



Tant com je fusse fors de ma contree

(RS 502)

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Vidame de Chartres

I

Tant com je fusse fors de ma contree
ne deüst pas a moi joie venir,
car qant remir la bien fete senee
4 moi est avis nel doie reveïr;
ensus de li ai fet grant demoree
en une terre ou estre ne desir:
melz amasse la ou ele fu nee.

II

8 Liez fui qant vi de Blois ma retornee
et je bien sui que m'en dui revenir
a la plus tres bele riens qui soit nee,
a qui je sui, se me veut retenir;
12 por Dieu li pri, qui tant l'a honoree
car chascuns qui la voit est a desir,
qu'ele ait de moi merci sanz demoree.

III

El païs sui ou cele est qui m'agree,
16 mais nel puis pas a mon vouloir veïr,
car tant redout la cruex gent baee
que je n'i os ne aler ne venir;
melz aim de li avoir dure pensee
20 que d'une autre grignors biens atenir,
tant aim de li la douce renonmee.

IV

Si me dont Dex de la tres bele nee
joie et solaz, si com je le desir,
24 que nule riens fors s'amor ne m'agree,
si m'a atret a son tres douz pleisir;
Dex! ert ce ja que la tiengne a celee
entre mes bras, nu a nu, a loisir?
28 Oïl, s'Amors veut que j'aie duree.

I

For as long as I remained away from my own
country I was destined not to have joy, as when I
thought of the lovely, wise lady it seemed to me I
should not see her again. I made a long sojourn far
from her in a land where I did not wish to be: I
would have rather (been) in the land of her birth.

II

I was happy when I saw that I should be returning
from Blois and I was certain that I would return to
the most beautiful creature ever born, to whom I
belong, should she be willing to retain me; I pray
her, for the sake of God who has so greatly
honoured her that whoever sees her lives in desire,
that she have mercy on me without delay.

III

Now I am in the land where lives the one that
pleases me, but I cannot see her as I wish, because
I am so afraid of the cruel snoopers that I dare not
move. I would rather have painful thoughts about
her than obtain the greatest favours from anothers
much do I love her sweet reputation.

IV

Nevertheless may God grant me joy and pleasure
from the loveliest creature, just as I desire it, since
nothing delights me but her love, so much has she
drawn me to her most sweet pleasure. Oh God, will
it ever happen that I hold her secretly in my arms,
both of us naked, at our leisure? Yes, if Love wishes
me to live.



V

Dame, por qui j'ai si lie pensee
qu'autre joie ne s'i puet aatir,
nus qui vos ait veüe n'esgardee
³² ne se poroit de vos loer tenir,
qu'avec biauté vos est bontés doublee;
si m'en doi moult amer et chier tenir,
qant j'ai biauté et bonté enamee.

V

Lady, on whose account I have such glad thoughts
that no other joy can compare with them, no-one
who has seen and gazed upon you can refrain from
your praise, for in you kindness is joined to beauty;
so I must consider myself most fortunate and
privileged, since I have fallen in love with beauty
and kindness.

Notes

For the affinities with the Vidame de Chartres' other song, RS 421, see the introductory note. Apart from the very similar opening, the two texts have in common the negative references to the distant land (RS 421, 4 and 13; RS 502, 6), the mention of the *mesdisants* and the author's concealed love (RS 421, 29-32; RS 502, 15-18), the hopeful prayer for the future joy of love (RS 421, 17-20; RS 502, 22-25), the more or less veiled mention of sexual pleasure (RS 421, 23-24; RS 502, 26-27) and the supplication addressed directly to the lady in the concluding stanza (RS 421, 33-40; RS 502, 29-35). Both texts also share many rhyme-words in -ee: *contree* (RS 421, 2; RS 502, 1), *agree* (RS 421, 6; RS 502, 15 and 24), *(en)amee* (RS 421, 8; RS 502, 35), *demoree* (RS 421, 14; RS 502, 5 and 14), *nee* (RS 421, 18; RS 502, 7, 10 and 22).

Although the author is from the central part of France, the text contains at least two northern forms confirmed by the rhyme in vv. 4 and 16 (*reveïr*, *veïr*); also of northern origin is the use of the masculine pronoun for the feminine (*nel*) in the same lines and the form *lïe* in v. 29. These are in any case phenomena of the Old French literary *koinè* which are also quite widespread outside their region of origin (see Petersen Dyggve 1944, p. 36).

- 1 For the use of *contree* in crusade songs see Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 1 and Thibaut de Champagne RS 757, 2; the King of Navarre's song also contains in vv. 5-6 a negative allusion to the Holy Land similar to that found in v. 6 of the present text. Compare also the close resemblance to the first stanza of Gautier de Dargies RS 1575 (and more vaguely RS 1582).
- 3-6 It is difficult to understand the syntactic link between the imperfect subjunctive of the first two lines and the present indicative of vv. 3-6; compare however the cases of asymmetry evoked by Ménard § 158d, p. 158. The asymmetry may perhaps also be explained by the succession of two temporal propositions, as happens in the case of hypothetical clauses (Ménard § 208, pp. 194-195). However, given that v. 15 assures us that the poet is in France and not in the East, it is highly likely that the present *remir*, *m'est avis* and *desir* have historical force and should therefore be interpreted as having preterite force, as has been indicated for example in Thibaut de Champagne RS 273, 37 and RS 1469, 25-26. Just the same curious alternation of tenses also occurs in RS 421 (vv. 11-14) and may be a distinctive syntactic feature of the author.
- 3 The verb *remir* in ATa can also mean "to think of, remember", for which see Petersen Dyggve 1945, p. 36 and Godefroy 7, 7a; this sense, which often occurs in the frequent lyric expression *remirer en son cuer* ("représenter dans son esprit"), would qualify *remir* as a *lectio difficilior*.
- 6-7 For the negative characterisation of the East, and in particular the Holy Land, see Thibaut de Champagne RS 757, 5-6 and the songs with female subjects RS 21, 5-6 and RS 191, 1-2. In RS 421, 13-14 the resentment towards the distant land is expressed in such strong terms that one wonders whether this does not actually concern the Holy Land but instead refers to Venice or Dalmatia.
- 8-9 For these lines see the Châtelain d'Arras RS 140, 5-6, also referring to the impossibility of joy in separation.
- 10-11 Compare Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 9-11 and note. For v. 10 see also the similarity with RS 421, 18.

- 17 For indeclinable *cruex* see *cruos* in TL 2, 1109, 32 ff. and examples such as Jean Malkaraume, 7850: *de la beste cruex sauvaige* and Rutebeuf, *Complainte du comte Eudes de Nevers*, 176-77: *ailliens en cele region / ou Diex soffri la mort crueulz*. The adjective *baee* would signify “idle, shiftless, lazy”, as suggested by Godefroy 1, 611c, who cites our text, or else “indiscreet” through the reference to the open mouth. Either way the line concerns the slanderers, already evoked in RS 421, 30-32, as in the Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 33-34 and RS 985, 36-40 and 43 and in part in Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 25-28.
- 19-20 A classic courtly axiom: see Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 15-16 (and note) and especially RS 985, 15-16. Here *pensee* evidently means “souci” (Godefroy 10, 313b).
- 26-27 For the reference to nudity see Châtelain de Coucy RS 985, 5-8 and the note to v. 7.
- 28 The use of a rhetorical question followed by an emphatic reply also echoes the Châtelain de Coucy; see RS 679, 9-11 and RS 985, 34-35.

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2016.

Mss.

(9+1). A 159a (*li Vidame*), K 181b (*li Visdame de Chartres*), M 8a (*li Vidame de Ch[...]*), Me 85v? (incipit only, *Robert de Blois*), N 86c (*Robert de Blois*), P 71a (*Robert de Blois*), T 106v (*li Vidame*), U 22v (anonymous), X 129d (*Robert de Blois*), a 21v (*li Vidame de Cartres*).

Versification and music


10a’ba’ba’ba’ (MW 674,5 = Frank 224); 5 *coblas unissonans* ; rhyme a: -ee ; rhyme b: -ir ; the stanzas are *capcaudadas* , as the rhyme -ie is found at the end and the beginning of each stanza; frequent identical rhymes, to the extent that one could speak of *coblas retronchadas* , even if the repetitions do not fall systematically in the same position of each stanza (*venir* vv. 2 and 18; *demoree* vv. 5 and 14; *desir* vv. 6, 13 and 23, but the second case is a noun whereas in the other cases it is a verb; *nee* vv. 7, 10 and 22 (in this case also the last occurrence is a noun); *agree* vv. 15 and 24; *pensee* vv. 19 and 29); paronymous and derivative rhyme vv. 2, 9, 18 (*venir* , *revenir*), 4 and 16 (*reveïr* , *veïr*) and vv. 11, 20, 32, 34 (*retenir* , *atenir* , *tenir*); paronymous only in vv. 3, 7, 8, 10, 22 (*senee* , *nee* , *retornee*); rich and leonine rhymes are also very frequent; lyric caesura vv. 7, 20 and 30; feminine caesura with elision v. 6; Italian-style accentual caesura 4’+5’ or else decasyllable 6+4 v. 1 (v. 13 is also, definitely, 6+4); melody in all mss., with A’s individual; melodic structure ABAB CDE (T 291).

Previous editions

Paris 1833, 113; Lacour 1856, 37; Ulrich 1889-1895, ii 147; Brakelmann 1896, ii 34; Noonan 1933, ii 196; Petersen Dyggve 1945, 34.

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

As is often the case common errors are scarce, but the usual opposition between the families AMTa and KNPX is constant. In M the text is lacunary because of the removal of a vignette and only vv. 1-3 and 20-33 remain. U’s text is highly individual: the first four lines of the first three stanzas are in the same position as in the other mss., while the last lines of the stanza are displaced according to the following order: 1-4+26-28, 8-11+5-7, 15-18+12-14. Hence vv. 19-25 and 29-35 are missing and in their place



the copyist has added a fourth stanza and a sort of *envoi* of five lines, both independent of the rest of the tradition. The manuscript variants for this text are few and of little relevance. In the case of minor differences between AMTa and KNPX the reading confirmed by U is chosen (vv. 2, 11, 12, 16), even if in the trouvère tradition there are a few traces of a possible common model of U and KNPX. Where U is absent or has an individual reading (vv. 3, 13, 20, 23, 33, 35) decisions are made on a case by case basis, what appears to be the best reading being chosen. In all these cases the reading of A(M)Ta seems *difficilior*, except in v. 23 where the variants of Aa and MT are probably erroneous. The graphy is that of P. The attribution to the Vidame de Chartres, unanimous in AMTa, is also confirmed by K, but see also the notable affinities with the song RS 421.

Historical context and dating

See the corresponding paragraph to song RS 421. This song also must have been composed after the author's return from his first stay in the East, probably between May and the end of the summer of 1203, or else after his possible (but unlikely) definitive return from the crusade.