



A vous amant, plus k'a nul'autre gent

(RS 679)

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Châtelain de Coucy

I

A vous amant, plus k'a nul'autre gent,
est bien raisons ke ma dolor complaigne,
car il m'estuet partir outreement
4 et desevrer de ma loial compaigne;
et, quant li pert, n'est riens ki me remaigne;
et sachiés bien, Amors, seürement,
s'ainc nus morut por avoir cuer dolent,
8 dont n'ert par moi mais meüs vers ne lais.

II

Beaus sire Diex, k'iert il dont et coment?
convenra il k'ens la fin congié praigne?
Oïl, par Dieu, ne puet estre autrement,
12 sans li m'estuet aler en terre estraaigne;
or ne quic mais ke grans maus me soffraigne
quant de li n'ai confort n'alegement,
ne de nule autre amor joie n'atent
16 fors ke de li, ne sai se ch'iert jamais.

III

Beaus sire Diex, k'iert il del consirrer,
del grant soulas et de la compaignie
et des samblanz ke me soloit moustrer
20 cele ki m'ert dame, compaigne, amie?
Et quant recort sa simple courtoisie
et les dols mos ke suet a moi parler,
coment me puet li cuers el cors durer?
24 quant ne s'em part, certes molt est mauvais.

IV

Ne me vaut pas Diex por noient doner
tos les deduis k'ai eüs ens ma vie,
ains les me fait c(h)ierement comperer,
28 s'ai grant paour chis loiers ne m'ochie;
merchi Amors, s'ainc Diex fist vilonie,
ke vilains fait boine amor desevrer:
ne je ne puis l'amor de moi oster
32 et si m'estuet ke jou ma dame lais.

I

To you, lovers, more than all other people, it is
right that I express my grief, for of necessity I am
compelled to leave and part from my faithful
companion; and once I lose her, there is nothing
left to me; and be aware, Love, truly, that if anyone
ever died of a sorrowing heart, then no song or lay
will ever emanate from me.

II

Good Lord God, what will therefore come about,
and how? Shall I finally have to take my leave of
her? Yes by God, it cannot be otherwise, without
her I must go into a foreign land; I do not think now
ever to be free of dreadful pain, since I have no
comfort or consolation from her, and expect no joy
from any other love but hers, and I do not know
whether this will ever be.

III

Good Lord God, what will become of the kind
thoughts, the great solace, the companionship and
loving looks which the one who was my lady,
companion, friend, used to bestow on me? And
when I call to mind her simple courtesy and the
sweet words with which she is accustomed to speak
to me, how can my heart remain within my body? If
it does not part from there it is assuredly most
wretched.

IV

Not for nothing has God wished to grant me all the
delights I have had in my life; instead he makes me
pay dearly for them, to the point where I fear that
this price will be my death. Have pity, Love, if God
ever acted basely, it is a cruel thing to sunder good
love: but I cannot free myself of love, and yet I am
obliged to leave my lady.

V

Or seront lié li faus losengeor
cui tant pesoit des biens k'avoir soloie,
mais ja de çou n'ere pelerins jor
³⁶ ke ja vers aus boine volenté aie;
por tant porrai perdre tote ma voie,
car tant m'ont fait de mal li traïtor,
se Diex voloit k'il eüssent m'amor,
⁴⁰ ne me porroit cargier plus pesant fais.

VI

Je m'en vois, dame: a Dieu le creator
comanc vo cors, en quel lieu ke je soie,
ne sai se ja verrés mais mon retor;
⁴⁴ aventure est que jamais vous revoie;
por Dieu vous pri, en quel lieu ke je soie,
ke nos convens tenés, viegne ou demour,
et je proi Dieu k'ausi me doinst honor
⁴⁸ com je vous ai esté amis verais.

[VII]

*De moie part di, chançons, si t'en croie,
que sols m'en vois, que n'ai altre seignor;
et bien sachiez, dame de grant valor,
⁵² se je revienng, que por vos servir nais.*

V

Now the false slanderers who so resented the good things I used to have/enjoy will be glad, but I shall never be so penitent as ever to be well disposed towards them; for this reason I could lose all the benefits of my pilgrimage, because the traitors have done me so much harm that if God desired me to love them, He could not burden me with a heavier load.

VI

I leave, Lady: I commend you to God the creator, wherever I may be, and I know not if you will ever see my return; it is a matter of chance whether I shall see you again; I beg you, for God's sake, wherever I may be, to keep true to our promise, whether I return or stay, and I pray God to grant me honour, just as I have been your true friend.

[VII]

Song, say on my behalf, and may you be believed, that I leave alone, since I have no other lord; and be well aware, lady of great worth, that if I return, I was born to serve you.

Notes

The literary merits of the Châtelain de Coucy were immediately recognised by his contemporaries, as is shown by his privileged position at the beginning of the main songbooks immediately after Gace Brulé, his elevation to the ranks of exemplary lover proposed by Eustache le Peintre in RS 2116, 33-35 (along with Tristan and Blondel de Nesle, though the comparison with Tristan already exists in the Châtelain's most famous song, RS 40, 19-20), confirmed by the *incipit* of the anonymous RS 358 (*Li chastelains de Couci ama tant / qu'ainz por amor nus n'en ot dolor graindre*), which is moreover a *contrafactum* of our RS 679. One of the Châtelain's lines (the *incipit* of RS 40) is quoted in v. 7 of the song RS 1252 by Gilles de Viés Maisons, which also cites Gace Brulé and Blondel de Nesle. The legend of the castellan who is a perfect lover and loyal knight, immortalised in the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy*, finds an excellent starting-point in RS 679, though it mainly concerns the farewell to the lady and the exaltation of courtly love. The present song does not actually mention the overseas expedition, which can only be deduced by certain vague indications (see especially vv. 25-27 and the use of the "technical" noun *voie* in v. 37); but the author stresses the duty and necessity of departure, reinforced by the insistent recourse to *m'estuet* (vv. 3, 12, 32) and the adverb *oultrement* (v. 3) and summed up in vv. 11-12. The success of the Châtelain de Coucy's songs is demonstrated both by the romance of which he is the protagonist and by their insertion into the main romances containing lyric quotations: Jean Renart's *Guillaume de Dole*, Gerbert de Montreuil's *Roman de la Violette* and the *Châtelaine de Vergi*.

Whether the song RS 679 was written at the time of the Third Crusade or the Fourth, it is in any case one of the oldest *chansons de départie* with a male first-person speaker, if one disregards Conon de Béthune's RS 1125, which despite the novelty of the opening adieu still bears the imprint of a classic song of crusading exhortation (Dijkstra 1995a, p. 164). The *chanson de départie* is a typically French variation of the crusade song, which progressively emphasises the theme of love at the expense of its political and religious side and its tone of exhortation or invective. The Châtelain de Coucy's crusade songs are essentially love-songs which exacerbate the tension of departure and present the crusade solely as an unavoidable and painful duty, in which the idealising and religious spirit typical of the songs of exhortation, still present in Conon de Béthune's texts, find no place: the focus is on the exaltation of the beloved lady, along with the psychological analysis of the lover's suffering as he is forced into departure (for definitions and analyses of the *chansons de départie* see Bec 1977, I, pp. 150-157 and Dijkstra 1995a, pp. 35-49). Notable are the thematic and formulaic affinities between RS 679 and Hugues de Berzé's RS 1126, Thibaut de Champagne's RS 757, Chardon de Croisilles' RS 499, the anonymous RS 1582 and also Gautier de Dargies' RS 1575 which is not usually considered as a crusade song since it contains no explicit allusion to the Eastern expeditions but only an initial reference to a long absence from France.

- 3-4 On the pain of separation see Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 9-11: *Amors, ci a trop dure desevree / quant il m'estuet partir de la meillor / qui onques fust ne qui jamés soit nee*. The formula *m'estuet* is also found three times in RS 499 (vv. 3, 10, 22), and is typical of the *chanson de départie* (compare v. 12 with Châtelain d'Arras RS 140, 1 and RS 1582, 36).
- 7-8 For the idea of death for love see RS 1582, 39-40: *Se nus morut por leament amer, / ne cuit vivre dresk'a havre de meir* and Hugues de Berzé RS 1126, 1-2: *S'onques nuns hons por dure departie / ot cuer dolant, dont l'ai je par raison*. The theme of death within the love relationship is analysed by Zaganelli 1982, pp. 143-157.

- 17 Nearly all editors have considered the substantival infinitive *consirrer* to have its usual sense of “lack, privation”, the following nouns specifying its objects; but this interpretation requires one to accept a strong anacoluthon and to ignore the syntactic construction of a perfectly symmetrical list headed by *consirrer*. In fact *consirrer* can also mean “amorous thought, amorous care” and can thus acquire positive force.
- 23 The theme of the separation of the lady linked to the separation of the heart from the body is adopted in very similar terms by Hugues de Berzé RS 1126, 49-50, but is already present in Conon de Béthune RS 1125, 7-8. See also RS 1582, 5-6 and the whole of RS 499 by Chardon de Croisilles, especially vv. 5-8, 14-15 (*quant mes cors va fere sa destinee, / et mes fins cuers s’est ja mis el retor*) and 21-24 (*Dex, ou irai? ferai je noise ou cri, / quant il m’estuet fere la departie / de mon fin cuer et lessier a celi / qui ainc du sien ne me lessa partie?*). The separation of the heart from the body is one of the central themes of all of the Châtelain’s production, which can explain the insertion of the eaten heart motif into the Roman du Châtelain de Coucy.
- 25-27 God asks for the knight’s service in exchange for the joy of love granted to him. This is a more courtly version of the typical preaching theme of exchange found in some crusade songs, according to which service of God through crusading is the fair price to pay for salvation procured by Christ by His death on the cross. The use of this motif, along with other analogies found in the *chansons de départie*, allows us to link the present text to the context of crusading; compare for example Huon de Saint-Quentin RS 1576, 1-8; Richard de Fournival RS 1022, 1-8; RS 401, 3-7; RS 1967, 21-30.
- 29-30 These lines introduce the theme of the discreet reproach to God for the cruel separation from the lady, echoed in several other crusade songs such as RS 191, 6-7: *si qu’a bien pou que vers Deu ne m’irais, / qui m’a osté de grant joie ou j’estoie*; Guiot de Dijon RS 21, 30-32: *Sire Dex, por quel feïs? / Quant l’uns a l’autre atalente, / Por coi nos as departis?*; Hugues de Berzé RS 1126, 33-36: *Un confort voi en vostre dessevrance, / que je n’avrai a Deu que reprochier; / mais quant por li me covient vos laisser, / je ne sai rien de greingnor reprochance* and Thibaut de Champagne RS 757, 5-6: *Dex! pour quoi fu la terre d’outremer, / qui tant amant avra fait dessevrer*. Syntactically this is probably a case of the particular use of the expression *faire que* with a neutral relative pronoun, for which see Ménard § 69, p. 83 and Jensen § 22, p. 12.
- 31-32 For these lines, and particularly for the idea of the contrast between the physical separation from the lady and the impossibility of separating from love, see Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 3-5: *lessier m’estuet la riens qu’ai plus amee / por Damledieu servir, mon criator, / et neporquant tot remaing a Amor*.
- 33-40 As Bédier 1909, p. 106 observed, these lines are to be understood within the crusading context. The crusader obtained the indulgence only for those sins of which he repented and which he confessed, and was also invited to pardon those who had done him injury. Hence the trouvère declares he will lose the spiritual benefits of his pilgrimage because he is incapable of forgiving the great harm done to him by the slanderers. It is noteworthy that *voie* (v. 37), which corresponds to the Latin *iter*, is one of the terms with which pilgrimage and crusade were commonly indicated; see for example Thibaut de Champagne RS 757, 23: *quant j’onques vos aler en ceste voie*; RS 1133, 18-19: *se ceste voie est perie, vilains sera li retours*; RS 1636, 31: *L’arme et lo cors mettrai tot en la voie*; RS 1738a, 3-4: *Li rois de France est croisiés / pour aler en chele voie*.

- 35 I have chosen to translate *pelerin* as “penitent” to make the context clearer, but it should be remembered that *pelerinage* is another term with which the crusade is commonly defined, along with *voie*; hence *pelerin* has the technical sense of “crusader”, along with the more generic one of “pilgrim”. See Conon de Béthune RS 1125, 27: *partiront tot a cest pelerinaige*; Raoul de Soissons RS 1204, *Se j’ai lonc tans esté en Romenie / et outremer fet mon pelerinage*. The exclamation *Sire, aidiés au pelerin* constitutes the initial line of the refrain of Guiot de Dijon RS 21.
- 45-48 The commitment to mutual fidelity before departure on crusade is also expressed in Thibaut de Champagne’s RS 1469, 13-16: *por ce vos pri, d’amors douce senblance, / c’on ne s’en doit partir por esmaiance, / ne ja de moi nel verrez avenir, / que tout parfaiz vuil en amors morir* and Chardon de Croisilles’ RS 499, 41-44: *Au departir, douce dame, vos pri / que ja por riens que losengiers vos die / ne m’oubliez, et je tot autresi / jamés vers vos ne ferai vilanie*.
- 49-52 The *envoi* is almost certainly spurious, being attested only in U and the version in the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy*, but it is worth recording it to point out the evolution towards explicit reference to crusading, which is particularly clear in the romance version, vv. 7395-7398: *Nus n’a pité. Va, cançons, si t’en croie / Que je m’en vois siervir Nostre Seignour; / Si saciés bien, dame de grant valour, / Se je revien, que pour vous siervir vais*. It is not impossible that such a version was already present in the model used by the romance author, but it is much more likely that we are faced with an innovation due to the demands of the narrative text, since the song is inserted at precisely the point where the Châtelain commits himself to leave on crusade. Compare the strong similarities with the *envoi* to RS 1582, 41-44: *Car atresi con la flors nest de l’ante, / n’est li grans duelz de vos ki me tormante; / mais, s’en revien, sour sains le puis jurer, / ke c’iert por vos servir et honorer*.

Text

Luca Barbieri, 2015.

Mss.

(11+28). A 153a (anonymous), C 17v (*li Chaistelain de Cousi*), K 107b (*li Chastelains de Couci*), M 52d (anon.), O 4d (anon.), P 39b (*li Chastelains de Couci*), R³ 119r (anon.), T 155r (*li Chastelains*), U 19v (anon.), V 80a (anon.), X 76c (*li Chastelains de Couci*); *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy et de la Dame de Fayel* vv. 7347-7398 (2 mss.), *Roman de la Violette* vv. 4624-4631 (vv. 9-16, 4 mss.), *La Châtelaine de Vergy* vv. 295-302 (vv. 9-16, 22 mss.).

Versification and music

10 ab’ab’b’aac (MW 889,2); 6 *coblas doblas* ; the 4-line *envoi* (b’aac) is found only in U and is very probably spurious, even if confirmed by the version found in the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy* ; rhyme a: -ent , -er , -o(u)r ; rhyme b: -aigne , -ie , -oie/-aie (a licence also found in Gace Brulé RS 787 and RS 1590); rhyme c: -ais (rhyme c is fixed in all stanzas, as for example in the song RS 1314 of Conon de Béthune). The unusual use of the isolated rhyme within the stanza is compensated for by the repetition of the same rhyme in every stanza. The anonymous song *Li chastelains de Couci ama tant* (RS 358) is a *contrafactum* of our text. The author pays great attention to varying the rhymes and to avoiding redundant effects, though there is a paranomous rhyme in vv. 37 and 44 (*voie-revoie*), an equivocal rhyme in vv. 8 and 32 (*lais* , in the first case a nominative noun and the second a verb), and an identical rhyme in vv. 42 and 45, with repetition of the same formulaic expression (*en quel lieu ke je soie*). The caesurae are also generally regular: there is a feminine caesura with elision in vv. 15 and 41. Melody in AKMOPR³ TUVX, with insignificant variants; melodic scheme AA’ AA’ BCDE (T 401,1).

Previous editions


de la Borde 1780, II, 300; Crapelet 1829, 137; Michel 1830, 79; Brakelmann 1870-1891, 103; Fath 1883, 36; Paris-Langlois 1897, 287; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 99; Delbouille 1936, 238; Woledge 1961, 101; Lerond 1964, 57; Maillard 1967, 28; Mary 1967, I, 206; Cluzel 1969, 109; Schöber 1976, 205; van der Werf 1977-1979, 224; Bec 1977-1978, II, 96; Aspland 1979, 154; Collins 1982, 23; Baumgartner 1983, 236; Picot 1975, II, 6; Dijkstra 1995a, 196; Rosenberg-Tischler 1995, 384; Gaullier-Bougassas 2009, 534 (as far as romances containing quotations are concerned, references are given only to editions of the *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy*, which contains the complete text).

Analysis of the manuscript tradition

Three families seem to stand out fairly clearly (see also Schwan 1886, p. 137): the usual group AMT (s^I), in this case joined by O, a notoriously contaminated songbook, here particularly close to A (there are no common errors but only common readings); KPR³ VX (s^{II}), thanks to the irregular rhymes of v. 25 and stanza VI and to various common readings, some *facilior* (this group seems to transmit a re-written, inferior version, perhaps influenced by the legend that sprang up around the Châtelain de Coucy; see Jung 1986, pp. 8-10); and the couple CU (s^{III}; error at the rhyme in v. 10 plus other *facilior* readings). The result is a strong incidence of contamination: clearly contaminated are R³ V, O and also CU which, while at times confirming the good readings of AMOT, often separate from each other and come closer to the two alternative readings. Because of the strong level of contamination and the scarcity of common errors which stand in the way of a traditional reconstructive approach, it has been decided not to opt for a hybrid text but basically to reproduce the text of the AMT group because of the quality of its readings, often confirmed by O and also CU (vv. 6, 24, 26, 46-48), even when the tradition offers three variants each supported by one of the families of Schwan (vv. 12, 20, 25, 28, 31, 45). In some cases this decision has probably led to a banal and perhaps inferior reading of s^I (vv. 15, 31 and 45). Effort has nevertheless been made to avoid including in the text the reading from one single family when this is unanimously opposed to the testimony of the other groups (vv. 8, 19/22, 21, 24, 26, 30). The graphy is that of ms. T (U for the *envoi*), characterised by northern traits which must also be those of the author's *scripta*. The attribution can be considered essentially unanimous, since even in A, M, O and R³ the text is integrated into the section devoted to the Châtelain de Coucy.

Historical context and dating

The trouvère is almost certainly to be identified with Guy IV, Castellan of Coucy (départ. Aisne, arr. Laon), who was born before his father's death in 1167 and died at sea in 1203 during the Fourth Crusade. Often confused with the titular lord and owner of the fief, the castellan is actually the official responsible for the custody and defence of a castle, usually in charge of a garrison (Barthélémy 1984, p. 148). Guy IV appears with the title of Castellan of Coucy in some documents dated between 1186 and 1202, the year the Fourth Crusade set out, and he is also titled Viscount of Soissons and Lord of Namcel (Melleville 1855, p. 254). The fact that the documents only define him as castellan from 1186 onwards suggests that he was born not much before his father's death, perhaps around 1165; he must have still been relatively young at the time of the Fourth Crusade. Guy IV took part in both Third and Fourth Crusades and died at sea in June 1203 during the crossing of the Aegean sea, as Villehardouin, § 124, confirms. Villehardouin also states that he was among those who opposed the deviation to Constantinople but nevertheless remained with the crusaders (§§ 113-117). Guy was married to a certain Marguerite (d'Epagny, according to Melleville 1855, p. 256) but remained childless; for this reason the post of castellan of Coucy was inherited by Mauduite, his father's only living sister, who passed it on to her son Renaud de Magny, previously destined for the clerical life, who is referred to as



castellan in documents written between 1207 and 1218. The Châtelain de Coucy is the protagonist of a late-13th-c. romance vaguely inspired by his life, but certainly justified by the success of his lyrics, which it frequently quotes. The *Roman du Châtelain de Coucy et de la Dame de Fayel* identifies the trouvère as Renaud de Magny, who however never took part in a crusade and would have had to have done so before acceding to the title of castellan. In addition, the author of the romance situates the action within the context of the Third Crusade, producing a distortion of history which makes all other dates unreliable. The song is addressed to lovers awaiting the imminent departure on crusade (even if this is never mentioned explicitly) and treats the painful necessity of separation from the beloved and the predicament of having to give precedence to God's rather than the lady's service. If such autobiographical indications are to be taken seriously, the text must have been composed shortly before departure on one of the two expeditions in which the Châtelain took part, so in the early months of 1190 or of 1202.