

Antoine Busnoys

C'est bien malheur qui me court seure a 3

Edition and comments by
Peter Woetmann Christoffersen

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<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH052.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) https://data.idemdatabase.org/IE9381778/representation?fl_pid=FL9382190
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

C'est bien malheur qui me court seure 3v · Busnoys, Antoine

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Dijon ff. 24v-25 »C'est bien malheur qui me queurt seure« 3v Busnoys

*Nivelle ff. 41v-42 »C'est bien malheur qui me court seure« 3v Busnois

Text: Rondeau quatrain layé; full text in Dijon and Nivelle.

After Nivelle:

C'est bien Malheur qui me court seure
lors quant je cuide estre au desseure
de mes amours
qu'aultruy les me toulte et deveure. 1)
Fault il qu'en ce point je demeure?
Las, queulx doulours.

Pour nyant l'ay servy a toute heure,
aultruy recueille et je labeure,
pour ris j'ay plours.

C'est bien *Malheur qui me court seure*
lors quant je cuide estre au desseure
de mes amours.

Se Fortune ou Dieu me sequeure
en amours, ne scay voye seure
ne aucuns destours
que chacun apres moy n'aqueure.
Se l'ay la verte, aultruy la meure, 2)
voyez les tours.

C'est bien *Malheur qui me court seure*
lors quant je cuide estre au desseure
de mes amours
qu'aultruy les me toulte et deveure.
Fault il qu'en ce point je demeure?
Las, queulx doulours.

It is clearly Misfortune who pursues me
that when I believe I find favour
with my beloved
another pushes me away from her and curses me.
Must I remain in this situation?
Alas, such suffering.

For nothing have I served her at any time,
another reaps while I labour,
in stead of smiles I have tears.

It is clearly Misfortune who pursues me
when I believe I find favour
with my beloved.

Even if Fortune or God were to help me
in love, I know no secure path
nor any hiding places
that everyone after me does not find at once;
if one gets the green, someone else gets the ripe,
see how the wheel turns.

It is clearly Misfortune who pursues me
that when I believe I find favour
with my beloved
another pushes me away from her and curses me.
Must I remain in this situation?
Alas, such suffering.

1) Dijon, line 4, "aultruy les me tost ..."

2) Dijon, line 17, missing (error)

– several differences in spelling between the sources.

Evaluation of the sources:

In Nivelle, this song was entered by the main scribe without errors in text and music. The Dijon scribe has copied the same version of the song into his manuscript with some errors and variants in music and text; among other things, he has omitted a line in the tierce of the poem. In addition to the usual small departures in the use of coloration and ligatures and writing errors, his version contains some musical variants, all of which concern dotted figures: In tenor bar 1.3 we find a dotted *minima a* and a *semiminima b* instead of

Nivelle's *semibrevis a*; in superius bar 19.1, a dotted figure replaces a *semibrevis* in a similar manner, and in contratenor bar 22 the reverse occurs; here there is a *semibrevis* in Dijon instead of a dotted figure. All of these are decorative elements, the differences of which may be due to the preferences of the scribes as well as different exemplars.

In both sources, one-flat hexachordal signatures are given in all three voices. In Dijon, the signature in the upper voice disappears from bar 16, making the interpretation of the hexachord progressions easier for the singers to handle. It is possible that the song was originally equipped with a signature only at the beginning of the tenor. Here, a flat is essential for the song's Dorian colouring in the first section, while the signatures are actually superfluous in the superius and countertenor. The countertenor moves obviously in F- and C-hexachords throughout, and the superius is just as clearly in the same hexachords in the first section of the song. However, the desire to secure oneself with both belt and braces has led both scribes to use conventional hexachordal signatures.

The song is in a rare poetic form. It is a *rondeau quatrain layé*. That is, a poem of four lines of normal length (eight syllables) into which two short lines (four syllables) are inserted, one after each half. Busnoys has composed this form as if it were a *rondeau cinquain* in terms of the length of the sections. Here the short third line in the first section is given a rather long musical phrase, while the last short line in the second section must be squeezed in under the final melisma of the song. In Dijon, the words "de mes amours" are clearly positioned with the first two syllables under bars 10.3-11, while "amours" must be distributed under the long melisma bars 12-15. In Nivelle, the four syllables are placed under bars 10.3-11 and the words belonging to the second section continue indifferently during the following bars. This may encourage us to let "de mes amours" be performed clearly and concisely (nearly syllabically) in the canon between superius and tenor and then vocalize the rest of the phrase. Both interpretations work (cf. the editions).

Comments on text and music:

Busnoys has composed the song for quite low voices: an upper voice that moves between *g* and *c''*, a tenor that in the second section takes over the melody from the superius, *d-f'*, and a low countertenor *G-a*. He has obviously treated this artful poem in very rich *rimes léonines* about a loser in the game of love with some ironic distance.

It opens in a mournful elegiac mood emphasizing the declamation of the words and with a short melisma at the end of the first line, a longer one at the end of the second, and a very long one in the short third line, which furthermore is formed as a short canon between the upper voices. There is something grotesque about this development. The desperation comes clearly out when the tenor takes the leading role in the fourth line with "qu'aultruy les me toult et deveure" (another pushes me away from her and curses me) in bars 15.3-19, and the texture suddenly takes colour from the G- and C-hexachords in the upper voices. The line ends bar 19.3 on *A* in a striking double time rhythmic gesture. The last two lines unfold in rapid text declamation while the upper voice rises from *a* to *c''* before the regular final cadence to *A*. Like many of Busnoys' other chansons, this one is an original creation that brings new ways of expression to the genre.

The song's tonal development has not been easy for the scribes to handle, and they chose the safe solution of one-flat signatures as the default starting point in all three voices. Then the singers had to discover during performance the few places where

naturals were needed. The many diminished fifths on paper (especially noticeable in modern score editions) in this song and in several similar ones by Busnoys have led to some discussion in the scholarly literature – Peter Urquhart has discussed and clarified this topic in detail in his article ‘False Concords in Busnoys’.¹

Its appearance in Nivelles, which has not been discussed much, also serves to clarify the situation. Here the song is placed right after Busnoys’ rondeau cinquain »Ma damoiselle, ma maistresse« (ff. 40v-41), and it is very likely that the two songs belong together as a pair.² Both are love complaints with *finalis* on A, in triple time, and both start with a dotted figure rising up to the low sixth above the starting tone. The first song starts on *e'*, is notated without any hexachordal signatures and has a Phrygian colouring. The second starts on *d'*, is notated with flats in all voices and has a Dorian colouring. Both are in an A mode, and where “Ma damoiselle” uses a turn to the flat side to create contrast in the second section – establishing G Dorian for a short while, “C’est bien Malheur” goes in the opposite direction by using the G Dorian model from the start and then weakening it by implying naturals in the second section and ending just like the first song in pure A mode in the last bars. The pair of songs appear as a systematic exploration of using flats in the mode on A. The first experiment was easy for the copyists to communicate by inserting a few accidentals in the voice parts, but the second was more difficult to bring out in notation as it to an even higher degree depended on the singers’ understanding of hexachordal interpretation.

1 Paula Higgins (ed.), *Antoine Busnoys. Method, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music*. Oxford 1999, pp. 361-87.

2 Edition at <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH044.html>.

Dijon no. 20

Busnoys, *C'est bien malheur qui me queurt seure*

Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 517, ff. 24V-25: Busnoys

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1.4. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me queurt seu - - -
 3. Se For - tu - ne_ou Dieu me se - queu - - -

Tenor

1.4. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me queurt seu - - -
 3. Se For - tu - ne_ou Dieu me se - queu - - -

Contratenor

1.4. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me queurt seu - - -
 3. Se For - tu - ne_ou Dieu me se - queu - - -

5

re lors que je cui - de_es - tre_au des - su - - -
 re en a - mours, ne scay voy - e seu - - -

re lors que je cui - de_es - tre_au
 re en a - mours, ne scay voy -

re lors en que je cui - de_es - tre_au
 re en a - mours, ne scay voy -

9

- - - re de mes a - - -
 - - - re n'au - cuns des - - -

des - su - re de mes a -
 e seu - re n'au - cuns des -

des - su - - - re a -
 e seu - - - re n'au - mes cuns des -

13

- - mours aul - truy
 - - tours que cha -

- - mours aul - truy
 - - tours que cha - - -

- - mours aul -
 - - tours que

1) Contratenor, bar 12.3, c (error).

17

2)

les me tost et de - veu - re. Fault il qu'en ce point je
 cun a - pres moi n'a - queu - re. ³⁾ Se l'ay la ver - te_au - truy

les me tost et de - veu - re. Fault il qu'en ce point je
 cun a - pres moi n'a - queu - re. Se l'ay la ver - te_au - truy

- truy les me tost et de - veu - re. Fault il qu'en ce point
 cha - cun a - pres moi n'a - queu - re. Se l'ay la ver - te_au -

22

de - meu - re? Las, quelz dou - - - lours.
 la meu - re, voi - ez les tours.

de - meu - re? Las, quelz dou - - - lours.
 la meu - re, voi - ez les tours.

je de - meu - re? Las, quelz dou - lours.
 truy la meu - re, voi - ez les tours.

2) *Superius*, bar 17.1-2, 4 *minimae d'' - a' - rest - c''* (error).

3) *Superius*, *text3*, bars 20-22, the line "Se l'ay ... meure" is missing (error).

2a. Pour ne - ant l'ay ser - vy_a tou - te_heu - - -
 2b. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me queurt seu - - -

2a. Pour ne - ant l'ay ser - vy_a tou - te_heu - - -
 2b. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -

2a. Pour ne - ant l'ay ser - vy_a tou court - te_heu - - -
 2b. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -

5
 re, aul - truy re - cueil - le_et je la - beu - - -
 re lors que je cui - de_es - tre_au des - su - - -

re, aul - truy re - cueil - le_et je
 re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au

re, aul - truy re - cueil - le_et je
 re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au

9
 - - - re, pour de ris mes j'ay
 re de mes a - - -

la - beu - re, pour de ris mes j'ay
 des - seu - re de mes a -

la - beu - - - re, pour de ris mes j'ay
 des - seu - - - re de mes a -

13
 plours.
 mours.

plours.
 mours.

plours.
 mours.

Nivelle no. 34

Busnoys, *C'est bien malheur qui me court seure*

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. Vmc. ms. 57,

Chansonnier Nivelle de la Chaussée, ff. 41V-42: Busnois

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1.4. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -
 3. Se For - tu - ne_ou Dieu me se - queu - - -

Tenor

1.4. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -
 3. Se For - tu - ne_ou Dieu me se - queu - - -

Contra

1.4. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -
 3. Se For - tu - ne_ou Dieu me se - queu - - -

5

re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au des - seu - - -
 re en a - mours, ne scay voy - e seu - - -

re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au
 re en a - mours, ne scay voy -

re lors en quant je cui - de_es - tre_au
 re en a - mours, ne scay voy -

9

- - - re de mes a - mours
 - - - re ne_au - cuns des - tours

des - seu - re de mes a - mours
 e seu - re ne_au - cuns des - tours

des - seu - - - re de mes a - mours
 e seu - - - re ne_au - cuns des - tours

13

qu'aul - truy
 que cha -

qu'aul - truy
 que cha - - -

qu'aul -
 que

17

les me toul et de - veu - re. Fault il qu'en ce point je
 cun a - pres moy n'a - queu - re. Se l'ay la ver - te_au - truy

les me toul et de - veu - re. Fault il qu'en ce point je
 cun a - pres moy n'a - queu - re. Se l'ay la ver - te_au - truy

- truy les me toul et de - veu - re. Fault il qu'en ce point
 cha - cun a - pres moy n'a - queu - re. Se l'ay la ver - te_au -

22

de - meu - re? Las, queulx dou - - - lours.
 la meu - re, voy - ez les tours.

de - meu - re? Las, queulx dou - - - lours.
 la meu - re, voy - ez les tours.

je de - meu - re? Las, queulx dou - lours.
 truy la meu - re, voy - ez les tours.

2a. Pour ny - ant l'ay ser - vy_a tou - te_heu - - -
 2b. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -

2a. Pour ny - ant l'ay ser - vy_a tou - te_heu - - -
 2b. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -

2a. Pour ny - ant l'ay ser - vy_a tou - te_heu - - -
 2b. C'est bien Mal - heur qui me court seu - - -

5
 re, aul - truy re - cueil - le_et je la - beu - - -
 re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au des - seu - - -

re, aul - truy re - cueil - le_et je
 re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au

re, aul - truy re - cueil - le_et je
 re lors quant je cui - de_es - tre_au

9
 re, pour ris j'ay plours.
 re de mes a - mours.
 la - beu - re, pour ris j'ay plours.
 des - seu - re de mes a - mours.

la - beu - re, pour ris j'ay plours.
 des - seu - re de mes a - mours.

13