



## **En chantant vueil mon duel faire**

**(RS 164)**

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## Philippe de Nanteuil (?)

I

En chantant vueil mon duel faire  
pour ma douleur conforter  
du preu conte debonnaire,  
4 qui seult los et pris porter,  
de Montfort, qui en Surie  
ert venus pour guerrier,  
dont France est moult mal baillie;  
8 mais la guerre est tost faillie,  
car de son assaut premier  
nel laissa Diex repairier.

II

Ha! France, douce contree  
12 que touz seulent honorer,  
vostre joie est atornee  
du tout en tout au pluerer.  
Touz jourz mais serez plus mue,  
16 trop vous est mesavenue!  
Tel dolours est avenue  
qu'a la premiere venue  
avez vos contes perdus.

III

20 Ha! cuens de Bar, quel souffraite  
de vous li François avront!  
Quant il s'avront la nouvelle  
de vous, grant duel en feront,  
24 quant France est desheritee  
de si vaillant chevalier.  
Maudite soit la jornee  
dont tant hardi soudoier  
28 sont esclave et prisonnier.

I

In song, to alleviate my grief, I want to make my  
lament over the good and valiant Count of  
Montfort, who used to receive praise and honour,  
and who came to Syria to wage war, through which  
France came to a dreadful pass; but the war is  
suddenly over, for God has not allowed it to be  
renewed after its first assault.

II

Ah, France, sweet country customarily honoured by  
all, your joy has been utterly and completely  
transformed to weeping. You will be grieving for  
ever more, such is the misfortune you have  
suffered! The tragedy is that as soon as you arrived  
you lost your counts.

III

Ah, Count of Bar, how the French will miss you!  
When they hear the news about you they will make  
a huge lament, when France is deprived of such a  
valiant knight. A curse on the day when such brave  
soldiers are slaves and prisoners!

## IV

Se l'Ospitaus et li Temples  
 et li frere chevalier  
 eüssent donné exemple  
 32 a noz genz de chevauchier,  
 nostre granz chevalerie  
 ne fust or pas en prison,  
 ne li Sarrazin en vie;  
 36 mais ainsi nel firent mie,  
 dont ce fu granz mesprisons  
 et samblanz de traïzon.

## V

Chançons, qui füs compensee  
 40 de dolour et de pitié,  
 va a Pitié, si li prie  
 pour Dieu et pour amistié  
 qu'aille en l'ost, et si leur die  
 44 et si leur face a savoir  
 qu'il ne se recroient mie,  
 mais metent force et aïe  
 qu'il puissent noz genz ravoir,  
 48 par bataille ou par avoir.

## IV

If the Hospitallers and the Templars and the brother (Teutonic) knights had given the example to our people to ride in pursuit, our great cavalry would not now be in prison, or the Saracens alive; but this they did not do, and it was a great mistake and virtually treasonable.

## V

Song, composed in equal measure of grief and compassion, go to Pity and beg her in the name of God and friendship to go among the troops, and speak to them to urge them not to give up, but to gather their strength and mutual aid so that they can recover our people, either through battle or through money.

## Notes

The typology of the songs RS 164 and RS 1133 and their placing within such a richly detailed chronicle as William of Tyre's *Continuation Rothelin* mean that these texts are valuable and original documents for our understanding of the genre of Old French crusading songs. The chronicle uses them to underpin the events of the narrative, bringing out their historical and political, rather than their (rather indifferent) aesthetic or literary, character. The unusual function of these lines, which are as it were political pamphlets of one of the sides involved, perfectly introduced into the historical context, is repeated in song RS 1887 – though this one has much greater rhetorical and artistic depth – which is introduced into the debate arising later from Louis IX's request for advice over whether he should remain in the Holy Land after the failure of the seventh crusade. The rough-and-ready versification and rhetoric of these two songs may be due to their essentially documentary nature, whether they are the result, as Bédier (Bédier-Aubry 1909, p. 225 n. 41) seems to suggest, of reconstruction through memory by the chronicle's compiler, or whether the text as it is preserved reflects the precarious conditions in which the authors must have found themselves and in which the transmission in any case took place. It is also possible that some allusions to later developments of the episode, closer to the actual events, were woven into the original text during later stages of transmission.

The attribution to Philippe de Nanteuil is attested by the introductory rubric present in all manuscripts of the chronicle. Philippe II, lord of Nanteuil-le-Haudouin, now in the département of the Oise in Picardy, was a companion of Thibaut de Champagne, to whom he dedicated numerous songs and with whom he exchanged a *jeu-parti* and two *débats*. He arrived with him in the Holy Land and figures in the list of the barons taken prisoner and taken to Cairo after the Gaza ambush ( *Continuation Rothelin*, p. 546). Once back in France after the liberation, he was to take the Cross again and accompany King Louis IX of France on his first expedition to Egypt (his name is mentioned twice by Joinville, *Vie de saint Louis*, §§ 138 e 173). Historians studying the Nanteuil family date his death to 1258. No philological element casts doubt on this attribution; however stanza IV refers to the animated discussion arising among the crusaders over whether to pursue the enemy, an event of which the prisoners could hardly have been aware, even if we disregard the fact that the references to the captured barons are always expressed in the third person (vv. 19, 28, 33 and 47). These details notably weaken the attribution to Philippe. It may have been induced by the trouvère's fame, and it would seem more prudent to assign the song to one of the French crusaders who escaped capture, a baron or a young knight, if not the actual author of the chronicle. For a possible attribution to the count of Brittany see the commentary to song RS 1133.

- 3-5 Count Amalric VI of Montfort, son of Simon de Montfort and protagonist of the Albigensian crusade who died in 1218 during the siege of Toulouse, was one of the prisoners taken to Egypt after the Gaza ambush, as is clear from all the relevant sources. He was freed together with the other hostages on 23 April 1241 following the negotiations concluded by Richard of Cornwall. After embarking for France along with the other French prisoners he died in Otranto on the return journey, probably debilitated by his long imprisonment and the exhausting journey.
- 11 The emphasis on a national 'identity' of the crusaders is made explicit for the first time in this song and is widely developed in songs composed at the time of St Louis' crusade. This, together with the personal interests and ambitions of individual barons, is probably one reason for the disintegration of the original idea of crusade.

- 20 Count Henry of Bar-le-Duc was a friend and companion of Thibaut de Champagne and sided with him at the time of the conflict over the Champagne succession (1216-1221), forming with him and other companions a league of barons rebelling against the French crown (1226-1227, see the introduction to RS 273). Thibaut's unexpected change of position in subsequently seeking closer alliance with the regent Bianca of Castile provoked a reaction among his former companions who joined forces to besiege the city of Troyes, one of the comital seats of Champagne. However this did not prevent the Count of Bar and the other barons from participating in the 1239 crusade alongside Thibaut, or recognising him as the designated leader of the expedition. Henry of Bar is indicated by the *Continuation Rothelin* as the man chiefly responsible for the defeat at Gaza, because of his obstinacy which was deaf to all counsel of caution and all realistic evaluation of the situation. The death of the Count of Bar on the battlefield or immediately afterwards is attested by all the sources other than the *Continuation Rothelin*, which explicitly declares it does not know whether Henry of Bar was killed or taken prisoner (p. 546, with a curious addition on p. 555). The *Continuation* may possibly have based itself on the text of our song which, by omitting any precise reference to the fate of the Count of Bar and Amalric of Montfort (who was certainly captured and taken to Cairo), treats them symmetrically. The chronicle of Alberic of Three Fountains mentions the Count of Bar being captured but fatally wounded (p. 946). The uncertainty nevertheless seems resolved by v. 8 of the song RS 1133 which explicitly refers to the death of Henry of Bar.
- 29-38 This stanza contributes to the depiction of internal divisions of the Christian front attested in contemporary chronicles and highlighted by historians. Immediately after this episode Thibaut had great difficulty in maintaining his authority and found himself having to mediate between the positions of the two main factions that emerged among the Christian knights. The political-military stalemate and wait-and-see tactics imposed by the complex situation of the Muslim world increased the impatience of crusaders newly arrived from France, who were eager for action and instant glory and had little inclination for long and costly inactivity. They were opposed by the alliance of the Franks of the Holy Land and the military orders: subtle connoisseurs of the pitfalls of the region and of the enemy's ways, these favoured caution and the search for allies among one or other enemy faction. The defeat at Gaza further complicated the Christians' plans and provoked a fresh split over how to proceed (see "Historical context and dating", above). The song's author seems to espouse the position of the French crusaders, accusing the military orders openly of 'betrayal' for having advised against pursuit when they ought to have been the first to set an example.
- 47-48 The final line seems to some extent to anticipate the actual outcome of the long negotiations concluded by Richard of Cornwall which would lead to the freeing of the hostages.

## Text

Luca Barbieri, 2014

## Mss.

(5). Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, W.142 (B), 310ab; Paris, BnF, fr. 9083 (P1), 316ab; Paris, BnF, fr. 22495 (P2), 283r; Paris, BnF, fr. 24209 (P3), 320ab; Turin, Biblioteca nazionale universitaria, L.I.5 (T), 490c-491a.

## Versification and music

7a'ba'bc'dc'c'dd (MW 1262,1); 5 *coblas singulares* ; a = -aire , -ee , -aite / -elle , -emple(s) , -ee / -ie ; b = -er , -er , -ont , -ier , -ié ; c = -ie , -ue , -ee , -ie , -ie ; d = -ier , -us / -ue , -ier , -on(s) , -oir . Respect for



metrical norms is far from uniform: despite the *coblas singulares* structure many identical rhyme-words are repeated in several stanzas, and other more major irregularities include the following: the 'a' rhyme of st. III alternates between two forms ( *-eite /-elle* ), and two forms in stanza V ( *-ee /-ie* ), while the 'd' rhyme in st. II even presents a f. form *-ue* identical to the 'c' rhyme. In the whole ms. tradition two lines are missing (one line of the 'd' rhyme in st. II and one line in st. II has the 'c' rhyme of st. II and one has the 'c' rhyme of st. III), without there being any perceptible interruption in the sense; given the impossibility of establishing their exact position or cause, such gaps are not indicated in the text. No ms. has preserved the tune.

## Previous editions

*Histoire littéraire de la France* , XXIII, 675; *Continuation Rothelin* , 548; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 217; Dufournet 1989, 188; Guida 1992, 115; Dijkstra 1995a, 209.

## Analysis of the manuscript tradition

Of the twelve complete manuscript witnesses of the so-called *Continuation Rothelin* of the chronicle of William of Tyre, only five include the text of the two songs mentioned by the author. These mss., all dating from the second or third quarter of the 14th c. except Turin ms. dating from the 15th c., constitute a compact group recognised by all scholars who have worked on this text. The archetype of the songs is clearly corrupt: some lines are missing, there are irregularities in the rhyme-scheme, and some readings appear extremely banal. Ms. base B.

## Historical context and dating

The song refers to an episode of the barons' crusade led by Count Thibaut of Champagne, King of Navarre. After arriving in the Holy Land at the beginning of September 1239 crusaders assembled in Acre, but the fluid situation of the enemy and tensions between the sultanates of Syria and Egypt suggested it would be better to delay action and await favourable developments. Some barons decided to act independently and during the course of one such undertaking, on 13 November, they were ambushed and encircled near Gaza: some nobles were slain, others imprisoned and taken off to Cairo. The surviving French crusaders wanted to pursue the enemy and try to free the prisoners, but the Templars and Hospitallers disagreed and convinced Thibaut that there was too great a risk of the hostages being killed in reprisal. To free the prisoners the French undertook a long and complex series of negotiations and alliances which involved all Christian parties, Syria and Egypt. The negotiations were slow to bear fruit and Thibaut, discouraged and annoyed by the continual internal tensions among the Christians, carried out a swift pilgrimage to Jerusalem and departed for France during September 1240, before being able to establish the hoped-for truce. The negotiations were brought to a conclusion by Richard of Cornwall, who had arrived in the Holy Land after Thibaut's departure, and the prisoners were freed on 23 April 1241. The numerous specific references contained in the song indicate that it was composed after the disaster of Gaza and before the prisoners' release, hence between 13 November 1239 and 23 April 1241; but it is highly probable that it preceded the departure of Thibaut and part of the contingent of French crusaders which had arrived towards the middle of September 1240. The tone of the first stanzas, typical of the *planctus*, and the absence of any reference to the long negotiations undertaken to free the prisoners (except perhaps in the final line, which is very general) seem to suggest that the song must have been composed not long after the ambush of 13 November 1239.