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The Vlachs and the troubadour. Brief analysis of three poems by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras

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The Vlachs, mistranslated as *Walachians* in Linskill's edition,³ are the natural allies of the Greeks, together with the Cumans, the Russians, the Turks, the "Pagans", and the Persians. In the next stanza one will find Babylon and Cairo as references to the targets of the crusader vengeance, so that both the Vlachs and their allies prove to live in a mythical land, even though their appearance in the poem is due to the immediate menace they posed to the armies of the Fourth Crusade. Găzdaru dated the poem in the summer of 1204⁴ and believed that "the Wallachian army included Cuman mercenaries", linking the joint presence of the two ethnic names through the pro-Cuman orientation of the early Assens.⁵ He does not speculate however the presence of the Russians in the same fragment.

When analyzing the fragment, Linskill speaks of Walachians as "inhabitants of the Danube basin", of the Cumans as "primitive, warlike people of apparently Turkish stock who had settled in Moldavia and Macedonia", and believes that "the two peoples are frequently coupled by the chroniclers". He also considers that the mention of the *Ros* (Russians) in this context, though historically unjustified, is a poetic amplification of the list of European enemies of the Latin Empire, suggested by the geographical proximity of the Russians to the Cumans (as well as by the need of the rhyme).⁶ I will not focus on the correction of the few and subtle geographic or ethnic mistakes, for, if such matters are complicated to the philologist, they are rather obvious to the historian's eye. One should pay attention only to Linskill's hypothesis on the relation between the Vlachs and the Cumans and to his interpretation of the Russian presence in the fragment. In fact, as one will read later on, the rhyme could have not dictated the Russian presence, since the Greeks (*Grifos*, rhyming with *Ros*) have another name in Raimbaut's works (*Grezeis*). The troubadour could have envisaged a parallelism; two verses contain two lists, each list having three terms. In fact, the *Grifos* bring against the crusaders both the North and the East. From the North one sees the arrival of the Vlachian army, followed by the Cumans, and the Russians. From the East comes the army of the Turks, followed by the Pagans, and the Persians. Thus, the Vlachs are the chief Northern enemies, as known from the chronicles of the Fourth Crusade, just as the Turks, the chief enemies from the East, are known from the chronicles of the previous three crusades. I believe that the mention of the Russians is not for the sake of rhyme, but for that of symmetry.

Among the other names mentioned in Raimbaut de Vaqueiras' poems one finds Arthurian erotic themes: *Tristans* (XVII, 55) and *Yzeus* (XVII, 56); followed by classical references either to the story of Troy, or to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

³ We tend to employ different ethnic names for the Balkan Romanic population and for the future inhabitants of Walachia. Since Joseph Linskill was a philologist and not a historian, such distinctions might have been unknown to him.

⁴ Cf. J. Linskill, *The Poems of the Troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras*, La Haye, Mouton, 1964, p. 225, who dates it June-July 1204.

⁵ D. Găzdaru, art.cit., pp. (22-23) 106-107.

⁶ J. Linskill, ed.cit., pp. 231-232.

Troia (XVIII, 74, 135) or *Pyramus & Tisbe* (X, 12). Such names are the immediate consequence of the courtly love rhetoric and they cannot be linked to the appearance of the Vlachs. However, various other ethnic names can link to them, among which one should count: *Breto* (II, 47); *Genoes* (III, 14; IV, 17); *Grezeis* (XXII, 55) or *Grifo(s)* (XX, 38; *Epic Letter* II, 31); *Guasco* (*Epic Letter* II, 49); *Mauris* (XIX, 64); *Paian* (XX, 37); and *Turc(s)* (XIX, 28, 42; XX, 37, 52, 61; XXII, 82, 88). The mentioning of Bretons and Gascons belongs to a catalogue of allies, fighting together for the conquest of Constantinople.⁷ That of the Greeks, the Turks, the Pagans, and the Moors, supplemented by the Russians, the Vlachs, and the Cumans in the first poem I have mentioned, refers to a general enemy, neither Muslim nor Pagan, but Oriental altogether. However, all these data are vague. These enemies appear in many literary texts of Western Europe and the fact that the Vlachs are listed among them proves only the crusaders' hostility towards them.

The second citation discussed here belongs to another poem and is much more interesting, since it mentions only the Vlachs and their local allies, in a limited context, in the text of a poem written during the summer of 1205:⁸

*Pero no-m comanda valors,
si be-m sui iratz ni enics,
q'ieu don gaug a mos enemics
tan q'en perda pretz ni lauzors,
q'ancar puosc dan e pro tener,
e sai d'irat joios parer
sai entre-ls Latins e-ls Grezeis;
e-l marques, aue espaza-m seis,
gerreia Blacs e Drogoiz,
et anc pois lo mons fon bastitz
nuilla gens non fetz tant d'esfortz
cum nos, cui Deus a gent estortz.⁹*

Thus, one might point out that the discourse has changed in the time passed between the redaction of the two poems. The image of the Vlachs shifted from a general menace (allied with the Greeks) to a neighbouring enemy, whose hatred

⁷ The *Epic letter* lists:

E vos pensetz de far defensio e.l coms de Flandres; e Frances e Breto et Alaman, Lombart e Berguonho et Espanhol, Proensal e Guasco.

⁸ D. Găzdaru, art.cit., p. (24) 108, who thinks it is the last poem written by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras; cf. J. Linskill, ed.cit., p. 242, who dates it June-July 1205.

⁹ "Yet, though I am troubled and vexed, Valour does not command me so to gladden my enemies as to forsake glory and honour, for I can still do harm and good, and change my countenance from sad to gay, here among the Latins and the Greeks; and the Marquis, who girded me with the sword, is warring against the Wallachians and Drogo bites, and never since the world was made has any people accomplished such feats as we, whom God has graciously delivered". See ANNEXE 1 for the exact bibliographical references.

had immediate consequences not on the Crusade rhetoric, but on the country occupied by Raimbaut's master. The Vlachs are not linked with the general crusade *topoi*, but with a real historical event: the Balkan wars waged by Boniface de Montferrat. The fragment has been analyzed by Găzdaru in his article, where he clearly states that the *Drogobites* should be interpreted as Vlachs, due to the fact that they inhabited a Vlach region in the Balkans and of their alliance.¹⁰ However, the sources he used in his analysis speak of the Drogobites as of a Slavic ethnic group.¹¹ When confronting these theories with Linskill's commentary on the poem, one finds out that the editor has no idea what decision to make. He used both the sources cited and Găzdaru's interpretation, and reached no clear conclusion.¹² In fact, we should correct Găzdaru's theory and determine a Slavic origin of the *Drogoiz*, consequently shifting the false synonymical binome¹³ to a real alliance of the early XIIIth century.

Next, Găzdaru mentions a fragment of Raimbaut's *Epic Letter*, one of the most famous works of the Provençal literature, which he dates in spring 1205,¹⁴ and where he identifies the hidden presence of Johanitsa, the Assen king, as *rey*.¹⁵

*Maynt fort castel e mainta fort ciutat,
maint bel palaitz ai ab vos azeguat,
emperador e rey et amirat
e-l sevasto Lasquar e-l proestat
el Peitr' assis, e maint' outra postat.*¹⁶

Nonetheless, even though Găzdaru argued that while reading this fragment one should bear in mind two Crusader campaigns into Thracia: one led by Boniface of Montferrat in 1203 in order to help the young Alexios IV against his uncle, Alexios III; and the second one, in July 1204, led by the same Boniface against Baldwin of Flanders, who might have extended his dominion too much into the Kingdom of Thessalonika,¹⁷ the identification of the word *rey* as a hidden hint to

¹⁰ D. Găzdaru, art.cit., pp. (24–25) 108–109.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. (25) 109. Găzdaru cites a fragment of the *Acta Sanctorum* where he has found: *Scavorum gens, numero infinito ex Drogobitis, Sagodariis, Belegezetis, Boeonitis, Berzitis reliquisque.*

¹² J. Linskill, ed.cit., p. 250.

¹³ The “synonymical binome” is a figure of speech used mainly by French translators (and writers) in the Middle Ages; one introduced a new word in the language by glossing it with a second one, more common, either using comparisons or copulatives (similarly to the Latin hendiad). Such a practice could have been used by Raimbaut in case he would have written *Drogoiz e Blacs*. However, the word order and the rare use of this figure of speech in the Provençal literature is a supplementary proof that the troubadour did not gloss the *Drogoiz*, but used them as real enemies, allied to the Vlachs.

¹⁴ J. Linskill, ed.cit., p. 303, favors the same dating.

¹⁵ D. Găzdaru, art.cit., pp. (23–24) 107–108.

¹⁶ “Many a fortified castle and city, many a splendid palace have I razed with you, and besieged emperor, king and commander and the august Lascaris and the prostrator in the Petron, and many another mighty one”. See ANNEXE 1 for the exact bibliographical references.

¹⁷ D. Găzdaru, art.cit., p. (23) 107.

Johanitsa Assen, king of the Bulgarians and the Vlachs, is merely a speculation. Găzdaru followed Schultz-Gora, who had previously favoured the same interpretation,¹⁸ but ignored the synonymical list (*emperador – rey – amirat*) which is followed by otherwise clearly identified figures or toponyms, such as Constantine or Theodor Laskaris (*sevasto Lasquar*) and the Petrion district of Constantinople (*Peitr'assis*).¹⁹ All in all, since the Linskill edition was published after his article, Găzdaru was not aware of the problems posed by the manuscript tradition and by the various readings of the fragment, which do not easily allow further speculations. Thus, no matter what *emperador*, *rey* and *amirat* are hiding (were they hiding any hidden references at all!) no one can favour their identification with a famous leader from the time of the Fourth Crusade. Even though various other hypotheses favoured by Schultz-Gora or Crescini envisaged vague hints to Alexios V Murzuphlos or even to John Stirion (see *amirat*),²⁰ the general context of the fragment does not point towards the north of the Rodope Mountains, into the land of Johanitsa, but towards the Bosphorus and mainly around Constantinople. I therefore disagree with Găzdaru's conclusion and reject the fragment, since it does not refer to Johanitsa or to the Vlachs.²¹

*

Even though the two citations I have already analyzed and identified as references to the Balkan Vlachs do not bear much historical value, their testimony is priceless from a cultural point of view. One should know more about the context to which they belong and this brief analysis should pass perhaps to the presentation of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras' life and times. It was previously supposed that he could have been born between 1155–1160,²² and one knows only that he was a troubadour from Vaqueiras / Vaqueirad (Vaucluse), in the principality of Orange, who could have joined as a court poet in the late 1170s or the early 1180s the entourage of the marquis Boniface of Montferrat, whom he describes in his Epic Letter as *valen marques, senher de Monferrat*. Unfortunately, the exploits of the marquis mentioned there include many references to love stories, marriages, and knightly courageous adventures,²³ his Italian campaigns, and the attack and conquest of Constantinople, but no details concerning his wars with the Vlachs. Raimbaut might have also been a soldier, since he tells his readers that he protected Boniface with his shield in the battle of Messina, when the marquis took part in Emperor Henry VI's invasion of Sicily; the troubadour claimed however that he obtained his knighthood due to his songs. Moreover, he could have fallen in love

¹⁸ O. Schultz-Gora, *Le epistole de Trovatore...*, Firenze, 1898, pp. 136–137 ; *apud* D. Găzdaru, art.cit., p. (23) 107.

¹⁹ J. Linskill, ed.cit., p. 321.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ The entire text of the poem is reproduced in ANNEXE I.

²² O. Schultz-Gora, ed.cit., p. 7.

²³ See for example Boniface's rescue of Jacobina de Ventimiglia from her uncle Otto.

with Beatrice, the daughter of Boniface, whom he named *Bel Cavalher* in his poems, and during the service for the marquis he fought in the war against the communes of Asti and Alessandria (Italy) as mentioned in the *Epic Letter*. Later, after Boniface's Italian failure in 1202 and Raimbaut's return to Provence, he returned to his master in 1203 and took part in the Fourth Crusade. In 1204-1205 he accompanied Boniface to Thessaloniki after his master failed to be elected emperor, and he followed him in his expedition throughout Greece. One could presume that Raimbaut de Vaqueiras died by the side of his master Boniface on September the 4th 1207 in an ambush laid by the armies of Tsar Kaloyan.²⁴ This hypothesis is suggested by the fact that he composed no *planh* (lament) in his master's memory. Still, two other hypotheses suggest that Raimbaut could have simply lacked interest for the poetic matters after his master's death, and he could have been involved either in the Latin Empire's affairs, or he could have returned to Provence.²⁵ The data already presented cannot substantiate any hypothesis concerning his connection to the Balkan Vlachs.

Even the *vida* of the troubadour, in its common version, tells us that *Raembautz de Vaqueiras si fo fillz d'un paubre cavailler de Proensa, del castel de Vaqueiras, que avia nom Peirors...* After a brief description of the troubadour's relation to Boniface of Montferrat, one finds out that *E quant lo marques passet en Romania, el lo mena ab se e fetz lo cavalier. Et det li gran terra e gran renda el regisme de Salonic. E lai el mori.*²⁶ From the later interpolations one reads only about Raimbaut's love for the marquis' daughter following troubadour rhetoric with no detailed references,²⁷ and no historical details are given. As for the literary approach, most of Raimbaut's works were lyrical. He has been attributed 33 songs, out of which only 8 were with accompanying melodies. He used a variety of styles (*cansos*, *tensos*, *descort*, and *albas*), and *Kalenda Maia*, one of his poems, is considered to be one of the finest troubadour songs. Only one of his works, the *Epic Letter*, the one mentioning the false hint to Johanitsa, has an important historical value, since it refers to the career of Boniface de Montferrat and to the politics of the Latin Empire in its earliest years. The rest of his works provide bits and pieces of a large puzzle one cannot assemble properly.

In the end, no one can easily put into words which was Raimbaut's true relation to the Vlachs he mentions twice in his poems. They must have been enemies, but did he meet them in battle? When looking at the previous references concerning the Latin-speaking peoples of the East, one finds that their first appearance in Western sources occurs at the end of the eleventh or at the beginning of the twelfth century, when the Walachians or the Vlachs are mentioned in the *Chanson de Roland* among the contingents of the Saracen army. They were the

²⁴ J. Linskill, ed.cit., pp. 4–37.

²⁵ O. Schultz-Gora, ed.cit., p. 19; W.T. Pattison, *Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut d'Orange*, Minneapolis, 1952, p. 34.

²⁶ J. Linskill, ed.cit., p. 67.

²⁷ Linskill, ed.cit., pp. 68–69.

Blos, allied with the *Nubles*, and neighbours of other Eastern ‘fairy-tale’ nations. Byzantine, Russian, and even Scandinavian sources mention the Vlachs much earlier, but the Western ones tend to neglect them, either due to a lack of interest, or to a lack of geographical data. The Vlachs inhabiting the lands south of the Danube appear out of a sudden in the texts of the Fourth Crusade, in the works of Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Robert de Clari, and Henri de Valenciennes or even in those of Philippe Mousket. The ones to the North are mentioned in the second part of the thirteenth century, consequently to the appearance of Hungarian Latin sources. In this general context, Raimbaut’s mentioning of the Vlachs belongs to the sudden emergence of the interest for the Vlachs due to the Fourth Crusade. Consequently, the two (out of three) poems I have discussed in the present article do not provide the historian with new data, with new perspectives, or with more clues to the interpretation of the early history of the Romanians. They mention the Vlachs as enemies of the Latin Empire, and the importance of this source lies only in their early time of its redaction.

Annexe 1
The Three Poems

RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS, *CONSEIL DON A L'EMPERADOR*
(392, 9a; edited and translated by Linskill 1964, pp. 225-228)

Manuscript:

Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Càmpori γ. N. 8. 4 ; 11, 12, 13 ; diplomatically edited by Bertoni,
Il canzoniere provenzale di Bernart Amoros (Complemento Càmpori), Friburg, 1911

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>Conseil don a l'emperador
pois per conseil fai totz sos plais,
e non faria meins ni mais
mas tant con sei conseillador
5 li volun far dir 'e faire :
e-il conseil, s'el vol esser pros,
qe don, sens conseil, derenan ;
e, ses conseil ab sos baros,
creza-l conseil del plus prezan,
10 q'aissi 's conseils d'empeaire.</p> | <p>I offer a counsel to the Emperor, since he conducts all his affairs by council, and would not do nor more nor less than his councillors would have him say and do. And I counsel him, if he aims at excellence, to give henceforth without counsel; and, without consulting the barons' council, let him hearken to the counsel of the worthiest man, for such is a counsel befitting an Emperor.</p> |
| <p>Pueis eu li conseil sa honor,
creza m'en, si-n vol, o s'en lais ;
e se-l senescal no-s n'irais
ni Coine del cosseil major,
15 eu serai bos cosseillaire,
e darai conseil a els dos,
qant lur segnor consseillaran,
qe-il cosseillen de far rics dos ;
mas no sai s'amos m'en creiran,
20 ni eu no-ls en forzi gaire.</p> | <p>Since I counsel what will bring him honour, let him hear me, if he would, or let him give no thought to it. And if the Seneschal and Conon of the Grand Council be not wroth, I shall be a good counsellor, and shall counsel them both, when they counsel their suzerain, to counsel him to bestow such rich gifts; but I know not if these two will hearken to me, nor do I in the least compel them to do so.</p> |
| <p>E si no-s meillur' en la flor,
lo frugz poiri' esser malvais ;
e gart se q'al seu tort non bais,
qe pujatz es en grant honor,
25 et es bels e de bon aire ;
e se vol creire mos sermos,
ja no-i aura anta ni dan,
anz sera granz honors e pros,
car se pert cels c'ab lui estan,
30 tart venran de son repaire.</p> | <p>And if there be no improvement in the blossom, the fruit might well be rotten; and let him beware lest he decline, to his own hurt, for he has risen to great honour, and he is a goodly person and of a noble lineage. And if he would heed my words, then indeed there will be no shame and no hurt, but there will be great honour and profit, for if he abandons those who stand with him, men will be slow to become his servants.</p> |
| <p>E non tema freg ni calor,
ni-s baign ni sojorn em palais,
qe al col a cargat tal fais
qe, s'el non es de gran valor,
35 greu lo poira a cap traire ;
qe li Blac e-il Coman e-il Ros
e-il Turc e-il Paian e-il Persan
seran contra lui ab Grifos ;
e si per pretz non trai ofan,
40 tot qant a faig pot desfaire</p> | <p>And let him not fear cold or heat, nor linger in palatial ease, for he has placed on his neck a burden of such weight that, if he be not of great valour, it will be hard for him to bear it to the end. For the Wallachians and the Cumans and the Russians and the Turks and the Pagans and the Persians will be against him, with all the Greeks; and if he does not endure toil for glory's sake, he may undo all he has done.</p> |

- Q'el e nos em tuig pecchador
dels mostiers ars e del palais,
on vei pecar los clerics e-ls lais ;
e se-l sepulchre non secor,
45 serem vas Dieu plus pechaire,
q'en pechat tornara-l perdos,
e se-l conqis no 'stai enan ;
mas s'el es larcs ni coratjos,
ben leu pot anar osteian
50 a Babiloni' e al Caire.*
- For he and we alike bear guilt for the burning of the churches and the palaces, wherein I see both clerics and laymen sin; and if he does not succour the Holy Sepulchre and if the conquest does not advance, then our guilt before God will be greater still, for the pardon will turn to sin. But if he be liberal and brave, he will lead his battalions to Babylonia and Cairo with the greatest ease.
- Tota sa forz' e sa vigor
taign qe mostr' als Turcs part Roais,
qe tuit li soudan e-il alcais
e-il amirail e-il almassor
55 n'esperan lansar e traire ;
et er n'encolpatz Nevelos,
e-ls doz' electors blasmaran,
se-l sepulchr' es mais en preizos ;
e-l dux n'er apellatz d'enjan
60 si-l vol del socors estraire.*
- All his power and strength must he display to the Turks beyond Roais (Edessa), for all the sultans and the cadis and the emirs and the caliphs are hoping to wield lances and hurl missiles. And Névelon will be denounced, and the twelve electors will be blamed, if the Sepulchre remains in captivity; and the Doge will be accused of deception if he is minded to turn him aside from this succour.
- Al marescal voil retraire
mon cosseil, q'es leials e bos ;
mas lui, e Miles de Burban,
blasmarai se non es fort pros
65
e lares e francs l'empeaire.*
- I wish to make my counsel known to the Marshal, for he is loyal and true. But I will blame him, and Milon of Brabant, if the Emperor be not most valiant and liberal and noble.

RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS, *NO M'AGRAD' IVERNS NI PASCORS*
(392, 9a; edited and translated by Linskill 1964, pp. 241-246)

Manuscripts, diplomatic editions and other details:

Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana 5232;

diplomatically edited by Pakscher, De Lollis, *Studi di filologia romanza*, III, pp. 1-670;

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 1592 ;

the same text variant appears in:

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 12474 ;

Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 71; diplomatically edited by Bertoni, *Il canzoniere provenzale della Biblioteca Ambrosiana R 71*, Dresden, 1912;

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 856 ;

Modena, Biblioteca Estense, a, R, 4, 4, ff. 152-211;

Modena, Biblioteca Estense, a, R, 4, 4, ff. 243-260; diplomatically edited by Teulié, Rossi, *AdM*, XIII-XIV;

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 854;

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 12473;

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 12474;

Berlin, Königliche Bibliothek, cod. Phillips 1910; diplomatically edited by Pillet, *Archiv* 101;

Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. XLI, cod. 42 (includes a *razo*); diplomatically edited by Stengel, *Archiv* 49.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 22543 (includes the musical setting);

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 269; diplomatically edited by Shepard, *The Oxford Provençal Chansonnier*, Princeton-Paris, 1927;

Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, 146;

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 15211;

Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. XLI, cod. 43; diplomatically edited by Grützmacher, *Archiv* 35.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| <p>5
10</p> | <p><i>No m'agrad' iverns ni pascors
ni clairs temps ni fuoills de garrics,
car mos enans mi par destrics
e totz mos majer gauz dolors,
e son maltrag tuit miei lezer
e desesperat miei esper ;
e si-m sol amors e dompneis
tener gai plus que l'aiga-l peis !
E pois d'amor me sui patitz
cum hom issillatz e faiditz,
tot' outra vida-m sembla mortz
e totz autre jois desconortz.</i></p> | <p>Neither winter nor spring delights me, nor sunny days
nor leaf of (kermes-)oak, for my advancement seems
to me loss, and my greatest joy sorrow, and all my
pleasures are sufferings, and my hopes are turned to
despair ; yet love and service of my lady were wont to
keep me happier than a fish in water ! And since I
have parted from love, like one ruined and banished,
every other (way of) life seems death to me, and every
other joy desolation.</p> |
| <p>15
20</p> | <p><i>Pois d'amor m'es faillida-il flors
e-l dolz fruitz e-l grans
l'espics,
don gauzi' ab plazens prezics
e pretz m'en sobrav' et honors
e-n sabi' entre-ls pros caber,
era-m fai d'aut en bas cazer ;
e si no-m sembles fols esfreis,
anc flama plus tost non s'esteis
q'ieu for' esteins e relinquitz
e perdutz en faitz et en digz
lo jorn qe-m venc lo desconortz
que non merma, cum qe-m refortz.</i></p> | <p>Since the flower of love is denied to me, and the
sweet fruit and the grain and the ear, in which I
rejoiced with pleasant discourse, and by which I had
glory and honour in abundance, and could take my
place among the valiant, now am I fallen low from
the summit ; and did it not seem to me a foolish
fear, no flame ever failed more quickly than I would
have failed and been forlorn and lost in words and
deeds the day there came to me the desolation that
no striving of mine may diminish.</p> |
| <p>25
30
35</p> | <p><i>Bels armatz e bos feridors,
setges e calabres e pics,
e traucar murs nous et antics,
e vensser bataillas e tors
vei et aug ; e non puosc aver
ren qe-m puosc' ad amor valer !
E vauc cercan ab rics arneis
gerras e coitas e torneis,
don sui conqueren enriquitz ;
e pois jois d'amor m'es faillitz,
totz lo mons no-m parri' us ortz,
ni mos chans no m'es mais confortz.</i></p> | <p>Fine warriors and stout fighters, sieges, catapults
and pikes, and walls old and new pierced, and
battalions and towers overwhelmed I see and hear ;
yet can I gain naught to avail me in my love ! And,
in rich armour clad, I seek out wars and frays and
combats and am enriched by conquest; yet since the
joy of love is refused to me, the whole world (if I
possessed it) would seem less than a garden to me,
and my song no more consoles me.</p> |

- 40 *Doncs, qe-m val conquistiz ni ricors ?
 qu'eu ja-m tenia per plus rics
 qand er' amatz e fis amics,
 e-m paissi' ab n'Engles amors ;
 n'amava mais un sol plazer
 que sai gran terr' e grana ver,
 c'ades on plus mos poders creis
 45 ai major ir' ab mi mezeis,
 pois mos Bels Cavalliers grazitz
 e jois m'es loignatz e fugitz,
 don mais no-m naissera conortz,
 per q'es majer l'ir' e plus fortz.*
- 50 *Pero no-m comanda valors,
 si be-m sui iratz ni enics,
 q'ieu don gaug a mos enemics
 tan q'en perda pretz ni lauzors,
 q'ancar puosc dan e pro tener,
 e sai d'irat joios parer
 55 sai entre-ls Latins e-ls Grezeis ;
 e-l marques, aue espaza-m seis,
 gerreia Blacs e Drogoiz,
 et anc pois lo mons fon bastitz
 nuilla gens non fetz tant d'esfortz
 60 cum nos, cui Dieus a gent estortz.*
- 65 *Lo marques n'es honratz e sors
 e-l Campanes e-l coms Enricx,
 Sicar, Montos e Salanicx
 e Constantinople socors,
 quar gent sabon camp retener,
 e pot hom ben proar en ver :
 qu'anc mais nulha gent non ateis
 aitan gran honor, apareys.
 Per bos vassals, valens, arditz,
 70 es nostr' emperis conqueritz,
 e Dieus trameta nos esfortz
 coissi:s tray' a cap nostra sortz !*
- 75 *Anc Alixandres non fetz cors
 ni Carles ni-l reis Lodoics
 tan honrat, ni-l pros n'Aimerics
 ni Rotlans ab sos poignadors
 non saubron tan gen conquerer
 tan ric emperi per poder
 cum nos, don poja nostra leis;
 80 q'emperadors e ducs e reis
 avem faitz, e chastels garnitz
 prop dels Turcs e dels Arabitz,*
- What then do conquest and riches profit me? For I held myself richer when, a faithful lover, I was loved, and had my fill of love beside my lord Engles; one single gracious gesture then charmed me more than here great lands and great possessions, for ever as my power grows, so the displeasure in my heart is greater, since my well-beloved Fair-Knight and joy have withdrawn and fled from me, wherefore no more will comfort come to me, and so my spleen is greater and more burdensome.
- Yet, though I am troubled and vexed, Valour does not command me so to gladden my enemies as to forsake glory and honour, for I can still do harm and good, and change my countenance from sad to gay, here among the Latins and the Greeks; and the Marquis, who girded me with the sword, is warring against the Wallachians and Drogobites, and never since the world was made has any people accomplished such feats as we, whom God has graciously delivered.
- The Marquis is thereby honoured and exalted, so too the man of Champagne and Count Henry, and Sicar, Modon, Salonika and Constantinople relieved, for (these men) well know how to be masters of the field, and this indeed can easily be shown : that never yet did any people attain such glory is apparent. By fine warriors, valiant and intrepid, has our empire been won, and may God send us (fresh) forces whereby our destiny may be fulfilled!
- Never did Alexandre or Charlemagne or King Louis lead such a glorious expedition, nor could the valiant lord Aimeri or Roland with his warriors win by might, in such a noble fashion, such a powerful empire as we have won, whereby our Faith is in the ascendant; for we have created emperors and dukes and kings, and have manned strongholds near the Turks and Arabs, and opened up the roads and ports from Brindisi to St. George's Straits (Bosphorus).

*et ubertz los camins e-ls portz
de Branditz tro al Bratz Sain Jorz.*

85 *Per nos er Domas envazitz
e Jerusalem conqueritz
e-l regnes de Suri' estortz,
que-ls Turcx o trobon en lur sortz.*

By us will Damascus be assaulted, and Jerusalem conquered, and the kingdom of Syria liberated, for the Turks find this in their prophecies.

90 *Los pellegris perjurs, fraiditz,
qi nos an sai en camp geqitz,
qi los manten e cortz es tortz,
que chascuns val mens vius que mortz.*

He does wrong who maintains in courts those Crusaders, perjured and perfidious, who have deserted us here on the battlefield, for each one is worth less alive than dead.

95 *Belhs dous Engles, francx et arditz,
cortes, essenhatz, essernitz,
vos etz de totz mos gauz conortz,
e quar viiu ses vos, fatz esfortz.*

Fair, gentle *Engles*, noble and bold, courteous, well-bred and distinguished, you are the inspiration of all my joys, and in living without you I perform a feat.

RAIMBAUT DE VAQUEIRAS, *VALEN MARQUES, SENHER DE MONFERRAT (= THE EPIC LETTER)*
(edited and translated by Linskill 1964, pp. 303–312)

Manuscripts, diplomatic editions and other details:

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, f.fr. 856;

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I

*Valen marques, senher de Monferrat,
a Dieu grazisc quar vos a tant onrat
que mais avetz conques e mes e dat
c'om ses corona de la crestiantat ;
5 e laus en Dieu quar tan m'a enansat
que bon senhor ai molt en vos trobat,
que m'avetz gent noyrit et adobat,
e fait gran be e de bas aut pojat,
e de nien fait cavalier prezat,
10 grazit en cort e per donas lauzat.
Et ieu ai vos servit de voluntat,
de bona fe, de bon cor e de grat,
que mon poder vos n'ai ben tot mostrat ;
et ai ab vos fait maint cortes barat,
15 qu'en maint bel luec ay ab vos dompneyat ;
et ai ab vos per guerra cavalguat,
et ab armas perdut e guazanhat,
e pres maynt colp et ab vos n'ai donat,
20 e gen fugit et ab vos encaussat,*

I

Valiant Marquis, Lord of Montferrat, I thank God that He has granted you such honour that you have conquered and dispensed and bestowed more than any uncrowned man in Christendom ; and I praise God that He has so advanced me that I have found in you a most generous lord. For you have graciously maintained and equipped me, and shown me great kindness, and from lowly state raised me on high, and from naught made me a knight of repute, welcome at court and prased by the ladies. I in return have served you willingly and truly and with glad heart, and to the utmost of my power. I have devised with you so many a courtly stratagem, and with you given service to ladies on may a fine occasion. With you I have ridden to war and, in armour clad, have lost and won, and taken and given with you many a blow, and skilfully fled and pursued with you, and,

vensen l'encaus, et en fugen tornat,
 e sui cazutz et ai en derrocat.
 Et ai en ga e sus en pon jostat,
 e part barreiras ab vos esperonat,
 25 et envazit barbacan' e fossat,
 e sus en guarda et en aut luec anat,
 vensen grans coytas ; et ai vos ajudat
 a conquerre emperi e regnat
 e-l sevaso Lasquar e-l proestat
 30 el Peitr' assis, e maint' outra postat.
 Et encausse ab vos a Filopat
 l'emperador, qu'avetz dezeretat,
 de Romania, e l'autre coronat.
 35 E si per vos no suy en gran rictat,
 no semblara qu'ab vos aia estat
 ni servit tan cum vos ai repropchat,
 e vos sabetz qu'ieu dic del tot vertat,
 40 senher marques.

II

Senher marques, ja no-m diretz de no,
 que vertatz es, e vos sabetz ben quo
 me tinc ab vos a ley de vassalh bo,
 5 quant assalhis a Cart entr' Ast e No,
 que quatre cens cavaliers a tenso
 vos encausavon, feren ad espero,
 que no-s tengron ab vos detz companho,
 quan vos tornetz e feris de rando :
 10 pueys vos dupteron mais que grua falco.
 Et ieu torney al mager ops que-y fo,
 que ieu e vos levem gen del sablo
 n'Albert marques, qu'era jos de l'arso.
 Et ai estat per vos en greu preyzo
 15 per vostra guerra, e n'ai part Recaldo
 fait maint assaut et ars maynta maizo,
 e fait maint colp ab vos part Caranso.
 Et a Messina vos cobri del blizo ;
 en la batalha vos vinc en tal sazo
 20 que-us ferion pel pietz e pel mento
 dartz e cairels, sagetas e lanso,
 lansas e brans e coutels e fausso.
 E quan prezes Randas e Paterno,
 Rochel' e Terme e Lentin et Aido,
 25 Plass' e Palerma e Calatagiro,
 fui als premiers, sotz vostre gonfayno.
 E quant anetz per crozar a Sajsso,
 ieu non avia en cor, Dieus m'o perdo,

checking the pursuit, turned during flight (to
 renew the combat), and have fallen from the
 saddle and unseated others. I have fought in fords
 and high up on bridges, and with you spurred
 on past barriers, and attacked barbicans and
 moats, and scaled fortified heights, triumphant
 amid great perils. I have helped you to conquer
 empire and kingdom and these lands and islands
 and a duchy, and to capture kings, princes and
 principalities, and to vanquish many an armed
 knight. Many a fortified castle and city, many a
 splendid palace have I razed with you, and
 besieged emperor, king and commander and
 the august Lascaris and the prostrator in the
 Petrion, and many another mighty one. With
 you I pursued to the Philopatation the Emperor of
 Romania, whom you stripped of his
 inheritance, placing the crown on another's
 head. If then through you I do not possess great
 riches, it will not seem that I have been by your
 side nor served you as I have set forth. Yet you
 know that I speak but the truth, my Lord
 Marquis.

II

My Lord Marquis, you will not gainsay me, for
 it is true, and you know full well how I stayed
 by your side like a true warrior when you
 attacked at Quarto, between Asti and Annone;
 four hundred horsemen were pursuing you,
 outvying each other and spurring their steeds,
 and by your side there were barely ten
 companions, when you turned and struck with
 violence: they feared you then more than the
 crane fears the falcon. And I turned to the most
 pressing need there was, and you and I
 skilfully raised from the ground the Lord
 Marquis Albert, who had fallen from the
 saddle. For you, fighting in your war, I have
 suffered dire captivity, and by Ricaldone have
 made many a raid and burnt many a dwelling,
 and along with you have struck many a blow
 by Caranzano. At Messina I covered you with
 the shield; amid the fray I came to you at the
 moment when darts and bolts, arrows and
 javelins, lances and swords and daggers and
 falchions were striking you on breast and face.
 And when you captured Randazzo and Paterno,
 Roccella and Termini and Lentini and Aidone,
 Piazza and Palermo and Caltagirone, I was there,
 beneath your standard, in the forefront. When
 you went to Soissons to take the cross, I had no

que passes mar, mas per vostre resso
 levey la crotz e pris confessio ;
 30 e era pres lo fort castel Babo,
 e no m'avion res forfait li Grifo.
 Pueys vinc ab vos guerreyar part Monço ;
 entorn Blaquerna, sotz vostre pabalho,
 estei armatz, a ley de Bramanso,
 35 d'elm e d'ausberc e de gros guambaizo ;
 e-m combatey sotz la tor el Peiro,
 e-i fui nafratz d'outra la guarnizo.
 E estey tan armatz pres del donjo
 tro qu'en cassem l'emperador felho,
 40 selh que destruyt son frair' a trassio.
 Quan vi'l gran fum e la flam' e'l carbo,
 e'l mur traucat en man luec ses bonso,
 issi el camp per combatr' a bando
 ab tan grans gens, ses tota falhizo,
 45 c'az un de nos eron cen per razo.
 E vos pensetz de far defensio
 e'l coms de Flandres; e Frances e Breto
 et Alaman, Lombart e Berguonho
 et Espanhol, Proensal e Guasco,
 50 tug fom renguat, cavalier e pezo.
 E l'empeaire, ab lo cor al talo,
 esperonet e sei vil companho
 plus d'una legua; pueys volgron li gloto.
 Nos fom austor et ylh foro aigro,
 55 e cassem los si cum lops fai mouto.
 E l'empeaire fugic s'en a lairo,
 e laisset nos palays Bocaleo
 e sa filha ab la clara faisso.
 E franc vassalh quan ser a senhor bo,
 60 pretz l'en reman et a-n bon guizado :
 per qu'ieu n'esper de vos esmend' e do,
 senher marques.

III

Senher marques, no-us vuelh totz remembrar
 los joves fagz qu'en prim prezem a far,
 que paor ai tornes a malestar
 5 a nos que-ls autres deuriam chastiar ;
 e non per tan bel ero-l fag tan clar
 que en macip no-y pogr'om melhurar ;
 car prim punh es de jove ric triar
 si vol gran pretz mantener o laissar,
 10 cum vos, senher, que volguetz tant aussar
 vostra valor ades al comensar
 que vos e mi fezetz per tot lauzar,
 vos cum senher e mi cum bacallar.
 E quar es greu perdr' e dezamparar,
 15 senher, amic, qu'om deu tener en car,
 vuelh retraire, e l'amor refrescar,
 lo fag que fem de Saldina de Mar,

mind (may God forgive me) to cross the sea,
 but for the sake of your glory I took the cross
 and made confession; yet I was near the fortified
 castle of Babon, and the Greeks had done me
 no wrong. I came then to wage war by your side
 beyond Modon; by the Blachernae, beneath
 your banner, I stood armed, like a Brabantine,
 with helm and hauberk and stout gambeson,
 and I fought beneath the tower in the Petron,
 and there was wounded beneath my armour.
 And long stood I armed near the castle, until
 we drove out the felon Emperor, he who undid
 his brother in treacherous fashion. When he
 saw the great smoke and the flames and the
 embers, and the wall breached in many a place
 without the battering-ram, he came out into the
 field purposing fierce battle, with him so great
 a host that, without a doubt, there were
 perforce one hundred of them to each of us.
 And you looked to the defence, and the Count
 of Flanders also; and Frenchmen and Bretons,
 and Germans, Lombards and Burgundians, and
 Spaniards, Provençals and Gascons, we all
 stood arrayed, horsemen and footmen. And the
 Emperor, with his heart in his heels, spurred
 forward, with his contemptible companions,
 for more than a mile; then the wretches turned.
 We were hawks and they were herons, and we
 chased them as the wolf chases the sheep. And
 the Emperor fled thence like a thief, and left us
 the Bucoleon palace and his daughter of the
 fair countenance. Now when a vassal serves a
 generous lord, he acquires merit thereby and
 receives a full reward: hence I await from you
 a recompensing gift, my Lord Marquis.

III

My Lord Marquis, I do not wish to recall you
 all the youthful exploits that we set out to
 accomplish in the beginning, for I fear it would be
 unbecoming to us, who must teach the others ;
 and yet these exploits were so splendid that in a
 young man they could not be bettered. For it is of
 the first importance for a young nobleman to
 choose whether he wishes to win great glory or to
 renounce it, as you chose, my lord, who right
 from the outset desired to raise your worth to
 such great heights that you made both yourself
 and me honoured everywhere, you as lord and
 me as a novice in arms. But since it is a
 grievous thing, my lord, to abandon and
 forsake a friend, whom one should cherish, I
 want to revive our friendship by relating the

20 *quan la levem al marques, al sopar,
 a Malespina de sul plus aut logar,
 e la donetz a Ponset d'Aguilar,
 que muria el liet per lieys amar.
 E membre vos d'Aimonet lo jocglar,
 quant a Montaut venc las novas comtar
 que Jacobina ne volian menar
 25 en Serdenha mal son grat maridar.
 E vos prezes un pauc a sospirar,
 e membret vos cum vos det un baizar
 al comchat penre, quan vos preguet tan car
 30 que de son oncle la volcsetz amparar,
 que la volia a tort dezeretar.
 E vos mandetz cinq escudiers muntar,
 de tot lo mielhs que vos saupes triar,
 e cavalguem la nueg apres sopar,
 35 vos e Guiot et Hugonet del Far
 e Bertaldo, que gent nos saup guidar,
 e mi meteys, que no mi vuell deixar,
 que la levey al port, a l'embarcar.
 E-l crit se leva per terra e per mar,
 40 e segon nos pezo e cavalariar :
 grans fo l'encaus, e nos pessem d'anar,
 e cujem lor a totz gent escapar,
 tro silh de Pisa nos vengron assautar.
 E quan nos vim devant nos traversar
 45 tan cavalier, tan estreg cavalgar,
 e tant ausberc e tan belh elme clar,
 tan golfaino contra-l ven baneyar,
 rescozem nos entr' Albeng' e-l Finar;
 aqui auzim vas manhtas partz sonar
 50 manh corn, manh gralle, manh ta senha cridar:
 s'aguem paor, no-us o cal demandar.
 Dos jorns estem ses beur' e ses manjar;
 quant venc al terz que no-n cugem anar,
 55 nos encontrem el pas de Belhestar
 dotze lairos, que-y eron per raubar,
 e no-i poguem cosselh penre ni dar,
 quar a caval no-i podi' hom brocar.
 Ei ieu a pe anei-m ab els mesclar,
 60 e fui nafratz ab lansa pel colar,
 mas ye-n nafriey tres o quatre, so-m par,
 si que a totz fi las testas virar ;
 e Bertaldo et Hugonet del Far
 viro-m nafrat e vengro-m ajudar;
 65 e quan fom trey, fem lo pas desliurar
 dels lairos, si que vos poguetz passar
 seguramen, e deuria-us membrar.
 Pueys nos dirnem ab gaug, ses pro manjar,
 70 d'un pan tot sol ses beur' e ses lavar.
 E-l ser venguem ab n'Eyssi al Pueg-clar,
 que-ns fés tal gaug e tant nos volc onrar
 que sa filha n'Aiglet' ab lo vis clar,
 se-u sufrissetz, fera ab vos colgar.*

deed we performed together for Saldina de Mar, when we rescued her from the Marquis, at supper-time, at Malaspina, on his highest retreat, and you gave her to Ponset of Aguilar, who through love for her lay dying in his bed. Remember too when the poet Aimonet came to Montaldo to bring the news that they were preparing to take Jacobina away to Sardinia, there to be married against her will. You gave a gentle sigh, and you remembered how she gave you a kiss on taking leave of you, when she begged you so dearly to protect her against her uncle, who sought unjustly to deprive her of her inheritance. And you ordered five squires, the best you could select, to mount horse, and after supper we rode off during the night, you and Guiot and Hugonet del Far and Bertaldo, who knew how to guide us so skilfully, and I myself, for I do not wish to leave myself out, since it was I who carried her off from the harbour at the moment of embarkation. The alarm was raised on land and sea, and footmen and horsemen followed in our wake: great was the pursuit, and we prepared to depart, and we believed we should cleverly escape them all, when along came the men of Pisa, intending to attack us. When we saw ahead so many horsemen, athwart our path, riding in close order, so many hauberks and fine, glittering helmets, so many banners streaming in the wind, we concealed ourselves between Albenga and Finale; there we heard on many sides the blowing of many a horn and clarion and the shouting of many a war-cry: there is no need for you to ask if we were afraid. For two days we remained without food or drink; and when the third day came and we resolved to break out, we encountered in the pass of Belhestar twelve thieves, assembled there for the purpose of robbing, and we were in a quandary, for in that place one could not attack on horseback. And I went forward on foot to engage them, and was wounded by a lance through the collar, but I in turn wounded three or four of them, I think, so that I made them all turn; and Bertaldo and Hugonet del Far, seeing me hurt, came to my help, and when we were three we cleared the pass of the robbers, so that you could pass in safety, and this you must recall. Then we were gladly a frugal midday meal of bread alone, without drinking or washing. That evening we reached Pueg-clar the dwelling of Sir Aicio, who received us so joyfully and desired so much to honour us that, had you suffered it, he

- 75 *Vos al mati cum senher e ric bar
volgues l'oste fort be guazardonar,
qu'Anselmet fes Jacobin' espozar,
e fetz li tot lo comtat recobrar
de Ventamilha, que devia tornar*
- 80 *a Jacobina per la mort de son frar,
mal grat de l'oncle que la'n cuget gitar ;
pueyssas volgues Aigleta maridar,
e detz la Gui del Montelh-Azemar.
E s'ieu volia retraire ni comtar*
- 85 *los ondratz faitz, seynher, que-us ai vistz far,
poiria nos az amdos enujar,
a me del dire, a vos de l'escotar.
Mais cent piuzellas vos ai vist maridar
a coms, marques, a baros d'aut afar,*
- 90 *que foran laissas e no saupran que far,
c'anc ab una jovens no-us fetz peccary.
Cent cavaziers vos ai vistz heretar,
et autres cent destruyr' et yssilhar,*
- 95 *los bols levar e-ls fals e-ls mals baissar;
anc lauzengier no vos poc azautar.
Tanta veuza, tant orfe cosselhar
e tant mesqui vos ai vist ajudar
qu'en paradis vos deurian menar,*
- 100 *si per merce nuls hom hi deu intrar ;
quar anc nuls hom, dignes de merceyar,
si la-us preyet, no-i laisset fadiar,
et ab merce voletz tostemp renhar.
E qui vol dir per vertat ni comtar,*
- 105 *Aleyxandres vos laisset son donar
et ardimen Rotlan e-lh dotze par
e-l pros Berart domney e gent parlar.
En vostra cort renhon tug benestar:
dar e dompney, belh vestir, gent armar,*
- 110 *trompas e joc e viulas e chantar,
e anc no-us plac nulh portier al manjar.
Et ieu, senher, puesc mi d'aitan vanar
qu'en vostra cort ai saubut gent estar,
dar e servir e sufrir e celar,*
- 115 *et anc no-y fi ad home son pezar ;
ni no pot dir nuls hom ni repropchar
qu'anc en guerra-m volgues de vos lunhar,
ni temses mort per vostr' onor aussar,
ni nulh bo fait vos volgues destrigar.
E pus, senher, sai tan de vostr' afar,
per tres dels autres mi devetz de be far,
et es razos, qu'en mi podetz trobar
testimoni, cavalier e jocglar,
senher marques.*
- would have offered his daughter, the lady Aigleta of the fair countenance, to lie with you. The next morning, you, as lord and a powerful baron, desired to reward your host richly, and you gave Jacobina in marriage to Anselmet, and you recovered for her the entire county of Ventimiglia, which was to come to Jacobina through her brother's death, in despite of her uncle who thought to cast her out; then you wished to find a husband for Aigleta, and you gave her to Gui of Montélimar. And if, my lord, I attempt to tell and relate the honourable deeds which I have seen you perform, it might well weary both of us, me in telling and you in the listening. But this only will I say, I have seen you give in marriage to counts, marquises and lords of high estate a hundred maidens, who would have otherwise remained hapless and not known how they would fare, and yet not with any did youth lead you to err. I have seen you enrich a hundred knights, and destroy and ruin a hundred others, exalt the good and cast down the false and the wicked; nor could flatterer ever find favour with you. I have seen you give aid to so many widows and so many orphans, and succour so many of the unfortunate that they should lead you into paradise, if any man may enter there through compassion; for never did any man worthy of compassion await it in vain if he but begged it of you, and it is your wish always to rule with compassion. And should one wish to tell and relate truly, Alexander left to you his generosity, and Roland and the twelve peers their daring, and the gallant Berart lady-service and graceful discourse. In your court reign all good usages: munificence and service of ladies, elegant raiment, handsome armour, trumpets and diversions and viols and song, and at the hour of dining it has never pleased you to see a keeper at the door. I for my part may make this boast, my lord, that in your court I have known how to deport myself in seemly fashion, to give and serve and to be patient and discreet, and never have I given any man cause to grieve; nor can any man say in reproach that I have ever wished to leave your side in war or shunned death if I could increase your glory thereby, or that I ever wished to dissuade you from a noble need. And since, my lord, I know so much of your affairs, you must reward me as for three of the others, and this is just, for in me you may find a witness, a knight and a poet, my Lord Marquis.