

Anonymous

La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe a 3

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<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH029.html>

This edition is extracted from the online project *The Copenhagen Chansonnier and the Loire Valley' chansonniers*, which consists of linked html-files and a great number of single PDF editions. It can be accessed at <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/>.

Each html-file about a song contains lists of sources, and edition and translation of the poetic texts, discussion of the main sources and comments on text and music. Separate files hold lists of contents and descriptions of the sources. Other files contain papers and notes on related topics. The online edition offers many cross references and links to online facsimile editions. These links had to be simplified in the present edition.

Each version of a song is regarded as a valid performance by a scribe/musician, and therefore they are published separately. In most cases there will be no attempts to imagine the intentions of the composer or to reconstruct exactly what the composer had written when the music left his pen. Rather the aim is to interpret the written music in largely the same way as 15th century performers may have read it. Many details, which in one source are different from other sources, must be accepted by the editor as valid elements in a performance of the actual source. Sources marked by an asterisk * are included in the edition.

Sigla

The related 'Loire Valley' chansonniers

Copenhagen	Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8° http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/702/dan/0+recto/
Dijon	Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 517 http://patrimoine.bm-dijon.fr/pleade/img-viewer/MS00517/viewer.html
Laborde	Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MS M2.1 L25 Case (Laborde Chansonnier) https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200152631.0/?sp=1
Leuven	Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number (Leuven Chansonnier) http://depot.lias.be/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE9381778
Nivelle	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. Vmc. ms. 57 (Chansonnier Nivelle de la Chaussée) http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55007270r/f1.image
Wolfenbüttel	Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag. http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=mss/287-extrav

La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe 3v · Anonymous

Appearance in the five chansonniers:

*Copenhagen ff. 33v-35 »*La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe*« 3v

*Dijon ff. 71v-73 »*La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe*« 3v

Text: Bergerette, full text in both sources:

La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe,
a qui du tout mon amour est conjointe,
chanter me fault d'une faincte conjointe,
muant nature en becarré la basse.

The most dazzling, surpassing everyone,
with whom my love is utterly conjoined,
I must sing of her in a false conjunction
lowering the natural B-quadratum.

Je soupire et pleure souvent
en grief tourment est ma demeure.

I often sigh and cry
dwelling in grim torment.

Mon cueur noir come meure se sent
piteusement fault que je meure.

My heart feels black as mulberry,
piteously I have to die.

J'ay ma rigle changee d'autre espace,
ma haulte game est en estrange jointe
pour grief douleur faindre qui m'est jointe
pour la durté qui me fait je trespasse.

I have moved my scale into another range;
my high hexachord is joined to a foreign one
to feign the grievous dolour, to which I am enjoined,
for the harshness, which causes me to die.

La plus bruiant, *celle qui toutes passe*,
a qui du tout mon amour est conjointe,
chanter me fault d'une faincte conjointe,
muant nature en becarré la basse.

The most dazzling, surpassing everyone,
with whom my love is utterly conjoined,
I must sing of her in a false conjunction
lowering the natural B-quadratum.

Line 11 “pour grief douleur ...” lacks a syllable in both versions (10 instead of 11 syllables). It does not seem to bother the musical setting as the addition of a filler word does not make the underlaying of text any easier.

The couplets (lines 5-8) are obviously corrupt in Dijon. In order to stretch the text the scribe has added the words “a ma chante pleure”, which probably was meant to appear in both couplets:

Je soupire et pleure souvant,
a ma chante pleure
Souvent en grief tourment est ma demeure.

Mon cueur noir come meure se sant
[a ma chante pleure]
Content piteusement fault que je meure.

Evaluation of the sources:

The song was copied into both manuscripts after the same exemplar by the Dijon scribe. Identical errors appear in both (a *semibrevis* instead of a *minima* in the contratenor, b. 8.3; the superius is written a third too low in bb. 57-64; and the ligature in the contratenor, bb. 59-60, is *a-f* in Dijon and *a-e* in Copenhagen). The hexachordal signatures in superius carefully prescribe in both instances a flat before *b'* and a flat before *f''*. This last flat indicates that a high tessitura is used in the upper voice with a fictive (*ficta* or *falsa*) hexachord on *c''*, and that one can expect a sound characterized by high E-naturals (*mi*). In Dijon the tenor has two flats, before *b* and *e'* (the flat before *e'* disappears in the song's couplets), while the tenor in Copenhagen has only one flat, which is more in keeping with the idea of the chanson (see below). Also in Dijon the underlay of the text is less careful than in Copenhagen. Not because the scribe did not think about it. It looks as if he has tried to expand the short text lines in the couplets by repeating words and inserting an extra line: "a ma chante pleure" (see below). It is not possible to perform Dijon's version of the text in the couplets and at the same time obey the carefully placed signs of repetition (see the attempt at a transcription on p. 3b of the Dijon edition). The problem arose because he did not realize that the tenor governs the text declamation in this section. He applied a more credible version of the text in his slightly later copy in Copenhagen, probably after trying out the chanson in performance. As in other cases the Copenhagen copy must be regarded as the scribe's more considered version.

Comments on text and music:

This anonymous bergerette displays a lot of interesting features. One could mention the 'angular' melody with many leaps and its tendency to let the phrases 'run past the cadences', which contribute to its troubled, floating nature etc. My comments will concentrate on the following topics:¹

1. The poem
2. The relationship between text and music
3. A ma chante pleure
4. Tempo and rhythm

1. The poem

The love complaint spices its conventional poetic language with musical terms. Such a procedure is not unusual. We find it for example in four rondeaux by Charles d'Orléans.² However, while Charles with great precision uses a few terms as metaphors, this poet amasses them in order to say the same things over and over in slightly varied ways. Already in line 3 a tautology turns up as "conjoincte", a *rime equivoquée* which in line 2 meant "joined to", here must be understood as "coniuncta", that is, a hexachord on a scale degree

1 A slightly longer version of these comments was published in P. Woetmann Christoffersen, 'Æslets skryden og sang gennem tårer. Billeder i musik i 1400-tallets populære og kunstfulde traditioner', *Musik & Forskning* 26 (2001), pp. 97-134 (at pp. 119-130).

2 Cf. Charles d'Orléans (ed. Pierre Chanpion), *Poésies*, Paris 1923-24, nos. 34, 317, 404 and 422.

different from the three commonly used, which by mutation is joined to the Guidonian hand and consequently is fictional – it belongs to *musica ficta*. This clear statement is in line 3 intensified by the word “faincte”, which means “feigned” or again “fictional”.³ This points out the theme of the song: It is about singing in fictional hexachords. The meaning of the last line in the refrain is not very clear; I shall return to that.

After the description of deathly sorrow in the two short couplets (lines 5-8), the *tierce* begins by declaring “J’ay ma rigle changee d’autre espace” (line 9). The rule, the scale, or just his usual singing has been moved into another space or range. It can hint at transposition or again at changes brought about by *musica ficta*. “Ma haulte game” (line 10), strictly “my high scale”, must also be interpreted as referring to a hexachord because the expression can be found in rondeau no. 317 by Charles d’Orléans, and he unambiguously defines it as referring to a hexachord: “Trop entré en la haulte game, / Mon cuer, d’ut, ré, mi, fa, sol, la”. The hexachord is again joined to something foreign, fictive, “est en estrange jointe”, all to imitate or feign (“faindre”) the “grief douleur”, which is nearly killing the poet. Charles d’Orléans also lets us hear agonies of love resound in *musica ficta* “musique notee par fainte”: “Chiere contrefaict de cuer, / De vert perdu et tanné painte, / Musique notee par Fainte, / Avec faulx bourdon de Maleur!” (Rondeau 404).

Line 4 heaps up musical terms for a striking ending to the refrain and thereby to the whole poem: “Muant” = “mutating”, “nature en becarré” = “*hexachordum naturale* to *hexachordum durum*”, “la basse” = “the bass”. The line lacks a preposition. The meaning may be “becarré [a] la basse”, which, however, gives the line a syllable too many, so either “a” is implied or the line should be emended to “becarré a basse”. We can find a parallel – less courtly elevated – of using words like “nature” and “becarré” in poems in the popular play *Sottie des sotsz triumphans qui trompent chascun* (printed in Paris in the first decades of the 16th century) whose opening monologue rattle up “Sotz triumphans, sotz bruyantz, sotz parfaictz, sotz glorieulx, sotz sursotz autentiques ...”, and in line 10 gets to “Sotz de bemol, de becarre et nature”.⁴ The nearest translation of this line is “Fools in every hexachord” or “fools in *hexachordum molle, durum* and *naturale*”. The juxtaposition of precisely these three terms does not permit any other interpretation. The hexachord interpretation of line 4 then must be that the poet mutates his song from *naturale* into *durum* by lowering the notes – that is again by the use of *musica ficta*. In my translation this is paraphrased as lowering B-quadratum, which “becarré” indeed also stands for.

2. The relationship between text and music

Knud Jeppesen and Edward E. Lowinsky have commented on the special relationship between text and music in this song.⁵ They both took the obscure line 4 as their starting point. Jeppesen interpreted the line as an instruction to mutate from *cantus naturalis* into *duralis* in low position. But with support from Adam von Fulda’s tract *De musica* from 1490 he thought that the poet’s statement did not speak about hexachords and *musica*

3 Cf. Karol Berger, *Musica ficta. Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino*, Cambridge 1987.

4 Cf. E. Droz (ed.), *Le Recueil Trepperel*. Paris 1935, Vol. I, p. 35.

5 Knud Jeppesen (ed.), *Der Kopenhagener Chansonier*. Copenhagen 1927, pp. LXI-LXII, and Edward E. Lowinsky, ‘Foreword’ in H. Colin Slim (ed.), *Musica nova accommodata per cantar et sonar sopra organi; et altri strumenti, composta per diversi eccellentissimi musici. In Venetia, MDXL* (Monuments of Renaissance Music I), Chicago 1964, pp. v-xxi.

ficta, but rather about the three predominant modes, the major ones on *ut* and *fa*, the minor on *re* and *sol*, and the Phrygian on *mi* and *la*. Therefore the line implies a Phrygian colouring of the Dorian mode caused by the E-flat.⁶ Lowinsky disagreed strongly and turned the meaning of the line upside-down with the translation “Changing to high notes nature’s low hexachord”.⁷ His reasons were in the first place that *hexachordum naturale* is placed lower on Guido’s hand than *durum*, and secondly that the superius at “becarré la basse” sings the until then highest passage in the song (cf. the edition, bb. 25-29). Therefore he proposed to link “muant nature” to “la basse” because a passage just before uses *hexachordum naturale* in low position (bb. 19-20 which must be solmized as *la, sol, fa, mi*). Before and after *hexachordum molle* is used, and in bar 25 the *hexachordum durum* comes to full flowering with a sharp (natural sign) before *b’* – becarré!⁸

The two highly esteemed scholars both took the liberty to disregard part of what the sources in fact tell us in order to get a difficult point under control, because then “wird die Meinung auf einmal klar” and “everything falls into place”. It is a bit difficult to approve, even if elements of their contradictory interpretations do offer important insights. Jeppesen was probably right in his description of a mutation to a hexachord in low position, and that it has a modal significance by colouring the tonal development. At the same time Lowinsky’s calling attention to the correlation between the wording of the text and the shape of the superius’ vocal line in bars 17-29 has a touch of the obvious. The important thing is then to find an explanation, which is able to accommodate and reconcile the contradictory interpretations.

A problem, which has to be sorted out, is that Jeppesen as well as Lowinsky assumed that the superius in the Copenhagen chansonnier has a key signature of two flats inflecting

6 “Der verzweifelte Liebhaber, der seine Dame zu besingen hat, kann es nur in Trauertone vollbringen indem er zu einer “faincte conjointe” ... Zuflucht nimmt, und dadurch von *nature* (cantus naturalis) zum *becarre la basse* (d. h. eine tiefe Lage des cantus duralis) mutiert: ... [quotes lines 1-4]. Dass es sich hier nicht um eine blosse Solmisationsangelegenheit dreht, geht daraus hervor, dass die Mutation aus dem C-Hexachord in den G-Hexachord nicht mit der musica ficta zu tun haben kann. Fasst man aber dagegen die Stelle im Sinne der oben gegebenen Interpretation von der Lehre Adams [pp. LIX-LX] auf, wird die Meinung auf einmal klar, denn in diesem Falle wird damit ausgedrückt, dass der singende Liebhaber die dorische oder mixolydische Tonart durch ein Verzeichen in die phrygische oder aeolische ändert. Vielleicht ist hiermit speziell an die dorische Tonart gedacht, die durch *be* in die phrygische übergeht. Ansichten wie Glareans über den weinerlichen Charakter dieser Tonart scheinen hierdurch auch andererseits geäußert.” (Jeppesen, *Der Kopenhagener Chansonnier*, p. LXI).

7 Lowinsky, ‘Foreword’, p. xii.

8 “Jeppesen interpreted this [line 4] as a mutation from the *cantus naturalis* to a low position of the *cantus duralis*. The difficulty with this interpretation is twofold: 1) the natural hexachord, in the context of this composition, is the lowest of the three, the hard one is the highest; 2) the composer sets the words *becarre la basse* to a high passage in the soprano, changing from the treble clef on the second to one on the first line to facilitate ascent of the melody to G”, the highest note of the whole chanson. I propose that we construe *la basse* as belonging to *nature* although, with poetic licence, it is placed after *becarre*. As soon as we interpret the passage in this fashion, everything falls into place and the musical setting at once makes sense. The phrase preceding the words *muant nature* has to be solmized in this manner: [cf. the main text] In other words, the composer changed from *hexachordum molle* to *hexachordum naturale*. Now, *muant nature*, he must change from the *hexachordum naturale* to a higher position requiring B-natural and indeed in measure 25, to insure the *becarre*, he inserts a sharp, which, in the usage of the time, stands also for a natural sign. The flat before B in the superius in measure 22 ... is surely notated so as to emphasize the change to B-natural. The poet-composer is careful not to speak of a change from the natural to the hard hexachord, but only from the low natural to *becarre*. The accompanying music, for a fleeting moment of three to four tones, requires a solmization in the *hexachordum durum*, but it executes the demands of the text in employing the use of B-natural and in changing from low to high.” (Lowinsky, ‘Foreword’, pp. xviii-xix).

b' and *e''*. This is not the case. The higher flat is very carefully written on the staff's uppermost line (see the facsimile of Copenhagen chansonnier). This flat draws the singer's attention to the fact that the song moves outside the Guidonian hand and employs a fictional hexachord based on *c''*, in which the note *f''* has to be solmized as "fa", and consequently *e''* is "mi".

This is, however, the only example in the Copenhagen chansonnier where the superius has a signature of more than one flat. It could be a writing error. The use of signatures in the superius with an extra flat added to the one inflecting *b'* is seldom in this group of MSS, but it can be found: In the Dijon chansonnier the same scribe notated »La plus bruiant« in exactly the same way as in Copenhagen (ff. 71v-73). In three further instances we find such an extra flat, all of them before *f''*, which have to be read as "fa"-instructions for parts in a G-clef.⁹ Final confirmation of this practice can be found by looking through the Nivelles chansonnier. It also contains four chansons with a flat before *f''* in high upper parts notated in G-clefs. In all instances they are instructions not to inflect *e''*.¹⁰

This practice has to be regarded as relatively common in the environment in which these MSS belong, as an important and understandable instruction to the singer, just like it was in earlier as well as later musical sources (including Petrucci's prints). Reading the signature as a common two flat key signature transformed »La plus bruiant« in Jeppesen's transcription into a song in C-Dorian with some Phrygian colouring of the upper voice's cadences on D, while Lowinsky in his transcription introduced so many accidentals that the song is close to c-minor.¹¹ The two scholars' lifelong work on 16th century music apparently had weakened their feeling for the special character of this song.¹²

»La plus bruiant« is in a high tessitura. Superius and tenor each has a range of an octave plus a fourth and reaches *g''* and *b-flat'* respectively. As the contratenor too lies quite high, there could be reason to think that the song has been transposed up a fourth. Down a fourth, we see a song in comfortable, for its time absolutely ordinary ranges (*a-d''*, *c-f'*, *F-a*) with only one flat in the contratenor. The transposition away from a normal tessitura could very well be "J'ay ma rigle changee d'autre espace", exactly what the poet describes.

The song can be transposed, but *musica recta* cannot. Hexachords on any other degree than C, F and G remain *ficta* or "faincte conjointe". In »La plus bruiant« the flat before *f''* in superius creates an expectation that hexachords on *c''* will sound. However, superius has for long stretches been consciously fashioned with a view to enforce an inflection of *e''* into *e-flat''*, either in order to avoid cross-relations or illegal intervals in relation to the other voices (bb. 3, 7, 58, 59), by virtue of imitation of a poignant phrase (b. 38), or by

9 Dijon no. 104 (ff. 127v-128) »J'ay prins deux pous a ma chemise«, no. 130 (ff. 156v-157) »A qui vens tu tes coquilles« by Busnoys, and – slightly different – in no. 80 (ff. 97v-98) »L'omme bany de sa plaisance« by Barbingant.

10 Nivelles no. 17 (ff. 21v-22) »A quoy tient il le cuer me vole«, no. 24 (ff. 29v-30) »Puisqu'aultrement ne puis avoir« by Delahaye, no. 27 (ff. 32v-33) »Comment suis je de vostre cuer« also by Delahaye (also found as Copenhagen no. 1 and Dijon no. 51 without any hexachordal signatures in the upper part), no. 36 (ff. 44v-46) »En tous les lieux ou j'ay este« also found in Dijon as no. 71 (ff. 83v-85) under Busnoys' name and without this flat.

11 Jeppesen, *Der Kopenhagener Chansonnier*, pp. 54-55, Lowinsky, 'Foreword', pp. xiv-xvii.

12 It is quite remarkable that Lowinsky in 1945 had published the classical (if rather incomplete) explanation of these flats before *f''* in his article 'The Function of Conflicting Signatures in Early Polyphonic Music', *The Musical Quarterly* 31 (1945), pp. 227-260, at pp. 254-256. In note 31 on p. 254 he declares that "The practice is no longer consistent in the Copenhagen Chansonnier ... in Nos. 1, 11, 12, and 29, *f''* occurs often, but never accompanied by a flat." – he did not consult the MS itself, but relied on Jeppesen's edition!

repeated, exposed leaps of a fourth up from *b-flat'* (bb. 12-13, 23-24, 48-49, 50). Every time the expected hexachord on *c''* is transformed into a hexachord on *b-flat'* – “ma haulte game est en estrange joincte”. Again exactly what the poet says.

Modally the chanson is in transposed Mixolydian. This is proclaimed by the tenor's final phrase, which in bars 24-28 goes up and down through most of the authentic scale (*c - b-flat'*). But the characteristic major third of this mode is most of the time suppressed by *musica ficta*, and as a result the setting adopts a Dorian colouring. This may be what the ambiguous line 4 hints at – close to the interpretation by Knud Jeppesen. I am more inclined to think that “muant nature en becarré la basse” is just another way of paraphrasing the use of fictional hexachords. Lowinsky had a point in connecting the solmization of the phrases in superius to the words. His description can be modified as follows: Bars 19-20 must be solmized in *hexachordum naturale*, bars 21-23 go in *hexachordum molle* with bar 24 mutating into a ‘high’ *hexachordum naturale*, which however – forced by the surrounding music – has to be lowered into a fictional hexachord on *b-flat'* (“muant nature ... a basse”), and finally bar 25 *hexachordum durum* enters (“en becarré”) alternating with *naturale* until the end of the song. One cannot avoid the feeling that music and text were created concurrently as the ideas popped up, and that the *tierce* was added as an explanation of the not quite evident last line of the refrain.

Testing the offered interpretation of the relations between the elements of music theory in the text and the music, we can try to estimate if the interpretation describes relations, which can be heard in performance. Several of the points that I have brought to attention must be characterized as ‘music for reading’: The high tessitura may be normalized in performance (transposing down the song), and the modal profile designed by the flat before the high *f''* is nearly everywhere dispelled by *musica ficta* and was anyway primarily intended for the informed reader. All in all, the sharp distinction between *recta* and *ficta* was a pedagogical intellectual construction, which cannot be heard – certainly not in a transposed performance. What we can experience by hearing is the song's unusual tonal changeability. A C-Dorian tonal space with a minor third is established during the first lines of text, which turns towards F in bars 14-17, a Phrygian cadence on D is hinted at in the following bars, but the final words in line 3 “d'une faincte conjointe” slide into an unstable imperfect concord in bar 20 (*c / c'-g / e''*). The final phrase starts again in C-Dorian, then suddenly rises and cadences in a luminous C-Mixolydian. This is a striking illustration of the poem's emphasizing of the fictional – and it is clearly audible.

In a bergrette the two half-stanzas (couplets) often have to form a contrast with the refrain. These lines are in »La plus bruiant« quite conventionally about the lover's heart, which “feels black as mulberry”. In addition to the rhythmical contrast created by the introduction of *tempus imperfectum diminutum* the setting tonally proceeds in a direction opposite to the refrain: From Mixolydian major third and “becarré” (b. 35) it changes to a sound characterized by minor thirds in the imitation between tenor and superius on “souvent en grief tourment” (bb. 36 f) – remark the tenor's notated and heartfelt *a-flat* in bar 40. Before the repetition sign tenor and superius cadence Phrygian on D, which, however, turns into a major triad on *g* (bb. 53-54). To the words “est ma demeure” the superius sings the almost thematic leap up a fourth *b'-flat - e''-flat* twice! After the two couplets follows a highly unusual passage, which leads back to the refrain. It moves again to the highest range and re-establishes C-Dorian. The use of coloration in superius

demonstrates the composer's theoretical ambitions also in matters of rhythm. I shall return to that.

3. *A ma chante pleure*

As mentioned in the discussion of the relationship between the sources it looks as if the scribe in the Dijon chansonnier has tried to improve the short text lines of the couplets by repeating words and inserting an extra line "a ma chante pleure". It is an interesting addition. Maybe the poem's use of musical terms did create an association to the poet and duke Charles d'Orléans. His beloved mother, Valentina Visconti, after being widowed, when Louis d'Orléans was murdered in 1407, took as her emblem a picture of a chantepleure, a sort of watering can pouring out big tears; as device she chose "Nil mihi praeterea, praeterea nihil mihi" or in French "Rien ne m'est plus, plus ne m'est rien". This expression of faithful love to her dead husband became of great symbolic importance in a time when dynastic marriages of convenience were the norm among the nobility, and it was imitated and remembered for generations.¹³ It is exactly this feeling of desolation, which »La plus bruiant« tries to express in words and music, so the addition is well chosen, even if Copenhagen chansonnier probably transmits the correct version of the poem.¹⁴

However, "A ma chante pleure" does not need to have such courtly associations. *Chantepleure* can also be a song or a dance, or both. In the farce *Bien avisé, mal avisé* (printed in Paris around 1500) the personified vices sing and dance "Le chantepleure", and *Mal avisé* is lectured that the song in the beginning is happy ("commence par liese"), but ends in tears and sadness ("Il chet en pleur et en tristesse") for the song is wild and the words even more ("Car le chant en est sauvage / Les motz le sont encore plus"). In other farces and moralities "dancer/chanter la/le chantepleure" is used in similar sense: To drop from happiness into sorrow.¹⁵ This meaning also fits into the tone of »La plus bruiant«.

4. *Tempo and rhythm*

There is no indication of mensuration at the start of the chanson in either Copenhagen or Dijon. It is not needed, as the mensuration only can be *tempus perfectum* (O). From the beginning the rhythmical interplay between the three voices gives a probably deliberate display of subdivisions of the perfect *brevis*. Superius divides it equally in two perfect *semibreves*, tenor divides it in three equal parts, three imperfect *semibreves*, while the contratenor divide it unequally in an imperfect *semibrevis* plus an imperfect *brevis*. This sets up a rhythmical stage on which the singers have to re-enter with the *tierce* having performed the two couplets in *tempus imperfectum diminutum* (C). The re-entry is prepared by a short 'bridge passage' added to the couplets after the repetition sign – as a sort of *clos* after two times *ouvert*. In this passage the tenor and contratenor move in regular *breves* and *longae*, while the notes in superius are in coloration by which they loose a

13 Cf. Enid McLeod, *Charles of Orleans. Prince and Poet*, New York 1969, p. 50; opposite p. 44 *ibid.* is a picture of a chantepleure.

14 There is a lot more on the *chantepleure* in the article by Anna Kłosowska, 'Tearsong: Valentine Visconti's Inverted Stoicism', *Glossator* 5 (2011) pp. 173-198.

15 Cf. Howard Mayer Brown, *Music in the French Secular Theater. 1400-1550*, Cam. Mass. 1963, pp. 164-66, which includes a longer excerpt of *Mal avisé*. In modern French "la chantepleure" stands for a sort of bung for wine barrels with several holes to get out the last drops of wine from the barrel. From this a lot of words is derived in the wine industry (even as names for orders). The word is also identified with this meaning in *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française* from 1694.

third of their duration. If we interpret the tempo relation between O and C as strictly proportional, a flawless gradual return to the rhythmical scene of the refrain (and *tierce*) appears. The triplets in superius (bb. 55-62) exactly match the *semibreves* in the tenor in the opening phrase, and the *breves* in tenor and contratenor (bb. 55-62) in the same way correspond to superius' equal division of the perfect *brevis* (bb. 1-2) – the voices simply exchange roles in the rhythmical setup. How this 'return' was performed in practice is hard to know. Maybe the singers vocalised the return on the last syllable of the couplet; a possibility is to omit bar 54 and go directly to bar 55 as a *seconda volta* – and it might also be considered to sing here the words “a ma chante pleure” (see the edition of Dijon).

This interpretation of the tempo relation between the two sections of the bergerette is the only one making sense, and it presupposes equivalence between *breves* in O and *breves* in *tempus imperfectum* (C) resulting in a 4:3 relation between C and O:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{O} \equiv \quad &= \text{C} \equiv \quad = \text{C} \equiv \equiv \\ \text{O} \diamond \diamond \diamond &= \text{C} \diamond \diamond = \text{C} \diamond \diamond \diamond \diamond \end{aligned}$$

The disposition of the start of the refrain and the end of the couplets seems very deliberately designed by the composer as if he wanted to stress the tempo relation and show his expertise of such matters. Whether he was conscious of the theoretical debate in the 15th century concerning tempo relations or simply followed a convention of the genre (the 4:3 relation seems to fit most bergerettes) is difficult to know. The French tradition (adhered to by Johannes Tinctoris and Franchinus Gaffurius) prescribes equivalence on the *minima* level, which automatically produces a 2:1 relation, while the majority of theorists with Bartolomeo Ramos de Pareja and Giovanni Spataro insists on the equivalence on the *brevis* level (producing 4:3). Tinctoris moreover sees the cut signs not so much as indications of diminution as of *acceleratio mensurae*, which probably brings the relation close to 4:3. The modern discussion of these problems has been long and comprehensive, but this chanson has not yet been summoned as a witness.¹⁶

If I am asked to guess on the identity of the composer of this intriguing chanson, I would point to a really competent composer of the second rank with a primarily regional fame, already known for his interest in hexachordal problems and his rather dense polyphony. One name fits this description, namely Delahaye, composer of two chansons in the Copenhagen chansonnier (nos. 1 and 6)¹⁷ and a local hero in the Nivelles chansonnier.

As mentioned earlier there is a not inconsiderable element of 'music for reading' in »La plus bruiant«. The knowledgeable reader browsing the small, intimate and beautifully made manuscript has to admire the refinement and the manifold connotations put into these pages – and his own cleverness and comprehension. This must be the situation imagined by the compiler of the manuscript, by the scribe and the painter, and not least by the person who ordered and paid for the work. As a gift the manuscript was in the same way a tribute to the receiver's taste and musical intelligence. Were the songs to be

16 For a thorough examination of 15th and 16th century theoretical positions and of the modern literature, see Anna Maria Busse Berger, *Mensuration and Proportion Signs. Origins and Evolution*, Oxford 1993; for a review of more recent literature and Tinctoris' views, see Alexander Blachly, 'Reading Tinctoris for Guidance of Tempo' in Paula Higgins (ed.), *Antoine Busnoys. Method, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music*. Oxford 1999, pp. 399-427.

17 »Comment suis je de vostre cuer« (<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH001.html>) and » Puis qu'il convient que le depart se face« (<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH006.html>).

performed, the singers had to learn it by heart or to read from copies in another format made by one of the household's musicians.

So much erudition is bound up with »La plus bruiant« – maybe to such a degree that the music not really gets off the ground – and it becomes interesting to know what is on the next opening. The compiler evidently had some fun when he decided on »Sur mon ame«.¹⁸

18 At <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH030.html>.

Copenhagen no. 29

La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe [Anonymous]

Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8°, ff. 33V-35

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1.)
1.4. La plus brui - ant, cel - le qui tou - tes
3. J'ay ma rig - le chan - ge - e d'au - tre_es -

Tenor

1.)
1.4. La plus brui - ant, cel - le qui tou - tes
3. J'ay ma rig - le chan - ge - e d'au - tre_es -

Contraténor

1.)
1.4. La plus brui - ant, cel - le qui tou - tes
3. J'ay ma rig - le chan - ge - e d'au - tre_es -

5

pas - - - se, a qui du
pa - - - ce, ma haul - du
te

pas - se, a qui du
pa - ce, ma haul - du
te

pas - se, a qui du
pa - ce, ma haul - du
te

8

tout mon a - mour est con - joinc - - -
game est en es - tran - ge joinc - - -

tout mon a - mour est con - joinc - - -
game est en es - tran - ge joinc - - -

tout mon a - mour est con - joinc - - -
ga - me_est en es - tran - ge joinc -

12

te, chan - ter grief me fault d'u - ne
te pour grief dou leur fain dre

te, chan - ter grief me fault d'u - ne fainc - - -
te pour grief dou leur fain dre

te, chan - ter grief me fault d'u - ne fainc -
te pour grief dou leur fain dre

1) No mensurations signs in the MS.

2) *Contraténor* bar 8.3, *g* is a *semibrevis*.

16

fainc dre - - te qui con - joinc - - te,
m'est joinc - - te

- - - te qui con - joinc - - te,
m'est joinc - - te

- - - te qui con - joinc - - te,
m'est joinc - - te

21

mu - ant na - tu - re_en be - car ré la
pour la dur - té qui me fait je tres -

mu - ant na - tu - re_en be - car ré la
pour la dur - té qui me fait je tres -

mu - ant na - tu - re_en be - car ré je

25

bas - - - - - se.
pas - - - - - se.

bas - - - - - se.
pas - - - - - se.

la bas - - - - - se.
tres - pas - - - - - se.

30 Mensura = \circ

2a. Je sou - pi - re⁵⁾ et pleu - re⁵⁾
 2b. Mon cuer noir come meu - re

2a. Je sou - pi - re⁵⁾ et pleu - re sou - vent en
 2b. Mon cuer noir come meu - re se sent pi -

2a. Je sou - pi - re⁵⁾ et pleu - re sou -
 2b. Mon cuer noir come meu - re se

38

sou - vent en grief tour - ment⁶⁾
 se sent pi - teu - se - ment

grief tour - - - ment est ma
 teu - - - se - - - ment fault que

vent en grief tour - ment est ma
 sent pi - teu - se - ment fault que

47

est fault ma que de - - - - - meu - re.
 fault que je - - - - - meu - re.

de - - - - - meu - re.
 je - - - - - meu - re.

de - - - - - meu - re.
 je - - - - - meu - re.

55

(-re)

(-re)

(-re)

1) The mensuration sign is found only in the *Tenor*.

2) *Superius* and *Tenor* bar 54, *longae* in the MS.

3) *Superius* bars 57-64 are notated a third too low.

4) *Contratenor* bar 60 is *e-flat*.

5) In the MS the couplets' first lines "... pleure souvent / ... meure se sent" are underlaid bars 30-36.

6) The words "en grief tourment / piteusement" are placed below bars 41-44.

Dijon no. 61

La plus bruiant, celle qui toutes passe [Anonymous]

Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 517, ff. 71^v-73

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1.) 1.4. La plus brui - ant, cel - le qui tou - tes
 3. J'ay ma rig - le chan - ge - e d'au - tre_es -

Tenor

1.) 1.4. La plus brui - ant, cel - le qui tou - tes
 3. J'ay ma rig - le chan - ge - e d'au - tre_es -

Contraténor

1.) 1.4. La plus brui - ant, cel - le qui tou - tes
 3. J'ay ma rig - le chan - ge - e d'au - tre_es -

5

pas - - - se, a qui du
 pa - - - ce, ma haul - du
 te

pas - se, a qui du
 pa - ce, ma haul - du
 te

pas - se, a qui du
 pa - ce, ma haul - du
 te

8

tout mon a - mour est con - joinc - -
 game est en es - tran - ge joinc - - -

tout mon a - mour est con - joinc - -
 game est en es - tran - ge joinc - - -

tout mon a - mour est con - joinc - -
 ga - me_est en es - tran - ge joinc -

2.)

12

te, chan - ter me fault d'u - ne
 te pour grief dou leur fain dre

te, chan - ter me fault d'u - ne fain dre
 te pour grief dou leur fain dre

te, chan - ter me fault d'u - ne fain dre
 te pour grief dou leur fain dre

1) No mensurations signs in the MS.
 2) *Contraténor* bar 8.3, *g* is a *semibrevis*.
 3) The second verse "a qui ... conjointe" is written below bars 6-10.

16

faindre - - - te¹⁾ con - joincte,
dre qui m'est joincte

- - - te con - joincte,
qui m'est joincte

- - - te con - joincte,
qui m'est joincte

21

mu - ant na - tu - re_en be - car ré la tres -
pour la dur - té qui me fait je la tres -

mu - ant na - tu - re_en be - car ré la tres -
pour la dur - té qui me fait je la tres -

mu - ant na - tu - re_en be - car ré je
pour la dur - té qui me fait je

25

bas - - - - - se.²⁾
pas - - - - - se.

bas - - - - - se.
pas - - - - - se.

la bas - - - - - se.
tres - pas - - - - - se.

1) Verse 3 "chanter me ... conjointe" is written below bars 10-17.

2) Verse 4 "muant nature ... basse" is written below bars 17-29.

30 Mensura = 

2) 2a. Je sou - pi - re_et pleu - re⁶⁾
 2b. Mon cuer noir come meu - re

1) 2) 2a. Je sou - pi - re_et pleu - re sou - vent en
 2b. Mon cuer noir come meu - re se sent pi -

2) 2a. Je sou - pi - re_et pleu - re sou -
 2b. Mon cuer noir come meu - re se

38 sou - vent en grief tour - ment 7)
 se sent pi - teu - se - ment

grief tour - ment est ma
 teu - se - ment fault que

vent en grief tour - ment est ma
 sent pi - teu - se - ment fault que

47 est fault ma de - - - - - meu - re. 8)
 fault que je meu - re. 3)

de - - - - - meu - re.
 je meu - re.

55 (a ma chan - - - te pleu - re)
 (a ma chan - - - te pleu - re)
 (a ma chan - - - te pleu - re) 5)

1) *Tenor*: The signature of two flats changes to one flat.
 2) The mensuration sign is found only in the *Tenor*.
 3) *Superius* and *Tenor* bar 54, *longae* in the MS.
 4) *Superius* bars 57-64 are notated a third too low.
 5) *Contratenor* bar 60 is *f*.

6) In the MS the couplets' first lines "... pleure souvent / ... meure se sent" (verses 5 and 7) are written below bars 30-36.
 7) The words "a ma chante pleure" are written below bars 42-46 (see next page). The transcription proposes to use these words for bars 55-64.
 8) Verses 6 and 8 have "Souvent en grief tourment est ma demeure / Content piteusement fault que je meure" and are placed below bars 47-59.

Dijon no. 61, p. 3b (text as in the MS)

30

Je sou - pi - re et pleu - re sou - vant
Mon coeur noir come meu - re se sant

Je sou - pi - re
Mon coeur

Je sou - pi - re
Mon coeur

38

a ma chan - te pleu - re
a ma chan - te pleu - re

47

sou - vent en grief tour - ment
con - tent en pi - teu - se - ment

55

est ma de - meu - re.
faut que je meu - re.