



Aler m'estuet la u je trairai paine

(RS 140)

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Châtelain d'Arras

I

Aler m'estuet la u je trairai paine,
en cele terre u Diex fu travelliés;
mainte pensee i averai grevaine,
4 quant me serai de ma dame eslongiés;
et saciés bien jamais ne serai liés
dusc'a l'eure que l'averai prochaine.
Dame, merci! Quant serai repariés,
8 pour Dieu vos proi qu'en vos prenge pitiés.

II

Douce dame, contesse et chastelaine
de tout valoir, cui sevrance m'est griés,
si est de vos com est de la seraine,
12 qui par son chant a pluisors engigniés:
n'en sevent mot, ses a si aprociés
que ses dous cans lor navie mal maine;
ne se gardent, ses a em mer plongiés;
16 et, s'il vos plaist, ensi sui perelliés.

III

En peril sui, se pitiés ne m'aïe,
mais se ses cuers resamble ses dos oex,
je sai de voir dont n'i perirai mie:
20 esperance ai qu'ele l'ait mout piteus.
Sovent recort, quant od li ere seus,
qu'ele disoit: «Mout seroie esjoïe,
se repariés; je vous ferai joïex:
24 or soiés vrais come fins amourex».

IV

Ha Dex, dame, cis mos me rent la vie;
biaus sire Diex, com il est precieus!
Sans cuer m'en vois el regne de Surie:
28 od vos remaint, c'est ses plus dous chateus.
Dame vaillans, comment vivra cors seus?
Se le vostre ai od moi en compaignie,
adés iere plus joiaus et plus preus:
32 del vostre cuer serai chevalereus.

I

I have to go to where I shall suffer pain, to that
land where God was tortured; there I shall have
many heavy thoughts, when I shall be far away
from my lady; and be well aware that I shall
nevermore be happy until the hour when I shall
have her close. Lady, have mercy! When I return, I
beg you for God's sake to take pity on me.

II

Sweet lady, countess and châtelaine of great worth,
from whom parting is grievous to me, with you it is
the same as with the siren who has deceived many
(sailors) through her song: they are unaware of it,
and she has come so close to them that her sweet
song leads them off course; they pay no heed, and
now she has plunged them into the sea; and in the
same way, if it please you, I am in danger of
shipwreck.

III

My life is in danger, if pity does not help me; but if
her heart resembles her sweet eyes, I am sure I
shall not perish there: I have the hope that it is
most full of pity. Often I recall that when I was
alone with her she would say: «I shall be most
joyful if you return; I shall give you joy, (but) now
be true like a true lover».

IV

Oh God, lady, these words bring me back to life;
good Lord God, how precious they are! I go off to
the kingdom of Syria without a heart: it remains
with you, it is its sweetest gain. Worthy lady, how
will my body survive alone? If I have yours (your
heart) for company, I shall be constantly more
joyful and fight better: thanks to your heart I shall
be bold in battle.

V

Del gentil cuer Genievre la roïne
fu Lancelos plus preus et plus vaillans;
pour li emprist mainte dure aatine,
³⁶ si en souffri paines et travas grans;
mais au double li fu gueredonans,
après ses maus, loiaus amie fine;
en tel espoir serf et ferai tous tans
⁴⁰ celi a cui mes cuers est atendants.

VI

Li chastelains d'Arras dist en ses chans:
ne doit avoir amour vraie enterine
ki a la fois n'en est liés et dolans;
⁴⁴ por ce se met del tout en ses comans.

V

Thanks to the noble heart of Guinevere the queen
Lancelot was braver and more valiant; for her sake
he undertook many hard fights and suffered great
pains and tribulations; but the true courtly beloved,
after his sufferings, doubly rewarded him; in such
hope I serve and will ever serve the one to whom
my heart aspires.

VI

The Châtelain d'Arras says in his songs that one
cannot experience true, perfect love without feeling
at the same time joy and pain; so he submits
entirely to her will.

Notes

The song belongs to the tradition of *chansons de départie*, but even if it begins conventionally by highlighting the ideas of crusading as a duty (the classic formula *m'estuet* is typical of the *chansons de départie*: see the commentary on the Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 3-4) and of the suffering caused by the separation from the beloved lady, it represents an accomplished attempt to reconcile love and crusade, through the idea that the lady's acceptance and affection make a man more worthy, and that courage and audacity in battle will be rewarded on the level of love. In addition, the lady does not have the negative courtly characteristics found for example in the Châtelain de Coucy's songs, and despite the siren image the song underlines her power over the lover's life: her own words, reported in the text in vv. 22-24, speak of perfect reciprocity of feeling, and open the way to the theme of love which makes men valiant, which characterises the second part of the song. In fact this idea is already hinted at in Conon de Béthune RS 1125, 14-16 and the same motif is developed, though differently, in the second part of Thibaut de Champagne's RS 757.

- 2 The Holy Land is presented as the place of Christ's passion (Dijkstra 1995a, pp. 154-155), a designation typical of preaching and also common in songs of crusading exhortation (see Maistre Renaut RS 886, 15-18 and Huon de Saint-Quentin RS 1576, 1-2, but also more succinctly in Thibaut de Champagne RS 6, 1-2 and Richart de Fournival RS 1022, 25-27). However it seems new and interesting that the author assimilates his own suffering, both physical and amorous, to that of Christ.
- 11-15 The comparison of the siren's behaviour to the lady's also occurs in the bestiary of Pierre de Beauvais (ed. Mermier 1977, XI, 14-17), the Châtelain's contemporary, as well as in the later *Bestiaire d'Amour* of Richard de Fournival. However, the present piece does not have the strongly misogynistic character of Pierre de Beauvais' text. The Châtelain is simply underlining his submission to the lady and the power over life and death granted to her by love. For the use of the siren myth in Old French lyrics compare Raoul de Soissons RS 1204, 26-27: *mes [est] sanblant au chant de la seraine, / dont la douçours atret dolours et paine* and the Comte de Bretagne RS 597, 12-13: *tot ausi com la serene / qui chante quant il fet torment*. The siren's behaviour is described in many bestiaries, almost all ultimately leading back to the Latin *Physiologus*, but the lack of any allusion to the sleep induced by her song, an element unanimously present in the bestiaries, suggests dependence on romance texts which do not contain it; compare Wace, *Brut* 735-772 and *Roman de Troie* 28837-28871. Probably the author is playing on the double sense of the verb *periller* which can mean "sink" but also "place in danger, kill".
- 21-24 Here the lady is entirely free of the haughtiness of the courtly *domina* found elsewhere, and is constantly well-disposed towards the knight. The grief expressed in the song concerns separation alone, and the certainty of reciprocal love never diminishes, which is how the knight can reconcile love and crusade. Usually in the *chansons de départie* it is the knight who asks the lady for the same fidelity he promises to her (see the Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 45-48 and the note to those lines); here the opposite occurs, recalling songs with a feminine first-person speaker (RS 21 and RS 191).
- 27 On the separation of heart and body in crusade songs see Conon de Béthune's earlier RS 1125, 7-8: *Se li cors va servir Nostre Signor, / Mes cuers remaint del tot en sa baillie* (but the contact with our v. 27 extends to v. 9 of RS 1125: *Por li m'en vois sospirant en Surie*); see also the Châtelain de Coucy RS 679, 23-24 (and note); RS 1636, 33-35; RS 1582, 5-6. In Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 21-24 the situation is the same, but the trouvère stresses the lady's cruelty in not returning the gift of the heart. For the use of *regne de Surie* to denote the Holy Land see the note to Thibaut de Champagne RS 1152, 10.

- 28 T's reading *chateus* < *capitale(m)* is undoubtedly a *lectio difficilior* and is therefore accepted into the text; for the sense see TL 2, 314, 14ff "Besitz, Habe, Gewinn" and Godefroy 2, 89a "bien, patrimoine". Compare RS 900, 64-66: *Diex! Diex! / li mieudres chatex / ki me soit remés*.
- 33-34 The motif of love which makes men more valiant, anticipated in vv. 30-32, is illustrated by the literary example of Lancelot and Guinevere, probably drawn from Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la Charrette*, where the hero is emboldened by the thought and sight of Guinevere before being rewarded by a night of love (see Payen 1974). An analogous idea, but without any literary allusion, is also expressed by the Châtelain de Coucy in RS 679, 47-48: *et je proi Dieu k'ausi me doinst honor / com je vous ai esté amis vrais* and Raoul de Soissons in RS 1154, 10-13: *Sire, saichiés, et si n'en douteis mie, / ke cheveliers n'iert jai de grant renom / sens bone amor ne sens sa signorie, / ne nuls sens li ne puet estre proudom*.
- 37-38 The question of the double reward is in some ways a response to the conflict between love service and religious/military service mentioned by many trouvères and formulated particularly clearly by Hugues de Berzé in RS 1126, 17-24; such a conflict goes so far as to formulate a sense of disproportion between the loyalty of the knight and the reward received, for example in Gautier de Dargies RS 795, 58-64 and Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 29-30: *ma loiauté me tout, jel sai de fi, / la joie q'ai par reson deservie*. In this text, however, as indicated, love is reciprocated and the knight's service is also rewarded on the level of valour in battle; compare Raoul de Soissons RS 1204, 30-33, which contains another mythological and literary reference (to Helen and Paris).
- 42-43 The concluding phrase is presented as a direct quotation and is treated as such in the text, even though in the translation it has been transposed into indirect speech. For the use of the oxymoron *liés et dolans* in crusade songs see Thibaut de Champagne RS 757, 33-36: *Bien doit mes cuers estre liez et dolanz: / dolanz de ce que je part de ma dame / et liez de ce que je sui desiranz / de servir Deu, qui est mes cuers et m'ame*.

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2015.

Mss.

(5). K 249a (*mestre Gile li Viniers*), N 122a (*mestre Gile li Viniers*), P 104b (*mestre Gilles li Viniers*), T 39v (*Hues li chastelains d'Arras*), X 168d (*maistre Gilles li Viniers*).

Versification and music

10 a'ba'bba'bb (MW 923,1 = Frank 304a); 5 *coblas doblas* with a 4-line *envoi* (ba'bb); rhyme a: -aine , -ïe , -ine ; rhyme b: -iés , -eus , -ans ; *capfinidad* link between stanzas ii-iii (*perelliés-peril*), iv-v (*cuer*) and less strikingly between stanzas i-ii (*dame* ai vv. 7 and 9); paronymic rhyme vv. 2, 5, 16 (*travelliés , liés , perelliés*) and between v. 18 (*oex*) and all other rhymes in -eus of stanzas iii and iv, if *oex* = *eus* ; identical rhyme vv. 21 and 29 (*seus*), even if the two occurrences may have slightly different nuances; etymological wordplay in the rhymes in vv. 22-23 (*esjoïe-joïex*); frequent lyric caesuras in vv. 6, 9, 15, 25, 31, 37; feminine caesura with elision vv. 2 e 3; melody in all mss., with minimal variants in the case of KNPX and somewhat more significant ones in T; melodic scheme ABAC DEFG (T 82).

Previous editions

de la Borde 1780, ii 230; Auguis 1824, ii 50; Dinaux 1837-1863, iii 238; Paris 1856, 617; Metcke 1906,

33; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 135; Guida 1992, 79; Dijkstra 1995a, 201.


Analysis of the manuscript tradition

The common errors of vv. 21 (incomprehensible), 29 and 32-34 (a series of simplifications which change the syntax and generate an error at the rhyme in v. 34) group mss. KNPX together; common errors in NP produce irregular rhymes in vv. 42 and 44 of the *envoi* (absent from KX), but the opposition between KNPX and T remains constant. The absence of the *envoi* probably constitutes a joint error of KX, though it is difficult to pinpoint the relations between NP and KX (see only the small variant KNX in v. 11). T's reading is highly correct and generally better than that of KNPX. It also presents some interesting *lectiones difficiliores* (the northern form *averai* in vv. 3 and 6, *chateus* in v. 28, the syntax of vv. 32 and 33), which makes it an excellent base for the edition, and its northern features may moreover correspond to the author's *scripta*. Apart from the verbal form *averai* already noted (vv. 3 and 6), see for example depalatalisation in *eslongiés* (v. 4) and the subjunctive *prenge* (v. 8); the treatment of *c* before a palatal or medial vowel in *saciés* (v. 5), *aprociés* (v. 13), *cans* (v. 14); and the forms *oex* (v. 18) and *travas* (v. 36). T's reading is only rejected in vv. 12 and 16 (inversion of the rhyme-words) and v. 25 (*heex* instead of *ha Dex*).

Historical context and dating

Aside from the rubric of the authoritative ms. T, numerous indications point to the Châtelain d'Arras as the author of this piece. Although Metcke 1906, p. 13, considered the reference in v. 41 as a quotation from another author, it must be an internal signature, given that the Châtelain d'Arras was little known. In addition there is a second song (RS 308) attributed to a Châtelain d'Arras by ms. P (ms. C, notoriously unreliable, attributes it to Thibaut de Champagne), also addressed to a countess (RS 140, 9: *Douce dame contesse et chastelaine* and RS 308, 9: *Contesse a droit la doit on apeler*) and in both cases the address is accompanied by the expression *de tout valoir* in v. 10, a coincidence which seems to confirm the *difficilior* attribution of both these texts to the Châtelain d'Arras.

T's rubric also provides us with the Christian name of the Châtelain in question. According to the study of Feuchère 1948, the only châtelain of Arras named Hugues is the son and heir of Baudouin V; his date of birth is unknown, but his activity as a castellan is documented from 1210 to 1226, the date of his death, as witnessed in the necrology of the "Confrérie des jongleurs et bourgeois d'Arras" (Berger 1970). In a document of 1206 the sons Hugues and Robert confirm a donation by Baudouin, which suggests that the elder son was born in 1190 at the latest. None of the documents concerning Hugues mentions him participating in a crusade, which would have to be the Fifth; so at least three documents go back to the period when the crusade was in full swing (22 January 1218, February 1219 and April 1219) and testify to his presence in Arras. True, he could have taken the cross and shown his intention to leave before 1218 (probably between 1213, the year of Innocent III's bull *Quia maior*, and the summer of 1217, when the first crusaders left for Acre), and then have renounced his commitment for unknown reasons. Alternatively he could have left for the East for a short time between the start of 1218 and the start of 1219, or else after April of the same year, even if this seems unlikely: from the end of May 1218 the crusade was directed against Egypt and more specifically Damietta, while the two mentions in the Châtelain's song refer unquestionably to the Holy Land (the land of Christ's passion in vv. 1-2 and *Surie* in v. 27). In any case there is no trace of the Châtelain d'Arras in the East (his name is absent from the list of participants in the Fifth Crusade drawn up by Röhrich 1891). It is also recorded that the preaching of the crusade in France by the papal legate Robert de Courçon met with scant success, and only a few French knights took part in it. Of the life of Hugues d'Arras we know only that in 1216 he took part in the French king's embassy to England to meet the barons in revolt against John Lackland, and that he accompanied the future Louis VIII in the ensuing English expedition. These



chronological references seem also to be confirmed by the dedication of song RS 308 to Thomas de Coucy (v. 33), the son of Raoul I de Coucy, born before 1187 (Barthélemy 1984, pp. 406-407) and hence a contemporary of Hugues d'Arras. Thomas was an opponent of Thibaut de Champagne from 1229 and died in 1253.

Given the information provided by the manuscript tradition and historical documentation, it seems most likely that RS 140 was composed by the Châtelain d'Arras at the time when he had shown his intention of leaving on the Fifth Crusade, at some time between 1213 and 1217.