

**THE ERUCTAVIT, AN OLD  
FRENCH POEM; THE  
AUTHOR'S ENVIRONMENT, HIS  
ARGUMENT AND MATERIALS**

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**GEORGE FITCH MCKIBBEN**

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The *ERUCTAVIT*, an Old French  
Poem: the Author's Environment,  
his Argument and Materials

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS  
AND LITERATURE, IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY  
GEORGE FITCH McKIBBEN

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## THE *ERUCTAVIT*, AN OLD FRENCH POEM:

### THE AUTHOR'S ENVIRONMENT, HIS ARGUMENT AND MATERIALS.

This paraphrase in verse of Psalm XLIV of the Vulgate (*Eruclavit cor meum verbum bonum*) must have enjoyed no small popularity during three centuries, and in widely separated parts of the then French speaking world. This is attested by the fourteen copies<sup>1</sup> that survive. Of these, two contain only about a quarter of the poem; two, about one-half; while no less than ten are quite complete or nearly so.

In this study of the poem, after an outline of the investigations of well known scholars, are presented my conclusions upon its contents and plan, the author's environment and character, his materials.

Conspicuous in the poem, and no doubt explaining much of its popularity, are the passages at the beginning and end in which the poet addresses his patroness. A third address, containing only four lines and serving merely as a transition passage without identifying

<sup>1</sup> One of the fragments,—Paris, B. N. 902 (ms. L),—and eight of the complete copies of the *Eruclavit*,—Paris, Ste. Geneviève, Lf. 13, (ms. C); B. N. 2094 (ms. A); 1747 (ms. N); 24429 (ms. G); Arsenal, 3518, (ms. H); Madrid, B. N. E. 150 (ms. B); Vatican, 1682 (ms. F); British Museum, add. 15606 (ms. E),—were copied by me between December and August, 1891-'92. The other copies, excepting that of Vienna, were at the same time rather hastily examined and compared. One of my copies, that made in the British Museum, was published in 1893, appearing with a brief introduction in the *Scientific Bulletin* of Denison University, Granville, Ohio. I have recently secured copies of the other mss.: Paris, B. N. 1536 (ms. K); 20046 (ms. M); 25532 (ms. I); Arsenal, 3516 (ms. J) and Vienna, Bibl. Palat., 3430 (ms. D).

The restored text of the *Eruclavit* will be published by Professor T. A. Jenkins, of the University of Chicago. As basis of the outline of the poem, or Part II of this study, I have used my copy of the ms. in the British Museum, published in 1893, as stated above.

phrases, occurs in the latter part of the poem. These addresses<sup>1</sup> are as follows:—

## Ll. 1-14.

Une chançon que David fist,	I' po trop d'une sole chose :
Que nostre sire an cuer li mist,	Tant i mist cil qui la cria
Dirai ma dame de Champaigne,	Largesee que trop an i a ;
Celi cui Damedés anseigne	Largescé et li hauz despens
Et espire de toz ses biens,	Metent cusançon et espans
Si qu'en li ne faut nule riens ;	Mainte foiz an jantil corage.
Ançois i a, qui dire l'ose,	Deus doint que n'i aiens damage !

## Ll. 1749-1752.

Cist vers apres conte la joie,	Cui Damedés mantaigne et gart
S'est bien droiz que ma dame l'oie,	Si qu'ele an ait antiere part.

## Ll. 2079-2100.

La jantil suer le roi de France,	Qui de grant bien nos asseüre :
Recordiez i vostre creance.	Qui Deu aime et de lui anquiert
Pansez, dame, de bien amer,	Seürs soit il que miez l'an lert.
De servir et de reclamer	Mout met son cuer a bone escole
Celui qui la foi nos espire,	Qui volantiens ot sa parole.
Ou vostre jantis cuers se mire.	E vos, dame, estes toz jorz preste
Mout l'avez fin et aguisié ;	De l'oïr et d'estre an anqueste ;
Ne sai ou vos avez puisié ;	Li bons maistre don vos avez
Mes d'une chose vos faz sage,	Retenu quant que vos savez,
Que mout avez grant avantage :—	Si com il est verais amis,
Qu'un mot a an sainte escriture	Croisse le bien qu'il i a mis !

<sup>1</sup> These addresses, in which something of the poet's purpose appears, altho easily omitted, belonged to the original poem ; their omission, when not the result of a mutilation of the ms., may be attributed to the scribe's desire to adapt the poem to some more general use.

The various copies treat them as follows : L and M, being fragments, have only the first address ; K and H, only the second ; I, altho nearly complete, omits all three addresses ; J, a fragment and mutilated, has only three lines of the first ; D, F, G, A, N, and E contain all three ; B and C contain the first and second, but the latter, evidently by an error, has lost the identifying phrase of line 3, *ma dame de Champaigne*.



The only expressions that serve here to identify the patroness are *ma dame de Champagne*, l. 3, and *la jantil suer le roi de France*, l. 2108. These, taken together, can refer only to Marie, daughter of King Louis VII and Queen Eleanor. She became countess of Champagne in 1164, upon her marriage with Henri I, the Liberal, after a betrothal beginning in early childhood. On the death of her father and the accession of her half-brother, Philip Augustus, in 1181, she could be spoken of as "sister of the King of France." In the same year she became a widow, and her bereavement, it is thought, offered to the devout poet his opportunity.

After being forgotten for three centuries, the *Eructavit* began about two generations ago to attract some attention from students of the life, thought and speech of medieval France. Certain well known investigators have made some expression in print concerning it, as one of the many *inedita* worthy of study.<sup>1</sup>

Prosper Tarbé deserves the credit of pointing out Sens as the author's city, and the Benedictine abbey, St. Pierre-le-Vif, as his home. This appears from the following passage, ll. 769-786, where the local saints of Sens are mentioned by name:—

Li bons archiers qui si loing lance	Qui s'aresturent droit a Sanz.
Retraist 'ii' saietes an France,	La estoit lors toz li bofois
Bien legieres et bien tranchanz,	Et li chiés de Sarazinois.

<sup>1</sup> Paulin Paris, *Les manuscrits françois de la bibliothèque du roi*, vii, 199, 208; Prosper Tarbé, *Poètes de Champagne antérieurs au siècle de François I*, 37, 38; Holland, *Christien von Troyes*, 247; D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Histoire des ducs et des comtes de Champagne*, iv, 642; P. Meyer, *Romania*, vi, 9, and *Bulletin de la Société des anciens textes français*, 1873, 50; G. Paris, *Romania*, xii, 523, and *Histoire de la littérature française au moyen âge*, 232; J. Bonnard, *Les traductions de la Bible en vers français au moyen âge*, 139; Gröber, *Grundriss der romanischen Philologie*, ii, 689; Suchier and Birch-Hirschfeld, *Geschichte der französischen Literatur*, 150. Reference, it may be added, is made to some particular copy of the *Eructavit*, for philological rather than literary purposes, by W. Foerster in the large edition of *Oligés*; by E. Goerlich in *Der burgundische Dialekt*, and by A. Thomas, *Romania*, xxx, 339. Opinions concerning the identity of the *dame de Champagne* varied even after 1865, when the fourth volume of D'Arbois de Jubainville's work, mentioned above, appeared. The statement of P. Meyer, *Romania*, vi, 9, foot-note, sets the matter at rest. To G. Paris is due the assignment of the year 1181 as the earliest probable date of the poem.

Li uns fu sainz Saviniens,	Par ces ·ji· fu France conquise :
Li autre sainz Potanciens.	A Sainz fu la premiere eglise
Selonc lor nons la vertu orent :	Qui a non Sainz Peres li Vis ;
Qu'anbedui sorent mout et porent.	Qu'aneor n'estoit il pas ocis
Des deciples Damedé furent ;	Quant cele eglise fu fondée
Avec lui mangierent et burent.	Qui de son non est honorée.

#### I. THE AUTHOR'S ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER.

Such a passage as that quoted above is usually thought to determine the writer's home. It may be so taken here. Our poet's general environment then was *urbs antiqua Senonum*, the Canterbury of France. The abbey of St. Pierre-le-Vif was his more particular environment. He was a Benedictine monk. The reference to the monastery seems all the more decisive for the reason that the poet says nothing of the many other religious foundations in Sens, a city which at the time was probably unsurpassed in France as an ecclesiastical centre, being popularly called "little Rome."<sup>1</sup> For instance, he does not mention the depository of St. Loup's relics, the abbey of St. Columba. But he chooses to give the names of the less conspicuous St. Pierre-le-Vif and its traditional founders, SS. Savinian and Potentian.<sup>2</sup> One reason for this choice may be the desire to exalt especially the earliest heralds of the Gospel; but the stronger reason must be the local pride of the poet, as member of a community that held them in special honor. The proverb holds good here: *Chescuns prestres ses reliques loue*.

Accepting this theory, everything becomes of interest and importance that concerns Sens and the abbey St. Pierre-le-Vif, as they were in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Among the documents that afford us light on the subject are chronicles of the two

<sup>1</sup> Its archbishop, until the fourteenth century, claimed the title "primate of France," as an equal of the archbishop of Lyons.

<sup>2</sup> The bells cast at Auxerre by Mangin Vyard in 1560 and still hanging in the south tower of the Sens cathedral, St. Etienne, are called *Savinienne et Potentielle*. But the poet's monastery was demolished at the time of the Revolution, tho its name survives in that of the east part of the present city, it is said. See Quantin's *Dictionnaire topographique de l'Yonne*, article *Sens*.

monasteries above mentioned. The chronicler of St. Columba is anonymous; but two monks, known to us by name, Odorannus and Clarius, separated by a century, wrote of St. Pierre-le-Vif. The former recites at length the recovery, thru a dream of Queen Constance, King Robert's wife, in 1025, of the precious relics, hidden and forgotten at the time of the Norman invasion, generations before. In both chronicles abundant proof is afforded of the reverence in which SS. Savinian and Potentian were held by the people of Sens and by the monks of St. Pierre-le-Vif. Indeed the monastery is sometimes called by the names of St. Peter and St. Savinian<sup>1</sup> joined together. The chronicle of Clarius, who wrote early in the twelfth century, has considerable interest for us. He describes with unusual intelligence and enthusiasm several of the chief ecclesiastical events of his own time, which he witnessed or participated in. Yet he keeps himself in the background, barely mentioning his own name in narrating what was probably his proudest achievement: namely, his service as substitute for the Abbot Arnaldus and the Archbishop Daimbert on an occasion of great moment for the community. After narrating the abbot's efforts in defence of the monastery, endangered in its rights by grasping neighbors, Clarius ends his chronicle by reciting his chief's labors for the library. This had been almost destroyed by fire in 1095, shortly before his election as abbot. He made it his task to preserve and multiply the books of the monastery, and to devise means for their preservation thenceforward. In order to more fully render this important service he finally resigned his high position. The collection due so largely to his efforts consisted, in the year 1123, of twenty volumes, a catalog of which the chronicle gives. This loyal tribute of Clarius to his abbot, and the book-list, form the conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Duru's *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne*, II, 294-314, 564-566; *Passio SS. Saviniani et Potentiani, sociorumque eorum*, etc.; charters of Pope Honorius II, Archbishop Richer, Hugues and Constance of Champagne. Cf. also the chronicle of Clarius, annis 1108, 1110, 1117. Savinian appears to enjoy a sort of primacy as compared with his traditional companions. In the *Grande Encyclopédie*, under the article *Savinien*, M. Prou treats the entire group.

<sup>2</sup> See *Histoire littéraire de la France*, XIII, 38; Duru's *Bibliothèque historique de l'Yonne*, II, *Chron. Clarii*, anno 1123; D'Achéry, *Spicilegium*, II, 484, 485.