



## **Seignurs, oiez, pur Dieu le grant**

**(RS 344a)**

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## Anonymous

I

Seignurs, oiez, pur Dieu le grant,  
chançonete de dure pité (+1)  
de la mort un rei vaillaunt; (-1)  
4 homme fu de grant bounté, (-1)  
e que par sa leauté (-1)  
mut grant encuntre ad sustenue;  
ceste chose est bien prové:  
8 de sa terre n'ad rien perdue.  
*Priom Dieu en devocioun,*  
*qe de ses pecchez le face pardoun. (+2)*

II

De Engleterre il fu sire,  
12 e rey qe mut savoit de guere;  
en nul(e) livre puet home lire  
de rei qe mieuz sustint sa tere;  
toutes ses choses qu'il vodreit fere, (+1)  
16 sagement les mist a fine. (-1)  
Ore si gist soun cors en tere,  
si va le siecle en decline.

III

Le rei de Fraunce grant pecché fist (+1)  
20 le passage a desturber,  
qe rei Edward pur Dieu enprist, (+1)  
sur Sarazins l'ewe passer.  
Sun tresour fust outre la mer(e),  
24 e ordiné sa purveaunce  
seint Eglise pur sustenir(e):  
ore est la tere en desperaunce.

I

Listen, lords, for the sake of God the great, to a little song of profound pity for the death of a valiant king. He was a man of great goodness, who through his loyalty has undergone many a great battle. This thing is well known: of his land he has lost nothing. *Let us devoutly pray to God to pardon him for his sins.*

II

He was the ruler of England and a great expert in warfare; in no book can one read of a king who better defended his land. All those things he wished to do he brought wisely to fruition. Now his body lies in the ground, and the world is in decline.

III

The king of France committed a great wrong in obstructing the crusade that Edward undertook for God, to cross the sea against the Saracens. His treasure was overseas, and his decisions aimed at the support of the holy Church: now the Holy Land is in despair.

## IV

Jerusalem, tu as perdu  
 28 la flour de ta chivalerie,  
 rey Edward le viel chanu,  
 qe tant ama ta seignurie.  
 Ore est il mort; jeo ne sai mie  
 32 toun baner qi le meintindra;  
 sun duz quor par grant druerie  
 outre la mer(e) vous mandera.

## V

Un jour avant que mort li prist,  
 36 od son barnage voleit parler; (+1)  
 ses ch[i]valers devant li vist,  
 durement commença de plurer: (+1)  
 «Jeo murrai», dist, «par estover,  
 40 jeo vei ma mort que me vent quere;  
 fetes mon fiz rey corouner,  
 qe Dampnedieu li don bien fere!».

## VI

A Peiters, a l'apostoile  
 44 un(e) messenger la mort li dist;  
 e la pape vesti l'estole,  
 a dure lermes les lettres prist: (+1)  
 «Alas!», ceo dist, «comment? morist  
 48 a qi Dieu douna tant honur?  
 A l'alme en face Dieu mercist!  
 De seint Eglise il fu la flour».

## VII

L'apostoile en sa chambre entra,  
 52 a pein se poeit sustenir,  
 e les cardinals trestuz manda; (+1)  
 durement commença de plurir. (+1)  
 Les cardinals li funt teisir,  
 56 en haut commencent lur servise;  
 parmy la cité funt sonir,  
 e servir Dieu en seint eglise.

## IV

Jerusalem, you have lost the flower of your  
 chivalry, king Edward the old and hoary, who so  
 loved your nobility. Now he is dead and I know not  
 who will sustain your banner; out of great love he  
 will send his dear heart overseas to you.

## V

One day before death took him he desired to speak  
 with his barons; seeing his knights before him he  
 began to weep bitterly. 'I must needs die,' he said,  
 'I can see death coming for me; have my son  
 crowned, and may God grant he do good!'

## VI

In Poitiers a messenger announced his death to the  
 pope, and the pope donned the stole and took the  
 letters with hot tears. 'Alas!', he said, 'how is this?  
 Has the one to whom God gave so much honour  
 died? God have mercy on his soul! Of the holy  
 Church he was the flower.'

## VII

The pope entered his chamber, and could hardly  
 stand; he summoned all his cardinals and began to  
 weep bitterly. The cardinals console him and begin  
 aloud their office [for the dead]: they have the bells  
 rung throughout the city and prayers said to God in  
 the holy church.

## VIII

60 L'apostoile meimes vint a la messe(+2)  
 ové mult grant sollempnité;  
 l'alme pur soudre sovent se dresse, (+1)  
 e dist par grant humilité:  
 «Place' a Dieu en Trinité  
 64 qe vostre fiz en pust conquere  
 Jerusalem, la digne cité, (+1)  
 e passer en la seinte tere!».

## IX

68 Le jeofne Edward d'Engleterre  
 rey est enoint e corouné:  
 Dieu li doint tele conseil trere  
 ki le païs seit gouverné,  
 e la coroune si garder  
 72 qe la tere seit entere, (-1)  
 e lui crestre'en bounté, (-1)  
 car prodhome i fust son pere.

## X

76 Si Aristotile fust en vie,  
 e Virgile qe savoit l'art,  
 les valurs ne dirr[ai]ent mie  
 del prodhome la disme part.  
 Ore est mort le rei Edward,  
 80 pur qui mon quor est en trafon;  
 l'alme Dieu la salu e garde,  
 pur sa seintime passioun!  
 Amen.

## VIII

The pope himself came to the Mass in great  
 solemnity; often he rose to his feet to free his soul  
 (pray for the soul of the deceased), and spoke  
 through great humility: 'May it please God the  
 Three in One that your son may conquer Jerusalem,  
 the noble city, and make the crossing to the Holy  
 Land!'

## IX

The young Edward of England is anointed and  
 crowned king: God grant him to make wise  
 decisions so that the land is governed [well], and to  
 preserve the crown so that the land remains intact  
 and is full of grace, for his father was a great man.

## X

If Aristotle and Virgil, who knew the art [of  
 rhetoric], were still alive, they would not be able to  
 tell the tenth part of the noble qualities of this  
 great man. Now king Edward, for whom my heart is  
 in the depths of woe, is dead; God save and keep  
 his soul, through his most holy passion! Amen.

## Notes

This funeral lament on the death of Edward I of England, probably composed by an English cleric, extols at length the king's devotion to the Holy Land (vv. 19-34), and also mentions the long war with France as an obstacle to a possible crusade (vv. 19-22) and the king's express wish to send his heart to the Orient (vv. 33-34). The second part of the text features the long description of Pope Clement V's reaction to Edward's death (vv. 43-66), which suggests access to a direct source, and ends with an exhortation to Edward II to follow in his father's footsteps and liberate Jerusalem (vv. 63-66). A Middle English version is also preserved in its entirety in ms. Harley 2253 of the British Library in London (f. 73rv), and in fragmentary form in ms. Cambridge, University Library, Additional 4407 (26 lines); see the edition of this in Bøddeker 1878, pp. 138-143 and Aspin 1953, pp. 90-92. The same topic is treated in a Latin poem found in ms. Oxford, Magdalen College, Lat. 6, which however develops it independently. The order of stanzas in the English version is different and apparently more coherent (Aspin 1953, p. 81).

- 6 The noun *encuntre* may be m. or f., and is probably used here as a collective singular, with *mut* acquiring adjectival force with an analogous sense to *maint*, according to a formula frequent in Occitan but much rarer in French (Tobler, *Vermischte Beiträge* II, 49-50; Jensen § 804, p. 400); for the sense "encounter, conflict, battle" see TL III, 235, 16ff. It is difficult to say whether the author is referring to a particular episode, since there were many wars which Edward had to face and his enemies were numerous: the Welsh, the Scots, Simon de Montfort, the king of France.
- 8 This may be a specific reference to Gascony, which Edward ceded to Philip the Fair in 1293, with the agreement that it would be restored to him as dowry for Philip's sister Blanche. But the wedding never took place because of the renewed outbreak of war between France and England and Edward only regained Gascony in 1303, four years after his marriage to Margaret, Blanche's younger daughter. See D'Avray 1994, pp. 75; 264, § 4.4 and 268 § 3.4. See also vv. 13-16.



- 19-22 Edward I's interest in the Holy Land was real and continuous over time, but his participation in crusading goes back to the period before his coronation (1272). The passage may refer to other promises or aborted attempts at expeditions to the Holy Land, plentiful during Edward's lifetime (Prestwich 1997, pp. 326-333). Between 1274 and 1282 there were various contacts between Edward and the pope regarding the king's possible direct involvement in a future crusade in exchange for the ecclesiastical tithe. In the spring of 1287 Edward took the Cross without following this up. In 1291, the year of the fall of Acre, Pope Nicholas IV devolved the ecclesiastical tithe to him for six years with the aim of launching a new crusade (see for example Rymer, *Foedera*, I 2, pp. 743-752, especially p. 747). Various political problems, firstly the Scottish question and then the war with France, notably between 1295 and 1298, made it impossible to carry out this project. A paragraph of the *Opus chronicorum*, written in 1307-1308, relates that in 1295 Edward asked Boniface VIII to intervene in order to make Philip the Fair abide by the agreements he had made with him, and promised to leave on crusade once peace was obtained (*Opus chronicorum*, p. 58). But in other documents it is Edward himself who claims that it is because of his war with the Scots, rather than because of the tensions with the king of France, that it is impossible to set out (*Historia anglicana*, I, pp. 114-115). The peace negotiations, begun in 1298 and ratified by the marriage of Edward and Margaret, Philip the Fair's sister, only led to a definitive agreement in 1303 with the restitution of Gascony. Pope Clement V's attempts to involve Edward once more in a crusading project (Menache 1998, p. 105) generated a dense correspondence between the two which reached its apogee at the end of 1306, when Edward explicitly manifested his intention to take the Cross again, while nevertheless making departure for the Holy Land subject to peace with the French king. See the pope's letter to Edward on 22 December 1306 (Rymer, *Foedera*, I 2, p. 1006), but more especially that of 28 November (Rymer, *Foedera*, I 2, p. 1005).
- 22 For the preposition *sur* used to express a sense of direction with the meaning "towards, against" see Jensen § 911, p. 465.
- 24-25 The sentence is co-ordinated with the preceding one, but the word order is distorted and can be reconstructed as follows: "his decrees [have been conceived in order to support the holy Church". This is probably a reference to Edward's important legislative activity (see D'Avray 1994, pp. 73-74 and, for the emphasis on the king's love of *iustitia legalem*, p. 263, § 3.5).
- 26 The *tere* in question is indubitably the Holy Land.
- 27-30 For the description of Edward I as defender of the Holy Land see for example D'Avray 1994, pp. 264 § 4.3, 268 § 3.4, 276 § 7.
- 33-34 The author gives credit to the tradition according to which the king requested that his heart should be taken to the Holy Land by a contingent of a hundred knights sent to fight the Saracens for a year (cfr. Aspin 1953, p. 88 and *Annales regum Angliae*, pp. 413-414; according to the *Historia anglicana*, I, pp. 114-115 there would have been 140 knights). His son Edward II did not respect his father's wishes and buried his body in Westminster Abbey after a solemn funeral service. If the text was really composed after Edward II's coronation, the future *mandera* used by the author in v. 34 must be considered erroneous or contradictory, unless the author still considered that Edward I's wishes should be respected.
- 35-42 Rather than referring to the episode of spring-summer 1307 mentioned in the *Historia anglicana*, I, pp. 114-115 (Aspin 1953, p. 88), which concerns the reconstruction of the last conversation between Edward and his son, this stanza seems to reflect what is found in another English chronicle concerning Edward's arrangements transmitted to certain noblemen concerning his succession (*The Brut*, I, pp. 202-203).

- 43-66 Various legends about Edward I's death circulated in contemporary chronicles (see for example *Flores historiarum*, III, p. 328 and Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Chronicle*, 8333-8342). The author does not believe the legends, and his lines are much closer to historical reality: Clement V was in fact residing in Poitiers from 17 April 1307 to 12 August 1308 and it was there that he learned of Edward's death, a few weeks after the event. The ample space devoted to the pope's reaction to the king's death seems to confirm that the author must have been a cleric, who was probably able to take advantage of a source close to the archbishop of Canterbury Robert Winchelsey, who at the time of the king's death was in exile in the vicinity of the papal curia. Although the chronicles of the time do not mention it, it is known that Clement V held a solemn funeral service for Edward in Poitiers cathedral during the week of 22-28 July 1307 (Ullmann 1955, pp. 26 and 30-32; Prestwich 1997, p. 558). Lines 55-60 of our piece constitute one of the rare pieces of historical evidence of this event, important because this was one of the first funeral services for a king celebrated in the papal curia. The novelty of this celebration is highlighted by two documents: the liturgical report written by cardinal Jacopo Caetani degli Stefaneschi (Ullmann 1955, pp. 33-35) and the funeral orations pronounced in honour of Edward preserved in a Roman manuscript as a model for similar occasions (D'Avray 1994, pp. 263-276). Both documents show interesting points of contact with the lines of the present elegy.
- 48 For the relative proposition without antecedent see Jensen § 456, p. 219, even if this construction rarely involves the use of the prepositional dative.
- 54 The repetition of v. 38, with sound change in the conjugation of the verb needed for the rhyme, is more likely to be the result of the author's scant talent than of scribal error.
- 56 For *servise* in the sense of "office of the dead" see Godefroy 10, 669b.
- 57 The infinitive *sonir*, as *plurir* in v. 54, can be explained by a typical anglo-normal neo-formation.
- 59-60 This emphasis is explained by the exceptional nature of a pope's solemn and official participation in a king's funeral service celebrated in the context of his curia. The form *meimes*, while rendering v. 60 hypermetric, can be justified by the unusual fact of the pope's direct participation in the funeral service performed by cardinal Niccolò Alberti bishop of Ostia.
- 61 The noun *alme* ought to be the direct object of the infinitive *soudre*, but its initial position and the absence of the subject pronoun give the sentence an unusual structure constituting a sort of anacoluthon; the right word order can be reconstructed by translating "[the pope rose frequently to free [the king's] soul", that is, to free him from the chains of sin. The verb *soudre* does not necessarily mean "to absolve", but rather means "to free, dissolve". This would be linked to the Latin technical term ABSOLVERE, ABSOLUTIO which indicates a specific prayer in the Catholic liturgy for the dead (see for example Niermeyer and Du Cange s.v. *absolutio* 5 and *absolvere* 4 [*defunctos*]). According to cardinal Stefaneschi's report, however, no specific *absolutio* took place during the service, because of the absence of the deceased's body (Ullmann 1955, p. 34).

- 63-66 According to historians, Clement V was constantly concerned for the fate of the Holy Land, but did not manage to generate a full, shared expedition during his pontificate, and he personally spent money to try to bring about peace between France and England, a necessary condition for the realisation of a crusade on a serious scale (Menache 1998, pp. 17-18 and 101). He assigned the island of Rhodes to the Order of St John of Jerusalem and on 11 August 1308 launched an appeal for crusade preaching to all the bishops, followed in June 1309 by another appeal for financial assistance. Rhodes was conquered at the end of 1309, but the *passagium generale* desired by the pope never came about, despite it being discussed at the council of Vienne, at the session of 3 April 1312. In 1313 Edward II took the Cross in Paris along with the king of France Philip the Fair (Menache 1998, p. 115), an event which seems to support the papal prophecy contained in these lines. These observations do not mean that the date of composition should be assigned to a yet later date, but they do constitute confirmation of the attention paid to crusading on the part of the pope and the clergy, which was still ongoing in Europe during the early decades of the 14th c. despite the disappointing results of the most recent expeditions.
- 67-68 This must refer to Edward II's coronation (25 February 1308) and the demonstrable historical accuracy of the text suggests it should be regarded as postdating that event. It should however be noted that Edward II was proclaimed king immediately after his father's death, on 20 July 1307 (Phillips 2010, pp. 125-126).
- 69 Here it is necessary for correct scansion to keep the feminine form of the adjective *tele*.
- 70 If the ms. reading of this line is accepted, the form of initial *ki* must be interpreted as a final conjunction. The confusion *ke/ki* is well attested in anglo-norman as far as the forms of the relative pronoun are concerned (Short § 32.2), but it does not seem to apply also to *ke* as a conjunction. However the parallel construction in vv. 71-72 also points in this direction.
- 73 The three infinitives *trere*, *garder* and *crestre* are probably coordinated and dependent on the optative formula *Dieu li doint* of v. 69. For the expression see Adenet le Roi, *Enfances Ogier*, 4248-4249: «*Dieus,*» *dist Ogiers*, «*pere de majesté,* / *Ce chamberlenc vueilliez croistre en bonté*» and *Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*, XXXIV (*Miracle de sainte Bouteuch*), 2488: *Seigneurs, Dieu vous croisse en bonté!* The personal pronoun *lui* is probably reiterating the same pronoun (*li*) of v. 69.
- 80 I have found no other attestation of *trafon*, given in the AND with the meaning "depths of woe" and repeated in the DEAF with the meaning "profondeur (du chagrin, du deuil)".
- 81 The verb *sauvegarder* is unattested in medieval French, even if there are some traces of the noun *salvegarde*, especially after the middle of the 14th c. (DEAF G, 165-166). Here we probably have a double subjunctive of exhortation or wish *salu(e) e garde*, with the first form having lost the final unstressed *e*, as sometimes occurs in anglo-norman (Short §§ 19.7 and 19.8). This interpretation allows restoration of correct line length, which would be hypometric if the verbal form *salvegarde* were accepted. For *saluer* in the sense of "to save" see TL IX, 126, 21-25. Here also, as in v. 61, the noun *alme*, though in initial position, is the object of the sentence, not its subject; here the feeling of being in the presence of an anacoluthon is emphasised by the presence of the oblique case pronoun *la*.

## Text

Luca Barbieri, 2016.

## Mss.

(1). Cambridge, University Library, Gg.1.1, f. 489b (anonymous).



## Versification and music

8ababbcbcb(xx); for the rhyme-scheme ababbcbcb compare MW 1026 = Frank 323; 10 *coblas singulares*, which randomly mix m. and f. rhymes; the rhymes present various irregularities and are often repeated in different places, and even in the same place. The two lines with the x-rhyme are transcribed only after the first stanza, but could constitute a refrain to be repeated at the end of each stanza; rhyme a: -ant, -ire, -ist, -u, -ist, -o(i)le, -a, -esse, -ere, -ie; rhyme b: -é, -ere, -er(e) (-ire in one case), -ie, -er, -ist, -ir, -é, -é(r), -art/ard(e); rhyme c: -ue, -ine, -aunce, -a, -ere, -(o)ur, -ise, -ere, -ere, -o(u)n; rhyme x: -oun (repeating rhyme c of the final stanza); in the ninth stanza the rhymes a and c coincide, giving rise to a rhyme-scheme 8ababbaba; many lines are irregular and are variously hyper- and hypometric, preserved in the edited text even though in some cases they could easily be corrected conjecturally, for example by eliminating superfluous forms; paronymous and derivative rhymes in vv. 21, 35 and 46 ( *enprist-prist-prist* ), 40 and 64 ( *quere-conquere* ); paronymous rhyme in vv. 76 and 78 ( *art-part* ); identical rhyme in vv. 4-73 ( *bounté* ), 14-17-66 ( *tere* , in paronymous rhyme with vv. 67 *Engleterre* and 72 *entere* ), 15-42 ( *fere* ), 31-77 ( *mie* ), 35-46 ( *prist* ).

## Previous editions

Wright 1839, 241; Böddeker 1878, 453; Meyer 1886, 338 (first stanza); Zettl 1935, 105; Aspin 1953, 83.

## Analysis of the manuscript tradition

The text is found in a manuscript of miscellaneous verse and prose texts, mainly in French. It is written at the end of a short chronicle of the history of England in French prose ( *Brut d'Angleterre abrégé* , ff. 484c-489b), possibly deriving from a verse model, which ends with the death of Edward I (1307). The codex also contains the third part of Peter of Langtoft's chronicle of England (ff. 328v-345v), also devoted to the reign of Edward I. The manuscript, compiled in England probably at the beginning of the 14th c., but in any case after 1307, belonged to John Moore (1646-1714), bishop of Ely. In 1715 King George I gave John Moore's library to Cambridge University Library, where it still is. Given the obviously amateurish nature of the composition and its numerous irregularities, I have preferred to present the text as it is recorded in the manuscript, without trying to make any corrections other than the completely obvious ones for scansion or grammar. In some lines a final unstressed *e* , superfluous from the morphological point of view and metrically supernumerary or incorrect, has been placed in round brackets (vv. 13, 23, 25, 34, 44) and I have made a few obvious suppletions, indicated by square brackets (vv. 37 and 77). The language shows marked anglo-norman characteristics and the customary anglo-norman carelessness can also partly explain the metrical irregularities.

## Historical context and dating

The song is an elegy on the death of Edward I of England, which occurred on 7 July 1307 (though the news only reached London on 25 July), and must therefore necessarily postdate it. Lines 67-68 refer to Edward II's coronation, which took place in Westminster Abbey on 25 February 1308, and suggest that the composition of the text must also postdate that event. Such a late date can also be explained by the fact that the king's solemn funeral only took place on 27 October 1307 (Phillips 2010, p. 131; see the reference to the burial in v. 17). The possibility that the author may have had access to the testimony of the archbishop of Canterbury Robert Winchelsey or one of his suite (see the note to vv. 43-66) would move the date of composition to after the latter's return from French exile on 24 March 1308. The text was therefore probably written between the autumn of 1307 and the spring of 1308, around the date of the king's funeral or shortly after the archbishop of Canterbury's return home.