



Li nouveaux tans et mais et violete

(RS 985)

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Châtelain de Coucy

I

Li nouveaux tans et mais et violete
et roussignols me semont de chanter,
et mes fins cuers me fait d'une amourete
4 si douç present ke ne l'os refuser;
or me laist Diex en tel honor monter
ke cele ou j'ai mon cuer et mon penser
tiegne une fois entre mes bras nuete
8 ains ke vaille outremer.

II

Au comenchier la trovai si doucete
ne ne quidai pour li mal endurer,
mais ses dols vis et sa belle boucete
12 et si bel oel vair et riant et cler
m'orent ains pris ke m'osaisse doner;
mais s'or me vieut retenir et cuiter,
miex aim a li faillir, si me pramete,
16 k'a une autre achievever.

III

Las! pour quoi l'ai de mes iex regardee,
la douce riens ki Fausse Amie a non?
Ele me rit et je l'ai tant plouree:
20 si docement ne fu traïs nus hom.
Tant com fui miex, ne me fist se bien non,
mais or sui siens si m'ochist sans raison;
et pour itant ke de cuer l'ai amee,
24 n'i set autre ocoison.

IV

De mil sospirs ke je li doi par dete
ne me velt pas d'un tot seul aquiter,
ne Fause Amor ne laist ke s'entremete
28 ne ne mi laist dormir ne reposer.
S'ele m'ochist, mains avra a garder,
si ne m'en sai vengier fors au plourer;
car ki Amors destruit et desirete
32 ne s'en set ou clamer.

I

The new season and May and violet and nightingale
invite me to sing, and my courtly heart makes me
such a sweet gift of a new love that I dare not
refuse it; now may God allow me to rise to such
honour as to hold naked in my arms the one in
whom I have my heart and thoughts, before I go
overseas.

II

At the beginning I found her so sweet and did not
think to suffer on her account, but her sweet face
and her lovely mouth and her lovely shining,
laughing, bright eyes had taken me prisoner before
I dared to offer [my service]; but if she is now
willing to retain and free me, I prefer to fail with
her, if she gives me hope, than succeed with
another.

III

Alas, why did I allow my eyes to look upon her, the
sweet creature with the name of False Beloved?
She smiles at me, and I have wept so much for her:
no man was ever betrayed so sweetly. As long as I
was my own, she did me nothing but good, but now
I am hers she kills me without cause; and because I
have loved her from the bottom of my heart, I know
no other reason for it.

IV

Of the thousand sighs I owe her as a debt she will
not acquit me of a single one, and False Love does
not cease to intrude and prevent me from sleeping
or resting. If she kills me she will have less to be
concerned about, because I know not how to take
revenge beyond by weeping; for the one whom
Love destroys and disinherits knows not where to
seek justice.

V

Sour toute joie est cele coronee
ke j'ai d'Amors; Diex, i faurai je dont?
Oïl, par Dieu, tex est ma destinee,
³⁶ car tel destin mi doinent li felon;
si sevent bien k'il font grant mesprison,
car ki ce taut dont ne puet faire don
il en conquiert anemis et mellee:
⁴⁰ n'i fait se perdre non.

VI

Si coiement est ma dolors celee
k'a mon samblant ne la reconoist on;
se ne fuissent la gens maleüree
⁴⁴ n'eüsse pas sospiré em pardon:
Amors m'eüst doné son guerredon;
mais en cel point ke dui avoir mon don,
lor fu m'amors ensegnië et mostree:
⁴⁸ ja n'aient il pardon!

V

Above all joy the one that I have from Love is
sovereign; God, shall I then be deprived of it? Yes,
by God, such is my destiny, for such a destiny the
wicked grant me. And they well know they are
committing a great wrong, since one who takes
away that which he is unable to give wins [only]
enemies and war: he does nothing but lose.

VI

My grief is so secretly concealed that it cannot be
recognised by my expression; if it were not for the
wretched people I should not have sighed in vain:
Love would have given me its reward. But just
when I should have received my gift, my love was
revealed and made known: may they never be
forgiven!

Notes

This text is neither a *chanson de départie* nor a crusade song as it is traditionally understood, but a classic song of courtly love which begins in the light style of a pastourelle to end tragically because of the lady's indifference and the pernicious action of the slanderers. The only sign of departure on crusade occurs in v. 8, at the end of the first stanza, but this simple indication referring to a figure such as the Châtelain de Coucy, whose actual participation in two crusades is well known, and the legend of love and death celebrated in the romance of which he is the protagonist, invite us to consider it as integral to the corpus (for other arguments see Dijkstra 1995a, 55-56). It contains some points of contact with RS 679, where the lady seems indifferent to the lover's suffering (vv. 13-14) and the poet blames the action of the slanderers (vv. 33-34), but the style of the two texts is very different.

- 7 The beginning of this song is reminiscent of a pastourelle both for its frequent diminutives and for the reference to nakedness; see for example the "canso-pastourelle" of Jocelin de Dijon RS 95, 11-20. The explicit references to nakedness are not very common in the OF lyric and nearly all are in genres other than the courtly love song.
- 8 The various strategies adopted by the manuscript tradition (*ançoiz qu'aille, ains que voise, ains que j'aille, ains k'en aille*), which even lead to the production of hypermetric readings such as those of L (*ains que je m'en voise*) and UV (*ainz que je voise*), suggest the existence of an original hiatus *ains ke aille*.
- 10 C's hypometric reading and the initial diffraction of the tradition (*ja ne, je ne, que ne, qu'onc ne, qu'ains ne*) suggest the existence of an original initial *ne ne*, with syllabic repetition having led to the suppression of an element (as attested by C). Such a solution is made *difficilior* from the fact that in this case the sentence is linked to a previous positive statement (but the possibility of this usage is documented by Ménard § 214, pp. 198-199; for the series *ne ne* see Ménard § 419 point 1°, p. 332), and compare AMa in v. 28.
- 14-15 The main problem with v. 14 concerns the presence or absence of an initial negation, which leads to two different interpretations. The variant with a negation is attested by mss. CU+KLPVX and accepted by all editors, but it has every appearance of a *facilior* and trivial interpretation. It is possible however to remain faithful to AMOR³Ta if we understand the two verbs as feudal metaphors (*retenir* means "take into service", while *quiter* means "free from service"; compare the similar interpretation of Bédier 1909 and Lerond 1964), or even in the literal sense ("keep with her" and "leave, abandon") meaning "if she wants to take me and (then) leave me", or else "if she wants to take me (into her service) and free me"; in this case the negation does not seem necessary. Concerning v. 15, it should be recalled that *prometre* can also mean "concede, grant some hope" or "ordain" (cfr. God X, 430c and VI, 432a) and the first sense seems particularly interesting, given the use of the subjunctive which could be interpreted as indicating a wish along the lines of *si m'aît Diex*.
- 19 The idea of mockery inherent in the reading *quant de moi rit di MOR³T* is never otherwise attested in this form in OF lyric and fits ill with the idea of the "sweet death" expressed in the following line. It must refer to a smile, perhaps cruel, but nonetheless a real smile, so the reading *ele se rit* is preferable, unanimously attested by the mss. of the other two families and also supported by Aa. See for example *Tristan en prose* (ed. Curtis) III, iii, 688, 55 (p. 14): *Amors me rit, et puis me point jusques au sanc*.
- 23 ACUa's reading is the only one that does not syntactically link this line to the previous one, thus avoiding an awkward contradiction (it does not make much sense to say the lady is killing the poet because he has loved her faithfully after having just said she has no reason to do so); it seems much better to isolate vv. 23-24 syntactically and interpret them as meaning that precisely because the poet has loved the lady faithfully, she has no excuse.

35 I do not agree with Lerond 1964, p. 81 who sees in MR³T's *nenil/naie* a *lectio difficilior*, justifying it with a strained interpretation. It seems rather that the negation is a *lectio faciliior* arising from the idea that the poet cannot passively resign himself to an unrewarding fate. But such a fate is made inevitable by the interference of the slanderers and in any case the expression *teux est mon destin / ma destinee* in the OF lyric nearly always expresses the idea of resignation to a negative situation. Compare RS 679, 9-11: *Beaus sire Diex, k'iert il dont et coment? / convenra il k'ens la fin congié praigne? / Oïl, par Dieu, ne puet estre autrement.*

38-39 This phrase with its proverbial overtones is not entirely clear, even if the general sense is intelligible: the slanderers who take away the joy of love will not be able to restore it. Certain exceptions to the formula *faire don* could suggest a passive sense ("receive as a gift, freely"), in which case it would have the much clearer sense of "who takes away what he cannot receive as a gift"; but it could also be interpreted more simply as "who takes away (from others) what he himself cannot give", in other words love. See Colin Muset RS 989, 8-12: *Amors ont malvais renon, / car li riche al cuer felon / sont amé por faire don, / et li cortois povres hom / aime seus.*

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2015.

Mss.

(13+3). A 155a (*li Kastelains de Chouci*), C 125v (*Muse an Borse*), K 95b (*li Chastelains de Couci*), L 62v (anonymous), M 53c (*li Chastelains de Couci*), O 73c (anon.), P 30c (*li Chastelains de Conci*), R³ 129v (anon.), T 155v (*li Chastelains*), U 38r (anon.), V 75b (anon.), X 69a (*Li Chastelains de Couci*), a 13v (*li Castelains*), u 73b (vv. 1-8 = *Guillaume de Dole* vv. 922-929); *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy et de la Dame de Fayel* vv. 7005-7011 (vv. 1-8, 2 mss.).

Versification and music

10a'ba'bbba'6b (MW 966,4 = Frank 312); 6 "interlaced" coblas ternas; rhyme a: -ete, -ee; rhyme b: -er, -on. Thibaut de Champagne's chanson de départie RS 757 uses very similar versification, virtually mirroring it. The song contains a derivative rhyme in vv. 15 and 27 (pramete-entremete); 'annominatio per immutationem' vv. 9 and 11 (doucete-boucete); grammatical rhymes vv. 17-29 (regardee-garder) and 19-30 (plouree-plourer); equivocal rhyme vv. 18 and 21-40 (non, but identical vv. 21-40 where the whole of the end expressions are very close), 44-48 (pardon); equivocal ear rhyme vv. 20-42 (hom-on), 34-38-46 (dont-don, though identical vv. 38-46); numerous paronymous rhymes in -on; lyric caesura v. 43 and a feminine caesura with elision v. 33. The text has three different melodies: one in ms. R, one in V and the third in AKLMOPTUXa, with numerous variants; melodic structure ABAB CDEF (T 577,1).

Previous editions

de la Borde 1780, II, 270; Crapelet 1829, 132; Michel 1830, 33; Brakelmann 1870-1891, 114; Fath 1883, 54; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 87; Bartsch 1920, 164; Ullsperger 1935, 61; Delbouille 1936, 227; Brittain 1937, 140; Pauphilet 1952, 875; Spaziani 1954, 33; Cremonesi 1955, 107; Lerond 1964, 76; Toja 1966, 229; Cluzel 1969, 113; van der Werf 1977-1979, 243; Alvar 1982, 256; Baumgartner 1983, 240; Bergner 1983, 458; Dufournet 1989, 114; Rosenberg-Tischler 1995, 388; Gaullier-Bougassas 2009, 516 (for the romances containing quotations, references are given only to the editions of the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy*, and not to *Guillaume de Dole*, for which the single ms. has been consulted directly).

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

The number and order of stanzas fairly clearly show the division AMOR³ Ta-KLPVX-CU, but the usual paucity of errors and the particularly high incidence of contamination make it impossible to clarify further the relations between the mss. and to use the stemma systematically to reconstruct the text. A few common errors occur only in KLPVX, in vv. 25-27 (the rhyme is modified and hence the metrical shape of the stanza is distorted), 34 (the reading *vit* seems a corrupt form of Aa's *vient*) and 37. Collation therefore gives rise to the identification of three different "editions" rather than a collection of explicable variants of the same text. Tripartite readings which seem to confirm the existence of the three families are found in vv. 11 and 27-28. Mss. OR³ e CU appear particularly contaminated, and in some cases divide to follow the readings of different families (vv. 3, 5 and 10); but even M sometimes acts autonomously and includes readings from other families, in vv. 26, 30 and 36 for example. The particular situation of the manuscript tradition makes it impossible to produce a truly critical edition and requires an edition based on the reading of a version of one of the manuscript groups. That of AMOR³ Ta has been chosen, not only because it is the only complete one, but also because it presents several better readings. This choice also necessarily implies the acceptance of the particular stanzaic structure defined here as "interlaced" *coblas ternas*: the rhymes of stanzas I and II are picked up in stanza IV, while the rhymes of stanzas V and VI are anticipated in stanza III. The validity of this very rare structure is confirmed by the important case of Conon de Béthune's song RS 1314. In cases of a threefold division the reading of AMOR³ Ta is always adopted, as in a twofold division if the group is in essential agreement (vv. 3 and 5), even when all the other mss. agree on the same reading (vv. 14, 26, 30). If mss. AMOR³ Ta are virtually uniform, decisions are made one by one on the basis of the value of the different readings, taking account of the other witnesses. T, which shows some northern characteristics, has been chosen as base. As far as the attribution is concerned, only ms. C, notoriously unreliable, offers a different one; in L, O and V the text is integrated into the section devoted to the Châtelain de Coucy.

Historical context and dating

It is fruitless to speculate about the possibility of deducing the relative chronology of the Châtelain de Coucy's two "crusade songs", as Bédier 1909, p. 100 does, even if it is true that RS 985 seems to describe an initial phase of love, which ought logically to precede that described in RS 679; but there is no need even to mention how risky it is to apply overly autobiographical and chronological criteria to the medieval French lyric. It can simply be said that if RS 679, as a *chanson de départie*, was composed just before departure, RS 985, given the generic indication of future departure on crusade contained in v. 8, could have been composed at any time between the Châtelain taking the cross and the beginning of the Third or Fourth Crusade. Nothing is known about the date when he first took the cross, while in the case of the Fourth Crusade Villehardouin, § 7 tells us that the Châtelain did so between the beginning of Advent (28 November) 1199 and the start of Lent (23 February) 1200.