



**[amis] Douce dame, cui j'ain en bone foi**

**(RS 1659)**

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## Anonymous

I

**[amis]** Douce dame, cui j'ain en bone foi  
de loiaul cuer, sens jamaix arier traire,  
4 mercit, dame, a mains jointes vos proi,  
se seus croixiés, ne vos doie desplaire!  
Desoremaix ai talent de bien faire:  
aleir m'en veul a glorious tornoi  
8 outre la meir, ou la gent sont sens foi,  
ke Jhesu Crist firent tant de mal traire.

II

**[dame]** Biauls dous amis, certes se poise moi.  
Ains maix mes cuers ne fut si a mesaixe:  
c'outre la meir vos en irois sens moi!  
12 J'amaixe muels tous jors vestir la haire  
maix, pues k'il veult a Deu et a vos plaire,  
je ne veul pais k'il remaigne por moi.  
A mains jointes a la meire Deu proi  
16 ke vos ramoinst et vos laist grant bien faire!

III

**[amis]** Molt me mervoil se del sen ne mervoi,  
quant je dirai: 'A Deu jusc'a repaire!'  
a ma dame, ke tant ait fait por moi  
20 ke lou dime n'en sauroie retraire.  
Maix nuls ne puet trop por Damedeu faire:  
quant me membre ke il morit por moi,  
tant ai en lui de pitiet et de foi,  
24 riens ke je laisse ne me poroit mal faire.

I

Sweet lady, whom I love faithfully with a loyal and  
ever-constant heart, I beseech you, lady, with  
joined hands I beseech you, let it not displease you  
if I have taken the cross! Henceforth I have the  
desire to do what is good: I wish to go away to the  
glorious tourney overseas, where live the faithless  
people who brought Jesus Christ so much suffering.

II

Fair sweet friend, certainly this grieves me. Never  
was my heart so downcast: you will go overseas  
without me! I would rather wear a hairshirt for all  
my days but, since this pleases God and you, I do  
not wish it not to happen on my account. With  
hands joined I beseech the Mother of God to bring  
you back home and let you perform great deeds!

III

I shall be amazed if I do not to go out of my mind  
when I say 'Adieu, until my return!' to my lady, who  
has done so much for me that I could not recount  
the tenth of it. But no-one can do too much for the  
Lord God: when I remember that He died for me, I  
have so much compassion and faith in Him that  
nothing I leave behind could hurt me.

## Notes

Bec 1977-78 (I, p. 157) includes this text among 'chansons de départie féminine', whereas Dijkstra 1995 (pp. 58-59), prefers to list it among the 'chansons d'appel à la croisade', on the grounds that the separation of the lovers seems merely a pretext to illustrate the preeminence of God's service over the service of Love. It does in fact highlight numerous propaganda themes and motifs.

What makes the song unique in the panorama of the 'crusade' corpus is its dialogue component in the first two stanzas which represents dramatically the two voices of the *chansons de départie*: the feelings of the crusader about to depart, expressed in a courtly register ( *Douce dame, loiaul cuer, mercit*) and with feudal images ( *bone foi, a mains jointes, glorious tornoi*), and the lament of the lady grieving over her abandonment which corresponds to the style of a *chanson de femme*, beginning with the address *Biaux dous amis*. The third stanza closes, in the first person, with the declaration of the primacy of divine service in Outremer. On the question of female reactions to crusading, see among others Lecoy de la Marche 1890, 20 and Throop 1975, 156 ff.

- 3 *a mains jointes*: the phrase used here in its feudal sense – the *immixtio manuum* as part of homage to the lord – is taken up again in v. 15 in the sense of an act of Marian devotion, of which there are many examples, from the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* to the *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages* (see Koenig 1955-1970 and Paris-Robert 1876-1893).
- 6 *glorious tornoi*: the image of the tourney in the Holy Land is also found in *Chevalier, mult estes guariz*, RS 1548a, vv. 49-50: 'Deus ad un turnei pris / Entre enfern e pareïs'.
- 10 *mesaixe*: the rhyme requires *mesaire*, which gives no sense. Bédier suggests the hypothetical emendation contraire: 'mais il faudrait refaire l'hémistiche', p. 291.
- 11 *c'outre la mer*: Bédier prints *contre* to indicate a relationship of opposition if not hostility: 'vers la mer'; however in a note he proposes the correction *c'outre la mer*.
- 12 *haire*: see the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française* (<http://atilf.atilf.fr/academie9.htm>): 'n. f. Xe siècle. Issu du francique \*harja, "vêtement grossier fait de poil". Chemise rugueuse faite de crin ou de poil de chèvre, qu'on portait sur la peau par esprit de mortification ou par pénitence'. Compare also TLFi, s.v.
- 13 For the construction *voler* + inf. indicating the imminence of an action, see Ménard 1973, § 72. Bédier prefers to correct *veult*, the ms reading, to *peult*.
- 17 *Molt me mervoil se del sen ne mervoi*: compare v. 14 of RS 191: 'granz merveille est que je ne sui dervee'.
- 24 To avoid the epic caesura Bédier, following Hofmann, proposes correcting to *lais*. The last line could also be interpreted as praise of the lady: 'nothing that I leave behind could induce me to act badly, to behave badly', that is, not to leave.

## Text

Anna Radaelli, 2014.

## Mss.

(1). C 58r (anonymous). Empty stave.

## Versification and music

10ab'ab'b'aab' (MW 860,41 = Frank 295); 3 coblas unissonans of 8 vv; rhyme a = -oi; rhyme b = -aire; assonance 10 mesaixe: 12 haire; equivocal rhyme: foi 1: 7, 23; identical rhymes: foi 7, 23; proi 3, 15; moi 9, 11, (por) moi 14, 19, 22; traire 2, 8; faire 21: (bien) faire 5, 16 : (mal) faire 24; derivative rhymes: 2, 8 traire: 20 retraire; 13 plaie: 4 desplaie; lyric caesura in vv. 1, 3, 15, 19, 20, 22; median caesura in v. 21; epic caesura in v. 24. The versification is common in the Old French tradition; there are 20 other pieces with the same metrical shape, but only the anonymous *Or ai Amours servi tout mon vivant*, also a unicum in C (RS 372 = MW 860:28), is arranged, like this one, in 3 8-line coblas unissonans, but with different rhymes. In the Occitan repertory a short anonymous text has the same metrical shape: the song *Aissi m'ave cum al enfan petit*, not listed in BdT but registered by Frank under 295:6 (and in BEdT 461.9a), stemming from an anomalous and contested tradition (see Bartsch 1858, 304; Frank 1952, 113; Gambino 2003, 145).

## Previous editions

Hofmann 1867, II, 495; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 287.

## Historical context and dating

There is virtually nothing to indicate either the date or the place of composition.