Chapter 9

‘Quant j’eus tout recordé par ordre’:
Memory and Performance on Display in the Manuvers of Guillaume de Machaut’s Voir Dit and Remede de Fortune

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works: the Voir Dit and the Remede de Fortune as they are presented in the three of the six manuscripts which appear to contain Machaut’s ‘complete works’.

In this contribution to the understanding of the multi-faceted concept of memory under scrutiny in this volume, I am interested in the technique of memory that would be involved in the various stages in the transmission of a manuscript’s contents from creator to receiver. As the works under consideration are transmitted in more than one manuscript, I have chosen to regard each codex as a performance, that is, a unique interpretation in which different individuals take part. This concept of performance stems from the contemporary music philosopher Christopher Small’s coining of the active verb ‘to music’, which he defines thus:

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance. That means not only to perform, but also to listen, to provide material for a performance – what we call composing – to prepare for a performance – what we call practising.

Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300–77) is generally considered to be a Reims-based composer, even though much of the first portion of his long life was spent travelling in the service of various branches of the house of France. He is believed to have been born in Reims and certainly died there as a canon in the cathedral, having settled there some years previously. The well-known single-author manuscript collections, which apparently contain all of Machaut’s musical and poetic works available to their compilers, have the following catalogue numbers and sigla:

- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 1586 (manuscript C, c. 1350);
- Private collection of Elizabeth J. and James E. Ferrell, currently held in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library, without shelfmark (manuscript Ferrell-1g, c. 1370);
- Paris, BnF, fr. 1585 (manuscript B, c. 1370);
- Paris, BnF, fr. 1584 (manuscript A, c. 1370);
- Paris, BnF, fr. 9221 (manuscript E, c. 1390);
- Paris, BnF, fr. 22545–6 (manuscript F–G, c. 1390: a single manuscript currently bound in two volumes).

The dates of compilation are taken from François Avril, Manuscript Painting at the Court of France, trans. Ursula Molino and Bruce Benderson (London, 1978), pp. 26–7 and ‘Les manuscrits enluminés de Guillaume de Machaut: essai de chronologie’ in Guillaume de Machaut: colloque-table ronde organisé par l’Université de Reims, Reims, 19–22 avril 1978 (Paris, 1982), pp. 117–33. Avril’s research forms the basis of the seminal work and starting-point for Machaut studies by Lawrence Earp, Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research (New York, 1985). The Remede de Fortune (c. 1345–49) and the Voir Dit (c. 1360–65) are both transmitted in the three later manuscripts, A, E and F–G. The other three manuscripts contain the Remede, but were apparently written too early to transmit the late Voir Dit. The term ‘work’ is commonly used when referring to Machaut’s oeuvre, although it is problematic. For a full discussion of its use, see Kate Maxwell, ‘Guillaume de Machaut and the mise en page of Medieval French Stung Verse’ (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Glasgow, 2009), pp. 27–30.
or rehearsing — or any other activity which can affect the nature of the human encounter. [...] To music is to pay attention in any way to a musical performance, at whatever level or quality of attention [...]  

This definition can, I believe, be usefully applied to manuscript creation, reception and transmission, in order to enhance our understanding of the varying presentation of the same works in different manuscripts. 

The roles involved in manuscript performance include those of the author-performer, who in this case is the same individual invoked (albeit differently) in all the manuscripts, the scribal-performers (among whom I include illuminators and miniaturists) and the reader-performers (of all eras). Each of these uses his or her memory in constructing, transmitting or receiving the work, and it is the play of memory in this subtle process of transmission (or even possibly of interchange in the Middle Ages) that I will examine here in two of Machaut's musical-poetic works, the *Remede de Fortune* and the *Voir Dit*. There are, therefore, two principal types of memory under discussion here. Firstly, there is that of individuals, be they fictional characters in the tales or those involved in the production of the manuscripts under discussion. Secondly, there is the more abstract concept of the memory preserved within the manuscripts, the memory which is 'on display' and which offers us valuable clues as to the transmission of the two works. 

The quotation opening this chapter comes from the *Remede de Fortune*, where it forms part of the narrative related by the first-person narrator, called Guillaume. In the *Remede*, the narrator is a poet and composer, but also a lover — or at least a would-be lover, since he lacks the refinements necessary to woo his lady successfully. The plot is simple, but interwoven with the act of creation of lyric poetry and music in each of the *formes fixes* popular at the time: inspired by devotion to the lady, Guillaume writes a lay, which somehow comes into her possession. She commands him to read it and then asks him who wrote it. He flees rather than answering this all-too-leading question and enters a walled garden, where he writes a *complainte* against Fortune and falls into a trance. He is roused from his torpor by Hope, who instructs him through discourse and music (a

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4 For a more detailed discussion of the concept of manuscript performance see Maxwell, 'Guillaume de Machaut', Chapter 1.

5 In the *oeuvre* of Guillaume de Machaut, the term 'lay' ('lai') denotes a 12-stanza poem, often set to music, in which each stanza has a unique structure and rhyme scheme except for the first and last, which share the same. If the lay is set to music, these two stanzas usually share music, although it is generally transposed for the last stanza. Most of Machaut's lays are set to music and most (though by no means all) of these settings are monophonic. Machaut's treatment of the lay is, however, an important turning point in the form's history. For a summary of research into the lay and Machaut's role in its development, see Maxwell, 'Guillaume de Machaut', pp. 93–5.
chanson royale and a balladette) how to become a worthy lover and woo his lady. After his tuition, Guillaume composes a ballade in his joy and returns to his lady, who now accepts him as her lover. A banquet is taking place and he takes part in the entertainment by singing a chanson balladée, or virelai. After the festivities, the lover departs for home singing a rondelet. Alas, he soon has doubts about his lady's constancy and accuses her of looking favourably on others. Although they are later reconciled, the lady is not as reassuring as she could be and so the tale ends on a note of uncertainty.

It is worth bearing in mind when discussing the Remede de Fortune that Machaut wrote it in his late forties, an age which, at the time, was far from young. In addition, Machaut was (presumably!) unaware of the fact that he would go on to live -- and compose music and poetry -- for another quarter-century. The Remede seems to have been written not long before the compilation of the earliest complete-works manuscript, C, which was most likely patronized by the house of Luxembourg, the Remede (which may do homage to Bonne of Luxembourg) taking centre stage in this manuscript. Although C is not one of the manuscripts under consideration here as it does not contain the Voir Dit, I mention it because, had Machaut not been exceptionally long-lived for his time, this manuscript and especially the Remede would have provided a full compilation of the poet-composer's works. For the Remede, like the complete-works manuscripts, contains a kind of catalogue of the author's musical and lyric capabilities, since it features within the narrative one of each of the music-poetic formes fixes.

In Machaut's narrative construction of the Remede, the increasing aptitude of the lover Guillaume at the hands of Hope is in stark contrast to the order of difficulty of the formes fixes in the tale. Whereas Guillaume the lover begins by failing in the basics of courtly love, Machaut the poet-composer opens with the most challenging of the formes fixes, the lay. As Guillaume the lover becomes more educated and adept, Machaut the poet-composer works his way through the formes fixes in descending order of difficulty, so that the triumphant lover departs from the banquet singing the simplest rondelet.

Left on his own without Hope or music, Guillaume the lover flounders in his suit at the end of the tale. Similarly, at the end of the tale, Machaut the poet-composer claims to sign his name in an anagram -- yet the text in question does not in fact reveal his name, only an approximation: a 'solution' which is very close to, but does not match exactly, the various spellings of 'Guillaume de Machaut'. It is an ingenious manipulation, setting to work our memories as reader-performers. We are asked to recall and are left in no doubt as to who the author is, yet he also leaves us frustrated. By the end of the tale, therefore, the reader-performers who have failed to 'solve' the anagram are, like the lover who pursued his suit

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6 For more discussion of Bonne of Luxembourg, particularly the possibility of her patronage of this manuscript being transferred to another member of her family following her untimely death in 1349 (the year before her husband became Jean II of France), see Wimsatt and Kübler, pp. 33–4.
beyond Hope's teaching, left in ambiguity; the author-performer, on the other hand, remains in the ascendant. Thus we can see that the very construction of the tale, with its didactic overtones contained in the teachings of Hope and in the order of the lyric insertions, together with the inclusion of the anagram, relies on the memory of the reader-performer, which is manipulated by the author.

As for the manuscript presentations of the *Remede*, it can be seen from the opening miniatures in each manuscript that the iconographic presentation of the author and/or the first-person narrator differs between the manuscripts and that the reader-performers must exercise their memories to a greater or lesser extent in order to interpret the miniatures within the context of the manuscripts and the tale. In manuscript *A* (c. 1370), which was produced at the end of Machaut's life (and perhaps in some way under his supervision), the opening miniature contains two figures seen in discussion. One is young and standing, listening to the other who is old, seated and situated higher in the frame. While the younger figure reappears in subsequent miniatures and is identifiable as the character Guillaume the lover, there is no older character in the *Remede*, nor does this figure reappear in subsequent miniatures. Sylvia Huot has suggested that this older figure is Machaut the poet-composer, portrayed instructing his younger personage. If this is the case, then he is portrayed with a symbol of learning usually reserved for the learned metaphorical character Grammatica: the switch. There is surely at play in this miniature an intrigue similar to that found in the anagram: we as reader-performers may seek the author and yet what we find does not quite match our expectations. Rather, it surpasses them: by finding only a near-naming we are reminded who set the anagram; by finding Grammatica we are not allowed to forget the learned attributes of the author-performer.

The memorial activity required of the reader-performer in the opening miniatures of the other two manuscripts is less subtle. The *Remede*'s opening miniature in Manuscript *E*, produced some two decades after Machaut's death, is the only one illustrating this tale. It portrays a male figure in a garden, surely a reference to the greater part of the story, which will take place in the walled garden which the reader-performer is asked to recall. Manuscript *F–G*, on the other hand, although contemporary with manuscript *E*, follows manuscript *A* in not portraying a scene from the story. Instead, it shows a clerical figure seated behind a raised lectern, reading (or singing) from a book to a group of people seated below who are responding to him actively. This scene of interactive learning does not involve any characters from the tale, nor even any reference to the setting of the story. In portraying the didactic nature of the tale, the

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7 The work of Laurence de Looze has much influenced my thinking here; on this point in particular see especially "Pseudo-autobiography" and the Body of Poetry in Guillaume de Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*, *L'Esprit Créateur* 33/4 (1993): pp. 73–86.


9 It is my pleasure to thank Domenic Leo for pointing this out to me (personal communication).
opening miniature in manuscript F–G has moved the focus from the education of Guillaume the lover to the education of the reader-performer. Here, the link shown in the tale between education, learning and memory is on display.

It is not just in iconography that the presentation of the Remede in manuscript E stands apart from that of A and F–G. E is physically the largest of the complete-works manuscripts and its text is generally laid out in three columns rather than the two found in A and F–G. In addition, while in A and F–G the music within the Remede is also contained within two columns, in E it is allowed to flow freely across the columns in a single colourful flourish. In a work with as many carefully-placed musical interpolations as the Remede, this must have taken a great deal of planning. Indeed, the lack of miniatures in E’s Remede ensures that it is surely the music which provides the principal visual interest for the reader-performer. Out of the three manuscripts considered here, it is E which, by its musical presentation, is also the most visually appealing and thus also the most appealing to the reader-performer’s memory.  

A closer inspection of the music suggests that its visual appearance was indeed of primary concern to the compilers of manuscript E. This is especially apparent in the rondeau, which contains an unexpected feature in its musical presentation. In manuscript E (fo. 35v.), the rondeau presentation contains a highly abbreviated and unusually small line of text below the final staff of music which contains the second portion of the otherwise untexed tenor part. While an educated guess at its significance could be made from this manuscript alone, a glance at manuscripts A (fo. 78v.) and F–G (fo. 62v.) confirms that this line of text is in fact the second stanza of the rondeau text, which, even in manuscript E, would usually be presented as a separate stanza after the music. Rather than dismiss this anomaly as an ‘error’ in the presentation of manuscript E, I would suggest that, although most likely unplanned, this aspect of the presentation of the rondeau does not prevent a reader-performer from reconstructing the work, either orally or silently, if he or she so wishes, with only slightly more difficulty than that required in reading the same text in manuscripts A or F–G. Indeed, even without entering into hypothetical ‘what if?’ scenarios regarding what kind of action would be taken in similar situations in the other manuscripts, here we can say with conviction that manuscript E allows such a reconstruction by the reader-performer without marring the beauty of the page layout.

Before moving on to the Voir Dit, it is worth considering how the reader-performer reconstructs the music from the manuscripts, perhaps alone, perhaps quietly, perhaps memorizing at the same time. While this cerebral reconstruction is by no means the only way to perform music contained in luxury illuminated manuscripts, it does aid memorization.

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10 For evidence that a manuscript’s visual appearance could aid memorization see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990, repr. 2004), pp. 93–5. Also see Part I of this volume, ‘Memory and Images’.

11 For a summary of this process when reading text from a manuscript, see Carruthers, p. 186. There is surely no reason why the same would not be true of music.
manuscripts, the well-known image of singers gathered around a manuscript is more likely to hold true for rotuli, or other less-formal presentations, than for the manuscripts under consideration here, as shall be seen from examples in the Voir Dit. Nevertheless, there is one group of reader-performers who would generally have received the music in written form, including illuminated manuscripts, with the intention of reproducing it again in written form: the scribal-performers. Here I do not intend to challenge the idea that manuscripts were copied from exemplars, but I would like to offer a more nuanced view of the process, taking the mnemonic aspects of the page layout into account. For, in the case of all three manuscripts here, the relationship of syllables to notes shows that the text scribe, whose work was usually done first, was aware of how much space to leave for the music.

While this could be done entirely by sight, we must remember that scribal-performers were professionals, highly educated (and therefore with memories trained to remarkable levels by today’s standards) and capable of great subtlety and skill. Therefore, it is my proposition that, whether they were copying directly from an exemplar (or several) or from ‘the book of memory’, the scribes involved in the act of notating the music and text were also engaged in a performance, probably silent, but in accomplishing which they were nevertheless aware of the sonic value of their task, the sounding nature of the music they were notating.

If the Remede de Fortune displays imaginative combinations of lyrical, musical and narrative poetry, then the Voir Dit takes this to extremes. Mixing not only music and poetry, the Voir Dit is a story which is set in motion by, and indeed played out through, a series of letters between the first-person protagonist and his young female admirer, Toute Belle. As with the lovers in the Remede, the relationship waxes and wanes, ending on a note of doubtful reconciliation. Whereas the allegorical nature of the Remede is clear from the outset through its use of personification, in the Voir Dit this is certainly not the case and the story makes extensive claims to be true, not least in its title. The lover-protagonist is once again a poet-composer, but in the Voir Dit he is elderly and indeed ailing, albeit revived by a letter and poem from Toute Belle. Although opinion on the ‘true’ nature of the Voir Dit has veered from one extreme to the other since the resurgence in Machaut scholarship in the nineteenth century, careful analysis by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and R. Barton Palmer of the interpolated exchange of lovers’ letters and the historical events and characters to which they relate seems to have settled the debate at least for the moment. For my purposes here, then, I agree with their findings: the story is at least broadly true, albeit undoubtedly embellished.

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13 Guillaume de Machaut, Le Livre dou Voir Dit, ed. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and trans. R. Barton Palmer (New York 1998), ‘Introduction’. That it has taken such time for the debate to reach even this settlement is surely testimony to Machaut’s skill as a writer.
If we accept at least the broad truth of the *Voir Dit*, especially the fact that it is set in contemporary mid- to late-fourteenth-century France, then it is reasonable to assume that the minutiæ of the story (the details of letter-writing, the presence of secretaries, the role of the messengers, the protagonists’ day-to-day activities and so on), while not necessarily being historical fact, are at least in keeping with this broad patina of ‘truth’. In this light, an analysis of the transmission of the written communications between the lovers — letters, poetry and music — shows the great extent to which memory and speech were relied upon even when the written word was the focus of the exchange.

Let us begin with the characters in the story, who can be broadly classified according to their roles within the manuscript performance. We have the author-performer, Guillaume, who, although using his first name throughout the text, is nevertheless referred to as ‘Machaut’ in a hairline inscription (an artist’s instruction) next to one of the miniatures in manuscript F-G. This occurrence, despite being unique in the manuscripts, surely shows that the compilers of the manuscripts equated Machaut the poet-composer with Guillaume the lover in the *Voir Dit* (most likely in a way that they did not for the other *ditis*). It is also strikingly reminiscent of the well-known inscription at the head of the index to manuscript A, a scribal rubric that also invokes the name of the poet-composer: ‘Vesci l’ordenance que G. de Machaut vult qu’il ait en son livre’ (‘here is the order which G. de Machaut wishes his book to have’).15

Another way in which the author-performer manifests his dual appearance in the *Voir Dit* is through the anagram, which, like that of the *Remede*, does not have a satisfactory ‘solution’. The anagram in the *Voir Dit* differs from that in the *Remede*, however, in that the later work claims that it also conceals an unknown element — or at least, unknown to reader-performers today — that is, it claims also to include the name of Toute Belle. Whether the reader-performers of the time were in any doubt as to her identity is certainly questionable, for concern over gossip about the relationship is a theme which appears in some later letters in the tale. The essential difference from the *Remede*, however, is that in the *Voir Dit* the author’s name is easily found in the anagram; it is Toute Belle’s name which remains elusive. Thus the seemingly ‘unsolvable’ anagram may well be a deliberate play, like that in the *Remede*, to remind the reader who has control over the text and indeed over our reception of it. Latter-day gossip-hunters, keen to know which young noblewoman got herself mixed up with a lovelorn old poet, remain disappointed: we must accept that here Machaut, as ever, has the last laugh.16

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14 Manuscript F-G, fo. 173r: The inscription is described, transcribed and translated in Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut*, p. 179, n. 176.

15 Earp, ‘Scribal Practice’, pp. 51–83. For a full discussion of the authority (or identity) invoked by this rubric, see Maxwell, ‘Guillaume de Machaut’, Chapter 1.

16 For a discussion of the various solutions proposed over the years (at least until 1998), see Leech-Wilkinson and Palmer, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxxix–xli, n. 5. For a discussion
In addition to the author-performer, we also have a reader-performer, Toute Belle. (She is also likely to have been the author-performer, and Guillaume a reader-performer, of her letters, and poems; however, here I will concentrate on her as a reader-performer of Machaut.) She is, in fact, a reader-performer *extraordinaire*: at the start of the tale she is already a ‘fan’ of Machaut’s work, particularly his music, and she is herself an acclaimed singer. She is familiar enough with Machaut’s *œuvre* to be able to chide him (letter 32) for sending her music which she already knows. In the story she receives Machaut’s work not through luxury manuscripts but through letters and she repeatedly solicits new music from him so that she can learn it. Her repeated use of the verb *savoir* in her letters implies not only great familiarity, but memorization. She does not, however, learn the music exclusively from written notation, although she does make use of it as an *aide-mémoire*. She either learns it orally from a secretary (or messenger) who has himself learnt it orally from the composer, or, on the rare occasions when they are together, she learns it directly from Guillaume himself with the help of his secretary’s notation:

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Quand j’eus ma balade fine,
Ma douce dame desirée
Dist: ‘C’est bien fait, se Dieux me gar!’
Adonc par son tres douz regart
Me commanda qu’elle leyist
Par quoi sa bouche la levist,
Car, en cas qu’elle la liroit,
Assez mieux l’en entenderoit.
Et je le fis moult volontiers
Et du cuer, mais endore[a]tiers
Que mes escrivains [l’escrissoit],
[Ma douce dame] la lisoit,
Si qu’elle en sot une partie
Ains que de la fin departie. (ll. 2361–74)
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[When I had finished my *ballade*, my sweet lady said, ‘God protect me, that is well composed.’ And with her sweet look she asked me to give it to her so that she could read it out loud, for, in reading it, she could hear and learn it better. I did this willingly but she, meantime, while my secretary was still writing it, began to read it, so that she had already learnt some of it before she left that place.]

When, towards the end of the tale, Toute Belle finally receives a manuscript copy of the work-in-progress, she already knows the music.\(^{17}\)

\(^{17}\) Toute Belle’s learning method here is entirely in keeping with that described by both Hugh of Saint Victor and Jacques Legrand. See Carruthers, p. 9 and Appendix A.
This brings us to the third important character in the *Voire Dit* for this study of transmission: Machaut’s secretary. Along with the other secretaries and messengers in the work—both lovers use secretaries to write the letters—he provides a rare glimpse of a scribal performer in action. In the above scenario, Guillaume calls on him to notate a work which has already been spontaneously composed. The notation takes place after the composition is complete, with a view to being reproduced elsewhere by the secretary or other scribes: rare evidence of a standard textual composition procedure also being used for music. Since Toute Belle was able to memorize it there and then, so too, we can assume, was the highly-trained secretary, who, when coming to transcribe it again, would then have had both a written and a memorized ‘copy’ at his disposal. Additionally, we must bear in mind that Toute Belle initiated the writing of the *Voire Dit* and, according to the opening of the tale, desired that everything about her love affair with Guillaume be preserved in writing. Also, Machaut the poet-composer was by this time well-known and highly regarded by a wide range of patrons (and presumably also their courts) and he was keen to preserve his works in his ‘livre ou je mets toutes mes choses’ (‘book where I keep all of my works’). The secretary’s notation of this work, therefore, is symptomatic not only of Toute Belle’s method of learning works she admired, but also of Machaut’s preoccupation, unusual for the time, with the written preservation of his work, a concern to which it seems we owe the large number of single-author, complete-works manuscripts which survive today. Thus the manuscript copies not only provide the opportunity for other reader-performers, then as now, to come to know Machaut’s works and to be able to learn and recreate them alone; they also demonstrate Machaut’s apparent awareness of the value of the written artefact in preserving the work beyond the lifetime of its creator.

Now that we have seen a little of the role of memory and the transmission of music in the story of the *Voire Dit*, we can compare this to the manuscript presentations. As with the *Remède de Fortune*, the manuscripts fall into two groups, with *E* once again standing apart from *A* and *F-G*. Whereas *A* and *F-G* have extended sequences of miniatures (30 and 37 respectively), *E* again has far fewer (four). Here too, however, what *E* may lack in iconography, it makes up for in the virtuosity of its mise en page. Maintaining its habitual three-column format for narrative text, *E* once again punctuates this with music which is written across the whole folio. The lovers’ correspondence likewise stretches across the columns and is additionally written in a cursive hand. This not only gives it a very

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18 For the textual procedure, see Carruthers, pp. 194-5.
19 Today, the Machaut manuscripts themselves certainly stand as a memorial to the composer, although who exactly is behind that memorial is impossible to know. Machaut does seem to have had a strong concept of his works’ posterity, as well as their status as a memorial to him, as seen in the Prologue and opening miniatures to manuscript *A*. For a full discussion of this topic, see Maxwell, ‘Guillaume de Machaut’, pp. 28-9 (Machaut’s ‘Prologue’), Chapter 4 (the Mass) and Chapter 5 (the *Voire Dit*).
distinctive appearance, but also adds a degree of verisimilitude to the contents of
the page: the letters are written in a letter hand.

In manuscripts A and F-G the two-column format employed for the Remede
is maintained and the lovers’ letters are written as prose within the columns,
distinguishable from the surrounding narrative poetry by their full justification as
opposed to left alignment. What is perhaps more remarkable in A and F-G, however,
is the fact that no music whatsoever is transmitted within their presentations of
the Voir Dit. Instead of musical notation, the rubric ‘et y a chant’ (‘with music’)
is employed, indicating that the music can be found in the music section of
the manuscript. This is a complete departure from the presentation of the Remede in
both manuscripts, yet it is one which is anticipated in the text of the Voir Dit itself.
Implied in the text of the Voir Dit, is the fact that the music was

(Des autres choses vous diray
Se diligentemen les queres,
Sans failir vous les trouverez
Aveques les choses notees
Et es balades non chantees;
Dont j’uy mainte pensee efi
Que chacuns na mic secet,
Car ciz qui vnet tel chose faire
Penser li faut ou contrefaire.) (ll. 521–9.)

[I tell you that you will without fail find the other pieces if you look carefully
among those set to music and the ballades which have no music and with which I
have been much preoccupied (which not everyone has been aware of), for those
who would like to make such pieces must think carefully or else pretend.]

A further way in which the manuscripts differ in their presentation and which
has potential consequences for the use of memory in their production is in the
distribution of variants across the whole text, particularly the 46 prose letters.
In total, E has the greatest number of variant readings across all parts of the tale
and for the music at least has been shown to relate to more than one source.21
E’s textual variants, however, are especially frequent in the letters.22 This is in

20 There is only one inconsistency in this pattern and it appears in both manuscripts.
The rondeau ‘Se mas cuer’ is labelled as having music when it does not, whereas the rondeau
‘Sans cuer, dolena’ is not labelled as having music when it does.
21 Margaret Bent, ‘The Machaut Manuscripts Vg, B and E’, Musica Disciplina, 37
22 It is worth noting in passing that one important set of variants in manuscript E
occurs in the anagram passage, although the text which is designated is no more ‘solvable’
than that in A and F-G. See Maxwell, ‘Guillaume de Machaut’, Chapter 5.
contrast to manuscript F-G, whose textual variants occur evenly across the letters, narrative and lyrics, and A, which displays comparatively few variants in the letters. The fact that the difference between the manuscripts is most pronounced for the prose letters is interesting, for the Voir Dit is the only one of Machaut's works to incorporate letters into its structure. In addition to the internal evidence from the story, this divergence may therefore be able to shed new light on the transmission processes of the three manuscripts.

Instead of dismissing manuscript E with its high number of variants as being a less reliable source than A or F-G, I would like to consider the possibility that memory played an important part in its production. If, as is believed to be the norm, manuscript copying took place primarily by sight and exemplar, then for the Voir Dit we would expect an even distribution of variants across all components of the text as is the case for manuscript F-G. The fact that there are fewer than expected variants in the letters in A is in itself interesting, since manuscript A may have been produced within Machaut's milieu in Reims; it was certainly produced within his lifetime. It is therefore tempting to speculate on whether the manuscript's compilers had access to the actual letters exchanged. Manuscript E, on the other hand, with its marked increase in variants in the prose letters, seems to lean towards memory playing a greater part in its production, since it is easier to memorize verse than prose (thus, variants appear in the material that was more difficult to memorize). The transmission history of manuscript E has puzzled scholars, who see the codex as a rather careless amalgam of several exemplars. If the scribal performers' memories are taken into account, from Machaut's secretary in the Voir Dit to those working some 30 years later on manuscript E, or, in other words, if we do not accept the need for direct manuscript-to-manuscript transmission at all times, then E's variants become a natural part of that process. The level of planning involved in the remarkable layout of manuscript E would certainly have required great familiarity with the works. In addition, manuscript E is the only complete-works manuscript to have a known patron: Jean, Duke of

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23 This assumption about manuscript copying is behind the arguments which pervade all discussions of the relationships between the Machaut manuscripts and is especially evident throughout Earp, 'Scribal Practice' and Bent, 'The Machaut Manuscripts', as well as in the various editing practices involved in modern editions of Machaut's works.

24 By the same token, it could be argued that it is easier to introduce variants, particularly unintentional ones, into prose than verse, due to its lack of a fixed structure. This is, in fact, the other side of the same coin: the meter, rhythm, and rhyme of poetry all contribute to its being easier to memorize; by contrast, the lack of these in prose gives a scribe less of a structure on which to build his mnemonic processes, which in turn leads to a greater number of variants. Indeed, it is the very 'written' nature of the Voir Dit, based on actual letters of which half were presumably composed by Toute Belle and not by Machaut himself, which lends itself to such variations. For a full discussion, see Maxwell, Guillaume de Machaut', pp. 210–17.

25 For a list of references to discussions of the musical and textual provenances of manuscript E see Earp, Guillaume de Machaut, p. 93, n. 25.
Berry (1340–1416, son of Bonne of Luxembourg and Jean II of France), whose library already contained copies of individual works by Machaut at the time of E's production. Therefore for E it is easy to imagine the transmission and production processes of copying and memorization working together in an informed atelier.

In conclusion, I wish to come full circle and return to the opening miniatures from the Remede de Fortune. In manuscript E the single miniature features a solitary courtly lover, with no indication of authorship or identity. For the most silent performer throughout manuscript E, in its miniatures, its page layout and its transmission, is indeed the author-performer. Manuscript A invokes the author in its opening rubric, claiming to reflect his intentions. Both A and F-G manifest his presence in their miniatures and through their representation of the music, which allows relatively little freedom of interpretation for scribal- and reader-performers. The posthumous manuscript F-G seems to display veneration for the remembered author, whereas manuscript E gives more weight to the memories of the other performers: the readers and the scribes. Thus we see that all three manuscripts have indeed been 'recordés par ordre', in that they have involved accurate recall, although in different ways and with very different implications for late medieval and post-medieval reader-performers, whose reception of the tale is manipulated by each mise en page, in which memory is ever present. It is the manuscripts' varying invitations to their reader-performers, in this case you and me, to take part in and to bring our own appreciation to these works, which does much to keep them alive and relevant today.

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36 Eap, 'Scribal Practice', pp. 120–21, especially p. 121, n. 225.