



S'onques nuns hons por dure departie

(RS 1126)

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Hugues de Berzé

I

S'onques nuns hons por dure departie
ot cuer dolant, dont l'ai je par raison,
c'onques tortre qui pert son compaignon
4 ne fut un jor de moi plus esbahie.
Chascuns ploure sa terre et son païs
cant il se part de ses coraus amis,
mais il n'est nuns congiés, que que nuns die,
8 si dolerous com d'amin et d'amie.

II

Li reveoirs m'a mis en la folie,
dont je m'iere gardeis mainte saison,
d'aler a li; or ai quis' ochoison
12 dont je morai, et se je vif, ma vie
vaudra bien mort, car cil qui ait appris
estre anvoisiés et chantans et jolis
a aseis pis, cant sa joie est faillie,
16 que s'il moroit tout a une foïe.

III

Se je seüsse autretant a l'enprendre
que li congiés me tormentaist ensi,
je laissasse m'ame en vostre merci,
20 s'alaisse a Deu graces et mercis randre
de ceu que ainz soffristes a nul jor
que je fusse beans a vostre amour;
mais je me teing apaiés de l'atandre,
24 puis que chescuns vos aime ensi sans prendre.

IV

Mult a croissiés amorous a contendre
d'aler a Dieu ou de remanoir ci,
car nesuns hom, puis k'Amors l'a saisi,
28 ne devroit ja si grief fais entreprendre:
on ne puet pas servir a tant seignor;
proec qe fins cuers qi bet a haute honor
ne se poroit de tel chose deffendre,
32 por ce, dame, ne m'en devés reprendre.

I

If ever a man had a sorrowful heart because of a cruel separation, then it is right that I should have one, since a turtle-dove which loses its companion was never more disconsolate than I. Everyone pines for his country and his land when he leaves his close friends, but whatever anyone may say, there is no parting as painful as that between lover and beloved.

II

The desire to see her again has given me the insane idea (which I have resisted for a long time) of going back to her; so I have put myself in a situation which will bring about my death, and if I live, my life will be like death, for a man who has learned to be merry and joyful and glad is much worse off, once his joy is over, than if he died straight away.

III

Had I known as well, when I decided on this parting, that it would have tormented me so, I should have left my soul in your service and gone to thank God for ever allowing me to aspire to your love; but I am content to wait, since everyone loves you like this without receiving anything.

IV

A crusader in love must well ponder whether to go towards God or to remain here, for no-one, once Love has taken hold of him, ought ever to assume such a heavy burden: one cannot serve more than one lord; but since a noble heart that aspires to high honour cannot avoid doing this, you ought not, my lady, to blame me for it.

V

Un confort voi en vostre dessevrance,
 que je n'avrai a Deu que reprochier;
 mais quant por li me covient vos laisser,
³⁶ je ne sai rien de greingnor reprochance;
 car cil qui voit tel amor dessevrer
 et n'a pooir qu'il puisse recovrer
⁴⁰ a assez plus de duel et de pesance
 que n'avroit ja li rois s'il perdoit France.

VI

Ahï, dame, tout est fors de balance,
 partir m'estuet de vos sans recovrier;
 tant en ai fait que je nel puis laisser,
⁴⁴ mais s'il ne fust de remanoir viltance
 et reproche, j'alaisse demander
 as fins amans congié de demorer;
 mais vos estes de si tres grant vaillance
⁴⁸ que vostre amins ne doit faire faillance.

VIIa

Merveille moi coment puet cuers durer (mss. DT)
 ki prent congié a sa dame a l'aler;
 mais mandast li de Lombardie en France,
⁵² car lons consirs doble la desevrance.

VIIb

Mout par est fols cil qui vait oltre mer (mss. LⁿHO^pQ^p)
 qui prent congié a sa dame a l'aler;
 mais mande li de Lombardie en France,
⁵² que li congiés doble la desirance.

V

I see one comfort in parting from you: I will have
 nothing for which to reproach myself before God.
 On the contrary, I know nothing more blameworthy
 than being made to leave you for Him, since a man
 who sees such love being split apart without him
 being able to go back on his decision has much
 greater grief and sorrow than the king would were
 he to lose France.

VI

Ah, lady, there is no more room for indecision! – I
 have to leave you without delay; I have gone so far
 that I cannot turn back. But if staying behind were
 not a base and shameful thing, I would go and ask
 true lovers for permission to remain; yet you are of
 such great worth that your lover ought not to fail in
 his duty.

VIIa

I marvel how a man's heart can hold out when he
 bids his lady farewell at the moment of his
 departure; instead he should send it to her in
 France from Lombardy, for lingering heartache
 doubles the [grief of the] separation.

VIIb

A man going overseas is out of his mind if he bids
 farewell to his lady before leaving; instead he sends
 it to her in France from Lombardy, because the
 farewell doubles desire.

Notes

Rather than a true crusade song this is a song of farewell to the beloved lady on the part of a knight leaving on crusade. If its model is indeed the song RS 1125 of Conon de Béthune, as indicated by the incipit, Hugues de Berzé's text does not take up the solemn, hortatory tone of its second part but instead delves more deeply into the dilemma introduced in the first stanza concerning the impossibility of choosing between serving God and serving the lady. The theme of the bond with the lady is developed in stanzas II and III, and the dilemma culminates in stanza IV where it is formulated explicitly and then resolved, not without anxiety and resistance, into the unavoidable choice of divine service. But the grief of separation becomes the protagonist of the last two stanzas, and is overcome only through the awareness that the lady's worth can but enhance the knightly virtues of the lover; this worth will be demonstrated by the knight's exploits, while in the final analysis it would only be debased by his desistance. The *envoi*, which appears in two interesting variant versions, closes with the advice, perhaps followed by the author himself, to avoid a farewell which involves the unbearable vision of the beloved lady, and to opt for a greeting sent from a distance after the parting. The author is inspired by the most classical models of OF lyric, in particular those within the crusade song sub-genre: Conon de Béthune (not only RS 1125 echoed from the first line, but also RS 1314) and the Châtelain de Couci (especially RS 679, also a farewell to a lady), and constitutes a sort of mediation between these authors and the synthesis produced by the last great trouvère, Thibaut de Champagne (see in particular RS 757). For a more detailed commentary see Barbieri 2001, pp. 258-272.

- 19-24 The poet wishes to thank God and the lady for having allowed him at least to be able to aspire to love and declares he is content with waiting in hope, which is the lover's normal condition according to courtly ideology and remains possible despite departure on crusade.
- 34 This line must mean 'I will have nothing for which to reproach myself before God', whether *reprochier* is taken as a noun or a verb. In the expression *a Dieu*, the preposition *a* means either 'near/around, before, in the face of', or 'on the part of' (see the examples in Ménard, § 316). The most obvious sense ('I shall have nothing for which to reproach God') would contradict what is said in v. 36, the sense in 35-36 being that the trouvère is blaming God for forcing this terrible, and uncourtly, choice upon him. Blaming God for the separation of the lovers is typical of the crusade song (see for example RS 191, 6-7; Guiot de Dijon RS 21, 30-32; Thibaut de Champagne RS 757, 5-6 and especially Châtelain de Couci RS 679, 29-30, with *dessevrer* at the rhyme).
- 36 The noun *reprochance* is a hapax in OF, perhaps an occitanism (see Levy SW 7, 251).
- 44-48 After remembering that he can do nothing to go back on his decision to leave, the trouvère says that if it were not considered unworthy and base, he would go and ask permission to remain. The tradition is divided as to the addressee of this request (*fin'amor*, *fins amans*, *ma dame*); the reading *as fins amans* of CU seems the most satisfactory, on the one hand because the interlocutors are more unexpected, on the other because the request for advice from collective true lovers is found elsewhere in trouvère lyric: RS 679 of the Châtelain de Couci in particular begins with an appeal directed towards the *amant*.
- 49-52 The *envoi* presents two distinct versions transmitted by the mss. DT and HO^pQ^p+Lⁿ. It has been decided to print both versions: the first for the sake of coherence with the version with the rest of the text that is substantially followed for the whole edition, the second because it refers explicitly to the voyage overseas and, given the agreement of the mss. from the peripheral regions (the Occitan and Angl-Norman mss.), it may constitute the authentic or definitive version of the author.

- 51 Both Bédier and Léron d link the verb *mander* to the news of departure, but more probably the *trouvère* is referring to the gesture of leave-taking and farewell (*congié* in the preceding line), identifiable in this case with the text of the song itself.

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2015.

Mss.

(17). A 135d [158d] (*mesire Uges de Bregi* ; vv. 1-12 only), C 221v-222r (*li rois de Naivairéz*), D 1rv [37rv] (*Hughes de Bregi chevaliers*), H 226d-227a (anon.), K 106d-107b (*li chastelains de Couci*), L ⁿ 14rv (anon.), M ⁱ Bc (*me sire Hughes de Bregi* , only the incipit in the table), O 131ac (anon., modern attribution *Chastelains de Coucy*), O ^p 54b-55b (anon.), P 38c-39b (*li chastelains de Couci*), Q ^p 112cd (*Çirardus* [*Brunelus*]), R ³ 123r-124r (anon.), T 103v (*me sire Hughes de Bregi*), U 99rv (anon.), V 79c-80a (anon.), X 75d-76c (*li chastelains de Couci*), a 26ac (*mesire Uges de Bregi*).

Previous editions

de la Borde 1780, II, 304; Michel 1830, 89; Le Roux de Lincy 1841, I, 101; Keller 1844, 257; Tarbé 1851, 65; Mætzner 1853, 93-96; Fath 1883, 91; Engelcke 1886, 169; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 119; Beck 1937, 94; Gennrich 1953, I, 4; Blume 1957, VI, 872; Lerond 1964, 178; Dufournet 1989, 104; Dijkstra 1995a, 199; Barbieri 2001, 237.

Versification and music

10 a' bba' cca' a' (MW 1410,3 = Frank 549); 6 *coblas doblas* + 1 four-line *envoi* (cca' a'); rhyme a: -ie , -endre , -ance ; rhyme b: -on , -i , -ier ; rhyme c: -is , -or , -er . The metrical shape is imited by Thibaut de Champagne in RS 1469 (with a f. c rhyme); melody in ADKOL ⁿ PR ³ TVXa; the groups KOPX+D and ATa+V+L ⁿ have two similar melodies with few variants but diverging by a fifth; however ms. R ³ presents an independent melody.

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

The tradition of this song is complex and very difficult to disentangle. Four families of manuscripts can be discerned, nearly all of them contaminated, and it is impossible to trace them back to common antecedents with any certainty, and even less possible to demonstrate the existence of a single archetype. Mss. ADTa share numerous readings but no real common errors and the same applies to the Lorraine mss. CU; in KOPR ³ VX the stanza order violates the *coblas doblas* structure; the fourth group is composed of the three Occitan mss. HO ^p Q ^p which lend the text a southern linguistic veneer; finally the Anglo-Norman ms. L ⁿ shares a few interesting readings with HO ^p Q ^p , which gives the impression that it might be forming with these a curious constellation of different marginal areas, but in other cases it is close to KOPR ³ VX (and even C at times), thus showing itself to be irremediably contaminated. Also contaminated are OR ³ : the first often shares ADTa's readings, while the second shows numerous convergences with CU. The tradition's complexity seems to represent the existence of editorial variants or even authorial ones. The edition therefore essentially reproduces the text of mss. (A)DTa, which seems the most reliable and coherent, often being corroborated by the other families, except when a reading is particularly isolated and the alternative is preferable for solid philological reasons (vv. 6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 21, 45-48). The question of attribution seems resolvable through

comparison of Hugues de Berzé and the Châtelain de Coucy: the attribution to Hugues de Berzé is supported by the whole of family α (mss. ADTa plus the table of M), whereas the Châtelain de Coucy's name is explicitly attested by KPX and indirectly supported by V. Other elements such as the evidence of U, which transcribes this lyric immediately after song RS 2071 of the Burgundian trouvère, the frons with the rhyme pattern abba and diffusion in Occitan songbooks weigh in favour of attribution to Hugues de Berzé.

Historical context and dating

Born in all probability around 1170, the castellan Hugues V de Berzé (now Berzé-le-Chatel, 15 km northwest of Mâcon, Saône-et-Loire) took part in the Fourth Crusade, as he himself testifies in his moralising *Bible*, and as Villehardouin's chronicle confirms (*La conquête de Constantinople*, § 45). According to the latter, Hugues took the cross together with his father and other Burgundian knights after the chapter of Cîteaux on 14 September 1201 and embarked at Venice in the autumn of the following year, having as his travelling companions, among others, Conon de Béthune and the Châtelain de Couci, who died during the undertaking. The French crusaders set out after Pentecost (8 June) 1202, crossed the Alps near the pass of Moncenisio and passed through *Lombardie* (northern Italy), probably arriving in Venice at the end of June or beginning of July. From there, after overcoming some serious financial difficulties and resolving differences over their strategy, they set out to sea in the direction of the Holy Land (1-8 October according to the prevalent hypothesis, 8 November according to Runciman). As is well known, in the course of the journey the leaders of the expedition changed their objective and headed for Constantinople, besieging and conquering the city between the summer of 1203 and spring of 1204, and establishing the seat of a Latin empire. According to the meagre allusions contained in the *Bible*, Hugues de Berzé participated in all operations, remained in the East until at least 1205, and probably also completed a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In 1207 he was probably not yet back in Burgundy, since during the course of that year it is his brother Gautier who signs an official act regarding the family fief; Hugues appears in a document of 1216 and perhaps also one of 1212, but the exact time of his return is unknown. The song RS 1126, a farewell to his lady, must have been composed when the trouvère had already taken the cross (vv. 17 and 25) before his departure between 14 September 1201 and 8 June 1202; however the allusion contained in v. 52 of the *envoi*, in which the author says that to avoid the pain of separation it is preferable to send greetings to the lady from *Lombardie*, suggests that it may have been written during the journey in Italy, hence probably during the second half of June 1202. Since some of the features of the manuscript tradition are compatible with the presence of authorial variants, the song may have been written on two occasions, first in Burgundy before departure and then during the journey in Italy.