



## **Conbien que j'aie demoré**

**(RS 421)**

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## Vidame de Chartres

I

Conbien que j'aie demoré  
fors de ma douce contree  
et maint grant ennui enduré  
4 en terre maleüree,  
por ce n'ai je pas oublié  
le douz mal qui si m'agree,  
dont ja ne qier avoir santé  
8 tant ai la dolor amee.

II

Touz tens ai en dolor esté  
et mainte lerne plore;  
li plus beau jor ou an d'esté  
12 me senble pluie ou gelee,  
quant el païs que je plus hé  
m'estuet fere demoree:  
ja n'avrai joie en mon aé  
16 s'en France ne m'est donee.

III

Si me dont Dex joie et santé,  
la plus bele qui soit nee  
me conforte de sa biauté  
20 qui si m'est el cuer entree;  
et se je muir en cest pensé(r),  
bien cuit m'ame avoir sauvee;  
car m'eüst or son lieu presté,  
24 Dex, cil qui l'a espousee!

IV

He las, trop sui maleürez  
se cele n'ot ma proiere  
a qui je me sui si donez,  
28 que ne m'en puis traire ariere;  
trop longuement me sui celez  
por cele gent malparliere  
qui ja les cuers n'avront lassez  
32 de dire mal en deriere.

I

However long I have stayed outside my sweet country and endured many great tribulations in an unhappy (accursed?) land, I have not forgotten the sweet pain which pleases me so well, from which I do not wish to be cured, so much have I loved the pain.

II

I have always been in pain and wept many a tear; the finest summer's day or year seemed to me to be rain or ice, since I was forced to stay in the land I hate the most: I shall never have joy in my lifetime if it is not given to me in France.

III

So God grant me joy and health, and may the fairest lady in the world comfort me with her beauty which has so entered my heart; and if I die in this thought, I truly believe my soul will be saved; God, if only the one who married her would lend me his place!

IV

Alas, I am too unhappy if the one to whom I have dedicated myself, to the point where I cannot extricate myself, does not heed my prayer; I have concealed myself too long because of those slanderous people who will never have their hearts weary of speaking ill behind one's back.

V

He, douce riens, ne m'ocïez,  
ne soiés crüex ne fiere  
vers moi qui plus vos aim qu'assez  
<sup>36</sup> d'amor loial droituriere;  
et se vos por tant m'ocïez,  
las, trop acheterai chiere  
l'amor dont tant serai grevez;  
<sup>40</sup> mes or m'est douce et legiere.

V

Ah, sweet creature, do not kill me, and do not be  
cruel or haughty towards me who love you more  
than ever with loyal and sincere love; and if you kill  
me nevertheless, alas, I shall pay too high a price  
for the love which will oppress me so; but now it is  
sweet and light to me.

## Notes

The Vidame de Chartres' two songs RS 421 and RS 502, together with RS 1204 attributed to Raoul de Soissons, RS 1575 by Gautier de Dargies and the anonymous RS 227b, form a group of texts on the theme of distance from the beloved lady, on which see the introductory note to RS 1204. The motifs treated are expressed with often very similar formulae, presenting an impression of homogeneity and reciprocal imitation, and some are also found in stanzas III and IV of the song RS 1154 of Raoul de Soissons. As has been stated already, within this group it is only Raoul de Soissons' texts which explicitly mention the crusades (but for RS 227b see the reading *Romenie* reconstructed in v. 5); in the other cases the references to distance remain generic and one cannot call them true crusade songs. It is known in any case that the Vidame de Chartres took part in the Fourth Crusade, whereas there is no historic evidence, if one disregards vague allusions found in his songs, of Gautier de Dargies' participation in Philip Augustus' Third Crusade. The Vidame's songs, like those attributed to Raoul de Soissons, situate the crusading experience in the past, but whereas in the latter the sufferings and hardships of the stay overseas serve as a comparison with the amorous sufferings of the present, for the Vidame distance from the lady merely exacerbates the essential, central nature of the bond of love. The texts show no feeling for the crusading experience, perhaps because of the expedition's deviation from its original objective in the direction of Dalmatia and then Constantinople, with which the Vidame and his *entourage* probably had no sympathy.

- 1 For the opening lines see st. I of Raoul de Soissons RS 1204, 1-9 and especially Gautier de Dargies RS 1575, 1-9. Compare in Raoul de Soissons's text the recourse to the verb *endurer*, the use of the initial concessive expression, the reference to physical illness and love-sickness. A slight difference can be seen in the description of the latter: if Raoul limits himself to saying that sickness from love is stronger than the physical kind, the Vidame goes so far as to assert that he does not wish to be cured and that he loves love's pains. Concerning Gautier de Dargies note again the use of the initial hypothetical phrase and of the noun *ennui*, but the link extends to the second stanza of RS 421, as vv. 6-7 of RS 1575 seem to echo vv. 9-10 of the Vidame, while Gautier's vv. 8-9 are taken up the Vidame's vv. 15-16.
- 2 For the use of *contree* in crusade songs see the note to RS 502, 1.
- 6-7 The image of the sweet love-sickness from which he does not wish to be cured has many echoes in trouvère lyric and is also typical of romances, being amply developed by Chrétien de Troyes, for example in the long dialogue between Fenice and Tessala in *Cligès* 3017-3075.
- 11-14 The verbs in the present tense should probably be interpreted as having the force of preterites; for *m'estuet* in particular see the analogy with the use of *covient* in Thibaut de Champagne RS 273, 37 and RS 1469, 25-26. See also the note to RS 502, 3-6.
- 13-14 This harsh and negative expression can hardly be applied to the Holy Land. Starting from this observation, Petersen Dyggve 1944, pp. 181-184 dates songs RS 421 and RS 502 to the period of war between Christians before the Third Crusade, imagining a supposed forced stay by the Vidame in the south or west of France on some military campaign (1188?); but there is no evidence of such a stay, which in any case would not fit the new chronology proposed for the Vidame. It is however perfectly plausible that the poet should be referring to the periods in Venice or on the Dalmatian coast where the crusaders found the long months of idle waiting difficult to put up with and many of them disapproved of the expedition's change of route. The allusion to summer in v. 11, if taken literally rather than metaphorically, as seems most likely, may point to the Venetian period.

21-22 The reference to possible death and the salvation of the soul might be thought to suggest that the author was still in the East, but in fact the expression is fairly common. See for example Thibaut de Champagne RS 1268, 31-33: *s'ele me fet languir / et vois jusqu'au morir, / m'ame en sera sauvee*.

34 For the form *cruex* see the comment on RS 502, 17.

## Text

Luca Barbieri, 2015.

## Mss.

(10+1) . A 159a ( *li Vidame* ), C 150v ( *Guios de Provins* ), K 221a ( *Gontier de Soigniers* ), M 7d ( *li Vidames de Chartres* ), Me 109r? (incipit only, *Gautier de Soignies* ), N 107a ( *Gontier de Soignies* ), P 75c ( *Gontier de Soignies* ), R<sup>1</sup> 9r ( *li Vidames de Chartres* ), T 106r ( *li Vidame de Chartres* ), U 57r (anonymous), a 21v ( *le Vidame de Cartres* ).

## Versification and music

8a7b'8a7b'8a7b'8a7b' (MW 689,26 = Frank 225); 5 *coblas ternas* (3+2), the first three also *capfinidas* ( *dolor* vv. 8 and 9, *donee-dont* vv. 16-17); rhyme a: -é , -ez ; rhyme b: -ee , -iere ; identical rhyme vv. 7-17 ( *santé* ) and 33-37 ( *ocïez* ), equivocal rhyme vv. 9 and 11 ( *esté* ); grammatical rhyme vv. 1-14 ( *demoré-demoree* ), 4-25 ( *maleüree-maleürez* ) and 16-27 ( *donee-donez* ); paronymous rhyme vv. 16-18 ( *donee-nee* ) and 31-35 ( *lassez-assez* ); derivative rhyme vv. 28-32 ( *ariere-deriere* ); melody in AKMNPR<sup>1</sup> TUa, with various variants; melodic structure ABAB' CDEB' (T 244).

## Previous editions

Wackernagel 1846, 31; Lacour 1856, 33; San-Marte 1861-1862, I 123; Dinaux 1837-1863, IV 271; Scheler 1879, 12; Brakelmann 1896, 26; Baudler 1902, 78; Orr 1915, 5; Noonan 1933, II 205; Petersen Dyggve 1945, 30; Pauphilet 1952, 921; Picot 1975, II 34; Dufournet 1989, 88. Wackernagel 1846, 31; Lacour 1856, 33; San-Marte 1861-1862, I 123; Dinaux 1837-1863, IV 271; Scheler 1879, 12; Brakelmann 1896, 26; Baudler 1902, 78; Orr 1915, 5; Noonan 1933, II 205; Petersen Dyggve 1945, 30; Pauphilet 1952, 921; Picot 1975, II34; Dufournet 1989, 88.

## Analysis of the manuscript tradition

A good number of common errors and lacunae show the threefold division AMR<sup>1</sup> Ta, CU, KNP. Mss. CU generally agree with KNP, and support the reading of AMR<sup>1</sup> Ta only when KNP are erroneous. The song is attributed to three different authors by the three manuscript families: AMR<sup>1</sup> Ta to the Vidame de Chartres, KMePN to Gontier de Soignies and C to Guiot de Provins. C's attributions are generally considered unreliable; the numerous analogies with the song RS 502, the difference of style from Gontier de Soignies' usual one and the general reliability of the s<sup>1</sup> group of witnesses induce a preference for the attribution to the Vidame de Chartres (see Formisano 1980, p. xxxvi). In a situation where a choice has to be made between two equivalent alternatives, CU seem to contain an excessively independent version and in AMR<sup>1</sup> Ta a stanza is missing; it has therefore been decided in this case to follow KNP, even though in other cases this group is known to be unreliable. The choice is made easier by the fact that the variants are minimal and in general do not change the sense of the text. I deviate from KNP only to supplete vv. 27-29 which are partly missing in these mss. (CU being followed here),



and the final syllable of v. 31, and to correct the hypermetric vv. 24 ( *celui* for *cil* ) and 34 (initial *ne ne* ); finally in vv. 38-39 KNP's reading appears erroneous (in particular the possessive *s'amor* ) and is isolated against the unanimous testimony of the other mss. Graphy of P.

## Historical context and dating

The lyric poet Vidame de Chartres is certainly Guillaume de Ferrières, mentioned in some documents dating between May 1202 and April 1204. According to Noonan 1933, I, p. 30 the trouvère was born in c. 1160, and according to Petersen Dyggve 1944, p. 180 just before 1150; but the long gap between the attestations concerning his presumed mother and those concerning Guillaume suggest that the scarcity of documents conceals a skipped generation, in which case Guillaume can be presumed to have been born even later, perhaps in c. 1170. The Vidame de Chartres probably took the cross together with Renaud de Montmirail, with whom he is often associated in the documents, on 29 November 1199 (Villehardouin, § 4) and left France in about June 1202, joining the other crusaders in Venice. After spending the whole summer there, the crusaders set sail for Zara in October and besieged and conquered it on 24 November. They spent the winter in the Dalmatian city until some French knights, including the Vidame de Chartres and Renaud de Montmirail, tired of waiting and perhaps disillusioned by the developments taking place in the expedition, requested and obtained permission from Count Louis of Blois to be sent to the Holy Land to gather information (Villehardouin § 102; this is the only passage in the chronicle in which the Vidame Guillaume is directly mentioned). Villehardouin relates that the knights left Zara on 30 March 1203 but did not keep their promise to return there. In all probability they did not even reach the Holy land, since some documents of 1203 attest the presence of Renaud de Montmirail and the Vidame de Chartres in France, the latter in May. Later Renaud and Guillaume set out again for the East, probably passing through the Holy Land and reaching Constantinople (probably between November and December 1203), where they took part in the second siege and final conquest of the city (12 April 1204; see Villehardouin, § 315). The latest notable document concerning the Vidame dates from April 1204 (see Métais 1902, p. 50); in this the author refers to himself as ill and *accedens Constantinopolim*, confirms a donation previously made to the Templars when he was in Acre and adds a second donation. From this it can be inferred that Guillaume de Ferrières was received by the Templars and did indeed pass through the Holy Land before reaching Constantinople. The document concerning the first donation made in Acre is undated (Métais 1902, p. 21). The tight time-scale seems to exclude the possibility that the Vidame went on to the Holy Land after leaving Zara, and it is much more likely that he travelled through it on his return to the East, as Petersen Dyggve 1944, p. 178 also thought. After the conquest of Constantinople there are no more references to Guillaume de Ferrières, either in the East or in France. Most probably Guillaume de Ferrières died as a result of the illness mentioned in the document of April 1204, or at the battle of Adrianople on 14 April 1205 (see Villehardouin, § 361), again sharing the fate of Renaud de Montmirail and Louis de Blois. It cannot be ruled out that the Vidame de Chartres returned to France after the crusade, but this seems rather unlikely.

The use of the present tense in vv. 12 and 14 suggests that the song was composed while the author was still in the East, but the close affinities with song RS 502, definitely written in France (see v. 15), which however uses the present tense in the historic sense (vv. 3-6), suggest that this song too may have been composed after his 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) final return from the crusade.