



## **Au temps plain de felonnie**

**(RS 1152)**

Author:	<b>Thibaut de Champagne</b>
Version:	<b>English</b>
Principal Investigator:	<b>Linda Paterson</b>
Text Editor:	<b>Luca Barbieri</b>
English Translation:	<b>Linda Paterson</b>
Reviewer:	<b>Luca Barbieri</b>
Text Encoding:	<b>Steve Ranford/Mike Paterson</b>

**Published by: French Department, University of Warwick, 2014**

**Digital Edition:**

**<https://warwick.ac.uk/crusadelyrics/texts/of/1152>**

## Thibaut de Champagne

I

Au temps plain de felonnie,  
d'envie et de traïson,  
de tort et de mesproïson,  
4 sanz bien et sanz courtoisie,  
et que entre maint baron  
veons le siecle empirier,  
et voi esconmunniier  
8 ceus qui plus offrent raison,  
lors vuel faire une chançon.

II

Li royaumez de Surie  
nous dist et crie a haut ton,  
12 se nouz ne nouz amendon,  
pour Dieu que n'i alons mie:  
n'i feriemes se mal non.  
Diex aime cuer droiturier:  
16 se tel gent se veult aidier,  
cil essauceront Son non  
et conquerront Sa maison.

III

Encor vaut miex toute voie  
20 demourer en son païs  
qu'aler povrez ne chaitis  
ou il n'a soulas ne joie. –  
Philippe, on doit paradis  
24 conquerre par mal avoir,  
car là ne troverés voir  
bon estre ne jeu ne ris,  
ensi que avés appris.

I

In this time full of treachery, envy and betrayal, of injustice and error, deprived of goodness and courtliness, when amongst many barons we see the decline of the world, and I see excommunicated those who would make the best contribution, then I wish to compose a song.

II

The kingdom of Syria tells us and cries aloud that if we do not amend our lives, it is better for God if we not go there: we shall do nothing but harm. God loves an upright heart: if people like this wish to lend their support, they will exalt His name and win back His dwelling-place.

III

– All the same it would be better to remain in one's own country than to go poor and sad to where there is no pleasure or joy. – Philip, paradise must be won through suffering, for you will certainly not find good living there, or play or laughter, which you are used to.

IV

<sup>28</sup> Amours a courut sa proie  
et si m'en mainne tous pris  
en l'ostel, ce m'est avis,  
dont ja issir ne querroie,  
<sup>32</sup> s'il estoit a mon devis.  
Dame, cui Biautez fait oir,  
je vous fac bien assavoir:  
ja de prison n'istrai vis,  
<sup>36</sup> ains mourrai loiaus amis.

V

Dame, moi couvient remaindre,  
de vous ne me puis partir;  
de vous amer et servir  
<sup>40</sup> ne me soi onques refraindre,  
si me vient bien pour mourir  
l'amours qui m'assaut souvent;  
adés vo merci atent,  
<sup>44</sup> car biens ne me puet venir  
se n'est par vostre plaisir.

VI

Chançon, va dire Lorent  
qu'il se gart outreement  
<sup>48</sup> de grant folie envahir,  
qu'en li avroit faus mantir.

IV

Love has worn out his prey and leads me captive to the lodgings where, it seems to me, I shall never wish to leave, even if it were within my power to do so. Lady, whom Beauty makes its heir, I tell you clearly: I shall never leave your prison alive, but shall die a loyal lover.

V

Lady, I shall have to stay behind, I cannot leave you; I have never been able to refrain from loving and serving you, so the love which continually assails me will surely make me die; I constantly await your mercy, for nothing good can come to me unless it is by your pleasure.

VI

Song, go and tell Lorent that he should be exceedingly careful not to undertake a great folly, for he would have to lie falsely.

## Notes

- 1-3 Guida 1992, p. 330 and Sanchez Palomino 2005, p. 188 emphasise the way in which the initial figure of *accumulatio* serves to express the author's state of mind. Compare stanza II of the song RS 273.
- 5-6 The decline-of-the-world theme is one of the commonest *topoi* of medieval literature, present in innumerable Latin and vernacular works, above all in an introductory position. It is repeated several times in Thibaut de Champagne's songs, for example in stanza I of the religious song RS 1843, 1-9. The responsibility of the barons for the decline of the world, well expressed by the preposition *entre*, is confirmed in RS 273, 23-24; *maint baron* is a collective singular as in RS 757, 6.
- 7-8 Concerning Frederick II's excommunication in March 1239, two recent studies of the so-called "barons' crusade" examine the subject of the difficult relations between Gregory IX and Frederick, and the Pope's resultant changeable and inconsistent approach to the question of the crusade. Lower 2005 particularly emphasises the Pope's wish to divert the crusade to Constantinople, whereas Chrissis 2010 limits the extent of this attempt. According to Chrissis, Gregory introduced the two projects in parallel and never attempted to use force and threats to persuade the crusading barons to change their objective, even during the aftermath of the excommunication imposed on Frederick in 1239, although this does nothing to mitigate the poisonous atmosphere of the struggle between Pope and Emperor. But in this song the author undeniably shows that he feels invested with a certain civil and moral authority, and the historical documents, corroborated by the crusade songs, seem to attest a drive and motivation in the convictions and intentions of the crusaders stronger than the Pope's hesitations and strategems. This pressure "from below", often emphasised in the history of the crusades, yet rather surprising in such a late expedition, shows that the religious aspect of the pilgrimage never diminished, and that while it became progressively more attended by more political and opportunistic motives, these never completely replaced them. Despite the assertions of the continuator of the chronicle of William of Tyre (*Continuation Rothelin*, 528), according to which the French barons considered the Emperor to be a collaborator of the Moslem enemy, and therefore would have set out without him, the official documents speak of a much more diplomatic relationship between the Emperor and the crusaders. Frederick, caught up in his political interests and the conflict with the Pope which made him reluctant to waste time on a new crusade, seems to have offered the crusaders all the help he could, leaving them to believe until the last minute that he really did wish to head the expedition; for their part the crusaders postponed departure several times until the end of the Emperor's involvement, and the latter's letter of 9 March 1239 seems to support the idea of his participation; but only a few days later, the papal interdict precipitated matters by making this impossible, and further delay pointless. According to Godefroy 6, 568a, who supplies no examples, the expression *offrir raison* means "to give satisfaction". From the context and the example in the *Mort Artu* (Hult) 17, 14 I would interpret it in the sense of "to give guarantees", "to commit to making one's own contribution", including armed support.
- 10 *Surie* or *regne de Surie* are the names commonly used for the Holy land, from a designation established in the Middle Ages which included, apart from present-day Syria, Palestine and a good area of the western Middle East up to the boundary with Egypt. This remains standard designation even if the political rulers of Palestine during nearly all the crusade period were the Fatimid and then Ayyubid sultans of Egypt.
- 12 Thibaut's appeal is not for a general and practical *conversio morum*, but for a genuine *conversio cordis*. It is not just a question of renouncing comfort and riches in the service of God: the failures of preceding expeditions invoked the question of what caused such defeats, the cause generally being ascribed to the Christians' sins (see for example Siberry 1988, p. 43 and Guida 1992, p. 17). Note again the parallel with the song RS 6, 33-35.

- 18 The line is omitted by R and supplied thanks to the unanimous testimony of the rest of the tradition. According to Micha 1991, p. 136 n. 3 the *maison* strictly speaking indicates the Holy Sepulchre rather than the whole of the Holy Land.
- 20 The presence of the verb *demourer*, together with that of the noun *mal* in v. 24, clearly refers back to vv. 29-32 of RS 6. Since *demourer* always has a negative connotation in crusade songs and Thibaut's texts in particular, it seems reasonable to adopt such an interpretation here.
- 22 The insistence on *joie* as characteristic of the presence of the beloved lady, and hence its impossibility in the case of departure on crusade, is a frequent theme in crusade songs and especially in Thibaut de Champagne (RS 1469; RS 757, 18; RS 273, 49). Guida interprets *soulas* in the sense of *consolatio*, but in view of the context it seems closer to that of the nouns in v. 26.
- 23 Philippe: most probably Philippe de Nanteuil-le-Haoudouin, Thibaut's fellow-trouvère at the time when Thibaut was composing love lyrics (he was his partner in the *jeux-partis/débats* RS 334, RS 333 and RS 1111 and addressee of songs RS 884, RS 1440, RS 1476 and RS 1410), and his companion in the Holy Land, where he was taken prisoner after the defeat at Gaza. He is considered to be the author of a crusade song (RS 164) perhaps composed during his imprisonment.
- 23-24 On the theme of the suffering necessary for the conquest of paradise see the parallel already indicated with the beginning of RS 6 and in particular vv. 10-11 (cfr. Dijkstra 1995, p. 120, n. 167).
- 28 From stanza IV onwards the song's tone suddenly changes: the crusade disappears, or remains in the background, and in its place emerges the love theme which occupies virtually all of the remaining two stanzas, following the pattern inaugurated by Conon de Béthune's song RS 1125, but with a singular inversion of the two parts with respect to the common model of the *chansons de départie*, where the part reserved for the separation of lovers usually falls at the beginning. On the somewhat rigid juxtaposition of the two main themes of the song and the possibility of anchoring it in a tradition that stems from Occitan lyric and Jaufre Rudel in particular see Bédier-Aubry 1909, p. 180. For transitive *corir* as synonymous with "to hunt" see *TL* 2, 867, 1-3; but the expression may also be interpreted by analogy with the formula *corir un cheval*, which means "to make a horse gallop at top speed". The metaphor of Love as huntsman is frequent in trouvère lyrics and probably stems from Ovid (see for example the emphasis on *praeda* in *Amores* I, 2, 17-20 e 29-32). Cfr. Ménard 1987, pp. 73-74.
- 35 *prison*: the image of love's prison emerges from a long medieval Latin and romance tradition (Guida 1992, p. 330) and is frequent in the OF lyric, being particularly favoured by Thibaut. These lines, linked to the previous vv. 29-31, express the contradiction typical of the courtly love relationship by which the lover does not wish to leave the prison in which he finds himself. The prison of love expresses the unbreakable bond established between poet and lady, based exclusively on desire in the absence of any reward. According to a recurring image, the poet prefers to die remaining faithful to his beloved lady rather than obtain easy satisfaction from any other woman (Brahney 1989, p. xix; Micha 1991, p. 9; Grossel 1994, pp. 442-443).
- 37 The apparent inconsistency between the reference to the impossibility of parting from the beloved within a context of departure on crusade is to be interpreted in the light of Chardon de Croisilles RS 499, 5-8.
- 39 The verb *servir*, which recurs particularly often in Thibaut de Champagne (Micha 1991, p. 8), is nearly always used in the crusade songs to designate service of God, with the exception of RS 1636, 26 and in part, RS 1582, 44.



- 41-42 It is possible that the reading of these lines was already corrupt or problematic at the level of the archetype. The interpretation of the sense is in any case not in doubt, since it is set in the highly stereotyped context of dying for love, amply attested in OF lyrics.
- 46-49 The ambiguity of these lines, frequently stressed by editors, is probably due to the fact that they refer to a precise context and situation that is nowadays impossible to reconstruct. For a summary of the hypotheses concerning the interpretation of this envoi see Melani 1999, pp. 143-145. According to this scholar (p. 143) the final two lines constitute an admonishment not to become involved in an irrational love, or else not to take too lightly one's crusading vows, or not to commit – in view of the expedition – some grave error of a political nature.
- 46 *Lorent*: an unidentified addressee, also found in Thibaut's song RS 1440; it may be the same person evoked in an envoi of Gace Brulé (RS 565, 51).

## Text

Luca Barbieri, 2014.

## Mss.

(7). K 25b-26b (li rois de Navarre), Mt 74d-75a (anon.), O 2bc (anon.), R<sup>3</sup> 182v-183v (anon.), T 12rv (li rois de Navarre), V 13c-14a (anon.), X 24c-25a (li rois de Navarre).

## Versification and music

7a'bba'bccbb (MW 1391,1; corrected on the basis of the new choice of base; *coblas doblas* (2+2+1) with a 4-line *envoi* (ccbb); rhymes a = -ie , -oie , -aindre ; b = -on , -is , -ir ; c = -ier , -oir , -ent ; equivocal rhyme *non* in vv. 14 and 17; melody in KM<sup>t</sup> OR<sup>3</sup> VX, with very few variants except in the case of R<sup>3</sup>, whose reading is more individual (van der Werf 1979, II, p. 146; Tischler 1997, V n° 443).

## Previous editions

La Ravallière 1742, ii 134; Auguis 1824, ii 6; Leroux de Lincy 1841, i 128; Tarbé 1850, 112; Bédier-Aubry 1909, 175; Wallensköld 1925, 189; Brahney 1989, 234; Guida 1992, 110; Dijkstra 1995a, 205; Sánchez Palomino 2005, 184.

## Analysis of the manuscript tradition

The variants suggest a two-branched stemma with R isolated on one side and the other manuscripts united on the other by errors which must have already been present in the archetype of Thibaut de Champagne's *Liederbuch*. Within this second branch a few readings indicate the division O-KVX, and while there are no common errors in M<sup>t</sup>T, they can still be grouped together on the strength of their usual clear affinity in Thibaut's *Liederbuch* tradition. The metrical oscillations in the 6th and 7th lines of each stanza also appear to confirm this stemma. The text is published here for the first time on base R (supplemented by M<sup>t</sup> in v. 18 and the *envoi*), at the cost of accepting a few of its poorer variants, the aim being to avoid blind subservience to the *Liederbuch*'s readings which, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, point to a late and overly homogenising collection (see Barbieri 1999 and Barbieri 2011). In fact ms. R offers an exemplary reading from the metrical point of view in all the heptasyllabic lines, without apparently resorting to strained morpho-syntactic constructions. As regards the attribution, what has been said with respect to M<sup>t</sup> and V in the song RS 6 also applies here; in ms. O it is the fourth song to begin with the letter A, the last of the texts attributable to Thibaut de Champagne, and is

followed by the Gace Brulé group; in ms. R it is the penultimate song of the collection, included in a section of twenty texts all attributable to Thibaut, despite some disagreements. The attribution can therefore be considered unanimous.

## Historical context and dating

Bédier's long chronological note, while containing some inaccuracies, remains a solid starting-point for dating. Understood literally, vv. 7-8 refer to Pope Gregory IX's excommunication of the emperor, Frederick II, who was refusing to take on the leadership of a crusade before the end of the ten-year truce he had concluded in 1229 with Saladin's nephew, the sultan of Egypt al-Malik al-Kāmil. In this case the song must have been composed after 20 March 1239, the date of the excommunication by which the Pope freed Frederick's subjects from their duty of fidelity, or alternatively after 7 April of the same year, when the sentence was announced to the whole of Christendom. The typical debate over whether to depart from the beloved lady contained in the second part of the song, stanza V in particular, would seem to suggest that such a separation had not yet taken place. This would allow us to fix the *terminus ante quem* to the first days of August 1239, when the crusaders left the port of Marseille, or perhaps, as Wallensköld suggests, 24 June of the same year, when Thibaut probably left Champagne for Lyon where the crusaders were assembling to await departure and were still hoping for Frederick's involvement.

But the verb *esconmunier* may be interpreted more broadly, and might then refer to the threats made by the Pope in a letter of 18 February 1236 against Thibaut and more than forty other French barons that he would reduce the prerogatives of their ecclesiastical courts (threats which carried little conviction, given that in June of that year Gregory intervened in favour of the crusader Thibaut, defending him from an attack by King Louis IX). One might also take into account the opposition to the Pope on the part of some barons, including Thibaut, in their refusal to direct the crusade to Constantinople in support of the Latin empire, rather than to the Holy Land. This hypothesis would move the *terminus post quem* back to 16 December 1235, date of the first papal letter to the barons of France which was announcing the new objective, but is weakened by the recent tendency of historians to reinterpret and reduce the scope of the new papal initiative (Chrissis 2010).

The impression gained from reading the text is that of an appeal from a man who already feels invested with a certain authority – officially recognised or due to his social position – over the other crusaders, and that in exhorting his companions to action he is also intending to seek precise guarantees from them, being aware that conflicts, divisions, acts of insubordination and individual interests can only damage the outcome of the expedition and personal prestige (on this see Melani 1999, p. 144).