



Ahï! Amors, com dure departie

(RS 1125)

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Conon de Béthune

I

Ahï! Amors, com dure departie
me convenra faire de la millor
ki onques fust amee ne servie!
4 Diex me ramaint a li par sa douçour,
si voirement ke m'en part a dolor.
Las! k'ai je dit? Ja ne m'en part je mie!
Se li cors va servir Nostre Signor,
8 li cuers remaint del tot en sa baillie.

II

Por li m'en vois sospirant en Surie,
car je ne doi faillir mon Creator;
ki li faura a cest besoig d'aïe,
12 saiciés ke il li faura a grignor;
et saient bien li grant et li menor
ke la doit on faire chevalerie
ou on conquiert Paradis et honor
16 et pris et los et l'amor de s'amie.

III

Diex est assis en son saint iretaige:
ore i parra se cil le secorront
cui il jeta de la prison ombraje,
20 quant il fu mors ens la crois ke Turc ont.
Saichiés chil sont trop honi ki n'iront,
s'il n'ont poverte ou viellece ou malaige;
et cil ki sain et jone et riche sont
24 ne poevent pas demorer sans hontaige.

IV

Tous li clergiés et li home d'eage
qui ens ausmogne et ens biens fais manront
partiront tot a cest pelerinaige,
28 et les dames ki chastement vivront
se loiauté font a ceus qui i vont;
et s'eles font par mal conseil folaige,
as lasques gens et mauvais le feront,
32 car tot li boin iront en cest voiaige.

I

Ah, Love, how hard it will be for me to part from
the best lady who was ever loved and served! May
God in his sweetness bring me back to her, as truly
as I leave her in sorrow. Alas! What have I said? I
am not leaving her at all! If my body goes off to
serve our Lord, my heart remains entirely in her
service.

II

Sighing for her I set out for Syria, since I must not
fail my Creator. If anyone should fail Him in this
hour of need, be aware that He will fail him in a
greater; and may great and small know well that a
man ought to perform knightly feats in the place
where one wins paradise and honour, reputation,
and praise, and the love of one's beloved.

III

God is besieged in His holy heritage; now it will be
manifest how those whom He released from the
shade of prison, when He died upon the Cross held
by the Turks, will assist Him. Shame on all those
who stay behind, unless they are poor or old or ill!
But those who are healthy and young and rich
cannot remain behind without disgrace.

IV

All the clergy and the old men who stay behind
performing deeds of charity and good works will
have their share in this pilgrimage, as well as the
ladies who live chastely and remain faithful to
those who go there; but if they ill-advisedly commit
folly, they will be doing so with cowardly wicked
people, for all the good ones will go on this voyage.

V

Ki chi ne velt avoir vie anuieuse
si voist por Dieu morir liés et joieus,
ke cele mors est douce et savereuse
³⁶ dont on conquiert le resne presieus;
ne ja de mort nen i morra .i. sels,
ains naisteront en vie glorieuse;
ki revenra moult sera eüreus,
⁴⁰ a tos jors mais en iert honors s'espeuse.

VI

Diex! tant avons esté prex par huiseuse,
or i parra ki a certes iert prex;
s'irons vengier la honte dolereuse
⁴⁴ dont chascuns doit estre iriés et hontex;
car a no tans est perdus li sains lieux
ou Diex soffri por nos mort angoisseuse;
s'or i laissons nos anemis mortex,
⁴⁸ a tos jors mais iert no vie honteuse.

[VII]

*Lais! je m'en voix plorant des eulz del front
lai ou Deus veult amendeir mon coraige;
et saichiés bien c'a la millor dou mont
⁵² penserai plux ke ne fais a voiaige.*

V

Let anyone who does not wish to lead a discreditable life go and die gladly and joyfully for God, for that death through which one wins the precious realm is sweet and delectable; and not a single one of them will die there from death, but rather all will be born into glorious life; anyone who returns will be most happy; glory will for evermore be his spouse.

VI

Oh God! we have been so long valiant in idleness; now it will be clear who really *is* valiant, if we go off to avenge the painful humiliation at which each one of us should feel sorrow and shame; for in our times the holy place where God suffered agonising death on our account has been lost; if we now leave our mortal enemies there, our life will be evermore stained with infamy.

[VII]

Alas, I leave with tears in my eyes to the place where God desires to purify my heart; and be well aware that I shall think more about the best lady in the world than of the crusade.

Notes

The text is distinct from a typical crusade song of exhortation in that its first stanza is devoted to the grief of separation from the beloved lady, a motif which was to have considerable success in the trouvère lyric (Barbieri 2015, pp. 48-50). The lack of fusion between its love and crusading elements, together with its considerable success and diffusion, suggest that it represents the first example of the subgenre known as *chanson de départie*. It certainly gave rise to numerous imitations and echoes, metrical and otherwise, on the part of trouvères (RS 1020a=1022 and Chardon de Croisilles RS 499) and Minnesänger (Friedrich von Hausen and Albrecht von Johansdor), as well as Huon d'Oisy's reply RS 1030, Hugues de Berzé's homage to Conon (RS 1126) into which Conon's song was merged in some Italian manuscripts, the strong links with the songs of the Châtelain de Coucy, and innumerable echoes of detail in other texts, above all in those of Thibaut de Champagne. There are also interesting links with the troubadours – notably with Conon's contemporaries Giraut de Borneil (BdT 242.41) and Bertran de Born (BdT 80.17) and with the later Pons de Capdoill (BdT 375.2; this song, probably composed around 1213, is indebted to Conon's text in a variety of ways) – such links being apparently absent in the case of other trouvères such as the Châtelain de Coucy. The second part of Conon's text is characterised by a detailed and specific echo of themes and motifs typical of papal documents (Alexander III, Gregory VIII, Clement III) and contemporary preaching (Henry of Marcy, Pierre de Blois, Alain de Lille, Baldwin of Canterbury).

- 1 The expression *dure departie* occupies the key rhyme position at the end of the first line, allowing the author to highlight the drama of separation from the beloved because of his departure on crusade. According to Payen 1974, p. 251, this constitutes an inversion of the dynamic of courtly love, since the poet and lady are united by love and constrained to separate.
- 7-8 The motif of the separation of heart and body is amply developed in the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, for example the *Chevalier au Lion*, 2639-2646; see in particular the famous v. 4697 (ed. Méla) of the *Chevalier de la Charrette* (*li cors s'an vet, li cuers sejourne*). Other echoes of this theme in crusade songs are found for example in the Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 23-24; the Châtelain d'Arras RS 140, 27-28; RS 1636, 32-33.
- 10-12 These lines may echo Matthew 10. 32-33. They are recalled in Huon d'Oisy RS 1030, 7-8, but see also Maistre Renaut RS 886, 55-57: *Quant il a jugement vanront, / Dont lor parrait lor bone foi; / Se Deu faillent, a lui fauront*. For a more detailed reference to the Last Judgment see RS 1314, 20-24 and commentary. Râkel 1973, p. 521 sees in this passage the expression of the idea of the feudal relationship between God and crusader, which he considers the real theme of the song.
- 11-14 The transition to the hortatory tone is underlined by the use of personal pronouns, which move from first to third person, while the impersonal form also puts in an appearance.

- 15-16 There is no trace in this text of the renunciation of the world for the sake of heavenly reward; instead crusading seems to offer worldly as well as spiritual rewards (see also vv. 39-40). The theme of the double reward, spiritual and worldly, is already present in Urban II's exhortation at the Council of Clermont, as reported by Fulcher of Chartres, *Gestis Francorum*, I, 3: *Nunc æterna præmia nanciscantur, qui dudum pro solidis paucis mercenarii fuerunt. Pro honore duplici laborent, qui ad detrimentum corporis et animæ se fatigabant*. Echoes of this motif in Occitan and Old French crusade songs are found for example in Marcabru BdT 293.22, 29-30: *conquerrem, de Dieu, per afic / l'onor e l'aver e-l merir*; Giraut de Borneil BdT 242.41, 31-36: *C'armat de bels guarnimens / sobre lur destriers correns / conquerran / benanans'e valor gran, / don seran pueis viu manen / e si morran eissamen* (compare also Conon's vv. 35-38); Aimeric de Belenoi BdT 9.10, 15-18: *que l'anars es esperansa / de be [e] joi [e] dos e gratz, / valor [en] cortz et onransa / e desliuramen de pecatz*; Thibaut de Champagne RS 6, 8-9 (but see also vv. 15-16) and RS 401, 34-42. The theme of the double (or triple) reward, spiritual, worldly and amorous, is particularly present in the Châtelain d'Arras RS 140, 21-24 and 36-38. Compare also *Aspremont* (ed. Brandin), 1494-1495: *Molt volentiers alasse en ceste voie, / mais pris ne los ne honor n'i avroie*.
- 17 The theme of the lost heritage is developed on the basis of Psalms 78. 1: *Deus, venerunt gentes in haereditatem tuam, polluerunt templum sanctum tuum*, and is widely exploited in crusade preaching. See for example Gregory VIII, *Audita tremendi* (PL 202), coll. 1539-1540; Baldwin of Canterbury, *Epistle* 98 (PL 207, date 1185), coll. 306-308 (especially col. 307); Henry of Marcy, *De peregrinante civitate Dei* (PL 204), col. 355. A synthetic formulation, containing many of the motifs expressed in this song, occurs in Alain de Lille, *Sermo de cruce Domini*, p. 281: *Fleant crucis raptum, laborent ad recuperandum; vindicent Christi iniurias, doleant contumelias; liberent terra nostre hereditatis, Christi hereditatem, Virginis dotem*. The Holy Land is also described as God's heritage in some literary texts and crusade songs; see for example Ambroise, *Estoire de la guerre sainte*, 5388-5389: *Car mult tendeit a recovrer / A Dampnedeu son heritage*; *Aspremont* (ed. Brandin), 4278: *Deus iretages nos volt en fin doner*, and RS 1020a=1022, 25-27.
- 19-20 The *prison ombrage* is the slavery of sin from which Christ's sacrifice has freed humanity. See Isaiah 42. 6-7: *Ego Dominus vocavi te in iustitia, et apprehendi manum tuam, et servavi te; et dedi te in foedus populi, in lucem gentium, ut aperires oculos caecorum, et educeres de conclusione vinctum, de domo carceris sedentes in tenebris* and RS 1548a, 37-38. The theme of Christ's passion understood as the highest manifestation of His love, requiring reciprocation, and hence the duty to assist the One who died for our salvation, reiterated in vv. 45-48, is widely exploited in papal documents and preaching; see for example Eugenius III, *Quantum praedecessores* (ed. Doeberl 1890), p. 41; Alexander III, *Inter omnia quae* (PL 200), coll. 599-560 and *Cor nostrum* (PL 200), col. 1295; Gregory VIII, *Audita tremendi* (PL 202), col. 1540; Henry of Marcy, *Epistle* 32 (PL 204), col. 250. It also recurs frequently in Old French crusade songs, for example Maistre Renaut RS 886; Huon de Saint-Quentin RS 1576, 5-7; RS 401, 4-7; RS 1582, 7-8; RS 1659, 21-22; RS 1020a=1022 (especially vv. 1-8) and RS 1967 (especially vv. 21-30); see also Thibaut de Champagne RS 6, 13-14 and 22-28. For the troubadours see Pons de Capdoill BdT 375.2, 25-26: *et en la croz cobret cels qe perdia; / e sufert mort per nostre salvamen*.
- 21-24 The exemption from crusade service accorded to the poor, the old and the sick is an explicit echo of the position adopted by Pope Alexander III, who restricts the crusade to armed knights; see the bulls *Inter omnia quae* (PL 200), col. 599 and *Cor nostrum* (PL 200), col. 1295. In fact this position is perceptible from the time of the announcement of the First Crusade, in the documents reporting the declarations of Urban II and the Council of Clermont (Brundage 1969, p. 32), but it is only from the Third Crusade and particularly Alexander III's pontificate that the indications become more precise and explicit. The question is also linked to the granting of partial indulgences to those who contribute in various ways to the expedition without physically departing, on which see the next note.

- 25-26 The practice of promising an indulgence to those who contribute financially to the expedition without joining it only finds clear and explicit expression in the documents of Innocent III and the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 (Brundage 1969, pp. 153-154; Dijkstra 1995a, pp. 88-89). Nonetheless Adrian IV had already expressed a similar general idea in 1157, whilst the first official act to have been preserved referring to a possible indulgence granted to one who contributed financially to the crusade is a letter of Clement III to the English bishops (10 February 1188), reported in Giraldus Cambrensis's tract *De instructione principis*, pp. 236-239, in which the Pope refers to a document of his predecessor Gregory VIII (not preserved, but a trace of it may be contained in PL 202, col. 1561, n° XXII; see Bysted 2015, pp. 160-161). On the collection of financial contributions for the benefit of the Holy Land see for example the act promulgated by Henry II of England in 1166, reported in Gervase of Canterbury, *Chronica* (ed. Stubbs), I, pp. 198-199, but again the practice is only finally formulated into a rule during the pontificate of Innocent III (see for example the two acts in PL 214, col. 830 of 1199 and PL 216, col. 821 of 1213). It is also referred to in a crusade song of the troubadour Pons de Capdoill, BdT 375.2, 46-48: *Toz hom cui fai velersa o malautia / remaner chai deu donar son argen / a cels q'iran, qe ben fai qui envia*. Conon may also be referring to the numerous taxes imposed by rulers to finance the crusade, such as the famous "Saladin tithe" imposed on clergy and laity not taking part in the expedition, whose misuse the same Conon denounces in the song RS 1314, 17-18. But rather than a real tax, Conon seems to be alluding here to voluntary acts of charity.
- 27 The future *partiront* here evidently means "will participate". This is a strong lexical choice giving the idea that those who contribute to the expedition in some way without actually going on the crusade are nevertheless taking part in it just as actively as those that are. An example of such a concession, which anticipates the new ruling on indulgences established by Innocent III, is found in a passage of the *Itinerarium Kambriæ* of Giraldus Cambrensis (pp. 73-74), who relates the initiative of an old man wishing he could take part in the crusade but is prevented from doing so by his physical condition. Particularly significant is the formula used by the old man to equate his desire with full participation: *Domine, si voluntas informat actionem, et ipsa plerumque pro facto reputatur, cum mihi hoc iter agendi sit plena et firma voluntas, residuæ [partis] pœnitentiæ relaxationem peto*.
- 28-29 In Conon's text women are asked to contribute not by financial donations or charitable acts but through chastity and fidelity to their crusading partners. Traces of this type of commitment to and recommendation of reciprocal fidelity can be found in other crusade songs: see for example the Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 45-48 and note; the Châtelain d'Arras RS 140, 21-24; Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 33-36. The stress on fidelity is probably not only due to the dynamics of the medieval lyric, but also to legal regulations concerning reciprocal marriage vows (Brundage 1969, pp. 44 and 49).
- 33-36 It may be possible to glimpse a biblical reference here (John 12. 24-26), but the passage has become proverbial, as can be seen in Morawski 1925 and Schulze-Busacker 1985, n° 1272: *Mius vaut morir a joe que vivre a onte* and Pons de Capdoill BdT 375.2, 15-18: *car qui lai muor, mais a que si vivia, / e qui chai viu piegz a que se moria, / q'avols vida val pauc, e qui muor gen / auci sa mort e pois viu ses tormen*.

- 37-40 The idea already appears in Robert the Monk's chronicle of the First Crusade, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (RHC Hist. Occ. III), p. 792: *quia quum morimur nascimur, quum vitam amittimus temporalem, recuperamus sempiternam*. The theme, which derives from Philippians 1.21: *Mihi enim vivere Christus est, et mori lucrum*, is repeatedly taken up by Bernard of Clairvaux; see for example *De laude novae militiae* (ed. Leclercq-Rochais, III), pp. 214-215: *Quam gloriosi revertuntur victores de proelio! Quam beati moriuntur martyres in proelio [...] Gaude, fortis athleta, si vivis et vincis in Domino; sed magis exsulta et gloriare, si moreris et iungeris Domino. Vita quidem fructuosa, et victoria gloriosa; sed utrique mors sacra iure praeponitur*; *Epistle* 363 (ed. Leclercq-Rochais, VIII), p. 315: *Habes nunc, fortis miles, habes, vir bellicose, ubi dimices absque periculo, ubi et vincere gloria, et mori lucrum* and *Epistle* 458, p. 436: *ubi (sit) et vincere gloria, et mori lucrum*. The same theme is also taken up by Third Crusade preachers, for example Henry of Marcy, *Epistle* 32 (PL 204), p. 250. It is summed up in RS 1738a, 7: *Saus est qui en la mer noie*; see also Aspremont (ed. Brandin), 3887-3894: *De paradis est overte l'entree; / Dex nos apele en sa joie honoree; / Or sons venu a la sainte jornee. / Cui Dex avra ici la mort donnee / De tant bone eure fu sa cars engenree; / Et qui vivra, ce est cosse provee, / Si grans riceche li iert abandonee / Tele ne fu veüe ne trovee*.
- 42 For this line and v. 18 compare Bertran de Born BdT 80.17, 1 (15 Paden): *Ara parra de prez qals l'a plus gran*. That this is quoting Conon seems confirmed by the fact that Bertran in fact sends his *sirventes* to the trouvère of Béthune. Such imitation may prove useful for the dating of RS 1125 if Gouiran's hypothesis, which dates the *sirventes* BdT 80.17 to between February and November 1188, is accepted; in this case it would provide confirmation that Conon wrote the song shortly after the meeting of Gisors on 21 January 1188.
- 43 On the idea of avenging God see for example Henry of Marcy, *De peregrinante civitate Dei* (PL 204), col. 355 and *Epistle* 32 (PL 204), col. 250: *Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis, in quibus utinam milites Christi abjiciant opera tenebrarum, et ad vindicandam injuriam crucis indui non differant arma lucis, lorica fidei et salutis galeam assumentes*; see also the formula used by a Welsh prince at the moment of taking the cross in Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerarium Kambriæ*, pp. 14-15: «*Vestra, mi pater*», inquit, «*et domine, licentia, summi patris injuriam vindicare depropero*». The expression is recalled in other crusade songs, such as RS 1548a, 61-62; Maistre Renaut RS 886, 27-28 and 53; and especially RS 1887, 9. On Christ's "humiliation" see also Villehardouin §§ 18 (*por la honte Jesu Crist vengier*) and 27 (*si vos crient merci que il vos preigne pitiez de Jerusalem qui est en servage de Turs, que vos por Dieu voilliez lor compaignie a la honte Jesu Crist vengier*).
- 45-46 On the loss of the Sepulchre compare expressions of Urban II reported by Robert the Monk, *Historia Iherosolimitana* (RHC Hist. Occ. III), p. 728: *præsertim moveat vos sanctum Domini Salvatoris nostri Sepulcrum, quod ab immundis gentibus possidetur, et loca sancta, quæ nunc inhoneste tractantur et irreverenter eorum immundiciis sordidantur*. See also the epistle of Clement III reported in Giraldus Cambrensis, *De instructione principis*, p. 237; Gregory VIII, *Audita tremendi* (PL 202), coll. 1539-1542; Henry of Marcy, *Epistle* 32 (PL 204), col. 249; but especially Alexander III, *Cor nostrum* (PL 200), col. 1295. See also Huon de Saint-Quentin RS 1576, 6: *et del saint liu u il souffri torment*.
- 45-48 The lines refer to the need (already anticipated in vv. 17-20) to repay Christ's death for our salvation, on which see the note to vv. 19-20.
- 49-52 Various factors suggest that the *envoi* is in all probability spurious, primarily it being solely attested in ms. C, well known for its editor's personal interventions; moreover the rhymes would require the abandonment of MR²Ta's stanza order, partially confirmed by HZaO^p, and the adoption of that of COST; finally the content, which takes up the love theme of the opening stanza, seems influenced by the later development of the *chanson de départie* in the Old French context, but actually contradicts the position expressed by Conon in this text.

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2016.

Mss.

(14+1). C 1v (*Cunes de Betunez*), H 227b (*Moniez d'Arraz*), K 93b (*le Chastelain de Couci*), M 46d (*Quenes*), N 39b (*Chastelain de Couci*), O 90c (anonymous; modern attribution *Chastelain de Coucy*), O^p p. 54b (anon.), P 29d (*li Chastelains de Couci*), R² 40r (*mesire Quesne chevalier*), T 100r (*me sire Quenes*), V 74b (anon.), X 67d (*le Chastelain de Couci*), Za 140r (anon.), a 23d (*mesires Quenes de Bietune*), Stuttgart (*Mes sires quenes de Betune* ; lost fragment; ed. Mone 1838).

Versification and music

10 a'ba'bba'ba' (MW 902,13 = Frank 302); 6 *coblas doblas* , one four-line *envoi* (b'ab'a) is attested by ms. C only and is very probably spurious; rhyme a: -ie , -aige , -euse ; rhyme b: -or , -ont , -eus . The versification is imitated in three other crusade songs: RS 1030 by Huon d'Oisy (a direct response to Conon's text, but with masculine rhymes only), RS 1020a attributed to Richart de Fournival and RS 499 by Chardon de Croisilles. There is *annominatio per immutationem* in vv. 4-5 (*douçour-dolor*) and 23-29 (*sont-vont*), a paronymous rhyme in vv. 6-16 (*mie-amie*); in v. 20 *ont* constitutes a paronymous rhyme with all the other rhymes in -ont ; the rhymes of the last two stanzas are 'grammatically' linked (-euse/-eus), but there is only a real grammatical rhyme in vv. 44 and 48 (*hontex-honteuse*). The caesuras are generally regular: a lyrical caesura occurs in v. 28, a feminine caesura with elision in vv. 22 and 26. Melody in KMNOPR² TVXa, with five melodic variants MTO, KNPX, R² , V and a; melodic scheme ABAB CDCD (T 647,1).

Previous editions

de la Borde 1780, II, 302; Michel 1830, 85; Paris 1833, 93; Mone 1838, 411; Buchon 1840, 421; Leroux de Lincy 1841-1842, I, 113; Dinaux 1837-1863, III , 397; Keller 1844, 254; Wackernagel 1846, 39; Mätzner 1853, 86; ASSL 34 (1863), 376; Brakelmann 1870, 75; Scheler 1876, 2; De Lollis 1886, 62; Wallensköld 1891, 224; Sudre 1898, 140; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 99; Oulmont 1913, 286; Bertoni 1917, 392; Gennrich 1918, 10; Bartsch 1920, 59; Voretzsch 1921, 79; Wallensköld 1921, 6; Gerold 1936, 289; Beck 1937, 71; Brittain 1937, 134; Frank 1952-1956, I, 29; Pauphilet 1952, 865; Spaziani 1954, 27; Cremonesi 1955, 93; Woledge 1961, 108; Lerond 1964, 187; Toja 1966, 204; Mary 1967, I, 214; Cluzel 1969, 52; Picot 1975, II, 24; Schöber 1976, 106; van der Werf 1977-1979, 285; Bec 1977-1978, II, 964; Alvar 1982, 248; Lea 1982, 128; Baumgartner 1983, 244; Rieger 1983, 52; Dufournet 1989, 124; Guida 1992, 54; Varvaro 1993, 145; Dijkstra 1995a, 189; Rosenberg-Tischler 1995, 368; Gresti 2011, 230.

Analysis of the manuscript tradition


Wallensköld 1891 and Bédier 1909 independently arrive at the same two-branch stemma, with the pair MT, R² and a on one side, and on the other the group comprising CO and the lost Stuttgart fragment and the more compact group KNPVX. Bédier does not take mss. H e O^p into consideration, while Wallensköld places them in the second group. Za, unknown to both, has a reading very close to that of H. The text offered here is that of the MR² Ta group, certainly the most reliable as far as Conon de Béthune's corpus as a whole is concerned (see Barbieri 2013, pp. 287-288 and n. 58). The graphy is that of T, whose form *tot* for the nominative plural case (vv. 27 and 32) is also retained, in conformity with the evolution of Picard (Zink, p. 126). Some interventions have proved necessary to patch gaps or correct errors in MR² Ta; in v. 26 the erroneous *morront* is replaced with *manront* from the other mss.;

v. 29, omitted by MR² Ta, and perhaps corrupt in the archetype, is patched by KNPX's reading to avoid an identical rhyme with v. 21; in v. 46 CSt's reading *angoisseuse* is adopted to avoid an identical rhyme with v. 38 and is preferable for the sense. MR² Ta's attribution to Conon de Béthune is confirmed by CSt and is guaranteed by the textual echoes contained in the song RS 1030 of Huon d'Oisy.

Historical context and dating

Conon de Béthune was the fifth son of Robert V and Adelaide (Alix) of Saint-Pol, descending from the counts of Artois and related to the counts of Hainaut and Flanders (Oisy), hence also to the Baldwin who was to become the first Latin emperor of Constantinople. Wallensköld places his birth around the middle of the XIIth c., but it is more likely that this should be moved forward by ten or fifteen years, seeing as the first document that concerns him dates from 1180-1181 and mentions him together with his father and brothers. Destined like all younger sons for an ecclesiastical or military career, Conon was able to exploit his diplomatic skills as an adviser and to become an influential figure, if not one of the main authorities in the Latin empire of Constantinople. There is no proof that Conon took part in the Third Crusade, although the songs of exhortation RS 1125 and RS 1314 were certainly written for that occasion. According to Wallensköld 1891, p. 101 n. 3, Conon was in the contingent led by Philip Augustus, who swiftly returned to France at the end of July 1191. It was perhaps on account of this quick return, which contrasts with the magniloquence of his songs of exhortation, that he was reproached in song RS 1030 by Huon d'Oisy, whom Conon himself defines as his kinsman and master. But in 1191 Huon d'Oisy was already dead, and in any case Conon's name does not appear in any sources for the expedition. It is known that his father Robert V, who died during the siege of Acre in January 1191, travelled with a Flemish contingent which left before the king of France, and it is possible that his son Conon accompanied him, but it is more likely that for some reason unknown to us he never left. On the problem of the attribution and dating of Huon's song RS 1030 and the fact that this may refer to a "false departure" by Conon in 1189 see the corresponding paragraph in the edition of that text. After having taken the cross once more in Bruges on 23 February 1200 he was immediately charged with important negotiation tasks for the organisation of the Fourth Crusade. A keen supporter of the deviation of the expedition and the interests of the young prince Alexios IV Angelos, Conon took part in the second capture of Constantinople (12-13 April 1204) and attended the coronation of the emperor Baldwin in the capacity of protovestiarios. Between 1204 and 1219 he was put in charge the regency of the empire on three occasions and continued to be a highly influential figure until his death on 17 December 1219 or 1220.

His works, highly varied and personal both in form and content, appear to be concentrated during the period of his youth. He cultivated personal and literary relations with numerous trouvères and with some troubadours, notably Bertran de Born, Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and Elias Cairel, and his texts reflect the Occitan authors' typical interest in social and political matters and a predilection for the tone of their *sirventes*. He distinguished himself to such an extent from the courtly and amorous uniformity of many of his northern colleagues that his work has been defined as one of the earliest cases of personal poetry (Jodogne 1964, pp. 99-100). Even song RS 1125, one of the earliest, the most important and the most influential crusade songs in the northern French tradition, is essentially written in the hortatory and polemical style typical of the troubadours, despite the opening stanza on grief at separation from the beloved lady. It was definitely composed after the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin in October 1187 (vv. 17-20). The fact that song RS 1030 by Huon d'Oisy presents clear references to Conon's song confirms that it must have been composed at the time of the Third Crusade, since Huon probably died on 20 August 1189 or at the latest the following year (see Bédier 1909, pp. 28-29 and 53-61; Dijkstra 1995a, p. 84). The composition of RS 1125 must therefore be dated at a time between the fall of Jerusalem (October 1187) and Philip Augustus's departure on crusade (summer 1190). The



hortatory tone and the use of motifs typical of contemporary preaching suggest it was written at the latest after Philip Augustus and Richard the Lionheart took their vow at Gisors on 21 January 1188.