

**MAYNOOTH
PHILOSOPHICAL
PAPERS
ISSUE 4
(2007)**

**An Anthology of Current Research from the
Department of Philosophy, NUI Maynooth**

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Introduction

The artistic output of Damien Hirst, especially his most recent work, the jewel encrusted ‘Skull’ makes sure that Nietzsche’s ‘unbidden’ guest remains somewhat within Western consciousness, despite the best efforts of modernity to exorcise the prospect of mortality. The theme of death is of course well inserted within the philosophical tradition. Plato writes in the *Phaedo*: ‘The one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death’,² and for Schopenhauer ‘death is the inspiration for philosophy’.³ Much of the efforts of the philosophers in the face of death has been to ‘overcome’ the emotions associated with it, especially fear, terror, disgust. One thinks of the efforts of Epicurus to free his fellow man from the fears of death and of the punishments of the afterlife through a calm acceptance of ultimate dissolution at death. The Stoic insistence that we should remember that we are mortal, the *memento mori* as an ethical rejoinder to the hedonism of *carpe diem*, re-emerges in renaissance and early modern times. From the history of philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries two philosophical movements were particularly influential in associating the acceptance of finitude with authentic human existence, namely existentialism and phenomenology. The Heideggerean *Sein zum Tode* alluded to in the title of this article in some ways represents a secularisation of the Kierkegaardian conception of death as the decisive moment in life, the *dies natalis* of the Christian. For both the reality of death as an immanent personal possibility forces one to become authentic, no longer to be merely content to ‘enjoy the ride’ but to accept that it has a terminus. Where thought diverges is over the possibility of turning being-towards-death into being-towards-transcendence. Death for some becomes the clearest indication of the absurdity of human existence, of the anguish of our ‘dual consciousness’ (Camus) of our desire for duration and our certainty of termination. It can be transmuted through *jouissance* and the excesses of postmodernism. Or, of course, for most of the western tradition, it becomes the turning point (κρίσις, separation and judgment) which opens up to the beyond (ἐπέκεινα).

The fusion between the Greek and Roman philosophical tradition and that of Judaeo-Christianity gave rise to a series of sustained reflections on the nature of the human condition. Christian soteriology, however, means that the Ancient tragic sense of life is overcome in a hope-filled vision of ultimate redemption, indeed to the extent as seen in the Eriugenian doctrine of the return of everything to God and so nothing will be lost. Many Christian authors saw themselves as continuing the philosophical tradition and completing it in the sense of providing a series of definitive answers to the questions which troubled the ancients.

I

The Twelfth-Century Background

It might seem an extraordinary thing to state but it seems that ‘Death’ was invented in the twelfth century, i.e., that particular Western idea, linked to

judgment and the afterlife, and which persists into modern times as a dominant theme in Western culture.⁴ It seems that Death as an abstract entity, or anthropomorphic representation, is absent from the High Middle Ages. He (?) begins to take form from the twelfth century onwards and becomes the centre of a rich artistic and literary production. Why the twelfth century? The suggestion by some is that the emergence of a wealthy and comfortable middle class, rich in material possessions, means an increased or heightened awareness of how much there is to be lost through death. There is also a reaction to this increased hedonism and materialism on the part of the monks whose chosen way of life runs counter to this new ‘consumer society’. There is the development of the *contemptus mundi* literature with its pitiless depiction of the misery and sordidness of human life; of the final judgment and the sufferings of the damned. Life is depicted as an existential drama where the individual is presented with a fundamental choice between salvation or damnation. There is an acute phenomenological description of the stark choices which faces every free individual on the road of life and where the ultimate turning point is the moment of death, a moment which is so important and yet unknown. The impetus for these monastic writers is a situation where if there is too much love of life that people need to be reminded of death, that ‘Et in Arcadia ego’. The solution is conversion, penitence and that distance from the world so beloved of Neoplatonism. On a more negative side, the obsession with the macabre already mentioned by Plato in the *Republic*⁵ where Leontius has a compulsion to look at corpses, emerges in vernacular literature, sermons and artistic depictions. One could also mention the fact that the dead themselves are often on show to remind the living of what they will become, a spectacle which still fascinates today in the crypts of some Capuchin monasteries in Italy.

In Twelfth-Century literature, one could mention the importance of texts such as the *De contemptu mundi* and that ‘best seller’ the *De miseria humane conditionis* of Innocent III. There is the beginning of that long tradition of texts around the theme of the *artes moriendi*, of preparing for a good death (and familiar to many Irish people up to recently, especially as related to the practice of the ‘Nine First Fridays’).⁶ An important poem in French is the *Vers de la Mort* of Hélinant of Froidmont and composed between 1194 and 1197 and which is seen as being one of the sources of that later medieval tradition of the Dance of Death.⁷ Hélinant develops his work around three themes: death is near at hand; the need to distance oneself from worldly goods; man’s destiny in the next life. As the opening lines put it:

Morz, toi suelent cremir li sage:
 Or queurt chascuns a son damage:
 Qui n’i puet avenir s’i rue.
 Por ce ai changié mon corage
 Et ai laissé et gieu et rage:

(O Death, those who are wise have always feared you
 Now, however, everyone rushes to their destruction
 And if they do not meet you at the pass, you gallop towards them.
 For this reason, I changed my ways
 And left behind pleasure and madness ...)

Unlike later authors, Hélinant does not indulge in the macabre; he appeals to the mind and the emotions of his reader/ hearer and not to fear or disgust.⁸ This,

rather, is something which comes to the fore with the experience of the Black Death in the fourteenth century. Hélinant is also important since he is one of the candidates suggested for the authorship of the poem which is our concern here, the *Vado mori*.

II The *Vado mori*

While doing some research on the manuscripts of the *Lectura on the Sentences* of Richard FitzRalph in the Vatican Library, I came across some verses at the end of the manuscript Ottoboni 679 which is of English origin and was written towards the end of the fourteenth century. The verses came at the end of the manuscript and together with some other lines of poetry or sayings which seemed to be jottings by the scribe in order to fill up the parchment which was left blank when he had finished copying his text. Each line (at least in the first part of the poem) begins and ends with the statement 'Vado mori' ('I am going to die') and hence the generic name for this type of poem which, while having its origins in the twelfth century, continued as a literary type up to the sixteenth century. The interest for the medievalist lies in the fact that the poem presents a list of various characters who come forward, state who they are, what their function in life was, and that they are going to die. Thus we have a depiction of the various types in medieval society and how they were viewed by a contemporary writer. Each personage is assigned a verse in which they lament their own death as something which is inevitable and before which they are impotent, no matter how important they were in life. The repetition of the phrase 'vado mori' is suggestive of a sombre litany, with funereal rhythms, characterised by melancholy and resignation.

The *Vado mori* genre was very popular, existing in many versions and surviving in over 50 manuscripts scattered throughout Europe.⁹ The surviving versions all differ in terms of the number of verses and the personalities which are listed, reflecting contemporary changes in taste, politics, and social status and indeed how much space a scribe wished to fill! All would seem to derive from a common source with verses being added to the poem and changed or deleted over the course of time. It is rather ironic that we have here a real death of the author in the post-modern sense. With each stage of re-committing the text to parchment, the scribe feels empowered to adapt the poem to his own needs and without respecting any authorship or ownership of the text. Each writing of the text is a re-reading and re-interpretation without any felt need to subscribe to a master narrative.

As I examined some more manuscripts while carrying out research in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, I discovered some other texts from roughly the same time (fourteenth century) and background (Anglo-French). This allowed me to establish the basis for a text which might have circulated at the time but which does not survive in any one manuscript. The possibility of such a text was strengthened when I came across the editions of similar texts by Eleanor Prescott Hammond and published in 1911.¹⁰ The text which is given below, it is hoped, is close to the original text which seems to date from the thirteenth century. What is clear from the text is that it is relatively optimistic and, unlike the Dance of Death, does not see Death as triumphing; rather, ultimately it is Death who must die since it is Life who wins in the end. Peter Dronke¹¹ was of the opinion that the style of

the opening verses with their unusual internal rhyming would suggest a date before 1200. Helmut Rosenfeld tended to go for a later date of the thirteenth century¹² and pointed out that the origin of the expression ‘*Vado mori*’ was undoubtedly French, ‘*je vais mourir*’. Indeed, as will be seen below, one of the lines appears in French.¹³

In the versions of the text which appear in the works of Rosenfeld¹⁴ and Donà,¹⁵ only the *vado mori* verses appear without the introductory lines. Both are relatively late versions. In the version printed below the *Vado mori* verses are counterbalanced by *Vive Deo* verses (in some manuscripts they are laid out in parallel columns). The opening lines or exordium begin with a statement of the anguish which arises at the thought of death for no matter what time it is, that moment could be one’s last (vv. 2-3). The impartiality of death is acknowledged, its function as ‘leveller’ bringing down both rich and poor since all must die (vv. 4-9). The various persons then appear on stage, to state who they are and then to exit. Here we have *Papa* (Pope); *Rex* (King); *Presul* (Prelate); *Miles* (Warrior); *Monachus* (Monk); *Legista* (Lawyer); *Placitor* (Advocate); *Praedicator* (Preacher); *Logician* (Logicus); *Medicus* (Doctor); *Cantor* (Singer); *Sapiens* (Intellectual); *Dives* (Rich man); *Cultor* (Country man); *Burgensis* (City man); *Nauta* (Sailor); *Pincerna* (Butler); *Pauper* (Poor man); *Elemosinarius* (Benefactor). Much has been made of the hierarchical nature of medieval society and more written of its caste-like structure riven with inequalities based upon birth. Only the Church, it seems, offered the possibility for a poor man to rise to the very top. It is rarely pointed out, however, that the structure of medieval society while being generally static and conservative (like most societies) did not have much by way of a religious justification. In fact, the message of Christianity was strongly egalitarian and favoured community of goods rather than private property. In this regard, religious communities were meant to oppose the secular arrangement of society, the latter being temporal whereas the life of the monk was seen as an anticipation of an eternal situation.

Each reader will find verses which amuse, strike a chord, or are memorable for one reason or another. The student of philosophy might pause at the fate of the logician: ‘A logician, I learned how to defeat others; Death quickly defeated me.’ The intellectual (*Sapiens*) finds that his knowledge is of no use when Death turns him into a fool (*me reddit fatuum mors seva*). The image of the cantor is a nice one where Death plays him a tune in a descending scale soh, fa, mi.



And the butler with a fondness for wine finds that death has served him up poison! In general, however, the tone, is not bitter or over-critical. The advice given to each character in the second section (*Vive Deo*) is hortative rather than condemnatory and is ultimately hopeful.

III Conclusion

In the medical school of Salerno, verses were also used in order to help future doctors remember their schooling. However, the author of the verses had to conclude that no matter how much medical learning one had, there was no cure for death: *Contra vim mortis, non est medicamen in hortis*. In our text the *Medicus* can find no cure and instead vomits up the medicine which his doctors prescribe. In the second section we find that the *Medicus* is advised one cannot ultimately rely upon medical science (*fallax est ars medicine*). The hopes of many then and now have always been that medical science might ultimately prolong our lives so as to ultimately exclude death. Clearly we have not reached that point and even if we had there is nothing to guarantee that we might not become such a problem to ourselves that death might still be chosen by some over living. The challenge remains to integrate the realisation of our radical finitude into our lives, to no longer take life for granted. If philosophy is to be a reflection on life, then it must also be a reflection on death and perhaps even some sort of guide as we all make our way to that *iter tenebrosum*.

NOTES

¹ I wish to thank Prof. Pietro B. Rossi for his help in sourcing some materials in Italian and to Prof. James McEvoy who read the Latin text and made some helpful suggestions. Thanks are due also to Prof. Peter Dronke who provided some very useful information as well as suggesting the arrangement of the opening lines of the poem.

² *Phaedo* 64A..

³ *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, I, §54; II, c. 4.

⁴ See Carlo Donà, *Hélinant de Froidmont, I Versi della Morte* (Parma: Pratiche Editrici, 1988), p. 7. See, also, the classic work by Phillipe Ariès, *L'homme devant la mort* (Paris: du Seuil, 1977).

⁵ *Republic*, IV: 440a: ‘I once heard something that I trust. Leontius, the son of Aglaion, was going up for the Piraeus under the outside of the North Wall when he noticed corpses lying by the public executioner. He desired to look, but at the same time he was disgusted and made himself turn away; and for a while he struggled and covered his face. But finally, overpowered by the desire, he opened his eyes wide, ran towards the corpses, and said: “Look, you damned wretches, take your fill of the fair sight.”’

⁶ See Mary Catherine O’Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: the Development of the Ars Moriendi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

⁷ See Helmut Rosenfeld, *Die mittelalterliche Totentanz, Entstehung, Entwicklung, Bedeutung* (Cologne–Graz, 1968). An excellent website and source for materials on this and related matters is to be found at <<http://www.totentanz-online.de/totentanz.php>> [accessed 9 September 2007].

⁸ This is also apparent from his ‘dispassionate’ treatment of the ineffectuality of death from what he writes in his *De cognitione sui*: *Clamat nobis certissima mors, et hora mortis incertissima, mortem semper ad omnium pendere oculos, et ideo semper habendam ab omnibus prae oculis, semperque meditandam, sicut scriptum est in Ecclesiastico [7:36]: Memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis ... (PL 212, col 730) with the novissima being death, judgment, hell or heaven.*

⁹ See Hans Walther, *Initia carminum ac versuum medii aevi posterioris Latinorum*, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969).

¹⁰ E. P. Hammond, 'Latin Texts of the Dance of Death', *Modern Philology*, 8 (1911), 399–410.

¹¹ In a letter to me, dated 21.12.03.

¹² Helmut Rosenfeld, 'Vadomori', *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum*, 124 (1995), 257–264 (p. 257): 'Zu den verbreitetsten Vergänglichkeitsdichtungen des Mittelalters gehören die lateinischen 'Vadomori'-Gedichte. Sie sind seit dem 13. Jahrhundert in ganz Europa anzutreffen und in zahllosen Sammelhandschriften überliefert, vielfach dabei variiert im Bestand und in der Anordnung der Verse, und sie wurden in den Volkssprachen angeeignet.'

¹³ We should remember that the French-speaking world at the time includes the Norman nobility of England, Wales, Ireland, Southern Italy and Sicily. The 'placitor hundredis et comitatu' mentioned in connection with the phrase in French is an advocate within the Anglo-Norman legal system of the Shires.

¹⁴ Helmut Rosenfeld, 'Das Aberaltaicher Vadomori-Gedicht von 1446 und Peter von Rosenheim', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*, 2 (1965), 190–204; the Latin text is to be found on pp. 195–198, and has a considerably amplified number of personages.

¹⁵ See Carlo Donà, *Hélinant de Froidmont, I Versi della Morte* (Parma: Pratiche Editrici, 1988), Appendice 1, pp. 102–113. This version is completely different from our text except for three verses, *Rex*, *Miles*, *Medicus* and *Logicus* which are identical.

‘Vado mori’¹

C = St John’s College, Cambridge, E6 (109), (XV) ff. 39v-40v

O¹ = St John’s College, Oxford, 58 (XV), f. 1 (92v)

O² = Oxford, Bodleian 423, f. 354v (mutilated)

V = Vaticana, Ottoboni 679, ff. 206rb-206vb

Editions:

B¹ = *Vado Mori*, *British Library*, Landsdown 397 (edited by Eleanor Prescott Hammond, 1911)

B² = *Lamentatio*, *British Library*, Royal 8 B VI (edited by Eleanor Prescott Hammond, 1911)

<Lamentatio morituri>

Dum mortem recolo² – crescit michi causa doloris,

Nam cunctis horis – mors venit ecce cito³.

Equa lege⁴ rapit⁵ – mors magnos atque pusillos,

Nunc hos nunc illos⁶ – precipitando capit⁷.

Pauperis et regis – communis lex moriendi,

Dat causam⁸ flendi – si bene scripta legis.

Gustato pomo – nullus transit sine morte,

Heu misera sorte⁹ – labitur omnis homo!

Vado mori Papa qui iussu regna subegi,

Mors michi regna tulit heccine: vado mori.

Vado mori rex sum. Quid honor? Quid gloria regni?

Est via mors hominis regia: vado mori.

Vado mori presul cleri populique lucerna,

Qui fueram validus, languo¹⁰: vado mori.

Vado mori miles certamine victor belli¹¹,

Mortem non didici vincere: vado mori.

Vado mori monachus mundi moriturus¹² amor,
Vt¹³ moriatur amor dic¹⁴ michi: vade¹⁵ mori.
Vado mori legista fui defensor egenis¹⁶,
Causidicus causas desero¹⁷: vado mori.

Vado mori placitor hundredis et comitatu,
(*Tor^at*) *e force or faut*, langueo: vado mori.¹⁸
Vado mori populo verbum vite predicare
Qui solitus fueram, langueo: vado mori.¹⁹
Vado mori logicus²⁰ aliis concludere noui,
Conclisit breviter mors michi: vado mori.
Vado mori medicus medicamine non redimendus²¹,
Quicquid agant medici²² respuo²³: vado mori.²⁴
Vado mori cantor frangens²⁵ que²⁶ notas modulando,
Ffrangit²⁷ mors modulos sol fa mi: vado mori²⁸.
Vado mori sapiens michi nil sapientia prodest²⁹,
Me reddit fatuum mors seva: vado mori³⁰.
Vado mori diues ad quid michi copia rerum³¹?
Cum mortem nequeat³² pellere: vado mori.
Vado mori cultor collegi farris acervos³³
Quos ego pro vili computo³⁴: vado mori.
Vado mori burgensis eram censum cumulaui,
Omnia³⁵ mors adimit impia: vado mori.
Vado mori nauta fluctus sulcans³⁶ remigando,

Mors proram pertransit nauifrago³⁷: vado mori.
Vado mori pincerna³⁸ fuit vinum michi dulce,
Propinat michi mors fellea³⁹: vado mori⁴⁰.
Vado mori pauper pro Christo cuncta relinquens⁴¹,
Hunc sequar⁴² evitans omnia: vado mori⁴³.
Vado mori pietate potens benefactor egenis,
Hoc mors non resecat hac dote: vado mori.
Nulli mors partis concludens singula fine⁴⁴,
Omnia transibunt preter amare Deum.⁴⁵

Responsio vite⁴⁶

Mors genus omne terit – sequitur sed vita futura,
Celica futura – nunc sibi finis erit⁴⁷.

Contendunt mutuo⁴⁸ – sibi⁴⁹ mors et vita duello⁵⁰,
Ista suo bello – se parat illa suo⁵¹.
Mors vitam resecat⁵² – sternit pro tempore fortem,
Set tandem mortem – vita probata secat.
Ad certamen eo – litis lis certat amori,
Dicis vado mori – consulo⁵³ vive Deo

Vive Deo papa nunc mammona sit dea pape,
Desine papa dee vivere: vive Deo.
Vive Deo per quem rex es re nulla adorna,
Rex rege, Rex Deus est, rex homo: vive Deo.
Vive Deo presul cuius vice stas in honore,
Fforma⁵⁴ gregi⁵⁵ datus es sta bene: vive Deo.
Vive Deo miles pacem patriamque tuere,
Fforcior⁵⁶ in fidei robore: vive Deo.
Vive Deo monachus quid voveris ipse memento⁵⁷,
Christo commoriens in cruce: vive Deo.
Vive Deo legista Dei lex vera probatur,
Ne te lex perdat perdita: vive Deo.
Vive Deo placitor iustas sustenta querelas⁵⁸,
Munera que cecant respue: vive Deo.
Vive Deo predicans qui vivere tu docuisti,
Cunctaque peccata spernere: vive Deo.
Vive Deo logice premissas fac tibi vite,
Ne conclusa tibi sit via: vive Deo.
Vive Deo medice fallax est ars medicine,
Est medicina Deus optima: vive Deo.
Vive Deo cantor sit vox bene consona laudi,
Mens bene concordet sic⁵⁹ bene: vive Deo.

Vive Deo sapiens que sursum sunt sapiendo,
 Desipit⁶⁰ hic mundus tu sape: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo dives opibus simul et pietate,
 Pauper eget fer opem, da sibi⁶¹: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo cultor manus utiliter colat agrum,
 Religione Dei mens pia: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo seu burgensis seu civius in urbe,
 Vt sis⁶² viva Dei mansio: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo nauta quia⁶³ multos obruit unda,
 Fforsan⁶⁴ erit subita mors tua: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo pincerna Dei sunt pocula⁶⁵ vina,
 Ffons⁶⁶ vius Deus est hunc bibe: vive Deo
 Vive Deo pauper tam re quam mente beata,
 Nil ut habens⁶⁷ et habens⁶⁸ omnia: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo carus rapiaris in eius amorem,
 Tota fer in Domini⁶⁹ viscera: vive Deo.
 Vive Deo bene vivis ei si vivis amori,
 Non potes ante Deum vivere preter eum.

THE LAMENT OF ONE WHO IS TO DIE⁷⁰

When I think about death, a reason for sorrow grows within me
 For at all times of the day look how quickly death comes!
 With impartiality death siezes the great and small
 Hurrying to grab now these, now those.
 A common law of dying applies to the king and pauper
 Such a well-written law gives cause for tears.
 Once the apple was eaten, no one passes on without death
 Alas what a miserable end touches everyman!

Pope

I am going to die, the Pope who subdued kings with a command
 Are not these then the kingdoms that death takes from me? *Vado mori*.

King

I am going to die, I am the King, what an honour and glory to the kingdom
Death is the royal road for humankind. *Vado mori*.

Bishop

I am going to die, a Bishop, the lamp for the clergy and people
I who was strong now am weak. *Vado mori*.

Knight

I am going to die, I am a Knight, in conflict the winner of the war
I was not able to deny victory to Death. *Vado mori*.

Monk

I am going to die, I am a monk, one dead to love of this world
So that this love may die, say to me, "you will die".

Lawyer

I am going to die, a lawyer, I was a defender of the poor
An advocate, I have lost my case. *Vado mori*.

Magistrate

I am going to die, a magistrate at the county court
Authority and force now fail me and I am weak. *Vado mori*.

Preacher

I am going to die, I who preached the word of life to the people
I who was solid now am weak. *Vado mori*.

Logician

I am going to die, a Logician I knew how to silence others
Death has quickly silenced me. *Vado mori*.

Doctor

I am going to die, a Doctor who is not saved by medicine
Whatever the doctors prepare I throw it up. *Vado mori*.

Cantor

I am going to die, a Cantor who shortened notes and made tunes
Death shortens my tune, soh, fa, mi. *Vado mori*.

Intellectual

I am going to die, an Intellectual, my knowledge is no good to me
Uncouth Death makes a fool of me. *Vado mori*.

Rich Man

I am going to die, a Rich Man, what good are riches to me now?

Death is impossible to defeat. *Vado mori*.

Farmer

I am going to die, a Farmer I gathered together heaps of wheat

Now I regard this with contempt. *Vado mori*.

Burgess

I am going to die, a Burgess I collected taxes

Merciless Death carries off everything. *Vado mori*.

Sailor

I am going to die, a Sailor sailing over the waves by rowing

Death holes the hull, sinking the ship. *Vado mori*.

Butler

I am going to die, a Butler, wine was sweet to me

Now Death serves me poison. *Vado mori*.

Pauper

I am going to die, a Pauper, I left everything behind for Christ

Follow him, avoiding all. *Vado mori*.

Benefactor

I am going to die, from mercy a rich Benefactor of the needy

This endowment Death does not divide up. *Vado mori*.

Without a part of its own, Death finishes each part in the end

Everything will pass away besides loving God.

THE RESPONSE OF LIFE

Death terrifies all but in a future life

A heavenly life, there will be an end to Death.

Death and Life faced each other in a war between them

One in battle the equal of the other.

Death halted Life and threw it to the ground

But Life, having been tested, wounded Death.
The outcome of the struggle was found in favour of love.
You say 'Vado mori', I say to you 'Vive Deo'.

Pope

Live in God, Pope to whom wealth is god
If you want to live, leave wealth behind, *Vive Deo*.

King

Live in God, he through whom you are King, without riches
Is King to a king, God the King is man the king, *Vive Deo*.

Bishop

Live in God, Bishop in whose place you stand in honour
You are given as an example to your flock, stand well, *Vive Deo*.

Knight

Live in God, Knight, protect peace and your country
Strong in the assurance of your faith, *Vive Deo*.

Monk

Live in God, Monk, what you vowed remember
With Christ hanging on the cross, *Vive Deo*.

Lawyer

Live in God, Lawyer, the law of God is proved the true law
Do not let the sinful law condemn you, *Vive Deo*.

Judge

Live in God, Judge, by finding for the just causes
Spit out the bribes which blind, *Vive Deo*.

Preacher

Live in God, you who by preaching have taught to live
By despising all sins, *Vive Deo*.

Logician

Live in God, Logician, make for yourself the premises of life
Lest the way be concluded for you, *Vive Deo*.

Doctor

Live in God, Doctor, medical skill is fallible
God is the best medicine, *Vive Deo*.

Cantor

Live in God, Cantor, let your voice be harmonious with praise
And so your mind will also be well-tuned, *Vive Deo*.

Intellectual

Live in God, Intellectual, it is the things above which should be known
Know that this world deceives, *Vive Deo*.

Rich Man

Live in God, Rich Man, both goods and mercy,
The poor man needs, help him, *Vive Deo*.

Farmer

Live in God, Farmer, the hand usefully cultivates a field
A pious mind the religion of God, *Vive Deo*.

Burgess

Live in God, be you a burgess or a citizen in the town
So that you will be the living dwelling of God, *Vive Deo*.

Sailor

Live in God, Sailor, since the waves sink many ships
It may be your death will be soon, *Vive Deo*.

Butler

Live in God, Butler, the wine sacks are God's
God is the living spring, drink this, *Vive Deo*.

Pauper

Live in God, Pauper, blessed in goods and mind
While having nothing, you have everything, *Vive Deo*.

Benefactor

Live in God, Dear Friend, be caught up in his love
Confide everything to the depths of God, *Vive Deo*.

Live in God, you live in him if you live in love
You cannot live before God without love, *Vive Deo*.

* * *

- ¹ Nota istos versus pro optimis mors C; Conclusio mortis pro omni genere hominum dicens Vado mori O²
- ² recolo B²: meditor B¹
- ³ Dum mortem – ecce cito: om. CO¹V O²: cito: citor B¹
- ⁴ The term ‘aeque lege’ (with impartiality) is to be found in Horace, Odes III, 1 which also deals with the subject of death.
- ⁵ rapit: capit B²
- ⁶ ‘Nunc hos accepit nunc illos’, Virgil *Aeneid* VI, 313-316, referring to Charon.
- ⁷ capit: rapit B²
- ⁸ causam: eam B²
- ⁹ sorte CO¹V; morte O²
- ¹⁰ langueo CO¹: langue V
- ¹¹: certamine victor belli C: belli certamine victor O¹V
- ¹² moriturus *codd. recte mortuus?*
- ¹³ Vt: O¹: Et C
- ¹⁴ dic O¹V: hic CO²
- ¹⁵ vade O¹V: vado CO²
- ¹⁶ egenis CO¹V; egenus O²
- ¹⁷ desero B²O²:defero CO¹V
- ¹⁸ line is left as a lacuna in V; tmria et fortitudo nunc deficient – langueo vado mori *in marg.* B²; perhaps this is a legal term or common expression, given that French was the language used in the law courts.
- ¹⁹ Vado mori placitor – Qui solitus fueram langueo vado mori *om.* O¹O²
- ²⁰ logicus CO¹V; O² places the verses on medicus here and the logicus follows.
- ²¹ redimendus CO¹V; revolendus O²
- ²² medici: medi O¹
- ²³ respuo: reppuo B²
- ²⁴ B¹ breaks at this
- ²⁵ frangens B²O¹: fuagensCV:
- ²⁶ que om. B²
- ²⁷ frangit O: FfuagitCV
- ²⁸ Ffrangit mors – modulando sol fa mi: In lacrimas muto; cantica: B²; Vado mori cantor ... vado mori *om.* B¹O¹O²;
- ²⁹ michi nil sapientia prodest CO¹V; doctor nunc cesso docere O²
- ³⁰ Me reddit fatuum mors seu a vado mori CO¹V; Qui facundus eram non oro vado mori O²
- ³¹ At this point a large tear begins in O², leaving only some of the text to the right of the line.
- ³² nequeat B¹O¹V: nequiat O²; nequeant B²
- ³³ acervos CO¹V: a cervos O²
- ³⁴ computo: deputo B²
- ³⁵ omnia V: diuina C; dimua O¹
- ³⁶ sulcans: fulcans B²
- ³⁷ Mors proram pertransit – nauifrago: Mors proram perimit nauifraga B²; a variant in the margin of B2 reads:
Vado mori nauta fluctus qui fulco marinos
Naufragor auferetur anchora vado mori
See E. P. Hammond, ‘Latin Texts of the Dance of Death’, *Modern Philology*, 8 (1911), 399–410 (p. 8).
- ³⁸ Pincerna (butler)
- ³⁹ fuit michi ... fellea: fui potum michi fellis, Hora proponandi vltima B²; fellea: follea V
- ⁴⁰ Vado mori burgensis ... Propinat michi mors fellea vado mori *om.* B¹CO²
- ⁴¹ pro Christo cuncta reliquens O¹V: quem pauper Christus amauit C; Christus pauper amauit O². In O² the manuscript has been mutilated and what remains of the lines is as follows:
... -nd tu nisi fimus
... mutare nequimus
... mundo totus adheres
... -a solus heres
... imo sepelitur
... -ta datur
... homo sic adnichilatur

-
- ... dum stare putatur
 ... et michi causa doloris
 ... venit ecce cito.
⁴² sequar: sequor C
⁴³ B¹ ends here
⁴⁴ Vado mori pietate ... singula fine; C has:
 Te male ...
 Qui subito rapuit ... isse mori
⁴⁵ Text ends here in C and there then follows a letter which ends on 40v: Explicit vna epistola
 vnus Italicus ad alterum ...
⁴⁶ Responsio vite V; om. O¹
⁴⁷ Mors – erit B²; om. B¹CO¹ O²V. The editor of B2 arranged the text so that the ‘vado mori’
 couplet is followed immediately by the ‘vive deo’ couplet.
⁴⁸ mutuo: vario B²
⁴⁹ sibi O¹: igitur V
⁵⁰ A reference to the Easter sequence *Victimae Paschali Laudes*: Mors et vita duello confluxere
 mirando; Dux Vitae mortuus, Regnat vivus.
⁵¹ Ista suo bello – se parat illa suo: illa suo bello separat ista pio suo B²
⁵² resecat: rececat V
⁵³ consulo O¹: consule V
⁵⁴ fforma: forma O¹
⁵⁵ 1 Pet 5:3 Forma facti gregi ex animo
⁵⁶ Fforcior: Forcior O¹
⁵⁷ Vive Deo monachus – quid voveris ipse memento: Vive deo monache: quodque anueris ipse
 memento B².
⁵⁸ Vive Deo placitor – iustas sustenta querelas: Vive deo rethor? iustas sustolle querelas B²
⁵⁹ sic: sit B²
⁶⁰ decipit V
⁶¹ sibi: tua B²
⁶² sis O¹: sit V
⁶³ quia: que B²
⁶⁴ Fforsan : forsan O¹
⁶⁵ pocula O¹: pocla V
⁶⁶ ffons V: fons O¹
⁶⁷ habens: heus B²
⁶⁸ habens: heus B²
⁶⁹ donum B²
⁷⁰ This rendering into English is neither ‘fair nor faithful’ but is merely intended to give an idea of
 the content of the Latin original.