



## **Belle doce dame chiere**

**(RS 1325)**

Author:	<b>Conon de Béthune</b>
Version:	<b>English</b>
Principal Investigator:	<b>Linda Paterson</b>
Text Editor:	<b>Luca Barbieri</b>
English Translation:	<b>Linda Paterson</b>
Reviewer:	<b>Luca Barbieri</b>
Text Encoding:	<b>Steve Ranford/Mike Paterson</b>

**Published by: French Department, University of Warwick, 2016**

**Digital Edition:**

**<https://warwick.ac.uk/crusadelyrics/texts/of/1325>**

## Conon de Béthune

I

Belle doce dame chiere,  
vostre grans beautés entiere  
m'a si sospris  
4 ke, se iere em Paradis,  
si revenroie je arriere,  
por convent ke ma proiere  
m'eüst la mis  
8 ke fuisse vostre amis  
n'a moi ne fuissiés fiere,  
car ainc ens nule maniere  
ne forfis  
12 ke fuissiés ma guerriere.

II

Por une k'en ai haïe  
ai dit as autres folie,  
come irous.  
16 Mal ait vos cuers covoitous,  
ki m'envoia en Surie,  
fausse, plus vaire ke pie!  
Ne mais por vous  
20 n'averai mes iex plorous.  
Fox est qui en vos se fie,  
ke vos estes l'abeïe  
as soffraitous,  
24 si ne vous nomerai mie.

I

My lovely lady, sweet and dear, your perfect beauty  
has so seduced me that even if I were in Paradise, I  
should return as long as my prayer would place me  
where I could be your lover without you being  
haughty towards me; for I have never acted badly  
in any way so as to deserve you to wage war on me.

II

On account of one lady I have hated I have spoken  
folly of all the others, like a man in a rage. A curse  
on your greedy heart for sending me to the Holy  
Land, false lady, more fickle than a magpie! Never  
again shall I weep on your account. Anyone who  
trusts you is mad, for you are the abbey of the  
wretched, so I shall not name you.

## Notes

The song consists of two stanzas of strongly contrasting tone, in accordance with the dialectical technique typical of Marcabru, for example, and the *descort* in general. The first stanza is fairly traditional, praising the lady in quasi-religious terms (she would be worth more than paradise); the second is strongly misogynistic and is based on the lady's indifference and volubility.

- 1 The opening line is repeated exactly at the beginning of the French stanza of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras's plurilingual *descort* BdT 392.4. Raimbaut's stanza repeats three other rhyme-words of Conon's first stanza (*entiere, maniere, guerriere*), indirectly confirming the stanza order in mss. MT, the only ones to place the stanza beginning *Bele doce dame chiere* first. The technique of the song *cum auctoritate* (a song constructed from quotations from other songs) adopted by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras in his *descort* does in fact favour the quotation of initial lines. It is worth noting that song RS 778 of Raoul de Soissons (*Chanson legiere a chanter*), which borrows the initial line of Conon's RS 629, contains numerous references to RS 1325, all taken from MT's first stanza.
- 4-5 On the renunciation of paradise for love of the lady see for example Thibaut de Champagne RS 1727, 13-14: [...] *qu'estre ne voudroie / en Paradis, s'ele n'i estoit moie* and RS 1479, 53-54: *si me vaudroit melz un ris / de vous qu'autre paradis*; Raoul de Ferrières RS 818, 43-44: *mieus en ameroie un baisier / ke la joie du paradis*; Guillaume d'Amiens RS 1004, 39-40: *que muels qu'en paradis lassus / m'ameroie entre ses dous bras*; RS 1185, 53-54: *que, se nue la tenoie, / n'en prendroie paradis*.
- 8 The three hypometric lines in MT, vv. 8, 9 and 12, corresponding to forms of the imperfect subjunctive of *estre*, suggest that the author considered such forms to be trisyllabic (perhaps by analogy with the weak northern forms in *-eui*, for which see Gossen 1976, § 73; there is an example in the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy*, 7806: *mais, s'encore vivre peuisse, / tout mon vivant siervans fuisse*).
- 9 The use of *a* in the sense of *vers* (which is the alternative reading in U) seems to be a distinctive trait of the author's language, as can be seen in RS 1314, 31 and RS 1574, 16. This is also supported by the virtually identical repetition of this line in the Gascon stanza of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras's *descort* (v. 28: *ab que no-m hossetz tan hera*).
- 17 The only reference to the Holy Land contained in this song is hard to explain on either the historical or the diegetic level. Wallensköld, trying to fit the songs within the biography of their author, places RS 1325 in a group of texts which would testify to the lady's betrayal, in some way linked to his departure for the Holy Land (Wallensköld 1891, p. 108). But as it has already been seen indicated, this type of historical reading cannot automatically be applied to medieval literature, especially since there are very strong doubts about Conon's actual participation in the Third Crusade. This allusion contributes solely to highlight the constant presence of the Holy Land and the experience of crusading in the trouvère's work, without us being able to draw from it any type of implication or conclusion.
- 18 Note the analogy with the anonymous RS 1229, 24: *por c'est tricheresse vaire*, in the context of a song which shows more than one point of contact with Conon's text (see also v. 9, for example: *Helas, je ai dit folie*, in relation to RS 1325, 14 and v. 55: *por li m'en vois en Egypte* in relation to RS 1325, 17).

- 22-23 A metaphor ironically inspired by the litany of the Virgin (*refugium peccatorum*), very probably echoing *l'abat Saint Privat* used as a sexual allusion by Marcabru BdT 293.25, 72-73 (the "abbot" would here represent the male organ). The two expressions in fact share a formal link (the identical use of enjambement) and a semantic one between the Latin etymologies of *Privat* (*privatus* "exclusive, private, deprived") and of *souffraitous* "miserable" (from *suffractum*, *suffringere* "broken, destroyed"). For other echoes of Marcabru's *vers* in Conon's text see Barbieri 2013, pp. 273-274.
- 24 Scholars tend to accept the correct but banal reading of O (*si ne vous amerai mie*), but the alternative *nomerai* di MT is undoubtedly a *lectio difficilior* and probably conceals a more interesting interpretation. See the possible interpretations suggested in Barbieri 2013, pp. 275-276.

## Text

Luca Barbieri, 2016.

## Mss.

(4). M 46a ( *me sire Quenes de Biethune* ), O 89b (anonymous), T 99v ( *me sire Quenes* ), U 36v (anon).

## Versification and music


7a' 7a' 3/4b 7b 7a' 7a' 3/4b 7b 7a' 7a' 3/4b 7a' (MW 394,1 = Frank 135); 2 *coblas singulares* ; rhyme a: - *iere* , -*ie* ; rhyme b: -*is* , -*o(u)s* . This is the sole attestation of this versification in the Old French lyric. Conon seems in particular to be imitating Bertran de Born's song BdT 80.9, including the rhymes of st. iii-v (a: -*ia* , b: -*os* ). Paronymous rhymes vv. 7-8 ( *mis-amis* ); *annominatio per immutationem* between the bisyllables at the rhyme, vv. 18, 21, 24 ( *pie* , *fie* , *mie* ); melody in MTO; melodic structure ABCD ABC'E FA'GF (T 748,1).

## Previous editions

Paris 1833, 88; Buchon 1840, 421; Leroux de Lincy 1841-1842, I, 43; Dinaux 1837-1863, III, 393; Brakelmann 1870, 86; Scheler 1876, I, 10; Wallensköld 1891, 234; Jeanroy 1892, 419 and 422; Wallensköld 1921, 12; Cluzel 1969, 54; van der Werf 1977-1979, I, 299; Schiassi 1999-2000, 408; Meneghetti 2003, 81; Barbieri 2013, 272.

## Analysis of the manuscript tradition

The manuscripts transmit three independent versions of this song. MT present a text composed of two *coblas singulares* . O's version also has two stanzas, adopting MT's second stanza as its first, though the first two lines are different; the second stanza is original to O and repeats the a' rhyme of the first. U's version contains four stanzas: the first two lines repeat the introductory rhymes of O, while the third stanza coincides with the first stanza of MT; the first two stanzas have the same rhymes, the third and fourth are *singulares* ; the fourth stanza is incomplete (the first four lines are missing) or should be regarded as an *envoi* . U's version does not contain the stanza referring to the Holy Land and cannot be taken into account here. Wallensköld 1921 offers a hybrid text following MT for stanza I and O for stanza II. For the reasons for preferring MT's version see Meneghetti 2003, pp. 77-79 and Barbieri 2013, pp. 272-276. The text is that of Barbieri 2013, with a few modifications, but adopts T's graphy. MT's version is substantially respected, though in vv. 18 and 22 O's *difficilior* readings are adopted, and O is also used to supplete v. 21 missing from MT. The short lines are irregular in all versions and



this probably stems from the original; it would be easy to adjust all to four-syllabic lines with the simple suppletion of a pronoun *je* at the beginning of v. 11 and reading the words in v. 15 without elision.

## **Historical context and dating**

The song must have been composed after Bertran de Born's song BdT 80.9, which dates from 1182 and before Raimbaut de Vaqueiras's plurilingual *descort* BdT 392.4 (1197-1201, probably c. 1200: see n. 1). Given the tone and content of the text, the allusion to the Holy Land in v. 17 may have no historic significance and should not be automatically interpreted autobiographically (Formisano 1993a, p. 148). There are no other textual elements that allow us to date the piece more precisely, and it would be safest not to assume it was composed during the years just before (or after) the Third Crusade.