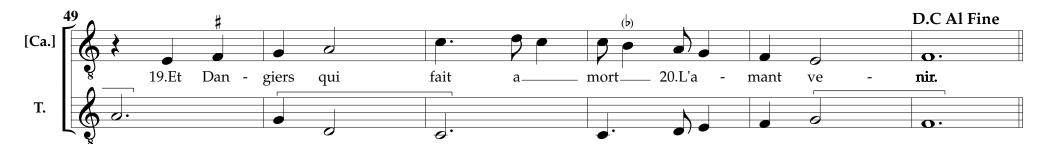


En mon cuer a un descort (V27/24) by Guillaume de Machaut (c.1300-1377)





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Guillaume de Machaut was an important poet and composer, who served as a Royal secretary to John of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia in the first half of the fourteenth century. Since its modern rediscovery and editing, his music has been widely performed and recorded, although this particular song seems to have escaped so far. The poetry of this two-voice virelai takes a musical conceit and applies it to a love relationship mediated by a number of personifications and impelled at all times by the idea of paradoxical (and impossible) reconciliation of opposites. Desire makes the lover bear the discord in the lover's heart caused by his lady's lack of agreement ('accort', accord). But Fear bids him listen to Refusal and Rebuff. Love makes the love suffer the pains caused by the lady's Sweetness and Beauty and only his mental image ('Souvenir') of her, Sweet Thought, and his own loving service allow him to hazard the lot that is thrown to him: whether gaining the return of his love or death in the attempt. Ultimately the lover claims that the discord in the his heart 'accords with him' (i.e. suits him) because the only good in his life is provided by serving his lady. His stoical final tierce text (before the final refrain) asserting his happiness to endure shows Machaut's use of the sonic properties of language at its finest: each line but the last starts with either 'La' or 'Et la', identical in sound to cries of 'Las!' and 'Hélas!', which lead him inevitably 'jusqu'au morir'—to death.

Elizabeth Eva Leach 2012

Most of the Machaut manuscripts can now be viewed online.

A list of links to them can be found at: http://www.stanford.edu/group/dmstech/cgi-bin/drupal/machautmss.

This virelai is on folios 330v-331r in the earliest source (CAMBRIDGE, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library MS. Vg (Ferrell 1).

A set of online tutorials for understanding the notation can be found at: http://diamm.nsms.ox.ac.uk/moodle/login/index.php (access using the key: DIAMM).

| Refi | rain | |
|------|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 | En mon cuer a un descort | There is discord in my heart, which |
| 2 | Qui si fort le point et mort | so strongly bites and pricks me that |
| 3 | Que sans mentir | I'm not lying [to say that] if Love, by |
| 4 | S'amours par son doulz plaisir | means of his sweet pleasure does not |
| 5 | N'i met accort | bring about an accord with my lady, |
| 6 | Aveuc ma dame pour mort | I think I must die. |
| 7 | Me doy tenir. | |
| Vers | ses 1 | |
| 8 | C'est de mon loyal desir | It's [only] my loyal desire [for my |
| 9 | Qui me wet faire gehir | lady] that makes me want to put up |
| 10 | Le mal que port; | with the woes I bear; |
| | | |
| 11 | Et comment j'aim et desir | and [with] how I love and desire |
| 12 | Ma dame sans repentir | my lady [both] without repenting |
| 13 | Et sans confort. | of it and without comfort. |
| Tier | rce 1 | |
| 14 | Mais Paour s'oppose fort | But Fear opposes herself strongly |
| 15 | Et dit que Desirs a tort | [to this], and says that Desire is |
| 16 | De ce querir; | wrong to seek that; she [Fear] cries |
| 17 | Qu'elle crient Refus oïr, | out to listen to Refusal - who never |
| 18 | Qui pas ne dort, | sleeps - and to Rebuff - who makes |
| 19 | Et Dangiers qui fait a mort | death come to the lover. |
| 20 | L'amant venir. | |
| 21-2 | 7, Refrain : En mon cuer | |
| Vers | ses 2 | |
| 28 | Si ne scay que devenir | So I don't know what will happen |
| 29 | Quant de ma dame remir | when my lady shows again her no- |
| 30 | Le gentil port, | ble bearing [i.e. when I next see |
| | | her], |
| 31 | Car Paour me fait fremir | because Fear makes me fret and |
| 32 | Et trembler et tressaillir | tremble and shake at her exhorta- |
| 33 | Par son enort. | tion. |

| Tier | rce 2 | |
|------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 34 | Et Desirs sans nul deport | And Desire, with no pity, through |
| 35 | Fait mon cuer par son effort | his efforts makes my heart change |
| 36 | Teindre et palir; | colour and grow pale; Beauty comes |
| 37 | Biaute me vient assaillir; | to assail me; Sweetness oppresses |
| 38 | Douceur m'endort; | me; but Love just makes me shut up |
| 39 | Mais Amours me fait au fort | and suffer. |
| 40 | Taire et souffrir. | |
| | 7, Refrain : En mon cuer | |
| ļ | ses 3 | |
| 48 | Las! einssi m'estuet languir, | Alas! Thus must I languish, com- |
| 49 | Pleindre, plourer et gemir | plain, weep, and moan in discom- |
| 50 | En desconfort; | fort; |
| | | |
| 51 | Ne bien n'ay fors Souvenir, | I have no goods except Souvenir, |
| 52 | Doulz Penser, et li servir: | Sweet Thought and serving her: that |
| 53 | La me confort, | comforts me. |
| Tier | ce 3 | |
| 54 | La seulement me deport, | That alone makes me merry; I've |
| 55 | La sont getté tuit mi sort, | thrown all my dice there, and that's |
| 56 | Et la me tir; | my lot; I wish to live and die there, |
| 57 | La weil je vivre et morir, | since that's in accord with me [i.e. |
| 58 | Et la m'accort; | that suits me]; that will be all my |
| 59 | La seront tuit mi ressort | refuge until death. |
| 60 | Jusqu'au morir. | |
| 61-6 | 67, Refrain : En mon cuer | |

Translation: Elizabeth Eva Leach (with thanks to Helen J. Swift)

