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## The *Donnei des Amants* and Courtly Tradition

Ce morceau... nous montre quelle influence la littérature romanesque inaugurée au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle dans la société anglo-française pouvait exercer sur les mœurs: cette influence était naturellement pernicieuse, comme l'a été et l'est celle de romans d'époques plus récentes.

GASTON PARIS

The *Donnei des Amants* is an anonymous Anglo-Norman poem of 1,244 octosyllabic lines preserved in ex-Phillipps 3713, now Cologny-Geneva, MS. Bodmer 82<sup>1</sup>. It relates how the poet overhears a conversation between a supplicating lover and his argumentative, recalcitrant lady. Since the *Donnei* has only been the subject of passing comment from scholars, and since it is in my opinion worthy of more than this, I wish to subject it here to a general re-appraisal and situate it in the literary context of the late 12th century<sup>2</sup>.

It has been clear since Gaston Paris's edition that the *Donnei* is an original Anglo-Norman work, and not an insular copy of a continental poem. The language, judging from the versification, rhymes, and some lexical items, is distinctly Anglo-Norman, although Paris typically hastens to de-emphasize the importance of this. He compares the poet to «les bons poètes anglo-normands comme Thomas ou Huon de Rotelande», that is to say, those whose French is still «correct» because it is chronologically close to that «des Français de France»<sup>3</sup>. From a literary point of view, the *Donnei* belongs to the common continental and insular literary heritage of its time, and is more illustrative of the unity of medieval literature in French than of differences between dialectal and regional corpuses.

<sup>1</sup> Edited by G. Paris, «*Le Donnei des Amants*», *R* 25 (1986): 495-541. For a description of the manuscript, see F. Vieliard, *Manuscrits français du moyen âge*, Cologny-Geneva 1975, pp. 103-8.

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography on the *Donnei* is meagre. See D. J. Shirt, *The Old French Tristan Poems: A Bibliographical Guide*, London 1980, pp. 133-4.

<sup>3</sup> Paris, p. 531.

The opening of the poem is lyrical in its associations, but quickly modulates to something approaching dream-vision: it is early Summer, the poet hears the sound of birdsong, rises early one morning and heads towards an enclosed garden. The birds are learned ones: «Oï ses oiselès chanter, | Un respundre, autre oposer» (15-6). *Respondere* and *opponere* are terms used in dialectic argumentation, as Gaston Paris pointed out, but the use of rhetorical language is more than just «mots . . . pris au figuré»<sup>4</sup>. The sound of the birds activates the poet's «memorie» (18), a vital means of poetic invention<sup>5</sup>. Remembering how God has endowed all creatures with the capacity for joy, the poet's memory then responds with a reminder that there are also those who hate amusement, joy, and song: the «vilein», and in particular, the «gelus». The singing birds are there to «tarier le fel vilein» (44), that is to say, to act as a rhetorical and dialectical counterpoint to the grumbling of the *gelus*. This entire passage (17-84) is in effect a succession of oppositions sustained by the threefold use of the word *contrarie*: «Contrarie est mut la sue [i.e., the *vilein's*] vie» (33); «Vilein qui est a Deu contrarie» (37); «Al vilein est tuche contrarie» (60).

*Joie* is closely — and, of course, traditionally — associated with *chant*, but here the harmony is particularly complex. The song of the birds, functioning dialectically, is reinforced by human and celestial music («A la celeste armonie | E as anges de paraïs» [34-5]), and the musical metaphor elaborates the basic opposition between the *vilein/gelus*, on the one hand, and *nus*, the joyfully inclined, on the other<sup>6</sup>. There are likewise two corresponding stylistic levels visible, *gravis* and *humilis* in the terms of Virgil's wheel<sup>7</sup>.

The poet's musings on the *vilein*, which practically constitute a text set to the melody of the birds, cease when the latter are interrupted by the appearance of a pair of lovers. In a bizarre, almost voyeuristic, variant on the Pyramus and Thisbe theme,

<sup>4</sup> Paris, p. 501, note 2.

<sup>5</sup> On medieval memory, see F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London 1966, esp. pp. 50-104, and P. Klopsch, *Einführung in die Dichtungslehren des lateinischen Mittelalters*, Darmstadt 1980, esp. p. 150. Geoffrey of Vinsauf devotes a whole section to memory in the *Poetria Nova*, ed. by E. Faral, in *Les arts poétiques du XII<sup>e</sup> et du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris 1924, ll. 1969-2030.

<sup>6</sup> The significant couplet, «Kar a geluz, tut sanz mensunge, | La nostre joie est fale e sunge» (47-8), anticipates the opening lines of the *Roman de la Rose*.

<sup>7</sup> See Klopsch, *Einführung*, p. 151.

the poet peeks between two boards in the garden fence to obtain a better view of the encounter. He recognizes the lover as someone he knows, but refuses to reveal his identity. On the other hand, he feels free to relate everything he saw and heard: «Kar ren ne vi de vilainie» (112). The preamble seems to end here, as the poet now designates his poem and gives it a title: «Ki demande de cest romanz, | *Le Donei ad num des amanz*» (115-6).

The poet's protestation of the propriety of the two lovers' behaviour is belied somewhat by the opening lines of the description:

Ore oiez dunt cum se cuntindrent  
 Quant el gardin ensemble vindrent.  
 Cil voleit fere sun pleisir,  
 Mès el ne li volt pas suffrir.

(117-20)

The beloved's refusal to grant more than a single kiss throws the lover into a typical state, again defined by opposites: «Ore est pale, ore est colurez, | Joius, e murnes pus assez» (127-8). But the start of the narrative has been a false one, for the poet now begins to digress in the following terms:

Tant cum de lor desputeisun  
 Retinc solum m'entencium  
 En cest escrit ai tut noté  
 Par rime mis e ordeiné.  
 Tels ensamples plusors oï  
 Ke pas ne voil metre en obli,  
 Einz les voil traire en remembrance.

(141-7)

These lines are heavy with associations. «Desputeisun» is another word taken from the language of legal dialectic, of course, and the poet's memory is presented as the agent of his invention, identifying those parts of the debate suitable for retention as *matiere* for the poem, a versified and ordered discourse<sup>8</sup>. The *matiere* consists of «ensamples» (145) worthy of being put into the romance for posterity's sake. Ll. 145-6 are strongly sug-

<sup>8</sup> On *inventio* and the general relevance of the Latin arts of poetry for Old French literature, see the indispensable articles of D. Kelly, «The Scope of the Treatment of Composition in the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Arts of Poetry», *Speculum* 41 (1966): 261-78, and «Theory of Composition in Medieval Narrative Poetry and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*», *Mediaeval Studies* 31 (1969): 117-48.

gestive of a number of passages from Marie de France's *Lais*, where she stresses the function of the poetic act as a guarantee against oblivion<sup>9</sup>. Poetry thus begins with authorial memory (*memorie*) as a means of invention, and aims at the preservation of worthy material in the collective memory (*remembrance*), whence it can be reclaimed by the act of reading or recitation<sup>10</sup>.

Next comes a standard warning about the potentially corruptive influence of the classics, in this case, Ovid, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, and Cato. Although their works are full of «fables... famfelues» (155-6), they can be interpreted by the informed in such a way as to be beneficial: «Tut oium nus des aucturs fable, | Noter i put l'em chose estable» (169-70). The particular authors referred to and the use of the word «aucturs» (151, 169) clearly suggest the medieval *accessus ad auctores* and the general tradition of justifying the reading of apparently mendacious, non-Christian, literature<sup>11</sup>. Once more, the argument is based on a play of oppositions:

... Ke ne pot nul hom sages vivre  
S'il ne set qu'est sen e folie,  
Afaitement e vilainie:  
L'un contrarie tut a estrus  
Par l'autre per cunuisum nus.

(164-8)

The *vilein/non-vilein* contrast is also taken up in a slightly modified form with the admonition about the danger of letting such works fall into the hands of «un lai» (157) as opposed, presumably, to those of a cleric<sup>12</sup>.

Whereas the author had designated his poem as a «romanz» (115) and an «escrit» (143; cf. also 180), he now calls it a «traité»

<sup>9</sup> For example, see the Prologue of the *Lais* (ed. by A. Ewert, Oxford 1944), ll. 35-6: «... Ke pur remembrance les firent | Des aventures k'il oïrent».

<sup>10</sup> See D. Kelly, «Obscurity and Memory: Sources for Invention in Medieval French Literature», in *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*, ed. by L. Ebin, Kalamazoo (Mi.) 1984, pp. 33-56, esp. p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> See Klopsch, *Einführung*, pp. 62-3. Jean de Meun discusses the matter in a well-known passage of the *Roman de la Rose*, ed. by F. Lecoy, Paris 1968-70, 3 vols., I, l. 7132 ff. The most celebrated modern critical study of it is probably D.W. Robertson, jr., *A Preface to Chaucer*, Princeton 1962.

<sup>12</sup> The sentiment is, of course, related to the biblical pearls-before-swine image taken up by Augustine, Alanus de Insulis, and countless other medieval commentators.

(173), indicating more accurately its didactic nature and purpose. The poem is intended for young people, and is being written for one «juvencels» (175) in particular, for his delight and edification («Pur enveiser e pur aprendre» [177])<sup>13</sup>. Once more, a simple idea is used as an occasion for a contrast-based digression, this time on youth and old age. Thus far, the poet has consistently applied a technique whereby the mention of one type of person or quality immediately evokes its opposite. This is visible on the levels of entire passages or even just lines; the following two couplets are characteristic:

Ki en juvente n'est joius  
Ben deit estre veillard grusus.  
Joie e deduit le cors sustent,  
Ire et penser le met a nent.

(187-90)

The idea of literature as distraction (177) is now developed (191-208) in terms of social and political responsibility that suggest that the intended recipient is a young nobleman recently come into his inheritance. This is an example of another frequently used technique whereby simple statement is followed by detailed elaboration.

The digressions on the reading of the classics and on the contrast youth/old age are in fact *excursus*, as the poet now makes clear as he returns to his subject-matter proper: «Mais ore ai fet [trop granz] tresturs; | Jo revendrai a *mun dreit curs* | E al gardin e al donney» (209-11). Yet the «*dreit curs*» turns out to consist of a continued series of *excursus*, of which the next (217-58) takes as its point of departure a proverbial comparison to the effect that grief, like fire, needs an outlet. As smoke indicates the presence of fire, so a downcast face reveals love. Again, the sentiment is expressed in a series of opposites: «Jeté m'avez de ris en plur. | E de leessee en grant tristur, | E de repos en grant travail» (245-7). Naturally, only the beloved can offer a solution.

The oppositional structure is maintained through the next section (259 ff.): whereas the lover's state had been revealed by his mien, the beloved's intentions are far from evident from her

<sup>13</sup> The poet says he will name the recipient, but does not appear to do so. The name may have occurred in one of the apparent lacunae; if it is encoded as an acrostic, I have been unable to find it.

appearance. The lover requires a two-stage proof, as it were, for since his lady's protestations of love are not enough, she must prove her affection by actions. As the poet earlier justified the study of classical *aucturs*, the lover now appeals to them for support:

«Entre les diz les fez mustrez:  
Od ovre, ço diënt auctor,  
Est provance de vere amor.  
N'est pas amor de bone eschole  
O nule ren n'ad fors parole».

(288-92)

The dialogue between the two lovers continues the series of statements and counter-statements. To the lover's appeal to the *aucturs*, the lady *replies* by expressing her fear of slanderers:

«Ke nus avum assez noturs,  
Mut espianz e mut guaiturs,  
Ki espient nostre deduit  
Forment le jor e plus la nuit».

(331-4)

The associations here are clearly in the first instance with the courtly lyric and the figures of the *losengeors*, but in the light of the subsequent reference to Tristan and Iseut and the *Tristan Rossignol* episode, there may be a retrospective echo of Bérout, whose lyricism scholars have not hesitated to point out<sup>14</sup>.

I have already had occasion to comment on a proverbial tendency of the poet, and he indeed furnishes both of the lovers with a store of proverbs and dictums to use in the cut and thrust of dialogue<sup>15</sup>. Whilst proverbs can be found throughout the poem, they are particularly concentrated in this passage: that of fire and smoke, and that of matching words with deeds in love just cited (219-20, 288-92); «Ne targe trop ki ben atent»

<sup>14</sup> See my «Le *Tristan* de Bérout en tant qu'intertexte», forthcoming in the John L. Grigsby Memorial Volume.

<sup>15</sup> The popularity of proverbs in the Middle Ages was enormous. The rhetoricians prescribe their use, particularly in prologues: e. g., Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, ed. by E. Faral, *Les arts poétiques*, pp. 113-6; for John of Garland, proverbs were one of the possible answers to the question of where to seek *inventio* (Faral, *Les arts poétiques*, p. 378). Interesting work is currently being carried out by E. Schulze-Busacker; see especially her *Proverbes et expressions proverbiales dans la littérature narrative du moyen âge français*, Paris 1985.

(304), «Kar Deus en pou de tens labore» (342); «Mauveisse haste n'en est pruz» (382), all three used by the lady to urge her lover to be patient; «Li famelus lunges atent | Ke le manger veit en present» (307-8), in which the lover makes an interesting association between food and the act of love, and «Mut suffre lunges cil que pent» (348), making the same point without the gastronomic comparison. Again, the poet's clerical training is clearly visible, and he is following the precepts of the rhetoricians. Not for nothing were the lover's opening words: «En proverbes avum oï | De Salomon e de Davi» (217-8).

If the lady's concern with the *losengeors* («noturs» [331], «espianz» and «guaiturs» [332], «encuseür» [373], «espie» [376]) may hint at Bérout, the lover's own language has strong Tristanian overtones: «Ostez! pur Deu, ma bele amie! | Ne estes vus ma mort, ma vie?» (383-4)<sup>16</sup>. The way is thus prepared for the first allusion proper to Tristan and Iseut that follows the list of women who succoured their lovers (Dido, Ydoine, Ysme-ne, Helen, and Iseut). The mention of Tristan and Iseut calls to the lover's memory («Or recorderz . . .» [404]) the suffering of the pair. The mention of Iseut's escape from the stake refers to an episode preserved in Bérout<sup>17</sup>, and the tone is clearly reminiscent of the same version, especially in the conviction that God is on the lover's side: «Mès Deus mut tost la delivra; | Si fait il tuz leaus amanz, | E blame e het tuz desevanz» (418-20)<sup>18</sup>. Line 416, «Ben en avez oï le veir,» belongs to the tradition of referring to widely known and unspecified tales that forms part of the Tristanian fiction.

The lady recognizes the lover's illustrations as «ensamples» (430) but restates, albeit more compassionately, her determination to show her love openly only when the time is right. The lover's response is to relate the tale of *Tristan Rossignol*. The use of the Tristan story is threefold, progressing from a simple mention (393, 403) through an allusion to Bérout (414-20) (and, later, to a version of the *Folie Tristan* [663-74]) to the telling

<sup>16</sup> This couplet is clearly in the same tradition as Marie de France's «Bele amie, si est de nus: | Ne vuz sanz mei, ne mei sanz vus» (*Chevrefoil*, ed. by A. Ewert, ll. 77-8) and more particularly Gottfried von Strassburg's quotation from Thomas: «Isot ma drue, Isot m'amie, | En vus ma mort, en vus ma vie» ll. 19213-4 and 19409-10 in the edition of G. Weber, Darmstadt 1967.

<sup>17</sup> Ed. by A. Ewert, Oxford 1939, ll. 1083 ff.

<sup>18</sup> For example, ll. 909-11.



of an entire episode (453-662). On each occasion, the poet's memory *invents* something progressively more elaborate; indeed, the lover's reproach to his lady also constitutes a comment on the ineffectiveness of her poetic memory, her inability to recapture and appreciate the significance of the «ensample»: «Oï! bele, poi vus sovent | E relment en memorie tent | Quel chose Ysoud fit pur Tristran» (453-5).

The lover presents the *Tristan Rossignol* story as if it were something his lady ought to know. Apart from functioning as a reproach, it is also part of the same fiction of unspecified tales, common knowledge, evoked in l. 416. It is evident that this type of allusion becomes a conventional part of the Tristan romancer's *matiere*, whilst at the same time having its origins in a real diversity of traditions. More than any other medieval matter, the Tristan story seems to have co-existed not only in variant versions of the whole, but also in a corpus of shorter, episodic, tales, to which the *Folies*, Marie de France's *Chevrefoil*, Gerbert de Montreuil's *Tristan Menestrel*, and *Tristan Rossignol* may bear a close resemblance. The lover therefore follows his evocation of the tradition with a concrete instance of it<sup>19</sup>.

All of these short tales are concerned with the exiled Tristan making clandestine contact with Iseut. The brevity of such a meeting, necessitated by the location of the episode within the story as a whole, rendered it particularly susceptible to an intense and lyrical treatment<sup>20</sup>. There could hardly be a more appropriate and poetic means for Tristan to indicate his presence to Iseut than by imitating («contrefere,» 465, 477)<sup>21</sup> birdsong, in particular that of the nightingale: «Tristran dehors e chante e gient | Cum russinol que prent congé | En fin d'esté od grant pité» (494-6). The general situation of Iseut in the

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent study of this theme, see D. Kelly, «La vérité tristanienne: quelques points de repère dans les romans», in *Tristan et Iseut, mythe européen et mondial*, ed. by D. Buschinger, Göppingen 1987, pp. 168-80. The idea that the *Donnei* poet is telling *Tristan Rossignol* for the first time seems most unlikely. See J.M. Telfer, «The Evolution of a Medieval Theme», *Durham University Journal* 45 (1952-3): 25-34, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Telfer (loc. cit.) thinks that the lyricism of *Tristan Rossignol* indicates its 'genesis' in the lyric tradition.

<sup>21</sup> «Contrefere» is a musical term and therefore particularly appropriate in the light of Tristan's reputation as author and singer of Breton *lais*. See Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann, «Tristan als Dichter bretonischer *Lais*», *RF* 98 (1986): 258-76.

chamber with Mark, and Tristan the nightingale singing outside, is strongly evocative of Marie de France's *Laüstic* or possibly *Yonec*; Iseut thus takes on aspects of Marie's *malmariées*. A further link to the *lai* is the repeated use of the word *aventure* in ll. 525 and 660, and particularly in the couplet: «Dunt se mistrent en aventure | Ki tant fu periluse e dure» (411-2).

The specific echoes, however, are of other versions of the Tristan story. The designations of the dwarf are unmistakably in the spirit of Bérout: «E li fel neims que mut plus doute» (491); «E li culvers neim . . . | . . . | Li fel culvert de males ars» (596-8)<sup>22</sup>. Other aspects of *Tristan Rossignol* seem closer to Bérout than any other version: the unseemly scrap between Iseut and the dwarf, for example, with its violence and colloquial language, inclines towards the *fabliau*, a distinct tendency of Bérout's<sup>23</sup>. Iseut's lament about her divided life, that culminates in the line «'J'ai ci le cors, il ad le quer'» (509) is part of a complex intertextual network concerning the body and heart motif. Thomas makes much of it, and it forms part of the involved question of Chrétien's relationship to the Tristan poems, particularly in *Cligés*<sup>24</sup>.

In the *Donnei*, however, we are rarely allowed to forget that the poet is a clerk, trained in the formal medieval arts of poetry. For example, his depiction of Mark as a *gelus* (the logical pendant to Iseut as *malmariée*) enables him to enter into a forty-six line digression on the etymology of the word *gelus*. What Gaston Paris regarded as a clumsy interruption into the charming tale of *Tristan Rossignol* can better be seen as *inventio* based on *ethimologia*<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, at the end of the Tristan tale, the lover reminds his lady — and the audience — of its function:

Ysoud mustra ben par cel fait,  
Ke deit a essample estre treit,  
S'amie n'est fine ne pure  
Ke ne se met en aventure  
E en perilus hardement  
S'ele aime del tut lealment.

(657-62)

<sup>22</sup> For example, Bérout, ll. 643-8.

<sup>23</sup> See my «Le Tristan de Bérout en tant qu'intertexte».

<sup>24</sup> See especially H. Weber, *Chrestien und die Tristandichtung*, Frankfurt/M. 1976, pp. 29-50.

<sup>25</sup> Paris, p. 536, n. 4. For *ethimologia* as *inventio* in John of Garland, see Klopsch, *Einführung*, p. 148.

The use of an episode from the Tristan story as an *exemplum* is unusual, but the lady's response, beginning with a brief allusion to a version of the *Folie Tristan*, modulates through a «glose» (699) on Dido and Aeneas, to a full-length *exemplum* taken from the *Disciplina Clericalis*<sup>26</sup>.

It is impossible to say which of the two *Folies* ll. 665-74 allude to, but the story of Tristan's disguise as a madman, taken from the same tradition as *Tristan Rossignol* itself, is used by the lady to counter the lover's argument<sup>27</sup>. Whereas he is attempting to persuade her to be more demonstrative of her affections, she says that Tristan's love for Iseut cannot be doubted in spite of his appearance of insanity; indeed, public behaviour is often the opposite of private sentiment. This leads her to an example of the dangers of rewarding such displays of emotion, that of Dido and Aeneas, a particularly appropriate case, since the lover had cited it himself earlier (392, 399). For the lover, Dido was merciful in responding to Aeneas's obvious love; for the lady, she was foolish because her kindness was abused when Aeneas became overweeningly arrogant. Up until this point, it is the lover who has employed the rhetorical techniques learned in the schools, but in her commentary on Dido and Aeneas, the lady shows herself equally adept, introducing it thus: «La glose entendre devez si...» (699). The «glose» consists of forty or so lines on how integrates always bite the hands that feed them, and culminates in a proverb:

Cum li vileinz dit: «Pur meuz fait  
De lui sanz faille avra cou frait.  
Kar la nature est del culvert  
De rendre mal qui ben li sert».

(749-52)

The proverb functions both as a conclusion to the Dido-Aeneas gloss and an introduction to the next *exemplum*, that of

<sup>26</sup> On the *exemplum* in general, see J.-Th. Welter, *L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge*, Paris 1929. The *exemplum* in the arts of poetry is discussed briefly by Klopsch, *Einführung*, pp. 130, 148.

<sup>27</sup> Ll. 669-70 («Rere se fit, dreit cume fol, | Barbe, gernuns e chef e col») recall both the *Folie de Berne*, ll. 154-5 («Haut fu tonduz, lonc ot le col, | A mervoille sambla bien fol») and the *Folie d'Oxford*, ll. 209-10 («Od les forces haut se tundi; | Ben senlle fol u esturdi»). Cf. also *Donnei*, l. 671, «E bricun se feseit clamer» and the *Folie d'Oxford*, l. 224, «Mult l'ad cum fol bricun tenu.» The *Folies* are quoted in the edition of J. Bédier, Paris 1907.

the *vilein* and the serpent, «Ke li clerz lissent en escrit» (754). This is a much amplified version of a tale from the *Disciplina Clericalis* which seems to be taken directly from the Latin text rather than from its vernacular adaptation, the *Chastoïement d'un père à son fils*<sup>28</sup>. By way of illustration, the following are some of the verbal resemblances between the *Donnei* and the *Disciplina*:

pasturel (770)	pastoribus (12, 6)
en liens mult ferm tenue (772)	alligatum (12, 7)
pur eschaufer (789)	calefacere (12, 7-8)
Si l'estreint (805)	strinxit (12, 9)
Ma nature faz a estrus (808)	Naturam meam... facio (12, 11)
mal pur ben (810)	malum pro bono (12, 10)
Entremetez   D'eschaper ent si vus poez (909-10)	Modo... si potes evadere discede (12, 17-8)

There are few verbal resemblances between the *Donnei* and the *Chastoïement*, despite the use of the same proverb in both texts<sup>29</sup>.

When the *vilein* suggests taking the dispute to a judge, the serpent eagerly responds: «J'esliz a juge le gupil: | Il est sotil estrangement» (834-5). The idea of a fox as judge inevitably evokes the *Roman de Renart* in Old French, and that *matière* is thus added to the intertextual network to which the *Donnei* belongs. The author of the *Chastoïement* also made a Renart of the *vulpis* of the *Disciplina*, but explicitly, referring to «'Miresse Renart le gopil'» (915). Before the case is actually taken to the fox, the poet, demonstrating his learning once again, interjects another proverb purportedly taken from the *Sententiae* of Petrus Lombardus:

...Le bon proverbe al Lumbard:  
«Rat en escripe herbergé,  
Serpent en sein e feu mucé;  
Kar icès treis rendent par num  
A leur oste mal gueredon».

(848-52)

<sup>28</sup> *Die Disciplina Clericalis des Petrus Alfonsi*, ed. by A. Hilka and W. Söderhjelm, Heidelberg 1911, Exemplum v: De homine et serpente; *Le chastoïement d'un père a son fils*, ed. by Edward D. Montgomery, jr., Chapel Hill 1971, ll. 887-954.

<sup>29</sup> *Donnei*, ll. 749-50, cf. *Chastoïement*, ll. 911-2: «N'as tu oï que por bien fait | A l'en tele ore est le col fait?» These are the words of the serpent to the *vilein*.

The amplification in the *Donnei* consists largely of description and expanded dialogue generated by sparse indications in the Latin original. Gaston Paris unfairly dismissed some of the rhetorical elaborations as «du remplissage» (p. 541), but did correctly point out the legalistic nature of much of the episode, concluding that the poet was «un *plaidier* expérimenté» (loc. cit.)<sup>30</sup>. This is further evidence in support of the view that the *Donnei* is a poem imbued with a formal, dialectical, legal, and somewhat «schoolish» rhetoric. After the serpent has been placed back in the trap, the fox, indulging the poet's predilection for proverbs, concludes his judgement appropriately with a reference to «li seives Salomon» (921). It seems as if the model copied by the scribe of the *Donnei* was lacunary at this point, as the conclusion to this episode and the introduction to the next *exemplum* are lacking. There is no break in the manuscript.

In the missing passage, the dialogue switches back to the lover, and the tale of the *vilein* and the little bird is told by him rather than by the lady. This story, also taken directly from the *Disciplina Clericalis*, has been studied in some detail by Michel Potelle, and so I shall consider it only briefly here<sup>31</sup>. Examples of verbal resemblance are:

Un vilein a un tens esteit,  
 Ki assez près d'un bois maneit,  
 Li quels aveit un bel verger  
 Ou suelent oiseus repeirer  
 E faire joie el tens d'esté,  
 Quant flurs e foilles s'unt mustré.

(*Donnei*, 929-34)

Quidam habuit virgultum, in quo rivulis fluentibus herba viridis erat et pro habilitate loci conveniebant ibi volucres modulamine vocum cantus diversos exercentes.

(*Disciplina*, 33, 13-7)

<sup>30</sup> Examples of legal terms are: «pleider en seisine» (842), «clamur» (855), «'Guger . . . ouel'» (898), «'Kar solun les diz d'ambes parz | Volum nus fere les esgarz'» (967-8), «'Les paroles dites sunt ci, | Mès vostre fet unques ne vi'» (977-8).

<sup>31</sup> M. Potelle, «Le conte de l'oiselet dans *Le Donnei des Amans*», in *Mélanges . . . Rita Lejeune*, Gembloux 1969, II, pp. 1299-307. There are other versions of the tale in French, in particular that known as the *Lai de l'oiselet*. *Les trois savoirs*, a poem in ex-Phillipps 25970, now MS. Princeton University Library, Taylor Collection, Phillipps 25970, shows close textual resemblances to the *Donnei*. The relationship between the two versions is not clear. See P. Meyer, «Notice du M.S. 25970 de la Bibliothèque Phillipps (Cheltenham)», *R* 37 (1908): 217-21.

«Prisuns de canter n'unt talent».

(*Donnei*, 977)

Pro nichilo, quia retenta nec prece nec precio cantabo.

(*Disciplina*, 33, 23)

«Ou tu en cage chanteras,  
Ou tu en fin mangé seras».

(*Donnei*, 1001-2)

Nisi cantaveris, te comedam.

(*Disciplina*, 33, 24)

The amplification effected in this *exemplum* is of the same kind as in the serpent tale; most of it is expanded dialogue, since the exchanges between the bird and the *vilein* are the very basis of the story. Potelle has pointed out that as the bird becomes aware that the *vilein* is about to be duped, his part of the dialogue increases and the *vilein's* diminishes. The bird's volubility is a mechanism for the poet's *amplificatio*, and the debate between the *vilein* and the bird a means of continuing on another level the stream of dialectic that courses throughout the poem as a whole. The poem began with the birds in the garden responding and opposing, and continued with the lover's debate; the lady's primary *exemplum* is based on legal claim and counterclaim between the *vilein* and the serpent, and the lover's on a debating technique that allows the bird verbally to deceive the *vilein*. It should further be noted that whereas in the first *exemplum* from the *Disciplina*, the *vilein* is the victor, in the second, the animal gains the upper hand.

In addition to the rhetorical *amplificatio* just discussed, the poet has added, almost imperceptibly sometimes, passages that draw the *exemplum* into the general context of late 12th-century French literature. For example, the passage describing the capture of the bird (945-54) recalls ll. 93-100 of Marie de France's *Laiistic*, and ll. 953-4 in particular of the *Donnei* («Par ses engins e par sa glu | L'oseil petit ad retenu») recall ll. 99-100 of the *lai*: «... il ne mettent laz ne glu, | Tant que pris l'unt e retenu»<sup>32</sup>. The bird's promise to return and sing at the *vilein's* command is also — if less specifically — reminiscent of Yonec's to his mistress and that of the fairy to Lanval.

<sup>32</sup> Ed. Ewert.

The *jeu-parti* offered by the *vilein* to the bird evokes an entire medieval genre, and the terms in which the offer is couched bear close resemblances to a number of scenes from romance<sup>33</sup>. As well as being in the spirit of various fables of the fox and the crow, the dialogue between the *vilein* and the bird is stylistically reminiscent of the pledging of troth as we find it in romance:

«Di mei les sens, si t'en iras  
E tuz dis mès quite serras...

Seit dunques sur ta leauté.  
Ton covenant or i parra».

(1023-4, 1034-5)

The description of the *vilein's* lament in ll. 1088-91 also belongs conventionally to romance:

... Trait ses chevols e tort ses meins;  
A tere chet e bat sun piz,  
Si leve noisse e plurs e criz,  
Si se demente e pleint assez.

The author of the *Donnei* has taken pains to indicate both that his poem is part of the general courtly tradition and that he is a learned author availing himself of dialectical, legal, and rhetorical techniques. Most of these aspects of the poem are outward-looking, points of contact with an enormously complex courtly and clerkly intertext, but the poet is equally adept at intratextuality, at bringing about a technical and thematic cohesiveness within the *Donnei* itself. One obvious example is that of birdsong: the poet wakes up to the sound of birds, Tristan imitates the birds, the final *exemplum* opens with birdsong, and one of the interlocutors is a bird who, like Tristan, «Tuz chanz d'oiseals sout contrefere» (941; cf. 465, 477).

Equally striking is the poet's concern for memory. His opening poetic statement is punctuated with references to «memorie», «membrance» and «remembrance» (19, 147); the lover's unrequited passion is seen as a threat to his «memorie» (249); the lady reproaches her lover with having forgotten her protestation of love (267-8); the lover doubts the lady's ability to

<sup>33</sup> See P. Remy, «Jeu-parti et roman breton», in *Mélanges... Maurice Delbouille*, Gembloux 1964, II, pp. 545-61. Potelle (p. 1301) talks of the *Donnei* as a 'pastiche' of a *jeu-parti*, but does not elaborate.

remember the examples set by Dido, Ydoine, Ismene, Helen and Iseut (404, 434, 453-4); the bird's triumph over the *vilein* in the final *exemplum* is dependent on the latter's not being able to remember what he had been told a few minutes previously.

The third major cohesive element of the *Donnei* is the frequent use of proverbs and proverbial expressions. There are almost twenty examples in the course of the poem, or roughly one every sixty lines. The use of proverbs is recommended by the arts of poetry, as we have seen, and the poet of the *Donnei* accordingly uses them for various purposes, at the beginning, middle, and end of his *exempla*; they spark the memory, provide starting-points for digressions, corroborate preceding arguments, and link one section to another.

The final lines of the poem consist of the lady's summing up. It begins with a lament for the olden days, not without similarities to the opening of Chrétien's *Yvain*<sup>34</sup>, and ends with an invitation to the lover to reflect again on the «ensamples» (1216, 1236) that the two of them have had the opportunity to hear in the course of the poem. The *Donnei des amants* clearly reveals the medieval taste for proverbs (*sententiae*) and *exempla*, not only as ornament but also as the very substances of poetry. Its formal techniques and apparently schoolish rhetoric lie at the very heart, not on the periphery, of the poet's craft.

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<sup>34</sup> *Der Löwenritter*, ed. by W. Foerster, Halle 1887, ll. 12 ff.