

## Laments for the Death of Edward IV: 'It was a world to see him ride about'

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Four poems survive mourning the death of Edward IV in slightly different, but essentially the same, mood and manner: a lament by the soul of the man who had been a great and active king; a lament by one who had known and served him; a fragment purporting to be a lament by all the ladies who grieve at Edward's death; and lastly a formal lament in Latin hexameters. All regret the death of the king and three of them call on the reader or listener to pray for his soul.

None of the English poems can be seen as an official epitaph, as their tone is far more personal and emotional than that of the traditional 'chivalric' epitaphs for kings and nobles, usually attributed to heralds. Such epitaphs listed in a more factual way the deceased's name, descent, titles and martial deeds, and were often intended to hang on or be carved or painted on the deceased's monument; the only resemblance between these and two of the English poems on Edward IV is the request for prayers for the dead man's soul, with which these epitaphs invariably ended.<sup>1</sup> The Latin text, however, has some of the hallmarks of an official, though not of an heraldic, epitaph.

The existence of other royal epitaphs and other, more literary, laments in much the same format and style is emphasised by the work of Robert Fabian, alderman and chronicler of London, who lived through the reign of Edward IV and composed his *New Chronicles of England and France* (the Creation to 1485)<sup>2</sup> at the end of the century (published 1516). He used royal epitaphs and laments whenever he could as an effective conclusion and summing up of each king's life and reign.<sup>3</sup> When they were in Latin he provided an English translation, sometimes

by himself, and in some cases he describes where he had seen them: 'An other vercyfyer ... made these verses folowyng, and caused theym to be hanged over the place of his sepulture' (Edward I); 'this epytaphy or superscripcion on a table hangyng upon his tombe' (Edward III); 'with this epytaphy upon his toumbe' (Richard II). No author is mentioned by name.

Fabian collected the actual epitaphs from the tombs of Henry II, Henry III, Edward I, Richard II and Henry V, and found other laudatory verses for Henry I and Edward I. He also had a long complaint in Latin written supposedly by Edward II during his imprisonment of which he only gave one Latin verse, with an English translation of the whole. Nothing in the poem's text in fact proved it was written by Edward II and only one line — 'Many with great honours I dyd whylom avaunce' — suggests that the author was a king. Its note of personal grief bears some resemblance to the lament by Edward IV's soul (see below), and in its heartfelt repentance and prayers to God, to Christ on the Rood, and to the Virgin Mary 'that barest swete Jhesu, ..., that shynyst and florysshed as flowre moost sure', there is a certain appeal and charm. The long Latin text that Fabian quotes for Henry V recounts in detail the sequence of masses said in his chantry. It has an English envoy celebrating Henry's acts, for which he should be included among the Nine Worthies and installed above the hierarchies of angels in heaven. Given Fabian's liking for such texts it is surprising that he found nothing for Edward IV, in whose reign he had been a young man. It was left to the didactic survey of famous Englishmen, the *Mirror for Magistrates* of 1561, to print the 'Lament of the Soul of Edward IV' as a comment on the king's life and character.<sup>4</sup>

From the evidence of Fabian's collection — the originals mostly in Latin — it is clear that poems on the death of a king, whether meant to hang on the actual tomb or to be circulated and read elsewhere, were well known in England and indicate that all kings might expect such tributes. Other laudatory poetic essays in the vulgar tongue have been collected by modern historians of English verse. Neither these, nor those collected by Fabian, have precisely the same format as the English poems on Edward IV. Some of the themes are inevitably the same: the 'tender' age at the time of death, the greatness that is gone, the passing away of every worldly thing, the grief, the regret and the wringing of hands, the warning that 'as I am, so will ye be', and the prayers for God's mercy on the deceased's soul. An English 'Death of Edward I', for example, harps on the dead king's prowess in war, how the king of France had prevented him leading a crusade, the particular grief of the pope at his death, expressed in direct speech, and a prayer that his son 'ner be worse man'.<sup>5</sup>

Another so-called 'Lament for Edward II', which has also been assigned to Richard II, points the moral of how an unnamed king topples off Fortune's Wheel.<sup>6</sup> 'The Death of Edward III' mourns the king as the lost steersman of the ship of

governance.<sup>7</sup> 'A Recollection of Henry V', ascribed to John Audley, the poet-chaplain to Lord Lestrage (died 1449), is a brief chronicle of Henry's conquest of France and his marriage to Katherine of France, and was written essentially to honour the infant Henry VI whom the poet expects to fulfil the prophecy and regain the Holy Land.<sup>8</sup> 'A Remembrance of Henry VI', ascribed to James Ryman, celebrates the virtues which have gained him 'a joyful place' in Heaven and cause God to do 'grete thingis' at Windsor, Henry's birthplace. It contains no facts about the king's career except his place of birth. It has been suggested that it could have been written as early as 1471 as it makes no mention of anything untoward about the king's death, but the reference to miracles at Windsor suggests a date after 1484, when Henry was reinterred there, and most probably 1492 when the poem was printed.<sup>9</sup>

With these poems may be linked the moral advice contained in the 'Lament of the Duchess of Gloucester', Eleanor Cobham. She is not dead but nevertheless is taking leave of the world after her public punishment. She bewails her crimes and ambition, bids farewell to all the rich trappings of her previous life and to freedom in order to lead a life of prayer; her refrain is, 'Alle women may be ware by me'.<sup>10</sup> The 'Elegy on King Henry the Seventh', of which four of the seven verses are mutilated, gives no precise particulars of the king's deeds, but compares him to Hector, Ulysses, Solomon, Croesus and Julius Caesar, and bids his subjects rejoice in his heir who is like to be another Trajan.<sup>11</sup> The longest surviving lament before 1500 and the one that resembles the 'Death of Edward IV', in that it purports to be by a servant of the deceased, is 'The Epitaffe of the moste noble and valyaunt late duke of Bedford', printed by Richard Pynson in 1497. This runs to 396 lines in twenty different metres and is highly repetitive, telling the reader nothing about Jasper except that he came of the line of Brutus and was related to kings. Beside the River Severn, the author comes across Smert, the keeper of Jasper's hawks, convulsed with sorrow at his master's death. The rest of the text consists of Smert's grief-stricken laments or orisons addressed to Death, who replies, and to God, who does not. Apart from the occasional inclusion of the name of Jasper there is nothing personal about this poem, as there is about the 'Death of Edward IV' by his supposed household servant. It reads like a learned exercise on a well-worn theme by an author who had not been supplied with a *curriculum vitae*.<sup>12</sup>

The tenor of the laments, harping on past greatness on the one hand and the inevitability and universality of death on the other, as well as on the sinfulness of man and his need of the prayers of others, would have come as no surprise to Edward IV. In his will of 1475 he had requested to be buried

lowe in the gronde, and ... a stone to bee laied and wrought with the figure of dethe with scochyns of our armes and writings convenient aboute the bordures of the same remembring the day and yere of oure decease.

His person was to be represented in silver and gilt, and the chantry would be large enough for thirteen persons to kneel and pray. Two priests would say masses for the soul of Edward and his queen for ever, and twelve almsmen, supported by the endowment of his chantry, would similarly pray for their benefactor.<sup>13</sup> Clearly Edward IV was as aware as any man of his time of the transitoriness of life, of the ever-present fear of death, and of the need to help the soul through purgatory by the prayers of the living. Although the precise layout visualised by Edward is obscure, it seems he wanted a form of tomb that included a figure of himself in death — a cadaver, a permanent *memento mori* for others, 'as I am so will ye be' — beneath a figure of himself alive, a double-tiered tomb which would include a chantry chapel and an altar. He was after all the king, he could afford the space and the expense, and as king he needed more prayers than most of his subjects.

The 'Lament of the Soul of Edward IV' speaks for the king in a tone similar to that of the king's will. It addresses 'my friends' and the soul's main theme is that this life is transitory and that the good things of life are mere trickeries of Fortune. The first two stanzas knock home the point, there is a constant harking back through the next four, with an insistent lugubrious, Latin line at the end of each stanza — a quotation from the book of Job used in the office for the dead<sup>14</sup> — and there is a finale of two stanzas, drawing in 'St Bernard' on the vileness of man, and recalling Alexander, Samson, Solomon and Absalom as examples of heroes who were powerful, strong, wise and beautiful, but who have all vanished as if they had never been. In Edward's will the message is equally explicit, even commonplace, if not conveyed in such a literary way. Death is ever present and the soul asks for pardon, as the chantry priests at Windsor were to do eternally for the king's soul — the Windsor chantry is specifically mentioned by the soul of the 'Lament', 'But Wynsore of all have I no mo, ... For *nunc in Wyndsore in pulvere dormio*' (stanza 6). The soul touchingly refers to 'Lady Bess', his wife, from whom he is now divided until Doomsday: he bids her love God in the meantime (stanza 6); although in another version it is more explicitly their own love which is his concern.<sup>15</sup> He refers to his patronage, foundations and building — the Tower of London, Tattershall, which Edward is interestingly said to have bought, Dover, London Wall, which he made the Londoners rebuild, Nottingham, Windsor and Eton, Westminster and Eltham (stanza 5)<sup>16</sup> — which are all in the past and no longer of use to him. Fortune had been kind and given him victory in England and a tribute from France, and had allowed him to amass a great treasure from his people, though at the expense of their goodwill (stanza 4). The soul concludes by asking for forgiveness — 'I wold amend' (stanza 4) — and for the prayers of those same 'courteys comyns' whose 'tresure' he had taken through taxation (stanzas 4 and 8).

The sympathy of the 'Lament of the Soul' for the dead king is apparent, although its main purpose is to teach the living. This is equally true of the 'Death

of Edward IV', but here the desperate search for the dead man and the remembrance of his greatness is undertaken by one of Edward's own household men — it echoes the far more elaborate, contemporary quest and remembrance by Olivier de La Marche for his dead masters and mistress, the dukes and duchess of Burgundy, in *Le chevalier délibéré*. In *Le chevalier délibéré*, and to a lesser extent in the 'Death of Edward IV', the personal loss is deeply felt and moves the sympathetic reader, while in 'The Epitaph of Jasper Duke of Bedford', as we have seen, the author fails to use the same literary device of personal involvement to any real effect.

The shortness of life is the inevitable theme in 'The Death', but admiration for Edward is the keynote: he was the 'doughtiest' and the 'worthiest' of men, the 'freshest' man in battle (stanza 2), and 'It was a world to see him ride about' (stanza 3). The author makes it clear that he himself had seen Edward sitting in estate (stanza 4), surrounded by 'the sun, the rose, the sunbeam'. He was peerless, the 'well of knighthood', and the lodestar of other princes (stanza 5); he was the 'lantern and the light' of his people, a metaphor readily used of the king and his household at this date.<sup>17</sup> He was 'our king, our lord', who was always ready to fight for England's right (stanza 6). Most dramatic of all: 'he was here yesterday', the sad and amazed reiteration of this simple fact in almost every stanza conveys the author's grief with some force. Like the 'Lament of the Soul' the last two verses emphasise the need the king's soul has for prayers and that soon 'we' shall be in like case. The last line of each verse of both the 'Lament of the Soul' and the 'Death' is similar or the same; both hammer at the main themes of death and prayer.

The fragment of the 'Lament of the Ladies' is so mutilated that little can be said about it. The beginning is reminiscent of the beginning of many medieval poems with the poet going forth in the month of May on a beautiful morning with happiness in his heart, to be met, in this case, by Ladies in black weeping for the death of King Edward.<sup>18</sup> The scraps of words which survive after the first verse show that Edward's fine appearance in rich clothes was mentioned and that the themes of the frailty of this life and of grief were present.

The Latin 'elegy' is more formal than any of the English verse and recalls many of the laudatory phrases used in the Latin 'epytaphys' quoted by Fabian: Edward IV was *pater* (father) and *pastor* (shepherd) and *legis custos* (guardian of the law), Edward I *rex bonus* (good king), *actio justitiae* (justice) and *pax regni* (peace of the realm). Edward IV is called *decus orbis* (ornament of the world) and *gloria plebis* (glory of the people), Edward III was *decus Anglorum* (ornament of the English) and *pax populorum* (peace of nations). Heraldic references occur: Edward IV's *rosa mundi* (rose of the world, i.e. the rose of York) and *sol triumphi* (sun of triumph, i.e. the sun in splendour); Edward I was *corde leopardus* (leopard-heart), Edward III *invictus pardus* (undefeated leopard). The dead kings' military

victories were remembered and they were compared to legendary and biblical heroes: Edward IV had the talents of Solomon, Jonathan, Arthur and Absalom, and even, 'almost', of Christ; Edward III emulated Judas Macchabeus, Richard II was as prudent as *Omerus*, Henry V was included among the Nine Worthies. The resemblance between all these poems is remarkable enough to suggest that the one for Edward IV was also actually made to be put on 'a table to hang on his tomb', were it not for the negative testimony of Robert Fabian, who did not know of one. The Latin lament also recalls the English poems in that it refers to England's grief, the building of St George's Chapel at Windsor, and the feasting and dancing that used to be seen in Edward's palaces but are now things of the past.

Who wrote these poems on Edward IV? Standard though they are, the 'Death' in particular suggests it was written by someone associated with the household of Edward, and while this was undoubtedly a literary device, the poet comes over as one who admired the king greatly — he was well informed about his achievements and his emblems: 'the sun, the rose, the sunbeam'. There were plenty of men about the court capable of composing verse, which was one of the necessary accomplishments of the courtier. In the past Lydgate (dead long before) as well as Skelton (a youth in 1483) have been put forward as the author on no evidence, but today we know more about cultural life at the Yorkist court and other names can be suggested.<sup>19</sup>

For the Latin poem the only possible and very slight clue to its authorship is to be sought in the first line, a semi-quotation from Ovid's *Letters from Pontus*. Unfortunately this text, in which the poet complains about his exile and his past errors — a theme not taken up in the lines that follow — was known in England at least from the beginning of the twelfth century (the date of the earliest recorded manuscripts).<sup>20</sup> Ownership of the *Letters from Pontus* was fairly common by the fifteenth century and many people could have been inspired by its lines; the other, rare and very brief, echoes of classical verse in the poem are also common enough, deriving from Vergil and other works of Ovid, or so frequently used that no source needs to be looked for. The surviving copy of this epitaph probably does not reflect the technical competence of the original.<sup>21</sup> In view of this and because of the poem's language, style and subject, it is possible that the lines were composed by the Italian Pietro Carmeliano, who was around and active as a court poet at the time of Edward's death.<sup>22</sup> Work by Carmeliano might have been published for he was sufficiently well known, but the unfinished state of Edward's tomb may have meant that there was no immediately obvious place for a long text to be carved or painted in a permanent manner, or even merely hung near the monument. The shortness of Richard III's reign and the lack of interest in the matter under Henry VII — though not presumably shared by his queen, Edward's daughter — may have contributed to the epitaph being forgotten.

No evidence survives as to who wrote any of these poems, and their very 'commonness' makes identification of the authors even more difficult. There was what amounted to an industry of writing the more formal epitaphs for the dead — many surviving fifteenth-century tombs testify to the interest in and the practical need for epitaphs in verse or prose, Latin and English.<sup>25</sup> Many of the more chivalric ones and those mostly concerned with rank and pedigree can be attributed to heralds, as was that for Richard, Duke of York — heralds were playing an increasing role in the organisation of the funerals of lesser men and women at this time. The author of the average epitaph is usually unknown, but in the case of Sir Ralph Verney, a past mayor of London, we know that it was commissioned by his executor and son-in-law, Henry Danvers, to be in gilded metal on the tomb in St Martin Pomery, Ironmonger Lane, in 1478,

Item, to the sonne of John Awdeley gyrdeler, for his devise of the  
wrytyng of the seid epytave and to helpe his fadre out of the prison of  
Ludgate — vs<sup>26</sup>

The occurrence of two John Audleys<sup>25</sup> as 'poets' of 'epitaphs' is presumably merely a coincidence, and not based on a family connection.

In a slightly different vein, a poet with a knowledge of fashionable French literature and enough imagination might have put Edward — who was mourned by all the ladies of the realm and who might have enjoyed such a fantasy in his more frivolous moments — in the cemetery of the Hospital of Love. In René of Anjou's *Livre du cuer d'amours espris* ('The Book of the Heart Captured by Love', 1457),<sup>26</sup> *Coeur*, the lover, at the end of his long quest reaches the Hospital where desperate and ailing lovers are looked after. Behind the Hospital itself is the cemetery of famous lovers; its entrance gate is a lofty hall hung with the full coats of arms of the noble and the great — David, Troilus, Aeneas, Caesar, Arthur — and beneath each coat are lines of verse in which the dead themselves explain who they are and why they ended their lives in the Hospital. Philip the Good's, for example, describes how the duke was Love's serf all his life and was defeated in many of his master's battles, ending up in the Hospital. In the cemetery itself are the rich and magnificent tombs of the great poets of love and all great lovers. Both Edward's tomb at Windsor and the Laments written for him after his death match the splendour and the pathos of this literary graveyard.

### 1. 'Lament of the Soul of Edward IV'

'The Lament of the Soul' was edited, collated from all surviving manuscripts and printed editions by Robert Kinsman in 1966; he also discussed the relationship of the manuscripts and the text's editorial history.<sup>27</sup> The surviving manuscripts are Corning, New York, Corning Museum of Glass, Corning Glass Centre MS 7 (ff. 131-132),<sup>28</sup> British Library MS Additional 29729 (ff. 8-9v), and British Library MS

Harleian 4011, f. 169v-170v).<sup>29</sup> In Add. 29729 the poem is ascribed to Lydgate (died 1450), probably by John Stow, who owned and made the manuscript, which is largely a copy of a John Shirley manuscript, in 1558.<sup>30</sup> Later the text was ascribed to John Skelton, but, as stated above, there is no clue as to the author.<sup>31</sup> The text printed here follows Kinsman's edition of Corning MS 7, but obvious errors by the scribe of Corning MS 7 have been amended to make a more readable text. Capitals, punctuation and *u* and *v* have been further modernised; thorn is written as *th*, yogh as *y* or *g*, and the ampersand as *and*.

1

*Miserere mei*, ye that be my frendis,  
For the world hathe enformid me to fall.  
How myght I endure when every thyng endis?  
What creature ys mad to be eternal?  
Now is ther no helpe but pray for my soule!  
This Eduard seyt, that lat was kyng  
And xxii yerys rulid this imperyall,  
Sum men to plesur, and sum men to [no] liekyng.<sup>32</sup>  
But forgeveins<sup>33</sup> I aske of all my mysdoing;  
What avaylyth yow now to be my foo?  
I may not resist ne amend your complaynyng,  
For *ecce nunc in pulvere dormio*.

2

I ly now in mold as it is naturall,  
That erthe unto erthe have the revertere:  
What ordeynid God to be terrestyall,  
Withowt recourse to erthe of nature?  
Who for to lyve ever may be sure?  
What ys it to trust the mutabylyte  
Of this world whan no thyng may endure?  
For I am now gon that late was in prosperyte,  
To presume ther upon, it ys but vanyte —  
Not<sup>34</sup> sertyn but a cheyrefeyre full of woo —  
Reygnid I not lat whylome in felycyte?  
*Et ecce nunc in pulvere dormio*.

3

Where was in my lyf suche on as I,  
Whyle that my fortune had contynauce?

Grauntid yt she not me with vycory  
 In Ynglond to reygne and to contribute Fraunce?  
 Sche toke me be thy hand and led me to daunce,  
 And with here suger lippis on me smylyd.  
 And for here dyssemblid countenaunce  
 Not covde beware tyll I was begylyd.  
 Now from this world she hathe me exilid,  
 Whan I was most lothe for to go,  
 And I am in age, as who sait, a child,  
*Ecce nunc in pulvere dormio.*

4

I se wyll they leve that doble my yeris;  
 Thus<sup>35</sup> dealid the world with me as it lust,  
 And hath me made, to yow that be my perys,  
 Example to thynke on had I wyst.  
 I storyd my cofers and allso my chestys  
 With taskys<sup>36</sup> takyng of the comenalte;  
 I toke ther tresure but of ther prayeris mist,  
 Whom I beseche with pure humylyte  
 For to forgeve and have on me pety.  
 I was your kyng and kept yow from yowre foo;  
 I wold now amend, but yt wull not be:  
*Ecce nunc in pulvere dormio.*

5

I<sup>37</sup> had inow,<sup>38</sup> I held me not content,  
 Withowt remembrans that I schuld dye,  
 And more to encrease was myne entent.  
 And not beyng ware who schuld it occupye,  
 I made the Towre strong, I wyst not why.  
 I knew not to whom I purchasid Tatersayle;  
 I amendid Dover one the mowntayne hye,  
 And London provokyd to fortifye with wall;  
 I made Notynham a plase ryall;  
 Wynsore and Eton and many odur mo,  
 As Westmynster, Eltham, and sone I went from all,  
 And now *ecce nunc in pulvere dormio.*

6

Where is now my conquest and my vycory?

Where is now my rechys<sup>39</sup> and my ryall aray?  
 Where be my gret coursers and my horsys hy?  
 And where is my grett plesure, solas and play?  
 As vanite to nought all went ys away.  
 O fayre Lady Bess, long for me may ye call,  
 Now ar we departid onto Domysday!  
 Therefore, love ye that lord that ys eternal.<sup>40</sup>  
 Where ar now my castelys and my byldingis ryall?  
 But Wynsore of all have I no mo,  
 And of Eton the prayerys perpetuall,  
 For *nunc in Wynsore yn pulvere dormio*.

7

Why shuld a man be proud or presume hy?  
 Seynt Barnard doth thereof nobly trete,  
 Seing a man ys a sak of sterqueryte<sup>41</sup>  
 And schall torne to wormys mette.  
 What came of Alysaunder the gret?  
 Or of strong Sampson who can tell?  
 Was not wormys ordeynyd ther flesh to fret?  
 Of Salamon, whyche was off wytt the well?  
 Absolon proferd his here to sell —  
 For all hys beute yet wormys ete hym allso.<sup>42</sup>  
 And I late in honowre dyd exsell,  
 And now *ecce nunc in pulvere dormio*.

8

I have playyd my pagent and now am I past,  
 Well ye wot y was not of gret eld.  
 Thys all concludid shall be at the last,  
 For when dethe approchyth, lost ys the feld.  
 But sethyn the world no lenger me upheld<sup>43</sup>  
 Ne nought wold concerve me my place,  
*In manus tuas, domine*, my spryt I yelde,  
 Humble besechyng ever thy grace.  
 And courtteys comyns your hertys unbrace  
 Benyngly to pray for me allso,  
 As I arst seyde,<sup>44</sup> your king I was,  
*Et ecce nunc in pulvere dormio*.

*Explicit*

A lamentable of kyng Edward the iiiij

2. 'The Death of Edward IV'

Manchester, John Rylands University Library MS Eng. 113, f. 3r-v.<sup>45</sup> Only one copy of this poem appears to survive; the spelling is rationalised as above.

Kyng Edward the iiiijth

1

Wher is this Prynce that conquered his right  
Within Inghland, master of all his foon;  
And after Fraunce, be very force and myght,  
Without stroke, and afterward cam hoom;<sup>46</sup>  
Made Scotlond to yelde, and Berwyk wan he from;  
Rydyng a hontyng, hym-silff to sporte and playe?<sup>47</sup>  
All men of England ar bounde for hym to praye.

2

This most dred prince that was under the son,  
Through all this worlde renewed<sup>48</sup> was his name;  
The dothiest,<sup>49</sup> the worthiest, withouten comparison,  
Ther was noon suche, but ye reken the same,  
Compassed the worlde,<sup>50</sup> so spronge his name;<sup>51</sup>  
And as in batell, the ffresshest I shall say.  
All men of England ar bounde for hym to pray.

3

Wher is he nowe, that man of noble men,<sup>52</sup>  
That in his howsold kepte the ryall rowte?<sup>53</sup>  
Ther is no place in all the worlde, I ken,  
But of the substaunce he hath chosen owte.<sup>54</sup>  
Hit was a wordle to se hym ride aboute<sup>55</sup>  
Throughout his land, and that was day be day.  
All men of England ar bounde for hym to pray.

4

O noble Edward, wher art thowe be-come,  
Which full worthy I haue seen in estate?  
Edward the iiiijth I mene, with the sonne,

The rose, the sonne-berne, which was full fortunate.  
Noon erthly prince durst make with hym debate.  
Art thowe agoo,<sup>56</sup> and was here yestirday?  
All men of Englund ar bound fo the to pray.

5

The well of knyghthode, withouten any pere,  
Of all erthely prynces thowe were the lode-sterre!  
Be-holde and rede, herkyn well and hyre!  
In gestis, in romansis, in cronicles nygh & ferre,  
Well knowen it is, ther can no man it deferre,<sup>57</sup>  
Perelees he was, and was here yestirday.  
All men of Englund ar bounde for hym to pray.

6

[f. 3v] Fy on this worlde! What may we wrecches say,  
Thate nowe have lost the lanterne and the light?  
Oure kyng, oure lorde — alas, and welc-a-wey!  
In every felde full redy for oure right;  
It was no nede to pray hym for to fight;  
Redy he was,<sup>58</sup> that was here yestirday.  
All men of Englund ar bounde for him to pray.

7

Me thinkith ever this kyng sholde not be gon,  
I see his lordis, I see his knyghtis all;  
I see his plasis made of lyme and ston;  
I see his servauntes sitting in the hall,  
And walkyng among them his marchall.<sup>59</sup>  
Whate sholde I say? he was here yestirday!  
All men of Englund ar bounde for hym to pray.

8

I am be-giled, for he is past and goon.  
I met his men wepyng in clothis blake<sup>60</sup> —  
Not oon nor tweyn, God wote, many oon,  
Which daily waylith and sorowith for his sake.  
Hit to endur, hit makith my herte quake,  
When I remembre he was here yestirday.  
All men of Englund ar bounde for hym to pray.

Nowe pray we to God, that all this wordle hath wrought,  
 Among His aungelis this prince may have a place;  
 And for His passion that us so dere hath bought,  
 That of His paynys he may have His grace.  
 Nowe, gracious Lord, remembre well this case!  
 As wofull synners, we call to The, and say,  
 That we of Englund ar bounde for hym to pray.

Ye wofull men that shall this writyng rede,  
 Remembre well here is no dwellyng place.<sup>61</sup>  
 Se howe this prince is from us goon, and dede,  
 And we shall aftir hym sue the trace.  
 Ther is no choise, ther is noon other grace;  
 This knowe ye well — he was here yestirday.  
 All men of Englund ar bounde for hym to pray.  
 Explicit.

### 3. 'Lament of the Ladies for the Death of Edward IV'

British Library MS Harleian 3952, f. 105v.<sup>62</sup>

The lamentacioun of ladyes for the death of King Edward the iiiijth.

In May, when every herte is lyghte  
 And fayre flourys doth sprede and springe,  
 I rose me up byfore the daye bryghte  
 For to heyre the birddys syng.  
     I herd a wofull lamentinge  
     Of ladyes that were clothed in blake  
     [We?]pt for king Edwardes sake

The text is written on the verso side of the last flyleaf, in a late fifteenth-century hand different from the one that wrote the rest of the manuscript, which contains John Lydgate's *Life of the Virgin*. The left side of the page is torn away and most of the words are missing; some of the now missing words were copied by a slightly later hand on the originally blank areas of the page. Though most of the poem is missing surviving words and phrases, such as 'noble king', 'handis wringe', 'clothes blak', '[h]e ded wer clothes of sylke', 'tyme was king', and 'prosperite' suggest the drift of the lament. Only the first, almost complete, stanza has been given here.

#### 4. The Latin Lament.

The only surviving poem in Latin on Edward IV's death occurs in Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 86, f. 174, a very miscellaneous collection of secular and devotional texts in prose and verse, but almost all in English.<sup>63</sup> The manuscript is made up of four booklets, all of London or near-London origin, and written by several hands. The lament is part of the second booklet which is of the second half of the fifteenth century and datable by the inclusion of the lament itself and the watermarks (after c. 1450). It contains two other, very short, rather common Latin verse texts, the first a complaint about the mutability of fortune, the second a prognostication about world events based on the weather on St Paul's day (Jan. 25). The English texts are mainly poems by Lydgate, but there is also one of the two surviving copies of Gilbert Banaster's *Legenda Sismond*, a translation in verse of Boccaccio's *Guiscardo and Ghismonda*, which can perhaps be dated to the 1470s. Banaster was a royal servant connected with the Chapel Royal under Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII.<sup>64</sup>

Punctuation and capitals have been modernised, abbreviations silently extended; ampersand is written as *et*, *que* has been attached to the relevant word. Because the scribe probably had no Latin and made many mistakes a number of hypothetical readings have been inserted in an attempt to recreate the original.

#### *Text.*

Carmina qui letus cecini cano tristia mestus:<sup>65</sup>  
Heu pater, heu pastor, heu rex, heu bellicus armis,  
Heu doctus Salamon, Jonathas, Arturus in hostes,  
Heu vere legis custos, heu gloria plebis,  
Edwardus Quartus, Anglie<sup>66</sup> Rex, et decus orbis.  
Tollitur a nobis rosa mundi solque triumphi,  
Absalon in vultu, Salamon, Christus quasi, cultu.  
Templi fundator, castris novus<sup>67</sup> et recreator.  
Astra [??] orbis<sup>68</sup> natus, qui sit iam queso beatus.<sup>69</sup>  
Gallus obedit ei vultu, Scotosque subegit,  
Protector Christi fidei victus nece tristi.  
Celsa petens astri, iam liquit culmina castris.  
Sol latet, obscuris gravibus dolet Anglia curis;  
Castra choris plena psallentum sunt per amena  
Olim, iam flentum vix verba referre valentum.  
Luce migrat celis nona rex noster Aprilis,  
[Edwardi ..... i Cristi matris .....bus que..]<sup>70</sup>  
M semel et C quater, octo decies tribus annis  
Christi, sed regni vicenus tercius annus.<sup>71</sup>

Natus quo mense necet hunc mors illius ense.  
 Anglia plange parens regis, sic Neustria nutrix;  
 Rex tuus ex iure moritur, cur Gallia confle  
 Regem nunc<sup>72</sup> reges plangent, geniti genitorem,<sup>73</sup>  
 Princeps, duxque, comes, genitrix, reginaque plores.  
 Spiritus exorent regis petat<sup>74</sup> alta polorum  
 Omnes Angligeni, quia rex et tutor eorum.

*Translation.*

I, who used to sing songs happily, am sad and sing laments:  
 O Father, O Shepherd, O King, O Warrior in arms,  
 O learned Solomon, Jonathan [and] Arthur to his enemies,  
 O guardian of the true law, o glory of the people:  
 Edward the Fourth, King of England, ornament of the world.  
 Taken from us is the Rose of the World and the Sun of Triumph,  
 In looks like Absalom, in habit like Solomon, almost like Christ,  
 Founder of the church and new restorer of the castle.  
 Born [the star??] of the world, who is now, I pray, blessed.  
 The French obeyed his eye, he subdued the Scots,  
 Protector of the faith of Christ, sad death overcame him.  
 He reached for the sky, but has now left his high castle.  
 The sun is hidden, England mourns, oppressed by dark cares;  
 Castles full of dancing, of people singing in the gardens,  
 That is past: now they are weeping and can hardly speak.  
 Our king went to heaven on the ninth [day] of April,  
 [.....]  
 In the year of Christ one thousand, four hundred  
 And eighty-three, but of his reign the twenty-third.  
 In the month he was born death attacked him with its sword.  
 England, lament, you bore the king; Normandy, too, that nourished him;  
 Your king by right is dead, therefore, France, weep with them.  
 Kings mourn a king and sons mourn their father,  
 Prince and duke, earl, mother, and you, his queen, weep.  
 That the soul of the king will reach the high heavens  
 Let all Englishmen pray, for he was their king and their guardian.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For some discussion on the origins and genre of these poems, R. Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1968, pp. 325-26; for some early 16th-century laments, p. 324; D. Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric*, London 1972, pp. 203-05; *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, gen. eds J. Burke Severs and A.E. Hartung, 9 vols, New Haven, Conn., 1967-93, vol. 5 [211]. For the epitaph of Richard Duke of York, the present authors with P.W. Hammond, *The Reburial of Richard Duke of York 21-30 July 1476*, Richard III Society, London 1996, pp. 12-13, 28-29. See also that of Sir Marmaduke Constable, K. Dockray, 'Sir Marmaduke Constable of Flamborough', *The Ricardian*, vol. 5 (1979-81), pp. 265-66. Those of a countess, Lucia Visconti, and a queen, Katherine de Valois, with their concentration on pedigree and virtue, make useful comparisons: H. Bradley, 'Lucia Visconti, Countess of Kent (d. 1424)', in *Medieval London Widows, 1300-1500*, ed. C.M. Barron and A.F. Sutton, London 1994, p. 84. 'Annales' of the so-called William Worcester, *Letters and Papers of the Wars of the English in France*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols, Rolls Series 1861-64, vol. 2, pt 2, pp. 761-62; a translation of the Katherine de Valois poem is given, A. Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 8 vols, London 1851-52, vol. 2, p. 155.
2. Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. H. Ellis, London 1812.
3. Henry I, p. 260; Henry II, p. 281; Henry III, p. 369; Edward I, pp. 405-06; Edward II, pp. 431-32; Edward III, pp. 487-88; Richard II, p. 569; Henry V, pp. 589-91.
4. *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. L.B. Campbell, 2 vols, Cambridge 1938, vol. 1, pp. 235-39: 'A lamentable of Kyng Edward the III'. See also John Thompson, *The Founding of English Metre*, London 1961, pp. 37-43; H. Steiner, *The First Part of the Mirror for Magistrates (1559)*, Strassburg 1914, pp. 94-95.
5. R.H. Robbins, *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, New York 1959, no. 5, pp. 21-24.
6. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, no. 38, pp. 98-102, pp. 301-02 on dating the poem to 1327.
7. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, no. 39, pp. 102-06.
8. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, no. 41, pp. 108-10. For Audley see M. Bennett, 'John Audley: some new evidence on his life and work', *Chaucer Review*, vol. 16 (1981-82), pp. 344-55. Audley is held to have died c. 1426.
9. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, no. 83, pp. 199-201, 362; the editor gives no explanation of why the date 1492 is the most likely.
10. *Political Poems and Songs relating to English History Composed during the Period from the Accession of Edw. III to that of Ric. III*, ed. Thomas Wright, 2 vols, Rolls Series 1859-61, vol. 2, pp. 205-08.
11. A. Dyce, ed., *The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, 2 vols, London 1843-44, repr. 1965, vol. 2, pp. 399-400.
12. STC 14477 (formerly 22605, under Skelton), printed by Richard Pynson in 1497; *Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. R.H. Robbins and C. Brown, New York 1943, no. 520 ('Bydyngge al alone ...'), *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse*, ed. R.H. Robbins and J.L. Cutler, Lexington, Ky, 1965, no. 2818.6 ('Rydyngge al alone ...'). Edited, Dyce, *John Skelton* (see n. 7), vol. 2, pp. 388-98.
13. *Excerpta Historica*, ed. S. Bentley, London 1833, pp. 366-76; W.H. St John Hope, *The Architectural History of Windsor Castle*, 3 vols, London 1913, pp. 376-77.
14. The First Lesson of the First Nocturn of Matins of the Office of the Dead is Job, 7, 16-21; it starts *Parce mihi, Domine* (Spare me, Lord) and ends *Ecce nunc in pulvere dormiam: et si mane me quaesieris, non subsistam* (For now I shall sleep in the dust; and if you seek me tomorrow, I shall be no more).
15. Compare the two versions of this section.
16. Tattershall was the castle of Lord Cromwell in Lincolnshire, owned by Bishop Waynflete of Winchester who carried out building works there in Edward's reign. There is no surviving record that Edward bought it or tried to do so. Thanks are due to Professor Richard Marks and Dr Virginia Davis for discussing this point with the authors.

17. *The Household of Edward IV. The Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478*, ed. A.R. Myers, Manchester 1959, p. 89: 'this honorable household and lantern of Ingland'.
18. Compare the laments for Edward II and Jasper, Duke of Bedford above.
19. Skelton was asserted as the author by the poet compilers of *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (1559), Campbell, *Mirror for Magistrates*, vol. 2, pp. 235-39. For a discussion of this, R.S. Kinsman, "'A Lamentable for King Edward the III'", *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 29 (1966), pp. 95-108. For the Yorkist court and its authors, see R. Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers. Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages*, Toronto 1980, *passim*.
20. K.L. McKinley, 'Manuscripts of Ovid in England, 1100 to 1500', *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, vol. 7 (1998), pp. 41-85.
21. The text was no doubt meant to be in hexameters, but deficient copying and legibility make it difficult to be certain.
22. See A.F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, 'Richard III's books: XIV. Pietro Carmeliano's early publications: his *Spring*, the *Letters of Phalaris*, and his *Life of St Katherine* dedicated to Richard III, *The Ricardian*, vol. 10 (1994-96), pp. 346-86.
23. E.g. those recorded for St Bartholomew's Hospital, the present authors, 'The cult of angels in late fifteenth-century England: an hours of the Guardian Angel presented to Queen Elizabeth Woodville', *Women and the Book. Assessing the Visual Evidence*, London 1996, p. 243 and n. 73. Julia Boffey starts her essay on 'Middle English Lives' in the new *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. D. Wallace, Cambridge 1999, p.610, with an epitaph.
24. Expenses of the funeral and tomb of Sir Ralph Verney within a longer account of Henry Danvers, PRO, C 1/230/53, f. 2: capitalisation modernised. The payment to secure the release of the father out of Ludgate, the prison for London citizens and especially for debtors, represents one of the seven acts of mercy done for the soul of the deceased.
25. See above and n. 8.
26. For a modern edition of the text see Susan Wharton, ed., René d'Anjou: *Le livre du cuer d'amours espris*, Série 10/18, Paris 1980. Unfortunately the series of magnificent miniatures of the well known ms. of the *Livre*, Vienna, Austrian National Library Cod. 2597, is unfinished and provides no picture of the cemetery. See *Le livre du Cœur d'amours espris*, introd. F. Unterkircher, London 1975, for the surviving illustrations.
27. Kinsman, 'Lamentable', pp. 95-108. See also *IMEV*, no. 2192, and *IMEV Sup.; Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. 1, 1460-1625, pt 2, Douglas-Wyatt, ed. P. Beal, London and New York 1980, SkJ 16-18, pp. 492-93.
28. Formerly called the Currer ms. and thought to be missing. The ms. contains Mandeville's *Travels*, 'The Invention of St Anthony the Abbott', a poem based on the legend of Ugolino, Count of Pisa, an anonymous English poem 'The Testamentum Christi', and finally the lament of Edward; see Kinsman, "'Lamentable'", pp. 98-99.
29. Harl. 4011 is described in G. Warner, ed., *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye. A Poem on the Use of Sea-power, 1436*, Oxford 1926, p. liii; it contains among other things Lydgate's *Life of the Virgin*, the *Mappula Angliae* and the *Libelle of Englysh Policie*; Edward's poem is a later addition.
30. In Add. 29729, the text is headed: *here folowythe the Epitaphy of kynge Edward the fowrthe complyd by John Lydgate monke of burie* [last five words deleted and Skelton added]; it is subscribed: *Explicit the Epitaffe of kynge Edwarde the fowrthe made John Lidgate monke of bery* [last five words deleted and Skelton added]. On f. 285v is written: *This boke perteyneth to Iohn Stow and was by hym wryten in the yere of our lord M.d.lviij*. The ms. also contains a text of the *Court of Sapience* — an encyclopedic poem perhaps made for Edward IV — copied from Caxton's imprint of the *Court*, 1481-83, see E.R. Harvey, *The Court of Sapience*, Toronto 1984, pp. ix-x.
31. It was printed by Richard Lant or Lunt c. 1542, and by Kyng and Marche, 1568, among Skelton's work,

and in modern editions of Skelton, e.g. Dyce, *Poetical Works of John Skelton*, vol. 1, pp. 1-5, which gives the variants of the printed editions; P. Henderson, ed., *The Complete Poems of John Skelton, Laureate*, London 1931 (modern spelling). Also in Carleton Brown, *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century*, Oxford 1939, no. 159, pp. 250-53, 341-42. See J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century*, London 1971, pp. 206-09.

32. The ms omits the 'no' which should obviously be there.
33. I.e. 'forgiveness'.
34. The ms has 'now'.
35. The ms has 'this'.
36. I.e. 'taxes'.
37. In the left margin of Add. is written 'his actes'.
38. I.e. 'I had enough'.
39. I.e. 'riches'; some versions have 'rentis'.
40. In Corning MS 7 this line reads: *Therefore, love, love ye that lord that ys eternall*. In Harl. 4011 it reads: *I lovyd you, lady, my soverayne overall*. The scribal alteration is interesting.
41. I.e. a 'sack of dung'; Harl 4011 has 'sake of stercory'. This is presumably a commonplace and not in fact a saying of St Bernard of Clairvaux; at least one proverb survives that echoes the sentiment of these four lines: *Unde superbit homo, dextra salvatur inermi / Villis natura, vas stercoris escaque vermi* (Freely translated: 'Why should man be proud and think he is able to save himself? His nature is vile, he is a sack of dung and food for worms'); see H. Walther, *Carmina Medii Aevi Posterioris Latina*, pt 2, vols 1-5, *Proverbia Sententiaeque Latinitatis Medii Aevi*, Göttingen 1963-65, no. 31265, and compare nos 25173-74. No text by St Bernard of Clairvaux himself appears to have this phrase, although references to *stercus* etc. are legion. We are grateful to Dom Eligius Dekkers and Mr R. Van der Plaetse, secretary of the Corpus Christianorum, for their search and information. Pseudo-St Bernard texts were not tried.
42. I.e. 'beauty'. This is presumably a reference to II Samuel 14: 26, where it said that David's son used to cut off his hair once a year and it was found to weigh 'two hundred shekels by the royal standard'. A shekel was a measure of weight as well as money, which may have given rise to the idea that Absalom — who was also a symbol of fatal vanity in the middle ages — was interested in its value.
43. The ms has 'help' which is obviously wrong.
44. 'As I said before'.
45. *IMEV*, no. 4062. Robbins, *Historical Poems*, pp. 111-13, 306-07. We are grateful to Peter McNiven for providing us with a xerox of the text.
46. These lines appear to prove that Edward was (supposed to be) proud of the fact that he defeated the French without fighting.
47. In 1463 when Warwick was fighting the last Lancastrian resistance in the North, William, Lord Hastings, had written to the Burgundian Jean de Lannoy that the earl had the situation in the north well in hand, while the king was 'at his sport and entertainment of the hunt without any fear for his very honourable person or any of his subjects'; printed C.L. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, 2 vols, London 1924, vol. 2, pp. 461-62. Was Hastings expressing criticism of Edward, or admiration for his *sang froid*, or was he merely telling de Lannoy that the king knew there was *no danger*, or he would be doing something himself?
48. *renewed*, 'renowned'.
49. *dothiest*, 'doughtiest'.
50. *Compassed the world*, 'lived in the world'??
51. *spronge his name*, 'his name spread around'??
52. *men*, 'mien'.

53. *rowte*, 'company'.
54. There was no place in the world from which he did not import some luxury??
55. *Hit was a wordle*, 'It was a marvel'.
56. *agoo*, 'gone'.
57. *deferre*, 'differ'?, have a different opinion.
58. Readiness to defend his people in battle was one of the king's duties, as Edward well knew; see Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, 'Chivalry under the Yorkist kings', forthcoming.
59. For this office and the operations of the king's hall see Myers, *Household of Edward IV*, passim.
60. Compare the third poem, the lament of the ladies, below.
61. *no dwellyng place*, 'no permanent place'.
62. *IMEV*, no. 1505. Printed in H.E. Sandison, *The 'Chanson d'aventure' in Middle English*, Bryn Mawr Monographs 12, Bryn Mawr 1913, pp. 128-29.
63. For the ms. see J.J. Griffiths, 'A re-examination of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 86', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, vol. 219 (1982), pp. 381-88; J. Boffey and C.M. Meale, 'Selecting the text: Rawlinson C. 86 and some other books for London readers', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. F. Riddy, Cambridge 1991, pp. 143-69. We are grateful to Julia Boffey for her help.
64. See e.g. R. Firth Green, 'The date of Gilbert Banester's translation of the tale of Guiscardo and Ghismonda', *Notes and Queries*, vol. 223 (1978), pp. 299-300, and references given there.
65. The only line so far identified as a partial quotation: Ovid, *Epistula ex Ponto*, 3, 8, line 35: *laeta fere laetus cecini, cano tristia tristis*.
66. The ms. has *Anglis*.
67. Before *novus* a word was crossed out, perhaps *navis*.
68. The ms. appears to have *orbis*.
69. The ms. has *beatīs*.
70. This line does not appear to be in the correct position; it is written between the last words of the previous and the following lines and the end has been cut off by the cropping of the page. The few partly legible words suggest the line might have contained a reference to Edward's 'messianic' career, saving his country like another Christ, See A.F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, Stroud 1997, p. 202
71. The ms. has *aruis*.
72. The ms. has *nuc*.
73. The ms. has *genitores*, but possibly the singular was intended.
74. The ms. has *petit*.