Le roman de Gillion de Trazegnies (The J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 111)
Passages in Middle French & Modern English, transcribed and translated by Zrinka Stahuljak

Prologue, folios 9, 9v, and 10

Prologue de lecteur du livre...

[fol. 9] Comme il soit ainsi que environ a deux ans je traversoye par la conte de haynnau, en laquelle conte a par [fol. 9v] cy devant et ancourre a de present de la noble et vaillant chevalerie comme par les anciennes histoires est apparent, entre lesquelles au passer que je fis par une abbaye assez ancienne ou je veys trois tumbes haultes eslevees laquelle sappelle l Abbaye de lolive. Et pour ce que des ma jennesse ay este desirant et suis de scavoir les nobles et haulz fais advenuz par les vertueulz et vaillans hommes du temps passe moy estant en icelle abbaye enquis et demanday les noms de iceulx trespasses qu desoubz les trois tombes gesoient. Racompte me fut par labbe et couvent de leans que les corps des deux nobles et vaillans dames et leur mary ou mylieu delles estoit illec en sepulture. Leurs noms et surnoms me dirent lesquelz je veiz par escript alentour de leurs tombes. Et quant jeuz veu et leu lepitaﬀe diceulx trespasses je sceuz que le tresvaillant chevalier messire Gillion de Trasignies y gesoit en sepulture ou milieu de deux nobles et vertueuses dames en son vivant ses compaignes et espouses dont lune avoit este fille au souldan de babilonne pourquoy je ne me peuz trop esmerveillier. Adont je requis tresinstamment a labbe et couvent dillec que plus amplement me voulsissent racompter comment celluy seigneur de Trasignies avoit eu a femme la fille du souldan [fol. 10] de Babilonne et comment il lavoit amenee ou païs de Haynnau. Adont le bon abe, voyant le grant desir que javoie den scavoir la verite, par lun de ses religieux me fist apporter ung petit livre en parchemin escript dune moult ancienne lettre et caduce en langue ytalienne. Et quant jeuz leu et bien entendu la matiere quy me sembla noble,

Prologue by the book’s author...

[fol. 9] As it happens, about two years ago I traveled through the county of Hainaut, where there [fol. 9v] once was and still exists a noble and valiant chivalry, as this ancient history, among others, makes manifest. I have been since my youth and remain eager to know the noble and high deeds achieved by the valorous and valiant men of lore and, since I was passing by a rather ancient abbey called Olive, where I saw three high raised tombs, I inquired at the abbey and sought out the names of the dead who lay buried in them. The abbot and those of the monastery therein told me that the bodies of two noble and courageous ladies and their husband in their midst were buried there. They told me their names and bynames, which I saw inscribed around their tomb. And having seen and read the epitaph to the dead, I learned that the most valiant knight, my lord Gillion of Trazegnies, lay buried there in the midst of two noble and virtuous ladies, who were both his companions and spouses during his lifetime, one of whom was daughter to the sultan of Egypt, which astonished me to no end. I then immediately bid the abbot and the monks to pray tell me at length how the lord of Trazegnies had had a sultan’s daughter for a wife [fol. 10] and had brought her to the land of Hainaut. Seeing my great desire to know the truth, the good abbot thereupon had one of the monks bring a small book in parchment, written in Italian, in very ancient and obsolete writing. Having read and understood the matter that seemed noble,
PROLOGUE, CONTINUED

pytoiable et de haute recommandation
je fus content de travaillier et reduisant
le contenu ou dit petit livre en notre
langue francoise a icelle fin que les
haultes emprises et chevalereuz faiz
du preu chevalier messire Gillion de
Trasignies et de ses deux fils Jehan et
Gerard ne fussent estaintes ainchois
augmentees en perpetuelle memoire.

poignant, and highly commendable,
I was glad to work on translating the
content of the said little book into
our French language, so that the high
deeds and chivalrous feats of my brave
lord Gillion of Trazegnies and his two
sons, Jean and Gerard, do not vanish
from memory but rather increase in
perpetuity.

GILLION AND HIS TWO WIVES, FOLIOS 195 AND 195v

[fol. 195] ‘Ma treschiere et bonne amie,
moi estant prisonnier au souldan
de Babilonne, il me fut rapporte et
certiffie par ung chevalier nomme
Amaury que vous esties morte
denfant dont je fus tant dolant que
je feis veu et serement de non jamais
retorner pardecha. Et long temps
apres ce je me remariay pardela a
cesto noble princesse, que veoir pouez
presentement, laquelle de sa grace
ma plusieurs fois saulve la vie. Piecha
feusse mort selle neust este. A Rome
lay fait baptisier. A tousjours mais
seres par elle loyaulment servie. Et tant
que lame me respitera ou corps a elle
nauray attouchement charnel [a elle]
se avant elle ne alez de vie a trespas, ce
que Dieu ne vueille.’

‘Sire, dist lors la dame de Trasignies,
puis que ainsi est que vous dittes que
ceste dame avez espousee et que par
son moyen vous avez eu la vie respitee,
ja Dieu ne plaise que jamais jaye a
vous attouchement ne compaignie.
Ains me voudray rendre au plaisir de
Dieu en une abbaye de nonnains ou
le remanant de ma vie je prieray Dieu
pour vous.’

‘Dame, dist lors Gracienne, ja Dieu ne
plaise que jour de ma vie je vous face
tort de vostre leal seigneur et mary.
Car [fol. 195v] raison et droit veulent

[fol. 195] ‘My dearest and good
companion [Marie], while I [Gillion]
was prisoner of the sultan of Egypt, a
knight called Amaury reported and
avowed to me that you had died with
child. This pained me so greatly that I
made a vow and pledged not to ever
return from across the sea. And a long
while after this, I remarried overseas
this noble princess, whom you can
behold here, who by her good graces
saved my life several times. I would
have long been dead had it not been
for her. I had her baptized in Rome.
From now until forever you will be
loyally served by her. And for as long
as my soul will be spared in my body
I will not have carnal contact with her,
unless you go from life to death before
she does, may God not will it.’

‘Sire, spoke then the lady of Trazegnies,
since the matter is such that you say
that you wedded this lady and that by
her influence your life was spared, may
it never please God that I ever have
intercourse or association with you. I
would instead like to surrender myself
to God's service in an abbey of nuns,
where for the rest of my life I will pray
God for you.’

‘Lady, Gracienne then said, may it
never please God that a single day of
my life I rob you of your loyal lord
and husband. For [fol. 196] reason and
right demand
que de ses biens vous soies la dame et
la maistresse veu que premierement et
aincois quil me veist oncques de long
temps il vous avoit espousee. Et aveuc
ce, vous luy avez apporte deux moult
beaulx filz. Pourquoy jay delibere
et conclut en moy meismes que de
cel jour en avant je vous serviray et
tendray loyalle compagnie non obstant
que je soie fille de hault empereur non
croyant en la sainte loy de Jhesucrist,
en laquelle pour lamour de vostre bon
seigneur et le mien je croy fermement
et en celle vouldray vivre et morir.'

La bonne dame de Trasignies, oyant
la noble dame Gracienne ainsi soy
humilier vers elle, ayant regard a la
grant jennesse, bonte et beaulte elle,
et aussi a la haulte lignie dont elle estoit
venue, ne se povoit assez esmerveillier.
Adont les yeulx plains de lermes et les
bras tous ouvers la print a embracer et
doulcement baisier en lui disant:

'Ha a tresnoble dame, la tres grande
humilite que japparchoy estre en vous
me contraindra faire ung veu nulz fors
Dieu ne le me feroit trespasser. Et est
tel que jamais aveuc homme ne jerray
mais le vouldray servir tous les temps
de ma vie en aucun monastere ou lieu
solitaire. Assez me souffist davoir veu
mon bon seigneur et mary.'

[fol. 196v] 'Je vous prie quil vous plaise
estre content de moy et que ceste noble
dame et moy vous servons ung espace
de temps sans nous vouloir oppresser
de avoir quelque attouchement charnel
de nuit ne de jour a elle ne a moy.
Car lune et lautre avons fait ung tel
veu moyennant que ce soit vostre
bon plaisir de nous rendre en aucune
religion pour illec acquierir le salut de
noz ames et prier pour vous tant quil
plaira a Dieu de nous donner povoir et
entendement de ce faire.'

that you be the lady and mistress of his
possessions, given that he had married
you first long before he ever laid his
eyes on me. And besides you have
given him two most beautiful sons. I
have therefore debated internally and
decided for myself that from this day
onward I will serve you and keep you
loyal company, regardless of the fact
that I am daughter of a great emperor,
a non-believer in the holy religion of
Jesus Christ, in which for the love of
your and my good lord I believe firmly
and wish to live and die.'

The good lady of Trazegnies, hearing
the noble lady Gracienne humble
herself thus before her, could not stop
marveling on account of her great
youth, goodness, and beauty and also
the elevated lineage from which she
had issued. At that, her eyes full of
tears and with arms wide open, she
began to embrace her and kiss her
tenderly, telling her: ‘Ah, most noble
lady, the great humility that I observe
in you will compel me to make an
oath that none other than God will
make me break. And the vow is such
that never with a man will I lay but I
wish to serve God for the rest of my
life in a monastery or some cloistered
place. Having seen my good lord and
husband has fulfilled me.’

[fol. 196v] ‘I entreat you that it please
you to be satisfied with me and content
that this noble lady and I serve you for
a while but without her or me suffering
the tyranny of any carnal contact with
you by night or day. For we both have
made such a vow, at your pleasure,
to enter a cloister together, there to
acquire salvation for our souls and to
pray for you for as long as it please
God to give us the power and ability to
do so.’