



Bernart, di me Falget, q'om tient a sage

(RS 37a)

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Published by: French Department, University of Warwick, 2014

Digital Edition:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/crusadelyrics/texts/of/RS37a>

Hugues de Berzé

N'Ugo de Bersié mandet aquestas coblas a Falquet de Rotmans per un joglar q'avía nom Bernart d'Argentau, per predicar lui qe vengues con lui outra mar.

I

Bernart, di me Falquet, q'om tient a sage,
qe n'enpleit pas tot son sen en folie,
que nos avons grant part de nostre eage
4 entre nos dos usé en lecharie,
e avons ben del segle tant apris
qe ben savons que chascun jorn vaut pis;
8 par qe fareit ben esmender sa vie,
car a la fin es for de joglaria.

II

Deus, qel dolor, qeu perda e qeu dampnage
d'ome qui vaut quant ill no se chastie!
Mas tel i a quant voit son bel estage
12 e sa mason ben plena e ben garnie,
qui ne cuide seit autre paradis.
Non [i] pensez, Falquet, biaux dolz amis,
mas faites nos outramer compaignie,
16 qe tot ce faut mas Deus ne faudra mie.

III

Bernart encor me feras [un] message
a mon marqis cui am ses tricharie:
qe ge li pri qu'il aut en cest viage,
20 que Monferraz le doit d'ancesarie;
c'un'autra fois fust perduz le païs,
ne fust Conras, qui tant en ot de pris
qu'il n'er jamais nul jorn que l'om nen die
24 que par lui fu recovree Surie.

Sir Hughes de Berzé sent these coblas to Falquet de Romans by means of a jongleur who was called Bernart d'Argentau, to exhort him to come overseas with him.

I

Bernart, tell Falquet for me, since he is said to be wise, that he should not waste all his sense on folly, as the two of us have spent a great part of our life in pleasure-seeking, and have learned enough about the world to know that each day is worth less [than the previous one]. It looks as if it would be good to amend one's life, for the time for play/diversion is coming to an end.

II

God, what grief, what loss and what damage [comes about] when a man of worth fails to correct himself! But there are some people who, when they see their fine situation and their house all full of rich furnishings, think there is no other paradise. Do not believe this, Falquet my sweet friend, but keep us company in Outremer, because all this fails yet God will never fail.

III

Bernart, you will also take a message to my marquis, whom I love without deceit: I beg him to go on this pilgrimage, since Monferrat is bound to do so out of hereditary duty. The Holy Land would have been lost on another occasion if it had not been for Conrad: he won such honour in this undertaking that there will never be a day when people will not say of him that Syria was recovered by him.

IV

Ni ja d'aver porter ne seit pensis,
qe sos cosis l'emperere Freeris
n'avra assez, qui ne li faudra mie,
²⁸ qu'il l'acuilli molt bel en Lombardie.

V

Bernart, di me mon seignor al marquis
que de part mei te don ce que m'as quis,
que je ai la crois qui me deffent e prie
³² que no mete mon avoir en folie.

IV

And do not worry about taking money, for his
cousin, the emperor Frederick, will have plenty and
he will not refuse it to him, since the marquis gave
him a great welcome in Lombardy.

V

Bernart, tell my lord the good marquis for me, that
on my behalf he should give you what you have
asked of me, for now I have the cross which forbids
me and begs me not to spend my money on foolish
things.

Notes

The Burgundian trouvère Hugues de Berzé sends this song to the troubadour Falquet de Romans through Bernart (of Argentau, according to the *razo*), to invite him and the marquis of Monferrat, at whose court the troubadour probably resided, to join a new crusade to the Holy Land. Mentioned are the exploits of Conrad Monferrat in Tyre and the links of kinship between the Monferrat family and the emperor Frederick II, who was supposed to take part in the expedition and finance it from his own resources. In contrast to song RS 1126, this one is a true crusading song of a fairly traditional hortatory kind, and confirms existing links between trouvères and troubadours. It contains some analogies to the anonymous song RS 401 and to some extent to the song RS 6 of Thibaut de Champagne. For a more in-depth commentary see Barbieri 2001, pp. 184-193.

- 1 The affective pleonastic use of the personal pronoun placed after a verb requires a tonic form in OF, i.e. the form *moi* attested in H^p. The same expression recurs in D^p in v. 29.
- 5-6 The moralising theme of the decline of the world is a *topos* of medieval literature, to which Hugues de Berzé has recourse several times in his *Bible* (see for example vv. 5-7). Moreover the whole song is interwoven with moralising expressions and images more typical of the *Bible* than the lyric production of our trouvère (see for example in stanza I of the present piece the noun *lecherie* and the verb *esmender*).
- 8 This line puzzled Paris and Bédier, who stressed its problematic aspects (principally the expression *esfor de*) without however proposing satisfactory solutions. We may be faced with an archetype error which is impossible to amend conjecturally. Guida 1992, p. 326 proposes the interpretation *es(t) for* (following H^p 's graphy), with *for* < *forum* in the sense of 'Art, Weise' (*TL* 3, 2330, 1-10). Such a proposal has the advantage of respecting the manuscript readings and offering satisfactory sense, but would involve a hapax in medieval French literature, as well as an anomalous linguistic and syntactical form; the absence of an article is surprising, and in addition the expression *a la fin* is normally used with temporal adverbial force rather than in the sense required by Guida's interpretation (*a la fin est* = 'volge al termine'). I have provisionally followed this last solution in order to respect as far as possible D^p 's reading, but I remain convinced that the ms. readings are irremediably corrupt.
- 11-13 The comparison recalls the biblical parable of the rich man (Luke 12, 16-21), and there may be some similarity with vv. 767-771 of the *Bible*: *Fols est qui a grant esperance / en grant richece, ne fiance; / car kanc que l'en a assamblé / de richesce en tout son aé, / pert on trestout en mains d'une heure* .
- 18 As indicated above, the marquis in question is certainly William VI of Monferrat, son of Boniface who led the Fourth Crusade in which Hugues de Berzé also took part.
- 20 A similar appeal to William of Monferrat based on the valour of his ancestors is found in AiPeg *BdT* 10.11, 51-53. This is the same song of 1213 whose v. 45 refers to Frederick II as emperor; its vv. 57-58, with their emphasis on worldly vanity and the appeal to make *sens* prevail, may be related to st. I of Hugues de Berzé.
- 22 The fact that the author points out to William the example of his uncle Conrad of Monferrat and not that of his father Boniface, even though the latter led the Fourth Crusade, is explained on the one hand by the epic resistance of Tyre besieged by Saladin in 1187, which allowed the survival of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem and the continuity of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and on the other by the atypical character of the Fourth Crusade, which ended not with the liberation of the Holy Land but with war against the eastern Christians. In his *Bible* Hugues de Berzé often criticises the outcome of the Fourth Crusade and the rôle of Boniface of Monferrat (see for example vv. 419-484).

- 25-28 This *envoi* 's sole attestation in D^p has been discussed in the introduction. It should be added that the references to the involvement of Frederick II and his economic resources could reflect the period following the Diet of San Germano in July 1225, where the emperor pledged to leave before the end of 1227 and had to commit 100.000 ounces of gold towards financing the crusade. This sum was to be placed in the custody of Ermanno di Salza and would only be restored to him on his departure. Under this scenario the *envoi* (and perhaps the whole song) would have been composed between the time of Boniface II of Montferrat's return from Greece (beginning of 1226) and Frederick's excommunication (September 1227). But this hypothesis is opposed by the new marquis's total lack of interest in the crusade to the Holy land and the bad relations between him and Frederick at that time, due to the failure to pay off the old debts of Boniface's father and Boniface's adhesion to the Lombard League opposing the Emperor.
- 25 The form *ni* is rare in French (Ménard § 419 *remarque*) and may be an occitanism, just as *seit* which is a rather archaic form in French. For the position of *ne* co-ordinating conjunction at the beginning of a sentence see Ménard, § 420.
- 27 The form *n'avra* may also be an occitanism, but even in French *n'a* is a rather rare but well attested variant for *en a* (see Jensen § 364 and the examples in *TL* III, 155, 52ff.) which is also found in Thibaut de Champagne RS 273, 12 and 30.
- 30 The spelling of the subjunctive *don* of both mss. is Occitan; in French it should be *doin(s)t*, but the variant *dont* is attested (Fouché 144, § 70).
- 31 The doubt expressed by Bédier-Aubry 1909, p. 165 concerning the inadmissibility of the expression *je ai la crois* with the sense 'I have taken the cross' would be irrelevant if the author were here referring, as suggested, to the cross of the Templar house.
- 32 The form *no* of the negative particle attested in D^p is allowed in French (see *TL* 6, 544, 26).

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2014.

Mss.

(2). D^p 210d-211a (anonymous), H^p 46ab (*N'Ugo de Bersié*).

Versification and music

10 a'b'a'b'ccb'b' (MW 1163,6 = Frank 362); 3 *coblas unissonans* with 2 *envois* of 4 lines (ccb'b'); rhyme a: *-age* ; rhyme b: *-ie* ; rhyme c: *-is* . The song RS 23 *Bien emploie son cuer et son corage* , attributed to Moniot d'Arras, is evidently a contrafactum of Hugues de Berzé's text, the versification being identical in all respects.

Previous editions

Archiv , 34, 1863, 403 (testo di H^p); Paris 1889, 554; Zenker 1896, 11; Bédier 1906, 387; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 153; Arveiller-Gouiran 1987, 4; Guida 1992, 90; Dijkstra 1995a, 203; Barbieri 2001, 173.

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

Both manuscripts transmit a text of three stanzas having overtones of Occitan, slightly more marked in

H^p. The *razo* with the attribution to Hugues de Berzé is found only in H^p, while the first *envoi* is only in D^p. Four small interventions have been needed in D^p's text, three of which are due to the lack of a minim producing a hypometric line, easily rectifiable from readings in H^p (vv. 14, 16, 17), while the fourth case concerns a variant of the name of the troubadour referred to. The short introductory *razo* of H^p is also printed here; it is written in Occitan, without any mixture of French, and contains the italianism *con* for *ab*.


Historical context and dating

The composition of the song is situated in the years around the fifth crusade, between 1213 and 1225, the date of the death of William VI of Monferrat (17 September?), who is therefore the marquis mentioned in the text. Three significant events focus attention on the year 1213: the publication of the bull *Quia maior* with which pope Innocent III invited the whole of Christendom to take part in a new crusade, the future emperor Frederick's pledge to leave for the Holy Land made in the Golden Bull of Eger on 12 July of that year, and the preaching of the crusade in France by the papal legate Robert de Courçon. It must be noted, however, that there was no immediate follow-up to such initiatives and in particular the preaching of the crusade in France had scant success. The project of a new crusade was officially relaunched by Innocent III only during the course of the Fourth Lateran Council of November 1215.

This date takes us to the mention of the emperor Frederick contained in the first *envoi*, preserved only in ms. D^p. Frederick was de facto emperor after his coronation at Aachen on 25 July 1215 which completed that of Mainz on 9 December 1212, but official documents attribute this title to him only after his coronation in Rome on 22 November 1220. There is however at least one poetic text, the crusade song *BdT* 10.11 of Aimeric de Peguillan, datable to 1213, where the author refers to Frederick as *emperador* (v. 45, even if the plural form could be interpreted in a generic sense as 'those who are competing for the imperial crown'); the song *BdT* 10.52 by the same troubadour dedicated to the *empereire* (v. 51) could predate 1220. Similarly the splendid reception reserved for the Swabian ruler at the court of Monferrat mentioned in the same *envoi* (v. 28) may refer to Frederick's visit to Monferrat in September 1220, when he was on his way to Rome to receive the imperial crown; but alternatively it may allude to events in Genoa on 14 July 1212, when William had been present at the disembarkation of the emperor and then escorted him as far as Asti and Pavia along the road leading to his coronation at Mainz.

According to Bédier, Hugues de Berzé's song must have been composed before the evacuation of Damietta on 7 September 1221, following the defeat of al-Mansūra on 27 August. Despite Frederick's promises, after this date we know of no serious attempts to organise expeditions to the Holy Land such as would give rise to the present text until at least the Diet of San Germano in July 1225, when the emperor was forced to renew his pledge to leave before the end of 1227. In addition William VI of Monferrat had definitively abandoned his plan to lead an expedition to Egypt and was involved in the question of the succession in the kingdom of Thessalonica, whose designated ruler was his young brother Demetrios.

The allusion contained in the first *envoi* concerning Frederick's economic support of William of Monferrat may refer generally to Frederick's economic resources rather than to a precise event, and this would not conflict with the dating proposed by Bédier. The French scholar notes that the use of the verb *porter* in v. 25 seems to indicate not so much a loan made by Frederick to the Marquis as the conviction that the emperor ought to take part in the expedition financing it with his own means (Bédier-Aubry 1909, p. 159).



Against the hypothesis that Hugues de Berzé died before August 1220, which would bring the *terminus ante quem* forward by a year, see the arguments of Gouiran 1994, pp. 343-345 and Barbieri 2001, pp. 176-177. The fact that official documents do not mention Hugues de Berzé's name can be explained either by a prolonged absence, or by his actual departure for the Holy Land, or by his entry into the order of the Templars, an event apparently confirmed by the document cited in Barbieri 2001, p. 9 and perhaps also hinted at in vv. 5-8.

In conclusion, if the first *envoi* is authentic the song is likely to have been written between November 1220 and September 1221; if on the other hand it is considered spurious, or if the reference to Frederick as emperor is not considered secure, it could have been written at any time between 1213 and 1221 (some suitable occasions have been listed by Lecoy 1942-1943, p. 253). The *envoi* does appear somewhat unusual in that it seems to carry straight on from the sentence of the preceding stanza, and the presence of so many specific references in so few lines may appear suspect, as if the *envoi* had perhaps been written to adapt the song to a particular historical context. Nonetheless, neither the chronology nor the language poses serious objections to its authenticity, and in any case the time frame indicated by the references contained in the *envoi* is included within the time frame established by the rest of the song.

There finally remains the question of the cross which the author says he has (v. 31). This does not mean that Hugues de Berzé took the cross again on his return from the Fourth Crusade, let alone that he actually left for the Holy Land a second time, even if this possibility cannot be completely excluded (information about the last part of his life is very fragmentary); in any case the reference may be to him belonging to the Templars, whose habit was adorned with a large red cross.