

La Vie du Prince Noir by the Chandos Herald as a Historical Source

Seigniour le temps qe ie vous dy
Ce fut droit p vn samady
Trois iours droit en moys daueriff
Qe tiel douce oisselet gentiff
Preignent a refaire lour chantz
Per prees ʒ bois ʒ p champs
En celluy temps fut tout sanz faille
Deuant Nazarz le grant bataille¹

The above lines are a small, yet revealing excerpt from *La Vie du Prince Noir* by the Chandos Herald.² What these lines show about *La Vie* is not only important for a historian because it may provide information about dates and events, but also because it is written in chivalric language that can be interpreted to be evocative of the age in which it was executed. The text, which chronicles the life of Edward, the Black Prince, is a source of information for historians studying both the Black Prince and the Hundred Years' War. The Black Prince lived from 1330 until 1376.³ By virtue of this fact, Edward's life was well placed within the political climate of the Hundred Years' War. In particular, *La Vie* is a good source for historians interested in the Prince's Spanish campaign of 1366-67.⁴ Therefore, the lines above are indicative of two ways in which *La Vie du Prince Noir* by the Chandos Herald may be utilized. First they could be used by a historian who can pull raw data from the text, and second by a historian who can read between the lines to interpret what the poem says about the fourteenth century and, in particular, the Hundred Years' War. For instance, although the above text depicts a beautiful spring day on which birds sing, what is being celebrated instead is a great battle.

This analysis will attempt to discern whether *La Vie du Prince Noir* is a valuable text to historians based on its manuscript evidence, authorship, literary devices and historical context. The above excerpt, although ostensibly drawn from the eyewitness testimony of an educated and fervent historian, is nevertheless bound in chivalric

¹ M.K. Pope and E.C. Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince by the Herald of Sir John Chandos*, (Oxford, 1910), p. 106. Translated *ibid.*, p. 164. 'My lords, the time I am telling you of was right on a Saturday, three days on in the month of April, when sweet and gentle birds begin to renew their songs in meadows, woods, and fields. It was at that time that, of a surety, befell the great battle before Najara, even as you have heard.' (3473-3480)

² For brevity's sake, in some instances I will refer to *La Vie du Prince Noir* as *La Vie*.

³ David Green, *The Black Prince*, (Stroud 2001), p. 11.

⁴ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, esp. p. lix-lx.

literary devices and therefore its usefulness as a historical source is thrown into question. Is *La Vie du Prince Noir* by the Chandos Herald a reliable or an untrustworthy source for historians?

La Vie du Prince Noir was most likely written in the year 1385.⁵ This can be determined through clues from the text. The Chandos Herald states in line 1816 that since the conquest of Castile, ‘Ne passa mye des ans vint.’⁶ This would suggest that *La Vie* was written in 1386, but because the author refers to the Princess of Wales in the present tense, and because she died at the close of 1385, in all probability this signifies it was written in 1385.⁷ The year in which *La Vie* was written is of utmost importance to a historian. The context of the time in which the Chandos Herald wrote it, coupled with the audience by whom or for whom it was commissioned, might vastly change the way the entirety of the poem can be interpreted.

The audience of *La Vie* is of central concern to a historian as well. The existence of the poem in only two manuscripts coupled with its being written in Anglo-Norman French suggests limited readership amongst the highest echelons of the English court. Furthermore, the choice of the Chandos Herald as author of the poem, paired with its writing in verse is highly suggestive of the poem being commissioned from an exterior source. The Chandos Herald, it seems, had never been utilized in this manner before. Not only does the poem provide clues for this conclusion due to the usage of stock rhyme words and the limited poetic skill of the author, but Froissart, one of the Chandos Herald’s contemporaries, only depicts him in the offices of herald and officer-of-arms.⁸ These facts are suggestive of the author’s patronage. Evidently, whoever commissioned the Chandos Herald to carry out this poem did so not for his skill with verse, but for the Herald’s own experience with the Black Prince.

This begs the question, why choose the Chandos Herald? Firstly, both Pope and Tyson identify him as a native Hainaulter;⁹ indeed, Pope goes even further by placing

⁵ Diana Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir by Chandos Herald*, (Tübingen, 1975), p. 15. and Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. lv. Interpreted from MS.1 Worcester College Oxford: ‘Qui de tout honor est maitresse’ (2142).

⁶ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, pp. lv, 55. Translated, p. 150. ‘not a score of years ago.’

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. lv.

⁸ Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 29.

⁹ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. xlvi.; Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 15.

his linguistic provenance in Valenciennes.¹⁰ Other than the overwhelming linguistic evidence both provide, this theory can be supported by the fact that Queen Philippa, mother of the Black Prince, was herself from Hainault. This meant that many Hainaulters would have followed her to the English court during that period. Furthermore, Sir John, from whom the Chandos Herald gained his appellation, was embroiled in the French wars for the majority of his life, and it would hardly be surprising for him to have a herald who was from the continent and was educated to speak and write proper French.¹¹

Secondly, it seems that the Chandos Herald, for this is the name he called himself even after the death of his patron, Sir John Chandos, was mostly used professionally as a diplomatic courier and herald-at-arms.¹² Tyson has successfully located him within primary sources as early as 2 September 1363, when he carried money from the king of Navarre to Sir John.¹³ It is tempting, therefore, to believe that he was appointed to his office as early as 1360, when Sir John was made banneret and would have merited a herald. Certainly, the Chandos Herald must have been close enough with Sir John to be trusted to carry money and serve in a diplomatic fashion three years later.

After the death of Sir John in 1370, the Chandos Herald was made Ireland King of Arms.¹⁴ He rose in prestige to become English King of Arms in 1377.¹⁵ His rank being well-established at court, it is not so far off that in 1385, nine years after the death of his father and at the end of his mother's life, Richard II himself might have commissioned a biographical work such as this, and by a man who would have been on campaign with his famous father.¹⁶ For the Chandos Herald most certainly experienced many of the events described in *La Vie* first hand.

¹⁰ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. xxxii. Actually, Pope posits his birthplace to be Valenciennes, but because birthplace and place of education are not always equal, here is only supposed his 'linguistic provenance.'

¹¹ Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 15.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Yet the context of 1380s England and the court of Richard II does not indicate that the king would have sought out a poem such as this, even though it celebrated his father's life. It seems that although the Black Prince was amongst the most martial of princes, his son was the opposite. At least, he is depicted this way by contemporary chroniclers.¹⁷ Indeed, Richard II seems to have been much maligned by chroniclers, especially after his deposition in 1399. Sources that are closer to 1385, however, also depict the king in a way that is diametrically opposed with the martiality of his father. Although they do not go so far as to suggest that he was more feminine, childlike, prone to flattery and petulant than a man should be,¹⁸ in the form of post-deposition chroniclers, they do put forward the image of a young king who was appropriately extravagant and wasteful in his expenditures upon building work and clothing.¹⁹ Even if the king in 1385 did not have such an unfavourable reputation as he would later earn, he still was not interested in pursuing war in France. Therefore, *La Vie* could also be interpreted by a historian as a pedagogical text commissioned for Richard II to demonstrate the glory of warfare and the vigorous martiality of his late father. As a didactic text fashioned for Richard II, either directly or indirectly, *La Vie du Prince Noir* makes sense. Written in Anglo-Norman French, eulogizing the life of the king's father and espousing the chivalric nature of the Black Prince and his lieutenants, *La Vie* highly romanticizes warfare.

However, how does *La Vie du Prince Noir* exist until today? *La Vie* had been printed three times based on what was considered to be the only surviving manuscript,²⁰ the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1. However, in 1953 a second manuscript was found: University of London Library, MS 1.²¹ Diana Tyson, who examined the University of London Library, MS 1 much in the same way as M.K. Pope and E.C. Lodge had done with the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1, has identified that the manuscript was 'executed in or after 1385,' the same year the biography was written.²² Yet there is a fundamental problem to any historian studying *La Vie*; even though it is entitled *La Vie du Prince Noir*, surely this is a construction much later than 1385.

¹⁷ Christopher Fletcher, 'Manhood and Politics in the Reign of Richard II,' *Past & Present*, 189. (2005), p.7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

There is no evidence to suggest that Edward went by this epithet during the fourteenth century. As such, it would not have been entitled *La Vie du Prince Noir* at first. This is because Edward of Woodstock was only given his appellation later, and it is uncertain from where or when it came.²³ The title, therefore, is the first clue that the text may have been altered, and this would cast suspicion onto it for any historian.

In spite of this, both University of London Library, MS 1 and Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1 are fundamentally the same. Despite this, Tyson concludes that neither one was copied from the other, nor was either manuscript transcribed from the same model.²⁴ Furthermore, she also concludes that the University of London Library, MS 1 is the better of the two since corrections to the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1 render it closer to the former's model.²⁵ This theory hinges on not only other versions being models from which the two extant manuscripts were copied, but also the supposition that one of the scribes from the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1 needed to correct his own work from a model that was closer to University of London Library, MS 1. This also means that the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1 is of a later date than University of London Library, MS 1. Nevertheless, in an attempt to remain as close to the Anglo-Norman French and manuscript as possible, excerpts will be taken from Pope and Lodge's Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1 reprint instead of the earlier, University of London Library, MS 1 from Tyson.

In all probability, Tyson is most likely correct in her suppositions regarding the *stemma*.²⁶ Pope identifies that there were two scribes for the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1, and both were unequal to the task. One, she states, was intelligent but independent-minded and careless whilst the second was well-meaning, but ignorant and stupid.²⁷ She also finds that the scribes must have had French of the insular variety as 'when confronted by an unusual word or phrase... (he) has no resource but to copy mechanically as closely as he can, or to set down at random some more

²³ Green, *The Black Prince*, p. 11

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁷ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. xlvi.

familiar word.’²⁸ Furthermore, the Worcester College, Oxford, MS 1 has been dated to the ‘concluding years of the fourteenth century,’ and found by Pope to be of ‘slovenly execution.’²⁹ This would have been wholly different from the native French of the author. All these characteristics of this manuscript, taken together, indicate that it must have been copied from a later and more corrupt version of *La Vie* than the University of London Library, MS 1.

La Vie du Prince Noir is a poem written in Anglo-Norman French that can be divided into two parts. The first section deals with the Black Prince’s early life and the French Campaigns, the second with the Spanish Campaigns and the prince’s later years.³⁰ The author’s language indicates, throughout the first segment, that he was not an eyewitness to the events taking place. As such, they are not given as even a depiction as the events of the latter part.³¹

This means that unfortunately, as a chronicler, the Chandos Herald is not entirely up to the task of producing an epic poem such as *La Vie*. First, dates were not generally used in poetry, and as such, there are few given within the text.³² Second, even when the Chandos Herald successfully weaves dates into the poem, he is not always correct: the battle at Crécy is given on 23 instead of 26 August.³³ Considering the importance of Crécy to the Black Prince, this could be construed to be grievous error. Despite this fault, the Chandos Herald is an enthusiastic historian.³⁴ It seems this might have been the only instance of his writing a literary work, but in spite of this hurdle, he seems to have gathered the information for the events he did not witness first hand from sources that had.³⁵ The Chandos Herald’s intentions, therefore, were to provide as even and as accurate an account as he could provide. Yet due to the enormity of the task that was given to him, to provide a praise-worthy account of the life of his king’s father, in verse, and incorporating the fashionably literary devices of his time,

²⁸ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. xxxiv.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv. Pope and Lodge identify that ‘Schum dates it to c. 1397.’

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. lv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. lvi-lvii.

³² *Ibid.*, p. lvii.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. lvii.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. lvi.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. lvi.

the Chandos Herald did the most he could with his already abundant intelligence, skill and historical fervour.³⁶

This leads the argument of how *La Vie* can be used as a historical source full-circle—back to the poetic excerpt with which this analysis began. In one sense, what is being described is a great battle where knights were cut down and thousands of men died. However, from the language used one might as easily believe it was more a depiction of a beautiful April day. These seemingly contradictory binary opposites, romantic language and warfare along with magnanimity and aggression, were at the heart of medieval chivalry.³⁷ Yet what can be deduced to have been at the heart of fourteenth-century literature?

The Chandos Herald employs several devices within his narrative to keep it fashionable and useful as a fourteenth-century literary work. First identified can be its use of verse throughout.³⁸ The Herald styled his poem much after the other epic works of Old French verse, and his verb usage complies with that literary model.³⁹ Pope also states that his ‘use of Mood is that of his continental contemporaries.’⁴⁰ It may follow that the Chandos Herald was creating an epic poem for which a literary model was already in place. Indeed, the poem identifies older works with which the Herald wanted to compare its hero. Lines 3382-3383 read, ‘Home ne poet comparison/ffaire de Olyuer ꝛ Rolant.’⁴¹ The identification of other, older, chivalric works within the poem may indicate *La Vie*’s literary ancestry, and demonstrate the primary encasement of the text within the bounds of chivalry. Tyson found this to be true as well, and she compares other passages with earlier works such as *Roman de Rou* and *Fouke Fith Warin*, among others.⁴²

If the Chandos Herald used the device of chivalric comparison, then surely he had his audience in mind while composing the narrative. Tyson theorizes that Richard II

³⁶ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. lvi-lvii.

³⁷ Gervase Mathew, ‘Ideals of knighthood in late fourteenth-century England’ in *Studies in medieval history presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*. Ed. R.W. Hunt, W.A. Pantin and R.W. Southern. (Oxford, 1948), p. 358.

³⁸ Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. xviii.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104. Translated, p. 164. ‘one cannot make comparison with Oliver and Roland.’

⁴² Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, pp. 39-40.

commissioned the poem for evidently by 1385 he had developed a taste for poetic literature.⁴³ A historian studying *La Vie* may also find other devices that were inherent to Old French works: namely, the use of proverbs.⁴⁴ This usage is not only indicative of the literary device that the Herald used in order for his work to remain within the expected parameters; it also reiterated the importance of religion to a chivalric knight. One example from the text includes the rousing speech the Black Prince gave before the Battle of Najera.

Et dist verray pier souerayns
Qui nous auez fait ⁊ treez
Si verrayment come vous sauez
Qe ie ne sui pas cy venuz
ffors pur droit estre sustenuz
Et pesce ⁊ pur franchise
Qe mon coer semonte ⁊ attise
De conquestre vie de honour
Je vous supplie qen cesti iour
Voilliez garder moy ⁊ ma gent⁴⁵

It seems that before the Prince might engage in battle, he would offer his prayers unto God. This simple pious act begs the question: how important to chivalry, the code under which *La Vie du Prince Noir* falls, is religion?

La Vie's qualities are not limited to discerning the fourteenth-century patron's literary tastes. The poem can also be interpreted as a didactic text about the Black Prince⁴⁶ and furthermore for the qualities inherent to a chivalric knight.⁴⁷ The chivalric code, or characteristics that are inherent to chivalry, are not explicitly stated.⁴⁸ However, in *La Vie* a historian might be able to pick out several themes that seem to be cornerstones of the practice of chivalry. First can be the dominant fixation on the order and organization of the Prince's troops. Throughout the passages regarding the

⁴³ Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 97. Translated *ibid.*, p. 162. 'True, sovereign Father, who hast made and created us, as truly as Thou dost know that I am not come here save for the maintenance of right, and for prowess and nobility which urge and incite me to gain a life of honour, I beseech Thee that Thou wilt this day guard me and my men.' (3176-3183)

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁷ Mathew, 'Ideals of knighthood,' p. 354.

⁴⁸ Dominique Barthélemy, 'Modern Mythologies of Medieval Chivalry,' in *The Medieval World*, P. Linehan and J. Nelson (eds.), p. 215.

Spanish Campaign, roughly from line 3007 until 3558,⁴⁹ the Chandos Herald repeatedly refers to the importance of the order of the troops:

Chiuacha ceñ matinee
Et rengist si ioliement
Qe vnqes ne vist si noble gent
Nuñ home puis qe iñu nasqui⁵⁰

Not only does the Herald praise the troops for their order, but he also links the Black Prince with 'iñu'. This is significant because it not only lends justification to his aid of King Pedro in a fight that might otherwise be construed to not be his own, but also it furthers the Black Prince's noble nature, largesse and the link with 'iñu' suggests parity between Jesus and the Prince. This shows that religion and piety are inextricable qualities to chivalry.

In line with the comparative device the Herald uses, the Prince is demonstrated to have superior qualities to all others for his noble nature. Gradually, the Herald begins a comparison in line 3017. The poem reads that the Prince and his army rode for 'Deux lenges.'⁵¹ This fact does not only lend further credibility to the text in the sense that it provides what is ostensibly an eyewitness account of the day, it also is the beginning of where the Chandos Herald begins to juxtapose the chivalry and worth of the Black Prince's army alongside the less worthy forces of Henry Trastamara.

After travelling the aforementioned 'deux lenges' and preparing for battle, the Prince:

Sez courreus enuoia p tout
Les queux se travaillerent moult
Pur la verite reporter⁵²

Why the 'currouers' of the Black Prince were at great pains to report the truth may be understood, but the direct usage of the word 'truth' implicitly suggests the ignoble

⁴⁹ As these are the lines that describe the Battle of Najera, within the context of the Black Prince's Spanish Campaign, this excerpt will be used predominantly for case studies.

⁵⁰ Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 93. Translated *ibid.*, p. 161. 'In right battle-array they rode that morning, so fairly ordered that never had any man seen so noble a host since the birth of Jesus.' (3012-3015)

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93. Translated *ibid.*, p. 161. 'Two leagues...' (3017)

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 93. Translated *ibid.*, p. 161. 'He sent out his currouers in all directions, who were at great pains to report the truth;' (3021-3023)

nature, at least through the perspective of those who served the Black Prince, of Henry Trastamara.

Up until now, the didactic nature of the text for the purposes of knightly ideology have been explained through the lines pertaining to the Spanish Campaign in *La Vie du Prince Noir*, but so far the historical context of the time has not been explained. Briefly, as stated in the text, on 3 April 1367, the Battle of Najera took place.⁵³ It was a resounding victory for the Black Prince's forces and those he supported—the usurped ruler of Castile King Pedro.⁵⁴ The battle was a major turning point in the war of Spanish Succession. Henry Trastamara, illegitimate half-brother of King Pedro of Castile was engaging in civil war as his brother's rule became increasingly violent, bloody and untrustworthy.

In the year 1350, Pedro 'the cruel' came to the throne of Castile, the only legitimate son of Alfonso IX. Coming to power at the tender age of 16, Pedro systematically alienated and lost the trust of the nobles of his country to the point that by 1366, the vast majority of them being in exile in France, they rallied behind his illegitimate brother Henry of Trastamara and toppled Pedro from the throne of Castile. Since the 1350s there had been an Anglo-Castilian alliance, and when bereft of aid from any other source Pedro sought help from his ally the Black Prince. Because French military leader Bertrand du Guesclin supported Trastamara, and the English led by the Black Prince backed Pedro,⁵⁵ the Castilian Civil War is classified as a continuation of the hostilities between England and France and therefore a branch of the Hundred Years' War.

The Chandos Herald does not explicitly denounce the army of Henry Trastamara, but provides several reports of how mighty it was in comparison with the humble forces of the Black Prince. In addition, the text implies that Trastamara's army was both un-chivalric and un-Christian, in contrast with the Black Prince's devoutly religious and

⁵³ As above, 'Trois jours droit eu mois d'averille,' Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 143. 'Three days on in the month of April,' From Pope and Lodge, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 164.

⁵⁴ Richard Barber, 'Edward , prince of Wales and of Aquitaine (1330–1376)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. Oxford: OUP, 2004. Online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman, January 2008. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8523> (accessed March 14, 2008).

⁵⁵ C.T. Allmand, 'The Black Prince,' *History Today*, 26. (1976), p. 100.

chivalric ethic. In line 3028, the Chandos Herald reports the location of where this battle is to take place: Najera.⁵⁶ After this is established, the herald continues by stating the importance of ‘Lordenance de la bataille.’⁵⁷ Therefore, here continues the evidence for significance of battle order to the audience and hence also to the chivalric ethic.

Furthermore, the Chandos Herald carries on by comparing the two armies, as well as the nature of the two leaders. The armies, coincidentally, were camped ‘A deux lenges pres densemble,’⁵⁸ so once again the comparison is set up in terms of two opposing forces. Lines 3044 to 3054 could be interpreted to demonstrate one of the firm agendas the Chandos Herald had in describing the leaders of the two armies:

Et deuant qil fut ad iourne
Tramist le Bastard Henri espies
Vers les Englois en plusours parties
Pur sauoir lour des logement
Mais si lui estoire ne ment
A plus matin se deslogierent
Et a chiuachier se chiminerent
Mais le Prince oue le coer fin
Nala pas le plus droit chemyn
Ancois prist sachez de certayn
Le chemin a la droit main⁵⁹

Here Henry of Trastamara is described as ‘le Bastard’ which in itself has negative connotations, as would the usage of ‘espies’ regardless of how necessary they might be within the function of an army. Yet the lines that set apart the Black Prince from Henry Trastamara begin on 3051 where he is described as having a ‘coer fin.’ As opposed to Henry Trastamara, ‘le Bastard’, the Black Prince did not take the most direct road, which could be interpreted as the road Henry took with the ‘espies.’ The Black Prince, again being compared with the saviour Jesus took ‘Le chemin a la droit main.’

⁵⁶ Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 93. ‘Pres de Naddres, en la biuere/En les vergiers ⁊ en les champs.’ (3028-3029)

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93. Translated *ibid.*, p. 161. ‘...the disposition of the battle.’ (3037)

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 93. Translated *ibid.*, p. 161. ‘...about two leagues apart.’ (3039)

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94. Translated, *ibid.*, p. 161. ‘And before it was day King Henry sent out spies on the English in divers directions to know about their movements; but these, if the chronicle does not lie, set forth earlier and began to ride. But the true-hearted Prince did not go the most direct road, but took the road to the right hand.’ (3044-3054)

Thereafter the herald discusses the vast number of men who were fighting for the bastard king Henry. The previously mentioned ‘iiij. mille’⁶⁰, the ‘...xij. Mille/Geneteurs, homes a chiual’⁶¹, and the ‘Bien xv. Mill homes armez’⁶² who made up the royal wing of king Henry’s army are part of the immense opposing force that is being described in *La Vie*. Perhaps most telling, however, are the descriptions of the sorts of men who made up this royal wing of the ‘Bastard’ king:

Et des gentz du pais assetz
Arblastiers villayns seruantz
A lances ꝛ a dartes trenchantz
Et a fondes pur getter piers
Pur garder deuant les ffrontiers⁶³

The ‘bastard’ king, is further purported by the Chandos Herald to not be the Prince’s chivalric equal in the manner he behaves when the tide of battle first turns against him. Trastamara is said to have been ‘Luy Bastard quant il les veoit.’⁶⁴ This can be construed to be in direct opposition with the Black Prince who, at the outset of the battle, ‘Et luy Prince naresta mye;’⁶⁵ The Prince’s eagerness for battle highlights yet another of his chivalric qualities—the ability to find relish warfare and battles.

Juxtapositions are not contained within only antagonists, for the Black Prince is also set alongside King Pedro. Tyson has found that the erstwhile ruler is depicted as ‘an unsuccessful overlord: he cannot keep his throne...because of the disloyalty of his people and his relatives, who ought to love and serve him but do not.’⁶⁶ Within the context of the analyzed lines, another scene takes place between Pedro and the Black Prince that underscores the contrasting nature of the two rulers:

Luy Roy daun Petre est venuz
Au Prince qui moult fui ses durez
Et lui ad dit nre cosin chier

⁶⁰ Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 94.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 95. Translated, *ibid.*, p. 161. ‘And many men of the country—crossbow-men, villains, varlets, with lances and sharp darts, and slings to throw stones—to guard the front ranks.’ (3085-3090)

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104. Translated, *ibid.*, p. 164. ‘Sore grieved and wrathful...’

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92. Translated, *ibid.*, p. 160. ‘And the Prince made no tarrying.’ (3007)

⁶⁶ Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, pp. 37-38 and in manuscript lines 1750-70, *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Je vous doy bien remercier
 Car a iour de huy mauez fait tant
 Qe iames iour de mon Viuant
 Je ne le purray deseruir
 Sire fir il vre plaisir
 Merciez dieu ꝛ noun pas moy
 Car ꝑ la foy qe vous doy
 Dieux lad fait ꝛ noun mie nous
 Siqꝛ nous denous ester touz
 En volunte de li prier
 Merci ꝛ de lui regracier⁶⁷

These lines show the Black Prince's devout religion, and the contrasting nature of Pedro to view military successes, however pragmatically, through the hands of the military leader instead of by the chivalric manner of through the grace of God. The comparison is continued when Pedro is warned about taking vengeance against his enemies by the Prince. The Herald quotes the Prince as saying:

Sire Roy donez moi vn don
 Mais ie vous conseille pur bien
 Si ester voillez Roi de Castelle
 Qe ꝑ tout mandez la nouvelle
 Qe ottoie auez le doun
 De doner a touz ceux ꝑdoun
 Qui ont encontre vous estee
 Et ce ꝑ mal volunteer
 Et ꝑ malueis conseil auxi
 Ont este oue le Bastard Henry
 De ore en auant lour ꝑdonez
 Mais qe de bon volunteez
 Ils beignent a vous merci priere⁶⁸

Despite the wise counsel of the Black Prince, King Pedro is set upon vengeance at least in one case—he demands the life of Gomez Carillo.⁶⁹ Pedro's demand

⁶⁷ Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, pp. 107-108. Translated *ibid.*, p. 165. 'The King Don Pedro came to the Prince, who was right well affectioned to him, and said to him, "Our dear cousin, well ought I to give you thanks, for this day you have done so much for me that never any day of my life shall I be able to repay it." "Sire," said he, "if it please you, render thanks to God and not to me, for, by the faith I owe you, God has done it and not we, so that we should all be minded to pray Him mercy and yield Him thanks.'" (3495-3508)

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108. Translated *ibid.*, p. 165. "'Sire, I wish for naught of yours. But I counsel you for good, if you wish to be king of Castile, that you send tidings everywhere that you have granted this gift: to bestow pardon on all who have been against you; and that, if through ill will or by evil counsel they have been with King Henry, you pardon them henceforward, provided that of their own accord they come to pray you mercy.'" (3515-3534)

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

represents his lack in a most chivalric of qualities; Pedro does not possess the largesse that is amongst the most important of traits.

Another device not yet mentioned but important for the study of *La Vie du Prince Noir* as a historical source, are the details the Chandos Herald employs in order to lend credibility to his narrative. Specifically, at the outset of the description of the Battle of Najera, he states, ‘Celi iour fuist le vendredi,’⁷⁰ but more importantly the Chandos Herald combines the date with the day of the week later, whilst also utilizing another Old French literary device to depict the season: the description of birdsong.⁷¹ This is explicit in the Najera excerpt in lines 3474-3477 that read:

Ce fut droit p vn samady
Trois iours droit en moys daueriff
Qe tiel douce oisselet gentiff
Preignent a refaire lour chantz⁷²

This Old French formula is used in both instances that the Herald specifically mentions the date.

Therefore, in conclusion there are several problems inherent with using *La Vie du Prince Noir* by the Chandos Herald as a historical source. First, is that the poem was written for an audience with a particular agenda in mind: to cast the best and most flattering light on the Black Prince and to eulogize the father for who was most likely the person for whom the poem was commissioned—Richard II. This, alone, is enough to render it untrustworthy as a biographical source for the Black Prince as the purpose of the poem, either directly or indirectly was created to influence a small. Coupled with its uneven depiction of events of the Prince’s life, doubt is cast upon the source’s use as a chronicle of his life either. Reasons behind this include that the Chandos Herald gives irregular attention to different episodes; those at which the Chandos Herald was witness are heavily expanded and intricate. Earlier events, although arguably of equal importance, are at times given little more than furtive mention.

⁷⁰ Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 93. Translated, *ibid.*, p. 161. ‘That day was Friday.’ (3016)

⁷¹ Tyson, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 41.

⁷² Pope, *Life of the Black Prince*, p. 106. Translated *ibid.*, p. 164. ‘...was right on a Saturday, three days on in the month of April, when sweet and gentle birds begin to renew their songs...’ (3474-3477)

Arguably, there are equal positive and negative qualities of *La Vie du Prince Noir* for a historian. Because the poem is about one of the most famous political and chivalric characters of the fourteenth century, there is a wealth of secondary literature extant to aid in interpretation of the source. Most notably are *Life of the Black Prince by the Herald of Sir John Chandos* by M.K. Pope and E.C. Lodge and *La Vie du Prince Noir by Chandos Herald* by Diana Tyson. Furthermore, there are several different ways that a historian could use the poem, especially the highly detailed passages pertaining to the Battle of Najera. First, the number of troops on both sides of the battle are listed, as well as the most important leaders in each army. Secondly, scenes from the battle are beautifully recreated in verse; the movement of troops around the battlefield and the ultimate demise of Trastamara's army in the river. Third, the topography of the land around Najera could be studied: the aforementioned river, the mountain the English descended and the way the Spanish Campaign travelled through Castile are all depicted within the lines of this epic poem. Fourth, a historian could also use the poem to interpret the diplomatic demise of relations between the Black Prince and Pedro of Castile, if nothing else a historian might be able to view Anglo-Castilian relations in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

Most importantly, perhaps, *La Vie du Prince Noir* could be utilized by a historian trying to discern the qualities that might be important to a fourteenth-century man attempting to live within the confines of the undefined chivalric code and emulate one of the most famous knights: the Black Prince. Qualities extolled in the poem are loyalty, as evidenced by the Prince's aid of Pedro; magnanimity, as shown by his forgiving of enemies; piety, as demonstrated by the Black Prince's frequent prayers and thanks to God; prowess, revealed through his win on the field of battle; and nobility, as was inherent to a Prince and those of puissant lineage that were knighted on the battlefield. Because of the paradoxical nature of the age, at times, these virtues seem to be in conflict with each other, yet all are shown to be intrinsic to the Black Prince's character. This renders *La Vie* an excellent historical source on the one hand, and on the other, one that must be approached cautiously. *La Vie du Prince Noir* by the Chandos Herald is at once the epitome of the contrasting nature of chivalry, the eulogy of an ideal knight, and an embodiment of its often-contradictory era.

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