

Scholar@UPRM

Giraut de Borneil's "Alba"

Item Type	Essay
Authors	Aguirre, Ángel Manuel
Publisher	Centro de Publicaciones Académicas, Facultad de Artes y Ciencias, Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez
Download date	2025-04-18 08:04:38
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11801/3456

GIRAUT DE BORNEIL'S "ALBA"

Ángel Manuel Aguirre

Giraut de Borneil was a professional troubadour of humble birth and a native of Excideuil in the Limousin region of Dordogne. Born to poor parents about 1138 or in the mid 1140's, he raised himself to a high position in the literary world by the exercise of his own talents:

Il était sans fortune, mais sage, instruit et de sens rassis... Et il fut meilleur poète que tous ceux qui l'avaient précédé ou qui vinrent après lui. C'est pourquoi il fut nommé le Maître des Troubadours, et continue à passer pour tel auprès des gens qui s'entendent à la poésie et à l'amour.¹

Well known in his lifetime and after his death around 1212, Giraut is, along with Bertrand de Born, one of the two main troubadours in the Limousin dialect. In the course of his literary career, which extended from c. 1165 to c. 1199 or 1200, he visited all the great courts of southern France and the court of Alfonso II of Aragón (1162-1196) in northern Spain. He was also patronized by Alfonso's successor, Pedro II (1196-1213), and by Alfonso IX of León (1188-1214). Giraut went through the siege of Acon (Acre?) with Richard I, the Lion Hearted, during the Third Crusade, and remained for a year at the court of Boemund II of Antioch. Also, he took part in the Crusade of 1189 in the company of Adémar V, viscount of Limoges (1138-1199), and probably visited Syria. Unmarried, he was generous to his parents and to his homeland Church, bequeathing his wealth to his parish and to the poor.

Few troubadours produced more than the seventy-six or seventy-seven (Thomas Bergin claims there are approximately eighty) poems now attributed to Giraut de Borneil, and none equaled his rich variety of structure and style. His poems, translated into German and edited with the utmost care by Adolf Kolsen in 1910, must have enjoyed great popularity among Giraut's contemporaries since they were

¹ André Berry, *Florilège des Troubadours* (Paris: Librairie Firmin-Didot, 1930) 203.

included in several chansonniers. Undoubtedly, Giraut de Borneil owes his well-earned reputation to the professional mastery with which he solved the problem of style and expression, becoming a model of the most perfect **cansós**.

The distinctive qualities of some of his moral **sirventès** poems led Dante Alighieri (who believed, nevertheless, that Arnaut Daniel, and not Borneil, was the greatest poet of the trobar clus, as expressed in *Purgatorio*, 120) to propose Giraut de Borneil as the model poet of moral rectitude in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Dante's quotation of Giraut de Borneil in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, ii, 2, as the poet of **rectitudo** is entirely justified by the high moral tones of his **sirventès**, in which Giraut rebukes the corruption of the feudal system of his times. According to Alan R. Press,

Both in his forty love-songs and his thirty or so **sirventès**, Giraut was faced with the constant task of renewing the formulation of thematic material which, since the great poets of the mid-twelfth century, had become fixed by cultural tradition and literary convention (and) the problem of style and expression had now become dominant. Giraut owes his reputation to the professional mastery with which he solved them. Though he states more than once his approval of the complexities of the trobar clus, he yet avoided the extreme manifestations of purely formal virtuosity affected by certain of his contemporaries.

His own abilities are more consistently and impressively revealed both in the stylistic richness and structural coherence of the **trobar ric** and in the ease and lightness of rhythm and expression characteristic of the **trobar leu**. Giraut not only took a leading part in the elaboration of these styles; he developed them to their highest point of perfection.²

Although Giraut de Borneil is primarily remembered for his defense of the **trobar leu**, he began his career as a practitioner of the obscure **trobar clus** (1165-70), was converted to the **trobar leu**, and adhered to it for the rest of his life. Alfred Jeanroy, who finds Giraut de Borneil to be "grave, sentencieux et souvent pedantesque," comments that

Borneil finis par limiter son ambition à entendre chanter ses vers "par les femmes qui vont puiser l'eau à la fontaine".³

Salverda de Grave explains that Borneil

...a raisonné la différence que présentaient entre elles la poésie obscure ou difficile et la poésie claire, et a pratiqué les deux... son oeuvre est difficile à interpréter, même dans les chansons qu'il presente comme

² Alan R. Press, *Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry*, (Austin: The University of Austin Press, 1971) 125-26.

³ Alfred Jeanroy, *Histoire Sommaire de la Poésie Occitane*, Genève: Slatkin Reprints, 1973, 47; 41.

“claires”... Giraut a cultivé a la fois le genre obscur et le genre clair, et puis que, pour lui, le **trobar clus** était autre chose qu'un moyen de montrer sa virtuosité; l'obscurité des vers avait une signification plus profonde...

Les moyens dont Giraut, ainsi que d'autres troubadours, se sert pour obtenir un style **obscur**, vient donc l'emploi de mots à sens multiple, les combinaisons inusitées, les mots nouveaux et la suppression des chaînons dans l'expression des idées.⁴

The alba

One of Giraut de Borneil's most beautiful compositions is an **alba**, considered by many to be a masterpiece, and together with the anonymous **alba** of the **aubépin**, “the best of this type of love poetry. About this **alba**, which begins with the verse “Re glorios, verais lums et clartatz,” Alan R. Press has written the following:

(this **alba**), adapted by Giraut from what is thought to be the folk-song form of the **alba** or dawn-song, is generally considered one of the most perfect compositions in the whole corpus of troubadour poetry. The technical skill and the poetic sensitivity with which the conventions of two quite separate literary traditions have been combined are immediately perceptible, rendering all comment superfluous. It is indeed a masterpiece by this the ‘maestre dels trobadors’.⁵

In order to analyze this **alba** in detail we have divided it into stanzas with numbered verses to facilitate our dissecting task. Several translations of the **alba** (into French, English and Italian) are included in the appendix, along with another Provençal **alba**, the **aube du rossignol**. But first we would like to try to define this type of love poem. For Francis Hueffer, the **alba** or song of the morning is a popular form and one of the most characteristic embodiments of Provençal poetry. In it the lovers are united and there is a dialogue, or at least, “the successive utterance of two persons.” According to Hueffer, in the oldest of these songs, the principal speaker in the poem is neither one of the lovers, but the faithful watcher or sentinel guarding them from any intrusion. Hueffer adds that the **alba** was by no means without its formal rule or custom. The reader will notice the refrain or burden at the end of each stanza, another proof of the antiquity of the species; he will also remark the recurrence of the word ‘alba’. This word is always found in the last line of every stanza, of which sometimes it is actually the concluding word. To this quaint

⁴ J.-J. Salverda de Grave, “Giraut de Borneil et la poésie obscure,” *Mélanges Jacobus van Ginneken*, 1937, 298-304.

⁵ Press 127.

and evidently very primitive device the name of these poems is owing.⁶

Alfred Jeanroy states the following about the **alba**:

L'aube dont les plus anciens exemples vent de la fin du XIIe siècle, est restée pendant quelques décades fidèle à son thème traditionnel, la séparation, au lever du jour, de deux amants réveillés par le cri du guetteur ou le chant des oiseaux. Sur les vingt et quelques **albas** conservées, deux seulement méritent de retenir l'attention: celle où Giraut de Borneil a fait du guetteur un ami du héros, tremblant pour la salut de celui-ci, et une autre, anonyme, dont le tour naïf et passionné a frappé tous les critiques.⁷

Spanish dictionaries of literature provide the following definitions:

Alba. Composición breve y sencilla de los trovadores. Su tema el sentimiento que produce la separación de los amantes al apuntar el día. Su carácter distintivo era la reiteración —como estribillo— de la palabra **alba** o **aurora**, alusión jaculatoria al nuevo día. Modernamente, corresponde esta poesía a la **alborada** y a la serenata. Los más bellos modelos de **albas** pertenecen al famoso trovador Guiraldo de Borneil.

Alba. Composición poética de los trovadores provenzales. Su asunto es de índole amorosa, y ni la métrica ni la estrofa se ajustan a normas determinadas. La única característica común a todas las "albas" es el estribillo, en el que se repite siempre la palabra "alba". Como indica su nombre, se cantaban por la mañana, al romper el día, y en melancólicos versos, el enamorado acusa al Sol de ser el causante de la separación de los amantes, que para sus amoríos buscan el amparo de las sombras nocturnas. En España, el "alba" difiere de la composición provenzal originaria en que su tema no se ciñe exclusivamente al asunto amoroso; para Henríquez Ureña constituye, en el ámbito español, un "canter de mañana" o "alborada"; un ejemplo de "alba" se encuentra en el conocido cantar recogido en el Cancionero musical de los siglos XV y XVI, cuyos primeros versos son: "Al alba venid, buen amigo, al alba venid".

As we can gather from these definitions, the **alba** was a brief, dramatic folk song whose most outstanding characteristic was a refrain repeated at the end of each stanza, which included the word **alba** (hence the name of this type of dawn-song), it being sometimes the last word in the last line of every stanza. The oldest **albas** date from the end of the twelfth century, and in their development they remained faithful to its traditional love theme: the parting of two lovers at dawn, awakened by the cry of a watchman or by the song of the birds. Neither the rhyme nor the stanza of the **alba** follows a fixed structural pattern. The main difference between Provençal and Spanish **albas** is that the theme of the Spanish **albas** was not always exclusively amorous.

⁶ Francis Hueffer, *The Troubadours*, (London: Chatto and Windus 1977) 82; 89.

⁷ Jeanroy 76-77.

Furthermore, as the **alba** developed, several variations took place, such as narrative, introductory stanza added at the beginning of the poem for the public's or reader's benefit (since old **albas** like the Spanish **romances** usually began in **medias res**); the lover or even the lady may be the speaker, instead of the watchman, and a faithful friend may have uttered a short reply at the end of the poem. Also, a high content of complicated, religious symbolism (a technique known in Spanish Medieval and Renaissance literature as "escritura a lo divino") was brought into the interpretation of this formerly profane type of poetry: for some authors the night symbolized sin, dawn was the Virgin Mary, and the new day was Christ or purity of heart, which sinners could only attain through the mediating intercession of the Virgin Mother, whose symbol was dawn.

Giraut de Borneil's **alba**

- | | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 1 | Reis glorios, verses lums e clartatz, | |
| 2 | Deus poderos, Senher, si a vos platz, | |
| 3 | Al meu companh siatz fizels aiuda; | STANZA I |
| 4 | Qu'eu no lo vi pos la nochs fo venguda, | |
| 5 | Et aces sera l'alba. | |
| | | |
| 6 | Bel compahno, si dormetz o velhatz, | |
| 7 | No dormatz plus, suau vos ressidatz; | |
| 8 | Qu'en orien vei l'estela creguda | STANZA II |
| 9 | C'amena.1 jorn, qu'eu l'ai be conoguda, | |
| 10 | Et ades sera l'alba. | |
| | | |
| 11 | Bel compagno, en chantant vos apel,; | |
| 12 | No dormatz plus, qu'eu auch chanter l'auzel | |
| 13 | Que vai queren lo jorn per lo boschatge, | STANZA III |
| 14 | Et ai paor que.l gilos vos assatge, | |
| 15 | Et ades sera l'alba. | |
| | | |
| 16 | Bel companho, issetz al fenestrel, | |
| 17 | E regardatz las estelas del sel! | |
| 18 | Conoisseretz si.us sui fizels messatge. | STANZA IV |
| 19 | Si non o faitz, vostres n'er lo damnatge, | |
| 20 | Et aces sera l'alba. | |
| | | |
| 21 | Bel companho, pos me parti de vos, | |
| 22 | Eu no.m dormi ni.m moc de genolhos, | |
| 23 | Ans preiei Deu, lo filh Santa Maria, | STANZA V |
| 24 | Que.us me rendes per leial companhia, | |
| 25 | Et ades sera l'alba. | |
| | | |
| 26 | Bel companho, las foras als peiros | |
| 27 | Me preiavatz qu'eu no fos dormilhos, | |
| 28 | Enans velhes tota noch tro al dia. | STANZA VI |
| 29 | Era no.us platz mos chans ni ma paria. | |

- 30 Et ades sera l'alba.
- 31 -Bel dous companh, tan sui en ric sojorn
 32 Qu'eu no volgra mais fos alba ni jorn,
 33 Car la gensor que anc nasques de maire STANZA VII
 34 Tenc et abras, per qu'eu non prezi gaire
 35 Lo fol gilos ni l'alba.

In our analysis of Giraut's **alba** we have borrowed generously from Jonathan Saville's interpretation of the poem and we follow his acceptance of the doubtful seventh stanza, whose authenticity has been doubted by some of the poet's anthologists, like Raymond Thompson Hill in his *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, and Ruggero M. Ruggieri in his *La Prima Lirica Europea*, both of which do not include the lover's response (the seventh stanza) in their anthologies. The suspicion of authenticity relies on the alteration of the refrain (*Et ades sera l'alba* becomes *Lo fol gilos ni l'alba*) in the last line of the seventh stanza. Once we have established that the poem is composed of seven stanzas, we can say that it consists of seven **cobras doblas** of five lines, each with the following rhyme pattern: a10, a10, b10, b10, and c6 ("c" being the refrain). The poem can be divided in two parts; the first part, spoken by the friend or the watchman in the outside world, describes reality (Stanzas I-VI), while the second part is the reply of the lover (Stanza VII), spoken in the inner world of physical love and **joi**. The watchman in this poem is not the usual, conventional tower sentinel. It is probably a knight or a young nobleman, a **compain** of the lover.

The poem has, thus, a very simple binary structure which brings about the tension between the two speakers. The lover-knight voices the claims of the flesh and of the pleasure principle, and his faithful friend watchman voices the claims of reality, of actual time, of institutionalized society (the jealous husband), and religion (the watchman not only mentions the spiritual reality but prays repeatedly). The story does not tell us what happens afterwards. In it, the conflict between two different attitudes toward reality can never come to a solution. The two principles, carnal pleasure and reality, remain in unresolved tension. The verb forms which each of the speakers employs reflect their opposing values and their different attitudes toward time. The past and future tenses, along with verbal forms that imply a future tense (present subjunctive and present progressive), dominate the watchman's interference in the poem. The watchman recalls the past, and thus the verbs are in the preterite in lines 21 to 23.

He also anticipates the future with its danger of imminent destruction or discovery. The refrain, "aces sera l'alba," repeated six

times, is an urgent reminder that the future is continually pressing into the present, destroying the joy of the moment and bringing danger and eventually grief. It conveys also the **appel**, more and more urgent, of the watchman to the lover on day's dawning.

Saville mentions in a footnote a ninth-century Arabic poem about lovers parting at dawn that employs a watchman-like figure in the person of a crier calling from the Mosque tower to summon the faithful to prayer. Despite the fact that he admits a certainly striking resemblance between the **muizzin's** function in the Arabic poem and that of the watchman in the **alba**, he concludes that "no Arabic source can have played a role in the meaning of the watchman figure as he appears in the **alba** or in the meaning of the alba as a whole."⁸ Saville sees no possible connection between "one who calls the Moslem faithful to prayer at dawn" and Western Christian societies. What escapes his criticism is the reality of Mozarabic society in southern Spain with its merging of cultures, customs) and races. Saville also fails to notice that the prayer in Giraut's **alba** is not really a true prayer for the spiritual well-being of the Christian knight, but an irreverent and not really Christian prayer. The watchman prays for the lover's safety throughout his nocturnal and illicit sexual enterprise, and for his prompt return before dawn. The same type of prayer was common in the Spanish literature of Jewish "converts" like Fernando de Rojas. In his *La Celestina*, the go-between, who happens to be the main active character, prays to Heaven for assistance in her attempts to bewitch an innocent maiden so that a rich, handsome young man may seduce her, thus satisfying his lust.

We must keep in my mind that the legend of Don Juan Tenorio had its origins in southern Spain and that its social honor code (present in Tirso de Molina's play *El burlador de Sevilla*) has been linked by Raphael Pattai to the Arab mind. In Tirso's play, a young, handsome nobleman seduces women from different social backgrounds aided by other noble friends or by his servant Catalinón, who is not only Don Juan's watchman but also his **confidant**, adventure companion and accomplice, a premonitory **Vox Dei**, with the specific function of announcing the future, supernatural retribution that will be exacted by divine justice.

In Giraut's **alba**, the watchman-friend laments that the knight does not care anymore for his singing or his camaraderie. Strangely enough, in the first act of *La Celestina*, Sempronio, the servant-

⁸ Jonathan Saville, *The Medieval Erotic Alba*, (New York: Columbia University Press) 142.

companion who used to converse, sing, and play instruments for his master Calisto, can not soothe Calisto's passion for Melibea, whom he has exalted above God and the saints in Paradise (Giraut's knight only says that her beloved is "**la gensor che anc nasques de maire**", the most noble woman ever born of mother). Calisto thus becomes, instead of a Christian, a "Melibean," since he idolizes only Melibea. Whenever Calisto visits Melibea's garden for a night of illicit physical pleasure, he brings along some of his young servant friends or pages as outside watchmen (ironically enough, rushing to their cries for help from intruders, Calisto meets his death). Meanwhile, inside the walls of the garden, Melibea's maid Lucrezia is the envious watch-person of the lovers' rendez-vous.

Jonathan Saville notices that the watchman in Giraut's alba also employs imperatives ("**no dormatz plus, rssidatz, issetz al fenestrel, regardatz**"), verbal forms which, although not in the future tense, point toward action which has not yet been undertaken. He states that in each stanza the order in which the verb forms appear follows the natural movement of time: first in the past (in some of the stanzas); then the present and imperative; finally the future, which is always there in the refrain, and which is sometimes reinforced by another verb with future meaning. His main example is stanza III, where after the gerund form *en chantan* we find a present indicative, **apel** (which comes from **appelle**, but in the first person singular of the present indicative of Provençal, verbs ending in "**-ar**" generally do not exhibit any desinence), an imperative with future connotation, another present indicative with an infinitive object (**auch chanter**), a present progressive or **présent périphrastique (vai queren, va lamentant**: it seems there was in the Middle Ages a confusion between **quaere re** = chercher and **queri** = lamenter, which was produced by the disappearance of the diphthong "**ae**" and the system of deponent verbs), another present indicative ("**ai**") which is the main verb for the subordinate clause in present subjunctive (**assatge**), a tense which conveys the feeling of an imminent future. The following stanza V, with its predominant use of preterite forms (**dormi, moc, preiei**) and imperfect subjunctive forms, shows how the poet used different tenses and moods in the same poem and sometimes in the same stanza. The same trait is exhibited in popular Spanish **romances**, anonymous compositions which begin and end **in medias res**, are highly dramatic, employ dialogue, and some of them, the **romances líricos**, deal with the love theme. The most striking similarity is an artistic **romance** by the Andalusian poet Federico García Lorca, titled **Romance de la pena negra**, a sort of dawn-ballad whose two first lines ("**Las picotas de los gallos,/ cavan buscando la aurora**")

echo Giraut's image of a bird singing as it seeks daylight through the woods. This and other **romances** included in Lorca's **Romancero gitano** are the imitations of popular tradition by a modern writer, a cultured poet who, like Giraut de Borneil, cultivated both literary and popular genres. Like Arabic poets, Giraut used words that had multiple meanings, and intermixed past, present and future times into a timeless state in which the eternal joy is the continuation, forever, of the union with the beloved. Giraut also uses the bird and light imagery so important for Arab poets, who used to refer to their ladies in the masculine form, much like the masculine "**mi dons**" form present in the verses of the troubador poets.

If we read some of the "**jarchas**" discovered by S.M. Stern (which are, according to Dámaso Alonso, the early spring of European poetry, since they were composed before the birth of Guillem de Poitiers), we find many similarities between these short compositions, which Leo Spitzer calls Mozarabic **fraulieden** and the **albas**: the "**jarchas**" are usually spoken by a young girl and the theme is love; they start **in medias res** and we never know the outcome of the problem; they often use the word **habib** (with the meaning of friend/lover) to identify the beloved (as in French, Portuguese and Provençal), and the word "**Al-sabab**" (**aurora** or dawn) recurs considerably. Nevertheless, Spitzer maintains that only one of the **jarchas** is a dawn-song.

The debate of the Arabic influence on Provençal writers and in the origins of Western European Literature has been a long, difficult and complicated one. Fortunately, philologists and critics like Ramón Menéndez Pidal, R.N. Nykl, Dámaso Alonso, S.M. Stern, Leo Spitzer, Francisco Cantera, and others have undertaken a thoroughgoing research study and have produced results which, at the very least, make it impossible to reject entirely the theory of the Arabic influence.

Regardless of the conclusions of these researchers, we can still enjoy Giraut's magnificent **alba**, with its striking and refreshing simplicity in the depiction of the parting of lovers awakening at dawn to the song of newly stirred birds seeking the light of the new day. The poem's efficient and impressive intensity and use of language, its descriptive originality, its symbolism which eludes a definitive interpretation, its proof of the enormous value of the popular element in artistic poetry are all traits that assure its inclusion in the realm of authentic lyric poetry.

Bibliography

- Alborg, Juan Luis. *Historia de la literatura española*. Madrid: Gredos, 1966.
- Alonso, Dámaso. "Cancioncillas 'De Amigo' Mozárabes (Primavera Temprana de la Lírica Europea)." *Revista de Filología Española* 33 (1949): 297-349.
- Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry*. Edited and Translated by Alan R. Press. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1971.
- Berry, André. *Florilège des Troubadours*. Paris: Librairie Firmin-Didot, 1930.
- Brault, Jacques. "Le Secret d'Amour dans la Lyrique Courtoise," *L'Erotisme au Moyen Age*. Montréal: Les Editions de L'Aurore 1979, 23-33.
- Chaytor, H.J. *The Troubadours of Dante*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- Gay-Crosier, Raymond. *Religious Elements in the Secular Lyrics of the Troubadours*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971.
- Gorton, T.J. "Arabic Words and Refrains in Provençal and Portuguese Poetry," *Medium Aevum* 45 (1976): 257-64.
- Hoepffner, E. "Deux notes sur le troubadour Giraut de Borneil," *Romania* 63 (1937): 204-225.
- Hueffer, Francis. *The Troubadours. A History of Provençal Life & Literature in the Middle Ages*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1977.
- Jeanroy, Alfred. *Histoire Sommaire de la Poésie Occitane Des Origines a la Fin du XVIIIe Siècle*. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1973.
- Mermier, Guy. "Interplay in the Low Poetry of the Troubadours. Its Aspects and Possible Meaning: A Socio-Sexological Interpretation," *Studies in Medieval Culture* 8-9 (1976): 31-48.
- Millá y Fontanals, Manuel. *De los Trovadores en España*. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1966.
- Millás Vallicrosa, José Ma. "Sobre los más antiguos versos en lengua castellana," *Sefarad* 6 (1946): 362-71.
- Nykl, A.R. "L'influence Arabe-Andalouse sur les Troubadours," *Bulletin Hispanique* (Octobre-Décembre 1939): 305-15.
- Proensa. An Anthology of Troubadour Poetry*. Selected and Translated by Paul Blackburn and George Economou. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

- Ruggieri, Ruggiero M. *La Prima Lirica Europea. Testi e Versioni Da Poeti Occitani*. Roma: Editrice Elia.
- Salverda de Grave, J-J. "Giraut de Borneil et la poésie obscure," *Mélanges Jacobus van Ginneken*, 1937, 297-306.
- Saville, Jonathan. *The Medieval Erotic Alba. Structure As Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972.
- Shapiro, Marianne. "The Figure of the Watchman in the Provençal Erotic Alba," *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976): 607.
- Spitzer, Leo. "La lírica mozárabe y las Teorías de Theodor Frings," *Lingüística e Historia Literaria*. Madrid: Gredos, 1961, 55-86.

APPENDIX

French Translations of the **Alba** by René Nelli and René Lavaud
(From *Les Troubadours II. Le Trésor Poétique De L'Occitanie*, Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1966, pp. 93;95.):

Roi glorieux, vraie lumière et clarté,
S'il plaît a vous, Seigneur, Dieu tout-puissant,
A mon compain prêtez votre aide sûre
Je ne l'ai vu depuis hier, à la nuit,
 Bientôt ce sera l'aube!

Beau compagnon, dormez-vous? veillez-vous?
Ne dormez plus, rouvrez vos yeux tout doux:
A l'orient je vois grandir l'étoile
—Je la connais— qui ramène le jour...
 Bientôt ce sera l'aube!

Beau compagnon, ma chanson vous appelle:
Ne dormez plus! j'entends chanter l'oiseau
Qui va cherchant le jour par le bocage...
Et j'ai peur que le jaloux vous surprenne:
 Bientôt ce sera l'aube!

Beau compagnon, depuis votre départ
Je n'ai dormi, mais ici, à genoux,
J'ai prié Dieu, le fils Sainte Marie
De me rendre mon loyal compagnon...
 Bientôt ce sera l'aube!

Beau compagnon, dehors sur le perron,
Vous me priez de ne point m'endormir,
Mais de veiller cette nuit jusqu'au jour...
Ores mon chant d'amitié vous ennuie;
 Bientôt ce sera l'aube!

-Beau doux compain, m'est si heureux séjour
Que ne voudrais jamais voir jour ni aube...
Car la plus belle qui soit née de mère,
Je la tiens dans mes bras et peu m'importent
Le fol jaloux et l'aube!

.

Le guetteur chante:

Roi glorieux, vrai flambeau de clarté,
Dieu tout-puissant, Seigneur, je vous en prie,
Sous votre garde ayez mon compagnon.
Depuis le soir je ne l'ai pas revu,
Et bientôt poindra l'aube.

Beau compagnon, dormez-vous? veillez-vous?
Ne dormez plus, mais levez-vous sans bruit:
A l'Orient je vois grossir l'étoile
Qui rend le jour! je la connais, c'est elle!
Et bientôt poindra l'aube.

Beau compagnon, ma chanson vous appelle.
Ne dormez plus! j'entends chanter l'oiseau
Qui va cherchant le jour par le bocage,
Et le jaloux pourrait vous assaillir;
Et bientôt poindra l'aube.

Beau compagnon, mettez-vous au balcon
Et regardez les étoiles du ciel.
Vous connaîtrez que je vous ai dit vrai:
Tant pis pour vous si vous n'écoutez point!
Et bientôt poindra l'aube.

Beau compagnon, depuis votre départ
Je ne dors point, mais demeure à genoux
Suppliant Dieu, fils de sainte Marie,
De vous garder à ma tendre amitié.
Et bientôt poindra l'aube.

Beau compagnon, dehors sur le perron,
Vous m'avez dit de ne m'assoupir point
Et de veiller jusqu'au lever du jour.
Mais peu vous chaut de mes chants et de moi,
Et bientôt poindra l'aube.

L'amant répond:

Beau doux ami, je suis en si doux lieu
Que je voudrais qu'il ne fit jamais jour;
Du monde entier je tiens la plus aimable
Entre mes bras; et je tiens pour néant
Le fol jaloux et l'aube.

English Translation:

Glorious King, true light and splendor, almighty God, Lord, if it please You, to my companion be a faithful aid, for I've seen him not since night came on, and soon it will be dawn.

Sweet friend, if you sleep or wake, sleep ye no more; gently rise again for, in the East, I see the star arise which brings the day, and I have marked it well; and soon it will be dawn.

Sweet friend, in song I call you; sleep no more, for I hear the bird sing as it goes seeking the daylight through the woods, and I fear lest the jealous one assail you; and soon it will be dawn.

Sweet friend, go to the window, and look at the stars in the sky! You'll know if I'm your faithful messenger. If you do not, then yours will be the harm; and soon it will be dawn.

Sweet friend, since I left you, I have not slept or got up from my knees, but I've prayed God, the son of Holy Mary, that He might return you to me in loyal friendship; and soon it will be dawn.

Sweet friend, out there by the steps you begged me that I should not be sleepy but should keep watch all night until the day. Now neither my song nor my company pleases you, and soon it will be dawn.

-Sweet gentle friend, in such a rich dwelling am I that I would it were never more dawn or day; for the most noble woman that ever was born of mother I hold and embrace; hence I need not the jealous fool, nor the dawn.

Italian Translation:

Re glorioso, vero fume e chiarita, Dio potente, Signore, se a Voi piace siate fedele aiuto al mio compagno, poiché non lo vidi da quando è caduta la notte; e subito verra l'alba!

Bel compagno, sia che dormiate o vegliate, non dormite più! Svegliatevi dolcemente, poiché vedo sorta la stella d'oriente che porta il giorno, che io ben la conosco: e subito verrà l'alba!

Bel compagno, vi chiamo cantando: non dormite più, che odo cantare l'uccello che va cercanado il giorno per il bosco, e temo che il geloso vi sorprenda: e subito verrà l'alba!

Bel compagno, uscite alla finestrella e guardate le stelle del cielo: conoscerete se il mio annunzio è veritiero! Se non obbedite, vostro sarà il danno: e subito verrà l'alba!

Bel compagno, da quando mi separai da voi non dormii nè mi mossi dallo stare in ginocchio, pregando Dio, figlio di Santa Maria, che vi restituisse a me per leaf compagnia: e subito verrà l'alba!

Bel compagno, la fuori al petrone mi pregavate di non essere assonnato, anzi vegliassi tutta la notte sino a giorno. Ora non vi piace nè il mio canto, nè la mia compagnia, e presto verrà l'alba!

ANONYMOUS (13th century?)

I Alba

Quan lo rossinhols escria
Ab sa par la nueg e.l dia,
Yeu suy ab ma bell'amia
 Jos laflor,
 Tro la gaita de la tor
 Escria: drutz, al levar!
Qu'ieu vey l'alba e.l jorn clar

French Translation:

I Aube du Rossignol

Pendant que le rossignol, nun' et jour,
chante auprès de sa compagne,
je me tiens avec ma bien-aimée
sous la fleur jusqu'à ce que le guetteur,
du haut de la tour, s'écrie:
"Amants, levez-vous!
Voici l'aube et le jour clair."

Ángel Manuel Aguirre
Universidad Interamericana
Recinto Metropolitano
Río Piedras, Puerto Rico