

A New Trecento Source of a French Ballade

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THE MARK OF A GREAT OPEN-STACK LIBRARY is its equal ability both to fulfill the researcher's every need or to answer every question, and also to be such an amazing resource as to tempt him or her to stray from that true path and begin sifting randomly through its riches. Chance placement of my study carrel during half a decade allowed me to answer the long-sought musicological question of what the oeuvres of Sousa, Spohr, Spontini, Sullivan and Suk have in common.⁶¹ Surely a paper for another time.

But occasionally one successfully navigates between the Scyllas and Charybdises of rare scores and enticing books to pursue in peace an actual research project. The vast and varied holdings of the Loeb Music Library, and in particular the microfilm collection of the Isham Memorial Library, enabled a project of reexamining the connections among the various fragmentary Italian sources of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.⁶² Let us consider one such source and its context.

Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 522 is a little-known manuscript written in a gothic hand probably of the late trecento or early quattrocento.⁶³ According to a nineteenth-century note on the second flyleaf, the manuscript contains a "trattato

61 Astute readers will note that Sullivan and Suk are not in alphabetical order. However, aficionados of the Loeb collections will recall that composers are sorted not that way, but instead by the first two letters of the last name and then by their relative importance in the early twentieth century. Hence the musicological party game involving such questions as who will come first, Bruckner or Bruch? Who are the five "Sc-" composers more important than Schütz?

62 The larger study appears as Michael Scott Cuthbert, "Trecento Fragments and Polyphony Beyond the Codex" (Ph.D. dissertation: Harvard University, 2006).

63 The following manuscript sigla will be used in this study:

Casanatense 522	Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, MS 522
Cividale 98	Cividale del Friuli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale. MS xcviII
Melk 391	Melk, Stiftsbibliothek. MS 391 (<i>olim</i> 486 and J 1)
Mod A	Modena, Biblioteca Estense e Universitaria. MS a.M.5.24 (<i>olim</i> IV.D.5, then lat. 568)
Montserrat 823	Montserrat, Biblioteca del Monestir. MS 823
New Jersey p.c.	New Jersey, fragment in a private collection
New York Boorman	New York, fragment in the possession of Stanley Boorman
Parma 75	Parma, Archivio di Stato. Armadio B, Busta n.75, fasc. 2
Prague 9	Prague, Národní knihovna (formerly Státní knihovna SSR—Universitní knihovna). MS XI E 9

aescetico d'incerto autore" (treatise on asceticism by an unknown author).⁶⁴ Though an identification of this treatise could not be completed in this study, we are more interested in the other work contained between the volume's modern leather covers: a single folio serving as one of the two back flyleaves.⁶⁵ The folio contains two lines of music in mensural notation. Kurt von Fischer first brought this musical source to our attention in 1964, describing it as a single-voice (with a cautionary "(?)" placed after "einstimmigen"), French-texted song, probably a ballade.⁶⁶ Fischer noted that the unusual and difficult text probably indicated that the work was copied by an Italian without a clear understanding of his French text.

While most of the essential characteristics of this description remain unchallenged, we can improve substantially upon it with a fresh examination of the source, and an identification of concordances for its musical contents. Although no known work begins with Fischer's reconstructed incipit, "Cuoï (?) mon cuer," the distinctiveness of the opening gesture, with its repeated G's, combined with Fischer's correct identification of ballade form, identifies the music as the cantus voice of the three-voice anonymous ballade *Je voi mon cuer* known from the **Reina** codex and four non-Italian sources, summarized in the table below. Significantly, the ballade is unknown in French sources.⁶⁷

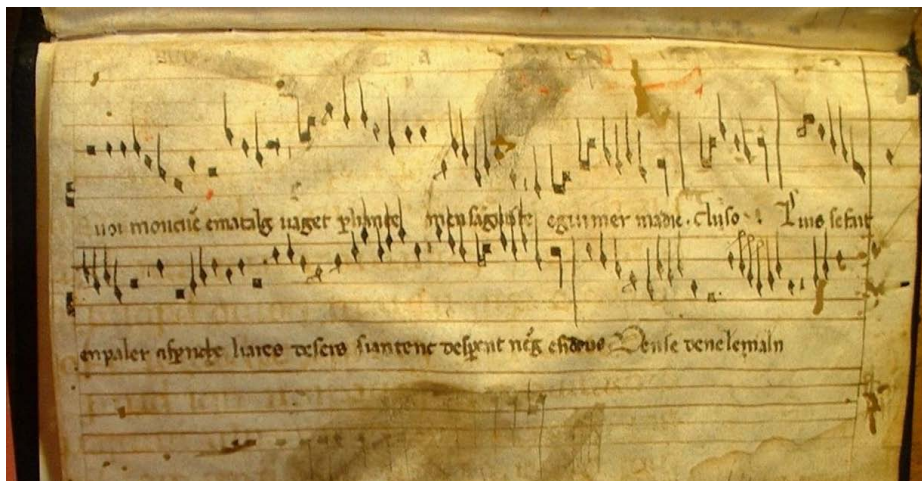
Reina	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. ms fonds nouvelles acquisitions françaises 6771
Strasbourg 222	Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Municipale (<i>olim</i> Bibliothèque de la Ville). ms 222. C.22. (Destroyed)
Todi Carità	Todi, Archivio Storico Comunale, fondo Congregazione di Carità, Istituto dei sartori, Statuto [senza segnatura] (ex O. p. Sarti n. 83)
Trémoille	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. ms fonds nouvelles acquisitions françaises 23190 (<i>olim</i> Angers, Château de Serrant, Duchesse de la Trémoille)
Wolkenstein A	Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. ms 2777
Wolkenstein B	Innsbruck, Universitätsbibliothek. ms without shelfmark

64 Incipit: "FO UNO Monaco desiderante dedio et delle soe marauelle che sonno nel mondo. et in tucte cose magnificano dio nelle soe opere et creature," (f. 1r). Explicit: "Chi adempie questi comandamenti perfettamenteamente pervene allo stato in sopra dicta," (f. 44r).

65 The treatise is also known from Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense ms 886, ff. 60r–107r, where it is also unidentified. See Anna Saitta Revignas, editor, *Catalogo dei manoscritti della Biblioteca Casanatense*, Indici e Cataloghi, Nuova Serie II, volume VI (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico Dello Stato, 1978), p. 26. An important mistake to correct in this catalog is its incorrect substitution of "ballata" for "ballade."

66 Fischer, "Neue Quellen zur Musik des 13. 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts," *Acta Musicologica* 36 (1964), p. 87.

67 The number of French works known entirely or mainly from foreign manuscripts continues to grow. For a new identification of the often copied rondeau *Esperance qu'en mon cuer* in Rome, Biblioteca Angelica 1067, see Cuthbert, "Esperance and the French Song in Foreign Sources," *Studi Musicali* 36 (2007),



Casanatense 522, recto (detail of first two lines)

Sources of *Je voi mon cuer* (including voice parts and incipits)⁶⁸

Casanatense 522, back flyleaf. C only. “[J]e voi mon cuer e ma talg vaget.”

Reina, f. 73v. Tr, C, T. “Je voy mon cuer et in bactel vaget.”

Prague 9, f. 261r. C, T. “Ce voy mon cuer en un bactel nager.”

Strasbourg 222, f. 83r. Only the incipit of C survives. “Cen mon chier.”

(Coussemaker’s transcription)

Wolkenstein A, ff. 13v–14r. Tr, C, T, Ct. “Du ausserweltes schöns mein herz,
dein wunniklicher scherz.”

Wolkenstein B, ff. 19v–20r. Tr, C, T, Ct. “Du ausserweltes schöns mein herz,
dein wunniklicher scherz.”

pp. 1–19. The two works are connected by *Je voy mon cuer*’s quotation of *Esperance*’s incipit at the word “asperance.” (Noted by David Fallows, *A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415–1480* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 154)

68 Recent editions in Gordon K. Greene, *French Secular Music: Ballades and Canons*, Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century 20, (Monaco: Éditions de l’Oiseau-Lyre, 1982), nos. 48 and 48a, pp. 158–162, and Willi Apel, *French Secular Compositions of the Fourteenth Century*, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae 53, 3 volumes, ([Rome:] American Institute of Musicology, 1970–72), no. 152, pp. 57–58. The work has also been discussed in Gilbert Reaney, “Music in Late Medieval Entremets,” *Annales Musicologiques* 7 (1964–77), p. 63, where he connects the opening line, “I see my heart floating in a boat,” to tableaux at a feast where the players in a mock ship would present their hearts to their lord.

The Casanatense version of the cantus is closely related to the reading in **Reina**. In every case where **Prague 9** differs from **Reina**, **Casanatense 522** agrees with **Reina**. All three sources differ considerably from the wordier Wolkenstein versions.⁶⁹ The differences between **Casanatense 522** and **Reina** are few: in m. 14 (referring to the transcription in *PMFC*) **Casanatense 522**'s last minim is a C. In m. 34 the second semibreve is written with an oblique tail (however, a small mark through the tail may be canceling this mistake). Measure 44 transmits an erroneous semibreve for the last minim. (See facsimile above, reprinted by permission of the Biblioteca Casanatense).

The version in **Casanatense 522** finishes its second line of music at the end of m. 49 and gives a custos for the next note, but the last thirteen notes are not found on this page. If the work were transmitted in two voices and this page were a verso, then the tenor could fit on a single line and it would not be unusual to have the upper voice conclude on the second line of the facing page—but this explanation relies on too many hypothetical assumptions; we simply cannot know why the music ends where it does.

With six sources (or five depending on how independent one considers the Wolkenstein sources), *Je voi mon cuer* is one of the most transmitted ballades of the fourteenth century (excluding Machaut's). It is surpassed in scribal popularity only by *Fuiés de moy, envie* (found in **Reina**, **Civiale 98**,⁷⁰ **Prague 9**, **Strasbourg 222**, **Todi Carità**, **Trémoille**, **Melk 391**, and the two Wolkenstein sources) and challenged only by Grenon's *Je ne requier* (in six sources: **Mod A**, **Montserrat 823**, **Strasbourg 222**, **Parma 75** (text only), **New York Boorman**, and **New Jersey p.c.**).

Kurt von Fischer has already commented on an odd detail of the scribe's notation, an unusual oblique semibreve form with a short tail emerging from the lower-left body of the lozenge; unfortunately the graphic reproduced in his article distorts this form beyond any usefulness in identifying concordances.⁷¹ The third and fourth lines of the manuscript also contain musical notation, albeit somewhat erased. The notation on the third line does not seem to have value as a composition:



Casanatense 522, recto, line 3

69 Only a ten-note incipit survives from **Strasbourg 222**. It uses a ligature for the final three notes. Those notes are texted in **Prague 9**, **Casanatense 522**, and **Reina**.

70 On this identification, see Cuthbert, "Trecento Fragments," Chapter 2.

71 Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

However, the notation on the fourth line implies a work in *tempus imperfectum cum prolatione maiori*. A provisional transcription is given below:



Casanatense 522, recto, line 4:

There are also a few musical figures—semibreves, a long, and a two note ligature—which can be made out on the binding strip connecting the flyleaf to the last folio of the preceding gathering.

The verso is mostly blank. Dry-point lines and a single red line have been marked. Although the folio appears never to have been used except for a line of text at the outside edge of the page (again upside-down with respect to the orientation of the music), there are also two red letters which tantalizingly stand out not erased: an R and an A with a bar over it, signifying “antiphon;” the verso thus seems to be a well-scraped palimpsest, though perhaps not of polyphony.

It is difficult to say whether this fragment is part of a larger manuscript. The last *custos* on the recto implies further music. The rotation of the leaf and the separation from the corpus's gathering structure make it obvious that the folio originates from a different manuscript than the host; the lack of a top margin to the music strongly implies that the conversion into a flyleaf occurred after the music was copied. But the lack of ruling on the verso along with the differing gauges of the staves on the recto entail the conclusion that the manuscript from which the leaf originated was something outside of what we perceive to be the norm of polyphonic manuscripts of the trecento. As the fragmentary sources of the trecento are reexamined, this norm may need to be reexamined along with them.

Special thanks are owed to the Italian Ministry of Fine Arts and Culture and the Biblioteca Casanatense for permission to reproduce the manuscript source.