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THE ANONIMO ROMANO AT HIS DESK: 
RECOUNTING THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ITALY

Maurizio Campanelli

Abstract
The Cronica of the Anonimo Romano, written between late 1357 and the first months of 1358, is the only extant fourteenth-century Roman chronicle. In his preface, its author states that he used exclusively oral sources for his history whenever it concerned events he did not himself witness; nevertheless, written sources are likely to have been used for portions of the work, particularly when dealing with matters from far afield. This paper focuses on the Cronica’s account of the battle of Crécy, where the Anonimo mentions no sources. This part of the Cronica offers a special perspective for the study of the Anonimo’s way of writing foreign history, since it can be compared with a wide range of different accounts of the battle, ranging from a matter-of-fact letter of Edward III to the wide and colourful accounts by Jean Froissart. These different accounts allow us to understand and fully assess the quality of the Anonimo as historian providing an insight into the way in which he used his written and oral sources, and into the transmission and reception of information around Europe at the time. An English translation of the Anonimo’s narrative of the battle is provided in the Appendix.

Rome, apparently, was not a city of chroniclers during the late Middle Ages, and the medieval Romans were not particularly concerned with transcribing and reading chronicles. The oldest extant manuscript of the only surviving fourteenth-century Roman chronicle – commonly known as the Cronica of the Anonimo Romano – dates to 1550. The second part of this text was first published only in 1624 as Vita di Cola di Renzo tribuno del popolo romano (a second edition was issued in 1631). It was not until 1740 that Ludovico Antonio Muratori published the whole text, with a Latin translation by Pietro Ercole Gherardi, in the third volume of his Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevi.
This chronicle, or at least most of it, is likely to have been written between the end of 1357 and the first months of 1358. Its author is unknown, which explains why he is simply called Anonimo Romano. All we know about him is what he tells us in his work. In 1325 he was a child and was living in the Rione Regola, near Sta Maria in Publicolis (the area of the modern Ghetto, the same Roman district where Cola di Rienzo was born and grew up). Around 1339 he was studying medicine in Bologna; this is why he was well informed of what was going on in Northern Italy. By the mid-1340s he had returned to Rome. At the end of the 1350s he probably moved to Tivoli, a town near Rome where he worked on his Cronica. The most recent event recorded in the Cronica is the release of John II of France, prisoner of the English, on 25 October, 1360, but the account is only a very short Latin passage at the end of chapter XXVI, which was clearly added at a later stage. The Anonimo was a member of a rising class of merchants, landowners and notaries, who fought against the Roman barons and found their champion in Cola for a while. As a physician, the Anonimo knows Avicenna and Aristotle, for instance he uses Aristotle’s De divinatione per somnum for a long digression on dreams (Cronica, XVIII, 174-76). He is also familiar with Livy: the most significant reasons for writing history he provides in the preface are drawn from him; two passages from the Ab Urbe condita are paraphrased in chapters VIII and IX; chapter XXVII contains a short compendium of Hannibal’s expedition to Italy (AUC, Bks XXI-XXII), focusing on the aftermath of Cannae and the famous conversation between Maharbal and Hannibal on the expediency of attacking Rome. Valerius Maximus is used to draw sharp comparisons and parallels between the past and the present in chapters IX, XVIII and XXVI. The Anonimo also quotes passages from Isidore, Martinus Polonus’ Chronicle and Gregory the Great’s Dialogi, whereas Lucan and Sallust are mentioned in the preface of the Cronica.

The Cronica is divided into two parts: after the preface, which contains the index of the chapters, the first part (chapters II-XVII) includes a large section on foreign history, the second one (chapters XVIII-XXVIII) focuses mostly on Cola di Rienzo. In the preface the Anonimo says that what he is going to tell us is true because he either saw or heard about the events; especially for the events of his country he used oral accounts of ‘reliable people, who agreed as if they were just one person’ (Cronica, I, 6). This was not a new statement in medieval historiography. Indeed, almost every medieval historian who dealt with contemporary events and wanted to assert the reliability of
his work underlined that he had just told the truth, relying on what he had seen and heard. Of particular interest are the cases in which we can be confident that the Anonimo was not an eyewitness, such as chapter XI, on the battle of Rio Salado (1340) (cf. Ugolini 1941), chapter XIII, on the crusade of Smyrna (1344–1346) and the following events, and chapter XIV, on the battle of Crécy (with an appendix on the siege of Calais). On the basis of what he says in his preface, we are led to assume that the Anonimo used only oral witnesses. However, the first source he quotes in this triad of chapters is a written one, a letter describing Alfonso XI’s array (on which see below, p. 41). Otherwise the Anonimo mentions only oral witnesses, namely people with whom he happened to talk, both for major events and for lesser stories. Therefore there is no explicit internal evidence in the text to establish whether, contrary to what he says in his preface, he did use other written sources, and it also seems impossible to know how many oral witnesses he interviewed, and above all how partial was the view he obtained from them. To consider issues like these may provide us with a deeper insight into the Anonimo’s methods, that is, the way he conceived and wrote the chapters about events he did not see.

In the chapter on the battle of Crécy there is no mention of sources. Perhaps the Anonimo did not have much confidence in his sources; perhaps he had to use more written accounts than he would have wanted. Nonetheless, the pages on Crécy probably offer the best insight to the Anonimo’s way of writing foreign history (that is non-Roman history, or rather events he did not witness himself), since his account of Crécy can be compared with many sources, ranging from a matter-of-fact letter of Edward III to the wide and colourful accounts by Jean Froissart. Although an examination of all these sources may provide us with a picture of the battle which resembles more closely a Picasso cubist painting than a consistent and homogeneous narrative, by comparing them with the Cronica, we are able to understand and assess the Anonimo as a European historian – an important aspect of the Anonimo’s work which has hitherto been neglected in scholarship, traditionally concerned with either the biography of Cola di Rienzo or the linguistic importance for the Italian vernacular. The comparative analysis also allows us to advance several working hypotheses on the way the Anonimo used his written and oral sources. The Anonimo’s account also provides invaluable information on how an Italian chronicler, writing a decade after the events and entirely detached from the politics and propaganda of the Anglo-French war, interpreted, and
reacted to, the battle and its outcome. Furthermore, the Cronica sheds new light on the transmission and reception of information around Europe at the time.

It is probable that the Anonimo used at least one newsletter or campaign diary. The beginning of the chapter resembles closely the opening sentence of a newsletter; we may productively compare it with the beginning of the cedula (brief note) enclosed in a letter sent by Johann von Schönfeld to the bishop of Passau in order to report on the battle of Crecy:

Anno Domini MCCCXLVI, indictione XIV, pontificatus domini Clementis pape sexti anno quinto, mensis Augusti, die XXVI, prelium fuit inmensum inter duos reges, videlicet Anglie et Francie, in quo idem dominus rex Anglie illustris victoriam Dei gratia obtinuit et triumphant. Idem bellum fuit in Francia iuxta quandam villam, que dicitur Kersy, quinque miliaribus iuxta quamdam villam, que dicitur Kersy, Monstruel in Pocien.

In the year of our Lord 1346, in the 14th indiction, in the fifth year of the pontificate of lord pope Clement VI, in the month of August, on the 26th day, there was an immense battle between two kings, namely the king of England and the king of France, in which the illustrious lord king of England won and triumphed by God’s grace. This battle was in France, near a town called Kersy, five miles from Monstruel in Pocien.

The letter is dated Bruges, 12 September; Schönfeld was a German knight who fought in the English army and was wounded by an arrow in his face. It is the only extant letter sent by someone who actually engaged in the fighting on the battlefield, since the other three were written by Edward III (dated 3 September) and by two clerics, Richard Wynkeley (2 September), confessor of the king, and Michael Northburgh (4 September), the king’s councillor. The figures that the Anonimo provides for the two armies seem to come from a newsletter. According to him, the army of the French king Philip had 100,000 knights and 12,000 foot soldiers. Edward III’s newsletter says that Philip ‘avoit plus de xij. mille dez hommes-d’armes, desquelx viij. mille furent de gentil gentz, chevaliers et esquiers’ (‘had more than 12,000 men-at-arms; 8,000 of these were nobles, knights and esquires’). Wynkeley says that Philip’s army had, ‘secundum aestimationem’, 12,000 ‘galeati’ (soldiers with helmets) and at least 60,000 ‘alii armati’ (other men-at-arms). The figures provided by Edward III and Winkeley reappear in such English chronicles as the Anonimalle, Henry Knighton’s Chronicon, and the Anonymous of Canterbury. Giovanni Villani had the figure of 12,000, writing that
Philip just before the battle thought that he had the victory within his grasp, since he had 12,000 knights and almost innumerable foot soldiers. Jean Le Bel says that Philip was believed to have an army of 20,000 knights and more than 100,000 foot soldiers. The Anonimo is quite likely to have drawn the number 12,000 – which recurs consistently in the mentioned newsletters – from such a source, getting confused between the knights and the foot soldiers.

Even closer to the newsletters is the Anonimo’s number of the most important French killed in the battle: ‘The English happened to gain fifteen hundred pairs of golden spurs’ (*Cronica*, XIV, 132). Edward III wrote that ‘moururent en ung petit place, où la primer assemblée estoiet, plus de mille et v^t^ chivalers et esquiers’ (‘more than 1500 knights and esquires died in a small place, in which the first fight took place’; Chandos Herald, 310). This figure of 1500 is confirmed by Northburgh’s letter: ‘La summe dez bones gentz darmes qe fusrent mortz en la champ a ceste jour, saunz comunes et pedailles, amounte a mil D. xlij. acountez’ (‘The total of the good men-at-arms who died on the field in this day is precisely 1542, without counting common people and foot soldiers’), and by Schönfeld, who says that 1500 died ‘inter barones, milites et nobiles, et xvi’.

Again Villani offers quite a similar figure, even though the other numbers he gives are different from the Anonimo’s: most people who wrote that they were present at the rout of the king of France said, ‘almost in accord, that including foot soldiers and knights, 20,000 lay dead, and unnumbered horses, and more than 1600 among earls, barons, bannerets and high rank knights, without the squires on horseback, who were more than 4000’.

Villani explicitly mentions written reports which had come into his hands in Florence, proving that newsletters and campaign diaries arrived as far as the centre of Italy, even though Florence, the city of bankers who lent huge amounts of money to Edward III, was in a much better position than Rome to get fresh news from the battlefield. The number of archers enrolled in Edward’s army could also be compared with Villani’s chronicle. The Anonimo says that Edward arrived in France with ‘thirty thousand bowmen on foot, including servants, infantry, cooks and the whole staff’ (*Cronica*, XIV, 119); according to Villani, Edward sailed for France with 2500 knights and 30,000 foot soldiers and archers, and just before the battle of Crécy ‘the king of England had less than 4000 knights and 30,000 English and Welsh archers, and many with Welsh axes and short spears’.
A controversial point is the number of Philip’s army lines or ‘battles’ (battaglie). The Anonimo says that the king of Bohemia (whom he considers the leader of the army) deployed nine battles, but that only three were really important: the first, led by sir Ottone Doria and sir Carlo Grimaldi, commanders of five thousand Genoese; the second, led by the king of Maiorca and the count of Flanders with three thousand knights; and finally the king of Bohemia’s battle, with one thousand Germans, four thousand French and the king’s son Charles in the rear. Perhaps the distinction the Anonimo draws between the overall number of the French battles and the most important ones is just an attempt to conflate two different traditions he found in his sources. In Northburgh’s letter Edward’s scouts ‘discoverent le roy de France, qe vint devers nous en iiij. grosses batailles’ (‘found the king of France who came towards us with four big battles’; Murimuth, 368-69); this figure is later found in John of Reading and Thomas Walsingham. The figure re-emerges in the short continuation of the Croniques de Flandres: ‘Then the king put together his whole army and arranged it in four battles’, the first led by the master of the Genoese, the second by the count of Alençon, the third by the king himself and the king of Bohemia, the fourth by Jean de Hainault. Other chroniclers mention three French battles. Thomas Burton says that the French formed one very big line ‘de tribus cuneis’ (‘with three wedge-shaped battles’); Henry Knighton writes that ‘rex Philippus paratus erat et arraiatus in .iij. distentis aciebus’ (‘King Philip deployed his army in three long lines’; Knighton, 60). Villani says that Philip had his people form three lines, called battaglie, the first one with the Genoese and their Italian leaders as well as the king of Bohemia and his son, the second led by Philip’s brother, Charles d’Alençon, the third led by the king himself; thus, except for the one with the Genoese, the battles in Villani are quite different from the Anonimo’s. The largest figure is provided by the Monk of Malmesbury’s Eulogium historiarum, according to which Edward ‘saw clearly the French army at about noon, numberless people divided into eight battles’, whereas the variant of Murimuth’s chronicle (extant in BL, Cotton MS Nero D.x) adds to the figures provided in Wynkeley’s letter the piece of information that the army was divided into seven battles and that the first was led by king Philip. Le Baker writes that ‘the French army was divided into nine battles [turmae]’ and that the first was assigned to the king of Bohemia. The Bourgeois of Valenciennes provides us with the most detailed description of the French battles. He records five battles, the
first led by Ottone d’Oria, the second by ‘ceulx de Rains’, the third by
the king of Bohemia, his son Charles, the count of Alençon, the count
of Flandres and the count of Blois, the fourth by the duke of Lorraine
and others, and the fifth led by the king of France. As for the varia-
tions in numbers, it is possible that the shifts from three to four and
from seven to nine may also depend on mistakes in transcribing the
Roman numerals, either in the tradition of newsletters and chronicles
or in copying a newsletter into a chronicle.

Another point where we find the Anonimo struggling with his
sources is the account of the fate of the king of Maiorca, James III.
Even the newsletters are quite divided on the king’s destiny: Edward
III lists ‘le roy de Maylocre’ among the dead (Chandos Herald, 310),
and so does Schönfeld (Acta Imperii, 751), whereas Northburgh does
not mention him (Murimuth, 369). According to Wynkeley, ‘in that
fight two kings died, that is the king of Bohemia, whose fate is
certain, and the king of Maiorca, whose death is a common and likely
opinion’. Many English chronicles (the Monk of Malmesbury,
Thomas Burton, the Lanercost chronicle, Walsingham’s Historia
Anglicana and Ypodigma Neustriae, Henry Knighton) as well as
Villani mention the king of Maiorca amongst the dead. Particularly
interesting is the manuscript tradition of the Anonymous of Canter-
bury, whose text is ‘based on Richard de Winkley’s letter … although
he seems to have used a different list of the French slain at the battle’
(Anonymus Cantuariensis, xxiii): the manuscript, which is likely to
have been the author’s autograph, has the name added in the margin,
whereas in the other three manuscripts, which are likely to derive
from it (Reigate, Parish Church, Cranston Library, 1117) the name is
missing (Anonymus Cantuariensis, xx, 10). The Chronique Nor-
mande, Jean de Venette, the Chronique des quatre premiers Valois,
the Chronographia regum Francorum and the short continuation of
the Croniques de Flandres do not include the king in the list of the
dead; Jean Le Bel, Froissart and the Bourgeois de Valenciennes do not
mention him at all. According to Le Baker, the French were so
confident that they allotted future English prisoners before the battle
and the king of Maiorca asked for the king of England; but the king of
Maiorca is not listed amongst the dead in Le Baker’s chronicle (Le
Baker, 164, 168). When the Anonimo clarifies that ‘king John of
Maiorca did not die in this fight, but he was wounded in his face. He
died in a very cruel way in his country’, we can be fairly certain that
he is reacting to the news of the death of the king he found in his
source, probably because he came across another source telling a different story on the death of the king.

Further details which are likely to come from a newsletter or a campaign diary concern the topography of the battlefield. When the Anonimo describes the battlefield at the outset, he says that Edward placed all his people and set his army between the mount of Crécy and Abbeville, ‘in the flat fields, at the foot of the slope of Crécy’ (*Cronica*, XIV, 121). Edward’s letter tells us that ‘lez batailles se assemblèrent en plain champ’ (Chandos Herald, 310), that is in open fields, but the Anonimo may have understood the word ‘plain’ as the equivalent of the Italian ‘piano’ (flat), which is the word he uses. The information recurs in the most relevant chronicles: Jean Le Bel writes that Edward set his battles ‘en ung beau camp où il n’y avoit fosse ne fossé’ (Le Bel, 106: ‘in a good field in which there were neither pits nor fosses’); in all the three versions of his narrative of the battle, contained in book I of the *Chroniques*, Froissart says that Edward and his army placed themselves ‘à plains camps’. The flat field is also in the Bourgeois of Valenciennes: ‘Entre Cressy et la Broye y avoit une belle plaine’ (Bourgeois of Valenciennes, 229). Villani is the only one who mentions a little hill, which can be related to the Anonimo’s slope of Crécy: Edward and his army arrived ‘to a place and a village on the side of a wood which is called Crécy’, and ‘so they camped in that place, outside the village of Crécy, upon a little hill between Crécy and Aubeville in Ponthieu’.

Another element in favour of the hypothesis that the Anonimo made use of a newsletter in his account of Crécy is the date of the battle: he says twice that the battle took place on 3 September. It seems most probable that this date is in fact the date of a letter: Edward’s letter is dated on September 3rd, Wynkeley’s on the 2nd, Northburgh’s on the 4th.

A similar mistake occurs in the number of days Edward and his army stood on horseback ready to fight again: according to the Anonimo, ‘For three full days they did not take off their arms, they did not get off their horses. Every royal standard stood still on the battlefield. Nobody left the guard’ (*Cronica*, XIV, 131-32). In fact, Edward stood on the battlefield only the night after the battle, as he wrote: ‘Et après la discomfiture nous y demourames tout le nut joien saunz boire et mangier’ (‘And after the defeat we joyfully stayed there the entire night without drinking and eating’; Chandos Herald, 310-11). Edward’s words are confirmed by Northburgh: ‘Et mesme la nuit le roy Dengleterre od tout son host demurra en la champ armez, od la
disconsiture fuist’ (‘and even during the night the king of England and all his army remained in arms on the field in which the defeat took place’; Murimuth, 369). Nevertheless, Edward and his army did indeed leave Crécy only three days after the battle. Villani writes that ‘king Edward remained on the battlefield for two days’ and ‘he left from Crécy on the third day’. The same piece of information is found in John of Reading: ‘On the third day after the battle the above-mentioned king of England made for Calais’, and in the Bourgeois de Valenciennes: ‘Et ou tierch jour se party le roy de Cressy’. The Anonimo combined two different pieces of information he had found in his sources: the one according to which Edward’s army stood on the battlefield after the battle, waiting for possible new French attacks, and the other saying that Edward’s army left Crécy on the third day after the battle. This combination of details does not seem to be the result of confusion, rather it appears to have served the purpose of rendering the English performance ‘moito notabile’. Indeed, the image of Edward and his army staying on horseback for three days adds a powerful heroic note to the conclusion of the Anonimo’s chivalric tale of Crécy.

Should the Anonimo have used a newsletter, mistakes like these would not come as a surprise. The sole mention of a written source in the Cronica is found in the chapter on the battle of Rio Salado. It is a letter containing a description of Alfonso XI’s army and its array on the battlefield: the kind of document the Anonimo could have had for Crécy. The letter is likely to have been the first news the Anonimo had of the battle, the primum movens of his chapter, but all the Anonimo says is that it was sent to Stefano Colonna in Rome and was a letter berbentana, very difficult to understand. The situation could have been quite similar with a newsletter coming from Crécy: it could have been very difficult to read, but also to understand, since it might have been written in French, and we have no idea whether and to what extent the Anonimo was familiar with French. Besides, we do not know anything about the way the Anonimo had access to his sources. It is very unlikely that a newsletter arriving in Rome from Crécy was addressed to the Anonimo. Did he manage to obtain the original or a transcription of the document? Or rather, was he able to take notes from the document or did he rely just on his memory? How long after reading the newsletter did the Anonimo write the chapter? These questions are impossible to answer, but probably for the Anonimo the risk of misunderstanding a document such as a letter on a remote battle written in a foreign language was higher than the chance of
misunderstanding an oral account of a foreign witness. Perhaps the Anonimo was aware of these problems, which could have strengthened in his work the traditional preference that medieval chroniclers gave to oral witnesses. As a matter of fact, he cut out every reference to written sources, except for the letter *berbentana*, which probably was intended to increase the exotic taste of the chapter on the battle of Rio Salado.

The Anonimo is not interested in the campaign itself. He shrinks the whole campaign before the battle into a few lines, a literary example of Tacitian style *ante litteram* (as far as we can tell, the Anonimo did not know Tacitus42); moreover, he does not say anything about the fights that took place the day after the battle. Aside from the final part on the siege of Calais, which is almost an appendix, and the initial presentation of Philip and of the causes of the war, the Anonimo focuses only on the battle, which in his view is a novitate, a *cosa granne*: the battle of Crécy matched the requirements the Anonimo set in his preface for choosing the subjects of the *Cronica*. Why? As a battle involving four kings and the two most important kingdoms of mid fourteenth-century Europe, it was an unparalleled event. But probably there is something more: the story of Crécy displays at the highest level the values about which the Anonimo most cares in history (at least, when he does not deal with social issues), that is betrayal and loyalty, courage and military skill. Every sequence of the Anonimo’s narrative of Crécy, from Philip’s distrust of his barons to the death of the king of Bohemia, may be read in the light of these categories. As for the the Anonimo’s source, it presumably contained at least an overview of the campaign, as is revealed by the Anonimo’s mention of the conquest of Saint-Lô, ‘which headed up those countries’ (*Cronica*, XIV, 120). The conquest of Saint-Lô is cited in Edward’s letter43 and listed by nearly all the chronicles which tell of the Crécy campaign, but in Villani Saint-Lô is the first town to yield to Edward (Villani, 445), while also in Le Bel’s chronicle Saint-Lô figures as Edward’s first important conquest.44 Probably the Anonimo’s source also put a special emphasis on the conquest of Saint-Lô or listed it as Edward’s first conquest in Normandy. Furthermore, if the Anonimo had found a piece of information similar to Le Bel’s, he would have had one more reason to mention the conquest of Saint-Lô, since in the *Cronica* he shows himself always very aware of the business interests of the middle classes, and particularly of trades.
It would be easy to draw quite a few lesser parallels between the Anonimo and the other chroniclers. In the Anonimo’s account, Edward sent back the ships just after his people disembarked; in Villani just before the departure from England the king asked his people to be brave, since he meant to send back the fleet as soon as he would have arrived in France, so that they had either to be valiant and conquer the land with the swords in their hands or to die all, since there was no way of escape.\(^{45}\) The letter Edward wrote to Philip to set the date of the battle finds an echo in the Bourgeois de Valenciennes. In his chronicle Edward, having learnt that Philip had arrived in Rouen, asked him many times to fight, and Philip answered that he was not ready and that the people he was waiting for had not arrived yet.\(^ {46}\) In the Anonimo’s account, Philip replied by asking for fifteen more days, just the time needed by his son John, who was besieging Aguillon, to join him. Many chroniclers tell the story of John leaving quickly the unsuccessful siege of Aguillon; Adam Murimuth uses nearly the same words as the Anonimo: ‘John left furtively, leaving pavilions and all the equipment except horses and arms’.\(^ {47}\) The Anonimo says that, when the English saw the French army coming against them, ‘Edward opened his eyes and knew for certain that he could not avoid battle. And it is no surprise that, considering the great number of the French, he was somewhat grieved’ (Cronica, XIV, 122); in the Chronique Normande, when Edward knew that Philip was following him closely with a big army, ‘il ala loger à Cressy près de la forest et fist son ost clorre de son charroy, car mout douboit la bataille, mais plus detrier ne la pouvoit’ (‘He settled in Crécy near the forest and enclosed his army with his carts, since he was very afraid of the battle but could no longer avoid it’; Chronique Normande, 80).

One of the fundamental questions in Crécy studies is ‘How was it that the English won the battle?’(see Ayton 2005b: 11; Prestwich 2005: 139-57). Many chroniclers do not answer this question, but the Anonimo’s narrative of the battle clearly spells out the strengths of the English and the weaknesses of the French. The first issue is the famous wagon enclosure which formed the English rearguard.\(^ {48}\) The English sources ignore the wagon enclosure, with the exception of a vague allusion in the Historia Roffensis (‘… quickly putting together their wooden shelters and setting their carts before them …’\(^ {49}\)). The French chronicles include no more than a mention of the wagon enclosure. In the passage of the Chronique Normande I have just quoted, Edward had his army enclosed by his carts, since he was very
afraid of the battle. According to the *Croniques de Flandres*, after the first two battles the English ‘firent une grande haye de leur charroy, par quoy on ne les peut souprendre’ (‘made a big hedge with their carts, so that it was not possible to take them by surprise’; *Croniques de Flandres*, 42). Jean Le Bel says that Edward ‘fit ... faire ung grand parc prez d’ung bois de tous les chars et charrettes de l’ost, qui n’eust que une seule entrée, et fit mettre tous les chevalx dedens ce parc’ (‘had a big enclosure made near a wood with all the wagons and the carts; it had only one entrance, and he had all the horses put into this enclosure’). Also Mathias von Neuenburg talks briefly of Edward hiding horses and grooms near the wood, dismounting from the horses, encircling his army with carts, so that the French cavalry could attack them only on the front, and putting 30,000 archers before his army. The best description of the wagon enclosure so far known is Villani’s:

E per afforzarsi, sentendosi troppo men gente che’ Franceschi, e per loro sicurtà, chiusono l’oste di carri, che·nn’aveano assai di loro e del paese, e·llasciavvi una entrata, con intenzione, e non potendo schiare la battaglia, disposti di combattere e di volere anzi morire in battaglia che morire di fame, che·lla fuga non avea luogo. E ordinò il re d’Inghilterra i suoi arcieri, che·nn’avea gran quantità, su per le carra, e tali di sotto e con bombarde che saettavano pallottole di ferro con fuoco, per impaurire e disertare i cavalli di Franceschi. E della sua cavalleria il di apresso fece dentro al carrino III schiere. (Villani, 452)

[In order to strengthen their position, since they realized that they were by far fewer people than the French, and for their own safety, they enclosed the army with carts, because they had many carts both of their own and taken from the country, and left one entrance, on purpose, and since they could not avoid the battle, they got ready to fight and rather wanted to die in the battle than to die of starvation, for there was no way of escaping. And the king of England set his archers, since he had plenty of them, upon the carts, and some under them and with bombards which darted iron balls with fire, to frighten and make the French horses flee. And the day after Edward divided his cavalry into three lines inside the enclosure of carts.]

A bit further on Villani adds that the carts were covered with two different kinds of heavy cloths which shielded the archers from the bolts shot by the Genoese crossbowmen. Already at the beginning of his chapter the Anonimo states that Edward had 3000 carts with him when he embarked. He mentions neither the guns nor the coverings of the carts, but his description of the wagon enclosure is much more
detailed than Villani’s. The strong iron chains, the iron poles stuck into the ground, the enclosure shaped as a horse shoe with only one big entrance on the front, the deep ditches dug where the line was weak, the English all engaged in working, the shafts of the carts raised straight in the air, the enclosure looking like a walled city, the barrel full of arrows put on each wagon, the two archers assigned to each barrel, the king keeping all his cavalry, except the knights arrayed in the three battles, inside the wagon fort: the picture provided by the Anonimo is extraordinarily vivid. The Anonimo is not likely to have made up all these details; some of them could be the product of his imagination, but undoubtedly his description reinforces Villani’s and confirms that the wagon enclosure was not just a rearguard but the English headquarters, the core of Edward’s operations.

The Anonimo has no doubts that the English archers played a key role in the battle. He is the only chronicler who makes it clear that the longbow is a distinctive feature not just of the English army, but of the English people: everyone of Edward’s people, even a servant or a cook, could leave his duties and serve as an archer. The Cronica is a very good witness to the great reputation that the English achieved as archers in mid fourteenth-century Europe. The Anonimo provides us with detailed information on the deployment of the archers: ten thousand of them, on foot, were hidden on the slope of Crécy, on the left side of the army, where there was a low hill with a small wood and wheat that had not been harvested yet. Just after the rout of the Genoese, the archers decided the fate of the battle:

... the English archers were coming down from the hillside among the grain and unceasingly shooting arrows into the cavalry. They held their bows and were shouting: ‘Strike, strike, strike’. Everyone was in danger. The horses were pierced on the left side, so the army was greatly weakened. The wounded began to retreat. Horses fell dead. The English lunge at the enemy. That battle was lost. (Cronica, XIV, 128)

While the vivid, almost cinematic description of the melée might be the result of the Anonimo’s literary talent – even though it is surely not far from the truth – he is not likely to have invented the details on the placement of the archers. The English archers unleashing their arrows from the flanks are found in a famous passage of Le Baker:

The English also assigned peculiar positions to the archers, so that they would not stand in front of the men-at-arms, but at the sides of the king’s army, as if they were wings, and in this way they would neither
hamper the men-at-arms nor clash with the front of the enemy, but would shoot the arrows from the flanks.\textsuperscript{58}

Even though Le Baker is supported by the Bourgeois of Valenciennes, who writes that Edward ‘ne fist que II batailles d’archiers à II costés en la manièrè d’un escut’ (‘ordered two battles of archers on both sides as if they were a shield’; Bourgeois of Valenciennes, 231), Ayton, after a long and careful examination of the issue, states that there is more than one reason ‘for thinking that the “wings” of archers at Crécy may have been a figment of Baker’s imagination’.\textsuperscript{59} Yet Thomas Burton should also be taken into account, since he wrote that \textit{acies} constituted by archers were placed on both sides of the three English battles of men-at-arms.\textsuperscript{60} I do not know whether and to what extent the Anonimo could reinforce the reliability of Le Baker’s account. The Anonimo is far more detailed; it seems not unlikely that some of the archers were hidden on a small hill, ready to ambush the French cavalry, shooting at it from on high. It is worth pointing out that the Anonimo mentions ten thousand archers, whereas at the beginning of the chapter he says that Edward had thirty thousand archers, a figure confirmed by other sources (see above, p. 37). It is possible that the other twenty thousand archers were deployed partly on the carts of the wagon enclosure and partly with the men-at-arms in somehow mixed ranks. The Anonimo does in fact mention archers on the carts, even if he uses the word ‘crossbowmen’, apparently by mistake (see n. 56), but, according to him (or rather to his source), they were not so many: just two on each cart. Another feature that experts of Crécy need to take into account is the placement of the archers only on one flank, not on both, as in Le Baker’s and Valenciennes’ chronicles: the Anonimo says that the archers were placed just where the ground was suitable for hiding them. This placement seems more realistic than Le Baker’s and Valenciennes’ two wings. In any case, the Anonimo’s passage gives a fresh contribution to the \textit{vexata quaestio} of the placement of English archers at Crécy, making it even more complicated than it has been so far.

A good deal more questionable is the information the Anonimo gives about the array of the three English battles. Almost every chronicler records that Edward divided his cavalry into three battles, putting his son in charge of the first; several sources add that the English knights dismounted from their horses and fought on foot. According to the Anonimo, the second battle consisted of two wings, while the king remained with most of the army inside the wagon fort:
Then he moved out of his army five hundred knights who were well trained. Their commander was Edward, prince of Wales, his son. This was the first battle. Behind these five hundred he set two wings, each of five hundred valiant knights, one on the right side, the other on the left. Behind these five hundred, he set one thousand knights. This was the third battle. Behind these one thousand, the king placed himself with all the other knights within the army, within the chains. (Cronica, XIV, 123)

Leaving aside the question of figures, which are quite variable in the sources, and just noticing that the king remaining with most of the army inside the enclosure of carts confirms the strategic role played by the wagon fort in the battle, we should focus on the two wings of the second battle, which have no parallel in other chronicles. During the fight, the battles were engaged in a very complex manoeuvre of replacement:

The English knights have a special skill. When they saw that one of their men was dead, they put a living one in place of the dead, a sound one in place of the wounded, a fresh one in place of the tired. Then they swapped, so the five hundred of the right flank came to the front. In their place came a half of the one thousand who were in the third battalion, and those in the front came back to the one thousand, and they swapped the left wing in the same way. (Cronica, XIV, 128)

There is nothing like this in chronicles of English and French provenance. During the final and deadly assault of the king of Bohemia, the two wings of the second battle made a pincer movement, surrounding and then annihilating the battle of king John:

The English kept two vicious skills: the first was that they refreshed the five hundred knights at the front with the one thousand at the back; the second was that they made the two wings of five hundred and five hundred widen and take the field both on the right and on the left, approaching the front from the flank. As soon as the first lines of the Germans clashed with the English, the wings, which had already got the field, struck from the flanks, on either side. (Cronica, XIV, 130)

Such movements of the English battles are not confirmed by any other source and it is quite unlikely that they took place on the narrow battlefield of Crécy, with so many knights. Certainly the Anonimo did not extract this piece of information from a newsletter of the kind that has survived, and it is very unlikely that an eyewitness could have furnished an account with such an elaborate choreography. Probably the Anonimo knew from his source that Edward had arrayed his army...
in three battles; but he also knew from his beloved Livy that in a big pitched battle the army had to have two wings of knights, which could finally surround and destroy the enemy. This was the case in the two big battles of the second Punic war, Cannae and Zama. Apparently, the Anonimo knew books XXI-XXX of Livy, since in his chapter XVIII he inserted a short abstract of the deeds of the war from Saguntum to the famous dialogue between Maharbal and Hannibal on the expediency of attacking Rome after the battle of Cannae. It is most likely that the Anonimo drew from his source the information that the last line of knights was the third battle; on the other hand he has Edward arraying the army in three central lines, including the strongest contingent of the king, plus two wings, that is an array formally not very different from the Roman army or Hannibal’s army in Zama, except that the central lines of those armies were formed by infantry of various kinds. The use of Livy to complement his source and to understand how the events took place on the battlefield may be disappointing for the modern historian but it is absolutely consistent with the principles that can be drawn from the Anonimo’s preface: the novitati, the great events he is going to recount, are as important as the ancient ones and he is not in a different position from the ancient historians; on the other hand, modern history may and, to a great extent must, be read and interpreted in the light of the ancient one, since the events are likely to have been the same in their substance.

Another reason for the French disaster provided by the Anonimo is the cruel failure of the Genoese crossbowmen. Here too, the Anonimo’s account does not find any parallel in other sources. According to the Chronique Normande, the Genoese had not enough ammunition with them since they came in a hurry leaving their carts behind them, whereas the English archers were shielded by their carts, good hedges and other defensive devices, and could shoot their arrows efficiently. The Chronographia regum Francorum specifies that the Genoese also left their large shields, the pavises, on the carts. Jean de Venette says that the rain, which had fallen just before the beginning of the fight, dampened and shrank the strings of the crossbows, so that the Genoese could not draw them at all, whereas the English archers were waiting for the battle and, already before the rain, had quickly got their bows ready, fixing their strings to the heads of the bows. The news of the rain making the strings of the crossbowmen unusable is also recorded, as a rumour, in the Grandes Chroniques de France. According to this source, the Genoese were put to flight by three English cannons. Villani says that the Genoese did manage to shoot
their bolts, but that they were overwhelmed by the archers, who, protected by the heavy cloths which covered the carts, were able to shoot three arrows for each bolt. Besides, the second French battle pushed the Genoese too close to the wagon enclosure, where they were too easily targeted and struck by the archers (Villani, 453-54). Le Bel and Le Baker do not add anything relevant to this picture (Le Bel, 102-03; Le Baker, 165). Froissart’s account of the defeat is very vivid, especially in the A/B version, in which he added some details: the Genoese were tired by the long way they had gone carrying their crossbows, and so, through their masters, they tried to delay the fight until they had recovered, but the count of Alençon refused it; the Genoese shouted loudly three times and advanced, finally they began to shoot, but the archers took one step forward and began to shoot in their turn; the arrows fell like snow on the Genoese, who had never experienced anything like that and tried to flee, leaving their crossbows or cutting their strings. In the Anonimo’s account there were two reasons for the defeat of the Genoese. In the first place, they could not take up the best position from which to fire on the English: ‘They were ordered to go up the slope of Crécy in order to tower above the English; but they did not succeed, because the English had taken the hill and put obstacles among the wheat. So they put themselves in another little mount at a distance’ (Cronica, XIV, 125). Secondly, they did not manage to load their crossbows, though this was not due to the shrinking strings:

Then a disaster occurred, since they did not shoot because they could not load the crossbows. There had been a bit of drizzle. The ground was wet, soft. When they wanted to load the crossbows, they put a foot into the stirrup. The foot slipped out. They could not stick the foot into the ground. (Cronica, XIV, 125)

This is the passage for which the Anonimo is more likely to rely on an oral witness; indeed, the detail of the foot not sticking into the ground seems considerably more plausible than the shrinking strings to explain why they could not shoot their bolts. The hill that the Genoese did not manage to take is probably the small hill on which the Anonimo said that Edward had hidden 10,000 archers before the battle (see above, p. 45). If this is correct, the archers towered over the crossbowmen, but in the Anonimo’s account, the Genoese were not defeated by the archers: they merely were unable to fight, and it was not their fault. Most probably this version of events is the oral account of a surviving Genoese, even though the Anonimo says that the 5,000
Genoese were killed to the last man. Also the story of the French thinking that the Genoese were traitors and killing them mercilessly has no other purpose than emphasizing the bad luck of the Genoese and the arrogance of the French, whereas in most chroniclers it marks a crucial point of the battle, when the French lines rushed one into the other and the English took the chance for a decisive counterattack.

A large part of the Anonimo’s account is devoted to the story of the prince of Wales, who was captured by count Valentino, and set free by Charles of Alençon, king Philip’s brother, who killed count Valentino. The elder Louis of Flandres witnessed Alençon’s treason and blamed him vehemently; then Alençon killed Louis of Flandres, so quickly and cruelly that nobody in Louis’ ranks dared say a word save for an unknown servant, who killed Alençon without hesitation and finally told the whole story to king Philip and was forgiven by him. The story of the count of Alençon’s treason explains what the Anonimo had written before: ‘king Philip was well aware that his barons were not loyal to him. He was well aware that they had called the English and put them in the midst of France’ (Cronica, XIV, 121).

In the Chronique des quatre premiers Valois Philip is introduced as a ‘bien hastif’ and hot-tempered man: as the queen had some seigneurs telling him to remain in Paris and avoid the fight, ‘le roy alla trois foiz parmi Paris, disant et criant qu’il estoit trahi’ (‘the king went three times through Paris, saying and crying that he had been betrayed’). According to Jean Le Bel, who does not miss any opportunity to put Philip in a bad light, the king of France remained in Paris while Edward was ravaging the country, and took the advice some clergymen and priests gave him: ‘Cher sire, ne vous vueillez effreer, ne votre personne aventurer, car à mesaise vous pourriez de trahyson garder’ (‘Dear lord, do not be afraid, do not put your person at risk, because it would be very hard to avoid betrayal’). Philip trusted these advisors, as Le Bel points out stigmatizing his behaviour: ‘Telz conseilliers a creut le roy Philippe, non pas les seigneurs et barons de son pays, ains en a aucuns par souspechon de trahison fait villainement morir et leurs hoirs desherité’ (‘King Philip trusted such advisors instead of the lords and the barons of his country, rather he put arrogantly to death some of them and disinherited their heirs, since he suspected them of being traitors’; Le Bel, 66). Philip avoided attacking Edward even when he found himself in a favourable position, ‘car ses conseilliers l’avoient enchanté et enfourné tant qu’ilz luy fairoient croire qu’il seroit tray et perdu s’îl se combatoit, et luy mettoient en l’oreille que ce seroit par aucuns de[s] plus nobles et des
plus poissans de son pays, desquelx aucunx furent pour telles souspeçons mis à de villaine mort’ (‘because his advisors bewitched and manipulated him so that they made him believe that he would be betrayed and lost, if he fought, and persuaded him that the traitors were some of the most noble and most powerful persons of his country; for such suspicions the king put arrogantly to death some of those noble and powerful people’). Thus Philip did not dare to fight, ‘car prince qui ses gens mescroira, jamais bon fait n’entreprendra’ (‘because a ruler who distrust his people never will embark upon a good deed’). In the *Récits* of the Bourgeois of Valenciennes, Philip talks to the Parisians, who are trying to stop him from leaving the city while Edward is in Poissy; he reassures and encourages his people, publicly accusing his noblemen of treason: ‘Sy ne vous esmayez de riens, mais gardez bien la ville au mieulx que vous poez; car je voy bien que mes gentiles hommes m’ont tray’ (‘So do not be afraid and defend the city as best as possible, since I see clearly that my noble-men betrayed me’; Bourgeois of Valenciennes, 224).

The story told by Le Bel about the rumours started by the priests is quite likely to have been a rumour in its turn (perfectly serving Le Bel’s purposes), as well as the short reference in the *Chronique des quatre premiers Valois*. The story of the prince of Wales being captured for a while looks like a rumour as well, and actually is told as such in a passage of the *Chronique Normande*. Rumours like these probably reached the Anonimo’s ears, perhaps through an oral witness, giving him a cue to make up a story which perfectly fitted the leit-motifs of his writing history but it is certainly not true. The same applies to the passages on the king of Bohemia. No other source says that the king of Bohemia was commander-in-chief of the French army and that Philip remained in Paris. This is the premiss of a heated dialogue between the two kings, which is made even more dramatic by the distance and the use of ambassadors: Philip and John exchange short sentences – as usual in the Anonimo’s prose – in which military skill, recklessness, courage and loyalty are displayed at the highest level. But, according to the other chronicles, the only news which could have come to the Anonimo’s ears was either the king of Bohemia asking about the deployment of king Edward – a piece of information known to us only from the later *Historia Anglicana* by Walsingham – or something even more generic, like the sentence which a ‘sage chevalier de France et usé d’armes’ uttered just before the battle: ‘Nous sommes en parti de tout perdre, car il n’i a point de
bogne ordance en nous’ (‘We are going to lose, since we are very badly arrayed’; Froissart 1972: 726).

The account of the last battle and the death of the king of Bohemia is a wonderful piece of literature. As soon as the king knows that there is no other French contingent left on the battlefield, he asks his two most important barons to get ready to fight. They try to talk him out of fighting; the king reminds them of their parents: ‘Thus are you not the sons of those two friends of mine who in their time were the bravest men all over Germany?’ They keep refusing, and the king replies simply: ‘I want us to go. Let’s go to die with honour.’ They ask what he is going to gain from his and their deaths: ‘In good faith, I say what I say because I believe that I am fighting for the truth,’ replies the king. The barons are finally convinced: ‘Like little sheep, they kept their voices down and said: “King, do what you would like to do”.’ Then the king assures his succession, ordering the most important barons of his kingdom to be obedient to his son Charles. The king comes to the last order:

Then he ordered the earls, who were in the front line, to put him so ahead and into the English ranks that, if the need arose, it would have been impossible to come back. Then he chained himself between the aforesaid two barons and they tied the chains of their armour, so as to get the same death, the same honour ... At that point the trumpets and the bagpipes sounded on each side. At that point they lowered the spears and spurred the steeds. At that point they struck each other mercilessly. (Cronica, XIV, 130)

The English get the better of the king and his army only because of their tactical superiority. The king dies first, killed by the horses of the two barons who were on each side of him. The 1000 Germans who were the heart of the king’s battle do not turn their back, indeed they fight bravely, having neither king nor gonfalon left, and kill many English, but their fate is sealed: ‘Eventually the troops of the King of Bohemia were annihilated, just as a bit of spice is ground by a large pestle.’ Knowing that his father is dead, Charles cries and says ‘Let’s die with him,’ but the barons, as they had been ordered by the king, stop his useless impulse, dragging him to Paris. The Anonimo’s final sentence is a bitter-sweet remark: ‘He let himself be gently forced and did the better and showed that he intended to do something’ (Cronica, XIV, 131).

Thus the Anonimo turned the death of the king of Bohemia into a great chivalric tale, in which we can still pick out what the Anonimo is likely to have drawn from his sources.
barons to be taken forward towards the English lines so that it would be impossible to get back recalls Le Bel’s account: ‘Le vaillant roy de Boheme … commanda … à ses chevaliers qu’ilz le menassent si avant comment que ce fust, qu’il poeit ferir ung cop d’espée sur aucun des anemis’ (‘The valiant king of Bohemia ordered his knights to bring him so forward that he could hit some of the enemies with the sword’). The king and the barons chained one to the other, ‘so as to get the same death, the same honour’, are found also in Froissart, even if the two barons become ‘all the knights of the king’, who tie the reins of their horses: ‘La se aloiierent tout li chevalier dou roi par les resnes de lors cevaus ensemble, a la fin que il ne se puissent departir l’un de l’autre ne perdre la veue de lor signour le roi ne retourner l’un sans l’autre’ (‘There all the knights of the king tied the reins of their horses together, to make sure that they could neither be separated from each other nor lose sight of their lord the king nor lose any of them’). The room the Anonimo gives to the Germans who fought with the king of Bohemia (he also says that their bodies had the honour of being taken to Paris by wagons to be buried) could suggest that he had either a German source or a source sympathetic to German soldiery. The discussion of Charles of Bohemia being taken away from the battlefield against his will is also especially interesting, because other accounts claim that he behaved cowardly and fled the field of Crécy (Given-Wilson 2004: 100, 234). From a German point of view, it would have been very important to show that Charles (who of course became Emperor in 1346) was not a coward at Crécy. This makes even more likely that the Anonimo had access to a German-related source, and, incidentally, it shows how important it was to use these sorts of texts to bolster reputations, correct rumours, and get one’s own view across. As a matter of fact, the only chronicler who points out the bravery of the Germans is Mathias von Neuenburg, who says that the French fled from the battlefield, sagittarii first, followed by tota acies, whereas the Germans remained to fight for a long time, suffering from very heavy casualties as a result. As for the king of Bohemia and his battle, there are no more parallels with other sources. There is no trace of the barons standing out against the king’s order to attack; on the contrary, Froissart says that, when the king asked them to let him advance into the battle to strike a blow with his sword, they all replied ‘Monsieur, volontiers’ (Froissart 1972: 730).

Reading and thinking over his beloved Livy the Anonimo certainly realized that speeches and dialogues presented the historian
with many opportunities to display his skill as a writer and to focus on the ideas which shaped his work (especially in a very selective work like the Cronica). To some extent it was a free zone, and it is not by accident that the passages with dialogue are the parts in which the Anonimo seems to drift away more freely from his sources and to give full rein to his pen and his ideas on what historiography was intended for. Therefore the Anonimo used the sources he had for the story of the king of Bohemia just as a sketch, a plain basis on which he managed to build the best narrative yet known of the end of a figure who just after his death had become a legend all over medieval Europe, embodying at the highest level the virtues of a chivalric world which was already disappearing in the second half of the fourteenth century. This was the main point of the Anonimo’s narrative of Crécy: in distant Rome, in an environment which was outside the propaganda and subjectification of Crécy between France and England, turning the blood-and-mud history of the battle into a display of exemplary virtues and vices, the Anonimo matched perfectly all the five reasons for writing history that the Anonimo listed in his preface, above all the last and most important one, that is to recall the greatness of the past as a way to forget the baseness and the troubles of the present:

The work is great and beautiful. I take this trouble for many reasons. The first is that one will find something written which will be seen to happen again in the same way; thus he will realize that Solomon’s saying is true. Solomon says: ‘There is nothing new under the sun, for everything that seems new has already happened’ [cf. Ecclesiastes 1. 10]. The second reason is that one will find here many beautiful and good examples; thus one will manage to avoid some dangerous things, and choose and use some others, so that the reading of this work will be quite useful. The third reason is that I have a consideration for the magnificence of an extraordinary event, as I said above; because one does not care about things of little importance, forgets about it, writes about great things. The fourth reason is the one that motivated Livy. In the first ten books Livy mentions Alexander of Macedonia: how many foot soldiers and knights he had, how long his dominion lasted, how far it spread over the world. And Livy says that his greatness was nothing compared to the greatness of the Romans [cf. AUC 9, 17-19]. By telling this, he answers a question one could ask him, saying: ‘Telling the history of the Romans, why do you meddle in Alexander’s deeds?’ Livy answers and says: ‘I do this to give a rest to my soul.’ As if he said: ‘My soul is spurred to write about this subject. I want to broach it. Then it rests relieved.’ I say the same: ‘My spurred soul does not rest until I put down on paper the beautiful things and extraordinary events I
have seen during my life.’ The fifth reason is what Livy writes in the preface of his book, in the first ten books. He says: ‘While I am busy writing these things, I am distant and do not see the cruelties our city has been seeing for a long time.’ I say the same: ‘While I take pleasure in writing this work, I am distant and do not feel the war and the troubles which overrun the country; I feel that they are sad and miserable, for the great tribulation not only to people who suffer them, but also to people who hear about them.’ (Cronica, I, 4-5)

On these premisses, writing history was not only a way to feel perfectly in tune with the greatest historian of the past, but also a way to understand the most profound meaning of the events. Finally, for the Anonimo this was the best way to assure the quality of his work as a historian, which mostly consisted in his truthfulness, deriving from the fact that he was ‘omnis expers curae quae scribentis animum, etsi non flectere a vero, sollicitum tamen efficere posset’ (‘free from every concern which, even if it could not divert the historian’s mind from the truth, might nevertheless cause it anxiety’), according to the precepts of Livy (AUC, I, 4–5, § 5).

Notes

1 This article is an expanded version of a paper presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds in July 2009. It is also one of the outcomes of a CRF/RSE European Visiting Research Fellowship, which allowed me to spend the first half of 2008 at the University of St Andrews Institute of Medieval Studies, working with Frances Andrews. I am most grateful to Chris Given-Wilson for his invaluable support and generous advice, and to Richard Barber, who gave me useful suggestions and advice, and corrected my translation of the Anonimo’s text. Barber kindly allowed me to see two chapters of his book before publication (Barber 2013; for assessments and translations of the most relevant parts of the Anonimo’s chapter on Crécy, see pp. 28, 222-25, 235, 237-39, 244).

2 Both editions were printed in Bracciano, a town near Rome, by Andrea Fei for the Roman publisher Pompilio Totti (in the first one the Cronica is attributed to Tomao Fortifiocca Scribasenato), and are quite unreliable (see Cronica XI-XII, 342-44). The critical edition was published by G. Porta only in 1979 (Anonimo Romano. Cronica); there is also an editio minor of Porta’s text (Milan: 1981, 2007). For the fortunes of the Cronica from the Bracciano editions onwards, see also Seibt (2000: 30-31).

3 On Muratori’s edition, as unreliable as the seventeenth-century ones, see Cronica XII, 344-46.

4 Billanovich suggested an identification with Bartolomeo di Iacovo da Valmontone, but his evidence is unconvincing (Billanovich 1995; see also Di Sacco 1994).

5 At the beginning of chapter XV the Anonimo says: ‘We toured a lot, we wandered about quite a time, we searched many foreign countries. We searched Lombardy and Spain, Turkey and France. Now it is the right time for going back home. Let’s go
back to Italy, let’s go back to the magnificent and unheard-of events which have lately concerned the whole Italy’ (Cronica, XV, 135).


7 On the Anonimo’s preface and his ideas about historiography, see Campanelli (2013).

8 ‘A reader of the chroniclers of Crécy may well be left with the impression that there are almost as many versions of the battle as there are fourteenth-century narrators of it’ (Ayton 2005a: 342).

9 For an English translation of the Anonimo’s narrative of the battle, preceded by a short account of the causes of the war and of Edward’s campaign, see the Appendix at the end of this article.

10 ‘It is impossible to say how many separate despatch-like documents or campaign diaries were circulating in England – or, indeed, throughout continental Europe – after Crécy; and any conclusions that may be offered about individual ‘lost’ documents and their influence on particular chronicles must necessarily be tentative. But such is the shadow that these missing documentary materials have cast over the historiography of Crécy that we simply cannot ignore them’ (Ayton 2005a: 296).

11 On Schönfeld’s letter, see Ayton (2005a: 295), who points out that the cedula was ‘probably intended for circulation around Europe’. The text is published in Acta Imperii (1870: 750).

12 On these three letters and the influence they had on the English chronicles, see Ayton (2005a: 293-311).


14 Wynkeley’s letter was copied in one of the manuscripts of Adam Murimuth’s chronicle (Murimuth 1889: 215-17). Murimuth’s account of Crécy consists of nothing more than Wynkeley’s letter. Murimuth, ‘canon of London’, was a royal clerk and diplomat; he was born in 1274-1275 and died during the first half of 1347; see Taylor (1987: 10-11, 26-27, 30-31), Given-Wilson (2004: ad indicem), Ayton (2005a: 306), Barber (2013: 19-20).

15 The king of France ‘avoyt pluis de xii m l homms darnes, des queux viii m l furrent des gentiles gentz et des communes graunt nombre’ (Anonimalle 1970: 22). On the Anonimalle and Crécy, see Ayton (2005a: 302-04). The Anonimalle is a continuation from 1333 to 1369 of a French chronicle belonging to the tradition of the prose Brut. According to Taylor, it uses ‘as its principal source to 1346 a French chronicle belonging to the tradition of the prose Brut. According to Taylor, it uses ‘as its principal source to 1346 the lost Minorite chronicle which formed the basis of the chronicle of Lanercost … After 1346 the compiler may also have used a continuation of the Polychronicon as well as a number of newsletters. In this section the chronicle appears to be the work of a York author’; see Taylor (1987: 140). Its author(s) ‘certainly had connections of some sort with the chancery’ (Given-Wilson 2004: 188).

16 ‘Numerus virorum venieniun cum rege Francie Philippine .xij. millia galliarum, .l. millia virorum armatorum ad tabias et pedes’ (Knighton 1995: 62). Knighton was a canon at the Augustinian abbey of St Mary of the Meadows in Leicester during the 1370s. His chronicle was begun in the late 1370s; it ends suddenly in 1396. ‘The section that includes the campaign and battle of Crécy rests squarely on Adam
Murimuth’s chronicle, and specifically on the newsletters that Murimuth copied into his text’ (Ayton 2005a: 307; see also Taylor 1987: 9-10, 17-18, 47).

17 See Chronicon Anonymi Cantuariensis (2008: 10); the Anonymous transcribes Wynkeley’s text with slightly variant readings. The Anonymous began to write his chronicle in the summer of 1357: ‘the chronological accuracy of the narrative from 1357 to 1364 makes it highly likely that he was writing contemporaneously with the events he recorded’ (Chronicon Anonymi Cantuariensis, xxxvii). Most likely he was a monk at Christ Church, even though there is a possibility that he was a secular clerk in William Rede’s circle (see Chronicon Anonymi Cantuariensis, xlvii).

18 ‘... però che ’l re di Francia avea bene da XIIM cavalieri, e sergenti a pie’ quasi innumerabili’ (Villani, 453). On Villani’s account of Crécy, see Ayton (2005a: 314-23); Ayton points out the traces of the newsletters which can be found in Villani’s narrative of the battle (2005a: 312-22). According to Sumption, Villani’s narrative was ‘probably based not on Genoese accounts but on Florentine newsletters from London and Bruges, in turn based on newsletters from the English army’ (1990: 623, n.24). Villani died in 1348, and ‘his account of Crécy must have been written within months of the battle. If his information was derived from newsletters, they can hardly have gathered much dust on his desk’ (Ayton 2005a: 322).

19 ‘et sachiez que cel ost fut extimé à XXM armeures de fer à cheval et à plus de C mil hommes de pyé’ (Le Bel, 100). Le Bel’s account of Crécy was written in 1358 (Ayton 2005a: 323-25). Le Bel quotes his sources explicitly, affirming that he is telling the story of Crécy as he heard it from ‘my lord and friend John of Hainault … from his own mouth, and ten or twelve knights and companions of his household, who were in the press with the valiant and noble king of Bohemia, and had their horses killed under them; and I have also heard it told in such a way by several English and German knights who were there, on the other side’ (the translation is Ayton’s 2005a: 323). ‘Jean le Bel, canon of Liège, who had written his work at the request of John of Hainault, uncle of Edward’s wife Philippa … Edward III is his hero, and it is the story of the ‘gallant and noble king’ that he sets out to tell … The events which particularly interest him are the knightly episodes, within the context of a narrative which is very much focussed on personalities rather than the details of diplomatic documents. And his only possible source for these knightly deeds is the knights themselves and their personal memories. John of Hainault himself was a prime source, and Le Bel therefore has a first-hand account of the battle of Crécy from the French side, which he must have recorded no later than nine years after the event (Jean died early in 1356)’ (Barber 2013: 6-8).

20 Northburgh’s letter was inserted in Robert Avesbury’s De gestis mirabilibus Edwardi tertii, written between 1356 and 1359 (Murimuth, 369): ‘In fact, the section on the battle of Crécy consists of nothing more than Northburgh’s letter, which Avesbury clearly preferred to Wynnkley’s for the climax of the campaign’ (Ayton 2005a: 304; see also Taylor 1987: 28, 31-32, 127, 229, and Barber 2013: 20).

21 Acta Imperii, 750. Unfortunately there is a lacuna in the text after ‘xvi’.

22 ‘Nella detta dolorosa e sventurata battaglia per lo re di Francia si disse per li più che scrissono che vi furono presenti, quasi inn-acordo, che bene xxM uomini tra pie e a-ccavallo vi rimasono morti, e cavalli innumerabile quantità, più di MDC tra conti e baroni e banderesi e cavalieri di paraggio, senza gli scudieri a•ccavallo, che furono più di IIIIM’ (Villani, 457). Jean Le Bel says that the French losses were ‘environ XII chevaliers et bien XV ou XVI d’autres, que escuiers, que Jennevois’ (Le Bel, 108). The first figure provided by Le Bel matches the Chronique Normande: ‘Et là fut mors
le roy de Behangne … et autres nobles seigneurs jusques au nombre de bien xiiéc chevaliers et autres gens, tant que il y ot bien mors xxviii [ms B has dix-huict] cens hommes d’armes’ (Chronique Normande, 82). The Chronique Normande was written by ‘a military experienced lesser nobleman of Norman origin. The text as we have it was written in about 1370, but it is possible that some sections had been drafted earlier’; the author took part in the Crécy campaign but did not fight in Crécy; for his brief account of the battle he presumably relied on eyewitnesses of the French army (Ayton 2005a: 317). According to Barber, it was ‘written in Normandy between 1369 and 1372 by a fierce supporter of Charles V just at the point where events were turning in favour of the Valois kings. The author is difficult to place, but may have been a town-dweller: he is a record-keeper rather than a chronicler’ (Barber 2013: 23). See also the Chronographia regum Francorum (233): ‘Tunc in eodem bello mortui sunt … bis sexcenti milites. In toto vero mortui fuerunt tria milia et octingenti homines et non plures’; the Chronographia was written in St Denis between 1415 and 1422.

‘These texts have so much in common … that we must suspect that either the Chronographia drew heavily on the Chronique Normande as one of its sources or, as seems more likely, their authors had access to a common source, which has since been lost’ (Ayton 2005a: 318, n.149).

23 The Anonimo does not seem aware of Villani’s chronicle and they did not draw on the same sources. To my knowledge the Anonimo and Villani are the only two Italian chroniclers who provide a careful description of the battle. A very short account of the campaign and the battle, de facto of no use for this article, is contained in Storie Pistoressi (1907: 222-23).

24 ‘… colla sua gente in quantità di iiiim cavalieri e da xxxm sergenti e arcieri a piè; … il re d’Inghilterra non avea iiiim cavalieri, e da xxxm arcieri inghilesi e gualesi, e alquanti con acce gualesi e lance corte’ (Villani, 443, 453). The German chronicler Mathias von Neuenburg says that Edward before the battle put ‘ante se et milites suos … XXX milia sagittatoriorum’ (Mathias von Neuenburg, 205 [B version], and 398 [WAU version]).

25 The number is missing in the β manuscripts of the Cronica.

26 Reading, 100. John of Reading was a Westminster monk, who wrote a chronicon during the last years of his life (he died in 1368/69). ‘Reading’s chronicle covers the years 1346 to 1367, and for the first half of it he draws quite heavily on Avesbury’s text’ (Ayton 2005a: 304; see also Taylor 1987: 82).

27 Walsingham, 287. The Ypodigma was written between 1419 and 1422; it contains a brief account of the battle ‘into which several distinctive extracts from John of Reading’s account have been inserted’ (Ayton 2005a: 305). On Walsingham, see Given-Wilson (2004: ad indicem), and Taylor (1987: 33-34, 41, 61).

28 ‘Adont assambla le roy tout son ost et en fist quatre battailles’, Croniques de Flandres, 42; see also Ayton (2005a: 318-19). I could not use the St Omer Chronicle, which is ‘closely related’ to the short continuation of the Croniques de Flandres, since it is not yet published (see A. Ayton 2005c: 164-67).

29 Burton, 58. Thomas Burton began his chronicle of the Cistercian abbey of Meaux ‘around 1388, but suspended it in 1396 when he was elected abbot, although he may have returned to it following his resignation in 1399’ (Given-Wilson 2004: 85; on the possibility that Burton had access to the Acta Bellicosa, see Ayton 2005a: 297-99, and also Taylor 1987: 19).

30 ‘Il re di Francia fece fare alla sua gente iii schiere a·lloro guisa, dette battaglie’ (Villani, 453).
‘Rex Angliae cum exercitu suo venit desuper Cressy et vidit aperte exercitum Franciae circa meridiem, gentem innumerabilem in octo aciebus distinctam’ (Eulogium historiarum, 210). The Eulogium was completed during the 1360s; on the possibility that the Monk of Malmesbury used the Acta Bellica, see Ayton (2005a: 296-99), and also Given-Wilson (2004: ad indicem).

‘… in quo [scil. exercitu Gallicorum] populus aestimabatur ad numerum xij. millium galearum, et armatorum ad aestimationem lx. millium et pedestrium innumerorum, qui dividebantur in viij. acies; quarum primam rexit rex Franciae’ (the text is published in Murimuth, 246). This revised version of Murimuth’s chronicle ‘was written either shortly before or after Murimuth’s death in 1347’; in the first case Murimuth himself could have been the author (Ayton 2005a: 310). The same number of French battles is found in the Historia Roffensis, attributed to William of Dene, a clerk in the service of the bishop of Rochester; it was written in a few years after the battle ‘and there can be little doubt that the source that, independently, both chroniclers used was an eyewitness account’ (Ayton 2005a: 311). The Historia Roffensis is not yet published (the manuscript is at the British Library, Cotton MS, Faustina B.v).

‘Exercitus Francorum fuit in novem turmas divisus; prima custodia regi Bohemiae … commendabatur’ (Le Baker, 82). On Le Baker’s account of Crécy, see Ayton (2005a: 334-42); Ayton points out that ‘his material may have been gathered soon after the battle, but the final version of the text was written during the later 1350s, after the battle of Poitiers’ (334). According to Barber, ‘Baker started his chronicle using Murimuth as a basis. He seems to have connections in Oxford, possibly through the house of Carmelite friars there, and came from nearby Swinbrook … He must have been friendly with men who had seen service in Edward III’s campaigns, both as soldiers and as clerks, because he has eyewitness accounts of the fighting as well as detailed notes of the routes taken by the armies which must come from official records. He gives a view of the war as seen by the provincial knights whom we were the backbone of the royal armies’ (Barber 2013: 21-22).

‘Sy ordonna ses batailles, et charge le roy à monseigneur Othes Doire la première bataille … La II e bataille eurent ceulx de Rains … La III e bataille de gens d’armes mena le roy de Bohengne, Charles son fils, le conte d’Alenchon, le conte de Flandres et le conte de Blois. La IIIIe bataille eult le duc de Loraine … La V e bataille avoit le roy de France’ (Bourgeois de Valenciennes, 230-31). We do not know when the Bourgeois wrote his chronicle; there is only one, early fifteenth-century manuscript of the text, which stops in 1366 and is probably incomplete (Ayton 2005a: 332-34).

‘… in illo conflictu ceciderunt reges duo, videlicet Beamiae, de quo certum est, et Majoricarum, de quo communiter et verisimiliter opinatur’ (Murimuth, 216).

See Froissart 1992: vol. III, 12, 13 (edition of the Amiens manuscript); Froissart 1877: 166, 168 (edition of the text of the A/B manuscripts); Froissart 1972: 717 (edition of the Rome manuscript); MS New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.804, fol. 100r, available at www.hrionaline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart (the text of this manuscript is published in Froissart 2001). The issue of the relationships between the Amiens and the A /B versions of book I of Froissart’s chronicles is a very complex one; see Palmer (1981: 7-24); as for Crécy, ‘there is no doubt that … the Amiens version is derived in all essentials from Le Bel whereas the A and B manuscripts (here identical) are substantially rewritten and closely related to the Rome edition. In stating the size of the contending armies, for instance, the Amiens text follows Le Bel verbatim while the A, B and Rome versions all omit this item. More significantly, the A, B and Rome
editions contain accounts of no less than twelve separate incidents in the battle – in all, more than a quarter of their entire narrative – which do not appear at all in either Le Bel or the Amiens MS’ (Palmer 1981: 15-16). According to Diller, the original version of the Amiens manuscript looks like the first effort of Froissart in writing history and could have been finished by 1380, whereas the version of the A/B manuscripts, which is found also in many other manuscripts, was intended for publication. The Rome version was begun after 1399. For an assessment of Froissart’s three versions of the battle of Crécy, see Ayton (2005a: 325-31). On Froissart, see also Barber (2013: 9-13).

37 ‘… a uno luogo e borgo di costa a uno bosco che ssi chiama Cresci … sì s’acamparono in quello luogo fuori della villa di Cresci in su uno colletto tra Cresci e Albavilla in Ponti’ (Villani, 451-52).
38 ‘Il re Aduardo rimase in sul campo due di … si parti da Cresci il terzo di’ (Villani, 458).
39 ‘Tertio quoque die post bellum idem dominus rex Angliæ versus Calais proficiscitur’ (Reading, 101); repeated by Thomas Walsingham in his Ypodigma Neustriae: ‘Tertia die post bellum, Rex Edwardus arripuit iter versus Kalesiam’ (Walsingham, 287).
40 Bourgeois de Valenciennes, 235; but just a page before Valenciennes had written ‘Et séjourné le roy d’Engleterre à Cressy IIII jours’.
41 See Cronica, XI 75. Berbentana is quite a mysterious word. Porta suggests that it could be related to the Beneventan script, without any real reference to it, of course, but just to mean a handwriting very difficult to read, see Porta’s note in the editio minor of the Cronica (20075: 227-28). Actually, as far as I know, the word Beneventana, or anything similar, did not exist during the fourteenth century.
42 On Tacitus’ fortune in the late Middle Ages, see Tarrant (1983: 407-09).
43 ‘Et de illeokes nous tenismes le droit chemyn devers la ville de Saint-Leo, et trovasmes le pount Herbert, prez cele ville , rumpu pour avoir desturbé notre passage; et nous le feismes maintenant refaire. Et lendemayn preismes la ville’ (Chandos Herald, 308).
44 ‘Ains s’en ala par devers la grosse ville et marchande merveilleusement qu’on appelle Saint Leu en Costentin, qui estoit plus riche et valoit plus III foys que la cité de Constance, et si y avoit grandes draperies et très grand aport de marchandise et grande quantité de riches bourgeois ... Il n’est homme vivant qui pourroit penser ne croire, se on luy disoit, la richesse qui là fuit gaagnie et robée, ne la grand quantité de draps qui là furent trouvez’ (Le Bel, 77-78). Le Bel’s account was the source of Froissart’s: see Froissart (1992: vol. II, 382; Froissart 1877: 139-40; Froissart 1972: 686-87; MS New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.804, fol. 95r).
45 ‘… pregando sua gente che fossono franchi uomini, però ch’elli avea intenzione di rimandare adietro il navile, come fosse arrivato nel reame di Francia, sicch’a lloro bisognava d’essere valorosi e d’aquistare terra colla spada in mano o d’essere tutti morti, che ‘l fuggire non avrebbe luogo’ (Villani, 444).
46 ‘Quant le roy d’Engleterre sceult que le roy de France estoit venus à Rouen, il lui manda à avoir bataille par plusieurs fois, et le roy de France respondy qu’il n’estoit pas encore pourveus et que ses gens n’estoient pas encore tous venus, qu’il attendoit’ (Bourgeois de Valenciennes, 220). According to the Acta Bellica, it was Philip who asked Edward to fight. Edward’s answer, dated 17 July, was transcribed in the Acta: Edward states that Philip has had many opportunities to have battle with him, especially when the English army was in Poissy, but that he always avoided it;
Edward continues saying that he is ready to fight ‘at whatever hour’, but he adds: ‘We shall never be dictated to by you, nor will we accept a day and place for battle on the conditions which you have named’. An English translation of the text, from which I quote, is available in Barber (1986: 38-39).

47 ‘Dominius Johannes de Francia cum suo exercitu ab obsidione villae de Aguylona clam recessit, dimissis tenotoriis et omnibus alis, exceptis equis et armis’ (Murimuth, 217).

48 On the descriptions of the wagon enclosure in the chronicles, see Ayton (2005a: 315-21).


50 Repeated in the *Chronographia regum Francorum*: ‘exercitum suum claudi fecit curribus suis et quadrigis, ibique multum hesitanter exspectabat’ (*Chronographia*, 231).

51 Le Bel, 105. Le Bel’s text is repeated by Froissart (1992: III, 12 ; 1877: 169 (with the addition ‘derrière son host’ after ‘[près] d’un bois’); 1972: 718); see also MS New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.804, f. 100r-v.

52 ‘Anglus enim omnes equos suos cum garciomibus suis [suis is missing in B version] a se iuxta silvam recondens pedestribus se commisit, curribus se circumdans, ne equites Franci alibi quam in cornu anteriori invadere eum possess, ante se et milites suos premittens XXX milia sagittariorum’; see Mathias von Neuenburg, 205 (B version), 398 (WAU version); and also Prestwich (2005: 145-46), and Ayton (2005a: 338). Mathias von Neuenburg (c.1295–1364/70) was a jurist, who studied in Bologna and worked for the bishops of Basel and Strasbourg. His chronicle goes from Frederick II to 1350, with a continuation up to 1355; the original text is lost, but several reworked versions are extant in the manuscripts (see Mück 1995).

53 ‘… ‘n su carri e sotto i carri alla coverta di sargane e di drappi che·lli guarentieno da’ quadrelli’ (Villani, 454).

54 In the last part of the chapter, the Anonimo tells that Edward besieged Calais using ‘bombarde, spingarde and other horrible things to harm the castle and the inhabitants’ (*Cronica*, XIV, 133).

55 These ditches make much more sense than the many pits, one foot deep and one foot large, which, according to Le Baker, were dug in a short time before the first English battle, so that, in case the English had been pursued by the French cavalry, the horses would have hesitated in front of the pits (Le Baker 1889: 166, and Ayton 2005a: 336, 341-42).

56 The Anonimo writes *valestrieri*, i. e. crossbowmen, which is apparently a mistake, since two lines above he refers to the *arcieri* and, of course, he makes no other mention of crossbowmen in the English army. It could be contributing evidence for the view that the *Cronica* did not receive final revisions by its author.

57 The Anonimo states that ‘the [French] horses were pierced on the left side’ by archers deployed ‘on the left side’ of the English army, the chronicler’s perspective is that of the French army looking up the slope to their enemies. This means that, according to Anonimo’s testimony, the archers were actually deployed on Edward III’s right flank.

58 ‘Sagittariis etiam sua loca designarunt, ut non coram armatis, sed a lateribus regis exercitus quasi alae astarent, et sic non impendirem armatos, neque inimicis occurrerent in fronte, sed in latera sagittas fulminarent’ (Le Baker, 166).
Ayton (2005a: 339). The picture of the archers shooting from the flanks is found also in Villani, but he states that, after the battle of king Philip had pushed back the English to the carts, the whole battle of Edward came out from a gate they opened in the wagon enclosure for that very purpose, ‘attacking the enemies bravely, shooting them from the flank, and with his Welsh and English on foot with the longbows and Welsh spears, and they aimed only at disemboweling the horses’ (‘francamente asalendo i nimici, feggendo per costa, e co’ suoi Gualesi e Inghilesi a piè coll’arca e lance gualesi, e solo intendeano a sventrare i cavalli’; Villani, 455).

‘In istis siquidem tribus aciebus 3,000 hominum ad arma fuerunt totaliter aestimati, aliiis hinc inde dispositis de sagittariis constitutis’ (Burton, 58).

It is worth noting that the Anonimo’s manoeuvre of replacement might also have been influenced by stories relating to the reinforcement of the Black Prince’s division at the height of the battle.

The Anonimo could know the Roman military manuals (Vegetius and Frontinus), which were widely read in the fourteenth century, but there is nothing in them that can be considered as the Anonimo’s source for the array and the movements of the English army. About the medieval fortune of Vegetius, see Reeve’s introduction to Vegetius (2004), and Allmand (2011). On Frontinus’ *Stratagemata*, see Reynolds (1983: 171-72).

‘Et fist IIm Genevois arbalestiers mettre devant, lesquelz trairent ce que ilz avoient de trait, mais pou en avoient avecques eulz, car venuz estoient en haste et leur charroy estoit derriere, par quoy leur trait faillit tantost, et les Anglois furent bien targiez de leur charroy et de fortes haies et d’aultre targement et trairent fort de leurs saiettes’ (*Chronique Normande*, 80-81).

‘Et clipei Jannencium et magna pars artilleriarum suarum remanserat supra currus et quadrigas qui veniebant post exercitum Francorum’ (*Chronographia regum Francorum*, 232).

‘While our Frenchmen were disposing themselves for battle, lo! suddenly rain descended from heaven. All the atmosphere, which before had been clear, darkened. The strings on the cross bows of the Genoese crossbowmen who had come to aid the French were soaked by the rain and shrank, so that when it was time for them to be drawn against the English, they were, woe is me! useless. It was not so with the bows and arrows of the English, for when the rain began as they were awaiting battle, they had quickly protected their bows by putting the bow strings on their heads under their helmets’ (Venette, 43). Unfortunately Birdsall could not publish the Latin text of MS Arundel 28; in the Latin text published as a continuation of William of Nangis the last sentence is: ‘Non sic autem de sagittarii arcubusque Anglicorum, quia jam ante pluviam, bellum expectantes, citius arcus suos praeparaverant, appositis in capitibus arcuum cordis sui’. The words ‘appositis cordis sui in capitibus arcuum’ mean that they simply fixed their strings to the heads of the bows (Guillaume de Nangis, 201).

‘Jean de Venette was … a highly placed cleric, prior of the Paris convent of Carmelite friars, and eventually head of the order in France. The work of the Carmelites put them in close touch with the lay world; Venette himself was of peasant origin. He was very probably writing as events happened from 1360s onwards … He is less inclined to blame the English exclusively for the horrors of war, and sees events from the standpoint of the classic definition of the orders of society: for the wellbeing of all, the peasant should work, the clergy should pray and labour at spiritual matters, and the knights should defend all the three orders … Jean de Venette is another voice to set against those of the aristocratic chroniclers’ (Barber 2013: 15).
‘Ains s’en ala a toute sa gent assembler aus Anglois, lesquieux Anglois gitterent trois canons, dont il avint que les Genevois arbaléstiers qui estoient ou premier front tournerent les dos et laissierent à traire, si ne scet l’en se ce fu par trayson; mais Dieu le scet. Toutes voies l’en disoit communément que la pluie qui cheoit avoit si moilliées les cordes de leurs arbaléstes que nullement il ne les pooiient tendre’ (Grandes Chroniques de France, 282). ‘In France, the great French official chronicle, the Grandes chroniques, was the work of the monks of St Denis, the royal monastery to the north of Paris where the kings of France were buried and the oriflamme or banner of France was kept. This was both a history of the reigns of each king and also a general history of France. The continuation of this, dealing with John II and Charles V, begins in the monastic style, but seems to have been written from 1350 onwards by someone close to Charles V. It is not far from being propaganda, and is much more interested in putting across official business and the official viewpoint on current affairs than in the details of campaigns, let alone of chivalric exploits’ (Barber 2013: 19).


Richard Barber informed me that Count Valentino is Aymar VI de Poitiers, count of Diois and Valentinois.

Chronique des quatre premiers Valois, 15-16. The author of the Chronique ‘may have been a cleric in the Norman administration at Rouen’; the text ‘dates from the 1380s; it takes a strongly nationalist view, and reflects the changing attitudes at the end of the century, when the divisions of nationality outweighed the old common culture of knightly aristocracy’ (Barber 2013: 22).

Le Bel also adds that the traitors were rather the advisors of the king: ‘On doibt mielx croire que ceulx que ce luy conseilloient le faisoient pour le trahir, que les nobles chevaliers qui en estoient à tort souspechonnez et qui mettoient corps et vye en aventure aveq lui’ (Le Bel, 87).

‘Et mout s’avança le prince de Galles … et Godeffroy de Harcourt d’assembler aux Français, tant que on dit que le conte de Flandres print le prince de Gales, mais tost fut secouru’ (Chronique Normande, 81). As usual, the Chronographia regum Francorum drew on the Chronique Normande: ‘In eodem bello captus est princeps Wallie a comite Flandrie, sed postmodum recuperatus’ (Chronographia regum Francorum, 233).

Needless to say the proximity of Crécy to Paris set by the Anonimo is completely wrong. The Anonimo writes that the valley of Crécy ‘is eight leagues from Paris’, a figure which should come from one of his sources; it would mean quite a distance (but in any case a great deal less than the real one: as the crow flies, it is about 170 km, according to the map in Ayton 2005b: 2). Shortly afterwards, the Anonimo says that the English spies could quickly get very close to Paris and Saint Denis; when the king of Bohemia and the other leaders of the French army left Paris, the English could perfectly see them from their position: ‘The English looked from a distance at the straight road of Paris, which lays in an easy view. The English looking at the French realized that they were coming out and were going to take the field. They recognised it by the gleaming of the shining helmets and crests, as well as of the flags which shone under the rays of the rising sun’ (Cronica, XIV, 122). This is definitely a nice piece of literature, but the news that the suits of armour in Paris ‘were sold for two hundred florins’ (Cronica, XIV, 122) could come from an oral witness, and perhaps the Anonimo had news of the fright which spread over Paris as soon as the Parisians
saw that Philip was leaving the city for Saint Denis, while Edward was in Poissy (in addition to the Bourgeois of Valenciennes, see Froissart 1877: 149-150, and Froissart 1972: 700).

73 ‘Ferunt utique regem Boemiae caecutientem fuisse ... qui quaesivit a suis qualiter Anglici collocati essent’ (Walsingham, 268).

74 It is not sure what these catene were; Barber translates ‘tied the fastenings of their breastplates together’ (Barber 2013: 238).

75 The passage on Charles is to some degree reminiscent of what a few chroniclers tell about king Philip reluctantly leaving the battlefield at the end of the fight: he would have been taken away by his closest counsellors, who cared for saving his person (see Croniques de Flandres, 44; Le Bel, 103-04; Froissart 1992: 21-22).

76 In Barber’s opinion ‘Here the anonymous Roman chronicler has a detailed account, which seems to be based on the first-hand experience of someone in his [the king of Bohemia’s] entourage’ (Barber 2013: 237).


78 Froissart 1972: 730; see also Froissart 1887: 178; cf. also the ms. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M.804, f. 102r, available in www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart.

79 I am grateful to Chris Given-Wilson, who encouraged me to strengthen this point. As he wrote to me in a letter: ‘People have sometimes wondered why Crécy became such a famous battle, talked about all over Europe, but maybe the reason why is because the German and Italian contingents played such a large – and such a controversial – part in it, so that German and Italian accounts were written in order to excuse them and save their reputations.’

80 ‘Diu autem in certamine remanserant Alamanni, ita quod multa milia sunt occisa’ [‘milia hominum sunt occisi’, WA version]; Mathias von Neuenburg, 206, 398.


82 It is, of course, in this light that we should view the Anonimo’s account of John of Bohemia’s suicidal engagement with the English, as well as his narration of the Prince of Wales’s capture by the ‘count of Valentino’, and the dramatic sequence of events that followed.

Bibliography

Primary sources


**Secondary literature**


APPENDIX

Chap. xiii. On the defeat of France, where the king of Bohemia died and the king of France was defeated by the king of England

It was in the year of the Lord MCCC[...] when the dreadful defeat in France occurred, within eight leagues from Paris, at the mount of Crécy, and Philip of Valois, king of France, was defeated, and Edward, king of England, was victorious. This extraordinary event happened this way. The reason for the war between the king of France and the king of England was this and not another one. There was a king of France very wise and good and right, whose name was Philip the Fair. This Philip truly had the sign of the cross on his right shoulder. He also played with a lion as familiarly as one would play with a kitten. This king Philip in his old age found himself without of a male heir. He had only one daughter, whom he married to Edward king of England. The queen was called Isabel. When this king Philip came to die, having no sons, he did not want to leave his kingdom without a governor. There was in France a noble count, whose name was Philip, count of Valois. He was a relative of Philip’s, even though not from the true line. Besides, he was the most wise, learned, clever-minded man of the whole of France. Besides, he was also brave, since he had fought as a hireling in Lombardy. The king appointed the count of Valois his agent and plenipotentiary all over the kingdom. He put everything in his hands. And so he died and passed away from this life. Philip de Valois remained. He began to rule the kingdom in a good and wise way. And seeing that he had no opponent, seeing that there were no sons of the king, he came to an understanding with the barons of the kingdom, he came to an understanding with the pope and so he was crowned. He was anointed and consecrated in Rouen, and his son John became duke of Normandy. After knowing that Philip had taken the crown of France, Edward king of England swore on the majesty of his kingdom that he would never give respite to the French until he retook the kingdom which was due to his mother. Legations, blandishments, the pope with his court meant little in Edward’s eyes. Then he moved his host, his big army, came down through England, crossed the sea with his royal navy and went ashore
on the land of France. The number of his people was eighteen thousand horsemen, no more, and thirty thousand bowmen on foot, including servants, infantry, cooks and the whole staff. It is a custom of the English that every servant of the house has a bow. When he leaves his job, he uses the bow and serves as an archer. There was king Edward. There was his son little Edward, prince of Wales. There was the queen, many earls, knights and barons. They had three thousand wagons, filled with everything the army needed. After the English had crossed the sea and disembarked, the first outstanding thing that king Edward did was to send the whole fleet back to England. His people were afraid and demanded: ‘Why are you doing this?’ The king replied, and said: ‘I don’t want you to be wishing to go back. Be brave’. Then he besieged a strong place, which headed up those countries - its name was St Lo - and so took it by force and held it to him. Then he came down through the coast of Normandy, along the seashore. He covered more than two hundred miles, burning and setting fire to cities and castles, plundering and killing. Nobody is countering him. From a distance he shows to king Philip the great damage he was doing. He took and robbed many people. He pulled down fortresses and towers in which there were people who opposed him. Then he wrote to king Philip that he was waiting for him and that he wanted to meet him on a battlefield, would king Philip fix a deadline. King Philip asked for fifteen days, no longer, the time to recall his son John. John, duke of Normandy, was in Gascony besieging a castle called Aguillon. There, along a river, was his very powerful army. He left on the field tents, pavilions and every kind of equipment, as soon as he had heard the order of his father. He had no hesitation. He left with his many people. He brought only the arms and the horses. He rode strongly for fifteen days. His strong riding was useless, for thirty days had gone when he arrived, the fight was over. He could not help his father. He could not take part in the fight. Let us come back to the subject now. Having promised to take the field, king Philip was well aware that his barons were not loyal to him. He was well aware that they had called the English and put them in the midst of France. He is very saddened that he watches his enemies wandering freely, without restraint, all over France. Nonetheless he gathered many good people. He had one hundred thousand knights. He had twelve thousand foot soldiers. He had the king of Bohemia – his name was John – with one thousand Germans. This king John en-
joyed fighting as a hireling. He had also the king of Majorca – his name was John –, who was expelled from his kingdom. He was there and fought as a hireling. He had also Louis count of Flanders, who was expelled from his county. He had also sir Ottone Doria and sir Carlo Grimaldi with five thousand Genoese crossbowmen. He had many earls and barons and many people. Now the king of England quickens his march and at night arrived in a very broad valley, which is eight leagues from Paris. That valley lies below a castle, which is called the mount of Crécy. At the other side, there is a town of more than four thousand people, that is called Abbeville. Between those two places, in the flat fields, at the foot of the slope of Crécy, he placed all his people and set his army. When the people had arrived and the army was placed, it was night and it was the hour that the bell rang. The couriers who run ahead and the spies, who approached Paris and Saint Denis, heard the bells of Saint Denis of France and the bells of Saint Mary of the Holy Chapel ringing at the break of the day. They heard also all the matins of the ecclesiastics and the choirs *a cappella* that follow them. When the news that the English had taken the field was spread in Paris, all the royal entourage armed itself. And they were so many that the suits of armour were sold for two hundred florins. The dawn of the day came. King Philip wanted the king of Bohemia to be commander in chief and to go out to counter the English; and so it was. John king of Bohemia, son of the emperor Henry, John king of Majorca, Louis count of Flanders, and all the other barons went out of Paris. While they were coming out, the English looked from a distance at the straight road of Paris, which lay in good view. Looking at the French, the English realized that they were coming out and were going to take the field. They recognised it by the gleaming of the shining helmets and crests, as well as of the flags which shone under the rays of the rising sun. Then Edward opened his eyes and knew for certain that he could not avoid battle. And considering the great number of the French, it is no surprise that he was a bit grieved. He was afraid and said: ‘Ah God, help me’. Then quickly, in a short time, he had his army surrounded with strong iron chains, with many iron poles, stuck into the ground. This enclosure was round, in the shape of a horse shoe, closed on every side, except that he left a big opening at the front, like a gate, to get in and out. Then he had deep ditches dug where the line was weak. Every Englishman was engaged in working. Then all along the chains he put
the wagons they had brought. He placed one wagon next to the other, and raised the shafts straight in the air. It truly seemed like a walled city, so deep were the wagons. Then he arranged his people in this fashion. On the left side, on the slope of Crécy, there was a small hill. There was a bit of a small wood. There was also the wheat, which was not harvested. It was the month of September, day three. Because of the great cold in that country the wheat ripens in September. There, in that small wood and among the wheat, he hid and placed ten thousand English archers on foot. Then he put on each wagon a full barrel of arrows. He assigned two crossbowmen to each barrel. Then he moved out of his army five hundred knights who were well trained. Their commander was Edward, prince of Wales, his son. This was the first battle. Behind these five hundred, he set two wings, each of five hundred valiant knights, one on the right side, the other on the left. Behind these five hundred knights, he set one thousand knights. This was the third battle. Behind these one thousand knights, the king placed himself with all the other knights within the army, within the chains. Having done that, he comforted his people, commended himself to God, and said: ‘Ah sir God, defend and help the right’. This was his deployment. This was his good arrangement. It was Saturday, September 3rd. The king of Bohemia got out of Paris towards the battlefield and put himself not very far from the English. The king of Bohemia had poor eyesight. He did not see very much. Firstly he asked about the deployment of king Edward. When he knew such a deployment, immediately he said: ‘We are going to lose. The English cannot be defeated without great loss to our side’. Then he asked what the weather was like. They answered his question and said that the air above the English was clean like sapphire, above the French the weather was getting rainy. So he said: ‘The battle does not suit us, it suits them’. Then he sent a message to king Philip in Paris. The messengers said: ‘King Philip, provided that your highness likes it, let the fight not take place, since it is not harmless, and serves no useful purpose. It is better that we hold our position still. The king of England will leave. When he leaves, we will follow his heels. He will be at our mercy’. Philip was very troubled and said, among many other words: ‘I feel like drowning myself in the waters of the Seine, since the best commander in the world is scared’. The messengers did not hide these words from the king of Bohemia. So the king of Bohemia said: ‘Today we will see that I am not afraid. And we will
see all the same that to fight is madness rather than bravery’. Then he ordered the battles to run as they had been set. Before this running (it took a long time), he had set nine\(^5\) battles. But three were the famous ones, the most important. The first battle was led by sir Ottone Doria and sir Carlo Grimaldi, commanders of five thousand Genoese, crossbowmen on foot. The second one was the king of Maiorca together with the count of Flanders with three thousand knights. After that, there were many particular battles. After that, there was the king of Bohemia with one thousand Germans and four thousand French and his son Charles in the rear. The first battle that got to the field the day after was the Genoese crossbowmen, five thousand. They were ordered to go up the slope of Crécy to tower above the English, but they did not succeed, because the English had taken the hill and put obstacles among the wheat. So they placed themselves on another little mount at a distance. Then a disaster occurred, since they did not shoot, because they could not load the crossbows. There had been a bit of a drizzle. The ground was wet, soft. When they wanted to load the crossbows, they put a foot into the stirrup. The foot slipped out. They could not stick the foot into the ground. At that point a whisper arose among the French; they feared the Genoese were traitors because they had not been paid. The French said: ‘These people are not going to shoot, and, if they shoot, they will throw shafts without iron. So let the Genoese die’. Saying that, the French flew into a rage against their soldiers. They struck cruelly with swords and lances. The Genoese were killed to the last one. Sir Ottone complained to the king about the killing of his people; the king replied and said: ‘We do not need foot soldiers. We have so many people’. This was the first fight. Five thousand Genoese were killed at one and the same time. Now the fronts, the points of the battles clash: John king of Maiorca attacks Edward duke of Wales\(^6\). In the mêlée there was so much shouting, so great was the noise and the clashing of spears, that it seemed as though two mountains were striking each other. This one gave, that one took. Lots of instruments, trumpets and bagpipes sounded. An extraordinary event occurred in this battle. The prince of Wales spurred his horse well into the enemies. All alone he did great harm. A count, whose name was count Valentino, saw and recognized him. He thought how much he would gain. He threw the hook to get a big fish. He moved his horse gently near Edward prince of Wales and embraced him. Then he took Edward by the chainlets of the armour\(^7\)
and said: ‘You are my prisoner’. Then he stopped and vigorously
dragged the prince out of his ranks and took him at his untrammeled
mercy. While count Valentino was taking the son of the king of
England, the count of Alençon, who was the brother of king Philip,
turned up and, seeing that little Edward was lost, tied as a young
sheep, said these words in a very angry way: ‘Ah, count Valentino,
how can you be so bold to take my cousin to prison?’ And saying that,
he did not wait for any answer, indeed he threw himself and raised an
iron gilded mace of his\textsuperscript{8}, which he had in his hand, and struck count
Valentino on the head. As the blows were increasing one after the
other, count Valentino lost his strength. He left the bit and the
chainlets of little Edward and dropped dead to the ground from his
horse. Then little Edward, having spurred his horse, came back very
happy to his ranks, which had already begun to weaken. Louis, count
of Flanders, saw this extraordinary event; as I said, he was expelled
from his county and had been in Paris for quite a long time as a
hireling. He was an old man, a good and honest person. He loved king
Philip and his honour very much. He realized that treason was spread
through the French barons. He could no longer hide his desire to tell
the truth. He raised his voice gently and said: ‘Ah, count of Alençon,
this is neither the loyalty nor the kindness you must keep towards the
crown. The war was won, whereas you made it lost’. When the count
of Alençon heard these words, he did not want hear anything else. He
turned the head of his steed and struck the little old count of Flanders
with that same mace so much that he killed him. Oh harsh thing: we
have come to the point where someone has to die because he told the
truth and blamed the harm somebody has done. None of the count of
Flanders’ comrades was so bold as to breathe a word. Only a skilful
servant of his, a foot soldier, a man of low birth, seeing such cruelty
drew a pointed sword of his, and stuck it into the count of Alençon’s
belly, and pierced him to the other side, so that the count of Alençon,
traitor of his brother, died there on the field. This servant, who killed
the count of Alençon, went in front of king Philip and told him that he
had killed the king’s brother to avenge his lord, and explained the
treason the count had done, and proved it by good testimony. Hearing
this, king Philip forgave him and did not want to take any revenge of
him. While these things were happening, the English archers were
coming down from the hillside among the grain and shooting arrows
into the cavalry without end. They held their bows and were shouting,
‘Strike, strike, strike’. Everyone was in danger. The horses were pierced on the left side, so the army was greatly weakened. The wounded began to retreat. Horses fell dead. The English lunged at the enemy. That battle was lost. In the meantime there were many battles and good deployments. Which one was the most famous? The English knights have a special skill. When they saw that one of their men was dead, they put a living one in place of the dead, a sound one in place of the wounded, a fresh one in place of the tired. Then they swapped, so the five hundred on the right flank came to the front. A half of the one thousand who were in the third battalion came in their place, and those in the front came back to the one thousand, and they swapped the left wing in the same way. The rearguard, the big royal rank, stood still in its place. It would not have moved without an important reason. King John of Maiorca did not die in this fight, but he was wounded in the face. He died in a very cruel way in his country. As he wanted to go back to his kingdom, he fought against his brother-in-law and so he was beheaded. After these battles were put to flight, the king of Bohemia asked his fellows how matters stood on the battlefield. They answered that there was no other living person left on the battlefield but he and his retinue. All the French were cut into pieces. The English stood strong and tough, still, with their standard raised. So the king of Bohemia ordered that two very important barons, who were on each side of him, got ready to strike. They said: ‘What do you want to do? All the French people are routed. The English stand strong. We are not sauce. It is madness to go against so many people’. The king replied: ‘Thus you are not the sons of those two friends of mine who were the bravest men in all Germany’. The two barons replied: ‘There is no need of prowess, for we are nothing if compared with the enemies’. The king replied: ‘I want us to go. Let’s go to die with honour’. The earls said: ‘What do you gain from your death and ours?’ The king replied: ‘In good faith, I say what I say because I believe that I am fighting for the truth’. Hearing those words, the barons were convinced. Like little sheep, they kept their voices down and said: ‘King, do what you like to do’. So the king made many barons come before him, who were the most important of Luxembourg and of the kingdom of Bohemia, and ordered them to be obedient to his son Charles as if he were him and to honour him as king and lord. He also ordered them to rescue Charles from the fight. Then he ordered the earls, who were in the front line, to put him so ahead and into the
English ranks that, if the need arose, it would have been impossible to come back. Then he chained himself between the aforesaid two barons and they tied the chains of their armour, so as to get the same death, the same honour. The first rank was the one thousand Germans from Luxembourg, good people, Bohemians and noble men from Prague. After them followed four thousand French, Burgundians and Picards. His son Charles remained behind. At that point the trumpets and the bagpipes sounded on each side. At that point they lowered the spears and spurred the steeds. At that point they struck each other mercilessly. The English kept two vicious skills: the first was that they refreshed the five hundred knights of the front with the one thousand of the rear; the second was that they made the two wings of five hundred and five hundred widen and take the field both on the right and on the left, approaching the front from the flank. As soon as the first lines of the Germans clashed with the English, the wings, which had already taken the field, struck from the flanks, on either side. The king of Bohemia was surrounded on the front, on the side and on the flank. The king’s horse fell. The king fell heavily to the ground and was killed by the horses of the two barons who were on his side. First fell sir Haun of the Tornello, a noble French knight who bore the banner of the king. He was among the first to be unhorsed and killed with the king. The one thousand Germans did not turn their backs, indeed they withstood quite well, given that they had neither king nor gonfalon. Many English died. Eventually the troops of the King of Bohemia were annihilated, just as a bit of spice is ground by a large pestle. Charles, son of king John, stayed far away. When he knew that his father was killed and defeated, he could not help crying. At the same time he spoke and said: ‘Let’s die with him’. He was already moving his banners to go. His going was reckless, futile, since the English stood stronger than ever before. He was led by anger, sadness, rage. Thus his barons came around him, took the bit of the horse and turned its head toward Paris, and so they dragged him, against his will, up to Paris; and there he rested. He let himself be gently forced and did the better and showed that he intended to do something. Now nobody is left on the battlefield on the side of the king of France. The English had won the battlefield. They did not go in for looting. Indeed they did a very noteworthy thing. For three solid days they did not take off their arms, they did not get off their horses. Every royal standard stood still on the battlefield. Nobody left the guard. After
they saw that nobody was arrayed against them and the places were free of ambushes, a part of them, in good order, went in for looting, for gaining the military stuff, for undressing the dead bodies. Here is the very noble defeat that occurred in France, at the town of Crécy. Sixty thousand men lay dead on the field. Many were the prisoners. The king of Bohemia, commander in chief of the army, the count of Alençon of Valois, Louis count of Flanders and many other barons lay dead. The English happened to gain fifteen hundred pairs of golden spurs, not to mention the other one thousand and the three hundred banners taken during the rout. The one thousand Germans were taken to Paris by wagons. Most of the body of the king of Bohemia was taken: a big part of it was crushed. These bodies were brought naked from the battlefield to burial in Paris. The other people were not taken at that time, indeed they remained four days on the field, as a spectacle for all to see. After this, the English gathered their camp, put on the wagons all their military stuff and, having arranged themselves in a good order, did not stay any longer. They set off to go back. Their way was to Calais, the strong castle along the seashore, to besiege it.

Notes

1 For the Italian text, see Anonimo Romano (1979: 118-32). Porta divided the manuscripts which he used for his edition into two families, α and β (see Anonimo Romano 1979: 329-39).
2 The year is missing in the β manuscripts, whereas almost all the α manuscripts have MCCCXLVII, which looks like a supplement of α.
3 The α manuscripts have ‘nine’.
4 The original text is Santa Maria delle Sciampelle; it should be the Sainte-Chapelle, whose lower chapel was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.
5 The number is missing in the β manuscripts.
6 I follow Castellani (1987: 77-78 = 2009: 986-88), who emended the text as Ora se aiongo le frontiere, le ponte delle battaglie: Ianni re de Maiorica a Adoardo duca de Gales. The α manuscripts are divided: se aduoco a, se aduogio b; the β manuscripts have se auugio (se auuegono V₄). Porta chose auugio as ‘they pitched one against the other’. The α manuscripts have Ianni re de Maiorica e [or et] Adoardo duca de Gales: e instead of a is clearly a trivial innovation of α.
7 As Barber writes, these catenelle are ‘not immediately identifiable as part of a suit of armour’ (Barber 2013: 588; he translates ‘he took him by the fastenings of his breastplate’, p. 235).
8 The Anonimo mentions iron gilded weapons also in the chapter on the battle of Rio Salado: Serafin, the watchman of the royal muslim pavilion ‘in mano teo una mazza
de fierro ‘naorata’ (‘has in his hands an iron gilded mace’) and a veteran of the battle, whom the Anonimo met in Tivoli, had a sword almost completely gilded: ‘era la maiure parte ‘naorato lo fierro, l’ilzo e·llo pomo tutto’ (‘most of the iron, the hilt and the whole knob were gilded’; see Anonimo Romano 1979: 78, 85). In the chapter on the crusade at Smyrna the Turks have spears made of ‘uno fierro pulitissimo … alcuno era ‘naorato’ (‘a very good iron … some of them were gilded’; Anonimo Romano 1979: 107). These all are muslim weapons; on the other hand it is not surprising that the brother of the king had a gilded arm (and the Anonimo is always very careful in describing objects). It would be worth exploring how much used were gilded weapons in the late Middle Ages, but this, of course, goes beyond the scope of this article. Barber translates ‘raised his mace studded with iron’ (2013: 235).

9 The text reads ‘Da, da, da’, that is ‘Dagli, dagli, dagli’, i. e. ‘Colpisci, colpisci, colpisci’.

10 The β manuscripts have ‘those’ instead of ‘many barons’.