

Fragments of verses in the *Vies des poètes
provençaux* by Jehan de Nostredame – between
the troubadour tradition and 16th century
Petrarchism

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Our proposal concerns scattered fragments of verses and prosaic paraphrases of the verses in the *Vies des plus célèbres et anciens poètes provençaux* composed by Jehan de Nostredame and published in 1575 simultaneously in the French and Italian translation. Nostredame's *Vies* are essentially a collection of troubadour biographies that describe personal and literary careers, political and sentimental relations of the "Provençal poets", but paradoxically troubadours' songs are almost absent in the text. This fact is surely striking if we consider how little was known about troubadours' lives in the times of Nostredame and how relatively rich was the conserved –and then still unpublished– corpus of their songs in the *chansonniers*. In spite of this, Nostredame includes only 24 fragments of verses oscillating from 2-verses distichs to several strophes and approximately 50 prosaic paraphrases of verses (summing printed *Vies*, Italian *Vite*, the so called manuscript of Carpentras and other manuscript fragments). In some cases the fragments are literal copies of parts of known troubadour songs, in others their origin and attribution was not established so far, and therefore since the studies of Meyer (1871) and Bartsch (1873, 1874) they are believed to be Jehan de Nostredame's own compositions.

Meyer and Bartsch unfortunately limited their interest to execute mainly a "Quellenforschung" study while neglecting the other obvious questions that are also important for understanding Nostredame's *Vies*. Questions that are still waiting for possible answers. First of all, if the volume is dedicated to poets-troubadours why isn't it fundamentally based on frequent citations of their "poetry"? And if it is not so and the book is focused rather on the lives of "poets", why does Nostredame mention isolated verses (deprived of their context and thus their complex hierarchy of significations) at all? And the other way around, if Nostredame wanted to include examples of troubadour's verses in the text why did he mix authentic fragments of them with others of somehow strikingly different poetic style — more connected to 16th century poetry than to troubadour tradition? And, finally, what relation exactly the

verses have to the Nostredame's times poetry vogues? Several scholars cited in the bibliography below already analysed some aspects of these questions and we would like to continue in this path, address these neuralgic points and propose possible ways of interpretation to each of them.

References

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