

Anonymous

Par Mallebouche la cruelle a 3

Edition and comments by
Peter Woetmann Christoffersen

July 2024

<http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH278.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

Par Mallebouche la cruelle 3v · Anonymous

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Leuven ff. 50v-51 »Par Mallebouche la cruelle« 3v

Text: Rondeau cinquain, full text in Leuven.

Par Mallebouche la cruelle,
ennemye faulse et rebelle,
aige perdu voustre acointance,
gentille pucelle de France,
dont j'ay au cueur douleur mortelle.

A quoy fault que je *ne* vous celle,
ja soit *ce* que vous soiez celle 1)
pour qui en ay tel desplaysance

par Mallebouche *la cruelle*,
ennemye faulse et rebelle,
aige perdu voustre acointance.

Onques n'y eut en ma querelle
que Loyaute, enqueres *elle* 2)
et y mettes telle ordonnance
que brief puisse avoir alegeance
de ma douleur qui renouvelle

par Mallebouche *la cruelle*,
ennemye faulse et rebelle,
aige perdu voustre acointance,
gentille pucelle de France,
dont j'ay au cueur douleur mortelle.

Due to cruel Mallebouche,
an enemy false and hostile,
have I lost your friendship,
sweet virgin from France,
so I feel a mortal pain in my heart.

Why should I not keep you hidden,
though you are her
for whom I suffer such displeasure

due to cruel Mallebouche,
an enemy false and hostile,
have I lost your friendship.

Never in my courtship has there been
anyone but Loyauté; ask her
and then put everything into such order
that soon I may have relief
from my pain, which is renewed

due to cruel Mallebouche,
an enemy false and hostile,
have I lost your friendship,
sweet virgin from France,
so I feel a mortal pain in my heart.

1) Lines 6-7 are each missing a syllable: “A quoy fault que je vous celle / ja soit que vous soiez celle”

2) Line 13 is missing a syllable: “que Loyaute, enqueres le”

Evaluation of the sources:

The unique rondeau was entered into the Leuven chansonnier by its main scribe without any errors in the music. The texting of the upper voice is very careful; the division of the second line with “ennemye” placed under bars 6-7 and “faulse et rebelle” under bars 9-13 is precise indications, and at the start of the second section, great care has been taken to align the words “gentille pucelle” with the six first *minimae* (bb. 20-21.1). However, in spite of this, three lines of the poem are missing syllables, which make the interpretation of its meaning a bit uncertain.

The song is the third in a series of unique songs consisting of two virelais simples, two rondeaux and a bergerette, which fills out the eighth fascicle in Leuven (ff. 45-54).

Comments on text and music:

It is male love complaint in rich rimes that invoke two allegorical figures, *Malebouche*, the cruel slanderer, and her antithesis, Loyauté, faithfulness. This exercise in the art of *rhétorique* is set for three voices, an upper voice in a modest range (*c'-d''*) and two tenors in the same range (*c-f'*), and it explores the quite rare Lydian mode, notated without any hexachordal signatures, but clearly anchored in a F-tonality.

It exhibits a curious blend of old and new, experiment and tradition side-by-side. The first section is kept entirely in the Lydian mode building on C- and G-hexachords and avoiding flattening of any B's. The contratenor starts before the other voices, and it programmatically announces the F-tonality by sounding the triad on *f*. The first line ends without cadence on *g* with the top voice on the concord's third (*b'*) in bar 5, while the first cadence to *f* comes in bar 9 after four syllables of the poem's second line. This secondary cadence is between the contratenor and the tenor with the contra as the highest voice in a syncopated cadence figure, while the tenor is relegated to a function as harmonic foundation. The upper voice follows the contratenor in parallel thirds above. In this way a sounding reference to the ending of the first line with a third at the top is established – a tone lower. The contra stays above the tenor for the remainder of the line, which ends in an old-fashioned double leading note cadence to F – after some curious plodding by the tenor in bars 11-12. Superius and tenor starts the third line as a canon at the fifth before cadencing in C with the contra as a harmonic filler below.

The pace and sound changes in the rondeau's second section. The contra opens a three-part unison imitation of a descending scale figure, which changes into octave imitation in superius and tenor, and the words are placed on rows of *minimae*. In the last line this imitation evolves into a three-part canon at the octave and unison in complementary rhythms characterized by *semiminima* movement. At the same time b-flats are needed constantly by the abrupt change into the combined F- and C-hexachords. The final cadence to F again involves double leading tones.

The poem is an artful rondeau cinquain, but the music is much lighter in tone with its bright sound and its occasionally rapid delivery of the words. The song is in *tempus imperfectum* with the beats on *semibrevis* values, yet an almost parodic effect occurs when the second section begins with imitation of *minima* movement with a syllable placed under each note. It is as if the composer wanted to demonstrate that he could achieve the greatest possible contrast between the rondeau's sections by changes in timbre and pace of declamation.

“Par Mallebouche” appears in the series of unique songs, where the first two, »Tousdis vous voit mon souvenir« and »Donnez l'aumosne, chiere dame« as well as the last one, »Si vous voulez que je vous ame« are definitely composed by the same musician.¹ Nothing argues against that this song too has the same origin. It exhibits the same mixture of old-fashioned style and sound treatment and newer elements, the same desire to experiment and attempts to sound modern – and a fondness for cadences with the third at the top. It may very well have been composed by a young musician around 1470, well versed in the music of previous generations and with some knowledge of contemporary music, but not entirely familiar with contemporary compositional techniques.

1 Cf. the editions of Leuven nos. 30-31 and 34 at <http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/LISTS/LeuvCont.html>.

Parts of this text are included in my publication *The unica of the Leuven chansonnier*
– a portfolio of songs by an ambitious young musician, August 2024.²

² See further at http://www.pwch.dk/Publications/PWCH_Leuven.pdf.

Leuven no. 32

Par Mallebouche la cruelle (unique)

Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number, ff. 50^v-51

[Superius] Mensura = ♩

1.4. Par Mal - le - bou - che la cru - el -
 3. On - ques n'y eut en ma que - rel -

1.4. Par Mal - le - bou - che la cru - el -
 3. On - ques n'y eut en ma que - rel -

5
 le, en - ne - my - e faul -
 le que Loy - au - te, en -

10
 se_et re - bel - - - - - le, ai - ge per -
 que - res el - - - - - le et y met -

15
 du vous - tre_a - coin - tan - - - -
 tes tel - le_or - don - nan - - - -

ai - ge per - du vous - tre_a - coin - tan - - - -
 et y met - tes tel - le_or - don - nan - - - -

per - du vous - tre_a - coin - tan - - - -
 met - tes tel - le_or - don - nan - - - -

19

ce, gen - til - le pu - cel - le de Fran - - - ce,
 ce que brief puis - se_a - voir a - le - gean - - - ce

24

dont j'ay au do - leur do qui - leur re -
 de ma do - leur do qui - leur re -

28

mor - tel - le.
 nou - vel - le

2a. A quoy fault que je ne vous cel -
 2b. par Mal - le - bou - che la cru - el -

2a. A quoy fault que je ne vous cel -
 2b. par Mal - le - bou - che la cru - el -

2a. A quoy fault que je ne vous cel -
 2b. par Mal - le - bou - che la cru - el -

5
 le, ja soit ce que vous
 le, en - ne - my - e faul -

10
 soi - ez cel - le pour qui en
 se_et re - bel - le, ai - ge per -

15
 ay tel des - play - san - ce
 du vous - tre_a - coin - tan - ce.
 pour ai - ge per - du tel des - play - san - ce
 en ay tel des - play - san - ce
 per - du vous - tre_a - coin - tan - ce.