’.<sup>116</sup> More recently, Arnold Hunt claimed that recent research into wills shows that two-thirds of parish priests in the north of England had one book to bequeath, suggesting that book ownership was widespread but not universal.<sup>117</sup> However, wills must be treated with caution as they may not exist for poorer parish priests active in rural areas, thus overestimating the percentage of priests who owned books, and

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<sup>113</sup> Salonen and Hanska, *Entering a Clerical Career*, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Reinhold Kiermayr, ‘On the Education of the Pre-Reformation Clergy’, *Church History*, 53 (1984), 7–16 (p. 7).

<sup>115</sup> Kiermayr, ‘On the Education of the Pre-Reformation Clergy’, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> H. R. Plomer, ‘Books Mentioned in Wills’, *The Library*, 1 (1902), 99–121 (p. 101).

<sup>117</sup> Hunt ‘Clerical and Parish Libraries’, p. 402.

they may not have recorded books as separate from the general belongings of the clergymen, thus underestimating the numbers of book-owning clergy.<sup>118</sup>

Liturgical books were necessary for parish priests in their daily services, and there is evidence of parishioners helping to build up a library collection for their priests in response to Archbishop Robert Winchelsea's thirteenth-century stricture that eight essential service books were required in parish churches.<sup>119</sup> Although the decree was not officially issued, it circulated widely. By the mid fourteenth century, it was treated as an official decree of the archdiocese of Canterbury.<sup>120</sup> The degree of compliance with this decree must have varied from parish to parish. In some cases, monasteries provided these liturgical books for parishes under their patronage, as outlined in the thirteenth-century episcopal statutes for the diocese of Bath and Glastonbury.<sup>121</sup> Provincial legislations sometimes required other books to assist the priests in carrying out their liturgical duties, but the need to possess the following eight service books remained standard throughout the legislation: a missal (the whole office of the mass), a troperium or sequence book (sequences sung after the epistle at mass), an antiphonary (musical parts of the service), a gradual (choir music for the mass), a psalter (psalms for the different days of the week), a breviary (text and office of the divine service), an ordinal (instructions for the administration of the liturgy and sacraments), and a manual (occasional services of baptism, marriage, and last rites).<sup>122</sup> Katherine French asserted that it is impossible to glean from inventories how well equipped any particular parish was because, over time,

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<sup>118</sup> Hunt, 'Clerical and Parish Libraries', p. 402.

<sup>119</sup> Hunt, 'Clerical and Parish Libraries', p. 410.

<sup>120</sup> Shinnars, 'Parish Libraries in Medieval England', p. 208.

<sup>121</sup> Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 183.

<sup>122</sup> Christopher R. Cheney, 'The So-Called Statutes of John Pecham and Robert Winchelsey', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 12 (1961), 21–25; French, *The People of the Parish*, p. 183.

some liturgical books absorbed the contents of others, rendering eight separate books unnecessary in order to fulfil the statutory requirements.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, in an attempt to increase the knowledge of parish priests and the effectiveness of their practice of pastoral care within their parish, pastoral manuals made by priests began to emerge in the fourteenth century, signifying a continuous tradition of education by clergymen for clergymen.<sup>124</sup> Wranovix contended that the production of books would have been an odd choice of medium through which various members of the church in England attempted to improve and reform the parish clergy if they were unable to read them, thus rejecting the notion of widespread illiteracy among priests.<sup>125</sup>

A parish library did not only comprise liturgical books, but where evidence exists, they seem to have constituted the majority of the book collection; an inventory of church furnishings in the archdeaconry of Norwich compiled in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century records about 6,363 books in 358 parishes, only 8% of which were not liturgical.<sup>126</sup> However, recent scholarship shows that by the fifteenth century, most churches had books other than service books.<sup>127</sup> Some parishes even acquired substantial collections of non-liturgical books, suggesting that some priests were interested in topics outside of their direct liturgical duties.<sup>128</sup> Recent research has highlighted that at least some members of the parish clergy had greater access to and interest in non-liturgical texts than has often been assumed.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> French, *The People of the Parish*, p. 183.

<sup>124</sup> Leonard E. Boyle, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education, and Canon Law, 1200–1400* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1981); Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, pp. 189–219.

<sup>125</sup> Wranovix, *Priests and their Books*, p. xii.

<sup>126</sup> Shinnars, 'Parish Libraries in Medieval England', p. 208.

<sup>127</sup> Neil Ker and Michael Perkin, *A Directory of Parochial Libraries of the Church of England and the Church in Wales* (London: Bibliographical Society, 2004), p. 30.

<sup>128</sup> Hunt, 'Clerical and Parish Libraries', p. 412.

<sup>129</sup> Wranovix, *Priests and their Books*, p. xiii.

Despite Shinnars' warning against searching for book-owning priests, some focused studies have emerged, which have helped to highlight personal collections of individual priests, the sharing of books between small clerical communities, and the circulation of books between clerics within the same parish, including this present dissertation.<sup>130</sup> In recent years, scholars have begun to look into the establishment of parish libraries and into the creation and distribution of books between members of the parish clergy in England, which has begun to cast doubt on long-held assumptions about the intellectual activities of priests, or lack thereof.<sup>131</sup> Beliefs surrounding the bookish habits of the parish priest are beginning to be challenged and transformed, allowing for greater appreciation of the varied contributions of parish priests to the intellectual life of the parish. The unhelpful binary question of whether parish priests were literate or illiterate in fifteenth-century England offers little space for the consideration of personal experiences. It disregards the unquestionable variety of proficiencies within the stratum of medieval English parish priests and potentially precludes further study into the intellectual life of the medieval parish. A consideration of the wide-ranging collection of texts in MS 516 expands present perceptions of the availability of non-liturgical texts for a priest in a small parish in the Lincoln diocese. MS 516 demonstrates that some parish priests were interested in areas outside the traditional liturgical texts and shows that there was potential for the parish library's books to offer the opportunity for 'exquisite learning or high contemplation', challenging Shinnars' scathing account of general clerical

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<sup>130</sup> Claire Cross, 'York Clergy and their Books in the Early Sixteenth Century', in *The Church and Learning in Later Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of R. B. Dobson. Proceedings of the 1999 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Caroline Barron and Jenny Stratford, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, n.s., 11 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), pp. 344–54; Sheila Lindenbaum, 'London after Arundel: Learned Rectors and the Strategies of Orthodox Reform', in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Swanson, 'Pastoral Revolutionaries?'; and Matthew Wranovix, 'Ulrich Pfeffel's Library: Parish Priests, Preachers, and Books in the Fifteenth Century', *Speculum*, 87 (2012), 1125–55.

<sup>131</sup> Dyson, *Priests and their Books*; Gee, 'Parochial Libraries', pp. 199–222; Hunt, 'Clerical and Parish Libraries', pp. 400–19; Wranovix, *Priests and their Books*; and Shinnars and Dohar, *Pastors and the Care of Souls*.

ignorance towards books and reading.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, the pervasive narrative of the ignorant parish priest that was dominant until approximately half a century ago has begun to be re-evaluated. Although numerous church historians have previously accepted that the ignorance and impiety of the late medieval clergy was a cause of the Reformation, re-evaluations of the intellectual life of the medieval English priest have emerged as part of a broader revision of the late middle ages and the emergence of the Reformation in England.<sup>133</sup> However, few examples of books owned by parish priests in English at that time have survived, which increases the importance of Benet's manuscript as providing a rare opportunity to delve into the intellectual interests of a late medieval English parish priest.

#### 4.2.2 MS 516: A parish priest's book

How might MS 516 have taken meaning in Benet's mind? A synthesis of findings concerning MS 516, Benet's biography, and the contexts in which he created and used his book helps to answer this. An analysis of the contents of MS 516 in Chapter Three exposed the manuscript as a collection of texts that predominantly related to matters of moral edification in a largely non-liturgical manner. An investigation of the roles and responsibilities of parochial clergy in late medieval England in this chapter revealed beneficed parish priests, like Benet, to be responsible for the moral instruction of parishioners. Benet could have used MS 516 to carry out his priestly duties. It had the potential to inform his own understanding of morality. It could be used as a reference

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<sup>132</sup> Shinnars, 'Parish Libraries in Medieval England', p. 222.

<sup>133</sup> See Swanson, 'Problems of the Priesthood', pp. 845–69; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*; Jeffrey Denton, 'The Competence of the Parish Clergy in Thirteenth-Century England', in *The Church and Learning in Later Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of R.B. Dobson, Proceedings of the 1999 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Caroline Barron and Jenny Stratford, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, n.s., 11 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), pp. 273–85; Logan, *University Education of the Parochial Clergy*; and Heath, *The English Parish Clergy*.



book on morality for didactic purposes in the community at large, suggesting that Benet understood that he was responsible for developing a moral understanding so that he could edify his parishioners. It seems likely that he was aware of the importance of being well informed in order to guard the souls in his care and help them distinguish between virtues and vices.

MS 516 reveals Benet to have been somewhat unconventional in his choice of pastoral texts when compared with his contemporaries. He did not include any of the standard pastoral manuals for priests or popular sermons and few liturgical items. Undoubtedly, his exclusion of any specific text might have been affected by the unattainability of specific exemplars in Harlington. On the other hand, he possibly had access to other service books and pastoral manuals to support his work further, particularly with concerning the liturgy.<sup>134</sup> By the later middle ages there were reasonably diverse collections of books (liturgical manuals, pastoral handbooks, synodal legislation, moral tracts) communally available to serve the needs of the curate and his assistants in most parishes.<sup>135</sup> Benet would have required service books for the liturgical aspect of his benefice in Harlington. Although MS 516 was the sole survivor of his collection of books, that does not mean that it was his only book; while standard service books were destroyed during the Reformation, it is more usual for inimitable non-standard manuscripts to have survived. Book collections of parish priests, when acknowledged, have been frequently described merely as a collection of working tools for practical use in the performance of rituals and the creation of sermons.<sup>136</sup> This pragmatic view of the intellectual interests of priests would suggest that Benet was an outlier with his diverse collection of texts.

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<sup>134</sup> Christopher Wordsworth and Henry Littlehales, *The Old Service-books of the English Church* (London: Methuen, 1904), p. 68.

<sup>135</sup> Shinnars, 'Parish Libraries in Medieval England', p. 207.

<sup>136</sup> Hunt, 'Clerical and Parish Libraries', p. 401.

However, further studies of the manuscripts and book collections of priests, and discoveries of new manuscripts, are beginning to show that Benet was far from unique in having scholarly interests. Instead, more significant evidence is emerging of parish priests who shared an interest in intellectual pursuits broader than, but still connected to and informed by, their profession. Wranovix's work on the book collections of priests in Eichstätt has found that late medieval priests tended to distinguish 'scholastic' from 'pastoral' works far less often and much less clearly than modern readers might.<sup>137</sup>

Shinners wrote that 'many priests probably had other pastoral material copied into their notebooks, but hardly any such volumes survive, so to suggest more is just speculation'.<sup>138</sup> Since he made this assertion, more volumes have come to light. The philological work done on MS 516 as part of this dissertation has exposed MS 516 to have included texts that could be considered as non-conventional pastoral material. Furthermore, Robert Swanson recently identified three examples of manuscripts that show medieval parish priests or canons who also assumed parochial duties, engaging with their responsibilities, as outlined in the statutes, through gathering appropriate material to ensure that they could provide religious leadership for their parishioners: London, British Library, Sloane MS 1584, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 123, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood Empt. 20.<sup>139</sup> Described as personal priests' manuals, the three manuscripts include varied collections of texts that each compiler considered to be potentially useful in carrying out their work in the parish.<sup>140</sup> The contents of the manuscripts suggest that the priests were concerned with fulfilling pastoral duties and, at times, they included unorthodox or unexpected texts to support them in their endeavours.

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<sup>137</sup> Wranovix, *Priests and their Books*, p. 135.

<sup>138</sup> Shinners, 'Parish Libraries in Medieval England', p. 222.

<sup>139</sup> Swanson, 'Pastoral Revolutionaries?', p. 119.

<sup>140</sup> Swanson, 'Pastoral Revolutionaries?', p. 119.

In MS Bodley 123, for example, the late fifteenth-century compiler Thomas Urmeston included reference material for his priestly tasks, tools for instructing and teaching his parishioners, and other moral tales and exempla.<sup>141</sup> Swanson argues that manuscripts created by and for parish priests deserve attention because they ‘show that individuals were willing to train themselves, to acquire the resources, and perhaps develop the skills, to make them effective guardians of souls’.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, some examples give a direct insight into other topics that interest their compilers, beyond the required roles and responsibilities of a parish priest, which challenges Shinnars’ assertion that theological considerations concerned with the cure of the souls were ‘far removed from the daily dealings of most parish priests’.<sup>143</sup>

While the idiosyncratic natures of such collections of texts make them challenging to interpret, each manuscript has the potential to elucidate the intellectual life of a member of the parochial clergy and the broader intellectual context of the parish to which he belonged. Viewed collectively, they add more nuance to the polarised debate regarding the illiteracy and ignorance of parish priests. Until recently, there has been little space for the consideration of the personal experiences of individual priests and the variety of intellectual proficiencies within the stratum of medieval English parish priests. As more examples of personal miscellanies of parish priests come to light, it challenges the assumption that most parish priests were concerned only with the liturgical aspects of their duties and neglected the more contemplative, academic, speculative and moral aspects of their roles.

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<sup>141</sup> Swanson, ‘Pastoral Revolutionaries?’, p. 121.

<sup>142</sup> Swanson, ‘Pastoral Revolutionaries?’, p. 124.

<sup>143</sup> Shinnars, ‘Parish Libraries in Medieval England’, p. 222.

#### 4.2.3 Benet's inclusion of 'þe proporcions' in MS 516

Benet's inclusion of 'þe proporcions' in MS 516 appeared, at first glance, to be out of place. Curiosity about Benet's interest in a treatise on vernacular vulgate *musica speculativa*, specifically concerning the Boethian tradition of neo-Pythagorean number theory, constituted the initial impetus for this dissertation. Chapter Three first considered the question of what 'þe proporcions' meant to Benet. Taking on board the findings of the codicological and philological investigatory approaches to the whole book, it seemed possible that the speculative tradition of the treatise on music proportions might have connected it to the moralising nature of so many of the other texts in Benet's collection. In light of the investigation into Benet and his hypothetical duties in Harlington, MS 516 has emerged as a tool to support a parish priest in carrying out his instructional duties within his parish. It is now necessary to comment further on Benet's inclusion of 'þe proporcions' in MS 516 and his interest in speculative music theory more generally.

The inconclusive nature of Benet's biography makes it difficult to ascertain his scholastic background. Whether Benet knew that the text was a translation of an excerpt of Boethius' renowned *De institutione musica* is impossible to say. If Benet had attended Oxford, he would likely have come into contact with Boethius' writing there as, from 1431, instruction in Boethius' *De institutione musica* was required by the statutes of the university.<sup>144</sup> However, Benet's attendance remains uncertain. The possibility that Benet included the treatise without understanding the contents must be acknowledged. It should be remembered that the comparative analysis of the text in Chapter Two revealed Benet's text as impartially and imperfectly transcribed. The extensive omission within the text

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<sup>144</sup> John North, 'The *Quadrivium*', in *A History of the University in Europe: Universities in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), vol. I, pp. 337–60 (p. 322); Nan Cooke Carpenter, *Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 77.

could signify that Benet did not fully understand what he was copying. Given the range of vernacular texts in MS 516, the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in Benet’s book could have had more to do with his interest in collecting Middle English texts, rather than the content, particularly if he was using it for pedagogical reasons. It could be a coincidence that the moral nature of speculative music theory resonates with other moralising texts in Benet’s manuscript. The inclusion of texts in MS 516 might have had more to do with exemplar availability than any overarching organising principle. Texts in Middle English were not widespread or easily available in late medieval England, which encouraged book compilers to include particular exemplars in their collection of texts simply because they happened upon them at a particular time.<sup>145</sup> It is not the intention of this dissertation to display a ‘modern insistence on coherence and clear organisational principles’ that was not always important in medieval books.<sup>146</sup> Given the inward and highly personal nature of Benet’s manuscripts, he did not need to display lucid organisation. By placing the manuscript in the context of its production, specifically, the parochial religious context, a level of inherent organisation and a purpose for the collection of texts emerged. However, we must be careful that we heed the warning of James J. O’Donnell when trying to understand medieval manuscripts, particularly miscellaneous ones, and make sure that we do not ‘wrestle the past into an order and shape comfortable to ourselves’.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Derek Pearsall, ‘The Whole Book: Late Medieval English Manuscript Miscellanies and the Modern Interpreters’, in *Imagining the Book: Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe*, ed. Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 17–30 (p. 25).

<sup>146</sup> Margaret Connolly and Raluca Radulescu, eds, *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>147</sup> James J. O’Donnell, ‘Retractions’, in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 169–73 (p. 172).

## Chapter Five

### Circulating ‘þe proporcions’

This chapter investigates various possible modes of reception to explore how the proportion treatise in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516 may have circulated within the small parochial community in Harlington and beyond. In order to understand the potential reach of ‘þe proporcions’, it is crucial to see this treatise within the context of MS 516, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four. The focus in this chapter is specifically the late medieval parish and the many ways in which written texts could enter the larger discourse. This opens up consideration of the role of music theory in an environment not traditionally associated with music pedagogy. Considering the impact of different reading practices and orality on the material circulation of MS 516 in Harlington and beyond acknowledges that the audience for ‘þe proporcions’ might have been more diverse than previously thought. An exploration of readers and users of music theory outside of the hegemonic cultural institutions expands understanding to include peripheral audiences hitherto excluded from the history of theory. While much of the material in this chapter is conjectural, it starts a process of at least asking questions about the place of English-language music theory in the late medieval parish.

The geographical scope widens from Harlington to include the neighbouring towns of Dunstable and Toddington in relation to John Benet’s procurement of exemplars. This wider lens facilitates consideration of the sustained interest in *musica speculativa* throughout the fifteenth century, which can be seen as a response to efforts to bring medieval philosophy and other scholastic endeavours from traditional academic

institutions into other contexts. The main catalyst for this expansion is the use of the vernacular.

### **5.1 Pathways of circulation in Harlington**

MS 516 inevitably reflects the parochial context in which it was created, but may also have served as a tool to shape intellectual activities within the parish. In order to understand how MS 516 could have facilitated the entry of speculative music theory into the discourse of the community of this particular fifteenth-century parish, the inquiry needs to broaden to draw on what is known about reading practices within late medieval English parishes more generally. It has now been almost forty years since Brian Stock first coined the term ‘textual community’ to describe a micro-society organised around a shared understanding of certain written (or oral) texts.<sup>1</sup> In his original appellation, he already included within the community members who were less literate, or indeed illiterate. For Stock, the minimum requirement was one literate member, who understood and was able to communicate the text to others. The impact of the text was felt in the community as a whole, through a process of absorption and reflection, even if most members did not engage directly with the original source. Within Stock’s textual community, a spectrum exists between literacy and illiteracy.

Although Stock derived his theory of textual communities in relation to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, more recent scholarship has applied it to the fifteenth-century English parish.<sup>2</sup> The spread of literacy both leads to and goes in tandem with increased vernacularisation. This adds another dimension to the ripple effect, as textuality spread

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 88–240.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine L. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 44.

within a non-Latinate community. The unusual inclusion of a vernacular proportion treatise in Trinity MS 516 leads me to propose that the environment around Benet in Harlington be considered a textual community.

Literacy in all parishes would have been variable, linguistically (between Latin and the vernacular), and in terms of facility with technical subject matter. The dependency on record-keeping that proliferated in many aspects of late medieval society, including government and law, also occurred in parish life. It is demonstrated in extant churchwardens' accounts, which recorded the laity's parochial income and expenditures on behalf of their portion of the church's revenue.<sup>3</sup> One expense that was recorded related to books. Parochial churches were required to have a wide range of liturgical books in order to carry out the services.<sup>4</sup> Several pre-Reformation English parish churches also contained legal and theological texts, grammar books, clerical manuals and other books of religious instruction and edification—described by Stacey Gee as 'reference books'.<sup>5</sup> The creation of written documents was widespread in the late medieval English parish. This was the larger textual society within which Benet compiled his manuscript, and the textual community in which the parishioners of Harlington interacted with MS 516.

There are multiple signs of use in MS 516, as documented in Chapter Three.<sup>6</sup> Benet's own annotations and the presence of other fifteenth-century inscriptions throughout the manuscript suggests that Benet's miscellany was actively used during his lifetime and in subsequent decades. As noted in Chapter Three, the miscellany was carefully arranged

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<sup>3</sup> French, *The People of the Parish*, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Wordsworth and Henry Littlehales, *The Old Service-books of the English Church* (London: Methuen, 1904), pp. 26–30.

<sup>5</sup> Stacey Gee, 'Parochial Libraries in Pre-Reformation England', in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 199–222 (p. 199).

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 3.1.4 for the codicological study of Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516.



for ease of reference. The addition of the list of contents to the book after it had already been bound provides firm evidence that the manuscript was intended to be read by others, perhaps still in the parish of Harlington, or elsewhere.

The term Stock uses to describe the person who understands the texts within a textual community, and serves as the conduit to others, is the *interprez*.<sup>7</sup> Someone assumed this role in Harlington, possibly Benet himself, possibly other members of the community. As noted in Chapter Three, there are a number of red underlines in ‘þe proporcions’. Perhaps Benet added them for his own edification, but the later history of the manuscript suggests that they were added to help in the instruction of others. Although the intellectual context of the late medieval parish in England was framed by writing, it encompassed people with hugely divergent literacies, quite aside from any familiarity with music theory.<sup>8</sup> Literacy rates varied according to many factors, including class, occupation and sex. There is much debate about the degree of illiteracy in late medieval England, but the overall trajectory is clear: throughout the late middle ages, the number of people who could read and write increased.<sup>9</sup> By the fifteenth century, some members of Harlington parish would likely have possessed sufficient reading skills to interact with the contents

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<sup>7</sup> Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore, MD, and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> French, *The People of the Parish*, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Robin Houssemayne Du Boulay, *Age of Ambition: English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1970), pp. 118–19; Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran, *The Growth of English Schooling, 1340–1548: Learning, Literacy, and Laicization in Pre-Reformation York Diocese* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 20; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Orders: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980; repr. 2006), pp. 15–18, 159–63; Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 184–88; Malcolm B. Parkes, ‘Literacy and the Laity’, in *Literature and Western Civilisation: the Medieval World*, ed. D. Daiches and A. K. Thorlby (London: Aldus Books, 1973), pp. 555–77; Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers: 1350–1400* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 18–57; Susan Crane, ‘The Writing Lesson of 1381’, in *Chaucer’s England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 201–22 (pp. 202–03).

of Benet's manuscript, at least the parts in English.<sup>10</sup> This could help to explain the appearance of 'þe proporcions' in the vernacular, as a way of making it potentially accessible to other members of the Harlington community.

Modern linguistic theory emphasises 'discourse' and 'community' rather than 'text' and 'audience'. This idea has gained ground in medieval studies in recent years.<sup>11</sup> Traditional conceptions of the words 'audience' and 'readership' when evaluating the place of a text in medieval society can be anachronistic. 'Readership' often implies literacy, but many people interacted with texts through oral and aural practices, even though they were operating within a literate context. The word 'audience' implies the passive consumption of a text and places the producer and interactor at opposite ends of a spectrum of textual reception, but individuals copied many texts for personal or local use. The model of a discourse community, developed from the sociolinguistic concept of a speech community, offers greater inclusivity than the traditional definition of 'readership'. Claire Jones described a discourse community as 'people who participate in a set of discourse practices not only by reading and writing but by listening'. Furthermore, discourse community can refer to 'the people a text is aimed at; it can be the set of people who read a text; or it can refer to the people who participate in a set of discourse practices both by reading and by writing'.<sup>12</sup> This concept emphasises the producers and readers of written texts while acknowledging that in many situations, spoken discourse can also be associated with the texts, thus broadening the potential reach of the text. It helps to define

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<sup>10</sup> Parkes, 'Literacy and the Laity', pp. 555–77; Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers*, pp. 18–57; Crane, 'The Writing Lesson of 1381', pp. 202–03.

<sup>11</sup> Claire Jones, 'Discourse Communities and Medical Texts', in *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, ed. Päivi Pahta and Irma Taavitsainen, Studies in English Language, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 23–36.

<sup>12</sup> David Barton, *Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of Written Language*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), pp. 75–76.

groups of people as being connected by texts, even if they are not aware of the connection, which can explain how the same text can be used in different ways by different individuals. This model expands on the fluidity already implied in Stock's textual community, to underscore the potential for wildly diverse relationships with texts. Through this chapter and beyond, the word 'reader' will imply someone who interacts with a text in a variety of ways, from personal to group practices and including both silent and aural practices.

Unless all the annotations postdate Benet's life, it does not seem that MS 516 was intended only as a book for personal and private reading. This is not to preclude that usage: a single book could function in several ways. But the linguistic and palaeographical evidence suggests that this manuscript was affiliated with communal reading and perhaps even served as a source for discussion.<sup>13</sup> Even as textual communities became more widespread, oral practices continued throughout the middle ages. Public reading flourished in the late medieval English parish. Here, as elsewhere, even among those fully literate, reading was generally a performed and shared community experience rather than a private one.<sup>14</sup> The extent of public reading during the late middle ages has been underestimated, according to Joyce Coleman in her influential study of public reading in late medieval England and France.<sup>15</sup> Coleman argued that people preferred hearing books aloud even when they were capable of private reading, making it a popular and important social activity in late medieval England.

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew Taylor, 'Into his Secret Chamber: Reading and Privacy in Late Medieval England', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 41–61 (p. 42).

<sup>14</sup> Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Late Middle Ages* (New York, NY, and Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 53.

Although it is difficult to account for historical oral practices because they are experiential and transient by their very nature, visual representations of reading communities from late medieval England confirm that written texts were shared by reading them aloud to groups of people.<sup>16</sup>

Collective worship was a central element of the late medieval English parish, and vernacular paraliturgical texts allowed audiences to engage with liturgical and theological themes in English without attracting the ire of church authorities opposed to Wycliffe's remaining followers (after the Council of Constance declared Wycliffe a heretic).<sup>17</sup> In the late medieval English parish, group reading encompassed a rich literature of allegorical plays, poetry and prose texts, and sermons, and many concerned non-liturgical matters. According to Katherine French, parish clerks would even read aloud the churchwardens' accounts.<sup>18</sup> These examples highlight the social aspects of reading that allowed for the dissemination of written texts in the late medieval English parish, where literacy levels varied significantly. A public reading allowed for a text to be absorbed by a large number of readers or listeners.<sup>19</sup> While we cannot know which portions of MS 516 might have been deemed suitable for public discourse in the parish community, the social and cultural embeddedness of reading in the late medieval parish at least opens up the possibility that 'þe proporcions' could have been included. Benet's vocation could accordingly have expanded the circulation of this text to a wider cohort of listeners. If part of what made this text suitable for broader dissemination was its appearance in the vernacular, the

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<sup>16</sup> Wendy Scase, 'Reading Communities', in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. Elaine Trehearne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 557–73 (p. 560).

<sup>17</sup> Ellen K. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2015), p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> French, *The People of the Parish*, p. 49–52.

<sup>19</sup> Pascale Bourgain, 'The Circulation of Texts in a Manuscript Culture', in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 94 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 140–59, (p. 142).

person who deserves credit for catering to these divergent levels of literacy is the person who translated and adapted the text from the presumed Latin original. Chilston is explored further in Chapter Six. Of relevance here, ‘þe proporcions’ displays a number of features that make it particularly well suited to oral dissemination in a public forum. As discussed in Chapter Two, many of these features rendered the text instructional in nature. The path towards parish dissemination need not have involved the full participation of all the actors along the way: any one of these individuals could have had a much smaller readership in mind. The point is just that the proportion treatise in MS 516 could have been included in public discourse within certain textual communities.

Besides Benet, other members of the parish community could have been responsible for conducting a public reading of texts from MS 516. Records show that in every parish there was supposed to be a parish clerk who would be able to sing and read, who would teach those who wanted to learn. In late medieval England, there is evidence of parish clerks reading aloud administrative records to members of the parish community.<sup>20</sup> There is also documentation that they helped teach members of the parish to read the psalter and learn to sing.<sup>21</sup> In this music pedagogical capacity, a treatise on speculative music theory could have been at least discussed.

The information contained in ‘þe proporcions’ could also have entered the discourse in Harlington in a way that did not require a direct reading from MS 516. There is a possibility that Benet, interested enough to include ‘þe proporcions’ in his collection of texts, might have told members of the community about the treatise and its contents. This

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<sup>20</sup> French, *The People of the Parish*, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1969; repr. 2007), pp. 19–20.

could have enhanced his social standing, affiliating him with the Latinate world of scholasticism. In sum, the community in Harlington could have interacted with ‘þe proporcions’ in many different ways, including private reading, oral practices, group reading, and through various interlocutors. By considering the entire discourse community for ‘þe proporcions’, rather than limiting the application of this treatise to a certain kind of literate user, it is possible to conjecture significant impact from the circulation of the information contained in the treatise within the parish of Harlington.

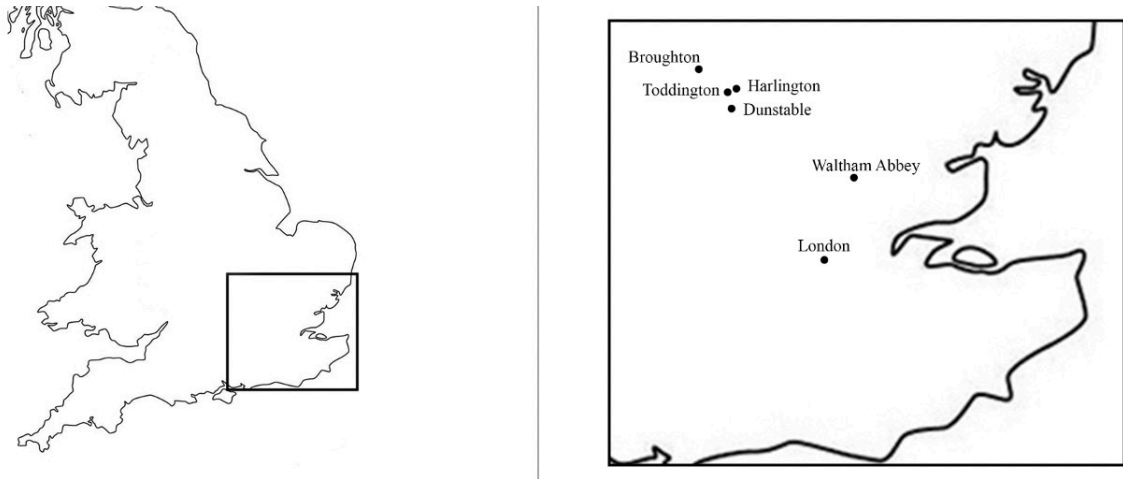
## 5.2 Beyond Harlington

For Benet to assemble the miscellaneous collection of texts that comprises MS 516, he would have needed access to a wide variety of exemplars. This section is primarily concerned with how a rural parish priest might have acquired a vernacular treatise on proportions. Two possible lines of transmission for ‘þe proporcions’ were uncovered in Chapter Two, as suggested by the textual and paratextual analysis: the source in MS 516 could have been copied from Lansdowne MS 763 or from a now-lost source.<sup>22</sup> This section delves deeper into these possible lines of transmission, considering individual people and whole communities from whom Benet might have obtained his exemplar (whether Lansdowne MS 763 or a lost exemplar), in an attempt to uncover the wider textual communities in which vernacular speculative music theory circulated in fifteenth-century England outside of centres of known scholasticism. Relatively speaking, the transmission of ‘þe proporcions’ was somewhat limited, as demonstrated in the following map, showing an arc of influence of this version of *musica speculativa*. While there is no evidence that the translation into the vernacular was done in this area, circumstantial

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 2.2.3 for a discussion of the transmission of ‘þe proporcions’.

evidence certainly suggests that this was the area in which exemplars circulated. It was, in fact, an area unusually rich in bibliographic materials.



**Map 2** The potential reach of 'þe proporcions'

### 5.2.1 A library in Dunstable priory?

The church at Harlington was granted to the priory of Dunstable by Ralph Pyrot before he took the monastic habit at the Cistercian abbey of Woburn sometime before 1195.<sup>23</sup> The exact date of this appropriation is contentious; in 1223 there was a dispute between Richard, grandson of Ralph, and the prior of Dunstable as to Ralph's right to the land. The former maintained that the land was granted after Ralph had taken the habit, therefore relinquishing his right to the land, while the prior claimed that the church was given to his priory ten years before he became a monk. The prior was successful, and Harlington remained under the control of Dunstable priory.<sup>24</sup> During Benet's incumbency, Harlington remained in the priory's possession. Indeed, it was the prior and convent of

<sup>23</sup> William Page, ed., 'Parishes: Harlington', in *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 3* (London: Victoria County History, 1912), pp. 379–82. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol3/pp379-382>> [accessed 24 May 2019]

<sup>24</sup> Page, 'Parishes: Harlington'.

Dunstable who presented Benet to his cure. Many monasteries maintained close interaction with the clergy and laity of their immediate catchment in late medieval England.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that, beyond the walls of the religious house, Benet's intellectual interests and cultural tastes were facilitated, and perhaps even determined, by the availability of books in Dunstable. However, no records of a library in the religious house in Dunstable have survived.

Dunstable priory was an important Augustinian centre in medieval England. The regular canons of Dunstable priory had an annual income of £344 in the sixteenth century, slightly above the average income of religious houses.<sup>26</sup> The priory obtained its income from its lordship of neighbouring Houghton Regis and tithes from the rectories and manors of Studham and Pulloxhill, the manors of Wadlow, Stokehammond, Gladley, Grimscote, Catesby and Shortgrave, and the rectories of Totternhoe, Harlington, Husborne Crawley, Flitwick, Segenhoe, Bradbourne, Newbottle, Pattishall and Weedon.<sup>27</sup> At the Reformation, when Henry VIII's clerks recorded the values of the lands owned by religious houses, Dunstable ranked twentieth out of 180, and most of those with more considerable resources were abbeys.<sup>28</sup> For a priory, therefore, Dunstable had a considerable income, and it would have been unusual for a religious community with such wealth to have been without a book collection of any description. Most religious houses had libraries, particularly ones as financially significant as Dunstable priory.<sup>29</sup> Where records have survived, Augustinian priory libraries appear to have been rich in

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<sup>25</sup> James G. Clark, 'Humanism and Reform in Pre-Reformation English Monasteries', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 19 (2009), 57–93 (p. 92).

<sup>26</sup> David Knowles and Richard Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1953), p. 136.

<sup>27</sup> Harriett R. Webster, ed., *The Annals of Dunstable Priory*, trans. David Presst (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), p. xi.

<sup>28</sup> Webster, *The Annals of Dunstable Priory*, p. xi.

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Gray and Chris Baggs, 'The English Parish Library: A Celebration of Diversity', *Libraries & Culture*, 35 (2000), 414–33 (p. 416).



books.<sup>30</sup> The income of Dunstable priory was comparable with other Augustinian priories.<sup>31</sup> Christchurch priory, Hampshire, Newburgh priory, Yorkshire, and Walsingham priory, Norfolk, all had similar incomes to Dunstable priory in c. 1535 and all three boasted substantial collections of books.<sup>32</sup> This circumstantial evidence suggests that Dunstable priory would probably have had a comparable collection of books. If so, it would have been the closest and easiest place from which Benet could have acquired some, if not all, of his exemplars. Records indicate that Augustinian houses allowed parochial clergy to borrow from their libraries: a comparable situation existed with the Augustinian priory at Llanthony, Monmouthshire, which allowed a vicar from an appropriated manor to borrow books from the priory.<sup>33</sup> Benet's position at Harlington was directly equivalent, suggesting that he would have been entitled to borrow books from Dunstable priory.<sup>34</sup>

The records of libraries in religious houses show that they helped develop and disseminate a range of texts in the vernacular, as well as the more expected books of sermons and liturgical books. As book production increased in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, religious library holdings also reflect a growing variety of treatises in English, including gospels, psalters, lives of saints, translations of patristic and medieval works of exegesis and doctrine, chronicles, medical tracts, poems, hymns, rules of the relevant orders, devotional material, masterpieces of English spirituality and other

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<sup>30</sup> Teresa Webber and Andrew G. Watson, eds, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 6 (London: The British Library in association with The British Academy, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*, pp. 137–82.

<sup>32</sup> Webber and Watson, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Lucas, 'Borrowing and Reference: Access to Libraries in the Late Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. I, pp. 242–62 (p. 245).

<sup>34</sup> Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II: c. 1370 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 254–55.

classics.<sup>35</sup> In 1334, Dunstable hosted the general chapter meetings of Augustinian canons of the southern province.<sup>36</sup> Meetings took place regularly and provided a viable forum in which texts might have been shared.

The documentation of vernacular books in religious environments suggests an instructional or pedagogical purpose. It is reasonable to imagine that ‘þe proporcions’ could have been one of the non-liturgical vernacular texts that circulated in religious communities. Indeed, we know that the text was also in Waltham abbey. Had Dunstable priory wished to make a copy of this pioneering vernacular translation of a text on speculative music theory—a reasonable proposition for a significant Augustinian house—the Waltham abbey copy could have been their source. Given the institutional dependence described above, Benet would have been more likely to use Dunstable as a source than to copy directly from the Waltham abbey version, although that cannot be ruled out.

### 5.2.2 An Augustinian textual community

As discussed above, textual communities shared culture and a common foundation of texts.<sup>37</sup> In medieval England, texts circulated through networks within locations and among organisations who were capable of communicating with each other.<sup>38</sup> Religious orders often facilitated the movement of texts, manuscripts and the production of materials through exchange networks.<sup>39</sup> These textual communities, in which the

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<sup>35</sup> David N. Bell, ‘The Libraries of Religious Houses in the Late Middle Ages’, in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. I, pp. 126–51, (p. 134).

<sup>36</sup> Allison D. Fizzard, ‘Shoes, Boots, Leggings, and Cloaks: The Augustinian Canons and Dress in Later Medieval England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 46 (2007), 245–62 (p. 256).

<sup>37</sup> Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, pp. 88–240.

<sup>38</sup> Bourgain, ‘The Circulation of Texts in a Manuscript Culture’, p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> Scase, ‘Reading Communities’, p. 569.

circulation of common texts occurred within constituencies that could communicate with each other, were favoured by religious orders for the exchange of texts.<sup>40</sup> There is evidence for the sharing of vernacular theological writings between houses of regular canons in the post-Arundelian period.<sup>41</sup> While there has been little research into the circulation of vernacular non-liturgical texts between communities of Augustinian canons, their congregational nature strongly suggests that there was the potential for books and texts on a variety of topics to circulate. Given the relatively recent publication of the extant library records of religious houses through the University of Oxford's 'Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues' project, there is likely to be increased interest in the reading habits of regular canons and the circulation of texts both between religious houses and between the houses and their appropriated churches.<sup>42</sup>

It is highly plausible that 'þe proporcions' circulated within an Augustinian textual community. Of the three extant copies of the text, two can be assigned to manuscripts that were connected to Augustinian communities: Waltham abbey, an important Augustinian centre, and Harlington, an appropriated parish of the Augustinian Dunstable priory. A line of transmission was conjectured for 'þe proporcions' in Chapter Two, whereby Benet copied his source from the version in Lansdowne MS 763. As demonstrated in the previous section, the connection between John Benet and the priory at Dunstable suggests that the Augustinian community there might have been a more logical path for him to follow to acquire this text. What is clear is that texts on speculative

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<sup>40</sup> Brian Stock, 'History, Literature, and Medieval Textuality', *Yale French Studies*, 70 (1986), 7–17 (p. 12).

<sup>41</sup> Niamh Patwell, 'Canons and Catechisms: The Austin Canons of South-East England and *Sacerdos Parochialis*', in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh, *Medieval Church Studies*, 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 381–93 (p. 392).

<sup>42</sup> Webber and Watson, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*.

music theory in English circulated within an Augustinian textual community in late medieval England.

### 5.2.3 Trading *musica speculativa* from London

It is hard to know what value was placed on the availability and acquisition of exemplars of texts concerning *musica speculativa*. The survival of three copies of ‘þe proporcions’ suggests that an exemplar of this text could have carried cultural capital. The centre of London provided a metropolitan context in which textual reproduction flourished, contributing to and deriving from a generous supply of exemplars on a range of subjects.<sup>43</sup> London was where most of the bigger roads of fifteenth-century England converged.<sup>44</sup> Benet likely spent some time in London, as many parts of his Latin chronicle after 1440 include entries that appear to be eye-witness accounts of events that took place there.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Benet’s manuscript suggests that he had access to polemical literature that was created and circulated in London.<sup>46</sup> While he could have spent short amounts of time in London, enough to obtain texts, it is unlikely that Benet spent any extended periods there. Priests were required to seek a dispensation for non-residence if a vicar were to reside outside his parish for an extended period. With no evidence of a dispensation and no evidence of the employment of a curate in his parish, it is doubtful that Benet spent any considerable amount of time in vibrant medieval London.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Benet frequently recorded his location as ‘Harlington’, suggesting that he did not spend much

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<sup>43</sup> Margaret Connolly, ‘Compiling the Book’, in *The Production of Books in England*, ed. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 129–49 (p. 130).

<sup>44</sup> F. M. Stenton, ‘The Road System of Medieval England’, *The Economic History Review*, 7 (1936), 1–21 (p. 1).

<sup>45</sup> John Scattergood, ‘Trinity College MS 516: A Clerical Historian’s Personal Miscellany’, in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A.S.G. Edwards*, ed. Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp. 121–31 (p. 124).

<sup>46</sup> G. L. Harriss, ‘A Fifteenth-Century Chronicle at Trinity College, Dublin’, in *Offprint from the Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 38 (1965), 213–18 (p. 217).

<sup>47</sup> G. L. Harriss and M. A. Harriss, ‘John Benet’s Chronicle for the Years 1400–1462’, in *Camden Miscellany* 24 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1972), pp. 151–233 (p. 158).

time away from his community. If Benet had spent time in Rome in 1471, as a signature within his manuscript suggested, he might have exited from the port in London and acquired some texts at that time. However, this does not tell us anything about his acquisition of 'þe proporcions' because it had been copied into his manuscript before this time.

Harlington's proximity to a variety of centres of learning and manuscript production suggests that Benet could have obtained his exemplar from London without having ever travelled there. His connection to Dunstable could have facilitated his acquisition of texts from London. During the fifteenth century, the original Roman road, Watling street, ran from London to Carlisle, passing through St Albans (another centre of manuscript production) and Dunstable and thus, would have facilitated the movement of texts between London and Dunstable.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, approximately 4km from Harlington was Toddington, a neighbouring parish. Toddington was also the home of a chapel and a hospital founded by John Broughton in 1433.<sup>49</sup> John Broughton, a known collector of books, was the patron who presented John Benet to the rectory of Broughton in 1471.<sup>50</sup> Benet might have been permitted to utilise some of Broughton's extensive book collection, part of which he kept at Toddington.<sup>51</sup> An executor of the notable Lincolnshire book-owner Sir Thomas Cumberworth in 1451, Broughton was known to have acquired books in London, and in 1462 he restored a

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<sup>48</sup> Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> William Page, ed., 'Hospitals: St John Baptist, Toddington', in *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 1* (London: Victoria County History, 1904), 402–03. *British History Online* <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/beds/vol1/pp402-403>> [accessed 21 January 2020]; Knowles and Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*, p. 399.

<sup>50</sup> Scattergood, 'Trinity College MS 516', p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> Gransden, *Historical Writing in England II*, p. 255.

register to Bury St Edmunds abbey that he bought from a London stationer.<sup>52</sup> Given his access to the capital, Broughton could have facilitated Benet's access to a wide range of texts from London without requiring Benet to leave his immediate surroundings.

### 5.3 The sustained relevance of *musica speculativa*

Chapter Two argued for the year 1468 as the *terminus post quem* for the inclusion of 'þe proporcions' in Trinity MS 516. Although Curt F. Bühler offered 1462 as the *terminus ante quem* for the compilation of Morgan MS B.12, he believed that it was compiled long before that, suggesting that the anonymous compiler transcribed 'þe proporcions' around 1425. The version of the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763 was likely created before 1450, although its chronology remains disputed.<sup>53</sup> If Bühler's early dating of Morgan MS B.12 stands, this vernacular treatise on speculative music theory circulated over a period of fifty years. While it seems likely that Benet's version of 'þe proporcions' is later than the other two known copies, the question is how much later.

Chapter One found no reason to suggest that Boethius was read widely in Oxford University before the statutes required it in 1431, and the University of Cambridge required it at an even later date. If interest in the quadrivial subjects increased as a result of the emergence of new statutes for Oxford in 1431, this suggests that it is worth considering whether MS B.12 might postdate 1431. With the Cambridge date even later, and the discovery of Benet's copy, it starts to seem reasonable to propose the 1430s as the period of the initial transmission, and perhaps translation, of 'þe proporcions', with a reduced time lag before the copies in Lansdowne MS 763 and Trinity MS 516. This is

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<sup>52</sup> A. I. Doyle and George B. Pace, 'A New Chaucer Manuscript', *PMLA* (1968), 22–34 (p. 25).

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 3.2.1 for a discussion of the chronology of the manuscripts in this study.

not to downplay the significance of sustained circulation of this text. Benet's manuscript indeed confirms that there was interest in speculative music theory well into the third quarter of the fifteenth century, which is noteworthy in light of changes in musical practice that veered away from speculative music theory.

Over the course of the fifteenth century, musical preoccupations shifted more towards polyphony and theoretical writings considered the problems encountered in counterpoint and measured music (mensural rather than arithmetic proportion). In late fifteenth-century England, the speculative music theory treatise in MS 516 would not have offered much insight into contemporary music performance, in Harlington or elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> What, then, do we make of the continued circulation of a Boethian text on speculative music theory in this community? From the late copying of this text, it is possible to gain insights into the culture of learning in this and perhaps other late medieval English parishes. Indeed, the circulation of vernacular information on proportions appears to have occurred at a time of renewed interest in Boethius' *De institutione* in English universities. In 1431, *De institutione musica* had been outlined in the statutes of Oxford; *musica speculativa* was read in Cambridge in the late fifteenth century, and the quadrivium enjoyed a renewed interest as the fifteenth century progressed.<sup>55</sup> The *studia* of the religious orders modelled their programmes of study on those of the universities. Accordingly, these institutions offered instruction in the quadrivial arts, in emulation of those provided by the universities.<sup>56</sup> Remarkably, this music theory treatise adds to the evidence for a

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<sup>54</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music [De Institutione Musica]*, trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca, Music Theory Translation Series (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. xiii.

<sup>55</sup> Ann E. Moyer, 'The *Quadrivium* and the Decline of Boethian Influence', in *New Directions in Boethian Studies*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Philip Edward Phillips, Studies in Medieval Culture, 45 (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 2007), pp. 479–517 (p. 491).

<sup>56</sup> Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen, 'The Transition of Academic Knowledge', in *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the Consolatio Philosophiae*, ed. Maarten Hoenen and Reinard Nauta, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 58 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 167–216

connection between the curriculum of the universities and the *studia* and intellectual interests in a parochial context.

Throughout the fifteenth century, the increased production of vernacular and vulgar texts on a range of scholastic subjects allowed for their consumption outside traditional academic contexts.<sup>57</sup> They tended to be adaptations and simplifications of academic works that circulated within the universities and, significantly, they were usually written in Middle English.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the treatise on vulgate *musica speculativa*, ‘þe proporcions’, allowed audiences to interact with music theory outside of traditional academic contexts. If the creation of ‘þe proporcions’ and its circulation in a rural parish during the middle decades of the fifteenth century mirrored renewed interest in Boethian *musica speculativa* in the elite academic institutions of England, this suggests a degree of intellectual parity or at least ambition hitherto unacknowledged.

If the compilation of MS B.12 moves from the 1420s to the 1430s or later, there is no reason to think that Chilston wrote the treatise before 1431. Although biographical information about Chilston is scant, information gleaned from the manuscripts in which his treatise was inscribed provides a richer picture from which to understand the impetus for the translation of speculative theories of proportions into the vernacular.

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(pp. 171–72); James G. Clark, ‘Monks and the Universities, c. 1200–1500’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, ed. Alison I. Beach and Isabelle Cochelin, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), vols I and II, pp. 1074–92 (p. 1084).

<sup>57</sup> For example, see Irma Taavitsainen and Päivi Pahta, eds, *Medical and Scientific Writing in Late Medieval English*, Studies in English Language, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>58</sup> Hoenen, ‘The Transition of Academic Knowledge’, p. 172.



## Chapter Six

### Creating ‘þe proporcions’

Musicologists have not studied Chilston’s treatise ‘þe proporcions’ in any great detail. Even though it is the earliest known treatise on *musica speculativa* in English, its importance in the history of medieval music theory has been overlooked, and the role of Chilston’s translation in the transmission of speculative music theory in England has not yet been recognised. This study has demonstrated that ‘þe proporcions’ is integral to the history of music theory. Accordingly, this chapter acknowledges that Chilston’s contribution warrants closer attention. In placing Chilston at its centre, this chapter echoes recent decentred studies that elevate ‘other’ less-known figures to reveal richer and more inclusive histories. Musicologists have questioned the hegemony of Western classical music since the late twentieth century. They argue that the elevation of Western art music has marginalised other types of music and musical experiences and processes. Even within Western art music, certain works and certain composers have been entered into the ‘canon’, while others remain peripheral or, at worse, entirely excluded. Among other musicologists, Susan McClary has called for the history of Western music to include the music of non-canonical composers.<sup>1</sup> This narrative has also excluded non-canonical theorists even though the writings of unfamiliar music theorists from medieval England have much to offer. The stories of their creation, circulation and consumption stand to tell different musical histories that, in turn, will contribute to a more complex and multifaceted narrative of music theory in medieval England than has been told hitherto.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan McClary, *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 30.

Questions surrounding the creation of the treatise are at the core of this chapter. First, I attempt to reconstruct a biography for Chilston, whose name is given in the attribution at the end of ‘þe proporcions’ in Lansdowne MS 763. No other biographical information survives. But it is possible to use the surviving treatises to speculate about Chilston’s dates, places of activity and intellectual milieu and audience. Secondly, this chapter asks the question: what might the environment in which Chilston created his treatise have looked like? I focus on Waltham abbey as an environment in which Chilston’s treatise is known to have circulated and I examine evidence for the intellectual life at the abbey. Given the fragmentary historical evidence, I construct a theoretical scenario, identifying Waltham abbey as one possible environment in which Chilston could have created his treatise. Extending Brian Stock’s notion of ‘textual community’, which is restricted to the literal audience, Sif Ríkhardsdóttir includes the imagined audiences of the author alongside the actual readers in what she calls the ‘reading community’.<sup>2</sup> While previous chapters went some way towards identifying the actual readers, this chapter focuses on Chilston’s imagined audience. Although ‘þe proporcions’ clearly derives from the Boethian tradition disseminated in music theory treatises over many centuries, I refer to Chilston as the ‘author’ in acknowledgement of the many authoritative activities, including compilation and translation, that constituted authorship in the pre-modern period.

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<sup>2</sup> Sif Ríkhardsdóttir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), p. 11–12. For more on ‘textual community’, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 88–240.

Underlying this chapter is the idea that Chilston's translation of Boethian music theory was a witness to the cultural context in which it was created and that Chilston was an agent who helped shape the wider culture. An investigation into the creation of 'þe proporcions' can offer insight into a significant time in the history of education when instructive texts were increasingly translated into vernacular languages. This development transformed the accessibility of educational opportunities. Accordingly, the final part of this chapter will consider the impact of this on educational opportunities by placing 'þe proporcions' into the wider fifteenth-century English context and questioning how authors such as Chilston challenged Latin cultural dominance through the production of English-language instructive texts.

## 6.1 Chilston: A closer examination

Although in 1927 the music scholar Jeffrey Pulver implored 'we should like to know more of Chilston', there remains surprisingly little scholarship on this early proponent of music theory in the English vernacular.<sup>3</sup> Though Pulver's high estimation for Chilston rested in part on attributions that have subsequently been discredited (and now given to Pseudo-Chilston), his assumption that Chilston's writings 'were employed in the instruction of choristers and composers for many a generation' merits further attention. It may even help to explain the relationship between the increased vernacularisation of music theory and the expansion of readership.

Beyond the attribution found at the end of the treatise in Lansdowne MS 763, little is known about Chilston.<sup>4</sup> Even if more biographical information survived, it would not be

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<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Pulver, 'Chilston', *The Musical Times*, 68 (1927), 699–701 (p. 701).

<sup>4</sup> See Ulysse Chevalier, *Répertoire des Sources Historiques du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1905), p. 906; Eric Blom, ed., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th edn, 10 vols (London: Macmillan, 1954), vol. II, pp. 214–15; Andrew Hughes, 'Chilston', in *The New Grove Dictionary of*

possible to understand all the reasons behind his redaction of what survives as the earliest known treatise on speculative music theory in English. However, new insights can be gleaned from the findings of the previous chapters. By re-examining the dates attributed to the compilation of the three manuscripts that contain ‘þe proporcions’, discovering the dialect of the texts, and identifying the communities in which the treatise circulated, it is now possible to piece together information about this important figure. What follows is an exploration of and commentary on Chilston’s dates, place of activity, social milieu and intended audience. New thinking about this early ‘music theorist’ will enable further discussion surrounding the context and conditions in which ‘þe proporcions’ might have been created.

#### 6.1.1 Dates of activity and a possible identification

Chilston’s treatise attests to his intellectual endeavours, and assigning a date to the source of ‘þe proporcions’ would, in turn, reveal his dates of activity. Although it is not possible to assign a precise date to the creation of ‘þe proporcions’ at this time, the findings in earlier chapters allow for further reflection. The textual analysis in Chapter Two concluded that it is unlikely that any one of the three extant copies of the treatise is the source of ‘þe proporcions’. Therefore, while the ‘Texts on Music in English’ (TME) database includes the three extant copies of ‘þe proporcions’ in the list of fifteenth-century texts, Chilston’s treatise was not necessarily a fifteenth-century creation.<sup>5</sup> The

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*Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 20 vols (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. IV, p. 241; Andrew Hughes, ‘Chilston’, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn, 29 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. V, pp. 625–26; Andrew Hughes, ‘Chilston’, in *Grove Music Online* <<https://doi-org.elib.tcd.ie/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.05593>> [accessed 23 November 2019]; Klaus-Jürgen Sachs, ‘Chilston’, in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik*, ed. Ludwig Finscher, 21 vols (London: Bärenreiter Kassel, 2000), vol. IV, pp. 938–39.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Lefferts, ed., ‘Texts on Music in English’, *Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University* <<http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/index.html>> [accessed 13 February 2020]

text might have been written in an earlier century and, since the information contained in the treatise dates back to ancient times, we cannot assign a *terminus post quem* by dating the contents of the text. Although 1387 is the earliest known date that has been assigned to any known writing on music in English, it is not possible to know what has since been lost and whether ‘þe proporcions’ predates even Trevisa’s writings in English.

Attempts to assign a *terminus ante quem* to Chilston’s treatise present further challenges. The Morgan Library, MS B.12 is the earliest known manuscript that contains a copy of ‘þe proporcions’. The Morgan Library’s online catalogue describes its compilation date as *c.* 1425, which could help to assign a *terminus ante quem*. However, this is all based on the presumption that the accepted dating of MS B.12 is accurate. At the end of Chapter Five, I suggested that this might be too early. If the treatise was produced in response to a resurgence of interest in the quadrivial subjects in Oxford following the 1431 statutes, Chilston’s activity is more likely to date from the fifteenth century. The emergence of technical texts in English from the late fourteenth century onwards suggests that Chilston might have been responding to an already established movement.

In the absence of the original treatise, the three copies of ‘þe proporcions’ alone cannot provide specific details of Chilston’s dates of activity. However, it is possible to connect Chilston to another manuscript, which helps to elucidate his life and likely dates of activity. Jeffrey Pulver’s article on Chilston in *The Musical Times* elicited a response in the following issue by the Irish author William Henry Grattan Flood, who suggested a possible identification for Chilston with a certain Celston, compiler of London, British

Library, Royal MS 5 A VI.<sup>6</sup> Although Grattan Flood's proposal was not picked up or discussed in any musicological discourse on Chilston, it seems worthy of consideration. In Royal MS 5 A VI, the compiler's name is given variously as Celston, Chelston and Chilston. An inscription on fol. 84<sup>v</sup> states, '*Iohannes Celston scripsit istud volume*' [John Celston wrote this volume] and gives the year 1446. The manuscript contains theological notes and elementary didactic texts, suggesting that it was a priest's manual.<sup>7</sup> Mostly Latin, the manuscript also includes some English entries in the compiler's hand. Although most of the treatises can be attributed to recognisable sources, Helen Forshaw, looking specifically at the *Speculum ecclesie*, wrote that the scribe treated his exemplars with 'great freedom'.<sup>8</sup> Such scribal creativity would indeed have been an asset, if Celston was also the author of 'þe proporcions'. In order to ascertain what can be known about this compiler, it is useful to look at the contents of Royal MS 5 A VI a little more closely.

| <b>Title/Description</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Folios</b>                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. A treatise in Latin on the duties of priests. Seventeen chapters quote various authors, including Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | fol. 2 <sup>r</sup> –13 <sup>r</sup>  |
| 2. A treatise in Latin on Christian duties. Similar in style to the first treatise. Among the authors quoted is Richard, hermit of Hampole                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | fol. 13 <sup>v</sup> –30 <sup>r</sup> |
| 3. Short theological treatises and notes<br>' <i>Regula sancti Bernardi de modo psallendi et cantandi in ecclesia</i> '<br>Memorandum on the six musical notes<br>' <i>Oratorio apolegitica [sic] sancti Ambrosii</i> '<br>' <i>Bernardus, de dignitate sacerdotum</i> '<br>Treatise without a title on the same subject as the preceding treatise, beginning ' <i>Bartholomeus in suo rosario</i> ' | fol. 30 <sup>v</sup> –37 <sup>v</sup> |

<sup>6</sup> William Henry Grattan Flood, 'Who was Chilston?', *The Musical Times*, 68 (1927), 933 (p. 933). I am grateful to Jane Alden for drawing my attention to the article by Grattan Flood and the possibility of linking Chilston to the compiler of British Library, Royal MS 5 A VI.

<sup>7</sup> Edmund of Abingdon, *Speculum Religiosorum and Speculum Ecclesie*, ed. Helen P. Forshaw (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund of Abingdon, *Speculum Religiosorum and Speculum Ecclesie*, p. 5.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 4. <i>'Speculum [ecclesie] Sancti Edmundi'</i> <sup>9</sup> (archbishop of Canterbury)                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | fol. 38 <sup>r</sup> –52 <sup>r</sup> |
| 5. <i>'Responsiones Augustini ad consulta Orosii'</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | fol. 52 <sup>v</sup> –67 <sup>v</sup> |
| 6. Treatise in Latin on the Creed and the Lord's Prayer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | fol. 68 <sup>v</sup> –78 <sup>r</sup> |
| 7. <i>'Formula honeste vite'</i> by S. Martinus, abbot of Sumia and archbishop of Braga                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | fol. 78 <sup>v</sup> –81 <sup>v</sup> |
| 8. Miscellaneous notes, including one entitled <i>'Peccata Britonum'</i> , a series of short Latin comments on English proverbial triplets, some English maxims, four English lines on the Lord's Prayer Ending with the date 1446 and the inscription <i>'Iohannes Celston scripsit istud volumen'</i> | fol. 82 <sup>r</sup> –84 <sup>v</sup> |

**Table 6.1** Contents of London, British Library, Royal MS 5 A VI<sup>10</sup>

Clearly a clergyman, some of the entries suggest that the compiler had a connection to the Augustinian order. These include the *'Responsiones Augustini ad consulta Orosii'* and *'Oratorio apolegitica [sic] sancti Ambrosii'* and the *Speculum ecclesie*. The author of the *Speculum*, Edmund of Abingdon, spent a year with Augustinian canons in Merton priory from 1213–1214 and it is believed that he wrote this text there.<sup>11</sup> Even the inclusion of the *'Regula sancti Bernardi de modo psallendi et cantandi in ecclesia'* does not refute the Augustinian connection, as the tonary was used in the elementary teaching of

<sup>9</sup> This text is identified in the British Library online catalogue as Saint Edmund's *Speculum ecclesie*. However, in her detailed study of manuscripts containing the writings of Edmund of Abingdon, Helen P. Forshaw identified the first eight chapters of the text as coming from his original *Speculum ecclesie* (this is the title by which it is commonly known but the title of the original Latin text was *Speculum religiosorum*) and the rest from a later Latin recension. For a detailed description, see Edmund of Abingdon, *Speculum Religiosorum and Speculum Ecclesie*, pp. 1, 4–5.

<sup>10</sup> British Library Online, 'Royal MS 5 A VI', in *Explore Archives and Manuscripts* <[http://searcharchives.bl.uk/IAMS\\_VU2:IAMS040-002106045](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/IAMS_VU2:IAMS040-002106045)> [accessed 26 May 2020]. Where other sources are used to supplement the library catalogue, a footnote has been included.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew of Paris, *The Life of St. Edmund*, ed. and trans. C. H. Lawrence (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996), p. 28.

Cistercian song and is found in the oldest Cistercian antiphons.<sup>12</sup> Although the tonary of Saint Bernard had little influence outside the Cistercian order, its inclusion in the manuscript does not necessarily indicate that the compiler was a Cistercian because it was included in other collections of non-Cistercian writings as a treatise on music theory.<sup>13</sup> In Royal MS 5 A VI, it is followed by a memorandum on six musical notes, which suggests that Celston might have included both for theoretical interest. The inclusion of two elementary theoretical treatises shows this compiler's interest in music theory. Furthermore, they suggest that he might have been responsible for the elementary instruction of music. As argued in Chapter Two, the pedagogical nature of 'þe proporcions' gave it value as an elementary aid to studying musical proportions.

Although far from conclusive, the circumstantial evidence supports the identification of Chilston, the author of 'þe proporcions', with Celston. In addition to providing biographical information that confirms Chilston's likely vocation, it also furthers the argument that he was a pedagogue. As well as the treatises on music theory, some of the authors quoted by Celston give Royal MS 5 A VI a quadrivial flavour: Edmund of Abingdon, a lecturer of mathematics and theology, was a proponent of Aristotelian study at both Oxford and Paris, Bernardus was a Platonist philosopher, and Bartholomaeus Anglicus created a scientific encyclopaedia. Given the fluidity of spelling in the fifteenth century, as shown in the various appellations in Royal MS 5 A VI, Celston and Chilston could easily be used interchangeably. Even while taking on board the information gleaned from Celston, I will continue to refer to this composite author as Chilston.

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<sup>12</sup> Michel Huglo, *Les Tonaires: Inventaire, Analyse, Comparaison*, Troisième Série, 2 (Paris: Société Française de Musicologie, 1971), p. 333.

<sup>13</sup> Huglo, *Les Tonaires*, p. 334.



Assuming the compiler of Royal MS 5 A VI was also the author of ‘þe proporcions’, Chilston seems likely to have been a clergyman probably connected to the Augustinian order. He appears to have had didactic responsibilities and an interest in music theory. Importantly, the identification also helps to place Chilston’s compilatory activity in the mid-fifteenth century. This supports the need for a later dating of MS B.12, discussed in Chapter Five. There, I suggested 1431 as a *terminus post quem*, based on the renewed interest in Boethius that emerged from the implementation of the statutes of Oxford, but the identification from Royal MS 5 A VI makes plausible an even later dating of MS B.12, closer to the middle of the fifteenth century. The circulation of ‘þe proporcions’ may no longer extend over fifty years, but its influence seems deeper.

#### 6.1.2 Place of activity

Although the exact place of origin for ‘þe proporcions’ is not known, the dialect of the shared material in the three extant versions helps to suggest a broad geographical area in which it might have been created. Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 were not copied from each other but were likely derived from a common source. If the original treatise had been written in a different dialect, the individual scribes could have each converted the text into the dialect of the area in which they compiled the manuscript, which would have resulted in two, or possibly three, quite distinct treatises. That is not the case, however. There is a considerable amount of shared material between Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12, suggesting that the common source from which they copied shared the same dialect. All three known versions are in a south-central East Midlands form of Middle English.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Chilston might have been active in London or the east of

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<sup>14</sup> John Scattergood, email to author, 18 February 2019.

England more generally.<sup>15</sup> As MS 516 and Lansdowne MS 763 were compiled in present-day Bedfordshire and Essex respectively, Chilston possibly created the treatise somewhere close to these areas. John Scattergood, affirming this hypothesis, wrote that ‘there is nothing about the language of the treatise that suggests that it was created in a different area’.<sup>16</sup>

There are many clues in the text that suggest the type of environment in which Chilston created ‘þe proporcions’. The didactic aspects of the text that emerged during the close textual reading in Chapter 2 suggested that Chilston created the treatise for educational purposes. The instructive tone of the treatise implies that Chilston’s role was a pedagogical one and his choice of language intimated that his learners were not sufficiently familiar with Latin to interact with the ultimate source of the text—Boethius’ *De institutione musica*. Chilston, therefore, was likely located in an environment associated with learning. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Chilston’s intended audience comprised recipients of an elite education, which would have included the study of Latin grammar. The emergence of technical texts in English as a means of increasing the accessibility of a text in non-elite environments, specifically the part played by Chilston in facilitating new learning opportunities through the creation of ‘þe proporcions’, will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

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<sup>15</sup> For a map showing the five main dialect areas in Medieval England see Christopher Given-Wilson, *An Illustrated History of Late Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 128–29. For more on Middle English dialects, see James Milroy, ‘Middle English Dialectology’, in *The Cambridge History of the English Language: 1066–1476*, ed. Norman Blake, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), vol. II, pp. 156–206.

<sup>16</sup> John Scattergood, email to author, 21 August 2018.

### 6.1.3 Intellectual milieu

There are no other known examples of treatises concerning music proportions in English from this time, and so it is likely that Chilston came to an understanding of music proportions through a Latin text. Therefore, it is probable that Chilston possessed a certain level of proficiency in Latin. In the late middle ages, knowledge of Latin was not ubiquitous, and an ability to read and comprehend Latin texts suggests two possible intellectual milieus for Chilston: a religious community or the growing class of literate laity who had acquired an education that had included the study of Latin grammar.<sup>17</sup> Two of the three extant manuscripts containing concordant copies of his treatise are associated with Augustinian communities, and Chapter Five revealed that ‘þe proporcions’ circulated in an Augustinian textual community. Furthermore, among many religious texts that were used by priests in medieval England, Royal MS 5 A VI also contains texts connected to the Augustinian order. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Chilston was a clergyman who had connections to an English Augustinian house.

For Chilston to have produced ‘þe proporcions’, he would have required access to texts on the subject. As it has not been possible to find a direct Latin source for Chilston’s text, the introduction to this chapter outlined the possibility that Chilston created a Middle English translation of Pythagorean proportions in consultation with Latin sources. By drawing attention to the chosen language of the treatise, Chilston suggests that another choice could have been made, presumably Latin, but that the reason for this treatise is to produce a translation. As Boethius’ *De institutione musica* was one of the most influential texts on music theory in medieval England and the ultimate classical source of the

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<sup>17</sup> Malcolm B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), p. 275. Originally published as ‘Literacy and the Laity’, in *Literature and Western Civilisation: The Medieval World*, ed. D. Daiches and A. K. Thorlby (London: Aldus Books, 1973), pp. 555–77.

information in Chilston's treatise, its presence could suggest locations in which Chilston could have consulted the authority while creating 'þe proporcions'. There were twenty-one houses of Augustinian nuns in medieval England and Wales, but there is no evidence that any of these nunneries possessed a single text on music theory in Latin, French or English.<sup>18</sup> There is only one known copy of any text by Boethius that was held by nuns in England (Benedictine nuns at Horton held a copy of Boethius' *De consolacione philosophiae*) and no evidence that any English nunnery owned a copy of *De institutione musica*.<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, the absence of texts on music theory might be because very little has survived from the medieval libraries in nunneries. Nonetheless, there is no record of a nun called Chilston, and therefore there is no evidence at this time to suggest that Chilston might have created 'þe proporcions' in a female house.<sup>20</sup>

From the survey of extant medieval library records undertaken in Chapter One, it emerged that three houses of Augustinian canons in England contained copies of Boethius' *De institutione musica*. Therefore, it is reasonable at present to suggest that Chilston might have been connected to one of these Augustinian abbeys. Moreover, only one was within the geographical parameters suggested by the dialectical features of 'þe proporcions': Waltham abbey. The preponderance of music theory treatises in Waltham abbey makes it a compelling location to explore further.

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher Daniell, *Atlas of Medieval Britain* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 99; David N. Bell, email to author, 29 April 2020.

<sup>19</sup> David N. Bell, email to author, 29 April 2020. See David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995) for a bibliography of manuscripts recorded in medieval religious communities. Also see David N. Bell, 'What Nuns Read: The State of the Question', in *The Culture of Medieval English Monasticism*, ed. James G. Clarke (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 113–33.

<sup>20</sup> David N. Bell, email to author, 29 April 2020.

#### 6.1.4 Chilston's audience

For medieval texts, 'audiences are born (and reborn) somewhere between authorial desire, the desires of actual historical audiences, and the cultural and linguistic possibilities that shape acts of reading'.<sup>21</sup> While the readership of MS 516, Lansdowne MS 763 and MS B.12 can tell us about the actual historical audiences, this does not necessarily denote Chilston's target audience. Theories of readership have reinforced the idea of a built-in reader for translations, whereby texts were generally translated for a particular readership and adjusted to fit either their tastes or their requirements.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, if we understand Chilston to have been a translator and if we accept his process of translation as the Latin *translatio* (translation), which was synonymous with *expositio* (interpretation), we acknowledge that 'þe proporcions' probably occurred as a result of Chilston transforming, adapting and re-shaping Boethian music theory to suit his intended readers.<sup>23</sup> This implies that the inscription of the intended audience should be within the text and it follows that when the translation is compared with the source text, omissions cannot be presumed to have been mistakes or misunderstandings. Instead, it should be considered that omissions or substantial differences, when compared to the source text, could be evidence of the way in which the translator was responding to their intended audience. It follows that the contents of the treatise and the ways that the author conveyed particular ideas stand to hold clues about the intended audience. In the absence of an 'original' text of 'þe proporcions', the challenge lies in discerning how the extant texts reflect Chilston's intended audience rather than the intended audience of the scribes of the various versions. However, the textual reading in Chapter Two uncovered shared

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<sup>21</sup> Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans, eds, *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 111.

<sup>22</sup> For example, see Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> Wogan-Browne et al., *The Idea of the Vernacular*, p. 317.

material and features across all extant examples of the treatise, which can be considered as evidence of Chilston's work and thus can offer some insight into his intended audience.

The most obvious difference between 'þe proporcions' and the many medieval copies of *De institutione musica*, and other known music theory treatises that circulated in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, was Chilston's use of Middle English. By choosing to present the information in a vernacular language, Chilston might have deemed the information in Latin to be preclusive and a barrier to his audience's engagement with the information, suggesting that his intended audience probably lacked Latin proficiency. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter One, the treatise does not include the speculative elements of Boethius' *De institutione musica*. While it presents the practical information concerned with the harmonic theory of Pythagoras, it does not present the reader with an opportunity to engage in the Neoplatonic elements of Boethius' Latin text. In Chapter One, I interpreted this omission as an intentional vulgarisation of Boethius' *De institutione musica*. Choosing to interpret it as an intentional omission rather than a deficiency of the treatise informs my speculation surrounding Chilston's intended audience. As an example of vulgate *musica speculativa*, therefore, 'þe proporcions' was probably written for a lay audience for whom the practical application of the knowledge would have been more pertinent than the speculative qualities. The textual reading in Chapter Two highlighted the instructional nature of the treatise and concluded that Chilston was probably a pedagogue and the text might have been his teaching aid. If Chilston had been based in Waltham abbey, or in a similar Augustinian context, who might he have been responsible for instructing? Why was he teaching about proportional relationships through a vernacular language? Why did he omit the speculative aspects? Accordingly, the following section investigates the intellectual

vibrancy of the community in Waltham abbey. It imagines the types of intellectual activities in an Augustinian religious house, specifically opportunities for education and learning, that could have had a bearing on Chilston's creation of this text on music proportions in English.

## **6.2 Intellectual life at Waltham abbey**

Compared to the extensive examination and evaluation of the contribution of Benedictines and Cistercians to education and learning in late medieval England, there is still much to discover about the involvement of Augustinian canons.<sup>24</sup> Even from the few studies that exist, it is clear that the order's intellectual activities lack consistency, but that is not unexpected given the largely autonomous nature of the various houses of the order.<sup>25</sup> There is only limited and sporadic evidence of the maintenance of a school in Waltham abbey and even where evidence suggests that a school existed, there are no extant records to clarify the nature of the education offered or for whom it was provided. Though some of the abbey's manuscripts remain extant, it is difficult to establish how they reflect the overall intellectual life in Waltham abbey. This section brings together historical records and information concerning the abbey in an attempt to understand the range of educational opportunities and intellectual pursuits that existed.

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<sup>24</sup> For an outline of the main works concerned with the contribution of monastic education see Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 401, 403–04, 406–07; and James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 81–91. On the contribution of the Augustinians, see Nicholas Orme, 'The Augustinian Canons and Education', in *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles*, ed. Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, *Medieval Church Studies*, 19 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 213–32.

<sup>25</sup> Orme, 'The Augustinian Canons and Education', p. 231.

### 6.2.1 Education and learning within Augustinian houses

Records show that a twelfth-century school was maintained by the secular canons of Waltham.<sup>26</sup> In his ground-breaking text on the history of education in England, A. F. Leach stated that a school was maintained at Waltham under a secular master until the fifteenth century.<sup>27</sup> However, he did not cite any sources or offer any more information about the school. As almost no documentation has survived from the intervening thirteenth and fourteenth centuries concerning the provision of education in Waltham abbey, his claim is not easily substantiated. It is possible that Leach was referring to a school within Waltham abbey for the canons. However, little is known about how the Augustinians educated within their religious communities, in comparison to the extensive knowledge relating to the Benedictines, partially because the rule of St Augustine lacks the detail that is provided by the rule of St Benedict.<sup>28</sup> Ordinances issued by the Augustinian general chapter offer some insight into what Augustinian houses were expected to provide by way of education for the canons, including one issued in 1334 that required heads of Augustinian houses to provide teachers for their monasteries.<sup>29</sup> Pope Benedict XII also issued a set of papal bulls to reform the three largest religious orders, focusing on the Augustinian canons in 1339 with the constitution entitled '*Ad decorum ecclesiae*'.<sup>30</sup> Among other issues, the constitution was concerned with the education of novices. The pope called for the careful provision of religious studies, requiring each abbey to have a master or a cloister school where the 'elementary sciences', which comprised grammar, logic, and philosophy, could be taught.<sup>31</sup> Beyond

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<sup>26</sup> William Stubbs, *The Foundation of Waltham Abbey* (Oxford: J. H. and J. Parker, 1861), p. xii.

<sup>27</sup> Arthur Francis Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England* (London: Methuen, 1915; repr. New York, NY: Barnes and Noble, 1969), p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> Orme, 'The Augustinian Canons and Education', p. 218.

<sup>29</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 269.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Hughes, *The Revolt Against the Church: Aquinas to Luther*, History of the Church Series, 3 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), p. 179.

<sup>31</sup> John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973; repr. Oxford: Routledge, 2007), p. 57; John Nelson Miner, *The Grammar Schools of Medieval England*:



these decrees, there is scant evidence relating to the practice of educating novices and young canons in Augustinian houses and whether these ordinances were observed is largely undocumented. However, there is little to suggest that the education Augustinian canons differed significantly from that of the Benedictines. Therefore, it is possible to supplement what is known with the extensive knowledge of the education of young Benedictine monks.

Child oblation died out in the twelfth century, and both the Benedictines and Cistercians banned the admittance of novices until they were eighteen years old.<sup>32</sup> Although this was not strictly adhered to, and novices continued to be accepted in their mid-teens, the offering of prepubescent children in this capacity was uncommon by the fourteenth century among all orders, including the Augustinians.<sup>33</sup> Upon admission into religious life, the recruit was clothed in a habit during a ceremony, and within months he would have taken various religious vows, before eventually making a full commitment.<sup>34</sup> The novice was then under the care of the master of novices who would teach practical matters, including the behaviour and duties required of the novice and the traditions of the house, and an in-depth study of the rule.<sup>35</sup> Scripture and pastoral care were also part of the curriculum, and the novice was usually required to learn the liturgical materials of the daily services from memory.<sup>36</sup> Just as monks were required to learn the psalms,

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A.F. Leach in *Historiographical Perspective* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), pp. 197–98.

<sup>32</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 256.

<sup>33</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, pp. 256–57.

<sup>34</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 266.

<sup>35</sup> James G. Clark, 'Monastic Education in Late Medieval England', in *The Church and Learning in Later Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of R. B. Dobson. Proceedings of the 1999 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Caroline Barron and Jenny Stratford, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, n.s., 11 (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), pp. 25–40 (p. 34).

<sup>36</sup> Susan Boynton, 'Training for the Liturgy as a Form of Monastic Education', in *Medieval Monastic Education*, ed. George Ferzoco and Carolyn Muessig (London and New York, NY: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 7–20 (p. 8).

canticles and hymns, there is evidence that the Augustinian canons of St Victor of Paris were also required to learn the same liturgical items in the same order, which suggests that the education of Augustinian novices did not differ significantly from novice monks.<sup>37</sup> Rather than differing between orders, the curriculum for novices probably varied from house to house as a result of many different factors, including the relative wealth of the religious house, the availability of suitable instructors, and the previous experiences of the recruits. For example, for Benedictine houses that recruited from their own almonry schools or from local grammar schools, it was often unnecessary to establish a formal programme of instruction in Latin grammar because during their elementary education in the associated schools the prospective monks would probably have acquired a standard necessary to engage in the daily activities of the religious house.<sup>38</sup> Extant injunctions demonstrate that, in principle, potential monks were expected to be literate in order to be received into the house.<sup>39</sup> One young boy was turned away from entering Christ Church, Canterbury, and was advised to learn reading, song, and grammar before presenting himself again.<sup>40</sup> There is no evidence detailing the educational prerequisites for entering into the Augustinian order, but it is possible that they mirrored the Benedictine requirements.

Beyond learning about the liturgy, the practical matters of the house, scripture and pastoral care, each religious house was also supposed to provide education in the trivium for members of the house, as outlined by Pope Benedict XII. There is some evidence that this was adhered to in Benedictine houses, namely St Augustine's (Canterbury),

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<sup>37</sup> Boynton, 'Training for the Liturgy', p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Clark, 'Monastic Education in Late Medieval England', p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 267.

<sup>40</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 267.

Gloucester, and St Alban's.<sup>41</sup> These houses possessed extensive collections of books, some of which were suitable for teaching, and the teaching extended far beyond the study of the religious rule and the rituals of the daily services.<sup>42</sup> According to Pope Benedict XII, the best students in monastic houses were to receive training in theology or canon law, and the bigger houses with larger numbers of monks were encouraged to send a fixed quota of its members to the universities after sufficient education within their own cloister schools.<sup>43</sup> Although this was not observed in the smaller houses, from the fourteenth century onwards, several of the greater Benedictine houses sent a steady flow of monks to the Benedictine houses of further study in Oxford.<sup>44</sup> An ordinance in 1325 also required scholars from the Augustinian order to be sent to the universities.<sup>45</sup> In the colleges that were established by and for religious communities, those who had studied within a religious house were permitted to progress directly to a higher degree, namely theology, law, or medicine, without first obtaining the fundamental arts degree.<sup>46</sup> This implies that education in the cloister schools of religious houses was considered of a standard comparable with the arts degree in the universities. The trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) together imparted the seven liberal arts of classical antiquity of which the medieval arts degree comprised. Therefore, this suggests that the education offered within some abbeys might have also included some education in the quadrivial subjects, as well as the subjects of the trivium, if members of religious communities were permitted to bypass the arts degree. In the case of Waltham abbey, that could explain the presence of Boethius' *De institutione musica* in the abbey's medieval library.

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<sup>41</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 272.

<sup>42</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, pp. 273.

<sup>43</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 270.

<sup>44</sup> Lawson and Silver, *A Social History of Education in England*, p. 57.

<sup>45</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 269.

<sup>46</sup> Lawson and Silver, *A Social History of Education in England*, p. 57.

Although there might have been opportunities for monks, and perhaps even for canons, to study music as a quadrivial subject in the religious houses, the study of music by novices appears to have been concerned primarily with the acquisition of the practical skills necessary to cope with the demands of the liturgy. The teaching of music to the novice monks was often, but by no means exclusively, in the hands of secular masters to whom novices paid fees.<sup>47</sup> The treatises on music that were included in manuscript compilations for the use of juniors and novices were almost entirely concerned with practical matters such as the rules that singers should adhere to when performing polyphony, rather than speculative music theory.<sup>48</sup> For example, the chronicler, Thomas Walsingham, a precentor at St Albans, created a music treatise as an introduction to musical notation that adhered to contemporary practice.<sup>49</sup> It was written specifically for the instruction of the junior monks at the abbey and was largely a practical book.

In the absence of evidence describing a curriculum for internal education within Waltham abbey, other religious institutions, particularly Benedictine houses, offer some insight into education and learning with religious communities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England. From the evidence, it is probable that the young canons at Waltham abbey were provided with an education that was comparable with other big religious houses: an in-depth study of the rule, texts relating to the oath of the profession, music for liturgy, scripture and pastoral care. Other instruction offered to the novices of Waltham abbey would have largely depended upon the existence of an associated secular school, where prospective canons could have acquired a knowledge of Latin grammar before entering the abbey. If such a school existed, it would have limited the necessity to

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<sup>47</sup> Clark, 'Monastic Education in Late Medieval England', p. 36.

<sup>48</sup> Boynton, 'Training for the Liturgy', p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Sylvia Federico, *The Classicist Writings of Thomas Walsingham: 'Worldly Cares' at St Albans Abbey in the Fourteenth Century* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2016), pp. 176–77.

provide instruction in grammar for the novices in the abbey. Records from the library of Waltham abbey hold more information related to the learning that took place within the religious community and contributes to the idea that there might have been a secular school affiliated with the religious community.

### 6.2.2 Library records

Despite a paucity of sources specifically relating to education and learning at Waltham abbey, an extant booklist contained in London, Newham Museum, Service MS LD PEM AD/AY 0001 provides insight into the one hundred and thirty-two texts that were held in the abbey from the late thirteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Many were the standard texts of trivial and quadrivial subjects, and others were introductory texts in theology, law, and medicine.<sup>51</sup> The list indicated that the books were assigned to various presses in different locations around the abbey, which offers clues as to who might have read and used the books. Most of them refer to *al. cl.*, which might have been in reference to *almarioli canonicorum*, suggesting that the books were available for general consultation by the canons in Waltham abbey.<sup>52</sup> Two volumes were assigned to the presses of the priors, *al(marium) p(rioris)*, and two others to the subpriors, *al(marium) supprioris*.<sup>53</sup> In his publication of the Waltham abbey booklist, Montague Rhodes James indicated that the compiler of the catalogue had attempted to classify the texts: 1–9 are biblical; 12–31 are patristic; 32 and 33 are to do with canon law; 34–37 relate to civil law; 38–60 are all concerned with philosophy and rhetoric; 61–70 are a separate division with the title ‘*De Grammatica*’;

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<sup>50</sup> Teresa Webber and Andrew G. Watson, eds, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues, 6 (London: The British Library in association with the British Academy, 1998), pp. 429–42; Montague Rhodes James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, n.s., 21 (1933), 34–46.

<sup>51</sup> Webber and Watson, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, p. 428.

<sup>52</sup> James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, p. 40.

<sup>53</sup> James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, p. 40.

71–77 are predominantly epistles; 78–85 deal with philosophy for the most part; entries 86–90 concern medicine and are grouped under the heading ‘*De Phisica*’; and 91–124 are entitled ‘*De auctoribus*’. According to James, ‘*De auctoribus*’ comprised books that might have been used in the teaching of novices.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, he suggested that this extensive collection of Latin poets could have been used as teaching resources in a school attached to the abbey but did not offer any more details of who would have received this education.<sup>55</sup>

| Book no. | Contents                            |
|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 91       | <i>Horatius novus et glossa</i>     |
| 92       | <i>Alius Horatius totus</i>         |
| 93       | <i>Juvenalis et Persius simul</i>   |
| 94       | <i>Item Juvenalis per se</i>        |
| 95       | <i>Et Persius per se</i>            |
| 96       | <i>Salustii Catalina et Jugurta</i> |
| 97       | <i>Lucanus et glosa</i>             |
| 98       | <i>Statii Theba idos</i>            |
| 99       | <i>Eneis Virgilii per se</i>        |
| 100      | <i>Bucolica et Georgica simul</i>   |
| 101      | <i>Prudentius</i>                   |
| 102      | <i>Ovidii metamorphoses</i>         |
| 103–05   | <i>Ovidius de fastis III</i>        |

<sup>54</sup> James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, p. 41.

<sup>55</sup> James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, p. 41.

|        |                                                                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 106–08 | <i>Ovidius de arte amandi III</i>                                                |
| 109    | <i>Ovidii epistole</i>                                                           |
| 110    | <i>Ovidius sine titulo</i>                                                       |
| 111    | <i>Ovidius de Ponto</i>                                                          |
| 112–13 | <i>Statius Achilleis II</i>                                                      |
| 114    | <i>Prosper</i>                                                                   |
| 115    | <i>Homerulus qui et Pindarus (the Latin Iliad so called)</i>                     |
| 116    | <i>Phis(i)ologus (probably the metrical version by Theobald)</i>                 |
| 117–18 | <i>Maximiani ijo (Elegies of Maximianus, formerly known as Cornelius Gallus)</i> |
| 119    | <i>Avianus pictus (Fables of Avianus)</i>                                        |
| 120    | <i>Et alius</i>                                                                  |
| 121    | <i>Theodolus. Cato.</i>                                                          |
| 122–24 | <i>Donati III</i>                                                                |

**Table 6.2** ‘*De auctoribus*’ as outlined in a Waltham abbey booklist<sup>56</sup>

During the twelfth-century renaissance, the practice of reading classical texts, specifically poems, became established in schools. Many classical writings that were also included in the booklist from Waltham abbey library were included in a description of an ideal school curriculum that was written in the thirteenth century.<sup>57</sup> These writings were to be read after the student had mastered the alphabet and Donatus, suggesting that some of the

<sup>56</sup> James, ‘Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries’, pp. 44–45.

<sup>57</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 97.

canons in Waltham abbey possessed a degree of Latin literacy that exceeded the basics.<sup>58</sup> However, Waltham abbey also possessed two copies of Donatus' *Ars maior*, which suggests that there was also some elementary education taking place on the grounds of the abbey.

The books listed under '*De auctoribus*' are similar to the library records of Christ Church Canterbury, which was known to have provided instruction for its novice monks in classical texts.<sup>59</sup> To enter orders in Christ Church, prospective monks were required to possess a knowledge of Latin.<sup>60</sup> Given the parallels between the book collections at Christ Church and Waltham abbey, it is possible that some degree of Latin literacy was also a prerequisite for entering orders in Waltham abbey. Moreover, the similarities between the book collections at Waltham abbey and Christ Church suggests that there might have been another type of school on the grounds of Waltham abbey. There was a school for boys at Canterbury cathedral priory, in which prospective monks likely obtained their introduction to Latin before entering Christ Church to become a monk.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, it is possible that Waltham abbey also had a similarly affiliated secular educational institution for young boys who intended to join the order when of an appropriate age. Although there are limitations to what can be discerned from the analysis of a list of texts and treatises, the particular books that were available at Waltham abbey strongly suggest the provision of some form of education. As one of the greatest Augustinian houses in medieval England, it should not be surprising that Waltham abbey offered opportunities for learning to its canons. However, by connecting the book list to Christ Church Canterbury,

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<sup>58</sup> Webber and Watson, *The Libraries of the Augustinian Canons*, pp. 429–42.

<sup>59</sup> James, 'Manuscripts from Essex Monastic Libraries', p. 41. See Montague Rhodes James, *Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).

<sup>60</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 268.

<sup>61</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 268.



there is also cause to suggest that there might have been a secular school in Waltham abbey. A thorough investigation is now required to evaluate the likelihood that Waltham abbey also supported the provision of secular education for young boys who were not yet part of the religious community.

### 6.2.3 The provision of secular education

It is possible that Leach's statement about a school in Waltham abbey was in reference to a secular school on the grounds of the abbey. Extant references to education for those external to the Augustinian order in Waltham abbey are found from the early fifteenth century onwards, and they suggest the presence of children in Waltham abbey. First, there is evidence from 1423 of a certain John Olyver, described as a 'scolemayster' of Waltham Holy Cross, which suggests that Waltham abbey provided some kind of schooling in the fifteenth century.<sup>62</sup> The record does not refer to Olyver as an Augustinian canon nor does it refer to him as having any position within the Church, which would suggest that he was a secular schoolmaster. If not a member of the religious community, the title of schoolmaster suggests that Olyver could have been a teacher in a secular schooling context that was affiliated with Waltham abbey rather than a teacher of the canons, who would have likely already completed some level of elementary education upon entering the religious house. Secondly, John Wylde, compiler of Lansdowne MS 763 is also known to have assumed some degree of pedagogical responsibility in Waltham abbey, but any attempts to understand John Wylde's role are complicated by conflicting evidence. Although the information on the flyleaf of Lansdowne MS 763 described Wylde as having been the 'precentor' of Waltham abbey, the same inscription was later copied below in black ink, but 'precentor' was replaced by 'preceptor', a term that

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<sup>62</sup> Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England*, p. 129.

traditionally denoted a teacher.<sup>63</sup> The confusion surrounding Wylde's official role possibly arose because, in addition to leading a choir and administrating the musical life of the monastery, he might have simultaneously fulfilled a teaching role. Without a proper record of his job position in Waltham abbey, it is impossible to discern whether he was a canon or secular priest and responsible for teaching young novices, or whether he was responsible for instructing lay boys in an almonry school, in which case he could have been a secular priest or layman. In any case, Wylde's creation of an anthology of musical-pedagogical texts suggests that instruction in music, for which he appears to have assumed responsibility, was taking place at Waltham abbey in the fifteenth century. His instruction, however, was not limited to practical matters; contained in his manuscript are treatises concerning music theory, of which 'þe proporcions' is one. Furthermore, as discerned in Chapter Three, the contents of Lansdowne MS 763 suggest that Wylde was responsible for instructing young boys, given his inclusion of texts specifically concerned with unchanged (unbroken) voices and his application of the gamut to the hands of boys.<sup>64</sup> Finally, an inventory of church goods taken at the dissolution of the abbey in 1540 by Sir Richard Riche shows that there was a room described as 'The Master of the Childernes Chambor', which also seems to indicate the presence of both a schoolmaster and of children in the abbey.<sup>65</sup> Collectively, these records indicate that children, probably young boys, were present in Waltham abbey at the time of its dissolution and in the early fifteenth century, which also suggests that some form of secular education was provided in Waltham abbey from the early fifteenth to the sixteenth century.

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<sup>63</sup> London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fol. 2r.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 3.2.3 for a discussion on the purpose of the manuscript.

<sup>65</sup> William Winters, *The History of the Ancient Parish of Waltham Abbey or Holy Cross* (Essex: William Winters, 1888), pp. 126, 129.

The provision of secular education in Waltham abbey was possibly linked to the Augustinians' concern for the provision of pastoral care. Although Augustinians tended to engage more closely with the wider society, Nicholas Orme has concluded that, if they were more involved with the outside world than Benedictines or Cistercians, they do not seem to have had a notably larger role in teaching and education.<sup>66</sup> However, there is evidence that Augustinian canons engaged in duties of pastoral care and came into direct contact with the world outside of their cloister walls, attempting to bridge the gap between the religious and secular spaces.<sup>67</sup> Although secular students were not permitted to partake in the kind of schooling that was reserved for novices and young monks or canons, some Augustinian houses nevertheless assumed responsibility for the education of secular students through an almonry, which was commonly found on the grounds of the religious house.<sup>68</sup> The almonry was responsible for distributing food to the poor, and from the thirteenth century, secular boys were also accommodated, for reasons of charity.<sup>69</sup> In England, the Church had acknowledged that it had a role to play in providing education for the poor as early as 1179 when the Third Lateran Council stated:

‘Since the Church of God is bound to provide for the needy [...] in order that the opportunity of reading and making progress may not be taken away from poor children, who cannot be aided by the resources of their parents, let some sufficient benefice be assigned in every cathedral church for a master who shall teach gratis the clerks of the same church and poor scholars’.<sup>70</sup>

It is difficult to determine if the decree was implemented at that time, but it shows that the Church understood that education and, in particular, reading allowed for social progress. By the late thirteenth century, statutes show that many Augustinian houses were

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<sup>66</sup> Orme, ‘The Augustinian Canons and Education’, p. 232.

<sup>67</sup> Janet Burton and Karen Stöber, eds, *The Regular Canons in the Medieval British Isles*, Medieval Church Studies, 19 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 278.

<sup>69</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 278.

<sup>70</sup> Lynn Thorndike, ‘Elementary and Secondary Education in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 15 (1940), 400–08 (p. 401).

employing grammar masters to provide elementary education for boys who were maintained in the almonries on their grounds.<sup>71</sup> Guisborough priory, an Augustinian house in Yorkshire, maintained boys out of charity and had employed a secular master to teach them by 1268.<sup>72</sup> Although initially intended for boys from the poorest sections of the community, these schools began to receive boys from a variety of backgrounds. It was hoped that many of these boys would become members of the religious community when they reached an appropriate age. They were increasingly given tasks within the religious houses, including assisting at the altar of monks or canons who were also ordained as priests.<sup>73</sup> Although the practice had been outlawed at an earlier time, the boys became indispensable assistants at masses in the fourteenth century when the number of men in religious orders fell sharply.<sup>74</sup>

Records of two ordinations documented the existence of an almonry at Waltham abbey in 1370 and 1371.<sup>75</sup> Two newly ordained acolytes and subdeacons were recorded as chanters in the almonry of Waltham abbey, suggesting that Waltham abbey had both an almonry and a chantry.<sup>76</sup> Many chantries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were associated with schools, the provisions of alms, and other similar institutions of care.<sup>77</sup> However, almonries could vary in structure and not all were responsible for keeping boys. In Roger Bower's preliminary listing, seventy-seven religious houses, mainly

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<sup>71</sup> Roger Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries, c.1265–1540', in *Monasteries and Society in Medieval Britain: Proceedings of the 1994 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Thompson, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, n.s., 6 (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1999), pp. 177–222 (p. 179).

<sup>72</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 279.

<sup>73</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 279–80.

<sup>74</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 280.

<sup>75</sup> Simon of Sudbury, *Registrum Simons de Sudbiria: Diocesis Londoniensis A.D. 1362–1375*, ed. Robert C. Fowler, Canterbury and York Society, 38, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1838), vol. II, pp. 89, 102.

<sup>76</sup> Simon of Sudbury, *Registrum Simons de Sudbiria*, vol. II, p. lii.

<sup>77</sup> Simon Roffey, *The Medieval Chantry Chapel: An Archaeology* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), p. 21.

Benedictine and Augustinian, and usually the larger houses, were identified as maintaining almonry boys.<sup>78</sup> These boys were either sent to grammar schools in local towns or the monastery employed its own secular masters to teach the boys within the almonry. While senior monks or canons assumed responsibility for much of the teaching of novices within the religious houses, there is no known instance of a monk or canon teaching grammar to almonry scholars in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England.<sup>79</sup> There is only one known case of a member of the Augustinian order doing so, in Bushmead priory, Bedfordshire.<sup>80</sup> Of the religious houses that are known to have kept almonry boys, there is evidence of an almonry school in around forty establishments.<sup>81</sup> Bowers listed no evidence of an almonry school, or even the maintenance of almonry boys, at Waltham abbey. However, he prefaced the list with the caveat that it was only an initial attempt to assemble data from what were ‘very obscure and ill-documented institutions’, suggesting that Waltham abbey’s exclusion from the list is not conclusive.<sup>82</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Singing boys at Waltham abbey

With declining numbers in religious houses throughout England, almonry boys began to assume duties related to the provision of music for services. The practice of men and a small group of boys singing a ‘lady mass’ in the lady chapel in honour of the Virgin Mary began in the secular cathedrals and the larger collegiate churches.<sup>83</sup> This spread to the more significant religious houses and by the end of the fourteenth century, churches in religious houses had expanded the duties of the almonry boys to including singing in the

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<sup>78</sup> Bowers, ‘The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries’, pp. 221–22.

<sup>79</sup> Miner, *The Grammar Schools of Medieval England*, p. 197.

<sup>80</sup> Orme, ‘The Augustinian Canons and Education’, p. 230.

<sup>81</sup> Bowers, ‘The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries’, p. 220.

<sup>82</sup> Bowers, ‘The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries’, p. 220.

<sup>83</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 281; Bowers, ‘The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries’, p. 222.

lady chapel.<sup>84</sup> Cantors were employed by the religious houses to teach singing to the almonry boys.<sup>85</sup> Religious houses tended towards the repetitive use of only four settings of the lady mass, which meant that the necessary rehearsal time, and ultimately the musical involvement of the young boys, was limited.<sup>86</sup> Unlike the boys of the secular cathedrals, the singing boys of the religious houses only took part in the music of the lady mass, and they were not referred to as choristers but as children or boys.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, their music education differed to that of the choristers of the secular cathedrals. While the singing boys would have received their main education in grammar in either an almonry school on the grounds of the religious house or a local grammar school, there is evidence that cantors also taught them the principles of improvisation and discant to provide variety to the repetitive diet of the limited chant required of the young boys.<sup>88</sup>

Bowers stated that a lady chapel choir existed in Waltham abbey at its dissolution in 1540.<sup>89</sup> While the year in which the lady chapel choir at Waltham abbey was established remains unknown, the biggest religious houses began to celebrate lady masses throughout the fourteenth century. Therefore, it is plausible that Waltham abbey followed suit. An illustration of Waltham abbey church shows that a lady chapel with a sub-vault was added around 1320–1330, which might have instigated the founding of the choir.<sup>90</sup> Although the black death caused financial problems throughout the country during the mid-fourteenth century, Waltham abbey, one of the richest Augustinian houses, could have

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<sup>84</sup> Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries', p. 208.

<sup>85</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 282.

<sup>86</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 282.

<sup>87</sup> Orme, *Medieval Schools*, p. 282.

<sup>88</sup> Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries', p. 210.

<sup>89</sup> Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries', p. 222.

<sup>90</sup> British History Online, 'Waltham Holy Cross' <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/essex/vol2/pp237-246>> [accessed 6 April 2019]

maintained a lady chapel choir throughout and following these turbulent times.<sup>91</sup> If Waltham abbey adopted the practice of other large religious houses, namely engaging young boys in the lady chapel choir, it is conceivable that young boys were present in Waltham abbey. Although there is no evidence explicitly stating the presence of an almonry school in Waltham abbey, the likelihood that young boys participated in the lady chapel choir, combined with the presence of an almonry on the grounds of the abbey, strongly suggests the presence of singing almonry boys in Waltham abbey. Whether the abbey assumed responsibility for educating the boys on-site, or whether they were affiliated with a local grammar school remains unclear. However, it is possible that their general education was conducted within the almonry, given the evidence that there was a schoolmaster in Waltham abbey in the early fifteenth century.

While it was usual for boys to be chosen to sing from an almonry school attached to the monastery or cathedral, admittedly there is also precedence for the establishment of a choir where no school existed. In Christ Church cathedral, Dublin, another Augustinian institution, a choir which included boys' voices was established in 1480. However, there was no school attached to the cathedral. Special provisions were made to feed, clothe, and teach the boys who would sing in the newly established choir. It was necessary to train the boys in the 'science of music' and to make arrangements for their sustenance.<sup>92</sup> By the sixteenth century, the boys of the cathedral studied reading, writing and grammar, in addition to music, until the age of eighteen.<sup>93</sup> In the case of Christ Church cathedral, it

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<sup>91</sup> David Knowles and Richard Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1953), pp. 137–45.

<sup>92</sup> Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church before 1800: Documents and Selected Anthems* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), p. 27.

<sup>93</sup> Boydell, *Music at Christ Church*, pp. 28, 44.

appears that a school, albeit small at first, emerged as a by-product of the choir, rather than a school providing boys for the choir, which occurred in most other religious houses.

However, in Waltham abbey, it appears likely that there was an almonry school that provided young boys to sing in the lady chapel choir, therefore indicating that there was some instruction in music for young boys. While it seems probable that the instruction was mainly concerned with preparing the boys to participate in the daily services, Bowers warned that the singing boys in lady chapels were not professionally trained, in contrast to the choristers of the secular cathedrals or the major collegiate churches.<sup>94</sup> Instead, he argued that their education was haphazard and dependent on the master in charge of the singers.<sup>95</sup> While the boys' primary role was to sing the liturgy, other information could be transmitted at the discretion of the master.

#### 6.2.5 Imagining Chilston in Waltham abbey

For the many reasons already stated, including the vernacularisation and the vulgarisation of Boethian *musica speculativa*, it seems unlikely that Chilston created his treatise for the use of a Latinate scholarly readership. If Chilston had been affiliated with Waltham abbey, it is interesting to think about the audience for whom he would have written the treatise. Waltham abbey possessed a Latin copy of Boethius' *De institutione musica*. Therefore, it was not necessary for him to create his English-language treatise for the canons if indeed Latin literacy was a prerequisite for entry into the religious community. Instead, the evidence has pointed to the existence of an almonry school that provided singing boys for the lady masses in the religious house. It is unlikely that these boys

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<sup>94</sup> Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries', p. 210.

<sup>95</sup> Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries', p. 210.



would have possessed sufficient literacy to engage directly with Boethius' writings in Latin. Furthermore, they would not have possessed the academic training necessary to engage in the speculative aspects of Boethius' text nor would they have needed to. Therefore, Chilston might have created his treatise for the instruction of singing boys.

Why Chilston would be concerned with teaching such information to his young singers is another matter. The information contained in 'þe proporcions' was not necessary for engaging in practical music-making. However, unlike the music education that was necessary for the young boy choristers of secular cathedrals and collegiate churches, the singing boys of monasteries needed to know little about the theory of music and their repertoire remained limited and repetitive. Bowers suggested that the masters in charge of the singing boys in the lady chapels would have taught the boys about other aspects of music, which could have included the musical principles of improvised discant.<sup>96</sup> This points to the provision of a less pragmatic music education for the singing boys of the almonry school than in secular cathedrals. However, it ultimately depended on the interests and expertise of the cantor in charge of their instruction. The information contained in 'þe proporcions' could have helped to explain to young boys the mathematics underpinning the rules of discant, which was within the tradition of speculative music theory. The mathematics would have been fundamental to understanding why certain musical intervals could be considered consonant and therefore, appropriate to sing. Perhaps the treatise was Chilston's attempt to explain the reasons for the rules of discant to the young singers of Waltham abbey. This would explain why Chilston did not include the philosophical concepts of Boethius' text, which were difficult to comprehend and unnecessary for the practical concerns of the singers.

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<sup>96</sup> Bowers, 'The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries', p. 210.

If Chilston had been a teacher, the instructive qualities and the overall pedagogical function of the text suggests that ‘þe proporcions’ might have supported him in this role. Chapter Two suggested that Chilston assumed the role of a pedagogue, engaging in Socratic questioning and omitting unnecessarily complicated aspects of the subject area in an attempt to provide a basic introduction to the mathematics of musical proportions. Wylde’s inclusion of Chilston’s treatise in his own manuscript could have been a respectful acknowledgement of his predecessor, or perhaps an attempt to preserve an exciting text found in Waltham abbey.

### **6.3 Transforming opportunities for learning**

Chilston acted as a conduit that bridged the gap between the Latin transmission of Greek harmonic theory and the late medieval vernacular readers of ‘þe proporcions’ in England. Through his translation, which encoded both the processes of vernacularisation and vulgarisation, non-Latinate fifteenth-century audiences in England were able to interact with aspects of ancient Pythagorean mathematics and the medieval academic tradition of *musica speculativa*. The survival of multiple versions of ‘þe proporcions’ suggests that there were multiple readerships in environments that were external to the traditional, Latinate, elite academic communities of medieval England. Although the full extent of the circulation of ‘þe proporcions’ cannot be known, evidence has emerged that suggests that the subject matter it conveys was cultivated in environments, such as an almonry school and a rural parish, not hitherto known as venues for the transmission of speculative music theory. Thus Chilston made it possible for audiences who were precluded from interacting with Latin examples of Boethian music theory to gain some knowledge of *musica speculativa*. An investigation into the circulation of ‘þe proporcions’ in Harlington (Chapter Five) and Waltham abbey (Chapter Six) has raised the possibility

that young boys and lay parishioners probably comprised some of the new discourse community for vernacular Boethian music theory.

The growth of literacy and the emergence of English-reading audiences for technical texts in late medieval England spurred the production of vernacular texts on a range of academic topics. In turn, the production of English-language texts led to a further rise in the numbers of readers of vernacular instructive texts. These interconnected developments are explained by the French literary critic Pierre Macherey's principle that the construction of new readers and new types of reading materials are both manifestations of the same social process.<sup>97</sup> According to Macherey's theory of literary production, 'readers are made by what makes the book', and 'the conditions that determine the production of the book also determine the forms of its communication'.<sup>98</sup> This theory drew on the influential work of the Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan, famous for articulating that 'the medium is the message' in the 1960s.<sup>99</sup> Although McLuhan was addressing the electronic revolution, his ideas shaped the thinking of many scholars focused on the transmission of texts in manuscript and print form, such as Walter J. Ong and Elizabeth L. Eisenstein.<sup>100</sup> Using these theories of textual reproduction, we can hypothesise that Chilston created his treatise for an audience of non-Latinate learners, and in doing so, facilitated the conveyance of music theory to new spaces and new audiences, including lay parishioners in Harlington. 'þe proporcions' may also have been used to instruct choristers in parishes that had singing boys.

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<sup>97</sup> Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, ed. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978).

<sup>98</sup> Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, p. 70.

<sup>99</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York, NY: Signet Books, 1964); See also Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York, NY: Random House, 1967).

<sup>100</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen Publishing, 1982); Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

However, it is important to keep in mind that Chilston did not simply replace the Latinate audience for Boethian music theory with an English-reading one. Neither did ‘þe proporcions’ displace Boethius’ *De institutione musica* in Latinate environments, as evidenced by the continued presence of the Latin treatise in the libraries of religious houses at the time of their dissolution and the university statutes that outline the requirement for English university students to continue to read the Latin *De institutione musica* throughout the fifteenth century. Chilston’s role was instead to take theories from Boethius’s *De institutione musica* and present them in the vernacular, thereby allowing music pedagogy to gain some traction in cultural spaces beyond the preserve of the ecclesiastical and academic elites. Chilston’s redaction expanded the potential audience for Boethian music theory, and transformed the opportunities for non-Latinate, English-reading lay learners to interact, via Boethius, with ancient Greek knowledge.

Although the extremely limited survival of music theory treatises from fifteenth-century England necessitated adopting a microhistorical approach to understand both the creation and the circulation of ‘þe proporcions’, in this final section, it is useful to also do the reverse—namely, to look at this treatise in the context of other developments in the use of the vernacular. Chilston’s translation was not made in a linguistic vacuum but was instead part of a cultural shift in late medieval England that supported the emergence of pedagogical texts in the vernacular. These texts both embody the spirit of the time while also bearing witness to the lineage that preceded them. The translation of Latin texts into Middle English, and the widespread vulgarisation of scholarly texts, allowed for lay participation in, and ultimately appropriation of, Latin academic discourse. To augment the translation of the proportions treatise, Chilston provided Latin terminology and English explanations. This provides crucial evidence of his intended reading community,

and the pedagogical role he assumed. Chilston's presentation of 'þe proporcions' can be viewed alongside other texts apparently intended to increase the accessibility of knowledge and learning for lay readers. Similar initiatives were undertaken by no less a figure than Geoffrey Chaucer, whose treatise on the astrolabe translates a technical text from Latin into English in order to render it comprehensible to a young audience.

Dating to 1391 and considered to be the oldest work in English about an elaborate scientific instrument, Chaucer dedicated his treatise to 'Lytel Lowys my sone' [Little Lewis, my son].<sup>101</sup> In the preface, he explicitly states that he wrote it in simple English because the child's Latin was not good enough to understand the existing Latin treatises on the astrolabe. Chaucer evidently thought it worthwhile to remind his reader that it was difficult for a child to understand complex Latin sentences; he asserted that technical texts intended for young readers should be simplified and taught in English. Chaucer also found it necessary to note that the facts were the same in English as in Latin and, therefore, his translations communicated the same ideas as the numerous Latin treatises on the subject. Chaucer's advocacy for translations making technical texts accessible to those who were more comfortable reading in English than in Latin no doubt contributed to the flourishing of explanatory texts in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Chilston did not state his reasons as bluntly as Chaucer, but his *incipit* makes clear that the treatise was intended to explain mathematical concepts in English, and to render the Latin terminology associated with this subject accessible to English-reading audiences.

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<sup>101</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, ed. Andrew Edmund Brae (Harvard, CT: J.R. Smith, 1852), pp. 19–21.

Arguably the greatest of Middle English prose translators of Latin texts, Trevisa's only original works were a brief introduction and dedicatory epistle to the *Polychronicon*.<sup>102</sup> The *Dialogus inter dominum et clericum* acts as a preface to the *Polychronicon* and offers a justification for undertaking the translation of well-known Latin material.<sup>103</sup> A fictional representation of the moment when Trevisa's patron, Sir Thomas Berkeley, requested the translation from his vicar, the *Dialogus* dramatises the debate that was then taking place regarding increased production of traditional Latin texts in English. The disputation is between *dominus*, who argues that translation allows greater readership, and *clericus*, who argues against translation. Contending that those who would want or need to read a work such as the *Polychronicon* could use the Latin version, *clericus* advocates retaining Latin, thereby the Latinate community, and the religious community of intellectual capital.<sup>104</sup> *Dominus* counters that a wider audience could be reached through translation into English, which in turn spreads information without the necessity for clerical intermediaries.<sup>105</sup> The ensuing history of English translations supports what Ralph Hanna has described as 'the removal of any Latin linguistic screen between the lay reader and authoritative materials'.<sup>106</sup> Trevisa's translations marked a significant step towards the increased provision of English-language texts.<sup>107</sup> The lack of biographical information about Chilton makes it impossible to know if he was specifically familiar with any of Trevisa's translations, but it seems clear he was responding to Trevisa's championing of the need to translate technical texts for lay readers. Although the ability of the vernacular

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<sup>102</sup> Fiona Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 62–63.

<sup>103</sup> A. S. G. Edwards, 'John Trevisa', in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards, pp. 117–26 (p. 120); Ronald Waldron, 'John Trevisa and the Use of English', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74 (1988), 171–202 (pp. 172–73).

<sup>104</sup> Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*, p. 64.

<sup>105</sup> Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*, p. 64.

<sup>106</sup> Ralph Hanna, 'Sir Thomas Berkeley and His Patronage', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), 878–916, p. 898.

<sup>107</sup> Traugott Lawler, 'On the Properties of John Trevisa's Major Translations', *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 14 (1983), 267–88 (p. 288).

to provide universal access to knowledge was only theoretical, a vernacular translation made a text potentially accessible to every person who could read English and, through those readers, it could be shared with an even wider audience of listeners.<sup>108</sup> Late medieval England saw the emergence of a range of instructive and professional texts in Middle English and a transformation in English audiences. It is time for musicology to look closer at examples of vernacular music theory to understand how their circulation affected the audience for music theory.

Through this chapter, we have come to acknowledge Chilston's integral part in the history of *musica speculativa*, and his creation of 'þe proporcions' has been shown to be part of a narrative surrounding the mobility of *musica speculativa* that encourages a broader conception of what music theory meant to medieval audiences. This allows for other readers and users, other ways of reading and understanding, and other contexts in which music theory circulated to be considered as part of the history of theory, which is only beginning to include peripheral voices that existed alongside the elite centres of music and learning. As more stories are considered, and more voices are heard, the history of theory will become richer, more problematic, and ultimately better capable of conveying the complexity that existed in late medieval England.

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<sup>108</sup> Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience*, p. 5.

## Conclusion

John Benet was uninhibited by disciplinary barriers in his creation of the miscellaneous MS 516. It therefore seemed appropriate for me to approach ‘þe proporcions’ from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing from a range of disciplines to shed light on the earliest example of a speculative music theory treatise in Middle English. Medieval musicology, the history of music theory, manuscript studies, medieval ecclesiastical history, literary studies, translation studies, the history of the book, philology (both ‘old’ and ‘new’), mobility studies and the history of education have all played their part.

This dissertation asserts the need to expand the prevailing understanding of the places where speculative music theory circulated in late medieval England. The survival of three versions of ‘þe proporcions’ attests to the circulation of this treatise outside of Latinate communities. Given its philosophical importance and place within the traditional quadrivial formation, Boethian *musica speculativa* has long been associated with religious houses and universities in England, and there is no doubt that it was studied by clergymen and students educated in Latin. But ‘þe proporcions’ proves that *musica speculativa* was not the sole preserve of Latinate communities. This research not only uncovers new milieux in which engagement with music theory may have taken place in fifteenth-century England, but it also accounts for some of the ways in which music theory seems to have circulated among and between communities.

While previous research has tended to concentrate on the Latin treatises that circulated within and among formal institutions of learning, MS 516 provides a crucial and hitherto unstudied witness to the readership for vernacular speculative music theory in a rural



parish. There are significant ramifications in recognising this locale as an environment conducive to scholasticism. It is time to reject the view that late medieval parish priests were ignorant and disinterested in intellectual endeavours. As this dissertation shows, it was possible for a fifteenth-century rural vicar to pursue and share interests in a range of intellectual areas. It is also clear that such a person had the financial means and network connections to be able to compile a diverse and intellectually significant miscellany. While Benet may have included ‘þe proporcions’ in his miscellany for personal edification, the survival of three copies of this treatise suggests that, in fifteenth-century England, *musica speculativa* was a subject discussed among a growing class of lay readers.

The possibility of identifying Chilston as the compiler of Royal MS 5 A VI adds important information to his biography and supports the theory that he was a pedagogue. Chilston seems to anticipate a new and potentially inexperienced audience, adopting the role of educator in his codification of ‘þe proporcions’. Had he been writing for a scholarly audience, he would almost certainly have used Latin, a language in which he would have been trained as part of his clerical vocation. The vernacularisation of ‘þe proporcions’, and its survival in three different manuscript contexts, is evidence of a wish to engage with non-Latinate readers. In these efforts, Chilston followed the growing trend to create a range of technical and didactic texts in Middle English.

The inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in Benet’s miscellany indicates the penetration of *musica speculativa* into at least one rural community. As discussed in Chapter Three, it also suggests potential circulation among young boys in Waltham abbey. By shining a light on Waltham abbey, Dunstable, Toddington, Broughton, and most of all Harlington,

this dissertation decentres the history of theory away from major institutions, piecing together a new narrative that accounts for vernacular speculative music theory in rural medieval England. This new narrative has significant implications for the composite manuscript Lansdowne MS 763. A reassessment of this manuscript is long overdue, and a microhistorical approach would be productive for this and The Morgan Library, MS B.12. While individual treatises from these manuscripts have been discussed, neither manuscript has yet been considered within wider cultural or intellectual contexts as composite entities. Widely recognised as a rare testament to music education in fifteenth-century England, Lansdowne MS 763 offers a range of insights into the place of speculative music theory in pedagogical practices within religious institutions. While a proportion treatise might seem a natural fit for MS B.12, a scientific-mathematic anthology in the quadrivial tradition, the inclusion of ‘þe proporcions’ in Middle English also places this manuscript into a less scholarly pedagogical context.

The survival of multiple copies of ‘þe proporcions’ is witness to the authority that Boethius held in England throughout the fifteenth century, including among non-Latinate readers and educators. While the circulation of this treatise seems to have been shorter than the fifty years suggested by Bühler’s early dating of MS B.12, its three-fold appearance in a relatively limited geographical area suggests a deep influence.

The close examination of one part of one fifteenth-century manuscript causes a knock-on effect that can be far-reaching. The discovery of ‘þe proporcions’ in MS 516 not only impacts the earlier versions of this treatise, but it also invites renewed attention to be paid to all extant English manuscripts that contain examples of vernacular music theory. Considerations of readership impact the ways we might analyse the production and

circulation of individual treatises. Mapping the sites of engagement with and around music theory leads to a richer understanding of its potential reach.

Vernacular music theory texts have their own important history. The circumstances in which they were copied and produced have much to tell us about the role of music theory in communities outside of ecclesiastical centres and other sites of Latin learning. The cultural spaces in which vernacular music theory existed inevitably differ from Latinate places of learning, yet the university has hitherto dominated discussions of the sites of quadrivial learning in medieval England. Vernacular texts brought knowledge outside of elite institutions; these texts act as witnesses to the intellectual lives of non-elite communities. At a time when scholars across many disciplines are attempting to identify a common theory of vernacular use and practice in medieval England, it is essential that music theory is included in discussions of vernacular culture.

## Appendix I

### Textual comparison of related copies of ‘þe proporcions’

| <b>Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516, fols 129<sup>r</sup>–31<sup>v</sup> <sup>1</sup></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763, fols 117<sup>r</sup>–22<sup>v</sup> <sup>2</sup></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12, 63<sup>r</sup>–68<sup>v</sup> <sup>3</sup></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>fol. 129<sup>r</sup></b><br/> Incipiunt proporcionones discantis in lingua materna</p> <p>Her ye schall of þe proporcions mor openly knowynge haue after myn vnderstandynge schale declare them to you. But for the names þerof be mor conuenyent and mor schortly set yn latyn then þey wold be yn englysshe, þerfor y schall let þe names of</p> | <p><b>fol. 117<sup>r</sup></b><br/> Here beginneth Tretises diuerse of musical proporcions. And of theire naturis. and denominacions. Ferst in englissh. and than in latyne.</p> <p>NOW passid al maner sightis of Descant and with him wel replesshid. yt natural appetite not saturate sufficientli but feruentli desirthe mo musical conclusions as nou in</p> | <p><b>fol. 63<sup>r</sup></b><br/> For ye schul of your proporciouns the more vndirstondynge haue aftir my symple vndirstandynge .Y. schal declare it yow. But for the names of hem be more conuenient. and more schortly sett in latyn than they wolde be in Englisch. therfore y schal leue alle the names of hem standynge stille in latyn. and schortly declare hem to yow in englich.</p> |

<sup>1</sup> Transcription by John Scattergood

<sup>2</sup> Transcription by Peter Lefferts, ed., ‘Texts on Music in English’, *Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University* <<http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/index.html>> [accessed 13 February 2020]

<sup>3</sup> Transcription by Peter Lefferts, ed., ‘Texts on Music in English’, *Center for the History of Music Theory and Literature, Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University* <<http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tme/index.html>> [accessed 13 February 2020]

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| <p>thaym stond style in latyn, and as schortly as y kan declare hem to þe in englysshe.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>special of Proporcions and of them to haue plein informacion. of the whch after myn vnderstonding ye shal haue opin declaracion. But for as moche as the namys of hem be more conuenientli and compendiusli sette in latin than in englissh therfor the namys of hem shal stonde stille in latin. and as breueli as I can declare the naturis of them in englissh.</p>                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>ffirst ye schall al understond that proporcioun ys a comparisoun of ij things be enchesoun of noumbre oper of quantyte, lyke oper onlyke, eyþer to oper, so þat proporcioun ys saide in ij maner wyse, that ys equalitatis &amp; inequalitatis. Proporcioun of equalyte ys when ij euen thingys be lykned or set togeder in comparisoun, as 2 to 2, or 4 to 4, &amp; so. Proporcioun of vnalyce ys when the mor thinge ys set in comparisoun</p> | <p>Ferst ye shal vnderstonde that proporcion is a Comparison of .2o. thinges be enchesoun of numbir. or of quantite. like. or vnlike eythir to othir so that proporcion is seide in 2o. maner of wyse scilicet Equalitatis and Inequalitatis [.2tem. proportionem scilicet equalitatis. et inequalitatis in marg.]</p> <p>Proporcion of Equalite is whan .2o. euyn thingis be likenyd eythir sette togedir in Comparison as .2o. to .2o. or .4. to .4. and so</p> | <p>Prima proporcio</p> <p>Ferst ye schul vnderstande. that proporcioun is a comparisoun of .2. (underlined in red) thyngis be enchesoun of numbre or of quantite. lyk or vnlyk eythir to othir. So that proporcioun is seyde .2. (underlined in red) manir of wysis that is Equalitatis and inequalitatis.</p> <p>Proporcio equalitatis. (something written in</p> |

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| <p>to þe lesse oþer þe lesse to þe more, as 2 to 4, [or 4 to] 2 [or] 3, 5 or 5, 3. And þis proporcioun of vnalyce<sup>4</sup></p> <p>hath 5 spyces or 5 kyndes of proporcioun wich names be thys in general, multiplex superparciens.</p> | <p>of othir. Proporcion of Inequalite. is whan the more thinge is sette in Comparison to the lasse or the lasse to the more. as .2o. to .4. or .4. to .2o. or .3e. to .5e. or 5e. to .3e. And this proporcion of Inequalite hathe 5 spicis or naturis or keendis. whois namys be these in general [5e. genera nominum porcionum in marg.] [.1. supra lin.] Multiplex [.2. supra lin.] Superparticularis [.3. supra lin.] Superparciens [.4. supra lin.] Multiplex superparticularis [.5. supra lin.] Multiplex superparciens</p> | <p>red beside this. Looks like no equalitatis but not sure what the ‘n’ really is)</p> <p>Proporcioun of equalite is whanne .2. euen thyngis be likind or sett togedre in comparisoun as .2. to .2. .4. to .4. .6. to .6. (all underlined in one continuous red stroke) and of all other Proporcioun of inequalite is. whanne the more thyng is set in comparisoun to the lesse. or the lesse to the more as .2. to .4. .4. to .2. .3. to .5. .5. to .3. and so of all. And this proporcioun inequalite hath .5. spycis or .5. kyndis of proporcioun. Whos names be these in general. Multiplex. Superparticularis. Superparciens. Multiplex superparticularis.</p> <p><b>fol. 63v</b></p> <p>Multiplex superparciens.</p> |
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<sup>4</sup> Amended to vn[equ]alyte

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| <p>The first spyce o[r] kynde of vnalyce ys called multiplex, þat ys to sey manyfold &amp; þat is when þe more noumbre conteyneth the lesse 2 tymes &amp; þen yt is called dupla in speciall [id est] 2fold as to 1 to 2 or 4 to 2 6 to 3 and so furth endelesly. Yf þe more noumbre conteyn thryse þe lesse, þen yt is called in speciall Tripla as 3 to 1, 6 to 2, 9 to 3. And yt be 4 tymes þe lesse conteyneth in þe more þen yt is Quadrupla, as 4 to 1, 8 to 2, 12 to 3, and so furth: Quintupla, sexdupla Sepdupla, Ocdupla, &amp; so furth vpward endelesly.</p> | <p>The ferst spice eythir keende of Inequalite is callid Multiplex. that is<br/><b>fol. 117<sup>v</sup></b><br/>to sey Manifolde. and that is whan the more numbir. conteynythe the lasse manyfolde. as twies .1. and that is callid in special Dupla id est tweyfold. as .2. to .1. or 4. to .2. or 6. to .3. and so forthe endlesli Yyf the more numbir conteyne thries the lasse. than it is callid in Special. Tripla. as .3. to .1. 6. to .2. 9. to .3. Yyf it be .4. times the lasse conteynid in the more than it is Quadrupla. as .4. to .1. 8. to .2. 12. to .3. and so forthe Qvindupla. Sexdupla. Sepdupla. Ocdupla. and so vpward endlessly.</p> | <p>The firste spyce or kynde of inequalite is clepid. Multiplex. that is to sey manyfold as twyis .1. it is clepid in special. dupla. that is to sey toofold. as .2. to .1. .4. to .2. 6. to .3. and foorth with owten ende. And yf the more noumbre conteyne thryis the lesse. thanne is it clepid in special tripla. as .3. to .1. .6. to .2. .9. to .3. Yf it be foure tymis the lesse conteynid in the more. thanne is it clepid. quadrupla. as .4. to .1. .8. to .2. .12. to .3. and so foorth. quintupla. sextupla. ottupla. And so vpward euere endelesly. with owten ende.</p> |
| <p>As for þe oþer kyndes 3e schall vnderstond þat þer be ij maner parties: on ys called Aliquota &amp; anoþer [non] Aliquota. Aliquota ys when ony party be any maner</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>As for othir keendis ye shal vnderstonde. that ther be .2. maner of Parties. one is callid Aliquota and another is callid. Non aliquota Pars aliquota is whan that partie be ony</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>As for othir kyndis that ther be ye schul vndirstande that ther be tweyne manir of partyis the ferste is named pars aliquota. [aliquota in marg.] the othir is pars non</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <p>multiplicacioun 3eldeth hys holde, as when between hys hole</p> <p><b>fol. 129<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>and hem ys proporcioun iijde. As an vnite [is] pars aliquota of euery noumbre, ffor by multiplicacioun of yt euery noumbre wexis to oþer a dvualite. Thys pars aliquota of euery euen noumbre &amp; þus thys party schal be named in special after þe noumbre be whom he ys multiplied &amp; 3eldyth [h]ys holde. For yf he 3ilde be multiplicacioun of ij than he ys calde altera [id est] halfe, &amp; he 3elde his hold by multiplicacioun of iij than he ys calde tertia þat ys the iijde party. Exemplum: 2 ys tertia of 6, &amp; 3 of 9, 4 of 12. And yf he 3elde his hole by multiplicacioun of 4 þan yt is calde quarta, as 2 to [8] for 4 times 2 is 8. And yf he 3ilde his hole by multiplicacioun of 5 þen yt is calde quinta, of 6 sexta &amp; so furth endelesly.</p> | <p>maner of multiplicacion yeldithe his hole. as whanne betwene his hole and him is. proporcio Multiplex. As a vnite is Pars aliquota of euery numbir For be multiplicacion of that euery numbir wexith and tweyne. or dualite is pars aliquota of euery evyn numbir and thus this partye shal be namyd in special after the numbir on whom he is multiplid and yeldithe his hole. For yf he yeldethe his hole be multiplicacion. of .2. it is callid altera id est halfe. And yyf he yeldithe his hole. be multiplicacion of .3. it is callid Tercia id est the thirde parte. Sequitur exemplum. 2o. is the thirde parte of .6. and .3. of .9. and .4. of .12. And yf he yeldith his multiplicacion be .4. than is callid Quarta as .2o. for .8te. for .4. tymys .2o. is .8te. And yf it yeldith his hole be multiplicacion of .5. than it is callid</p> | <p>aliquota. Pars aliquota is whanne that partye. be any manir of multiplicacioun yeldith his hole. as whanne betwene his hole and hym. is proporcio multiplex. As an vnite is pars aliquota of euery noumbre. for be multiplicacioun of that. euery noumbre [encesit del.] encresit And as tweyne in dualite is pars aliquota of euery euene noumbre in this partye schal be namid in special aftir the noumbre be whom he is multiplyid</p> <p><b>fol. 64<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>and yeldith his hole. for if he yelde hole be multipl[i]cacioun of .2. thenne is he callid in special altera id est half. And if he yelde his hole be multiplicacioun of .3. thanne is he callid thus. tertia. id est thridde. there exemplum. .2. est tertia pars .6. et .3. of .9. .4. of .12. and if he yelde his hole be multiplicacioun of .4. thanne is he callid</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Qvinta. An of .6. Sexta. and so forthe endlesli.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | quarta as .2. of .8. for foure tymis .2. is .8. And if be multiplicacioun of .5. is callid quinta. of .6. sexta. and so foorth with owten ende.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Pars non aliquota is when þat party by no maner of multiplicacioun may 3elde his hole, as 2 is a party of 5, but he ys non aliquota, for howe so euere he be multiplyd he maketh not euere 5, for yf he be take twyse yt maketh 4 & yf he be taken thryse he passeth & make 6. | Pars non aliquota. is whan that party be no maner of multiplicacion may yelde his hole. As .2o. is a parte of .5. but he is non aliquota. For hou so euer he be multiplid he makithe not euyn .5. For yf ye take [him supra lin.] twies it makithe <b>fol. 118<sup>r</sup></b> but .4. And yf ye take him thries he passithe and makithe .6. | Pars non aliquota.<br><br>Pars non aliquota is whanne that the partye be no manir of multiplicacioun may yelde the hole. as .2. is a partye of .5. but be not aliquota for how so euer he be multiplyd he makith not .5. euen. for if he take him twyis it makith but .4. And if he take him thryis. he passith .5. and makith .6. |
| Proporcioun superparticularis ys when þe more nowmbre conteyneth the lesse, & more ouer a party of hym þat is aliquota, schall þat proporcioun be named in speciall as bytwene vj and 4 is proporcioun sesqui per                                                              | Proporcio superparticularis. is whan the more numbir conteynyth the lasse. and more ouer a party of him that is Aliquota and aftir the special name of that parties Aliquota. shal that proporcion be namyd in special. As                                                                                                                   | De superpartulari.<br><br>Proporcio superparticularis. is whanne the more noumbre contenith the lasse. and more ouer a partye of him that is aliquota. and                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <p>altera. Sesqui in Grewe is as much to sey as totum</p> | <p>betwene .6. and .4. is proporcio<br/> Sesquealtera. [exemplum et exposicionem de sesquealtera in marg.] Ses. in grew id est totum in latin. al in englisshe. so<br/> Sesquealtera is for to sey. al. and halfe. For the [more supra lin.] numbir conteynyth al the lasse. and halfe therof more ouer.<br/> Betwene .8. and .6. is proporcio<br/> Sesquetercia. For the more numbir conteynyth the lasse. and his 3de. parte ouer.<br/> Betwene .10. and 8te. is Sessequarta.<br/> Betwene .12. and .10. is Sesquequinta.<br/> Betwene [.14. supra lin.] and .12. is Sesquesexta. et sic infinite.</p> | <p>affir the special name of that partye aliquota. schal that proporcioun be namid in special.<br/> as betwene .6. and .4. that is proporcio<br/> sesquealtera and that is in grw. as moche to say. as totum in latyn id est al in Englysch. so that sesquealtera is as moch say as al and half. for the more<br/> <b>fol. 64<sup>v</sup></b><br/> nOMBRE conteynith the lasse and half ouer. Moreouer. betwene .8. and .6. is<br/> porporcioun sesquetercia for the more<br/> nOMBRE conteynith the lasse and his thridde [and his thridde bis] part ouer. Also<br/> betwene. 10. and .8. sessequarta. betwene .12. and .10. sesquequinta. betwene .14. and .12. sesquesexta et sic sine fine.</p> |
|                                                           | <p>Proporcio superparciens. is whan the more numbir conteynythe the lasse. and more ouer the which excesse eyther superplu3 it not</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Proporcio superparciens. is whanne the more nOMBRE conteynith the lasse. and more ouer the which excesse or supplus is pars</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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|  | <p>pars Aliquota of the lasse numbir As betwene .5. and .3. But than thu must loke to that excesse. whan the more numbir passithe the lasse. and deuyde it into sweche parties that be aliquota. And loke hou many ther be therof. and what is her special namys. and whether they be .3e. 4te. or .5te. and so forthe. And yf ther be .2o. parties Aliquote than thu shalt sey in special Superbiparciens. and yf ther be 3 Supertriparciens. and yf ther be .4. Superquartiparciens and so forthe.</p> | <p>aliquota of the lasse noubre. as .5. and .3. but thanne ye moste loke to that excesse whanne be the more noubre passith the lasse. and diuide it into swych partyes that be aliquote of the lasse and loke how many ther be therof. and what ben here special names. whether they be. tercie. quarte. or quinte. and so foorth. And if ther be .2. partyis aliquote. thanne ye schail sey in special. superbiparciens. And if ther be .3. supertriparciens. And if ther be .4. superquartiparciens. et sic vlterius.</p> |
|  | <p>And ferthermore tho parties that be .tercie. than thu shalt sey alwey atte last ende. .tercias. And yf thei be .4te. .quartas. and so forthe endlesli. Sequitur exemplum. Betwene .5. and .3. is proporcio superbiparciens tercias. for the more numbir conteynyth the lasse. and .2o. parties ouer</p>                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>More ouer if that tho partyis be tercie. thanne schul ye put al that at the laste ende as tercias. [illeg. in marg.] if thay be quarte. quartas. and so foorth endelesly. Exemplum. betwen .5. and .3. is proporcio superbiparciens tercias. for the more noubre contenith the lasse and .2. partyis</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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|  | <p>that be .tercie. But they bothe togedir be not pars aliquota. of the lasse numbir.</p> <p><b>fol. 118<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>Betwene .7. and .5. is Superbiparciens quintas. Betwene .7. and .3. is [Superquartiparciens tercias. del.] [dupla sesquetercias in marg. m. sec.] Betwene .9. and .5. is Superquartiparciens quintas. Betwene .10. and .6. is. Superbiparciens .tercias. And loke ye take goode hede. that ye deuyde the excesse into the grettest partyes aliquotas that ye may. as here in this last ensample .4. is deuydid into .2o. dualiteis that beene .tercie. of six. And take this for a general rwle. that the same proporcion [that supra lin.] is betwene .2o. smale numbris. the same is betwene here doubles and treblis and quatreblis and quiniblis and so forthe endlesly Sequitur exemplum. The same proporcion. that is</p> | <p>ouer. that be tercie and they be togedre but not pars aliquota of</p> <p><b>fol. 65<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>the lasse noubre. Between .7. and .5. superbiparciens quintas. Also .7. and .3. superquartiparciens tercias. More ouer .9. ad .5. superquartiparciens quintas. Also .10. and .6. superb[i]parciens tercias. And loke ye take good hede. that ye diuide the excesse. into the grettest partyis aliquotas that ye mowe. as here in this laste ensauple .4. is diuidid into .2. dualiteis. that be tercie of .6. And tak this for a general rule. that the proporcioun that is betwene .2. smale noumbres that same is betwene hem. dubblis. and treblis. quatreblis. and quinyblis. and so foorth endelesly. Exemplum. the same that is betwene .5. and .3. is betwene .10. and .6. 20. and .12. .40. and .24. .80 and .48. and so foorth.</p> |
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|  | <p>betwene .5. and .3. is betwene 10. and 6.<br/> betwene .20. and 12. betwene 40. and 24.<br/> betwene 80. and 48. and so forthe endlesli.</p>                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|  | <p>Multiplex superparticularis. is whan the more numbir conteynythe the lasse. and a partye of him that is Aliquota. as .5. and .20. is Dupla sesquealtera. And so is .10. and .4. And so is .20. and 8te. But .7. and .3. is Dupla sesque .tercia. And so is .14. and 6.</p>        | <p>Multiplex superp[articularis]</p> <p>Multiplex superparticularis. is whanne the more contenith the lasse. and a partye of him that is aliquota. as .5. and .2. est dupla sesquealtera. and so is .10. and .4. .20. and .8. .7. and .3. est dupla sesquetercia. and so is .14. and .6.</p> |
|  | <p>Multiplex superparciens. is whan the more numbir conteynyth the lasse and the parties that be ouer Aliquote. But thei alle togedir be not one parte Aliquota . As .8te. and .3. is Dupla superbiparciens tercias. And so is .16. and 6 . 32. and 12. Secuntur denominationes.</p> | <p>Multiplex superparciens.</p> <p>Multiplex superparciens. is whanne the noumbre contenith the lasse and partyis ouer that ben aliquote. but tho alle togedre be not on partye aliquota. as .8. and .3. is dupla superbiparciens tercias. and so is .16. and .6.</p>                        |

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|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | .32. and .12.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|  | <p><b>fol. 120<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>Thus ouerpassid the rwlis of Proporcions and of their Denominacions. nou shal ye vnderstonde that as Proporcion as a Comparison betwene diuerse quantiteis oythir numbris. So is Proporcionalitas a Comparison eythir a likenes be .2o. Proporcions in .3re. diuerse quantiteis at te last. the whech quantiteis or numbris been callid the Termis of that proporcionalite. And whan the ferst terme. passithe the .2de. than [it supra lin.] is callid the ferst excesse. And whan the .2de. terme passith the thirde. than it is callid the .2de. excesse.</p> <p>So ther be .3e. maner of Proporcionalitees scilicet Geometrica. Arithmetrica. and Armonica.</p> | <p>Alia regula.</p> <p>But ye schul vndirstande. that as proporcoun is a comparisoun betweyne diuerse quantiteis or</p> <p><b>fol. 65<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>noumbris. So is proporcionalitas a comparysoun or a lyknesse betwene .2. proporcious in .3. diuerse quantiteis at the leste. the whoch quantiteis or noumbris be callid the termis of that proporcionalite. and that whanne be the firste terme passith the secunde it is callid the firste excesse. And whanne that be the secunde terme passith the thridde it is the secunde excesse. Thanne be ther .3. manir proporcionalites id est Geometrica. Arsmetrica. et Armonica.</p> |

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| <p>betwene the ij &amp; the iijde. When al proporciouns byn like as bytewen 8, 4, 2 is proporciounalite geometrica, for proporcioun dupla is the first &amp; so is the ijde, 9, 6, 4 sesqui altera, 12, 9 sesqui tercia, 25, 26, 16 is sesqui quarta, 36, 38, 24 sesqui quinta &amp; so furth vpward euere[la]s[t]yng.</p> <p>Thy noumbre of difference byn [id est] the noumbre of difference the excesse as al ouere &amp; when the first nowmbre or terrme passeth the seconde or the seconde þe iijde after the lesse excesse or difference that</p> | <p>Proporcionalitas. Geometrica is whan the same Proporcion is betwen the ferst terme. and the .2de. that is betwene the .2e. and the .3de. Whan al tho Proporcions be like. As betwene .8.4.2. is proporcionalitas. Geometrica. For proporcio Dupla is the ferst. And so is the .2de. 9. to .6. 6. to .4. sesquealtera. 16. to .12. 12. to .9. sesquetercia. 25 to .10. and 10 to .16. sesque quarta. 36 to .30. 30 to .25 sesque quinta. and so forthe vpward encresing the noumbir of difference be one.</p> <p>The noumbir of difference. and the excesse is all one. Whan the ferst numbir eythir terme passith the .2de. eythir the .2de. the .3de. than aftir the lasse excesse or difference shal that Proporcion be callid</p> | <p>Geometrica proporcionalitas is. whanne the same proporcioun is betwene the ferste terme and the seconde. that is betwene the seconde and the thridde id est whanne alle the proporciouns be lyk as betwene .8. and .4. and .2. that is proporcionalitas geometrice. for proporcio dupla is the ferste. And so is the secunde .9. and .6. and .4. sesquealtera. .16. and .12. and .9. sesquetercia. .24. and .20. and .16. sesquequarta. .36. and .30. and .24. sesquequinta. and foorth upward encresyng thi [noumbre] of differe[n]ce be on.</p> <p>the noumbre of difference and the excesse is al on. id est whanne be the ferste noumbre or terme passith the secunde. or the secunde the thridde. And aftir the lasse excesse. or difference. schal that proporcioun be clepid</p> |

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| <p>proporcioun schall be calde both the first &amp; the ijde, as 9, 6 the laste difference is most pars aliquota that his name by ij ys called the seconde or altera part then to the excesse [o]uer difference ouer</p> <p><b>fol. 130<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>vnto more &amp; that is the more difference &amp; the ij ptoporcons be then called both sesqui altera. Then take the more nowmbre of the iij termes &amp; encrese a nowmbyr abouten with the more difference that was before &amp; haste þou 9 &amp; 12 whose difference ys 3. Encrese then the more nowmbre by ij &amp; on once more by 8 then hast þou 16 so that there be 3, 9, 12, 16 in proporciounalite geometrica wherof bothe proporciouns be called sesquiseptima, sesquioctaua, sesquinona, sesquidecima, sesquiundecima 35 42 49 56 64 72 81 98 110 144 6 7 8 9 10 11 12.</p> | <p>bothe the ferst and the .2de. As .9.6.4. the lasse difference is .2o. and Aliquota that is namyd be .2o. is callid the .2de. or Altera. Put than to the excesse or difference one vnite more and that. that is the more difference. and tho tweyn Proporcions be than bothe Icallid</p> <p><b>fol. 121<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>Sesquealtera. Than take the most numbir of. tho .3. termys. and encrese a noumbir aboue with the more difference that was before than hast thu .9. and 12. whois difference is .3. Encrese than the more numbir be .3. and one vnite scilicet be .4. than hast thu .16. so here be .3.9.12.16. in proporcionalite. Geometrica. Wherof bothe Proporcions be callid Sesquetercia. aftir the lesse difference. Werk thus forthe endlesli and thu shalt fynde the same. sesque sexta. sesque</p> | <p>bothe the ferste and the secunde. as .9.6.4. the lasse difference</p> <p><b>fol. 66<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>is .2. and pars aliquota that is namid be .2. is callid the secunde or altera. put thanne to that excesse. or difference on vnite more and that is the more difference and tho too proporciouns be thanne bothe namid sesquealtera. Thanne take the moste noumbre of tho thre termis. and encrece a noumbre aboue with the more difference that was before. thanne hast thow .9. and .12. whos difference is .3. Encrece thanne the more noumbre be .3. and on vnite more id est be .4. thanne hast thu .16. so here be thre .9.12.16. in proporcione geometrica whethir of bothe proporciouns be [be bis] callid sesquetercia aftir the lasse difference. Werke thus foorth endelesly and thu schalt fynde the same. as sesquequinta.</p> |
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | septima. sesque octaua. sesque .nona. sesque decima. sesque undecima.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | sesquesepta. sesqueseptima. sesqueottaua. sesquenona. sesquedecima. sesqueundecima et sic vltorius.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Aneother rewle generall to fynde this proporciounalite þat is called geometrica ys thys. Take þou whych ij nowmbres þat thou wylt þat ben inmediate & þat on passeth þat other but by on vnite, multiplie that one by þat other & euerylke one be himself & þou schall haue iij termes in proporciounalite geometrica & eyther proporcioun schall be named in generall superparticularis be þe lesse nowmbre of the ij that þou toke firste. Example: iij & iiij, multiplye 3 by hym selfe & þat makyth 9, multipli 3 by 4 & þat makyth 12, mulyplie 4 by him selfe & þat makyth 16. Then þou haste this iij, 9, 12, 16, in proporciounalite geometrica & thus þou | Anothir general rwle to fynde this proporcionalite that is callid Geometrica is this. Take wech 2o. numbris that thou wilt. that be immediate. and that one that passith the othir be one vnite. Multiplie the one be the othir. and euerych be himselfe. and thou shalt haue .3e. termys in proporcionalite geometrica. and eyther proporcion shal be namyd in genere superparticularis. be the lasse numbir of tho .2o. that thou toke first. exemplum. As .3. 4. Multiplie .3. be himselfe and it makyth .9. Multiplie .3. be .4. and it makith .12. Multiplie .4. be himselfe and it makith .16. Than thus thou hast .3.9.12.16. in proporcionalite geometrica. and thus thou shalt fynde the | Anothir general rule to fynde the proporcionalite that is callid geometrica is this. tak whoche .2 noumbres that thou wilt that be immediat id est that on passith the tothir but be an vnite. multiplie the toon be the tothir and euerych be hymself and thou schal haue thre<br><b>fol. 66<sup>v</sup></b><br>termis in proporcionalite geometrica that eythir proporcioun schal be namid in genere superparticularis be the lasse noumbre of tho tweyne that thou took first exemplum .3.4. multiplie .3. be .3. himself and that makith .9. multiplie .3. be .4. and it makith .12. multiplie .4. be himself and it makith .16. thanne thou hast thas thre .9.12.16. in |

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| <p>schalte fynde the same but 4 nowmbrys þat þou take immediate.</p> <p>&amp; take this for a generall rewle in this maner proporciounalite þat þe mydil terme multiplied by hym selfe ys neythere more ne lesse þan the 2 extremiteis byn multiplid ylkon by other, as 12 be multiplied by hym selfe is 12 tymes 12, 144 &amp; so ys 9 tymes 16 or [1]6 tymes 9, þat ys al on. &amp; this rewle fayleth not of thys maner proporciounalite in no kynde of proporcioun, assay who so wyle.</p> | <p>same what .2o. numbris immediate that euer thu take.</p> <p>And take this for a general rwle in this maner proporcionalite that the medil terme multiplied be himselfe is neyther more ne lesse than the .2o. extremitis be. eche multiplied be othir Exemplum. As .12. multiplied be himselfe is 12 tymes 12. that is 144 And so is .9. tymes .16.</p> <p><b>fol. 121<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>or 15 tymys 9. that is al one. And this rwle faylith neuer of this maner proporcionalite in no maner of kende of proporcion. Asay whoso wil.</p> | <p>proporcionalite geometrica. And thus thu scalt fynde the same of what two noumbrys immediat that euer thu take. And take this for a general rule. in this manir proporcionalite that the middil terme y multiplyid be himself. is no more ne lasse than two extremitis y multiplyid eche be othir. as .12. multiplyid be himself id est .12. tymes .12. is .144. and so is .9. tymes .16. or .16. tymes .9. al that is on. and this rule faylith not of this manir proporcionalite in no kynde of proporcioun y warant.</p> |
| <p>Proporcionalitas arsmetrica is when t[h]e difference or the</p> <p><b>fol. 130<sup>v</sup></b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>Proporcionalitas. Arithmetrica. is Whan the difference or the excesse be like id est Whan the more numbir passithe the .2de. as moche as the .2de. passith the .3de. and so forthe. yf</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>De Arsmetrica proporcione</p> <p>Proportionalitas Arsmetrica is. whanne the differens. or the excessis be lik id est</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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| <p>excesse byn like [id est] when þe more nowmbre passyth þe secunde by as mykil as tho ijde passeth the iijde &amp; so furthe yf ther [be] moo termes than iij. Exemplum: 6, 4 &amp; 2. The first excesse or difference ys 2 bytwene 6 &amp; 4 so ys the ijde bytween 4 &amp; 2.</p>                                                                                                                         | <p>ther be mo termis than 3e. exemplum. 6.4.2. The first excesse or difference is .2o. betwene .6. and .4. and thus the 2de. betwene .4. and .2.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>whanne the more noumbre passith the secunde be as moch as the secunde passith the thridde and so foorth if ther be mo termis. thanne per exemplum .6.4. and .2. the first excesse or difference is.</p> <p><b>fol. 67<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>.2. between .6. and .4. And so is the secunde betwene .4. and .2. assay ho so wele.</p>                                        |
| <p>Proporciounalitas armonica ys when the[r] ys the same proporcioun bytwene the first excesse or difference &amp; the ijde þat ys bytwene the first terme &amp; the iijde Exemplum: 12, 8, 6. &amp; the first difference by twene 12 &amp; 8, 4, the secunde difference bytwene 8 &amp; 6 [is] 2 then the same proporcioun ys by twene 4 &amp; 2 that ys bytwene 12 &amp; 6 eyther ys proporcioun dupla.</p> | <p>Proporcionalitas Armonica. is Whan ther is the same proporcion betwene [the supra lin.] ferst excesse or difference and the 2de that is betwene the ferst terme and the thirde exemplum .12.8.6. Here the firste difference. betwene .12. and .8te. is .4. the 2de. betwene .8te. and .6. is .2o. than the same proporcion is betwene .4. and .2o. that is betwene .12 and .6. for eythir is proporcio dupla</p> | <p>Armonica</p> <p>Proporcionalitas Armonica is. whanne ther is the same proporcioun betwene the ferste excesse or difference. and the secunde that is betwene the ferste terme and the thridde exemplum .12.8.6. here is the ferste difference betwene .12. and .8. is .2. the secunde betwene .8. and .6. is .2. thanne the same proporcioun is betwene .4. and .2. that</p> |

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| The 3 proporcioniunalytes be calde<br>mediatates, þat is for to sey middelest, they<br>haue this names Geometrica, Arsmetrica,<br>Armonica. For the maner of tretynge of<br>scientis, Geometrice tretith length and brede<br>of londe; Arsmetryk of mornesse & lessenes<br>of nowmbre; Musyke of highnesse & of<br>lownesse acorde of voyse. Then when þou<br>biddest me [g]yf the a myddil bytween ij<br>nowmbres, then may I aske the what maner<br>of mydil þou wilt haue & efter that schall be<br>dyuersyte of myn ansure. For the noumbres<br>mowe be refferre[d to] length & brede of<br>erth or of othere mesure þat longeth to<br>geometrye, or they may be considered as<br>they be nomebred in thaym self & so yt<br>longeth to Arsmetryk, or they may be | These .3. proporcionalitees Boys callith<br>medietates. id est midlis. and thei haue thes<br>namis Geometrica Arithmetrica. Armonica.<br>As for the maner of tretynge of thees .3.<br>scientis Gemetrye tretith of lengthe and<br>brede of londe. Arithmetrike of morenes and<br>acorde. and the lasnes of numbir Musike of<br>the highnes and lounesse of voyse. Than<br>whan thu biddist me yefe the a. middle<br>betwene .2o. numbris .I. may aske the What<br>maner of midle? thu wilt haue. and afir that<br>shal be the diuersite of myn answe. For the<br>numbris may be referrid to lengthe and<br>brede of Erthe or of othir mesour that<br>longith to Gemetrie. Eythir thei may be<br>considerid as they be numbir in hemselfe. | De tribus predictis<br><br>For these proporcionaliteis. Boys. namith<br>medietates id est middlis. and they haue<br>these namis. Geometrica. Arsmetrica.<br>Armonica. For the manir of trefynge of these<br>.3. scientis. Gemetrye tretith of lengthe and<br>brede of londe. Arsmetryk tretith of the<br>morenesse and lassenesse of noumbre.<br>Musyke. of acorde hynesse. and lowenesse.<br>of voys<br><br>Thanne whanne thu biddist me yiue the a<br>middil betwene .2. noumbis. y may aske the<br>what manir of middil thu wilt haue. and afir<br>that schal be the diuersite of myn answe.<br>for the noumbis mowe be referrid to<br>lengthe and bridde of erthe or of other |

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| <p>refferred to longth &amp; schortnesse &amp; mesure of muscally instrumentys that causen highnes &amp; lowness of voys &amp; yt belongeth to Armony &amp; to crafte of musyke.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>and so they long to Arithmetrike. Eythir thei may be referrid to lengthe and shortnesse</p> <p><b>fol. 122<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>and mesure of musical Instrumentis the whech cause highnesse and lownesse of voyse and so thei longe to Armonye and to crafte of Musike.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        | <p><b>fol. 67<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>mesuris that longith to geometrye. or [they add. sup. lin.] mowe be considerid as they be noumbrys in hemself and so it longith to arsmetryk. Or they mowe be referrid to lengthe or schortnesse. or mesure of musical instrumentis. that causith hynesse and lownesse of voys. and so it longith to Armonye. and to craft of musyk.</p>                                                                                |
| <p>Exemplum of þe firste [id est] of Geometrie: 9 &amp; 4. Yf þou aske me whiche ys the medill be Geometrie y sey 6, &amp; þat for thys skillys: yf ther were a place þat were [9] fote longe &amp; 4 fote brode then then by Geometrye yt were 36 square foot. Then</p> <p><b>fol. 131<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>yf þou bad me yif the[r be] a body or another place þat were euene square, þat ys called quadratum Aquilaterum, wheryn were</p> | <p>Exemplum of the first id est Gemetrye Of .9. and .4. yf thu aske me whech is the medle be Gemetrye .I. sey .6. for this skille. Yf here were a place of 9. fote long. and .4. fote brode. be Gemetrie that were 36. fote square. than yf thu bad me yeve the a bodi. or another place that were euyn square that is callid Quadratum equilaterum Wherein [were supra lin.] neythir more space ne lesse than is in the former place that was first</p> | <p><i>(Exemplum in margin)</i> Exemplum of the ferste id est geometrye .9. and .4. if thu aske me whoche is the middil be geometrye. y sey .6. and for this skil. yf here ware a place that ware .9. feet long and .4. feet of brede. that be geometrye were .36. square feet. Thanne if thu bidde me yiue the a body or an othir place that were euene square that is callid quadratum equilaterum wher in whauere nothir mor space ne lasse than is in</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>neyther more space ne lesse than in that forme place þat was first assigned, than I muste abate of þe length of that forme place and eke a mykyl hys brede so þat yt be no lenger then yt is brode, þat thus be proporcioun so þat the same proporcioun between the lengh of the forme bodye &amp; a syde of the seconde þat is bytween þe same side &amp; brede of þe first body &amp; than hast þou þe mydil between þe length [&amp;] the brode of the first body euery place and by þat mydill a place 4square ys euere therto as yn thys ensample þat was fyrste assyned [id est] 9 &amp; 4, 6 ys the medil &amp; as many fete ben in a body or a place þat ys euyn 4square 6 fete as in that a[s] is 9 fete longe &amp; 4 fete brode [id est] 36 in both.</p> | <p>assignyd. than must thu abate of the lengthe of the formere place. and eke as moche his brede. so that it be no lenger than it is brode. that must be. by proporcion so that the same proporcion be. betwene the lengthe of the former bodi. and a syde of the .2de. that is betwene the same side and the brede of the ferst bodi. and than hast thu the medil betwene the lengthe and the brede of the ferst bodi or place. and be that medle .a. place .4. square that is euyn therto. As in this ensauple that was ferst assignyd .9. and .4. and .6. is the medil. And as many fote is in a bodi. or a place that is euyn .4. square .6 fote. as in that. that is .9. fote longe. and .4. fote brode id est 36 in bothe.</p> | <p>that formir place that was ferst assynid thanne mose y avate of the lengthe of that formir place. and eche as moche his brede. so that it be no lengere than it is brode that moste be by proporcioun. so that the same proporcioun be bytwene the lengthe of the formere body. and a syde of the secunde that is betwene that same syde and the brede of the ferste body. and thanne hast thu the middil</p> <p><b>fol. 68<sup>r</sup></b></p> <p>betwene the lengthe and the brede of the ferste body or place. and be that middil a place .4. squar that is euene ther to. as in this exsauple that was ferste assynid id est .9. and .4. .6. is the middil and as many feet is in a body or a place that is euene .4. square .6. feet. as is in that that is .9. feet longe and .4. feet brode id est .36. in bothe.</p> |
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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The seconde proporciounalyte ys opyn. Why? It is called the medil by arsmetryke the whiche tretith of morenesse &amp; lessnesse of nowmbre in as mykil þat the nowmbre passeth the seconde by as mykil as the ijde the iijde. As by nowmbre no lesse passyth 12, 9, than 9 dose 6, &amp; therfor 9 is medium ars metricum.</p>                                                                     | <p>The .2de. Proporcionalite is opin. Why? it is callid the medil be Arithmetrike. the whech tretyth of mornesse. and lasnes of numbir inasmoche as the more numbir passith the .2de. be as moche. as the .2de. passith the .3de. Neythir more ne lesse passith .12.9. than .9. passith .6. and therefore .9. is medium<br/><b>fol. 122<sup>v</sup></b><br/>Arithmeticum.</p>                             | <p>Arsmetrica proporcio.</p> <p>The secunde propocionalite is opin. Why it is callid the middil be arsmetryk the whoche tretith of morenese and lassenesse of noumbis in as moche that the more noum[bre] passith the secunde. be as moche as the secunde the thridde. as be no more ne lasse passith .12.9. thanne .9. doth .6. and therefore .9. is namid medium arsmetricum.</p> |
| <p>The iijde proporcioun is called Armonica or a middill by armonie, for this ilke diapasoun þat is proporcioun dupla þat is most perfyte acorde after the vnisoun bytwene the extremytes of that diapasoun treble &amp; tenor will be gevyn a medil þat is called a mene, the which mene is diapente [id est] sesquialtera to þe tenour &amp; diapasoun diatesseroun [id est] sesquitercia to þe</p> | <p>The .3de. Proporcionalite. is callid Armonica. or a medil be Armonye for this skille. Dyapason that is proporcio .2la. is the most perfite acorde afir the Vnisoun betwene the extremyteis of the Dyapason id est the Trebil. And the Tenor wil be yeue a mydle that is callid the Mene the which is callid .a. Dyapente id est sesquealtera. to the tenor. and Dyatessaron id est sesquetercia to</p> | <p>Armonica proporcio</p> <p>The thridde proporcionalite is namid armonica or a middil be armonye for this skil. Diapason. that proporcio dupla. is the most perfyte acord afir the Vnisoun. be the extremitis of that diapasoun id est treble and tenor wil be yeue a middil. and that is callid a mene. the whoche is diapente id est</p>                                         |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>trebyll. Therfor þat Armonie of medill is called Armonica medietas.</p> <p>Exemplum of thys. A pype vj fete longeth whiche ys competent brede ys a tenour to diapasoun to a pype of iij with hys</p> <p><b>fol. 131<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>competent brede. Than is a pype of iiij fete a mene to thaym, diatasseroun to þat one &amp; diapente to þat other, as þou schalt fynde more plenarly of the makynge of the monacord þat is calde the instrument of pleyn songe. But this suffyseth for to haue knowynge of þe proporciouns.</p> | <p>the treble. Therfor that maner of mydle is callid Medietas Armonica. Sequitur exemplum. A. pipe of .6. foote longe with his competent brede is a Tenor in Dyapason. to a pipe of .3. fote with his competent brede. than is a pipe of .4. fote the Mene to hem tweyne. Dyatessaron to the one. and Diapente to the othir. As thu shalt fynde more pleynli in the makynge of the Monacorde. that is callid the Instrument of plainsong the which Monacorde. is the ferst trefte in the begynnyng of this boke. But this sufficith for knowleche of Proporciouns.</p> | <p>sesquialtera to the tenor and dyatessaron id est sesquitercia to the treble. therefore that manir of</p> <p><b>fol. 68<sup>v</sup></b></p> <p>middil is clepid Armonica medietas.</p> <p>Ensaumple of this. take a pype of .6. feet length with his competent brede. and it is a tenor in dyapason. to a pype of .3. feete with his competent brede. Thanne is a pype of .4. feet lengthe. the mene to hem tweyne.</p> <p>dyatessaron to the toon. and diapente to the tothir. as thu schalt fynde more pleynly in the makynge of the monochorde. that is callid the instrument of pleynsonge. But this suffysith y now for knowlechyng of the manir of proporciouns.</p> |
| <p>Perfectio longarum constat in longis longarum in breuibis breuium quattuor in</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |



|                                                                                           |                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| semebreuium quattuorque minimis probatio<br>semper constat in semibreuib. C. <sup>5</sup> |                     |                 |
| Explicit                                                                                  | Secundum. Chilston. | Explicit. Amen. |

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<sup>5</sup> The final symbol was interpreted as a number 6 by Peter Lefferts

## Appendix II

### Biographical records of John Benet

#### Biographical Registers of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge

Alfred B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), vol. I, p. 166

Benet, John (Benett). Litchfield, Hants. Winchester Coll., scholar, adm. 1409; New Coll., scholar, adm. 5 Apr. 1414 [Win. Coll. Reg. Prim., p. 11; New Coll. Lib. Alb., fos. 20v, 109; Kirbym p. 35]  
Died 1 May 1415

Benet, John. Merton Coll., portionist in 1420–21 [Merton. Coll. Rec. 4570].

Benet, John. Exeter diocese. Ord. subdn. To the title of Rewley abbey, Oxford, 20 Mar. 1423; dcn. 3 Apr. 1423; pr. 29 May 1423, to the same title [Reg. Commune, Lacy, Ex., fos. 523,524,524<sup>v</sup>; ex inform. Rev. G. R. Dunstan]

Benet, John (Benett). Monk, Benedictine, Worchester Cath. priory by 1470.  
Gloucester Coll., scholar in 1482. His name notes down as a scholar at Oxford on a flyleaf of Worc. Cath. MS. F. 118 [J. K. Floyer and S. G. Hamilton, *Cat. MSS. Of Worc. Cath. Libr.* (Worcs. Hist. Soc.), p. 60]. Joined with mag. Th. Reve (q.v.) in depositing Bodl. Libr., MS. Auct. D, infra 2.4 (S.C. 4089): a Latin Bible, in the Chichele chest as caution for a loan 1482.

Ord. acol. 17 Mar. 1470; subdn. 19 Dec. 1472; pr. 5 mar. 1474 [Reg. Carpenter, Worc., I and ii]

Benet, John (Bener). Monk, Cluniac. Montacute priory, Somt.

B.Th., probably of Oxford.

Prior of Montacute in 1449; res. 1452 with pension [Reg. Bekynton, bath & Wells (Somt. Rec. Soc.), i. 114; *C. Pap. L.* x. 125].

Alfred B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 54

Benet, — (Benett). Master of Grammar (M.Gram), inc., 1481–82 [CUGBk A; 165; CUA, CUR. I.2.54]

Benet, *alias* Chestrie, John (Beneth). Coventry and Lichfield diocese. Master of Arts (M.A.); Scholar of Canon Law (Sch.Cn.L.) by 1366. Rector of Upwell, Norfolk by 1370

till death; included in University roll for papal graces as petitioner for an additional incompatible benefice 1370, and granted canonry and prebend of Southwell, later changed to a benefice in gift by the bishop and chapter of Lichfield, 28 January 1371. [J. Lloyd, in *BIHR*, xx (1944), 79; CUL Add. MS 7207 (Lloyd Collns: Reg. Avin. 181, fol. 147)]. Died 1374. Will dated 15 June 1374; proved 13 July 1374 [Norf. & Norw. Archives Centre, Norw. Consist. Reg. of Wills, 44 Heydon].

Benett, John (Benet). Lincoln. Eton College. King's scholar administered c. 1453; vacated 1457 [Sterry, 31]; King's College, scholar, administered 1457, fellow, 1461; vacated 1468–1469; conduct, 1466–1469 [King's College Muniments, Clarke's Year-list, I, fols 122–286 *passim*; *ibid.* Inv. fol. 72]. Questionist, admitted 1460–1461; Master of Arts (M.A.), inc. 1467; entered the *Sentences* 1474–1475 [CUGBk A, 26, 59, 104]; Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) Ordained deacon 28 March 1472; prior 13 March 1473 [Reg. Rotherdam, Linc, xxi, fols 134, 137<sup>v</sup>]. Vicar of Ware, Hertfordshire, admitted 8 October 1476; exchanged September 1480 [Reg. Th. Kempe, London, fols 158<sup>v</sup>, 180<sup>v</sup>; Newcourt, i. 903]; rector of Saint Margaret's, Lothbury, London, admitted 2 September 1480; till death [Reg. Th. Kempe, London, fol. 180<sup>v</sup>; Reg. Savage, London, fol. 27; Hennessy, 279]. Died by July 1498. Will dated 6<sup>th</sup> December 1497; proved 9 June 1498 (GL, London, Commy Ct of London Reg. of Wills, 161 Harvey]. Bequeathed one-third of his goods to Eton College and one-third to King's College. Gave King's College a silver censer, 2 chasubles of blue satin of Bruges, and 4 altar-cloths of blue worsted 'ymbroderd'.

To be distinguished from Magister John Benet, rector of Ditchingham, Norfolk, admitted 1454; till death [Reg. Goldwell, Norw., fols 30, 309]; Blomefield, x. 134]; rector of Monk Soham, Suffolk, till death [Reg. Goldwell, fol. 1<sup>v</sup>]; died by August 1473.

Benett, John (Benet). Questionist, administered 23 March 1471; forfeited caution for failing to determine 1473 [CUGBk A, 83, 94, 108; CUA, CUR, I.2.38].

### **Lincoln Cathedral Records**

Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Archives of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, A.2.32, fol. 126<sup>v</sup>; A.2.33, fol. 45<sup>r</sup>

Evidence of a vicar choral in Lincoln Minster from 1437 to 1441 who was named John Benet. Cited by Roger Bowers, 'Music and Worship to 1640', in *A History of Lincoln Minster*, ed. Dorothy Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 47–76 (p. 56).

### **Calendar of Patent Rolls (Cal. Pat. Rolls)**

Henry VI, 5 vols (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1907), vol. III: 1436–1446, p. 221

John Benet, chaplain, was presented to the church of Northcotes, Lincoln on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1438

## **Bishops' Registers**

Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register of Bishop William Gray (Register XVII), fols 212<sup>v</sup>, 215<sup>r</sup>, 217<sup>v</sup>, 219<sup>v</sup>, 220<sup>v</sup>, and 221<sup>r</sup>

Information about two men named John Benet who were ordained as subdeacon, deacon, and then priest between March and September 1435

Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register of Bishop William Alnwick (Register XVIII), fol. 183<sup>r</sup>

John Benet's presentation to the perpetual vicarage of Harlington by the patrons, the prior, and the convent of Dunstable, instituted on 17 March 1443

Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register of Bishop John Chedworth (Register XX), fol. 275<sup>r</sup>

John Benet became rector of Broughton from 4 October 1471. He was presented to his living by Sir John Broughton of Toddington

Lincoln, Lincolnshire Archives, Episcopal Register of Bishop Thomas Rotherham (Register XXI), fol. 97<sup>v</sup>

November 1474 shows that a certain Dom. John Stanwey was admitted to the benefice vacated by John Benet's death

G. R. Dunstan, ed., *The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, 1420–1455*, 5 vols (Torquay: The Devonshire Press, 1963–1972)

Benet (Benett, Benette) – vol. V, p. 14

John: rector or warden of Imber [Wilts.], vol I, p. 210; canon of Crantock, vol. I, pp. 210, 258

1436: Sir John Benet, chaplain, Rector or Warden of the Free Chapel of Immere [Inber, near Heytesbury...] was collated at Sonning, 31 May, by Robert [Neville], Bishop of Salisbury, under a commission from the Bishop of Exeter, dated at Chudleigh, 24 May. The certificate was received there on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June. Vol. I, p. 210

1440: St Crantock Collegiate Church: *canonicatus et prebendal*. vol. I, p. 258

John: ordained as subdeacon, vol. IV, pp. 81, 83

20<sup>th</sup> March 1422–1423: Subdeacon: Johannes Benet ad tit. ab. et con. Mon. de Regali loco Lincoln' d. ad omn. ord. Vol. IV, p. 81

April 1423: Presbiteri: Johannes Benet ad tit. ab. et con. Mon. de Regali loco  
Lincoln, d. Vol. IV, p. 83.

John: O cist m. of Newenham, ordained acolyte, vol. IV, p. 200.

19<sup>th</sup> Sept 1444: Frater Johannes Benet eiusdem domus et ord. per abbatem  
missus

Others ordained after the instalment of the manuscript compiler to Harlington

There is no reference to any 'John Benet' in the following registers:

N. H. Bennett, ed., *The Register of Richard Fleming Bishop of Lincoln 1420–31*,  
Canterbury and York Society, 73, 2 vols (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1984), vol. I

N. H. Bennett, ed., *The Register of Richard Fleming Bishop of Lincoln 1420–31*,  
Canterbury and York Society, 99, 2 vols (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2009), vol. II

## **Wills**

No wills in Bishop Rotherham's register, 1472 to 1480.

PROB 11: Prerogative Court of Canterbury and Related Probate Jurisdictions: Will  
Registers

The National Archives, <<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>> [accessed 3  
January 2020]

Search confined to 1400–1499:

1. John Benet of Staines, Middlesex: 06/1445
2. John Benett, Gentleman of Southwark, Surrey: 17/12/1475
3. John Benett (aka John Kyngeston) of Southwark, Surrey: 19/9/1476
4. John Benett, Draper of London: 14/10/1485
5. John Benett of Cirencester, Gloucestershire: 28/10/1496
6. John Benet/Benett of Holton, Suffolk: 12/5/1499

## **Papal Registers**

There is no reference to 'John Benet' seeking a Papal dispensation in the publications of Papal Registers, *British History Online* <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/cal-papal-registers--brit-ie>> [accessed 20 December 2019]/  
W. H. Bliss and J. A. Twemlow, eds, *Calendar of Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: 1404-1415*, 14 vols (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1904)

A rector ‘John Benet’ of the church of St Ewin is mentioned:

‘The recent petition of John Benet, rector, and all the parishioners of the parish church of St. Ewin (*Sancti Audoeni*), London, contained that the feast of the said Confessor is celebrated there on the feast of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, and that the said rector and the priests and ministers of the said church are so much occupied with the office of the said Saint Ewin that they are quite prevented from commemorating and celebrating the office of the said Apostle’.

<<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-papal-registers/brit-ie/vol10/pp22-38>> [accessed 4 December 2020]

## Testamentary Records

Marc Fitch, ed., *Index to Testamentary Records in the Commissary Court of London (London Division) Now Preserved in the Guildhall Library, London*, 4 vols (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office for the British Record Society, 1969), vol. I: 1374–1488, p. 17

|                                                                       | Year   | Register | Folio            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------|------------------|
| Benet, John; probate only                                             | 1377   | 1        | 49 <sup>v</sup>  |
| Benet, John, vicar of Leyton, Essex;<br>St Bartholomew Royal Exchange | 1430   | 3        | 252              |
| Benet, John, senior citizen and draper,<br>St Michael, Cornhill       | 1433   | 3        | 339 <sup>v</sup> |
| Benet, John, Ealing, Middlesex;<br>Probate only, no year              | (1454) | 5        | 136 <sup>v</sup> |
| Benyt, John, senior, West Ham, Essex                                  | 1457   | 5        | 223              |
| Benet, John, St. Benet Fink; probate only,<br>at length               | 1458   | 5        | 263 <sup>v</sup> |
| Benet, John, East Ham, Essex;<br>Administration                       | 1465   | 5        | 374              |

## Secondary Sources

Hugh Bailie, 'A London Guild of Musicians, 1460–1530', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 83 (1956–1957), 15–28 (p. 20)

The name John Benet appears in a list of members of The Fraternity of St Nicholas (later The Company of Parish Clerks) in 1449. Guildhall Library, Bede roll 1449-1521 (on permanent loan to the Museum of London, but a microfilm copy is available) L 37.01 MS 4889. As some other eminent composers were members of this guild, Hugh Bailie took this to be proof that the John Benet listed here was the composer.

Brian Trowell, 'Benet, John', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the earliest times to the year 2000*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), V, p. 70.

Benet, John (d. 1458), composer, has left about twenty compositions whose style proclaims him to be a slightly younger contemporary of John Dunstaple [...]

Caroline M. Barron, 'The Expansion of Education in Fifteenth-Century London', in *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey*, ed. John Blair and Brian Golding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 219–45 (p. 229).

The nearby church of St Benet Fink was appropriated to St Anthony's Hospital in London in 1441 and used the revenue granted to provide a salary for a master or fit 'informer' to teacher grammar *gratis* in the hospital precinct, or nearby to all boys or others who might wish to learn and to become scholars. From the beginning, Carpenter seems to have intended that there should be a song school attached to the new grammar school and John Benet, clerk, received an annual salary for teaching singing to the boys.

John Benet drew up his will in December 1458, in which he was described as 'of the parish of St Benet Fink', but he wished to be buried in the church of St Olave, Southwark. His modest will (Guildhall Library, Commissary Wills 9171/5, fol. 263<sup>v</sup>) commits the administration of his goods to his wife, Elene, and to John Weston.

## **Bibliography**

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Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 260

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 410

Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 354/581

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.21

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS 944 (R.15.22)

Cambridge, University Library, MS li. III. 12

Dublin, Trinity College, MS 516

Gloucester, Cathedral Library, MS 22

Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 50

Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 51

London, British Library, Additional MS 21455

London, British Library, Arundel 292

London, British Library, Harley MS 625

London, British Library, Harley MS 957

London, British Library, Harley MS 2251

London, British Library, Harley MS 2261

London, British Library, Harley MS 2324

London, British Library, Lansdowne MS 763

London, British Library, Royal MS 5 A VI

London, British Library, Sloane MS 1584



London, Lambeth Place, MS 67

Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS Q.9 sup

Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 367

New York, The Morgan Library, MS B.12

Oxford, Balliol College, MS 317

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 191

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 123

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 842

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Museo 180

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Selden Supra 25

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood Empt. 20

Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 118

Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 224

Oxford, Jesus College, MS 4

Oxford, Trinity College, MS 1

Oxford, Trinity College, MS 47

Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 1146

Wellington, Turnbull Library, MS 16

## ii. Editions

Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus, *Boethian Number Theory: A Translation of the De Institutione Arithmetica*, trans. Michael Masi (New York, NY: Rodopi, 1983)

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