

*'Fine words and joyful melodies': some  
stylistic aspects of the love songs of  
Bernart de Ventadorn*

Article

Published Version

Boitani, P. (1976) 'Fine words and joyful melodies': some  
stylistic aspects of the love songs of Bernart de Ventadorn.  
Reading Medieval Studies, II. pp. 14-44. ISSN 0950-3129  
Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/84235/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the  
work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

Publisher: University of Reading

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law,  
including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other  
copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in  
the [End User Agreement](#).

[www.reading.ac.uk/centaur](http://www.reading.ac.uk/centaur)

**CentAUR**

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online



'FINE WORDS AND JOYFUL MELODIES': SOME STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF THE LOVE SONGS OF BERNART DE VENTADORN<sup>1</sup>

The opening words of my title are taken from the contemporary *vida* of Bernart de Ventadorn, which (as in the case of other eminent Provençal troubadours) presents us with a curious mixture of factual and fictitious biographical detail. We are told that Bernart *aveia sotilessa et art de trobar bos motz e gais sons* ('had subtlety and the art of composing fine words and joyful melodies'), suggesting that the poet himself was responsible for creating both the words and music of his songs, rather than hiring a jongleur to provide the musical accompaniment. Today there remain forty-four love poems that can with reasonable certainty be attributed to Bernart, all taking much the same form — with three exceptions: dialogues between the poet and a friend. This form known as the *tenso* is a familiar variant on the *canço* (love song) in medieval Provençal literature, although in the hands of Bernart it is far from being a dispassionate discussion of the nature of love (as is common elsewhere) but becomes instead as lyrical an expression of the poet's own emotions as any of his *cançons*.

The composition of these songs covers a period of approximately thirty years between 1150 and 1180. According to the *vida*, Bernart was born in a castle in Ventadorn (in the Limousin region) to humble parents — a serf and a bakerwoman. Nevertheless, his ability as a poet quickly won him the favour of their overlord, and also it seems, of the lord's wife, who heads a succession of noble ladies for whom Bernart's songs are thought to have been written. The troubadour died in about 1194.

The idea of applying some of the techniques of modern stylistics to the study of medieval literature is by no means a novelty, but this has tended to be an area which most students of style have chosen to leave unexplored. An approach which depends on an examination of the poet's language rather than of his ideas inevitably raises the question of how the modern critic can hope to appreciate the stylistic nuances conveyed to the original audience when we have little idea of even the 'norms' (so-called), of their everyday

language. The issue is complicated further in the case of troubadour poetry, where, to paraphrase the French critic, Pierre Bec, style is an indissociable part of a literary whole, constituted by the rigid formulation of the ideas of courtly love, which allows the individual no freedom of choice outside these conventions;<sup>2</sup> and choice is, of course, the essence of style. Is it then possible only to study the structure of the collective literary whole, rather than the stylistic features of individual works, as this critic would seem to be suggesting? Another critic, Helmut Hatzfeld, argues that in view of this 'fixity' of style, the stylistician's task is to look for the central organizing principle of the genre, and then to consider the internal unity of a work of art.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, one is sometimes led to wonder just how far this collective style is imposed on the material by twentieth-century critics such as Paul Zumthor who, having constructed his own 'system' for medieval poetry, concludes that the troubadours failed to realize the full potential of 'their' system.<sup>4</sup>

In considering these poems of Bernart de Ventadorn it seems preferable to deal with just a few aspects of his writing, which are certainly common to other poets of his time, and to examine the picture of his style and technique that emerges. Thus, the subject of inquiry is an individual and not a 'collectivity', and in a longer study this individuality might well be verified by comparing the treatment of the same themes in the poems of Bernart's contemporaries. The topics in question, then, are first of all the role of the lady, the *domna*, secondly the theme of nature, in particular Bernart's use of the traditional opening stanzas on spring, and thirdly his imagery and its association with other linguistic devices.

Although Bernart's poems are all centred on the emotions which love inspires in the poet himself, this in no way diminishes the importance of the cause of his various feelings, his lady or ladies. In the forty-one *cansos*, excluding for this purpose the three *tensos*, there is often a direct appeal by the poet to his *domna*, as well as frequent descriptions of her, and she is introduced into the poems in a striking variety of ways. Not only is Bernart constantly changing the forms of address he uses, but he also draws on a wide range of epithets to describe her appearance and her character, not always applying favourable terms to the latter, as well as various more personal attributes.

The use of a *senhal* or pseudonym is a well-known characteristic of Provençal poetry, a device by which the troubadour is able to address himself directly to his lady without betraying her identity. In all his love songs Bernart uses no fewer than eleven different *senhals* for his ladies, often changing from one to another within a single poem, and alternating them with general terms such as *bela domna* or just *domna* alone. Of these *senhals* (used twenty-eight times in all) the most frequent is *Bel-Vezer* ('good-looker'). This is found nine times in seven different songs. Indeed, Bernart tends generally to be more interested in the visual aspects of his beloved than in the spiritual, and his preference for this particular *senhal* corresponds to an emphasis on the lady's physical attractions, her face, eyes, mouth, body and so on. Although this *senhal* is rapidly established as a means of reference to the lady, it is never left to be the only one in a poem. The only *senhals* which constitute the single reference to the *domna* in the course of a poem are *Mo Conort* (my consolation) and *Mo Frances* (my Frenchman), both of which are reinforced when they occur elsewhere. Otherwise, the poet uses terms to describe the lady which are unambiguous, in particular, of course, *domna*, whether or not qualified by an adjective: such as *bela*, *bona* or *genta*, or *dousa res* (sweet thing) or the feudal *midons* (my lord), a term traditionally used by the courtly lover. The fact that this form and the other *senhals* are masculine, another traditional device, may help to explain their co-occurrence with more general terms, thereby providing an alternation between masculine and feminine within the song. Thus Bernart may switch from feminine to masculine: *bona domna* to *Mo Cortes* (1), *bela domna* to *Mo De-Cor* ('of my heart') (36), or vice versa: *Mo Conort* to *domna* (37), but this is unusual, and in this particular example the *senhal* is used only as a third-person reference and is later replaced by the second person *domna*. It is also common to find a *senhal* which occurs early in the poem to be supported by a second one, for instance *Mo Bel-Vezer* followed by *Amic Tristan* (7), or *Miralh* then *Tristan* (31). While reference to the lady is generally confined to one or two forms of address within a poem, several songs break this convention and present a ternary structure. In 'Can par la flors josta. I vert folh' (24) *domna* is replaced first by *Mo Bel-Vezer* then by *Midons*, while in 'Estat ai com om esperdutz' (30) the initial *domna* is followed by two *senhals*, *Dous Esгар* ('sweet countenance') and *Fis-Jois* ('pure joy').

These references have already introduced a number of Bernart's eleven *senhals*. It is perhaps worth noting that apart from *Bel-Vezer*, those which occur several times include *Tristan* (four examples),

*Mo Conort* (four examples in three songs), *Mon Aziman* ('my magnet') (three), and *Mo Frances* (two). This leaves six which are found only once. It is interesting that terms of respect, which include some suggestion of the lady's rank and therefore of her superiority, are not the most common, apart from *midons* (four) and the repeated *domna*. The only *senhals* to include this idea are *E'n Fachura* ('enchanter') and *Na Dous Esgar*, both of which are used just once (*en* and *na* in Old Provençal being derived from *dominus* and *domina* respectively). Bernart clearly prefers a more neutral term such as *Bel Vezzer* or *Miralh* and is not averse to employing the possessive adjective to hint at a more personal relationship, as in the five *senhals* having this form: *Mo Conort*, *Mon Aziman*, *Mo Frances*, *Mo Cortes* and *Mo De-Cor*.

The recurrent use of these varying and interchanging forms of address is one of the features which creates a unifying structure in Bernart's work as a whole, and which establishes a clear contrast between his songs and those of other troubadours. Further, the choice of a *senhal* or some other form of direct address may be an important element in the structure of an individual poem, or may create a link between several different songs. For example in the final full stanza of 'Lancan vei per mei la landa' (29) Bernart first uses the image of a magnet to describe the compelling attraction of his lady, an image which is then lexicalized as a *senhal* in the *envoi* when he refers to her as *Mon Aziman*. Similarly, the note of nostalgia introduced at the end of this poem when the poet reveals that he is geographically separated from his love, echoes the nostalgic theme of 'Pois preyatz me, senhor' (18), where the *senhal* in question is also *Mon Aziman*. Alternatively, in the two songs where the only form of address used is *dousa res*, 'Amors, enquera.us preyara' (12) and 'Lo tems vai e ven e vire' (44), the *senhal* contrasts vividly with violent images in each expressing the poet's suffering: that of a man suffering torment in fire (*mor en flama*) and that of a madman (*doblara.lh folia*). The same kind of apparent contradiction links two other poems, 'Tuih cil que.m preyon qu'eu chan' (33) and 'Gent estera que chantes' (37) where the *senhal Mo Conort* is associated with themes of the poet's despair and disenchantment. Yet there is not a hint of irony present, for the song ends with a statement of his constancy and hope.

The terms used by Bernart in describing his lady's qualities, spiritual or otherwise, are too numerous to list in full, but again a clear pattern emerges. A small number of basic words, to be found in the vocabulary of virtually any medieval Provençal lyricist, are

used fairly frequently to qualify the term *domna*, but these are interspersed with a whole range of adjectives, none of which is particularly erudite (unlike those favoured in later troubadour poetry). Most of them occur only once in the whole collection. Further variation is achieved through syntactic differences; adjectives are nominalized to give a new series of terms which are interchanged with *domna*, for instance *la genta* or *la fausa* (fair or false), depending on the mood of the poet. Unlike most of the modern Romance languages, Old Provençal retained some of the synthetic Latin comparatives in *-ior*, and these are used (as superlatives) by many poets, to refer to their lady. In Bernart's work we find *la gensor* (the fairest) occurring six times, and *la melhor* (the best) four times. Again, however, he alternates the forms and introduces the analytic variants of Romance, e.g. *la plus bella* (the most beautiful) (twice), *la plus gaya* (the most gay) and *la plus avinen* (the most comely) (once each). These may all be combined: the lady is *gensor et avinen*, *gensor e melhor* or *bel e melhor*. The stylistic potential of this syntactic variety is neatly exploited in a double comparative: she is 'gensor de las plus gentas' (22) and 'entre las melhors la melhor' (36).

Epithets relating to the lady herself fall into two groups, favourable and unfavourable, although the former inevitably predominate as Bernart is incapable of maintaining a harsh tone, even within a single poem. The first group contains repeated words, standard in troubadour vocabulary, such as *francha*, *bela*, *conhde* ('charming'), *bona*, *pura* and *dousa*, together with single occurrences of adjectives like *jauzionda* ('joyful'), *valenta*, *frecha*, *clara*, *prezans* ('admirable') and so on. The only unfavourable term to occur more than once is *orgolhoza* (proud), and each time it is softened by its proximity to the adjective *francha*. The lady is also occasionally *salvatge*, *fausa*, *dura*, *vilana* and *avara*, the last term also juxtaposed with the favourable *conhde*. The lady is rarely described as 'bad', although she may be of ill disposition: *de mala merce*, *mal talan* or even *de mal linhatge* ('of a bad family').

There are more adjectives relating to the lady's physique than to her general qualities. A host of epithets describe her body (*cors*), including the superlatives *melhs telhatz* and *del mels establitz*, both meaning 'of the best form'. Her body is often *gai*, *blanc*, *gen* and *bel*, and occasionally *sotil*, *covinen* ('agreeable'), *delgat* ('slim') and *d'agradatge* ('charming'). In referring to her other attributes Bernart seems more interested in dwelling on the feature itself than in describing it. Thus there are five different terms for her face – *vis*,

*vizatge*, *fachura*, *fatz* and *faiossos*, but only three adjectives to qualify them — *clar*, *bel* and *fresc*, and the same is true of the terms for her colour, look and dress. Her eyes (*olhs*) are five times said to be *bels*, once *espiritaus* and once *traïdor*, but the latter is quickly modified by a further *bels*. References to her heart are few, and predictably unfavourable. Only once is it *franc*, otherwise *fer*, *dur*, *iratz* and *felo* ('wicked').

This points to a linguistic trait which is characteristic of all Bernart's poems, a preference for nouns as a means of achieving variety and nuance rather than adjectives. Indeed, for a poet whose inclination seems to be towards spontaneous and natural expression rather than erudite forms, it is hardly surprising that he should take advantage of common cognate forms in his language, resulting from different developments of the Latin noun. This is less true of adjectives, except, perhaps, in the case of comparative forms, and the commoner terms are quickly exhausted, as is only too clear from the near incomprehensibility of later troubadours who deliberately seek out the unusual.

It will be instructive at this point to contrast some aspects of Bernart's presentation of the *domna* with that offered by two other 12th century troubadours, Jaufré Rudel<sup>5</sup>, who died around 1150 when Bernart's work was just beginning, and Peire Vidal, whose poems written in the last twenty years of the century follow immediately after those of Bernart.<sup>6</sup> The six surviving *cansos* of Rudel all develop the theme of *amor de lonh* (distant love), whether in a geographical or spiritual sense, and such is the poet's obsession with his own feelings that he never directly addresses the object of his affection. Similarly his descriptions of her are very brief; there are only single references to her beauty and merit (*pretz*), her body and her eyes. Unlike Bernart Rudel lays more emphasis on adjectives than on nouns. In the first poem, 'Quan lo rossinhols el folhos', we are told that the lady's body is 'gras, delgat e gen' and elsewhere her *pretz* is qualified by the pair of adjectives 'verais e fis'. She is twice described as *gensor*, and this is further qualified on each occasion. The lady is fairest of all, among Christians or any other race: 'anc gensor crestiana juzeva ni sarrazina' (2), and using a similar negative construction the poet declares 'gensor ni melhor no.n sai' (5).

Vidal, on the other hand, in a total of forty-six love songs, frequently addresses his lady directly, but again lacks the variety of terms employed by Bernart. Normally he shows little concern for



concealing the lady's identity, and the most frequent form of address is a proper name, Na Vierna, which is used in fourteen songs. Curiously this nearly always occurs in the same position in each song, namely in the *envoi*, and generally in the first *envoi* in those poems ending with two. The only exception is the first poem, 'La lauzet' e.l rossinhol', where each of the four stanzas ends with the name of Na Vierna. The only *senhals* which Vidal uses are *La Loba* ('she-wolf'), found in three poems, although not as a direct form of address, and the unoriginal *Bels Sembelis* ('fair appearance'). In one or two other poems he addresses different ladies, again by their proper names: Na Raïmbauda and N'Alazais.

This reveals an important difference in the use of the lady's name or *senhal* by the two poets. In Vidal's work it appears merely as a routine dedication, often in a fixed position, and does not form an integral part of the poem's structure, bound up with imagery and word-play, that the *senhal* achieves in the work of Bernart de Ventadorn. In using other forms of address Vidal shows himself as somewhat unimaginative. In sixteen of the poems the lady is simply *domna*, sometimes qualified by *bela* or *bona*. The only other names used are *bels cors* (40), *filha de rei* ('king's daughter') (34), *amiga*, both in isolation (45) and qualified (6) and *res* (39), modified by various adjectives. The last two instances are of some interest in that they introduce enumerations of adjectives, again suggesting a preference for that part of speech: 'Amiga douss' e franca/covinens, e bel' e bona' (6) and 'Bela, doussa, franca res' (39). By contrast, however, the stylistic variation which emerges from a consideration of the *domna* in Bernart's poetry is immense and effective, and both lexical and syntactic variants clearly establish the lady as a central and unifying element in his work, amidst the poet's emotional outpourings.

The characteristic use of a 'début printanier' in troubadour poetry, where the opening stanza is given over wholly or in part to the celebration of spring, is frequently quoted as an illustration of the fixity of the *canço* form itself. Within this opening stanza certain motifs and key-words recur and produce a readily established pattern. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Bernart often using such an opening: in seventeen of the forty-one *canços* and in one of the three *tenso*s, a conversation about the poet's love. On the other hand it is far from being a stereotyped form and is never superfluous to the main theme of the poem. As in other aspects of his writing Bernart takes a traditional element of the love song and varies it to suit his

personal needs. In two songs it is extended to the second stanza as well, forming an integral part of the poems' structure. Elsewhere the device may be reduced to a mere two- or four- line reference, as in 'Can vei la lauzeta mover' (31) and 'La dousa vutz ai auzida' (34), where the sounds of the lark (*lauzeta*) and the nightingale (*rossinhol*) respectively introduce the poet's meditation on the theme of joy. Even here the tone is varied; in the first poem the effect on the poet is a negative one, for he is moved to jealousy of those who are joyful, whereas in the second the consequence is positive, as the poet is softened and feels the need to benefit from the joy of others. Here too, of course, structural links are forged, both within the individual poem and between different ones.

The potential rigidity of the 'début printanier' was early recognized in troubadour composition, and Bernart is not the first to use contrived variants, replacing spring by autumn or winter. Yet again he creates his own variations on the theme by opposing or juxtaposing summer and winter. 'Tant ai mo cor ple de joya' (4) and 'Ara no vei luzir solelh' (5) both elaborate the theme of metamorphosis. In each case, for the poet in love, winter is transformed into spring and the characteristics of both seasons are placed in oppositions: *frejura* ('cold') becomes *flor* ('flowers'), *neus* ('snow') becomes *verdura* ('greenery') in the first poem and *flors blanch'e vermelha* ('red and white flowers') in the second. This well-developed contrast is evoked fleetingly in 'Lonc tems a qu'eu no chantei mai' (19), where the poet in winter declares that he no longer seeks love, but still sets the terms *ven* and *pluya* ('wind' and 'rain') in semantic opposition to *flor* and *folha* ('flowers' and 'leaves'), symbolizing summer, in the opening stanza. A similar echo is felt in 'Anc no gardei sazo ni mes' (14). The poet, again in love, claims to be oblivious to the season, to whether *flors par* or *s'escon* ('flowers appear' or 'are hidden') or 'l'erba nais delonc la fon' ('grass springs up beside the stream'), passing references to the fuller contrasts between summer and winter and to the more usual 'début printanier'.

It seems that in introducing the themes of autumn and winter Bernart is more interested in the effect of contrast than in genuine evocation of the seasons. He limits characterization of winter to three basic terms - *pluya*, *ven* and *frejura*, the latter also used to name the season of winter itself, while the further terms *gel*, *neus*, *ivern* and *freja biza* ('cold wind') are only found in the more extended oppositions of the metamorphosis poems. Similarly, although two poems open in autumn, the sole autumnal characteristic mentioned in

each is that of falling leaves. Otherwise negatives are used, generally of the two most common features of spring, *flor* and *folha*.

On the other hand, in evoking spring or summer Bernart draws on a wide variety of terms, as well as repeating a number of key ideas. There are no fewer than sixteen occurrences of *flor* and thirteen of *folh* or *folha*. Further key topics are the *rossinhol*, birds in general (*auzel*) and *verdura* or *verdor*. But alongside these a whole range of words occur for greenery and associated ideas, usually expressed in nouns which are employed only once or twice; these outnumber the total of comparable adjectives or verbs. For instance, there are five terms indicating a small wood or shrubbery, two for leaves (*folhatz* and *broilha*) and three for branches (*verjan*, *ram* and *ramel*). Adjectives are limited to common colours, *vermelh*, *blanca* and *vert* (four examples of each), together with *fresca* (twice) and *groya* ('yellow') (once) and three single epithets describing the sound (*votz*) of the birds: *autet*, *clar* and *dousa*. The season itself, however, follows the familiar pattern of one common term, *doutz tems* (four examples), and a number of isolated variants, including *tems suau*, *tems de pascor*, *tems clar e sere*, *tems florit*.

Bernart's treatment of nature is in many ways more sophisticated than that of his predecessor Rudel, for whom an evocation of the season seems only a necessary preliminary to his main love theme. Whereas for Bernart, when he is happy in love, winter is actually transformed into spring, Rudel simply contrasts the two seasons. For him the *temps floritz* is *belhs* but *ivern* is *gensor* (4) and in 'Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may' (5) he finds that the characteristics of spring, birdsong and flowers, are no more pleasing than *yverns gelatz*. Rudel tends to dwell on the 'début printanier' for its own sake, rather than to integrate it into the poem as a whole, usually by filling out the verse with enumerations, such as the 'pratz, vergiers, albres e flors' of 'Pro ai del chan essenhadors' (3).

Thus, for Bernart the function of the 'début printanier', far from being merely poetic convention, serves to introduce the inward mood of the poet: the season reflected either positively, in the poet's sharing the joy of nature, or negatively, in his rejection of it. In the majority of examples (eleven out of eighteen) the initial reaction is a positive one, although the poet's attitudes characteristically vary throughout the poem. These verses also provide a source of imagery. In 'Lancan folhon bosc e jarric' (6) and 'Can vei la flor, l'erba vert e la folha' (7) terms used literally of the seasons and nature are extended in a

figurative sense to the poet himself. In the former, the poet first follows the birds' song with his own rejoicing, then like the *flors* and *verdura* he himself 'reflorisc e reverdei e folh' ('becomes green and reflowers'). His own personality is effectively seen as a reflection of a natural process. Similarly in 'Can vei la flor' birdsong inspires the poet's own song which 'neis e creis e broilha', the last verb being normally applied to growth in nature. The association between the song and joy of the birds and those of the troubadour is, of course, a commonplace, but by interchanging other aspects of nature, and also literal and figurative language, Bernart yet again produces his individual treatment of a traditional theme.

Bernart's treatment of the 'début printanier' leads naturally to a consideration of a key linguistic feature of his style, namely imagery or figurative language. Here, too, there is the same concern for a variety of expression in conjunction with structural cohesion which characterized the two preceding topics. Each poem makes use of imagery to a greater or lesser extent, some containing a single figurative idea, others using a number of images — of which one may emerge as the dominant image. The most frequent images to occur in Bernart's songs are those arising from the poet's suffering and those based on nature. In view of what has already been said about the unity of the poems, both collectively and individually, it is scarcely surprising that of nine songs where nature is the dominant image, eight have a 'début printanier', and in four more using this opening, nature occurs as a subsidiary image. In some cases (as in the songs already mentioned above), the opening stanza itself may provide examples of natural imagery, but the theme of nature may be resumed later in the poem in a figurative sense. Thus, in the fifth stanza of 'Tant ai mo cor ple de joya' the poet wishes he were a swallow in order to fly to his lady's bedroom. Significantly, the 'début printanier' in this instance does not make use of the leitmotif of birds and birdsong, and the idea expressed in the image of the swallow restates the notion of metamorphosis introduced in the opening lines. In 'Can lo dous temps comensa' (22), a song where the springtime opening has a negative function in demonstrating the writer's grief, the poet eventually takes refuge in hope expressed through natural imagery: 'apres le fer auratge / vei que.lh dous'aura venta' ('after the terrible storm I see the soft breeze blowing'), echoing the reference to 'lo dous temps' of the first line. Incidentally, the wind recurs as something of a leitmotif in Bernart's imagery, perhaps representing the ambiguous character of both nature herself and the poet's own feelings, at times obdurate and violent, elsewhere gentle and calm.

Associated with the theme of the suffering poet is the figurative notion of his captivity, and in ten poems there are images centering on this idea. In four of them, images of suffering and of captivity are interwoven, while in an additional three poems the idea of imprisonment is linked to images of nature. For example in one of the dialogues, 'Amics Bernatz de Ventadorn' (28), Bernart claims to be free of the bonds of love; now that he is able to prefer his sleep to the song of the nightingale he is also 'fors de cadena' ('free of chains'). Within this poem the association of two basic ideas fulfils a useful structural function, on the one hand prolonging the picture of spring with which his partner in the dialogue opens, and on the other introducing the details of the poet's former suffering.

It is not unusual to find images of a feudal or military nature in troubadour poetry. It is interesting, however, that while most types of images freely combine within Bernart's poems, feudal images and those relating to captivity seem to be mutually exclusive. The terms of the latter tend to evoke penal rather than feudal servitude. This idea is reinforced by several references to criminals in various poems, but not this time in connection with the poet's suffering. In 'Can l'erba fresch' e.lh folha par' (20), the poet declares himself to be so absorbed with his love that thieves could kidnap him and he would not notice.

Some other fairly predictable fields of imagery are given an unexpected twist. For example the theme of enchantment is used in traditional fashion in 'A! tantas bonas chansos' (16), where the poet is bewitched by the lady's beautiful eyes, but on another occasion, in 'Can l'erba fresch' e.lh folha par', the emphasis shifts when Bernart dreams of casting a spell on his enemies, the slanderers or gossips, and changing them all into innocent children.

In the formulation of his images Bernart tends to prefer metaphor to simile. Explicit comparisons, as a result, are fairly straightforward. For example, in 'Lo gens tems de pascor' (17), the lady's body is said to be as white as the snow at Christmas ('cors blanc tot atretal/com la neus a nadal'), but this also establishes a neat contrast to the season of Easter referred to in the opening lines. Direct similes never constitute the whole of the figurative language within a given poem, but are used to reinforce other forms of metaphorical expression. For instance, in 'Amors, enquera.us preyara' Bernart presents a nice linguistic variation on parallel images. The opening stanza uses a fairly commonplace metaphor - 'can me mis al cor la flama de leis'

(‘when I set a flame for her in my heart...’), and the same source of imagery (fire) is taken up again in the last verse, but this time as a simile: ‘doloirozamen / viu com cel que mor en flama’ (‘I live as sorrowfully as one who is dying in the flames’).

While imagery is widely used in Bernart’s poems to express some of the most important themes in his work, it is worth noting that this figurative language is constantly reinforced by other linguistic devices, the most striking of these being Bernart’s use of oppositions. The general subject of the poems as a whole, the poet’s ever-changing feelings, is thus conveyed through a series of contrasts both literal and figurative.

In an article aimed at compiling an inventory of terms in Bernart’s work expressing the idea of sorrow, Bec has suggested that there are at least sixty different lexemes conveying notions associated with this central theme.<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps equally important, however, not to overlook the stylistic means by which these ideas are presented. Thus, sorrow is not just a fruitful source of imagery; it also leads to the introduction of terms which are semantically opposed, often in fairly elaborate structures within the poem. For example, in ‘Tuih cil que.m preyon qu’eu chan’ (33), the opposition between the poet’s joy and his unhappy fate which concludes the first stanza, ‘pois perdei ma benansa / per ma mala destinansa’, is effectively echoed at the beginning of the next verse: ‘et eu, que chantar solia, / mor d’enoi e de pezan sa, / can au joi ni alegransa’ (‘I who used to sing am dying of pain and sorrow on hearing joy and happiness’), with the contrast reflected at a phonological level by the internal rhyme between *enoi* and *joi*. This in turn leads to a new, but related opposition in the fifth stanza between the poet’s good faith and the perfidy of love: ‘c’ab vostra fausa semblansa / m’avetz trait en fiansa’.

Such exploitation of the resources of the language and its reflection in figurative expression is typical of a number of Bernart’s poems and again demonstrates the closely-knit structure of both the individual songs and the collective work. As a final example, in ‘Lo rossinhols s’esbaudeya’ (23), a linguistic opposition serves as an introduction to a string of images. In the second verse the poet contrasts his own nature, ‘francs e fis’ (‘sincere and faithful’), with the characteristics which might more justifiably have caused his ruin: ‘C’anc no fui faus ni trichaire’ (‘I was never false or deceitful’). This idea is then taken up in a natural image in the next stanza,

where the poet, like a branch in the wind, bends to the will of the one who does him harm, and this is developed further in verse four, where metaphors drawn from judicial language echo the initial notions of falseness and wrong-doing.

While the investigation of Bernart's imagery is a fruitful and intriguing subject, it nevertheless offers only a small insight into the skill of the writer if it is not considered in conjunction with other devices, both linguistic and thematic. It is clear that the construction of each song depends much more than is immediately apparent on the interaction of a wide range of linguistic features, which are inseparable from the overall thematic progression.

Although it is undeniable that the poetry of the medieval Provençal troubadours does indeed constitute a highly-developed and well-formulated genre, I have tried to show that this in no way excludes original expression on the part of individual poets. It seems that the troubadours, those whose work is known to us, all provide rich material for a study of their own styles of composition, and that each poem is susceptible to stylistic analysis in its own right. Even when considering only three aspects of the technique of Bernart de Ventadorn, one is inevitably led to the conclusion that through the interrelation of varying elements, each poem presents its own structure, and since structural links within the poems also create new relations between them, Bernart's work may be viewed as a whole, formed in a way which is unique to this poet.

Particularly striking stylistically are the contrasts and variety obtained from fairly restricted material. Much is made nowadays of the limited vocabulary of the troubadours, and Bernart himself is often quoted as using only 2,400 different words. In fact, such statements are meaningless if they are not supplemented by details of the occurrence of these terms. In Bernart's work it is clear that lexical patterns are formed in different thematic areas, the repeated use of a few basic terms being complemented by a wide variety of related forms which occur only once or twice in the whole collection of poems. The topics discussed above, then, are only the beginning of a study of troubadour style, which would need to consider the expression of these and other themes in troubadour poetry, to try to determine the range of individual variants within the genre which has for so long been thought to exclude them.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> There are three editions of Bernart's work currently available: C. Appel, *Bernart von Ventadorn, seine Lieder mit Einleitung und Glossar*, Halle, 1915; S. Nichols, *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn*, N. Carolina, 1962; M. Lazar, *Bernard de Ventadour; Chansons d'amour*, Paris, 1966. All references here are to Lazar's edition.
- <sup>2</sup> P. Bec, 'Quelques réflexions sur la poésie lyrique médiévale. Problèmes et essai de caractérisation', *Mélanges offerts à Rita Lejeune II*, Gembloux (Belgium), 1969, pp. 1309-29.
- <sup>3</sup> H. Hatzfeld, 'Les études de style et la littérature médiévale', *ibid.*, pp. 1601-11.
- <sup>4</sup> P. Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, Paris, 1972, p. 188.
- <sup>5</sup> A. Jeanroy (ed), *Les chansons de Jaufré Rudel*, Paris, 1915.
- <sup>6</sup> J. Anglade (ed), *Les poésies de Peire Vidal* (2nd edn.), Paris, 1923.
- <sup>7</sup> P. Bec, 'La douleur et son univers poétique chez Bernard de Ventadour (1)', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* xi, 1968, pp. 545-71.



## CHAUCER AND LISTS OF TREES

No-one would deny that tree-lists were a very common feature in Classical and Medieval poetry. In his article on 'Chaucer's Dares'<sup>1</sup> Root found such lists in Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, Statius, Claudian, Joseph of Exeter's *Iliad*, the *Roman de la Rose*, Boccaccio's *Teseida*, and Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* and *Knight's Tale*.<sup>2</sup> In the present article and accompanying tables and notes I shall attempt to show how both Boccaccio and Chaucer used their sources and how Chaucer's use of them reflects his change in attitude towards the classics, medieval tradition and Boccaccio.<sup>3</sup>

I *Boccaccio*

That Boccaccio used both Statius and Ovid for his list of trees is clear from Table I and note 2. As the reader can see from Table IV, the structural source for this passage in the *Teseida* is the *Thebaid*. Both passages describe a similar scene, the making of a funeral pyre. That Boccaccio felt the need in compiling his list of trees to go back to Ovid (whose scene and poetic application are completely different) is further proof that, as everywhere in the *Teseida*, he is showing off his cultural knowledge and decorative virtuosity.

The preciseness of his translation from Statius and Ovid demonstrates that his command of Latin was good and that he always had in mind the presentation of classical forms (one of the central features of the *Teseida*). The fact that the phrase 'orni pien di pece' is a misunderstood conflation of Ovid and Statius (see note 2) may depend on the reading of the manuscripts he used, or it may be a sign of Boccaccio's limitations (which are evident elsewhere in the *Teseida*) – or it may simply reflect the way in which Medieval poets classified their material when they were committing it to memory.

Boccaccio's additions (note 2) show that he liked to embroider decoratively the sources he was remembering. The scene described in the *Roman* (the garden of Love) is partially imitated in *Teseida* VII. 50 ff. (the house of Venus). Of the trees listed in the *Roman* (see Table III) Boccaccio mentions only pines (*Teseida* VII.50,6), the presence of which is explained in the author's own gloss as due to their fruits, which, if eaten, are inducive to 'concupiscible appetite'. For the same reason, Boccaccio introduces myrtle (*Teseida* VII.51,8)

which, because of its smell, is 'very stimulating' (see his long gloss on the house of Venus).

In other words, Boccaccio in his description of the Temple of Venus makes no use of the list of trees that he had found in the *Roman*. His decision to omit any reminiscence of the *Roman* list may be described as functional inasmuch as Boccaccio is here describing not only a 'garden of love', but also the temple of 'concupiscible appetite', or that aspect of appetite 'per la quale ogni lascivia è desiderata'. The mention in this poetic context of the fruit of the pines indicates the sensual aspect of love. Thus, most of the trees listed in the *Roman*'s garden would have had no place here. The changes are significant. The Temple of Venus in the *Teseida* is the temple of concupiscible appetite — appetite which is explicitly contrasted in the author's gloss to 'honest and permissible desire, like that of having a wife and children'. Palamon, whose personified Prayer we follow into the Temple of Venus, asks the goddess to grant him Emily. Although he will later obtain her within the framework of a very precise social order ('as a wife', says Theseus, when announcing the conditions for the tournament: *Teseida* V. 94 ff.), at this point in the narrative Palamon exists socially and morally outside this order. He is a *courtois* lover and a 'sensual' lover, as he will be (with a shift in moral propriety) after the wedding: *Teseida* XII. 76-77. 'Amour courtois' and 'lascivia' coexist within him and dictate his prayer for Emily. The Temple of Venus which receives that vow naturally allegorises both aspects of his motivation.

## II Chaucer

In examining Chaucer's uses of the tree catalogue I shall follow a chronological order: Chaucer's contribution to the *Romaunt* predates his writing of *The Parliament*, which in turn was almost certainly composed before the *Knight's Tale*. The omissions, additions and changes which Chaucer has made to the same figurative formulation for different poetic purposes through these years may reveal some new fact about his maturation as a writer, or at least confirm what we already sense. The putative changes toward his sources (the *Roman*, Boccaccio, the Latin authors) and his preference for one or more of them at a particular time should be considered in any assessment of his ability as a 'translator' and of his general cultural position.

### The *Roman* and the *Romaunt*

The first of Chaucer's tree-lists to be examined occurs in his rendering of the *Roman de la Rose*.<sup>4</sup> In Table III and note 5, we notice

immediately that (a) Chaucer keeps the same number (13) of trees, but (b) changes their order, except for the first two trees; (c) he omits five trees found in the *Roman*: *charmes*, *fos*, *coudres*, *sapinz*, *chesnes* ('yoke-elm', 'beeches', 'hazels', 'firs', 'chestnuts'). Instead, he introduces 'oaks', 'planes', 'yews' and 'linden'. Group (a) shows that Chaucer was able to recognize all the items as trees, since he kept the same number of trees in the same number of lines.

As far as item (b) is concerned, the inversion of the position of 'cypress' and 'olives' is due to the exigencies of rhyme (*oliveres/heere is*). With *elmes* Chaucer goes back to the order of his French original (*ormes*), retaining the adj.+conj.+adj. type of modification (*branchus et gros; grete and stronge*). In 1384, *maples*, *assh*, *ok*, *asp*, *planes longe*, the order is completely altered, except perhaps for *asp* (see note 5). The *Roman* has *charmes*, *fos*, *coudres*, *trembles*, *fresnes*. Of Chaucer's substitute-trees, *ok* and *planes* are entirely new. *Maples* corresponds to Guillaume's *arables* which is found later on, and *assh* anticipates the French *fresnes*. But for *fresnes* (Latin *fraxinus*; Italian *frassini*) Chaucer seems to use *asp* in the *Parliament* as in the *Knight's Tale*. In the *Parliament* the poetic correspondence seems to be particularly direct: Ovid's *fraxinus utilis hastis* inspires Chaucer's *asp for shaftes pleyne*. On the other hand, Chaucer seems to translate accurately the *Roman's trembles* by *asp* but in the very next line he introduces *poplayer*, which also corresponds to *trembles*. Here, then, we have the first sign that something was misunderstood or deliberately blurred by Chaucer. *Fos* (Latin *fagus*; Italian *faggi*) is a word which Chaucer seems to have understood precisely or found a poetic use for only by the time he came to write the *Knight's Tale*. He uses it uniquely there (correctly corresponding to the *Teseida's faggi*) whereas he passes over it in silence in the *Romaunt* and in the *Parliament*, though he came across it in almost all his sources (*Roman*, *Teseida*, *Thebaid*, *Metamorphoses*). The case of *coudres* ('hazel') seems similar. Here Chaucer may have been uncertain of its meaning, since earlier in the *Romaunt* (1314) he substituted *cedres* ('cedars') for *coudres*. Unless his manuscript copy read differently (Langlois lists no variants for *Roman* 1287-88), this might indicate that he was uncertain of the meaning of this word, at least until he came to write the *Knight's Tale* where he used *hasel*, following Boccaccio's *corilo* and Ovid's *coryli*. In the *Romaunt* he duly replaced *coudres* by 'oak', a tree already included in the *Roman* and in any case familiar to an English audience.

The next two trees in the *Roman* passage are *sapinz* and *chesnes* ('firs' and 'chestnuts'), both ignored in Chaucer's rendering of the

corresponding lines. ME *ew* and *lyndes* fill the gaps. As far as *sapinz* is concerned, it may be that Chaucer was uncertain of the precise application of the French term. This is a hard word to decide on, for it is both a specific kind of tree (which Chaucer may have known from Servius's gloss on *Georgics* II.68, *abies*) and a generic term which would include 'pine' (the *O.E.D.* still so defines). The noun would seem to have existed in ME before Chaucer (cf. *O.E.D. sapin*). So, since *pyn* had already been included in a catalogue in the *Roman*, Chaucer may have decided not to use it again. He uses *fir* twice only in his works (*Parliament* 179, *Knight's Tale* 2063) and in both instances it seems to correspond to the Italian *abete* of Boccaccio (see note 3). He probably recognized the function of ME *fir* more immediately when he saw the Italian or Latin equivalent noun. As for *chesnes* ('chestnut') it is hard to see why Chaucer decided to omit it. Chaucer uses the noun 'chestnut' in the ME form *chastein* only a few lines earlier (1375). He was to use it again in *Knight's Tale* 2064 (where it has no equivalent in his sources, Boccaccio, Statius or Ovid). Perhaps he was reluctant to mention the tree twice within a few lines.

The trees that Chaucer has introduced into his translation (oaks, planes, yews and linden) do not add any particular quality to the garden of love, nor do they make it more exotic or more 'English'. Now, the *Romaunt* is, in the intention of its writer, a translation of the *Roman*; so we cannot automatically invoke Chaucer's freedom as a creative writer to justify his omissions or substitutions. These alterations, then, must be due to the causes outlined above: to an uncertain knowledge of French vocabulary or to *licentia translatoris* in dealing with verbal detail within the space provided by the couplet or group of couplets. Chaucer's poetic syntax in this tree catalogue is far superior in terms of variety, contrast and continuousness to Guillaume's. The poetic translator is not solely concerned with semantic equivalents, he is concerned with syntax and rhythmical units as well.

### III *Parliament*

Before examining the *Parliament's* tree-list, one should again mention Root's article, the second section of which is devoted to lines 176-182 of Chaucer's poem and argues that some of the attributes which Chaucer gives his trees derive from Joseph of Exeter's *Iliad*.<sup>5</sup>

Chaucer  
hardy assh  
boxtre pipere

Joseph of Exeter  
fraxinus audax  
cantatrix buxus

*Chaucer* (cont.)  
 cipresse deth to playne  
 olyve of pes  
 dronke vyne  
 laurer to devyne

*Joseph of Exeter* (cont.)  
 cupressus flebilis  
 oliva concilians  
 ebria vitis  
 interpres laurus

For both the cypress and the laurel there are corresponding attributes in Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* II. 107-111. Root concluded that 'were there no other evidence that Chaucer knew and used Joseph's poem, one might be skeptical as to the influence here; but with the certainty that the Trojan portraits [in *Troilus* V] owe much to Joseph, it seems at least probable that the agreements between the two tree-lists are not fortuitous.' There is no reason to dispute that view, but it ignores another important consideration, namely, the way in which Chaucer worked from one source to another and the reason why he used certain expressions.

One should first notice that, throughout the description of the temple in the *Parliament*, Chaucer follows Boccaccio's description of the Temple of Venus in the *Teseida* VII. 50 ff. The only trees mentioned by Boccaccio in that passage were 'pines' and 'myrtles'. But Boccaccio himself was remembering the source the *Roman* in his stanzas and Chaucer would have recognized the source of his own source and may have gone back to his own translation of the *Roman* passage to enrich his description of the garden in the *Parliament*. As appears from the second part of note 5 on Table I, and note 3, the number of trees and lines is the same in the *Parliament* passage as in the *Romaunt* and the *Roman*. Seven of the thirteen trees in the *Parliament* correspond to as many in the *Romaunt* (two trees, 'oak' and 'yew' are not present in the *Roman*). It would seem that Chaucer is here embroidering upon Boccaccio by drawing on an earlier work of his own (the *Romaunt*).

A similar process may have produced *saylynge fir* and *victor palm*. Again we must begin with the 'pines' and 'myrtles' in book VII of the *Teseida*, the only trees mentioned in this passage. But Chaucer knew the whole of the *Teseida* and may have remembered the list of trees in book XI in which both the 'fir' and the 'palm' appear. The relation between *victor palm* and 'D'ogni vincitore premio, la palma' is obvious and it is just possible (see note 3) that *saylynge fir* may derive from one of Boccaccio's glosses in book XI of the *Teseida*. *Asp for shaftes pleyne* is another interesting case. The tree that is traditionally associated with spears is *fraxinus* ('ash'). Chaucer could find it in *Teseida* XI. 23,4 together with the traditional attribute in Boccaccio's

relevant gloss. He could find the tree and attribute together in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X.93 in the phrase *fraxinus utilis hastis*. *Utilis hastis* is close to *for shaftes pleyne*. Chaucer changes *fraxinus* to *asp*, retaining the attribute of the original tree, assisted by a memory of Joseph of Exeter's phraseology. Chaucer knew the *fraxinus/frassino* form, for in the *Romaunt* he had kept the French *fresnes*, translating *assh*. This change is further proof that his mind worked not merely along lines of association, but also along those of invention. On the other hand, if for the attribute Chaucer returned to Ovid's *utilis hastis*, stanzas 22-4 of *Teseida* XI may have worked on him as the spring which released his erudition through a process similar to that which we observed in the *Parliament-Romaunt* relationship. If, instead, Chaucer followed Boccaccio's gloss, this would be the second time he had so done within a very short space. It would be a strong point in favour of the view that Chaucer had read these glosses and remembered them.

Root long ago established the origin of the other trees in the *Parliament* passage, but we should note that none of the trees seem to come from the *Thebaid*.<sup>6</sup> The trees which Chaucer could find in Statius (*holm*, *fyr* and *asp*) are present also in the *Teseida* and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; the attributes given them by Chaucer have nothing in common with Statian ones. As regards Statius, then, the mechanism which we have seen at work in Chaucer with the *Romaunt*, *Teseida*, *Iliad* and *Metamorphoses* does not operate.

The attributes which Chaucer gives his trees in the *Parliament* constitute their most important poetic feature. Many of these attributes are not original in themselves,<sup>7</sup> yet by means of them Chaucer introduces a note of 'functionalism' into the texture of the dream-poem. Each Chaucerian tree has one attribute, except the 'elm', which has two (*piler/coffre unto carayne*). The *hardy* referred to *asshe* has been supplied from Joseph of Exeter, yet recalls a commonplace function; *piler* may also have been a stock attribute (the elm 'grete and stronge' as a pillar). Of the remaining attributes, six refer to the purely material use of trees: three (*byldere*, *pipere*, *shetere*) have the same grammatical form (*homoeoptoton*); the remaining three (*coffre unto carayne*, *to whippes lashe*, *for shaftes pleyne*) also are similar.

Four attributes have an 'immaterial' connotation. Two (*victor*, *of pes*) were traditional symbols, the first derived from the classical tradition as exemplified by Ovid and Boccaccio, the second from classical and Christian tradition. Of the remaining two in this group,

*deth to playne* is a common connotation for the cypress; Chaucer seems to have blended Joseph's *flebilis* with Lucan's *luctus testata* (*Pharsalia* III.440) to produce a quiet immaterial image which contrasts with the strongly material image of death in *cofre unto carayne*. The last attribute (*to devyne*) is eruditely mythological, since the laurel was dedicated to Apollo and Apollo was associated with the oracular (see *Troilus* II. 540 ff.).<sup>8</sup>

Two attributes remain, *saylynge* and *dronke*. Their source (in Joseph and Boccaccio) has already been mentioned. We are concerned here with their meaning. The rhetorical figure, personification, is the same for both attributes. Joseph of Exeter is fond of agent-nouns for trees and Chaucer develops that interest. The *saylynge fir* through Joseph and Boccaccio recalls Virgil's 'fir that will see the perils of the sea' (*Georgics* II.68) — 'apta navibus' in Servius's note which was the source of Boccaccio's gloss.<sup>9</sup> Chaucer's *dronke vyne* renders precisely Joseph's *ebria vitis* and appreciates exactly the delicious use of two applications of the Latin adjective *ebrius*, 'intoxicated' and 'full of wine'. Joseph's metaphor is perhaps a reminiscence of Dracontius's turn of phrase in the *Carmen de Deo* I.170: *Vineu pampineos subarundinat ebria*. The epithet in all three poets refers to ultimate use ('wine') but more immediately evokes the physical appearance of the vine or vineyard: 'swollen with grapes'. It is clear that the attributes in the whole passage appertain to the sphere of human activity: building, playing, whipping, sailing, fighting. Death (in both its material and spiritual connotations), peace, victory and divination are evoked. So why not the abundance of convivial drinking? In the *Parliament*, then, the trees listed suggest the wide spectrum of humanity seen in its various activities and moods, as, later, the birds (and their listed attributes) will suggest a wide spectrum of human characters and opinions.

Chaucer can achieve this poetic result because he is not translating, as he was in the *Romaunt*, but using his sources freely — switching from one to the other, adding and cutting as he likes and as he needs for his purposes. The adaptive process I have outlined above allows him to pass from simple description (*Romaunt*) to the functionalism of the *Parliament*. Once he has mastered his technique, he is free to transform his French, Italian and Latin source passages. Within the process of memorization and topical classification which was part of the medieval art of rhetoric, Chaucer can forget about these passages as identifiable pieces of verse. Further, he can forget about the Englishness or the exoticism of his poetic landscapes (olives,



palms, oaks and firs mingle roots) and describe an Eden as universal as that of Dante, less *paradiso* perhaps, but more *terrestre*.

#### IV *The Knight's Tale*

In Table I and in note 4, one notices (a) that the number of trees has become considerably greater in a much more concentrated space; (b) that all the adjectives and attributes have been eliminated; (c) that four new trees have been introduced (*birch, chastain, thorn, whippeltree*); (d) that none of the trees seem to derive from Statius; (e) that three trees may derive from Ovid (*plane, mapul, wilugh*). As to (d) and (e) of the trees listed, ten correspond to those mentioned by Boccaccio in the parallel passage of the *Teseida*. Of these ten, two ('linden' and 'hazel') Boccaccio took directly from Ovid without any recourse to the corresponding passage in Statius's *Thebaid*. The remaining eight occur in Statius's poem, but one does not see why Chaucer should go back to him when he could find the trees in his more direct source. Chaucer introduces now three trees (*plane, mapul, wilugh*) which neither Boccaccio nor he himself (in the *Parliament*) had mentioned. 'Plane' and 'maple' had been already included in the *Romaunt*. 'Willow', then, is either Chaucer's own addition without literary prompting, or he has remembered it from Ovid. As there is no distinctive modifier in the passage, we must leave the question open.

The structural source of this passage is the *Teseida* XI.22-4. Both passages describe the building of Arcite's pyre, in particular, the cutting and felling of the trees with which the pyre was made. The chief model for Boccaccio was Statius, *Thebaid* VI.98-106 in the description of the making of Opheltes's pyre (see Table IV). Statius and Boccaccio had enriched the device of the tree catalogue with attributes that were essentially decorative or at least not strictly functional. Chaucer, who had invented a functional role for arboreal attributes in the *Parliament*, now eliminates them. In the economy of the long *occupatio* (see note 4) in the *Knight's Tale* they could find no place whatever.

Chaucer evidently realized that, if he kept Boccaccio's attributes, the rhetorical configuration he was using would become too heavy, too slow in syntactical movement for its place in the development of the *narratio*. This, together with the fact that he is introducing four more trees, that he is concentrating twenty-one trees in the space of three lines, and that he now seems to understand perfectly the meaning of the Italian terms shows how far we have come culturally and artistically



from the uncertainties of the *Romaunt* translation. The contact with Boccaccio which began with the *Parliament* opened up a whole new range of possibilities in the direction of a rediscovery of the classics as well as in that of poetic innovation.

G. D'Annunzio University

PIERO BOITANI

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> R.K. Root, 'Chaucer's Dares', *Modern Philology* xv, 1917, pp. 18-22.

<sup>2</sup> The passages are the following :

Virgil, *Aeneid* VI. 179-82.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X. 90-198.

Seneca, *Oedipus* 532-41.

Lucan, *Pharsalia* III. 440-45.

Statius, *Thebaid* VI. 98-106.

Claudian, *De Raptu Proserpinae* II. 107-111.

Joseph of Exeter, *Iliad* I. 503-13.

Guillaume de Lorris, *Roman* 1351-58.

Boccaccio, *Teseida* XI. 22-24.

Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls* 176-82

*The Knight's Tale* 2063-65.

<sup>3</sup> The texts used in this article are: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. F.J. Miller, London, 1968 (Loeb Classical Library). Statius, *Thebaid*, ed. J.H. Mozley, London, 1961 (Loeb Classical Library). Joseph Iscanus, *Iliad*, ed. L.Gomph, Leiden, 1970. Boccaccio, *Teseida*, ed. A. Limentani (*Tutte le Opere di G. Boccaccio*, vol.2), Milan, 1964. Chaucer, *The Romaunt, The Parliament of Fowls*, ed. F.N. Robinson (*The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*), London, 1957; *The Knight's Tale*, ed. J.A.W. Bennett, London, 1958. Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. F. Lecoy, Paris, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> It is assumed that fragment A of the *Romaunt* (1-1705) is the work of Chaucer. This section is not in dispute.

<sup>5</sup> *Iliad* I. 505-10. Cf. Root, *op.cit.* above; cf. also *The Parlement of Fouyls*, ed. D.S. Brewer, Manchester, 1972, pp. 105-6.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Root, *loc. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> *Ut supra*, and Root and Brewer, *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Joseph's *interpres laurus* and Claudian's *venturi praescia laurus*. The notion of the laurel as the tree of poets is to be found in Chaucer's *Anelida* 19, a passage which reflects the *Teseida* I. 1,4. Boccaccio makes the association clear in the related gloss. The laurel is associated with Apollo and perhaps with poetry in *House of Fame* III. 1106-8.

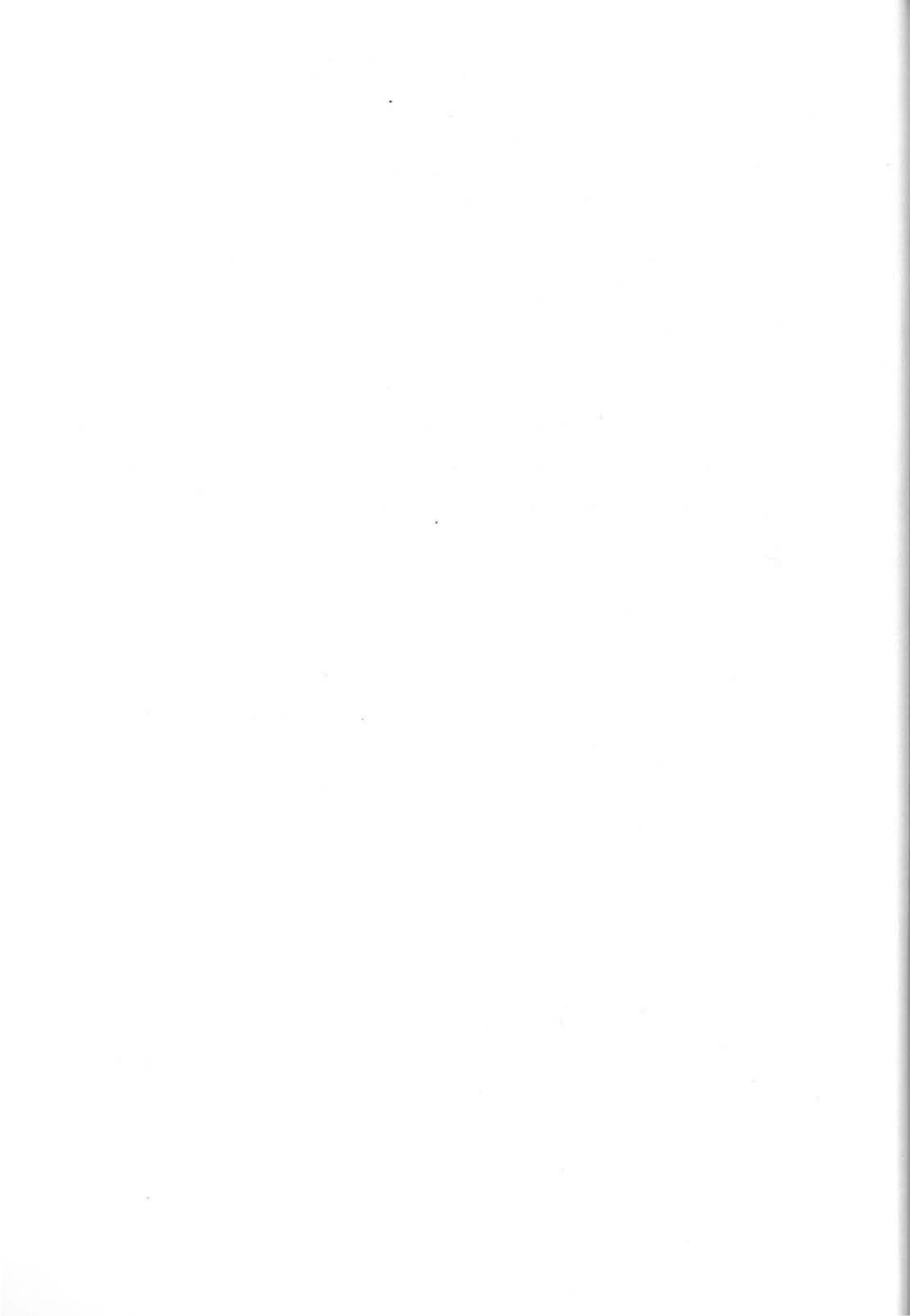
<sup>9</sup> Root, *op.cit.* p. 19, for some reason omitted Joseph's *vaga pinus* ('the roving pine') in *Iliad* I. 516 as a phrase which could have inspired Chaucer's *sayling fir*. He notices the similarity (p.20) but makes nothing of it. Tibullus had used *vagus* of *navita* and Horace used the adjective of *mercator*. *Pinus*, by synecdoche, signified 'ship' in classical and post-classical verse. Chaucer would scarcely have missed the point.

## NOTES TO TABLE I

Reference numbers are to be found at the top left-hand side of each column.

1. Besides the trees listed in the first column, Ovid mentions the following: *aquatica lotos* ('lotus, lover of pools'), *tenuis myricae* ('slender tamarisk'), *bacis caerulea tinus* ('viburnum with dark-blue berries'), *flexipedes hederæ* ('pliant-footed ivy'), *picae* ('forest pines'), *pomo onerata rubenti arbutus* ('arbutus, loaded with ruddy fruit').
2. When Boccaccio writes in the *Teseida* XI. 23, 1-2 'e gli orni pien di pece, nutrimento d'ogni gran fiamma' he may have followed Statius in *Thebaid* VI. 100 who talks of *picae flammis alimenta supremis*, conflating it with Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X. 101, who mentions *ornique et picae*. Strangely, Boccaccio eliminates the laurel, which he would find in Ovid (though not in Statius), and which he mentions several times elsewhere in the *Teseida* and in his glosses. Of the 18 trees in the *Teseida*, two ('tasso' and 'alno') only can come from Statius; one (cf. note 1) is probably a conflation of Ovid and Statius; five ('esculi', 'corilo', 'mirto', 'tigli', 'palma') must come from Ovid; seven occur in both Statius and Ovid, but of these, five trees ('faggi', 'cipresso', 'frassini', 'pin', 'abete') are accompanied by attributes found only in Statius, one ('l'olmo che di viti s'innamora') is an elaboration on a commonplace found in Statius and Ovid and one ('ilici soprani') could derive from either Ovid or Statius. Of the three remaining trees, one ('cerro') seems to be Boccaccio's addition; one ('morbidi tigli') can only derive from Ovid, but Boccaccio adds an attribute ('i qua' ferrati sogliono spaventare i fier coraggi nelle battaglie') which is explained in the gloss and which is his own contribution; and one ('cedro') is not found in Statius or in Ovid, but its attribute ('che per anni mai lontani [non] isgombro sito') seems to correspond to that which Statius gives to the *robur* ('oak').
3. To the aggregate of Ovid, Statius and Boccaccio, Chaucer adds in the *Parliament* the appropriate trees and attributes which he found in Joseph of Exeter's *Iliad* catalogue. Of the thirteen trees in the *Parliament* three (*laurer*, *boxtre*, *vyne*) can be found in Ovid and Joseph, but the functional attribute in each case rules for Joseph. The *saylynge* function of the *fyr* may point to Chaucer's reading of Boccaccio's gloss to *Teseida* XI. 24,1: 'because the first ship that crossed the sea was made of fir wood. He calls the ship 'daring' because great was the boldness of the man who sailed first.' But Claudian, *De Raptu* II.197 used the expression *apta fretis abies*; in any case, Boccaccio's gloss comes directly from Servius's note to Virgil, *Georgics* II.68, in a tree-catalogue which Boccaccio certainly knew. The marine function of the fir is a commonplace and is supported by *Aeneid* 5.663 in a famous passage. On Joseph's *vaga pinus*, cf. note 9 to the text. Of the various oaks listed by Boccaccio, Chaucer keeps the holm-oak (*Parliament* 178) but discards 'esculi', 'caonii' (both to be found in Ovid) and 'cerro'. He lumps them all together under *the byldere ok* (176). Of the trees which he could find in Ovid, Statius and Boccaccio, Chaucer fails to mention the 'pine' in the *Parliament* and the *Knight's Tale*. He omits the 'beech' only in the *Parliament*.

4. This passage is part of what Professor Bennett (*The Knight's Tale*, p.146) calls 'perhaps the longest *occupatio* in English'. The trees listed are 21 in 3 lines as against 13/7 (*Parliament*), 18/24 (Boccaccio), 13/9 (Status), 27/18 (Ovid). 4 new trees (*birch, chastein, thorn, whippeltree*) come from nature or literary sources (*Roman* etc.) outside Ovid, Statius or Boccaccio. The other new additions are found variously in these authors. *Popeler* could be remembered from Ovid's *nemus Heliadum* but it seems more likely to have been Chaucer's addition. From the passage in the *Teseida* Chaucer retains all the trees except the cypress, palm, pine, myrtle, cedar, and the various kinds of oaks, which he reduces to the *oak*. The main additions here, then, seem to come from Ovid. The main omissions emerge from a comparison with Boccaccio and Statius.
5. The scene described in the *Roman* and in Chaucer's translation, the *Romaunt*, is that of a garden of love; so, in part, is the garden in the *Parliament*. In the *Parliament* the fruit trees appropriate to the everyday realism of the *Roman* (1328-38; 1345-50), (*Romaunt* 1355-66; 1373-8) disappear. The universal, functional attributes and trees of Joseph take their place. The oak, which is present in the *Romaunt*, *Parliament* and *Knight's Tale* does not occur in the *Roman* catalogue. The pine, present in the *Roman*, *Romaunt*, *Teseida* VII.50,6 (at the beginning of the description of Venus's temple – which Chaucer is influenced by in the *Parliament*) does not appear in the *Parliament's* garden.



1 Metam. X, 90-108 18 lines 27 Trees	Theb. VI, 98-106 9 lines 18 Trees	2 Tes. XI, 22-24 24 lines 18 Trees	3 P.F. 176-182 7 lines 13 Trees	4 K.T. 2063-65 3 lines 21 Trees	Roman de la Rose, 1351-58 7 lines 13 Trees	5 Romaunt of the Rose, 1379-86 7 lines 13 Trees
fagus, 92	ardua fagus, 98	alti faggi, 22, 1		beech, 2065	fos, 1356	
tiliae molles, 92		morbidi tigli, i qua' ferrati sogliono spaventare fier coraggi, 22, 2-4		linde, 2064		lyndes faire, 1385
frondibus aesculus altis, 91		esculi, 22, 6	byldere ok, 176 see note 3	ook, 2063 see note 4		ok, 1384 see note 5
Chaonis arbor, 90	Chaonium nemus, 99	caonii, 22, 6				
metas imitata cupressus, 106	brumae inlaesa cupressus, 99	'l durante cipresso ad ogni bruma 22, 7-8	the cipresse, deth to playne, 179		ciprés, 1353	cipres, 1381
		cerro, 22, 8	see note 3	see note 4		see note 5
	picae, flammis alimenta supremis, 100 orni, 101	orni pien di pece, nutrimento d'ogni gran fiamma, 23, 1-2	hardy asshe, 176	ash, 2064		assh, 1384
curvata glandibus ilex, 94	ilicae Trabes, 101	ilici soprani, 23, 2	holm to whippes lashe, 178	holm		
	metuenda suco taxus, 101-102	'l tasso, li cui sughi nocimento soglion donare, 23, 3-4	shetere ew, 180	ew, 2065		fyn ew, 1385
fraxinus utilis hastis, 93	infandos belli potura cruores fraxinus, 102-103	frassini, che vani sangui ber sogliono del combattimento 23, 4-5	asp for shaftes pleyne, 180 (ash in Lat. and Italian)	asp, 2063 (ash in Lat. and Italian)	trembles, 1357 (Trembling poplars) fresnes, 1357 (ash or aspen)	asp, 1384
	situ non expugnabile <i>robur</i> , 103	<i>cedro</i> , che per anni mai lontani non sentì tarlo né isgombro sitò 23, 6-8				
enodis abies, 94	audax abies, 104	audace abete, 24, 1	the saylynge fyr, 179	firre, 2063	sapinz, 1358	
succincta comas hirsutaque vertice pinus, 103	odoro vulnere pinus, 104	'l pin, che odore dà dalle tagliature, 24, 2-3			haus pins, 1351	pyn, 1379
coryli fragiles, 93		fragile corilo, 24, 4		hasel, 2065	coudres, 1357	
bicolor myrtus, 98		bicolore mirto, 24, 4				
	alnus amica fretis, 106	l'alno senza sete, del mare amico, 24, 5-6		alder, 2063		
victoris praemia, palmae, 102		d'ogni vincitore premio, la palma, 24, 6-7	the victor palm, 182			
amictae vitibus ulmi, 100	nec inhospita vitibus ulmus, 106	l'olmo che di viti s'innamora, 24, 8	the piler elm, 177	elm, 2063	ormes, branchuz et gros, 1355	elmes grete and stronge, 1383
innuba laurus, 92			the laurer to devyne, 182	laurer, 2064	granz loriers, 1351	high lorer, 1379
platanus genialis, 95				plane, 2064		planes longe, 1384
acer coloribus inpar, 95				mapul, 2065	erables, 1358	maples, 1384
amnicolae salices, 96				wilugh, 2065		
perpetuo virens buxum, 97			the boxtree pipere, 178	box, 2064		
nemus Heliadum, 91				popeler, 2063, see note 4	trembles, 1357 (trembling poplar or aspen)	popler, 1385
pampinae vites, 100			the dronke vyne, 181			

TABLE NO. 1

Boccaccio's List	Modern English Terms
faggi	beeches
tigli	linden
esculi	durmast oaks
caonii	chaonian oaks
cipresso	cypress
cerro	turkey oak
orni	ash-trees
ilici	holm-oaks
tasso	yew
frassini	mountain ashes
cedro	cedar
abete	fir
pin	pine
corilo	hazel
mirto	myrtle
olno	alder
palma	palm
olmo	elm

TABLE NO. 2

Modern English Translation of Boccaccio's list

Roman de la Rose	Modern English	Romaunt of the Rose
loriers	laurel	lorer
pins	pine	pyn
oliviers	olive	cipres
cipres	cypress	olyveres
ormes	elm	elmes
charmes	yoke-elm	maples
fos	beech	assh
coudres	hazel	ok
trembles	trembling poplar or aspen	asp
fresnes	ash (Lat., fraxinus)	planes
arables	maple	ew
sapinz	fir	popler
chesnes	chestnut	lyndes

The trees as listed, in their respective and supposedly corresponding order, in the *Roman* and the *Romaunt*. Modern English terms for the French of the *Roman* are in the central column.

TABLE NO. 3



Metamorphoses	Thebaid	Teseida	Parliament	Knight's Tale	Roman	Romaunt
Orpheus' Trees	pyre for Opheltes	pyre for Arcite	garden of love and  garden of Nature	pyre for Arcite	garden of love	garden of love

TABLE No. 4: The scenes in which the lists of trees occur