

INTRODUCTION

Jehan Creton was a Frenchman and a writer, of whose work only the *Prinse et mort*¹ and the related *ballades* and epistles survive; see Figure I for his portrait. The action of his poem takes place in 1399, in England, Ireland, and Wales, during a truce in the middle years of the Hundred Years War (1337–1453). By command of Charles VI of France – whose daughter, Isabella, had been married to Richard II in 1396 – Creton joined Richard's retinue on his second Irish expedition, in 1399, and was thus by chance able to tell how a king, at the height of his powers, was left to face an overweening subject – his mortal foe – without his army. Tricked into leaving a strong castle, whence he could have escaped by sea, Richard fell into Henry Lancaster's power, was deposed and murdered. Safely back in France, Creton could relate how this happened, without fear of reprisals, and his long poem – quatrains, prose, and couplets – is thus an important corrective to the chronicles composed under the Lancastrian regime. He did not give his work a title; this has been taken from an entry in one of the duke of Berry's account books.²

Unlike Jehan Froissart writing rather earlier, Creton was not a chronicler and the *Prinse et mort* is not a chronicle. On the face of it, the sophisticated verse form is unsuitable. It was never popular – it was too difficult – but it was practised in France by the major literary figures of the day. Conversely it was the choice nature of the structure that made it appropriate; only the most dazzling and difficult form was a suitable vehicle for relating the downfall of an anointed king. Unlike other accounts of Richard II's capture, Creton's was designed primarily for reading aloud to an audience rather than for silent reading. This was another reason for writing in verse, which could be followed more easily by those listening.

¹ *Prinse* is pronounced to rhyme with English 'freeze': the *n* is not sounded. The rhymes at ll. 572–575 and 1576–1579 show this.

² M. Meiss, 'The bookkeeping of Robinet d'Estampes and the chronology of Jean de Berry's manuscripts', *Art Bulletin*, 53 (1971), pp. 228–229.

Description of the Manuscripts

The *Prinse et mort* has survived in five MSS from the fifteenth century and one from the sixteenth. A seventh, Bodleian Library MS Cherry 14,³ a copy of BL MS Harley 1319 made in 1697, has been discounted for the purposes of this edition.

British Library MS Harley 1319 (hereafter H)

H measures 290 × 215 mm and comprises 78 vellum folios: A¹:1–4⁸, 5⁶, 6–10⁸; the fly-leaf is numbered fo. 1, and the last folio is not numbered. There are catchwords parallel to the text, which begins on fo. 2r., beneath the initial miniature. There are 28 to 30 lines to a full page, the text finishing on fo. 78v. The poem is divided into chapters of unequal length, the initial capital of each being a delicately illuminated majuscule two lines deep, outlined in gold, and decorated with pink or blue, overpainted with white. The lower right-hand corner of each folio is soiled and limp, which gives the impression that **H** was at one time a well-thumbed volume. It has a modern, but not recent, leather binding on boards.

In the top left-hand corner of fo. 1v. is 1399, and beneath, in a late sixteenth-century hand, is the inscription: *Histoire du Roy d'Angleterre Richard traictant particulièrement la rebellion de ses subjectz et prinse de sa personne etc. Composee par un gentilhomme françois de marque qui fut a la suite dudict Roy avecques permission du Roy de France.*

From an entry in an account-book kept by Robinet d'Estampes, *garde de joyaux* to John, duke of Berry, **H** can be identified as *un livre de la prinse et mort du roy Richart d'Angleterre* which the duke received as a gift from the *vidame de Laonnois* in the latter part of 1405.⁴ The first words on fo. 2r. of the volume in question are *qu'il eust*. These are the opening words of **H**'s fo. 3r., but the fly-leaf of **H** is numbered fo. 1, and the *Prinse et mort* begins on fo. 2r. Thus **H**'s present fo. 3 is the second folio of the first quire and the second folio of the text.

The *vidame de Laonnois* was Jean de Montaigu, whose portrait is in Figure I; he served both Charles V and Charles VI as secretary and steward of the household respectively.⁵ One of his brothers, also

³ R.W. Hunt and others, *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, 7 vols [in 8], (Oxford, 1895–1953), III, p. 73, no. 9788.

⁴ C.E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani: A Study of the Sources of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts Preserved in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1972), pp. 50, 72, 242; Meiss, 'Bookkeeping', pp. 228–229.

⁵ L. Merlet, 'Biographie de Jean de Montagu [sic], grant maître de France (1350–1409)', *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 13 (1852), pp. 274–284.

named Jean de Montaigu, was bishop of Chartres (1390–1406) and one of those charged with negotiating the return of Queen Isabella after Richard's death (*infra*, ll. 3452–3).⁶ A *livre de la prise et mort de Richard II*, which Montaigu passed around the royal court, is included in a list of his books.⁷ The *vidame* was executed in 1409, the bishop fell at Agincourt.

The early, pre-1405, date indicated for **H** is corroborated by the palaeographical evidence. The hand is 'a French court-hand of the first quarter of the fifteenth century.'⁸ It is very similar to the hand of BL MS Additional 21247, which has been assigned to the early fifteenth century,⁹ and to the first hand of BL MS Royal 19 B XVI, which bears the date 1428.¹⁰ The hand is well formed, with a very slightly rightwards sloping duct. The ascenders and descenders, at the head and foot of the page respectively, are often exaggeratedly long and flourished.

H has over 130 corrections, made – as far as one can tell – by the same scribe, but they do not disfigure the MS. Sometimes a letter is squeezed in later, or one letter has been written over another; some corrections are made by expunction. Most, however, have been made by erasing the original lesson and writing over the erasure; this has been done in a very neat and careful way. The corrections are inconspicuous and very easy to miss; the scribe of **H** meticulously checked his MS against another exemplar (*infra*, pp. 15–16, Manuscript Tradition).

A second early MS existed. On 16 July 1402, Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, paid Creton *pour et en recompensacion d'un livre faisant mencion de la prise de feu le roy Richart*.¹¹ It is presumed to have been a similar volume to **H** but has not survived.

Further details of the volume noted by Robinet d'Estampes in 1405 emerge from inventories of John of Berry's library made in 1413 and 1416; they strengthen the case for identifying it with **H**.¹²

⁶ Catholic Hierarchy, *The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church, Current and Historical Information about Its Bishops and Dioceses*, www.catholic-hierarchy.org, s.v. 'Archbishop Jean de Montagu' (accessed 25 November 2022).

⁷ Quoted in M. Rey, *Les Finances royales sous Charles VI: les causes de déficit 1388–1413* (Paris, 1965), p. 38 n. 3.

⁸ E.M. Thompson, 'A contemporary account of the fall of Richard the Second', *Burlington Magazine*, 5 (1904) p. 161.

⁹ Alain Chartier, *Poetical Works*, ed. J.C. Laidlaw (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 66–67.

¹⁰ A.G. Watson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c.700–1600 in the Department of Manuscripts, the British Library*, 2 vols (London, 1979), 911.402.

¹¹ P. Cockshaw, 'Mentions d'auteurs, de copistes, d'enlumineurs et de libraires dans les comptes généraux de l'état bourguignon (1384–1419)', *Scriptorium*, 23 (1969), p. 135, no. 50.

¹² L.V. Delisle, *Le Cabinet des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 4 vols (Paris, 1868–1881), I, p. 56; III, pp. 190–191. L.V. Delisle, *Recherches sur la librairie de Charles V*, 2 vols

In both these inventories we read of *un livre de la prinse et mort du roi Richard d'Angleterre, escript en françois rimé, de lettre de court et historié en plusieurs lieux, que le vidame de Laonnois donna a Monseigneur*. again fo. 2 begins *qu'il eust*. The description fits **H** exactly: it is in French verse, in a court-hand, and is an illuminated text.

H was still in the ducal library when this was inventoried on Berry's death in 1416, passing thence to Charles of Anjou. A note in a fifteenth-century hand on fo. 78v. reads: *Ce livre de la prinse du Roy Richart d'Angleterre est a monseigneur Charles d'Anjou, conte du Maine et de Mortaing et gouverneur de Languedoc*. His signature – Charles – follows. At the foot of fo. 1v. the late sixteenth-century hand of the inscription¹³ continues: *Hors la librairie de Monsieur le Comte de Maine comme il appert folio ultimo verso de sa main propre*. This Charles – brother of the more famous René of Anjou – was great-nephew of John of Berry; his grandfather – Louis I of Anjou – and Berry were brothers, sons of John II of France. **H** must have been in his possession between 1443, when he became governor of Languedoc, and 1472 when he died.¹⁴

It has been suggested¹⁵ that the *Prinse et mort* was known in England by the 1470s, inferring that either **H** or **L** was in England by then. I have found no evidence for knowledge of the *Prinse et mort* in this country before the 1570s, when **L** was used a source by John Stow and Raphael Holinshed.¹⁶

It is not known how **H** came to England and was acquired by the Harleys. There is, however, a possible connection between **H** and the splendid and more magnificently illustrated 'Book of the Queen' by Christine de Pizan, BL MS Harley 4431. This MS also became available in 1472 on the death of its owner, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, and was inscribed next by Louis de Bruges, earl of Winchester. Louis was known as the greatest bibliophile of his age, said to have owned a copy of every MS valued in contemporary aristocratic circles; he would surely have known of **H**'s existence and of the possibility of obtaining it. The usurpation of Richard II was of renewed interest in the period of instability during the Wars of the Roses, and especially to Louis who had sheltered Edward IV during his brief exile in Flanders in 1470–1471. The evidence is circumstantial

(Paris, 1907), II, pp. 263–264; J. Barrois, *Bibliothèque protypographique, ou, Librairies des fils du roy Jean: Charles V, Jean de Berry, Philippe de Bourgogne et les siens* (Paris, 1830), p. 91, no. 521.

¹³ *Supra*, p. 2.

¹⁴ Delisle, *Recherches*, I, pp. 54–56.

¹⁵ *Chronicles of the Revolution 1397–1400: The Reign of Richard II*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (Manchester, 1993), p. 8.

¹⁶ *Infra*, p. 5.

but there are too many coincidences to rule it out completely as an explanation of **H**'s provenance.¹⁷

On the upper right-hand corner of fo. 2r. is *Oxford BH*, an autograph mark of ownership of Edward Harley (1689–1741), second earl of Oxford. The Harleian Library was founded by Robert Harley (1661–1724), father of Edward; Humphrey Wanley was appointed librarian in 1704. Commitments in Robert's public life meant that from 1711 the library was the responsibility of Edward Harley, working with Wanley. From 1715 a diary was kept by Wanley, a day-to-day record of library business. The earliest MS number mentioned in the diary is Harley 1321, thus **H** was in the collection before 1715. The Harleys possessed a considerable number of MSS before the founding of the library, from as early as the late seventeenth century, and it must be presumed that **H** was amongst these.¹⁸

This is corroborated by the entry for MS 1319 in Wanley's *Catalogus Brevior*, published in 1759. He begins: 'A French book, written upon Parchment by a French Hand; and in the second Page of the first Spare Leaf bearing this more Modern Title'. He continues with the inscription on fo. lv., *supra*, p. 2. 'Concerning this book, I take Leave further to Observe ... That John Stow hath taken very much from this Author, even Verbatim in a manner ... and that Raphael Hollingshead hath also borrowed some Light of Him, for which he citeth a French Pamphlet, or Poem, in the Possession of Doctor John Dee; which perhaps, may be this very Book'.¹⁹ Wanley was wrong here; John Dee's MS was the one now in Lambeth Palace Library, described *infra*, pp. 7–9, as the ownership inscriptions indicate. Wanley clearly had not purchased **H**, it must have been among the items waiting to be catalogued when he joined the Harleys.

H contains sixteen beautiful miniatures illustrating key personalities and incidents in the *Prinse et mort*, all depicted in the separate colour section towards the end (*infra*, pp. 331–346);²⁰ in the 1413 and 1416 inventories of Berry's library it is described as *historié en plusieurs*

¹⁷ For Harley MS 4431, see British Library, *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts; for Louis de Bruges, see *ODNB*, s.v. 'Brugge, Lodewijk van [Louis de Bruges; Lodewijk van Gruuthuse], earl of Winchester (c. 1427–1492)'; also M. Vale, 'An Anglo-Burgundian nobleman and art patron: Louis de Bruges, Lord of la Gruuthuse and Earl of Winchester', in C. Barron and N. Saul (eds), *England and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1995).

¹⁸ Humphrey Wanley, *The Diary of Humphrey Wanley 1715–1726*, ed. C.E. and R.C. Wright, 2 vols (London, 1966), II, p. 475; C.E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani*, pp. xv–xvii.

¹⁹ [H. Wanley], *Catalogue of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts*, 2 vols (London, 1759), I, s.v. 1319.

²⁰ They occur in the text immediately preceding ll. 1, 145, 273, 341, 489, 613, 805, 869, 1173, 1469, 1841, 2045, 2169, p. 102, l. 2; p. 109, l. 16, l. 2445.

lieux.²¹ Creton refers twice, in his epistle to Richard, to the account in words and pictures of the King's misfortunes which he has circulated in France (p. 305, l. 24; p. 309, l. 11), and there are two references in the *Prinse et mort* to illuminations. After describing McMurrough, Creton continues:

Sa semblance, ainsi comme il estoit

Vëez pourtraite

Ycy endroit.

(ll. 339–41)

Pourtraite is the last word on fo. 8v.; the top portion of fo. 9r. is occupied by Figure IV showing McMurrough and his men riding out of a wood to meet the English. The text recommences with *Ycy endroit* beneath the miniature. Again, *Après entra le duc ou chastel, armé de toutes pieces excepté de bacinet, comme vous povez veoir en ceste ystoire* (p. 197, ll. 20–21) comes in the middle of fo. 49v.; more than four lines of text follow. With a little juggling, there would have been room for the miniature at the foot of fo. 49v., but the scribe has chosen to leave a large blank and place Figure XIV at the head of fo. 50r. It shows the duke of Lancaster making obeisance to King Richard. Interestingly, it would seem that the author of the *Chronique de la traïson et mort de Richart Deux roy dengleterre*,²² who lifted his account of the meeting of Lancaster and the King at Flint from the *Prinse et mort*, copied from an MS which had this miniature. Lancaster is described in the *Traïson* as *armé de toutes pieces fors du bacinet et tenoit un baston blanc en sa main*.²³ The *Prinse et mort* makes no mention of the white staff, but Lancaster is shown holding it in Figure XIV.

Clearly Creton conceived the *Prinse et mort* as an illustrated text. When we consider also that **L** has spaces left for miniatures exactly where these occur in **H**, and that BnF MS n. a. fr. 6223 marks their position with *hystoire*, we have in **H** illustrations to the text as Creton meant them to be; they have been attributed to the workshop of the Virgil Master.²⁴ **H** was loaned to the Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 2010 for an exhibition of medieval French illuminated manuscripts. The volume published to coincide with the exhibition contains an illustration²⁵ of BnF MS fonds français 45, Simon de Hesdin's translation of Valerius Maximus' *Faits et paroles memorables*,

²¹ Deslisle, *Recherches*, II, pp. 263–264.

²² J.J.N. Palmer, 'The authorship, date and historical value of the French Chronicles on the Lancastrian Revolution', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 61:1 (1978), pp. 171–178.

²³ *Chronique de la traïson et mort de Richart Deux roy dengleterre*, ed. B. Williams, English Historical Society (London, 1846), p. 59.

²⁴ M. Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Late Fourteenth Century and the Patronage of the Duke*, 2 vols (London, 1967), I, p. 360.

²⁵ E. Morrison and A.D. Hedeman (eds), *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting* (Los Angeles, CA, 2010) fig. 34, p. 64, and nos 30a and 30b, pp. 199–200.

whose miniatures are also attributed to the Virgil Master. The resemblance to the *Prinse et mort* leaps off the page. The Master's hand is seen in two further reproductions of this MS.²⁶

Except for the first illumination in **H**, which has a more elaborate, if rather crude, ivy-leaf frame, the remaining fifteen have simple strands of ivy-leaves – *des rinceaux* – trailing from them. They come towards the beginning of Creton's poem: thirteen in the quatrains, two in the prose, and one in the couplets. The suggestion that their placing reflects a moral – a country divided against itself ends up with an empty throne – is too complex.²⁷ Creton clearly had a hand in organizing the miniatures; the portrayal of the King in Figures VIII, XI–XV is clearly life-like, Richard's two-pointed beard is well attested.²⁸ Creton chose to illustrate either incidents he himself had witnessed, or at least incidents that happened while he was with Richard.²⁹ It may thus be assumed that the images of Montaigu and Creton himself would also be life-like, and of particular value since faithful portraits of historical figures from as early as around 1400 are not numerous.

At the end of the MS two paper folios have been inserted containing notes, dated 1767, on the miniatures; a marginal note ascribes them to Dr Thomas Percy, bishop of Dromore from 1782 to 1811.

*Lambeth Palace Library MS 598 (hereafter **L**)*

The *Prinse et mort* is bound up in a volume³⁰ measuring 250 × 175 mm, comprising five portions of paper and parchment arranged alternately:

- 9 paper fos: contents-lists, indexes
- 31 parchment fos: Thomas Bray's *Conquest of Ireland*
- 31 paper fos: blank
- 76 parchment fos: 1–9^B, 10^A; the *Prinse et mort*
- 9 paper fos: coats of arms

²⁶ Ibid. nos 32a and 32b, and discussion, pp. 205–207.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 207. Also, A.D. Hedeman, 'Advising France through the example of England: Visual narrative in the *Livre de la prinse et mort du roy Richart* (Harl. MS. 1319)', *Electronic British Library Journal* (2011), Article 7, p. 9.

²⁸ J. Stratford (ed.), *Richard II and the English Royal Treasure: [An Inventory of Richard's Treasure in 1399]* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2012), plate 38b.

²⁹ S. Whittingham, 'The chronology of the portraits of Richard II', *Burlington Magazine*, 113 (1971), p. 16; also Thompson, 'A contemporary account', p. 161.

³⁰ See M.R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*, 5 pts, continuously paginated (Cambridge, 1930–1932), p. 779.

There is a suggestion of fire-damage to the MS of the *Prinse et mort*; the long edges of fos 26–31 are scorched, fos 31–2, and especially the latter, are puckered. There are 30 lines to a full page of the *Prinse et mort*, which begins on fo. 1r. and ends on fo. 75v. There were originally catchwords parallel to the text, but these have mostly been trimmed off. **L** has a modern, but not recent, leather binding with the Carew shield and an old pressmark *B* inlaid.

The *Prinse et mort* is written in a hand very similar to the second hand of BL MS Royal 19 B XVI, dated 1428.³¹ The letter forms are larger, more open and rounded than those of **H**, but can also be assigned to the first part of the fifteenth century. There are no miniatures in **L**, but spaces have been left for them exactly where they occur in **H**. The text is also divided into the same chapters as **H**, each one beginning with an illuminated capital two lines deep, written in gold, and set in a framework of blue and/or pink, overpainted with white. The initial majuscule after each blank left for a miniature is also illuminated; the letter is formed in blue or pink with white, and set in a gold frame from which ivy ascends and descends. In the blank left on fo. 1r. for the first miniature, a fifteenth-century hand has added in large red letters: *Deposicio Regis Richardi Secundi*.

The *Prinse et mort* has been glossed, and there is an autograph and date in the same hand on fo. 3r. of the first paper section of **L**: *G. Carew 1617*. The same hand continues with a list of the contents of **L**, which include, *a Parchement Manuscript in old frenche verse of the 2: journey which K:R:2: made into Irland and of his deposition*. Thus **L** existed in its present form at least as early as 1617. There is another note in Carew's hand at the top of fo. 1r. of the section containing the *Prinse et mort*:³² *This booke was written by a frenchman who was with K:R:2: when he was taken in flint Castel by Henry duke of Lancaster: and he was also with the sayed K:R:2: in his voyadge into Irland*.

George Carew, earl of Totnes (1555–1629), saw military service in Ireland and was interested in things Irish. The collection of MSS and documents that he built up went on his death to Sir Thomas Stafford, and passed from him to Archbishop Laud. The archbishop placed 42 volumes of documents relating to Ireland – most probably including the *Prinse et mort* – in Lambeth Palace Library. Carew translated into English that part of the *Prinse et mort* which relates to Richard's expedition to Ireland, and it is interesting to see how a var-

³¹ Watson, *Catalogue*, 911.402.

³² See J.S. Brewer and W. Bullen (eds), *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts: Preserved in the Archbishopial Library at Lambeth*, 6 vols (London, 1867–1873), p. 319.

iant reading in **L** has survived the process of translation.³³ Carew's rendering of l. 441 is, 'which the Duke humbly excused', **L** having *humblement* where the other MSS have *haultement*.

An earlier mark of ownership is found on fo. 75v.: *John Dee 1575*. Dr John Dee (1527–1608), mathematician and astrologer, collected a considerable library, but exchanged his *Prinse et mort* for another volume. Immediately after his signature, in the hand of John Stow (1525–1605), is written: *I gave for this boke a boke of the foundation of [blank] in Oxfordshire*.³⁴ As Humphrey Wanley observed (*supra*, p. 5): *John Stow hath taken very much from this Author, even Verbatim in a manner*.³⁵ Stow's account of the events of 1399 – from Richard's departure for Ireland until his capture by Lancaster – comes exclusively from the *Prinse et mort*.³⁶ His account is a summarized translation. He does not name Creton in his list of *Authours out of whom these Chronicles are collected* – **L** does not give the author – but he relates how Richard remained at Conway in great perplexitie and with him the Earle of Salisburie, the Bishop of Carelile, Sir William Ferebe Knight, Sir Stephen Scrope[,] mine Author, and another Frenchman.³⁷ This unnamed French author is Creton.

Raphael Holinshed (1529–1580) knew and used this MS while it was still in Dee's hands. Marginal notes in his chronicles tell us that Holinshed took material relating to Richard's Irish expedition out of a French pamphlet that belongeth to master John Dee.³⁸ His account of the events immediately preceding Richard's departure from Ireland, of the embassy sent to Lancaster, of the King's subsequent capture comes also out of master Dees French booke.³⁹ Holinshed's account of the 'St Albans plot' of 1397,⁴⁰ comes Out of an old French pamphlet belonging to John Stow,⁴¹ this was an MS of the *Traïson*.⁴² The *Prinse et mort* only begins with the Irish expedition of 1399.

³³ George Carew, earl of Totnes (trans.), 'The Story of King Richard the Second. His Last being in Ireland, Written by a French Gentleman, who Accompanied the King in that Voyage to His Leaving Ireland in 1399', in *Hibernica, or, Some Antient Pieces Relating to Ireland*, Part I, ed. W. Harris (Dublin, 1757; originally published 1747), p. 25.

³⁴ J. Roberts and A.G. Watson, *John Dee's Library Catalogue* (London, 1990), p. 171.

³⁵ John Stow, *Chronicles of England from Brute* (London, 1580; Text Creation Partnership), www.name.umdl.umich.edu/A13043.0001.001 (accessed 25 November 2022). Also, P. Ure, 'Shakespeare's play and the French sources of Holinshed's and Stow's account of Richard II', *Notes and Queries*, 53 (1953), pp. 428–429.

³⁶ Stow, *Chronicles of England*, pp. 530–541.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 534.

³⁸ Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols (London, 1807–1808), II, p. 850.

³⁹ *Ibid.* II, pp. 854, 856.

⁴⁰ Palmer, 'French Chronicles', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 61:2 (1979), pp. 400–405.

⁴¹ Holinshed, *Chronicles*, II, p. 836.

⁴² *Chronique de la traïson et mort*, ed. Williams, pp. 3–5.

Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) MS fonds français 14645 (hereafter A)

A, measuring 250 × 165 mm, comprises 90 parchment folios: A¹: 1¹⁰, 2–11⁸, the fly-leaf being counted as fo. 1, and the numbers running to fo. 91.⁴³ There are catchwords at right angles to the text, which begins on fo. 4r. and ends on fo. 86v., with 25 lines to a page. The upper part of fo. 4r. is occupied by **A**'s only miniature – *un frontispice* – which shows Richard taking leave of the Queen as he sets sail for Ireland; McMurrough and his men are seen across the sea, conducting themselves in a warlike manner. There is a fine border of fruits and leaves, with two figures – a man, on the back of a creature which is half-animal and half-man – in the centre of the lower part. The initial letter of the text is a very highly decorated capital.

A is written in a regular, classic Gothic book-hand, which cannot be dated more precisely than fifteenth-century, although it has recently been described as late fifteenth-century.⁴⁴ J.A. Buchon does not justify his opinion that **A** is the earliest of the manuscripts.⁴⁵ A summary of the contents in an eighteenth-century hand is found on fos 1v.–3v. In the lower right-hand margin of fo. 24r. is written: *Bonne Doctrine*; it is not clear whether this denotes approval of the text – which at this point describes the harassment of the deserters from Richard's army by the Welsh (*infra*, ll. 1000–7) – or whether it is an unidentified motto.

Sixteenth-century owners of **A** are named on fo. 91v.: *Ce present livre est a Marie Lefebvre demurant a Chartres, fille de Philippes Lefebvre, procureur au siege presidial a Chartres. Maitre Philippes le Fevre, procureur au baillage et siege presidial de Chartres, 1580, xxvi^e jour de mars. Vivent les Febvres.* At the top of fo. 4v. is an eighteenth-century *ex-libris*: *De la bibliotheque de Charles Adrien Picard 1758.*

Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) MS nouvelles acquisitions françaises 6223 (hereafter B)

B measures 265 × 190 mm and is made up of 36 paper folios.⁴⁶ On fo. 1r.–v. is a fragment of *Les Chroniques de France*, the *Prinse et mort* occupying fos 2r.–32v., with 68 lines to a page. It is followed by:

⁴³ See H. Omont, *Bibliothèque Nationale: Catalogue générale des manuscrits français: ancien supplément français*, 3 vols (Paris, 1895–1896), III, pp. 235–236. (**A** was originally numbered *Supplément français* 254³⁰).

⁴⁴ Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining the Past in France*, p. 207 n. 1.

⁴⁵ Jehan Creton, 'Histoire de Richard II', ed. J.A. Buchon, in *Collection des Chroniques*, XXIV (Paris, 1826), pp. 321–346.

⁴⁶ H. Omont, *Bibliothèque Nationale: Catalogue générale des manuscrits français: nouvelles acquisitions françaises*, 4 vols (Paris, 1899–1918), II, p. 420.

Epistre faicte par ledit Creton, fos 32v.–33v.

Balade par ledit Creton, fo. 33v.

Another epistle by Creton, fo. 34r.–v.

Balade par Creton, fos 34v.–35r.

Autre balade par ledit Creton, fo. 35r.–v; this is in fact a *chant royal* (five stanzas and an *envoi*).

Autre balade par ledit Creton, fos 35v.–36r.

B is the only one of the six MSS to name the author and to give these pieces by him. The first epistle is addressed to the deposed Richard II, the second to Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy.

MSS n. a. fr. 6220-4 were originally one volume – St Victor 275 – in the Bibliothèque Royale, before the individual items were split up and found their way into the library of the fourth earl of Ashburnham.⁴⁷ N. a. fr. 6221-3 are in the same hasty and ill-formed hand.⁴⁸ The evidence of the watermarks of the complete St Victor 275 suggests that **B** is perhaps as late as the 1430s.⁴⁹ This is supported by the fact that n. a. fr. 6221, written in the same hand as **B**, contains Alain Chartier's *Breviaire des Nobles* and *Lay de Paix*, both ascribed to the period 1416–1426.⁵⁰

B's text of the *Prinse et mort* is not illuminated, but the position of the miniatures as they appear in **H** is marked by *hystoire*. **B** is divided into the same chapters as **H** and **L**, the first two lines of each chapter being indented and a space left for a capital that has not been added.

The scribe of **B** appears to have copied the *Prinse et mort* from one MS, but had the other items all together from a separate source. The naming of Creton in the *explicit*: *composee par* [blank] *Creton*, seems to be taken from the beginning of the epistle to King Richard: *je, Creton* (*infra*, p. 301, l. 12). The scribe noticed *je, Creton*; he then added to the *explicit* and gave a title to the epistle. The *explicit* originally read:

⁴⁷ Chartier, *Poetical Works*, p. 77.

⁴⁸ Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Marquis de Queux de Saint Hilaire and G. Raynaud, 11 vols (Paris, 1878–1903), II, pp. xvii–xxii.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to Dr Spilsbury for the following details:

BnF n. a. fr. 6220: paschal lamb. Briquet, *Les Filigranes*, I, no. 15 (1439).

BnF n. a. fr. 6221: various sorts of anchor, *ibid.* I, nos 396–400 (1420–1464); a P surmounted by a cross, *ibid.* III, nos 8462–8487 (1379–1455), most similar to sub-group nos 8475–8484 (1398–1426).

BnF n. a. fr. 6222: a P surmounted by a cross, tail ending in a trefoil, *ibid.* III, no. 8485 (1433–1440).

BnF n. a. fr. 6223: arms of Valois Burgundy, *ibid.* I, no. 1649 (1406–1413).

BnF n. a. fr. 6224: bow, *ibid.* I, nos. 821–828 (1387–1414); cross-bow, *ibid.* I, nos 723–725 (1418–1441). The date 29 November 1430 is written on fo. 77.

⁵⁰ Chartier, *Poetical Works*, p. 42.

Explicit l'ystoire du Roy Richart d'Engleterre. The scribe later added *composee par* [blank] *Creton*; the letters are slightly smaller and set at an awkward angle to the preceding line. E.J. Jones,⁵¹ who made a faintly comic attempt to prove that Creton was Bishop Trevor of Saint Asaph, unaccountably illustrated the blank as being three times longer than it is, 60 mm instead of 20 mm; there is just enough space for a Christian name to be added. The other works are in order of composition, which suggests that they came in one piece to the scribe of **B**.

The epistle to Philip the Bold of Burgundy is the only item not specifically attributed, but this does not feel significant. The scribe began this second epistle at the very top of fo. 34r., and far over to the left; saving space seems to have been a major consideration for him. He continued with *ballade II*, on fo. 34v., again without a title attributing it to Creton. However, he went back and was able to insert a heading in the left-hand margin. He had no room to do this for the epistle.

B contains the 'complete works' of Jehan Creton, as they have survived. However, it is not clear why **B** takes the form it does: an unlovely MS, hastily and untidily copied and crammed into half the space of the other MSS; and equally unclear for what purpose it was made. Since it contains more material than most readers or listeners would want, and is in a format that is more difficult to read than the other MSS, it was perhaps compiled as a work of record to be deposited in an archive. The dukes of Burgundy were pioneers in the collection of chronicles and other historical records.⁵² It is one of the more useful MSS for any student of Creton's writings.

Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) MS fonds français 1668 (hereafter C)

This volume of 75 paper folios, measuring 290 × 200 mm is in a hand of the 1470s.⁵³ On fo. 1v. is written in a late sixteenth-century hand: *Histoire de Richard 2, Roy d'Angleterre par un François qui se trouvoit a Londres lors de l'emprisonnement de ce prince.* The text occupies fos 2r.–74v., with 28 lines to a page. There are no miniatures, but **C** is divided into the same chapters as **H**, **L**, and **B**.

⁵¹ E.J. Jones, 'An examination of the authorship of the deposition and death of Richard II attributed to Creton', *Speculum*, 15 (1940), p. 466.

⁵² R. Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy* (London, 1975), p. 33.

⁵³ Formerly no. 7656; see J.A. Taschereau, H. Michalant, and L. Delisle, *Bibliothèque nationale, Département des manuscrits: Catalogue des manuscrits français, Ancien fonds*, 5 vols (Paris, 1868–1902), I, p. 284.

Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) MS fonds français 1441 (hereafter D)

D comprises 72 paper folios and measures 265 × 180 mm,⁵⁴ it is written in a sixteenth-century hand.⁵⁵ The *Prinse et mort*, copied at a rate of 28 lines to a page, occupies fos 1r.–72r. It is not divided into chapters, and there are no miniatures, although the positions of the fourteenth and fifteenth are marked by *ystoire*. The binding bears the arms of Charles IX of France.

Manuscript Tradition and Choice of Base Manuscript

The large number of variants suggests that the extant MSS are survivors of a crowded MS tradition, with many MSS now lost. The *Prinse et mort* was written between 1399 and 1402 (*infra*, p. 27), at a time when there was great interest in the fate of Richard II. Between 1401 (the last event mentioned) and 1402 (when Philip the Bold paid for his copy) a significant number of MSS were copied but have not survived. **AD** came from a source that is not **HLBC**; likewise **LB** have a common and now vanished exemplar, and **H** was corrected from a source that was not **LABCD**. MSS of the *Prinse et mort* were never as numerous as those of the prose *Traïson*, of which almost forty remain.⁵⁶ After all, the same laws of dilapidation apply to the *Traïson* as to the *Prinse et mort*. However, the small number of remaining MSS should not be taken to indicate that the *Prinse et mort* was in less than vigorous circulation.

Examination of the variants quickly revealed that **AD** often have a common reading against the other four MSS. In a large number of cases either reading is acceptable, e.g. **HLBC** *la nous convint logier*, **AD** *I.n. vimmes I. (l. 29)*; **HLBC** *lautre avoit une borde*, **AD** *et lautre ot une b. (l. 75)*; **HLBC** *a mesaise car on le me conta*, **AD** *a grant meschief on le me raconta (l. 1043)*. Very exceptionally **AD**'s reading is preferable, e.g. **AD** *chevaux guinder*, **HLC** *ch. wuidier*, **B** line omitted (l. 63); **AD** *le temps si soit passe*, **HLBC** *no si (l. 419)*; **AD** *faisoit par tout*, **HLBC** *faire par tout (l. 621)*. Much more frequently **AD**'s reading is corrupt, e.g. **HLBC** *la feumes nous en joie*, **AD** *la mer passa en j. (l. 54)*; **HLBC** *estienne scroup*, **AD** *guillaume s. (l. 850; p. 187, l. 17)*; **HLBC** *qui prenront*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* I, p. 226; formerly no. 7532.

⁵⁵ For the date of the hand, see C. Samaran and R. Marichal, *Catalogue des manuscrits en écriture latine, portant des indications de date, de lieu ou de copiste*, 7 vols (Paris, 1959–1984), I, p. CLXI, dated 1539.

⁵⁶ *Chronique de la traïson et mort*, ed. Williams; for an almost complete list, see Palmer, 'French Chronicles', 61:1 (1978), pp. 180–181.

asez paine, **AD** *qui pourront a. p.* (l. 1662); **HLBC** *ne que en dire*, **AD** *jen muir tout dire* (l. 1752).

AD are also set apart from the other MSS in that they neither have the miniatures nor regular reference to them, nor do they divide the text into chapters as **HLBC** do. Both **A** and **D** have separative errors, which rule out one having been copied from the other, e.g. **A** *au roy preschier*, **D** *aux gens p.* (l. 470); **A** *car dix et huit apres*, **D** *car .xviii. jours apres* (l. 795); **A** *des boys grans et menus*, **D** *des boiz et des* [grans superscript] *menus* (l. 173); **A** *au duc r.*, **D** *le duc r.* (l. 571). Clearly, however, **AD** have a common source, and equally clearly the tradition which they represent is inferior to that represented by **HLBC**.

Each of **HLBC** has isolated readings, e.g. **LABCD** *une ville*, **H** *en une ville* (l. 611); **LABCD** *de cuer fin*, **H** *le c. f.* (l. 2788); **HABCD** *ne se furent point veoir*, **L** *no point* (l. 125); **L** line omitted (ll. 1409, 3210); **HLACD** *.iiii. jours*, **B** *troiz j.* (l. 714); **HLACD** *le duc dexcestre*, **B** *le d. de cestre* (l. 827); **C** lines omitted (ll. 2572–2573); **HLABD** *evesques abbes qui disoient*, **C** *no abbes* (l. 2574). Thus no one of the four is the source of any of the others.

B is significantly different in that it is half the size of the other MSS. The *Prinse et mort* is copied in 31 folios in **B**, with 68 lines to a page, whereas it occupies on average 76 folios (28 lines to a page) in the others. **B** also has a considerable number of errors, e.g. lines omitted (ll. 63, 703); *avant* omitted (l. 655). This has caused difficulty in editing the epistles, *ballades*, and the *chant royal*, of which it is the sole witness. Furthermore corrections made by the scribe as he went along – by scoring out or expunction – suggest that **B** was hastily copied, e.g. *larchevesque de cantorbie fier* [*disant* scored out] (l. 471); *que trestous* [*avrout* scored out] *ceulx avront* (l. 479); *tous les* [*cir* scored out] *crurent* (l. 498); *moult* [*chie* scored out] *riche et chiere* (l. 981). These three points – a text containing a large number of poor readings and omissions, cramped into half the space of the other MSS, and carelessly copied – added to the fact that the MS may be as late as mid fifteenth-century, show that **B** must be excluded from the list of candidates for base MS.

C also has a considerable number of lines missing, e.g. ll. 2824, 3471, 3484, and 3511. This, as well as being a late fifteenth-century MS, is enough to render it unsuitable as a base.

H was certainly written by 1405. **L** may be as early, but we cannot be sure; palaeographical evidence points merely to a date before 1440. What is certain is that **L** has a large number of isolated readings, e.g. *humblement* (l. 441), *nouvelles bien certaines* (l. 449), *de quoy ilz furent en leur vie entechies* (l. 481); there are also lines omitted, e.g. ll. 350–351, 1028, and 2289.

H is a more carefully copied MS, its errors being rarely more than venial, e.g. *ymerne* (l. 39); *nulz* (l. 215); *cestoit* (l. 429). It does have over 130 corrections – all given in the variants beneath the text, with an underlining beneath any letter written over an erasure – but while those in **B** point to a scribe working too quickly and carelessly, the reverse is so with **H**. Sometimes a letter has been squeezed in later, e.g. *brief* > *briefz* (l. 302); *soie* > *soiez* (l. 557); *assamble* > *assamblee* (l. 759), or one letter has been written over another, e.g. *ioyaulx* > *joyaulx* (ll. 1001, 1006); *chaccun* > *chascun* (l. 1230). The large majority of corrections have been made, however, by erasing the original lesson and writing over the erasure; the corrections were almost certainly made by the original scribe.

It is interesting to note that nearly 90 times out of more than 130, the correction in **H** coincides with an error or variant in one or more of the other five MSS, e.g. **H** *alames*, **C** *sen alla* (l. 393); **H** *tout*, **C** *puis* (l. 1100); **H** *tout*, **LC** *trestout* (l. 1241); **H** *pour vray*, **ACD** *certes* (l. 1284); **H** *sanc*, **B** *fait* (l. 3221). Very often **H**'s correction coincides with a hypometric reading in **LB** or **LBC**, e.g. **H** *avec*, **LB** *et* (l. 108); **H** *je vous*, **LB** *no je* (l. 220); **H** *quavoit le conte*, **LB** *quot le c.* (l. 304); **H** *moult forte et* **LBC** *no moult* (l. 612); **H** *tous le laisserent*, **LBC** *no tous* (l. 744).

Some corrections leave **H** with an isolated reading. Usually, however, there is nothing to choose between it and the lesson of **LABCD**; both are equally satisfactory as far as sense and metre are concerned, e.g. **H** *en chevauchant*, **LABCD** *ilz chevauchoient* (l. 1031); **H** *et de dueil*, **LABCD** *de douleur* (l. 1254); **H** *le grant meschief*, **LABCD** *la grant misere* (l. 1397). On one occasion, however, **H**'s correction gives a better rhyme, **H** *qui de vray cuer vouloient bien conquerre*, **LABCD** *q. d. bon c. v. aler guerre* (l. 883), rhyming with *guerre* (l. 881).

Once the correction supplies a word clearly omitted from the other MSS, **H** *gens* [in left margin] *parmi galles*, **LABCD** *no gens* (l. 1962). One correction is especially interesting: **H** *de le* [King Richard] *desfaire assez briefment*, **LABCD** *de le faire mourir b.* (l. 2437). Whereas *faire mourir* is unequivocal, *desfaire* is ambiguous, meaning either 'to kill' or merely 'to overthrow'. This may be a reflection of the uncertainty that existed at this early date as to whether Richard were dead or alive.

It is certain that **H** originally had these variant or hypometric readings of the other MSS, which the scribe later changed when he checked **H** from another exemplar. The separative errors in the other five MSS militate against any one of them being this second exemplar; it clearly represents a different tradition from **LABCD** and the uncorrected **H**. The corrections demonstrate the scrupulous care the scribe took with his MS. Not content with carefully copying

his exemplar, he went to the trouble of checking his text against a second MS. **H** offers the best text of the *Prinse et mort*, calling for the smallest amount of editorial intervention and was therefore used as the base MS for this edition.

Previous Editions

The *Prinse et mort* has been edited twice before: in 1824 by Rev. J. Webb, with a translation and notes,⁵⁷ and in 1826 by J.A. Buchon.⁵⁸ Of the six MSS surviving, Webb knew only **H**, **L**, and **D**. He used **H** as his base MS. 'Of two [*sic*] manuscripts of this tract, one in the British Museum and the other in the Library of Lambeth Palace, the former is apparently the earliest'.⁵⁹ Webb unaccountably states that the MS in Paris which he used was **C** (BnF f. fr. 1668, formerly No. 7656);⁶⁰ examination of only a few variants, however, e.g. ll. 159, 261, 457, 514, and 675, confirms that he was using **D** (BnF f. fr. 1441, formerly No. 7532).

The text as he establishes it leaves much to be desired. Scribal errors are either not corrected: *nulz* (l. 215), *pars* (l. 437); or are corrected without the fact being noted: *commument* (l. 329), *cestoit* (l. 429), *le duc de cexcestre* (l. 1073). His transcript is extremely inaccurate; the following errors occur on p. 295 alone: *verdur* for *verdure* (l. 3), *oyseaux* for *oyseaulx* (l. 5), *laisser* for *laissier* (l. 10), *pres* for *prest* (l. 18). Many errors are more serious, including errors of omission: *en* (l. 147), *scay* (l. 257), *qui est* (l. 611), *le duc* (l. 1507); and errors of transposition: *morir beaucoup* (l. 197), *chacun sa foy* (l. 221), *fu la* (l. 343).

Webb's unfamiliarity with Middle French led him to include many nonsensical readings: *jours* for *joies* (l. 387), *la guerre for le querre* (l. 411), *sur savis for sur sains* (l. 598), *niart for m'ait* (l. 999), *points nulx for pour ce nulz* (l. 1236). He also omits variants in **L**: *le pais* (l. 107), *point* omitted (l. 125), *affin tele* (l. 160); and in **D**: *plus riens* (l. 269), *le duc* (l. 571), *bien beau cousin le scay* (l. 581). Examples of all these errors could be multiplied many times over. Furthermore, Webb ignores the chapters into which both **H** and **L** divide the text, and since his is a diplomatic edition, abbreviations are not extended, nor are modern word-divisions introduced.

⁵⁷ Jehan Creton, 'Translation of a French Metrical History of the Deposition of King Richard the Second ... with a Copy of the Original', ed. J. Webb, *Archaeologia*, 20 (1824), pp. 1–423.

⁵⁸ Jehan Creton, 'Histoire de Richard II'.

⁵⁹ Creton, 'Translation of a French Metrical History', p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 293.

Buchon knew and used Webb's edition,⁶¹ but chose **A** as his base MS: [*le manuscrit*] *que j'ai suivi est à la fois le plus ancien et le plus correct.*⁶² Errors of transcription abound; the following occur on p. 324 alone: *fois* for *foiz* (l. 21), *fu* for *fut* (ll. 25, and 36), *un mains* for *ung moins* (l. 25), *cheauchant* for *cheauchans* (l. 27), *mercredi* for *mercresdy* (l. 30), *avoient* for *avoient* (l. 42), *repoz* for *repos* (l. 43). He gives no variants and corrects **A** without acknowledgement: *la feumes nous* (l. 54), *survenir* (l. 59), *par droit* (l. 105), *son bien* (l. 146).

Some extracts of Creton's account – from the time Richard heard of Lancaster's return to England until the King's leaving Chester for London in Lancaster's custody, and Creton's scepticism at the news of Richard's death – have been printed in his *Chronicles of the Revolution* by Professor Given-Wilson, in Webb's translation, substantially modernized.⁶³ The capture of King Richard at Flint by Henry Lancaster, in Webb's translation, is printed by H. Taylor in his *Historic Notices ... of Flint*.⁶⁴ Creton's two epistles and one *ballade* were published by P.W. Dillon in 1840; this is also a very poor transcription.⁶⁵ The remaining two *ballades* and the *chant royal* were edited by Professor Roccati in 2003.⁶⁶

The present edition is fiercely critical of the Rev. Webb and his edition. However, it should be remembered that he was writing without the benefits and advantages of modern scholarship. It was by means of his edition that a medieval text of the first importance, and most of the colour miniatures, were made available at an early date. We owe him a debt of gratitude.

The Prinse et mort du roy Richart d'Angleterre and the Chronique de la traïson et mort de Richart Deux roy dengleterre

There are two contemporary works in French on the deposition of Richard II: the *Prinse et mort*, in verse by Creton, and the anonymous *Traïson et mort*, in prose. It has been claimed that there is a further

⁶¹ Creton, 'Histoire de Richard II', p. 321.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 322.

⁶³ *Chronicles of the Revolution*, ed. Given-Wilson, pp. 137–152, 243–245.

⁶⁴ H. Taylor, *Historic Notices, with Topographical and Other Gleanings Descriptive of the Borough and County-town of Flint* (London, 1883), translated extracts on pp. 71–79.

⁶⁵ Jehan Creton, 'Remarks on the Manner of the Death of King Richard the Second', ed. P.W. Dillon, *Archaeologia*, 28 (1840), pp. 75–95.

⁶⁶ Jehan Creton, 'Trois ballades politiques inédites de Jean Creton (début du XVe siècle)', ed. G.M. Roccati, in *Lingua, cultura e testo: Miscellanea di studi francesi in onore di Sergio Cigala*, ed. E. Galazzi and G. Bernardelli, 3 vols (Milan, 2003), II, pt. 2, pp. 1099–1110.

French work on the death and deposition of King Richard,⁶⁷ but Professor Palmer has demonstrated that this third chronicle is a 'pirated' version of the *Traïson*.⁶⁸

The two works are quite independent and one cannot say either that they were interdependent or that 'Deux versions de la Chronique de Richard II existent, l'une en prose, l'autre en vers'.⁶⁹ Of the 37 surviving *Traïson* MSS, half contain incidents – e.g. Richard's capture, an alternative account of his death, the return of Isabella – using phrases which suggest that the author took them from the *Prinse et mort*. For his edition of the *Traïson* Benjamin Williams used one of these – BnF f. fr. 5624 – as his base MS. However, he folded into it a large excerpt – pp. 27–33 – relating to Richard's Irish expedition, contained in MS BnF 5624 (which he refers to as MS 10212, as formerly numbered).⁷⁰ Thus Williams presents the reader with a conflated text. Furthermore, BnF MS 5624 is the only MS of the *Traïson* with this account of Richard in Ireland, which follows very closely the *Prinse et mort*, and could certainly not have been written without it. It is a clumsy rendering of verse into prose.

It is fatally easy to miss the side-notes on pp. 27–33 announcing the change of MS, and equally easy to fail to recognize their significance. Williams' edition is unfaithful to the *Traïson* as originally written, since it has – from two different sources – all the incidents included at a later date, especially the unique account of Richard in Ireland.

Like the *Traïson* itself, the interpolations are anonymous and certainly not composed by Creton. Had he wanted to insert his own accounts into the *Traïson*, he would simply have written in prose, as he did in Chapters 30–40 (pp. 187–213) of the *Prinse et mort*. The information was all inside his own head, he had no need to borrow from his own work and thus deform it. Furthermore, it would have been an insult to King Richard and to Creton's patron, the duke of Burgundy, to have debased his own elegant work in this way.

There is a final stumbling block to a clear view of the relationship between these two independent works. In one family of MSS of Froissart's *Chronicles*, Book IV, is written:⁷¹

⁶⁷ P. Rickard, *Britain in Medieval French Literature 1100–1500* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 160; D.B. Tyson, 'Jean le Bel: Portrait of a chronicler', *Journal of Medieval History*, 12 (1986), p. 331 n. 5.

⁶⁸ Palmer, 'French Chronicles', 61:1 (1978), p. 180.

⁶⁹ P.M. De Winter, *La Bibliothèque de Philippe le Hardi, duc de Bourgogne (1364–1404)* (Paris, 1985), p. 20; also M.V. Clarke, *Fourteenth-Century Studies* (Oxford, 1937), p. 68.

⁷⁰ *Prinse et mort*, ll. 31–456; *Chronique de la traïson et mort*, ed. Williams, pp. 27–32. My remarks on the *Traïson* MSS are based on Palmer, 'French Chronicles', 61:1 (1978), pp. 145–181.

⁷¹ A. Varvaro, 'Jean Froissart, la déposition et la mort de Richard II: Construction du récit historique', *Romania*, 124 (2006), p. 156.

Pour ce que vous, sire Jehan Froissart ... sur vostre quart volume vous taisiez de la mort du noble roy Richart, roy d'Angleterre, en vous excusant par une maniere de dire, que au jour que vous feistes vostre dit quart volume n'estiez point infourmé de la maniere de sa mort, à celle fin ... que tous vaillans hommes se puissent mirer et exempoier ou fait douloureux de sa mort, je fais savoir à tous, ainsi que j'ay esté infourmé par [un] homme digne de foy, nommé Creton, et par escript de sa propre main, lequel pour ce temps estoit en Angleterre et ou païs, et escript ce que je diray: que le roy Richart d'Angleterre fut occis et mis à mort en la tour de Londres par ung jour des Roys, l'an mil trois cens .iiij.^{xx} et .xix., par la maniere qui s'ensuit.

Verité est, ainsi que certiffie le dit Creton ...

There follows an account of Richard being hacked to death by Sir Piers Exton, *as told in the Traïson*. At first glance this is a real obstacle, but there is a persuasive answer:⁷² Froissart was not in England at this time; Creton was associated with writing about Richard, and a simple mistake was made in attributing this account to him.

It might reasonably be argued that the two works were composed for different audiences: the *Prinse et mort* in verse for reading aloud to aristocratic groups, and in *de luxe* illustrated MSS for presentation to the higher nobility; the *Traïson*, with its large number of surviving copies, a very successful work intended for private reading among government officials and civil servants, prosperous merchants, and the upper *bourgeoisie* generally.

Jehan Creton: His Life

13 August 1386	Philip the Bold pays Creton <i>pour un livre par lui</i> . ⁷³
26 April 1399	Creton and his companion set out for England (ll. 9–29).
? September 1399	They return to France (p. 211, l. 24–p. 213, l. 4). Shortly afterwards Creton starts work on the <i>Prinse et mort</i> (<i>infra</i> , p. 27).
After August 1401	Creton gathers information from a clerk and others who gave him news of England (ll. 2377–2390).
After August 1401– before April 1402	The <i>Prinse et mort</i> , first epistle and first <i>ballade</i> are completed (<i>infra</i> , p. 27).

⁷² A. Garsden, *Historical Writing in England*, 2 vols (London, 1974–1982), II, p. 190 n. 193.

⁷³ Cockshaw, 'Mentions d'auteurs, de copistes, d'enlumineurs', p. 127, no. 20.

Before April 1402	Creton is sent to Scotland to investigate the rumour of Richard's being alive there. ⁷⁴
April–October 1402	The second epistle is written, referring to the offer to Burgundy of the regency of Brittany. ⁷⁵
16 July 1402	Philip pays Creton <i>pour et en recompensacion d'un livre faisant mencion de la prinse de feu le roy Richart</i> . ⁷⁶
1402–1403	The second and third <i>ballades</i> and the <i>chant royal</i> are written.
3 March, 17 June, 4 October 1403	Philip makes payments to Creton, his <i>varlet de chambre</i> . ⁷⁷
27 April 1404	Philip dies. ⁷⁸
late 1405	Duke of Berry receives H from Jean de Montaignu (<i>supra</i> , pp. 2–3).
11 November 1407	John the Fearless pays Creton for a journey to visit Richard in Scotland. ⁷⁹
29 July 1410	Charles VI pays <i>nostre amé varlet de chambre Jehan Creton la somme de deux cens frans</i> for a journey made some time ago to Scotland, to see if Richard were alive there. ⁸⁰
7 August 1410	Creton's receipt for 100 of the above 200 <i>frans</i> . ⁸¹
1411, 1413	Jehan Creton nominated <i>clerc payeur des oeuvres du roy</i> . ⁸²
1420	Royal accounts show payment <i>a Jehan Creton, payeur des oeuvres du roi es vicomté ... de Paris ... pour l'aider a payer sa rançon a mgr Jacques de Bouconvillier, qui naguere l'avait pris ... 200 livres tourmois</i> . ⁸³

⁷⁴ F. Lehoux, *Jean de France, duc de Berry: Sa vie, son action politique (1340–1416)*, 4 vols (Paris, 1966–1968), II, p. 518 n. 2; p. 473 n. 6.

⁷⁵ R. Vaughan, *Philip the Bold: The Formation of the Burgundian State* (London, 1962), p. 53.

⁷⁶ Cockshaw, 'Mentions d'auteurs, de copistes, d'enlumineurs', p. 135, no. 50.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 135, no. 50; p. 137, no. 61.

⁷⁸ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 240.

⁷⁹ Cockshaw, 'Mentions d'auteurs, de copistes, d'enlumineurs', p. 138, no. 69.

⁸⁰ Creton, 'Remarks', p. 94. The reference to the document concerned, BnF Pièces originales 930, Creton, nos 1–2, is given by Palmer, 'French Chronicles', 61:1 (1978), p. 153 n. 2.

⁸¹ Creton, 'Remarks', ed. Dillon, p. 95.

⁸² M. Rey, *Le Domaine du roi et les finances extraordinaires sous Charles VI 1388–1413* (Paris, 1965), p. 157 n. 1.

⁸³ B.A. Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, *La France gouvernée par Jean sans Peur: Les Dépenses du receveur général du royaume* (Paris, 1949), no. 1250.

The entry for 16 July 1402 has caused considerable confusion. In his catalogue of the library of the dukes of Burgundy, Gabriel Peignot wrongly notes the one entry he found for Creton:⁸⁴ *Du 16 juillet, le Duc achepste de Jehan Creston [sic], moyennant neuf escus d'or, ung liure faisant mention de La prinse du Roy Richar*. The entry is transcribed correctly by Pierre Cockshaw: *A Jehan Creton, pour don a lui fait par mon dit seigneur de grace especial, la somme de LX escuz d'or pour et en recompensacion d'un livre faisant mencion de la prinse de feu le roy Richart, si comme il appert ... par les lectres patentes ... donnees a Paris le XVIe jour de juillet l'an mil CCCC et deux. ...*⁸⁵ Creton is receiving payment for the book, i.e. for his work in writing it. Incorrectly, Georges Doutrepoint and Muriel J. Hughes follow Peignot, Hughes listing, 'Creston, Jehan. Bookseller. On 16 July 1401 [sic] he sold the duke a book mentioning *La Prinse du Roy Richar*'.⁸⁶ De Winter confuses the *Prinse et mort* with the *Traïson*.⁸⁷

It should be said at the outset that the position of *valet de chambre*, either to Charles VI or to Philip the Bold, entailed no duties in the royal or ducal bedchamber. By the end of the fourteenth century the title was bestowed on writers, artists, and craftsmen: this was how they were paid for their services: *la qualification de varlet de chambre ... fut conférée à des hommes que les ducs voulaient honorer*.⁸⁸ Similarly the *clerc payeur des oeuvres du roy* was held in high esteem: *l'office a souvent été tenu par des membres de la bonne bourgeoisie parisienne ... c'étaient tous des personnages fort considérés*.⁸⁹

There is no external evidence for Creton's background or life before the entry in the Burgundian accounts of 1386. He has been said to belong to 'the respectable family of Estourmel'⁹⁰ but no evidence is offered. His link to a family holding land at Moulbaix (near Ath, in Hainault) in the fifteenth century, adduced by Kervyn de Lettenhove,⁹¹ is equally problematic. The assertion that he

⁸⁴ G. Peignot, *Catalogue d'une partie des livres composant la bibliothèque des ducs de Bourgogne au XV^e siècle*, 2nd edn (Dijon, 1841), p. 32. Furthermore, Peignot misreads LX escuz (soixante escuz, 'sixty crowns') as IX escus (neuf escus, 'nine crowns').

⁸⁵ Cockshaw, 'Mentions d'auteurs, de copistes, d'enlumineurs', p. 135, no. 50; Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, pp. 200–201.

⁸⁶ G. Doutrepoint, *La Littérature française à la cour des ducs de Bourgogne* (Paris, 1909), p. 405; M.J. Hughes, 'The Library of Philip the Bold and Margaret of Flanders', *Journal of Medieval History*, 4 (1978), item II.3, p. 168.

⁸⁷ De Winter, *La Bibliothèque de Philippe le Hardi*, p. 19.

⁸⁸ Doutrepoint, *La Littérature française*, pp. 470–471; Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy*, pp. 166, 180.

⁸⁹ Rey, *Le Domaine du roi*, p. 156.

⁹⁰ *Chronique de la traïson et mort*, ed. Williams, p. viii n. 1.

⁹¹ J. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 'Les Chroniques inédites de Gilles le Bel', *Bulletins de l'Académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique*, 2nd ser., 2 (Brussels, 1857), p. 459.

was of Norman extraction has not been justified, and the Jehan Creton serving with Robert de Clermont in 1357 is of an earlier generation.⁹²

The internal evidence of the *Prinse et mort* shows that he was a native of Paris or the surrounding region. The *Prinse et mort* is written in *francien*, the dialect of Paris and the Île de France, before which all other Old French dialects faded out, and which became Modern French.⁹³ Such few Picardisms as occur are usually scribal in origin, e.g. *biau* (ll. 520, 3702); *mangonnaux*: *monchiaux*: *nouviaux* (ll. 1765–1767); *commencha* (l. 2555); *chieulx* (l. 3207).⁹⁴

The fact that he was attached to the house of Burgundy does not mean that Creton was a Northerner.⁹⁵ Philip the Bold had been created the first Valois duke of Burgundy by his father, John the Good,⁹⁶ and although he did everything he could to increase the size and importance of his duchy, he was fundamentally a prince of the French royal house. After the death of his brother, Charles V, in 1380, and the accession of the unstable Charles VI, he was locked in bitter rivalry for influence over the new king with Louis d'Orléans, the king's brother. Hostility between these two ran at a high pitch in the early years of the fifteenth century, and only the active intervention of the queen and the dukes of Bourbon and Berry prevented France from being precipitated into civil war at the beginning of 1402.⁹⁷ Burgundy's power base was at the royal court in Paris. From the mid 1390s until his death in 1404, 'Paris was his favourite and habitual place of residence'.⁹⁸

An educated guess can be made as to Creton's age. He could not have been such a very young man when Philip paid him in 1386 *pour un livre par lui* (*supra*, p. 19); he must have been in his early twenties at a minimum. Both Richard II and Henry Lancaster were born in 1367;⁹⁹ Creton was at least slightly older than they were, perhaps born around 1361–1363. The difficulty here is Lancaster's addressing him and his companion at Flint as *Mes enfans* (p. 197, l. 17). This is not to be taken literally; a priest might use the same expression to his congregation, i.e. someone in authority talking to people

⁹² V. Leclerc, *Histoire littéraire de la France au quatorzième siècle*, 2 vols (Paris, 1865), II, p. 18; Creton, 'Remarks', ed. Dillon, p. 86.

⁹³ M.K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French with Especial Consideration of Anglo-Norman, Phonology and Morphology*, rev. edn (Manchester, 1952), §60, pp. 33–34; §169, pp. 81–82.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* §1320 Northern Region; *Phonology*: §§i, viii, pp. 486–488.

⁹⁵ D. McGettigan, *Richard II and the Irish Kings* (Dublin, 2016), pp. 21–24, 219.

⁹⁶ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 56.

⁹⁸ Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy*, p. 49.

⁹⁹ N. Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, CT, 1997), p. 12; C. Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* (New Haven, CT, 2016), p. 11.

towards whom he is well disposed, regardless of their age. Henry is speaking *de haut en bas*; *mes enfants* is translated here as ‘my sons’.

Where external evidence is lacking, some modern writers have stepped in with their own view on Creton: he is variously a French nobleman; a French chronicler, a ‘hanger-on ... looking for an exotic adventure’; a squire; a French valet; Richard’s French adherent.¹⁰⁰ M.V. Clarke and V.H. Galbraith thought he was so unimportant that the earl of Salisbury left him behind at Flint Castle when he withdrew on Conway despite the fact that Creton was a royal envoy.¹⁰¹ This was necessary in order for them to explain the absence of Archbishop Arundel at Conway in Creton’s account.¹⁰² Creton himself tells us that *le roy nous avoit envoié avecques le roy Richart en Irlande* (p. 197, ll. 13–14), thus Clarke and Galbraith are asking us to believe that Salisbury had simply abandoned Creton and his companion, royal envoys from France, at Flint. Richard’s party – Richard, Salisbury, and some of Richard’s entourage – returned that way from Conway, but it was *after* Richard had been lured from Conway by Northumberland’s treachery. On retreating to Conway, Salisbury must have been thinking of escaping by sea (see map p. ii).

When Creton came to England in 1399, it should be understood that he was in his thirties at least. He says that he had been despatched by Charles VI, but given his attachment to the duke of Burgundy, and Burgundy’s influence over the king, he was sent by Philip the Bold. He was specifically instructed to go to Ireland, *pour veoir le país* (p. 197, l. 15) and does seem to have gone out of his way to see as much as possible: when the earl of Gloucester was sent to parley with McMurrough:

*Avecques eulx alay, comme celui
Qui vouloit voir
L'onneur, l'estat, la force et le povoir
De Maquemore. ...*

(ll. 315–318)

It is too much to call Creton a spy, but he does seem to have been sent as Burgundy’s eyes and ears, on a diplomatic mission of some sort.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, *Historic Notices*, p. 72; McGettigan, *Richard II*, pp. 22, 167; L. D. Duls, *Richard II in the Early Chronicles* (The Hague, 1973), p. 133 n. 51; D. Biggs, *Three Armies in Britain: The Irish Campaign of Richard II and the Usurpation of Henry IV 1397–1399* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 202, 233; P. Strohm, ‘The Trouble with Richard: The reburial of Richard II and Lancastrian symbolic strategy’, *Speculum*, 71 (1996), p. 88.

¹⁰¹ Clarke, *Fourteenth-Century Studies*, p. 69. Chapter III, ‘The Deposition of Richard II’ was written in collaboration with V.H. Galbraith, and originally published in 1930.

¹⁰² J. Sherborne, *War, Politics and Culture* (London, 1994), pp. 142–143.

¹⁰³ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, p. 10.

The Burgundian state was built on alliances and good relations, rather than on warfare and conquest, especially with England;¹⁰⁴ Philip's need for intelligence was essential for achieving his objectives. Three times in 1403 (*supra*, p. 20), Creton was paid for unspecified reasons.

Internal evidence suggests that Creton was attached to the earl of Salisbury when in England. He pronounces Salisbury a Francophile and poet (ll. 771–772, 779–781) and this is confirmed by Christine de Pizan who said of him: *icellui gracieux chevalier amast dictiez, et lui meismes fust gracieux dicteur*.¹⁰⁵ Jehan du Castel, Christine's son, spent some time in his service: *je consenti . . . que l'ainsné de mes filz, assez abille et bien chantant enfant de l'aage de .XII. ans, alast avec lui oudit pais d'Engleterre pour estre avec ung sien filz aucques de l'aage*.¹⁰⁶ Salisbury and Creton could have met at the end of the previous year, when Salisbury was sent to Paris by Richard to break off the negotiations initiated by Lancaster for a marriage between himself and Mary of Berry.¹⁰⁷ Lancaster bore the earl a grudge for his intervention, taunting him when he had him in his power: *Conte de Salsebery, sachiez de certain que, nyent plus que vous ne daignastes parler a Monseigneur le duc de Lancastre, quant lui et vous estiez a Paris au Noël derreinerement passé, il ne parlera a vous* (p. 204, ll. 18–21).

Creton was interested in Salisbury and his family: the son of his countess by an earlier marriage is the only one of the new knights created, along with Lancaster's son, whom Creton mentions (p. 187, ll. 20–22). Although of different rank, they were both educated men with similar interests and outlook on life. When Salisbury was ordered by Richard to return before him to Wales and raise the Welshmen for the King, Creton went with him (ll. 603–609). His presence in Salisbury's entourage would account for Creton's being practically at the King's elbow from the time he met up with the army on the way to Milford Haven (ll. 50–53) until Richard fell into Lancaster's hands at Flint (p. 203, ll. 26–27).

Salisbury realized immediately the King was captured that the Frenchman might be the only one left alive to tell the tale, and was concerned that Creton should be fully aware of what was going on. To this end, he repeated to him what the Archbishop of Canterbury said to Richard at Flint, since Creton had not been able to hear for himself (p. 193, ll. 5–7), and translated from English into French the exchange between the King and Lancaster

¹⁰⁴ Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁵ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre de l'advison Cristine*, ed. C. Reno and L. Dulac (Paris, 2001), p. 112.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Saul, *Richard II*, pp. 405–406 n. 8.

(p. 199, ll. 17–18). This gives the lie to the dismissal of Creton's information on the proceedings of the Council when they were in Ireland,¹⁰⁸ Salisbury was keeping him *au fait* with what was being discussed.

Creton thought very highly of the earl, witness his panegyric when Salisbury was deserted by his troops in Wales (ll. 773–786). No other person is described in such glowing terms, Salisbury is the very model of a perfect knight.¹⁰⁹

Creton returned to France in September 1399. Before April 1402 (*supra*, p. 20) he was sent to Scotland to investigate the rumour that Richard was alive there. Having been with Richard for four months, he would certainly have been able to identify an impostor. This was a large responsibility for him; on his finding rested the fate of Queen Isabella.

It was persistently alleged in the early 1400s that Richard was still alive.¹¹⁰ While it was clearly in the interests of the enemies of Henry IV to put it about that Richard was not dead, the particular concern of the French lay in the legal position of Isabella. Was she Richard's wife or his widow? Was she free to remarry? An ordinance of Charles VI dating from early 1402 states that it is: *commune renommee que nostre filz Richart, jadiz roy d'Angleterre, est en vie ou royaume d'Escoce, auquel pour en savoir la verité nous avons envoié certains nos messaiges*.¹¹¹ Creton was certainly one of these messengers (*supra*, p. 20).

Creton found no reason to believe Richard alive: in his epistle to Philip the Bold, written April to October 1402 (*supra*, p. 20), he implores Burgundy to avenge the death of King Richard (p. 319, ll. 1–12). In June 1404, Isabella was betrothed to Charles d'Orléans, son of Louis, future poet and prisoner of Agincourt.¹¹²

Creton was nominated *clerc payeur des oeuvres du roy* in 1411 and 1413. This clerk of the king's works was not a professional, although he had the advice of a master-mason and a master-carpenter: *l'office a souvent été tenu par des membres de la bonne bourgeoisie parisienne*.¹¹³ Civil strife raged in France at this time, and control of Paris and the king – and thus over appointments – fluctuated between Burgundians and Armagnacs/Orleanists. Burgundian influence extended from 1411 to 1413, at the end of which year they were

¹⁰⁸ D. B. Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983) p. 787.

¹⁰⁹ G. Mathew, *The Court of Richard II* (London, 1968), pp. 114–128.

¹¹⁰ G. Lecuppre, *L'Imposture politique au Moyen Age: La Seconde Vie des rois* (Paris, 2005), pp. 63–65.

¹¹¹ Lehoux, *Jean de France*, II, p. 518 n. 2; p. 473 n. 6.

¹¹² See *ODNB*, s.v. 'Isabella [Isabella of France]' (1389–1409).

¹¹³ Rey, *Le Domaine du roi*, p. 157 n. 1.

expelled from Paris.¹¹⁴ By 1418, Burgundians again ruled the capital. The entry in the royal accounts for 1420 suggests that Creton had been captured by the Armagnacs while trying to flee Paris in 1413.¹¹⁵ Nothing more has been discovered about Creton; he then disappears from the world stage.

Jehan Creton: His Writings

The date by which the *Prinse et mort* was completed is easy to fix. On 16 July 1402, Philip the Bold paid Creton for his MS. While the earl of Salisbury had urged Creton to write about Richard's betrayal, it is likely that Philip commissioned the work for reading aloud at court:¹¹⁶ it is noticeable that Creton refers always to listeners, not to readers (l. 164, note). The expression *com vous orrez*, 'as you will hear', or something very similar, occurs eighteen times (e.g. ll. 164–165, 461, 579). Reading aloud was commonplace in courtly circles:¹¹⁷ Christine de Pizan says of Charles V: *En yver ... se occupoit souvent a ouïr lire de diverses belles hystoires ... jusques a heure de soupper*.¹¹⁸ She assumes that her biography of Charles V, written for Philip the Bold, will be read aloud: *Pour ce que trop longue narracion ... tourne aux oyans ... à annuy ... souffise à present la declaracion des vertus ... qui ... est la premiere partie de ce present traittié. ...*¹¹⁹

Creton uses the expression *com vous orrez* in two ways. After ll. 165, 2471, 3184, for example, he immediately tells the next part of the story. However, *com vous orrez* (l. 164); *vous orrez bien comment* (l. 791); *com vous orrez / Ici après* (ll. 1176–1177); *Com vous orrez ains qu'il soit gueres tart* (l. 2221) and so forth set down a marker for an episode that will be related later. Creton goes on to fulfil these promises, except on one occasion: *Et vous l'orrez* (l. 835) indicates that we will be told further about how two of the three bishops in Richard's party were not loyal to him. We hear no more of this, and when writing subsequently of Richard's companions, only the bishop of Carlisle is mentioned; the other two – Lincoln and St David's – are dropped completely. This interweaving of episodes bespeaks careful planning.

¹¹⁴ E. Perroy, *La Guerre de Cent Ans* (Paris, 1945), pp. 197–211; Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy*, p. 153.

¹¹⁵ Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, *La France gouvernée par Jean sans Peur*, no. 1250.

¹¹⁶ De Winter, *La Bibliothèque de Philippe le Hardi*, p. 54.

¹¹⁷ Bratu, '«Or vous dirai»: La V ocalité des récits historiques français du Moyen Age (XIIe–XVe siècles)', *Neophilologus*, 96 (2012), p. 344.

¹¹⁸ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. S. Solente, 2 vols (Paris, 1936–1941), I, pp. 47–48.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* I, pp. 103–104.

Writing for listeners demands repetition. Modern-day preachers employ the same technique when delivering a sermon. People being read to do not have the luxury of stopping the narrative and going back through the pages if they want to remind themselves of something already said; the poet has to repeat the most important episodes for them. Creton tells us (ll. 677–752) that the Welsh desert Salisbury; the earl confesses this to Richard when they meet (ll. 877–899). Creton recounts how Rutland disbanded Richard's army at Milford Haven (ll. 945–1046); a messenger reports this to the King at Conway (ll. 1261–1284). Archbishop Arundel suggests Lancaster's demands of Richard (ll. 1628–1640); Northumberland fleshes them out in the King's presence at Conway (ll. 1839–1927). Rutland's betrayal of the Epiphany Rising is touched on, *comme vous orrez cy aval* (ll. 2883–2884); his treachery is laid out (ll. 3006–3011, 3056–3106).

As well as telling the story twice, Creton seeks to keep his listeners engaged by nudging them, referring back to what they had already heard. He reminds them – *Com vous avez / Devant oji* (ll. 1064–1065) – that the Welsh harassed the English deserters; he does it again (p. 191, l. 28). He refers back to Northumberland's treacherous deceit (p. 201, ll. 5–6); and once more with *Comme j'ay dit ycy devant* (ll. 3699–3704). Two 'nudges' towards the end of the work go to the heart of the matter of the *Prinse et mort*: *En la forme et maniere que vous avez oji, prist le duc Henry le roy Richart* (p. 203, l. 3); and *Ainsi com vous avez ouji / ... Fu desfait le roy ancien* (ll. 2833–2837).

Before April 1402 Creton was sent to Scotland to see whether Richard was alive there (*supra*, p. 20). In his epistle to the King announcing his intention to come to him (pp. 301–309), Creton says that the *Prinse et mort* has already been written and is in circulation: *Et saiches que tous les maulx et horribles trajisons, qu'ilz t'ont faictes, j'ay manifestees par figures [et] par diz ou royaume de France* (p. 305, ll. 23–25).

The last event mentioned in Creton's poem is the restitution of Queen Isabella at Leulingham on Sunday 31 July 1401 (ll. 3495–3498). Creton was not present at this ceremony himself, but took his information at second hand. He then writes of Isabella's return to Paris (ll. 3642–3643).

Clearly he did not compose the whole of the *Prinse et mort* between August 1401 and April 1402. It is a work of almost 4,000 lines plus an important prose section. He was back in France by September 1399 (p. 213, ll. 1–4); allowing for time spent in reporting back to the duke of Burgundy, and settling down to planning his work, he would have started writing in the autumn of 1399, while events were still fresh in his mind. The *Prinse et mort* was written 1399–1402.

The deposition of Richard, son-in-law to Charles VI, was an event with huge repercussions in France.¹²⁰ It happened during a truce in the Hundred Years' War, and had the potential to call into question Charles's right to the throne on account of his spells of incapacity. The large number of surviving MSS of the *Traïson*, plus Creton's account, bear witness to this. In particular, the *Traïson* must have had a very extensive readership. By contrast, the deposition of the ineffective Wenceslas IV, King of Germany, but never crowned Holy Roman Emperor, in 1400 was equally portentous but, unlike Richard's deposition, had little impact.¹²¹

It was common currency that Henry had had Richard murdered. Louis d'Orléans, who formed an alliance with Lancaster when he was in exile in Paris (1398–1399), accused him, in veiled terms, of regicide, in an exchange of insulting letters (1402–1403), referred to in Creton's *ballade* IV (pp. 327–329): *d'avoir entrepris encontre vostre lige et souverain seigneur le roy Richard ... ce que avez fait ... au temps que je fis ladite aliance je n'eusse ... pensé que vous eussiez fait contre vostre roy ce qui est congneu et que chacun scet que vous avez fait ... je ne sçay se à vostre seigneur le roy Richard vous rendistes le serement de feaulté que vous aviez à luy avant que vous procédissiez contre sa personne par la manière que avez fait ... la dignité en quoy vous estes, je ne pense que la vertu divine vous y ait mis.*¹²²

Eustache Deschamps stated baldly that Lancaster had captured and killed Richard,¹²³ and Christine de Pizan said of the marriage of Richard and Isabella of France: *duquel dit mariage fust ensuivi si grant bien ... se Fortune n'eust consenti parfaire la trahison, que fist Henri de Lancastre, qui cellui roy Richart par faultz et desloial tour prist et fist morir.*¹²⁴ Echoing these, a contemporary hand has added a marginal note to an early fifteenth-century MS of Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*; Demaratus betrayed Xerxes who gave him refuge when he was in exile: *Nota contre les François qui receperent Henry de Lancastre qui au partir d'eulz fist mourir son seigneur le roy Richart d'Angleterre, gendre du roy de France et son alié, et fu environ les annees mil iiii^c iiii^{xx} xviii, xix et les ensuivantes.*¹²⁵ Creton's views are entirely those of his contemporaries in France, which he had helped to shape.

¹²⁰ C. Taylor, '“Weep thou for me in France”: French views of the deposition of Richard II', in W.M. Ormrod (ed.), *Fourteenth Century England*, III (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2004), pp. 207–214.

¹²¹ Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy*, p. 17.

¹²² Enguerran de Monstrelet, *La Chronique d'Enguerran de Monstrelet*, 6 vols (Paris, 1857–1862), I, pp. 54–55.

¹²³ Deschamps, *Oeuvres complètes*, VI, no. 1200, pp. 184–185.

¹²⁴ Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs*, I, p. 147.

¹²⁵ John Rylands Library, Manchester, French MS. 63, fo. 56r.

The *Prinse et mort* falls into three separate sections: quatrains (ll. 1–2295), prose (pp. 186–212), and couplets (ll. 2335–3712), with an imprecatory *ballade* cursing Lancaster following the prose section (ll. 2296–2334). Each section tells a different part of the story: the first covers the events leading to Richard's capture; the middle, prose section comprises an accurate eye-witness account of the capture itself; and the final section deals with the deposition and its aftermath. The *Prinse et mort* is therefore quite unlike any of the other sources for the usurpation. Apart from Chandos Herald's *Vie du Prince Noir* and the anonymous *Voeux du Héron*,¹²⁶ it is the only account in French of a significant moment in English later medieval history made in a poetic form.

When Creton returned to France and set to work, the events described in the quatrains and prose had already happened: Richard was in prison and Parliament was going to meet to elect another King. However, Creton refers forward to the death of the earl of Salisbury (ll. 788–790), executed for his part in the failed Epiphany Rising of January 1400. Creton is actually writing about the earl being deserted by the Welshmen he had raised to fight for Richard, but inserts a panegyric on Salisbury. This reads just like a funeral eulogy, the emotion is quite raw and heart-felt; it seems as though news of the Rising had just reached Creton, and he responds to it with this outburst of feeling.

As he was writing the quatrains and prose, the events described in the couplets were still unfolding. News of the Parliament where Lancaster was elected King, his coronation and the Epiphany Rising came to Creton at second hand, he says from a French clerk who had travelled to England with Lancaster (ll. 2383–2390). In fact he was likely to have had information from various sources.

Creton wrote firmly in the tradition of the Middle French poets, although couplets, not quatrains, were the standard verse form of the period; only a highly competent writer, skilled in French verse, could accomplish a poem of this calibre. Even prolific authors such as Froissart and Chartier used the form only sparingly, and Creton himself slips into couplets in the final section.

The form he used, a system of concatenation – three decasyllabic lines rhymed together, while the four-syllable line following set the rhyme of the three ten-syllable lines coming after – was practised by leading Middle-French poets: Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Jugement du roi de Behaigne*; Jehan Froissart, *Le Dit dou bleu chevalier*; Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du dit de Poissy*, *Le Livre des trois jugemens*,

¹²⁶ Chandos Herald, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, ed. D.B. Tyson (Tübingen, 1975); *The Vows of the Heron (Les Voeux du Héron): A Middle French Vowing Poem*, ed. J.L. Grigsby and N.J. Lacy, trans. N.J. Lacy (New York, 1992).

and *Le Livre du debat de deux amans*; and Alain Chartier, *Le Debat des deux fortunés d'amours*. Chartier also used this form in *Le Livre des quatre dames*, but in octosyllabics. The form may be a development of the tercets – two long lines, one short – practised by Rutebeuf in the mid thirteenth century, perhaps the inspiration also for Dante's *terza rima*.¹²⁷

Creton sustains this complicated structure well, and the weaknesses are those to which any late Middle French writer might succumb: the second part of a decasyllable is occasionally mere padding (e.g. ll. 205, 851, 1537); the metre is awkwardly handled (ll. 1837, 1869, 2241); some rhymes are laboured (ll. 964–967, 2635–2636); there is assonance rather than rhyme in three quatrains (ll. 896–899, 1240–1243, 2144–2147); and he resorts fairly frequently to rhyming the same word with itself (ll. 81:83, 164–165, 832:835, 1312:1314, 1377–1378). One should note that *Ballades* I–IV are found only in one MS, a slovenly and hastily executed one (see, *infra*, p. 301). At first sight they display a distressing number of errors of rhyme and metre, but these are scribal in origin and easily corrected. The *Ballades* should not counter the view that Creton was an accomplished wordsmith.

Creton realized that what happened between Richard and Lancaster at Flint was of prime importance, the reason for which he was writing the *Prinse et mort*:

*Or vous vueil dire sans plus rime querir
Du roy la prinse. Et pour mieulx acomplir
Les paroles qu'ilz dirent au venir
Eulx deux ensemble –
Car retenues les ay bien, ce me semble –
Si les diray en prose, car il semble
Aucunesfoiz qu'on adjouste ou assemble
Trop de langaige
A la matiere de quoy on fait ouvrage.* (ll. 2285–2293)

Following the imprecatory *ballade*, which allows him full rein to curse Henry Lancaster, Creton picks up the narrative, this time from information received at second hand, in rhyming octosyllabic couplets. This is much less difficult to sustain, but Creton's narrative never recaptures the *élan* of the quatrains. It is as though he found it easier to write when he was drawing from his own experience. He had all the events in his memory, had lived most of them. Writing from

¹²⁷ L.E. Kastner, 'A neglected French poetic form', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 28 (1905), pp. 288–292.

another person's information did not suit Creton. Although it would have been easier to write, the third section is pedestrian; recounting events he did not personally witness seems to handicap him.

It was Creton's view that the English hated the French (ll. 2391–2394, 3661), and that Richard was deposed solely because he loved his father-in-law, Charles VI, King of France (ll. 3292–3297). It is clear from the pejorative terms in which he wrote of the English, with the exception of the King and the earl of Salisbury, that Creton greatly disliked, perhaps even hated the English (ll. 2243–2244; p. 188, ll. 10–12; p. 201, ll. 8–11; p. 212, ll. 4–6; p. 111, ll. 5–7; ll. 2341, 2348–2358, 2374–2376, 2457–2459, 2650, 2929–2930, 3653–3655, 3667–3668). Creton's last word on the subject is in *Ballade IV*, in which he urges the duke of Orleans to invade England at the head of an army that will burn and devastate the country (p. 327, ll. 28–31). Creton's animosity is reflected in Henry's name always being written in the English way, whereas Richard always receives French spelling: *Richart*. The exception is l. 1157, where *Henri* makes a better rhyme for the eye with *di : choisi : failli*.

Creton is given to exaggeration, and has a poor grasp of numbers. He consistently gets distances wrong (ll. 90, 1739–1740; p. 193, ll. 12–13), and insists that Richard rode overnight from Milford Haven to Conway (ll. 865–868, 1257–1258), a distance of around 150 miles. Lancaster reduces his army to 30,000–40,000 men, which will be enough now that the King has been captured (p. 205, ll. 6–7), clearly a preposterous figure. He tries to add up three figures to make a total of 22 – the number of years that Richard has been on the throne – and gets 21 (ll. 934–935). Dates receive the same cavalier treatment (*infra*, p. 36).

The accounts of Richard's weeping should be taken as hyperbole. Creton has everyone weeping (l. 465): Salisbury and Richard when they meet up in Conway (ll. 869–872); Creton himself (ll. 1385–1387); Exeter and Surrey when Lancaster will not let them return to the King (l. 1551); Lancaster when he sees his father's tomb (p. 211, ll. 18–19); Sir Thomas Percy and the English ambassadors at the restitution of Isabella (ll. 3572–3573, 3596–3597); and Isabella herself on her return to France (p. 307, ll. 2–3). *Plourant* is an exaggerated description of an unhappy person.

Like Froissart, Creton was unfamiliar with the English parliamentary system.¹²⁸ This made it difficult for him to describe what was happening in London after Richard had returned there in Lancaster's custody. Thus problems arose in translating his terms: *la commune* (p. 207, l. 3), *les comunes* (p. 211, l. 5), *de / aux communes*

¹²⁸ Varvaro, 'Jean Froissart, la déposition', p. 134.

(p. 207, l. 26; p. 209, l. 15), *le commun* (ll. 2415, 2817, 3317), *le peuple commun* (l. 2671), *la communauté* (l. 2653).

Creton's knowledge of English was probably not extensive. By this time, English was the language of the court, although the nobility spoke French as well.¹²⁹ Froissart confirms that Richard could both talk and read French: *il ... regarda dedens le livre ... et y lisy, car moult bien parloit et lisoit franchois*.¹³⁰ A slight understanding of English would have served to enable Creton to travel from Paris to London, and then to Scotland in 1402, but once in England he was attached to the household of the French-speaking earl of Salisbury (*supra*, pp. 24–25) on whom he could rely to keep him *au fait* with events around him. The words spoken when Richard and Lancaster met at Flint were understood by Creton but, for avoidance of doubt, *si le mes [sic] recorda le conte de Salsebery en françoiz* (p. 199, ll. 17–18). When Creton wished to return to France, he asked Lancaster Herald to approach Lancaster for him (p. 195, ll. 30–33). The Herald obviously talked to Creton in French because, when he conversed with Lancaster, Creton states that he spoke *en langage englesch* (p. 197, l. 13). On learning that Creton and his companion were French, Lancaster addressed them in French (p. 197, ll. 16–18), and when the Frenchmen begged a safe conduct, they went directly to him since they now knew that the duke understood French (p. 211, ll. 26–28).

Creton stands accused of bad faith by trying to deceive his readers; his use of direct speech is taken as an attempt to say that he was present when he was not. For Clarke and Galbraith: 'it has been too hastily assumed that because he was an eyewitness for part of the time that he was an eyewitness all the time. This is exactly what he wanted his readers to believe'.¹³¹ The intention to deceive is quite wrong. It should not be presumed that anything given in direct speech is to be taken as the actual words spoken.¹³² Professor Ainsworth has demonstrated this by comparing an extract from Froissart's first and third redactions of Book I of his *Chronicles*: in the first he uses indirect speech, in the third direct speech; no one thought that Froissart had suddenly remembered the exact words from thirty years before.¹³³ Direct speech was a narrative technique

¹²⁹ Mathew, *Court of Richard II*, pp. 30–31; I. Short, 'On bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England', *Romance Philology*, 33 (1980), pp. 467–469.

¹³⁰ Jean Froissart, *Chroniques de France et d'Angleterre, livre quatrième*, ed. A. Varvaro (Brussels, 2015), p. 376.

¹³¹ Clarke, *Fourteenth-Century Studies*, pp. 68–69.

¹³² Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', p. 789.

¹³³ P. Ainsworth, 'Style direct et peinture des personnages chez Froissart', *Romania*, 93 (1972), pp. 499–501.

to lend depth and texture to the account, giving the person reading the poem aloud the opportunity to ‘act’ the different speeches by varying intonation or gesture.¹³⁴

It is important to remember that Creton was not writing a chronicle. He was the author of a literary work. This explains his opening lines; placing the action in a springtime setting was typical of Old and Middle French verse. One can mention for example Guillaume de Lorris: *Le Roman de la Rose*:

*Que l'en ne voit buisson ne haie
 Qui en may parer ne se veille
 Et couvrir de novele fueille.
 Li bois recueurent lor verdure ...
 Mout a dur cuer qui en may n'aime,
 Quant il ot chanter sus la raimie
 As oisiaus les douz chans piteus* (ll. 50–53, 81–83)

Guillaume de Machaut: *Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne*:

*Au temps pascour que toute rien s'esgaie,
 Que la terre mainte coulour gaie
 Se cointoie ...
 En ce doux temps, contre le mois de may, ...
 Et cil oïsel,
 Pour la douceur du joli temps nouvel,
 Si liement et de si grant revel
 Chantoient tuit ...* (ll. 1–3, 9, 20–3)

Chandos Herald: *La Vie du Prince Noir*:

*Seignour, le temps qe je vous di,
 Ce fut droit par un samedi,
 Trois jours droit eu mois d'averille,
 Qe cil douce oïsselet gentille
 Preignent a refaire lour chantz
 Pres pres, per bois et per champs.
 En cellui temps fut, tut sanz faille,
 Devant Nazarz la grant bataille.* (ll. 3473–3480)

Jehan Froissart: *Le Dit dou bleu chevalier*:

*Ce fu ou mois d'avril le deduisant,
 Sur le declin, pres dou may approchant,
 Que cil oïsiel*

¹³⁴C. Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley, CA, 1957), pp. 79–80.

*Chantent moult cler pour le douc temps nouvel,
 Au raverdir prendent cil arbrissiel. ...
 Car la chantoient et marles et mauvis
 Et li tres doulz rosegnols seignouris
 Moult doucement.*¹³⁵

(ll. 10–14, 18–20)

Froissart's most recent editor was of the opinion that the chronicler did not know the *Prinse et mort*,¹³⁶ but I venture to disagree. Froissart's account of the deposition of Richard is largely fanciful, but echoes of Creton's description of Richard's being tricked out of the safety of one of his castles are found in Froissart. He has Richard return from Ireland to Bristol, then take himself off to Flint Castle, where Lancaster comes to him *with only eleven other men* [editor's italics] and persuades him *par douces parolles* to come to London.¹³⁷ It seems reasonable to suggest that Froissart had been present at a reading of the *Prinse et mort*; his account omits Northumberland at Conway, and condenses the action to Lancaster at Flint. This has the advantage of having the sneaking trick played on Richard carried out by Lancaster himself, rather than by his agent.

Creton's epistle to the duke of Burgundy, composed April–October 1402 (*supra*, p. 20), deserves special mention. In it he quotes from Valerius Maximus and other Classical authors. Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, compiled in the first century AD, was a collection of 'memorable deeds and sayings' intended for the teaching of rhetoric.¹³⁸

Considering the decline in the ability to read Latin, Charles V in 1375 commissioned Simon de Hesdin to translate Valerius into French. On Hesdin's death in 1383, partway through Book Seven (of nine), Nicolas de Gonesse completed the work in 1401. *Les Faits et dits memorables* enjoyed a huge success – more than sixty MSS survive¹³⁹ – and it is clear that Creton had unfettered access to an MS; he may even have owned one.

There are more than half-a-dozen substantial borrowings from Valerius Maximus, quoted almost word for word, either from the

¹³⁵ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. F. Lecoy, 3 vols (Paris, 1965–1970), I, pp. 2–3; Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne and Remede de Fortune*, ed. J.I. Wimsatt and W.W. Kibler (Athens, GA, 1988), p. 61; Chandos Herald, *La Vie du Prince Noir*, p. 143; Jean Froissart, *Oeuvres de Froissart: Poésies*, ed. A. Scheler, 3 vols (Brussels, 1870–1872), I, p. 348.

¹³⁶ Varvaro, 'Jean Froissart, la déposition', p. 115.

¹³⁷ Froissart, *Chroniques de France et d'Angleterre, livre quatrième*, pp. 616–620.

¹³⁸ *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edn (Oxford, 2012); <https://oxfordre.com/classics>, s.v. Valerius Maximus.

¹³⁹ A. Dubois, *Valère Maxime en français à la fin du Moyen Age* (Turnhout 2016), pp. 383–386.

author's text or from the translator's gloss. Also, when Creton 'quotes' from other writers, e.g. Suetonius or St Isidore of Seville, he takes his text not from them but from Valerius Maximus; there can be no doubt about this, as he quotes verbatim from Valerius. All the 'borrowed' passages have been made italic, and identified in the notes;¹⁴⁰ all come from the beginning of Book I. Creton does not move in a straight line through his model, but ranges to and fro. Obviously it is only in the prose epistle that it can be certain that Creton borrowed directly from Valerius Maximus. In the *ballades* it seems very likely that he had the information from Valerius, but given that he was writing in verse, and had to condense his source, the borrowing cannot be so easily verified.

This wholesale plagiarism seems underhand to us, but was not perceived that way in Middle French. At exactly the same time as Creton was composing his epistle to Philip the Bold (1402), Christine de Pizan was composing her *Chemin de long estude*, full of word-for-word borrowings from Valerius Maximus, and 'second-hand' borrowings from Valerius' sources.¹⁴¹ Christine employs the same technique in her *Livre du corps de policie* (1404–1407).¹⁴² It is certainly passing strange that two writers should be writing in the same way at the same time.

Thoughts might be entertained of Creton as an early exponent of humanism, but the Middle Ages were studded with moral tales from the Classics; they were a lesson in how to live, they were essentially practical.¹⁴³ Creton is not interested in the Classics for themselves, for the beauty of their form; his role is that of preceptor, his approach is quite medieval. The *Prinse et mort* occasionally looks backwards. Creton's use of an Old French word or expression to fulfil the needs of rhyme or metre shows the marvellous flexibility of the French language in the Middle French period.

¹⁴⁰ Valerius Maximus [Valère Maxime], *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, trans. Simon de Hesdin, Books I–III, ed. M. C. Enriello C. Di Nunzio, and A. Vitale-Brovarone (the only modern text, just available online and never printed), www.pluteus.it (accessed 25 November 2022); 'La Traduction de Valère-Maxime par Nicolas de Gonesse', ed. C. Charras, PhD thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1982, covers Books VII (part)–IX.

¹⁴¹ D. Lechat, 'L'Utilisation par Christine de Pizan de la traduction de Valère Maxime par Simon de Hesdin et Nicolas de Gonesse dans *Le Livre du chemin de long estude*', in E. Hicks (ed.), *Au champ des escriptures, IIIe Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan* (Paris, 2000), pp. 175–196.

¹⁴² Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. A.J. Kennedy (Paris, 1998), pp. xix, xxix–xxxii.

¹⁴³ J. Monfrin, 'Humanisme et traductions', *Journal des Savants* (1963), pp. 189–190; Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy*, p. 187.

Historical Value of the *Prinse et mort*. By J.J.N. Palmer

Creton was neither a chronicler nor an historian but a bystander involved by chance in events of high political drama. He was urged to recount these events by another of their victims, the earl of Salisbury, who believed that the truth would not otherwise emerge. His story is therefore largely based upon his own personal experiences and drawn from his own memory. It was almost certainly written down after an interval of some months, without the aid of documented sources, but more speedily than many of the other accounts.

Inevitably, such an account has many weaknesses, the most obvious being its chronology. Creton handles dates and figures with all the licence of a versifier. Richard, we are told, toured the castles of North Wales for 'four or six' days (l. 1393); Lancaster was accompanied by 'nine or eleven' great lords (p. 197, l. 9); an English king would reign for 'twenty to twenty-two' years (p. 199, ll. 25–26); Richard was guarded by 'ten or twelve' men (p. 205, l. 18). Impossibilities abound, his entire chronology is too 'long'. He relates that the English army left Kilkenny on 23 June and arrived in Dublin after eleven days of near-starvation and an unspecified number of days on the march. Yet the army was in Dublin by 1 July.¹⁴⁴ He further states that the army remained in Dublin more than eight weeks,¹⁴⁵ before news of Lancaster's invasion reached the King, and that Richard himself delayed in Ireland for a further eighteen days before leaving (ll. 795–797).¹⁴⁶ On this chronology, even the incredible feat which Creton attributes to Richard of riding the 150 or so miles from Milford Haven to Conway between midnight and daybreak would not have brought the King to Conway until weeks after the date which the poet gives for his critical meeting there with the earl of Northumberland.¹⁴⁷ On any reconstruction, Creton's Irish chronology is impossible.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ If not some days earlier; Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', p. 789 n. 3.

¹⁴⁵ More than two weeks (*quinzaine*) before Rutland's arrival (l. 405), and then a further six until news of Lancaster's invasion reached them from England. (ll. 446–450).

¹⁴⁶ Not eighteen days until he rejoined Salisbury, as stated by Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', p. 789.

¹⁴⁷ The latest possible date for Richard's capture – and the most likely one – is the date given by Creton (Tuesday 19 August), p. 187, ll. 6–7. See Palmer, 'French Chronicles', 61:2 (1979), p. 420. Tuesday 22 August is an impossible date. In 1399, 22 August was a Friday: therefore Creton meant either Friday 22 August or Tuesday 19 August. Comparison with other sources favours Tuesday 19 August.

¹⁴⁸ Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', pp. 789–790, makes a brave attempt to reconcile Creton's dates with those of other sources by resurrecting a suggestion made long ago by J.H. Ramsay (*The Genesis of Lancaster, or, The Three Reigns of Edward II, Edward III,*

Despite his imprecision, however, Creton's testimony is vital for the chronology of the events of July and August 1399; for he alone provides the information which enables us to make sense of the dates supplied by other sources. The most puzzling feature of this chronology is the delay between Lancaster's invasion and the King's reaction to it. News of Lancaster's arrival had reached Westminster by 28 June at the latest.¹⁴⁹ If the government reacted with the urgency we might expect, Richard should have been informed within the week. We do not know the exact date of his return to South Wales, but the earliest suggested is over three weeks later, the latest well over a month.¹⁵⁰ Of the various dates supplied by the English chroniclers, that of the monk of Evesham, who dates Richard's return some four weeks after Henry's arrival (c. 25 July), is probably nearest the truth.¹⁵¹ Why did Richard take so long to return?

Two of the English chroniclers refer explicitly to this delay but only Walsingham attempts to explain it. But his inconsequential story of the English army embarking for Wales only to disembark in order to change ports,¹⁵² would be utterly baffling without the aid of Creton's narrative by which to interpret it. Creton gives two reasons for the delay: the weather, and the strategic decisions taken by the King on the advice of his cousin, Edward Plantagenet, earl of Rutland and duke of Aumale. The first was in many respects the crucial factor. According to Creton, all communication between England and the army in Dublin was interrupted for several weeks

and *Richard II, 1307–1399*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1913), II, p. 355 n. 1) that Creton meant that Richard stayed eight (i.e. two plus six) weeks in Ireland, not in Dublin. But apart from the fact that this does nothing to resolve the other difficulties with Creton's chronology, Creton plainly says eight (i.e. two plus six) weeks in Dublin (*supra*, n. 145), and there is nothing in the text at this point to suggest that this was a slip of the pen.

¹⁴⁹ The sources give a variety of dates. A. Tuck, *Richard II and the English Nobility* (London, 1973), pp. 213–215, adduces record evidence which suggests a date towards the end of June. A hitherto unnoticed source confirms this deduction and lends precision: WAM, Book 1 (Liber Niger Quaternus), fo. 86v., 'In vigilia Nativitatis Sancti Johannis Baptiste [23 June] venit Henricus dux Herefordie versus Angliam. Et in vigilia Apostolorum Petri et Pauli [28 June] venerunt prima nova ad Westmonasterium de adventu ipsius. Et iiij die julij applicuit apud Pykeryng'. It may be presumed that the Council was informed no later than the Abbey of Henry's approach.

¹⁵⁰ Adam Usk, *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, ed. C. Given-Wilson (Oxford, 1997), p. 58, gives 22 July; Thomas Walsingham, *Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti*, in J. de Trokelowe et Anon., *Chronica et Annales*, ed. H.T. Riley, Rolls Series (London, 1866) p. 247, c.1 Aug.

¹⁵¹ *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi Secundi*, ed. G.B. Stow (Philadelphia, PA, 1977), p. 151.

¹⁵² Walsingham, *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, p. 248. Sherborne, *War, Politics and Culture*, pp. 119–124, provides a lucid analysis of the different accounts told by the chroniclers.

by storms in the Irish Sea (ll. 446–456).¹⁵³ When they abated, news of the invasion was immediately brought to the King; but by this date, Lancaster was already in control of much of England (ll. 457–512). Creton's story appears, inexplicably, to have been all but ignored by the secondary authorities.

Richard left Dublin on 17 July,¹⁵⁴ but his return to England was further delayed by the decision he had taken to divide his forces, sending the earl of Salisbury directly to Conway while he himself marched south to Waterford, whence he sailed to Milford Haven. Creton, who is our only authority for this decision, also supplies the reasoning behind it. The shipping available at Dublin was adequate for only a small force. The remainder of the navy which had brought Richard to Ireland was scattered down the coast as far as Waterford. It made sense to collect these forces, and detachments of the army, at Waterford, and then cross directly to South Wales (ll. 538–557).¹⁵⁵

Another factor, unknown to Creton, reinforced this reasoning. The actions of the English Council, and of Lancaster himself, very strongly suggest that it had arranged to join forces with the King near Bristol in order to confront the invader together, a sound enough strategy in view of Lancaster's line of march. The delays involved in communications and in moving the King's forces, however, meant that Lancaster was able to interpose his forces between those of the King and the Council. On 27 July, at about the moment of Richard's disembarkation in South Wales,¹⁵⁶ Lancaster came to terms with the Regent, the duke of York, at Berkeley; two days

¹⁵³ It is not clear why Sherborne states that we do not know where Richard was at this time; *ibid.* p. 120.

¹⁵⁴ The date is given by the account of the Receiver of Richard's chamber. J. Lufwyk: 'xvii die julii ... quo die predictus nuper rex cum exercitu suo recessit de Dublin ...' (The National Archives, Kew, PRO E101/403/21). The misreading of the date in the enrolled version of this account by various authorities has caused considerable confusion, described at length by G.O. Sayles, 'Richard II in 1381 and 1399', *English Historical Review*, 94 (1979), pp. 822–826, and by Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', pp. 790–793, who rather exaggerates Lufwyk's record. There is no reason at all to doubt his very precise statement that Richard left Dublin on 17 July. It should be noted that the particulars of Lufwyk's account cited here both confirm the enrolled version and are of superior authority.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 790, 793, says that Creton is suspect on this point. While it is true that there is no direct corroboration of his statement that Richard sailed from Waterford, it makes such good sense of the events that followed that it may be accepted without reserve as true and as further evidence of Creton's value in enabling us to understand events for which no other testimony is available.

¹⁵⁶ Having left Dublin on 17 July, Richard can scarcely have landed more than a day or so earlier than this, given the distances involved. There is a useful illustration in Given-Wilson, *Henry IV*, Map 3, p. 128.

later he was master of Bristol and promptly executed those members of the Council who had attempted to hold the city for the King. Richard's route from South Wales into England was effectively blocked.

The ensuing events in South Wales are perhaps the most obscure of all the episodes leading to the usurpation, not least because Creton was no longer in the King's entourage, having sailed for Conway with the earl of Salisbury. We therefore have no eye-witness account of what Richard did on his arrival; how long he remained with his army; in what circumstances he left it; what caused the army to disperse; or when the King set out for Conway.¹⁵⁷ The widespread belief that Richard himself abandoned his army is too evidently propagated in the interests of all concerned to be taken on trust. Only Usk's story of Richard's attempt to secure troops from Glamorgan,¹⁵⁸ offers any reliable clue as to his activities in this area.

By contrast, Creton gives a very clear account of Salisbury's attempts to raise an army in North Wales and Cheshire, and of the circumstances in which that army too melted away before the King could join it (ll. 633–749). But for Creton, we would not even have known of Salisbury's presence in North Wales and would therefore be quite unable to make any sense of the King's decision to cross the length of Wales from Pembroke to Conway.

There is one other factor in Creton's account of the events between Richard's departure from Dublin and his arrival at Conway which deserves mention: the alleged treachery of Rutland. Creton is the principal witness against Rutland, and many historians have accepted his word and have held Rutland's treachery to have been a major factor in Richard's downfall. Without rejecting Creton's testimony, it is possible to take a different view. Creton's case against Rutland is that he was responsible for the advice to divide the army, with the disastrous consequence which ensued, and to delay his departure from Ireland (ll. 527–557, 730–736, 793–801); that he was one of the two men in charge of the royal forces in South Wales which dispersed without striking a blow for the King (ll. 945–1007; p. 191, ll. 24–30); and that when next seen by Creton, Rutland was in the company of Lancaster, wearing his badge (ll. 1053–1058). In addition Creton knew at the time he was writing that Rutland was believed responsible for

¹⁵⁷ Sherborne, *War, Politics and Culture*, pp. 122–127, reviews the conflicting accounts. To his sources, add WAM, *Liber Niger Quaternus*, fo.86v., 'In vigilia Sancti Petri ad Vincula [31 July] fugit Rex Ricardus a facie ducis Henrici'.

¹⁵⁸ Usk, *Chronicle*, ed. Given-Wilson, p. 58.

betraying to Lancaster the Epiphany Rising of January 1400 (ll. 3074–3091).¹⁵⁹

In view of all this, Creton's admission (p. 191, l. 23) that appearances might possibly be deceptive, is remarkable testimony to his fair-mindedness. It is clear that he had witnessed no overt act of treachery by Rutland; nor, it should be stated, does he claim to have done so. His case against him rested upon the dire consequences of his acts, which Creton assumed to have been intentional, but which may not have been.

The most valued part of Creton's poem has long been his circumstantial story of the events surrounding the capture of the King. His account flatly contradicts the official version retailed by the Rolls of Parliament and by the majority of the English chroniclers. While they relate that Richard cheerfully resigned his crown when still a free man at Conway, Creton alleges that Richard was betrayed into surrendering himself by the promise of the earl of Northumberland – given under oath – that Lancaster's grievances were against *Ceulx qui aront fait mal, vice ne erreur / Ou trayson* (ll. 1883–1884), not the King himself, and that they should be tried in open parliament. To these terms the King agreed, and was thus:

... *faulnement*
Par traittié et par parlement
Atraiz hors de ses forts chastiaux
Qui sont en Galles bons et biaux,
Du conte de Northomberlant, (ll. 3699–3703)

who immediately broke his oath, ambushed the King, and led him captive to Flint.

It has been argued that Creton's account is not to be trusted; that he did not witness many of the events he reported; that he was wrong about a number of key facts; and that his testimony should therefore be rejected in favour of that of the Dieulacres chronicle, which tells essentially the same story, shorn of the rhetoric.¹⁶⁰ But Creton is in fact unusually meticulous in reporting which events he personally witnessed; his 'mistakes' may not be errors at all; and the very brief account in the anonymous Dieulacres chronicle would carry

¹⁵⁹ Johnston, 'Richard II's departure from Ireland', pp. 788–789, rather oversimplifies Creton's account of Rutland's alleged treachery, and is wrong in suggesting that Creton should have excused his late arrival in Dublin on the grounds of bad weather, since Creton, who is our only source for the state of the weather, clearly says that the storms arose after Rutland's arrival (ll. 425–465).

¹⁶⁰ Clarke, *Fourteenth-Century Studies*, pp. 68–75.

little weight but for the circumstantial story in Creton with which it agrees, and from which it may well be derived.¹⁶¹

For the events surrounding Richard's surrender we are therefore almost entirely dependent upon Creton, whose testimony cannot be directly verified but must be accepted or rejected on grounds of inherent plausibility and the general trustworthiness of the poem. Although Creton makes a number of mistakes, they are the kind of mistakes which might be expected from an eye-witness writing from memory some months after the events had occurred. There is nothing elsewhere in his narrative to suggest that he told deliberate lies or invented scenes which he claimed to have witnessed. When he states that he was present at the meeting of Northumberland and Richard at Conway; was there when the King was ambushed by the earl; and was told the details of Northumberland's *desloyale traïson* (l. 3687) by the earl of Salisbury, who was present when the terms of Richard's surrender were agreed; there would appear to be no good grounds for rejecting his testimony.

Creton's story of the events of June to August 1399 owes its considerable value to the fact that he personally witnessed many of the key episodes in a major political drama of which our other sources were either ignorant or were misleadingly informed by interested parties. None of this is true of the remainder of his poem. For the events of the Deposition Parliament and the Epiphany Rising, Creton relied on the report of:

... un cleric que le duc Henry
En avoit mené avec ly
Quant il se parti de Paris (ll. 2383–2385)

His account has all the defects of the earlier part of his poem and none of its merits. Its only possible value is the evidence it supplies as to how these events may have been viewed in Paris.

For the final section of his poem, Creton does not name his sources, the only occasion on which he fails to do so. This is unfortunate since this part of his work offers the best materials by which to judge his abilities as a reporter of current events. The subject matter – the return of Queen Isabella to France – is less contentious than earlier parts of his narrative; there are reliable materials with which his account may be compared; and we may reasonably presume that Creton was no longer constrained to depend entirely upon his own memory in reconstructing events. Whatever his sources, this final section does reveal that Creton was a fair and

¹⁶¹ Palmer, 'French Chronicles', 61:2 (1979), pp. 413–419.

accurate reporter. The worst error of which he can be convicted is of placing 25 July on the wrong day of the week (ll. 3477–3478).¹⁶² This part of his narrative does therefore give some assurance of his essential trustworthiness.

¹⁶² For the materials for these negotiations, see J.H. Wylie, *England under Henry the Fourth*, 4 vols (London, 1884–1898), I, pp. 115, 129–130, 205–211; IV, pp. 259–264; and L. Mirot, 'Isabelle de France, reine d'Angleterre (1389–1409)', *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 18 (1904), pp. 481–508.