“…AND BY GOD’S MERCY ANNALISTS WILL SURELY NOT BE WANTING”: THOMAS BECKET, MEMORY, AND NARRATIVE IN ANNALISTIC WRITING

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Abstract

This thesis offers new insights into the historiographical value and significance of the annalistic chronicle, challenging the notion that it is only of limited use for the study of the Middle Ages. Far from being simple records of events, annals were sophisticated works, the product of discerning editorial decisions. Multiple levels of meaning were layered throughout annals to create a text which embodied the beliefs, concerns and circumstances of their authors. By assessing the presentation of Thomas Becket in annalistic chronicles, a new perspective can be gained on a notable saint, and a better understanding achieved of the texts themselves and the monks who created them. Frameworks of narrative and memory are employed to create an assessment that is more sympathetic to the idiosyncrasies of annalistic writing. This approach encompasses the commemorative and historical processes at work within an individual annal and across the text as a whole. Each annalist was purposefully choosing what to remember and what to forget, and their creative responses moulded the past to suit their particular circumstances. The chronicles that they produced represent a vital opportunity to consider these authors and their world, and should thus be regarded as an integral component of medieval historiography.

Dedication

I appreciate the support of my family and friends, and in particular the encouragement of my partner, Rachel, throughout the lengthy process of producing this thesis. I am also thankful for the advice given to me by the innumerable academics who I bothered with questions over the last four years.

Acknowledgement

This thesis could not have been completed without the support and tutelage of my supervisory team of Simon Yarrow and William Purkis. This thesis was copy edited for conventions of language, spelling and grammar by my mother, Helen, for which I am very grateful. I am also thankful for the generous financial support offered to me by the Wolfson Foundation which facilitated this project. Finally, I appreciate the support of the University of Birmingham not only in terms of my research but also for the wider opportunities that have been afforded to me.

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Terminology and Language

A few preliminary stylistic points merit explanation at this stage. In the interests of clarity and consistency I have employed the anglicised versions of given names, rather than their contemporary equivalent. This includes the names of French and Manx monarchs where English equivalents exist. Individuals conventionally known by a Latin name have received as literal a translation as possible. In unusual cases such as Radulphus de Diceto, where it cannot be categorically stated where "*Diceto*" refers to, the name has been translated as far as it definitively can be, thus "Ralph of Diceto". The anonymous authors of monastic chronicles are referred to in plural (that is "the Winchester annalists" rather than "the Winchester annalist"), or the text itself is referred to as the subject (that is "the Winchester chronicle stated" rather than "the Winchester chronicler stated"). This approach better appreciates the collaborative authorship of these texts.[1] However, the terms 'author', 'annalist' and 'chronicler' are used interchangeably simply to allow for greater variety of prose. Places will be referred to by their modern names. The monastic chronicles which form the core of this study are generally referred to as the "x" chronicle, where x refers to the monastery where the text was produced. In part this reflects a specific point about the terminology of "annals" and "chronicles" elucidated in the introduction,[2] but it also avoids following the somewhat arbitrary modern names which have come to be associated with individual texts in favour of a more consistent approach. In some cases, this contradicts the conventional naming of texts, such as the Manx Chronicle (here referred to as the Rushen chronicle) or the *chronicon* of Ralph of Coggeshall (here the Coggeshall chronicle) in favour of more consistency and emphasising the context of a

[1] See Introduction p. 7.

[2] See Introduction p. 6.

chronicle's production. An exception is the "Lowlands" chronicle. I use this term to refer to the text commonly known to as the Holyrood chronicle. Although this text is largely based on a work produced at Holyrood Abbey, the later stage of this text, which contains most of the annals relating to Becket, was produced at Coupar Angus Abbey. A less specific name better reflects the mixed heritage of the work.[3] Texts which are only referred to occasionally are given their conventional name, such as the *Liber Eliensis* or William of Tyre's *Historia*. Unless specified otherwise, translations are my own. Where I have felt that the specific terminology employed was important, I have clarified the exact Latin in brackets following my translation, while sections of Latin longer than a few words have been moved into the footnotes.

[3] For a discussion of the production of this text see Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, eds. and trans., *A Scottish Chronicle Known as the Chronicle of Holyrood*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press , 1938), pp. 1-35 and A. A. M. Duncan, 'Sources and Uses of The Chronicle of Melrose, 1165-1297', in *Kings, Clerics, and Chronicles in Scotland, 500-1297: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the Occasion of Her Ninetieth Birthday*, ed. Simon Taylor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 154-170.

Abbreviations

Anchin	'Continuato Aquicinctina' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* VI, ed. G. Waitz, *Scriptores* vol. 6 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1844).
Barlow, *Becket*	Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986).
Burton	'Annales de Burton', in *Annales Monastici,* ed. Henry Richards Luard, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol 1.
Coggeshall	'Radulphi De Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum', in *Chronicon Anglicanum: De Expugnatione Terrae Sanctae Libellus. Thomas Agnellus de Morte et Sepultura Henrici Regis Angliae Junioris. Gesta Fulconis Filii Warini. Excerpta Ex Otiis Imperialibus Gervasii Tileburiensis*, ed. Joseph Stevenson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1875).
Coventry	'The Coventry Chronicle', in *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles: Hitherto Unnoticed Witnesses to the Work of John of Worcester*, ed. Paul Antony Hayward vol. 2, 2 vols, (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2010).

Dore	'Annales Dorenses', in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* XXVII, ed. G. Waitz, *Scriptores* vol. 27 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1885).
Duggan, *Becket*	Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Hodder Educational, 2004).
Dunstable	'Annales Prioratus de Dunstaplia', in *Annales Monastici,* ed. Henry Richards Luard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 3.
Egmond	'Annales Egmundi', in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* XVI, ed. G. Waitz, *Scriptores* vol. 16 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1859).
Lowlands	Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, eds., *A Scottish Chronicle Known as the Chronicle of Holyrood* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1938).
Margam	'Annales de Margan', in *Annales Monastici,* ed. Henry Richards Luard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 1.
Melrose	Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Chronica de Mailros* (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1835).
Ps-William Godel	'Ex Chronica quod dicitur Willelmi Godelli', in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules,* ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1869), vol. 13.

Roberts, *Preaching* — Phyllis B Roberts, *Thomas Becket in the Medieval Latin Preaching Tradition: An Inventory of Sermons about St. Thomas Becket, c. 1170-1400* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992).

Rushen — George Broderick, ed., *Chronicle of the Kings of Mann and the Isles* (Edinburgh: George Broderick, 1973).

Smalley, *Becket Conflict* — Beryl Smalley, *The Becket Conflict and the Schools: A Study of Intellectuals in Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973).

Staunton, *Biographers* — Michael Staunton, *Thomas Becket and His Biographers*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).

Staunton, *Historians* — Michael Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Staunton, *Lives* — Michael Staunton, ed. and trans., *The Lives of Thomas Becket*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001)

Tewkesbury — 'Annales Monasterii de Theokesberia', in *Annales Monastici,* ed. Henry Richards Luard, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol 1.

Torigni — 'The Chronicle of Robert of Torigni', in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. iv.

Trois-Fontaines — 'Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium', in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* XXIII, ed. G. Waitz

(Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1884) *Scriptores* vol. 23.

Waverley — 'Annales Monasterii de Waverleia' in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol 2.

Winchcombe — 'The Winchcombe Chronicle', in *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles: Hitherto Unnoticed Witnesses to the Work of John of Worcester*, ed. Paul Antony Hayward vol. 2, 2 vols, (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2010).

Winchester — 'Winchester Annals' in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 2.

Ymagines Historiarum — Ralph of Diceto, 'Ymagines Historiarum', in *The Historical Works of Master Ralph de Diceto, Dean of London*, ed. William Stubbs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) vol. 1.

Map

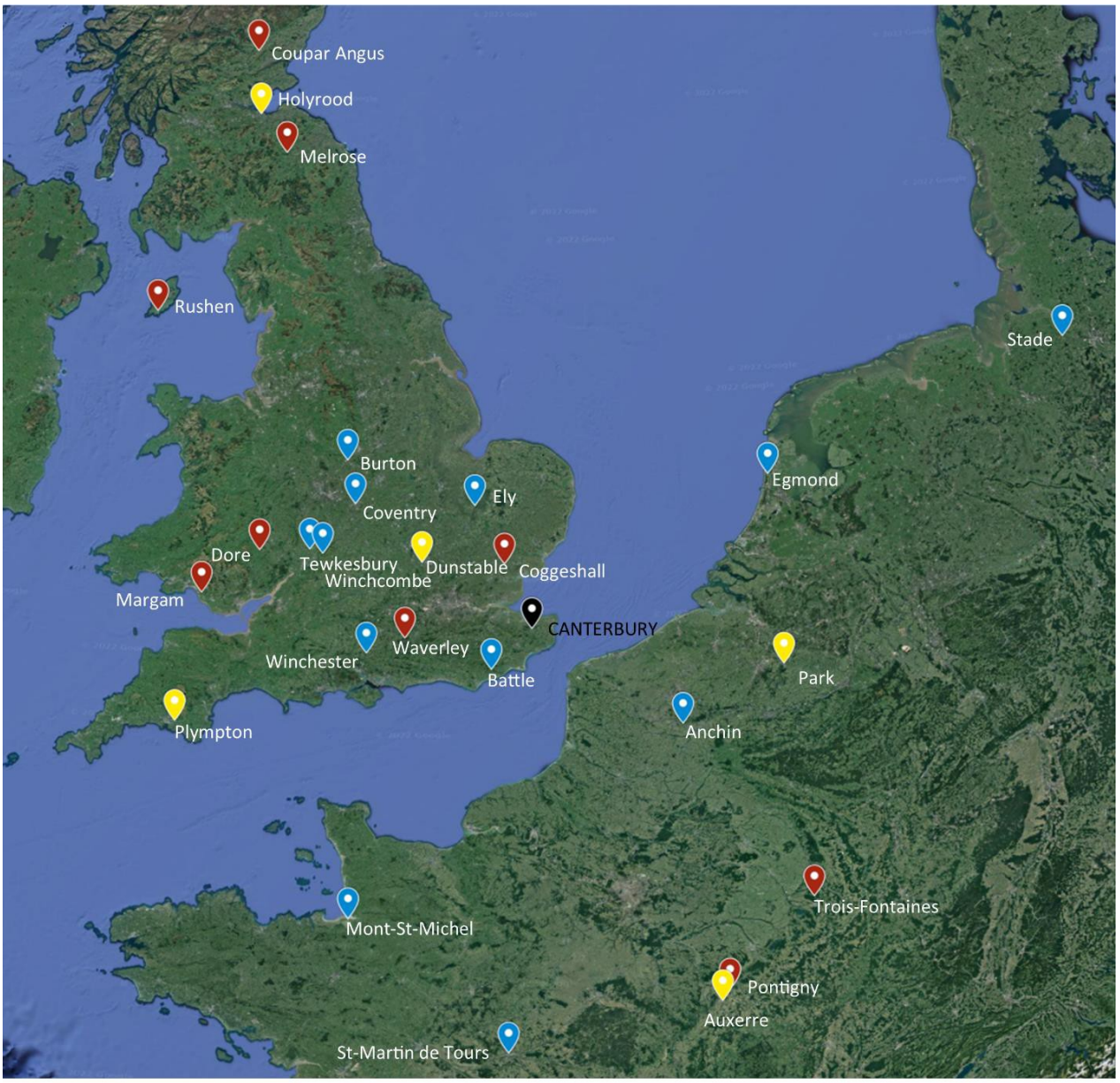

Fig. 1: A map showing the location and affiliation of the monastic foundations which produced the principal texts of this thesis. Google Maps, 2022, 'Chronicle Map', accessed 05/08/2022, labels created by Giles Connolly, https://earth.google.com/web/@51.96828462,2.41427409,48.77681008a,1748102.08952526d,30.0000162y,0h,0t,0r.

Key:

Benedictine Cistercian Augustinian/Premonstratensian

Introduction

The problem of annalistic history

Medieval historiography tends to be explored through the works of famous, individual historians such as Gerald of Wales or Orderic Vitalis.[4] These varied and compelling texts have not only facilitated positivist studies of the events of the Middle Ages, but also discussions of the lives, beliefs, and literary culture of their authors. Yet even as scholars move toward a more comprehensive understanding of medieval historiography, a rich seam of more humble works remains underutilised.[5] The frequently brief, anonymous, and unfinished nature of monastic annals has seen them dismissed as derivative and inconsequential.[6] They seem to lack the detail and insight of more expansive works and the absence of a clear author makes them difficult to contextualise. The uneven nature of their content, fluctuating between precision and vagueness, is made more frustrating by gaps in their record and abrupt endings. This has led to a tendency by scholars of medieval historiography to reduce annals to an

[4] Michael Staunton's recent *Historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) is explicitly focused on nine named historians. Chris Given-Wilson's *Chronicles* (London: Hambledon, 2004) also concentrates on famous, named, medieval historians. Elizabeth Freeman's discussion of Cistercian historical writing is largely concerned with Aelred of Rievaulx and Ralph of Coggeshall, although she does provide excellent analysis of the less well known *Fundacio abbathie de Kyrkestall* in *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150-1220* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002). For an earlier example, a casual glance at the titles of essays in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern,* ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) reveals a similar focus.

[5] Walter Pohl, 'Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 352.

[6] For the presentation of annals as a failed historiographical form, see Suzanne Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory* 22, no. 3 (October 1983), p. 284 and Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy F. Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 89.

inferior status. Reginald Poole considered annals valuable if they could provide "a new fact or correct a wrong date",[7] a limitingly positivist approach to the significance of a historical source. Michael Clanchy classified them as "unstylish" texts, which present no form of interpretation of the past they recorded, and Justin Lake and Matthew Kempshall have described annals as lists of events devoid of causal connections.[8] This attitude casts annals as an inchoate form of historiography, which prefigured the more detailed and sophisticated chronicle. Annals are valuable where they can provide original information, but otherwise offer little to a scholar. Even the radical work of Hayden White followed this tendency to devalue annals. White emphasised that annals should be seen not as "imperfect histories", but instead as the product of a historiographical tradition which was an alternative to, rather than prefiguring, the modern historical format.[9] Yet despite this caveat, White discussed annals only in terms of their failure to achieve the narrativity and cohesion which validates modern historical discourse. He argued that annalistic writing was incapable of conveying narrative, and relegated it to the bottom of a historiographical hierarchy, with the fully-fledged narrative and historical discourse of histories at the summit, and chronicles, which show some elements of narrativity, occupying the middle ground.[10] White's application of the linguistic turn to medieval historiography perceptively explored the

[7] Reginald Poole, *Chronicles and Annals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 60.

[8] M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), p. 100, Justin Lake, 'Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography', *History Compass* 12, no. 4 (2014), p. 346 and Matthew Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400 - 1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) p. 451.

[9] Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 5-6.

[10] Ibid., pp 5-6, 17-18 and 22-24.

mediation of reality within these texts, but his framework still designated annals as a less valuable historical source.

The brevity, lack of authorial voice and ambiguous inclusion criteria of annals make them difficult to read and interpret. However, while the narrative and deeper levels of meaning within an annal may not be immediately accessible to a modern reader, that does not mean it is absent. It is necessary to explore how annals did mediate the past, how they did communicate, or else risk leaving the most common medieval form of historiographical expression by the wayside. To engage with annalistic writing is to challenge the "persistent scholarly focus on named authors, identifiable movements, intellectual distinctiveness, and, to coin Allen Frantzen's phrase, 'a desire for origins'", which has seen annals dismissed for their perceived lack of originality.[11] On the contrary, there was creativity in compiling, curating, and communicating the past, and annals were the product of a discerning editorial process. It is the premise of this thesis that all editorial decisions within a set of annals were purposeful, and, if correctly explored, reveal far more than an "unstylish" list of events. This assertion raises two immediate questions: what purposes did annals fulfil, and how were these purposes achieved? This project aims to answer these questions and promote a more nuanced understanding of these texts.

Recent scholarship has paved the way for this study by demonstrating the fallacy of considering annals as a subordinate predecessor to other historiographical formats.[12] Key to this has been the dismantling of the assumption that annals lack narrative.

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[11] Elaine M. Treharne, *Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020-1220* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 4-5.

[12] Pauline Stafford, *After Alfred: Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and Chroniclers, 900-1150* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 12.

Sarah Foot has identified coherent narratives by viewing sets of annals as "unitary and coherent wholes".[13] She has argued that the *Annales regni Francorum* presented the Franks as the chosen people of God, their destiny tied with the Carolingian family; and that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles recounted the experience of the English people while locating them within a divine time-scale.[14] Matthew Innes and Rosamond McKitterick have also suggested that annals conveyed a narrative centred on the community that produced them (be that the community of their abbey, local cult, or *familia* of their bishop) by locating them within a wider historical context.[15] In addition, the narratives of these annals were also consolidated "in a Christian chronological framework".[16] This created a supplementary providential narrative by placing events within the continuing sequence of linear time; events happened because God allowed them to happen, and though that sequence may at times be unclear, this continuing rhythm provided coherence to annals.

Annals did then contain narrative and, far from being restricted by their form, it was "a central element in conferring meaning on their content".[17] If deeper analysis undermines White's categorisation of annals, then we should also question the similar assertions that they lacked interpretation or causality. This returns to White's own point, namely that annals should be understood as an alternative format, rather than

[13] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 92.

[14] Sarah Foot, 'Annals and Chronicles in Western Europe', in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, ed. Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 356-362.

[15] Matthew Innes and Rosamond McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 201.

[16] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 102 and Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', p. 201.

[17] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 102.

an inadequate or stunted one. Indeed, there is growing consensus that little is gained from attempting to partition medieval historiography by imposing rigid distinctions between annals, chronicles, and histories. Sarah Foot, Matthew Kempshall and Chris Given-Wilson have all argued that while some theoretical separation existed between the chronological formats of annals and chronicles on the one hand, and the more descriptive mode of histories on the other, in practice there was no consistent demarcation.[18] The medieval historiographical tradition was deeply idiosyncratic: texts did not follow a positivist agenda and could accommodate features of hagiography, romance and epic literature comfortably.[19] The distinction between chronicle and annal in modern usage has generally come down to volume – historiography structured by the sequential passing of years is named a set of annals if it is brief, or a chronicle if it is more expansive. In Foot's eyes, "the prolix annal is hardly to be distinguished from the laconic chronicle entry".[20] For this reason, the texts in this study will be referred to generally as chronicles, while annal will be retained to refer to a specific entry in these texts which recorded the events of a single year, and annals referring to several such entries. It is "annalistic" writing, however, that forms the focus of this thesis – the style of writing centred on sequential records of the passing years and the events which occurred within them. This involves considering both the stereotypical "annalistic" brief and declamatory entries and the more expansive and discursive entries which typify a more "chronicle-like" style of writing. Both types of annal appear within these texts, and a fuller understanding of the text is only possible

[18] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 90, Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles* p. 1 and Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History,* pp. 450-2.

[19] Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy F. Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), p. 111 and Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), p. 98.

[20] Foot, 'Finding the meaning of Form', p. 90.

with consideration of both elements. It is, in Pauline Stafford's words, "the choice" of writing annals,[21] and the decision to employ a "thicker" or "thinner" style, that needs to be explored. Annals should not be seen as a supplementary resource, only employed from necessity when they provide an original fact otherwise absent in more expansive works. They require in-depth analysis as part of the intermeshed web of genres that formed medieval historiography.[22] Though their truncated form challenges easy interpretation, annalistic chronicles represent a valuable resource and the creation of these texts can be historicised productively.

This project builds on the pioneering research of Foot, Innes and McKitterick by not only viewing these texts for their overarching themes and structures, but by also exploring the mediation of the past which took place within an individual annal. This does not dispute the conclusions of these scholars, but the narratives they have identified are epic in scope, tales of peoples and dynasties which span the entire text.[23] Their approach overemphasises the degree of coherence which existed in texts that were fundamentally composite in nature, the product of a changing team of compilers, scribes, copyists and editors, which were "not necessarily, perhaps even are rarely, the product of a single authorial voice".[24] Foot has described annalistic chronicles as "multi-textured stories" which can operate in several temporal frameworks simultaneously, yet we should not look only for textures that span the text as a whole. To do so misses out on additional levels of meaning, the sub-narratives and the editorial concerns hidden within individual annals. These elements demonstrate the influence that the changing context of production had on annals, rather than to suggest

[21] Stafford, *After Alfred*, p. 12.

[22] Stafford, *After Alfred*, p. 2.

[23] Foot, 'Finding the meaning of form', p. 102 and 'Annals and Chronicles in Western Europe', p. 362.

[24] Stafford, *After Alfred*, p. 11.

that they were shaped primarily by an overarching authorial vision. Although important progress has been made in the rehabilitation of annals, there remains an opportunity to develop a more nuanced understanding of these texts.

Methodology

The hidden details of annals can be better appreciated when multiple texts are compared. While it is necessary to appreciate the specific context of each chronicle, the corporate nature of their production – and the interconnection between texts through shared sources and mutual borrowings – makes analysing individual editorial decisions difficult. A comparative approach alleviates this by presenting the spectrum of responses, the broader trends contextualise the ambiguities of an individual text. The life (and death) of Thomas Becket has been selected as the control to facilitate this comparison, a historical incident explosive enough to have left traces across a multitude of texts. Becket provides an opportunity to assess the response of these chronicles to a specific historical crisis, rather than extracting only the parochial foundation myths or original anecdotes from them. A more insightful understanding of even the briefest of annals can be achieved by considering the alternatives, what was gained or avoided by taking the chosen approach. For example, the decision of the Winchcombe annalists to record that, in 1163, a conflict arose between Henry II and his bishops over taxes can be more meaningfully analysed if compared to annals in other texts. Some annalists instead recorded the dispute between Henry and Becket at this point, while others chose not to refer to such events entirely; behind each of these editorial decisions lies an idiosyncratic agenda. Alternatively, a comparison of different versions of the civil war of 1173-4 reveals how minor alterations in emphasis,

chronology or juxtaposition of events created significantly different meaning. A comparative approach provides an array of accounts of Becket, demonstrating how far consensus was established, or whether a continual process of reinvention, prompted by contemporary context, thrived.

Two frameworks have proven vital to achieving a more productive assessment of these annals: narrative and memory. The contentious relationship between narrative and annals has already been referenced. The aim is not to comment on narratology itself, but rather to borrow concepts which will benefit an assessment of how annals communicate and avoid a positivist reading of these texts.[25] Narrative will be employed in a broad sense, following H. Porter Abbott's usage to include any representation of an action or incident.[26] This approach accommodates less explicit forms of narrative such as the paratactic narrative created by annals' juxtaposition of a series of events or by marginal notes next to an annal.[27] A broad definition of narrative facilitates the comparison of the narrative both within an individual annal and as it exists within the chronicle's account of Becket as a whole. The goal is not to measure the divergence of these annals from some ur-narrative of Becket, but to use narrative as a measure of how these texts achieved their purposes.

It is valuable to distinguish between the events themselves and their presentation within an account. The former is generally referred to as "story", but the classification of the latter is more contentious. White uses "plot" to refer to the presentation and framing of events, though Abbott suggests that plot's conflicting meanings make it an

[25] For an extended discussion of the use of narrative as an alternative to positivism see Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre'.

[26] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 13.

[27] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 54-55.

unwieldy term, and instead employs “narrative discourse” to mean how a story is conveyed.[28] Marcus Bull simply uses “narrative” to describe the “discursive packaging of events”; the term which for Abbott encompasses both “story” and “narrative discourse.”[29] A distinction between the two concepts is valuable, as it allows us to compare which events are employed in the “story” of Becket and the differing presentation of each event. This thesis will follow Marcus Bull’s lead in using “story” and “narrative”, with the addition of “account” to refer to the combination of these elements. We may then speak of the Winchcombe chronicle’s *account* of Thomas Becket, in which is contained both a series of events forming the *story* and the *narrative*, which frames the individual events and the story as a whole.

A final narratological concept to consider is that of “storyworld”. This term refers to the mental world in which the account takes place, constructed by an audience’s inferences and presuppositions, contextualising the narrative in a “projected environment”.[30] Again, the example of Marcus Bull will be followed and this term will be adapted to suit the needs of the project.[31] While considering the culturally-specific storyworld of a medieval audience can help contextualise a set of annals, I do not wish to be entangled in a discussion of how an imagined medieval audience internally conceptualised a storyworld, something better suited to an anthropological (or perhaps even neurological) study. Rather, this idea will be adapted to consider the position of

[28] White, *The Content of the Form,* p. 20 and Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative,* pp. 15-18.

[29] Marcus Bull, *Eyewitness and Crusade Narrative: Perception and Narration in Accounts of the Second, Third and Fourth Crusades* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), p. 52.

[30] David Herman, ‘Storyworld’, in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2010), accessed 14/01/2021, https://search.proquest.com/docview/2137942698/fulltext/D32D3A733B947F1PQ/1?accountid=8630.

[31] Bull, *Eyewitness and Crusade Narrative*, pp. 65-66.

a specific account within the world constructed by cues in the rest of the text. This "textworld" considers the version of reality suggested by an annalistic chronicle and juxtaposes the account of Becket's life with other events within the text, comparing Becket's miracles with other miracles or considering Henry II's presence outside of the specific account of Becket. This broad consideration of narrative, guided by precise terminology, allows for a more exact assessment of each editorial choice within an annal.

The term "memory" requires similar care in its employment. This thesis will not discuss memory in terms of cognitive recollection, or the intellectual tradition which trained and cultivated such memory – a topic that has been extensively explored by Mary Carruthers.[32] Instead, memory here refers to the conscious and subconscious relationship of an individual or community with the past. This ephemeral relationship is manifested in "relics" (to borrow Patrick Geary's term), objects which articulate memory into a communicable form and thus created a bridge between past and present.[33] Annals act as a relic: recalling, communicating and promoting a version of the past. As Geary notes, this version of memory runs close to historiography.[34] However, using the term memory distances annals from the anachronistic empiricism traditionally associated with historiography, and avoids the pitfall of classifying annals as the deficient form of historiography mentioned above**.** Moreover, considering annals through the deeply social framework of memory appreciates their social nature, as texts produced by and for collectives. The articulation of memory is "both a social

[32] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[33] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 7.

[34] Ibid., p. 9.

process and tool of socialization";[35] that is, the shared attitudes and values of communities influence how memory is articulated, and that articulation itself creates and reinforces such group identities.

This aspect of memory has been gainfully employed by scholars of the medieval period, although the exact terminology varies. The term "collective memory", coined by Maurice Halbwachs,[36] is still occasionally employed in medieval studies to refer to the ideas shared and created by a community about the past,[37] but is increasingly avoided. Slavica Ranković suggests that the term inaccurately implies an absence of any social element in personal memory,[38] while Geary argues that the framing of collective memory as a neutral and non-purposeful exercise is misleading, and creates a false dichotomy between collective memory and history.[39] For James Fentress and Chris Wickham, collective memory reduced the individual within the collective to "a sort of automaton", and preferred instead to speak of "social memory", which encompasses the conscious and individual elements of memory.[40] Jan and Aleida Assmann's term "communicative memory", which, alongside "cultural memory", formed their reinterpretation of collective memory, has also been employed as an

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[35] Megan Cassidy-Welch, *War and Memory at the Time of the Fifth Crusade* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019), p. 20 and Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 31.

[36] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[37] Pit Péporté, *Constructing the Middle Ages: Historiography, Collective Memory and Nation-Building in Luxembourg* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 12.

[38] Slavica Ranković, 'Communal Memory of the Distributed Author: Applicability of the Connectionist Model of Memory to the Study of Traditional Narratives', in *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lucie Doležalová (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 11-12.

[39] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 10-11.

[40] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. ix.

alternative.[41] Communicative memory refers to the articulation of the recent past between individuals, and for Megan Cassidy-Welch the term anchors memory within the specific historical moment at which remembering took place.[42]

Memory provides a framework that appreciates the significance and meaning of any annal, no matter how brief. In Geary's words, 'all memory, whether 'individual', 'collective' or 'historical', is memory *for* something, and this political (in a broad sense) purpose cannot be ignored", while Fentress and Wickham stress the "functionalist" purpose of memory.[43] It is this aspect of memory that can facilitate a better understanding of annals. An account of Becket in these texts could serve multiple purposes for the community remembering him. It could provide historical identity or anchorage to a community,[44] record for posterity the heroes and villains of a community's past,[45] or assert values and establish correct behaviour,[46] all elements which allowed a group to define itself and reinforce the terms of its membership. Annals do not provide a clear image of the general categorisations of memory mentioned above, but by considering annals as a commemorative act a more nuanced understanding of the purpose of these records can be achieved.

The connection between memory and identity facilitates a more considered assessment of the authors of these texts. For example, Matthew Innes has stressed that individuals do not belong to a single identity or community, but rather are part of

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[41] Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 35-36.

[42] Cassidy- Welch, *War and Memory*, p. 16.

[43] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 12 and Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p.88.

[44] Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', pp. 200-201.

[45] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, p. 118.

[46] Cassidy-Welch, *War and Memory*, pp. 65-70.

a set of overlapping identities.[47] This raises intriguing questions about how annals navigated the intermeshed identities of their creators, who belonged to a community influenced by region, realm, monastic order, and membership of a greater Christian nation. Identity is "neither a given nor a stable entity … it needs constant maintenance",[48] and these annalistic chronicles provided a way of establishing and preserving the multifaceted identity of a monastic community.

Finally, employing the framework of memory to these texts introduces the corollary process of forgetting, which could be just as active a process as remembering.[49] Annalistic writing was an effective means to facilitate this conscious forgetting. Controversial or uncomfortable moments could easily be omitted or reinterpreted, simplifying the past to make it conform to the beliefs of the authors and disarming events or ideas which undermined the monastic identity produced in these texts.

The two concepts described above, narrative and memory, are deeply interwoven. Narrative was key to the communication of memory and in turn was deeply influenced by the commemorative needs of a community. This methodology assesses annals on their own terms, showing not only how annals communicated and gave meaning to the past, but also what this achieved, rather than viewing them in terms of anachronistic standards of historiography.

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[47] Matthew Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past & Present*, no. 158 (1998), pp. 6 and 10-12.

[48] Mayke de Jong and Rosamond McKitterick, 'Conclusion', in *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, eds. Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 287.

[49] Peporté, *Constructing the Middle Ages*, p.14.

Thomas Becket as a case study

There are several reasons which make Thomas Becket a particularly appropriate case study. Though his life demanded recording, there was no single approach as to how this should be done and Becket's controversial early career, contentious term as archbishop and dramatic murder made this a complicated matter. His story was entwined with crucial and ongoing questions concerning the nature of royal authority and ecclesiastic freedom, questions which found various answers within the differing contexts of each monastery. Thanks to such variance in response, it is possible to contextualise individual editorial choices with the approaches of other authors. The myriad versions of Becket's life in hagiography, liturgy and wider historiography provide valuable further comparisons, demonstrating what could and should be said about Becket. Simply put, Becket was popular enough and complex enough to create a case study which encompasses the intricacies of a medieval annal. Yet Becket also acts as a stress-test for the annalistic form – could brief and rigidly chronological annals convey the complexities of one of the medieval period's most notorious figures?

The goal is to explore a new perspective on Becket by considering his legacy as it was interpreted by monastic annalists, rather than to uncover any new details about Becket's life. In the decades following his death, hagiographers and historians created an array of biographies of Becket that have been continuously scrutinised throughout the subsequent centuries.[50] The dispute between Becket and Henry II which

[50] See Kay Brainerd Slocum, *The Cult of Thomas Becket: History and Historiography through Eight Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2019). For a more specific discussion of Becket's hagiography see Jennifer O'Reilly, '«*Candidus et Rubicundus*» an Image of Martyrdom in the «Lives» of Thomas Becket', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 99.3–4 (1981), pp. 303–14 and 'The Double martyrdom of Thomas Becket: Hagiography or History?', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 7 (1985) pp. 185-247. A more recent analysis of the hagiography can be found in Staunton, *Biographers*.

characterised his term as archbishop has received the most attention in recent scholarship, a topic that will be covered in more detail in the second chapter of the thesis. The definitive modern biographies of Becket remain those written by Frank Barlow and Anne Duggan.[51] Alongside these biographies, both historians have written on Becket's household,[52] and Duggan has produced a huge variety of material on various topics pertaining to Becket's life.[53] Their biographies offer insightful and detailed assessment of Becket's life, but are best considered in tandem to balance the more critical reception of the archbishop in Barlow and the more sympathetic view of Becket found in Duggan. In general, Barlow tends to be sceptical of Becket and offers pragmatic explanations for his actions, while Duggan has suggested he was often moved by genuine religious sentiment. At times, Duggan's generosity borders on the defensive, and Barlow, despite his suspicions, stops short of drawing categorical conclusions from his work.[54] This thesis will offer no new insight into the course of events during Becket's life that cannot be found in these biographies. The focus is on the memory of Becket, and how this was utilised, rather than the man himself. The work of Michael Staunton also merits specific reference, as his recent book *The Historians of Angevin England* and his article 'Thomas Becket in the Chronicles' have

[51] Duggan, *Becket* and Barlow, *Becket*.

[52] Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket and His Clerks* (Canterbury: The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral, 1987) and Anne Duggan 'The Price of Loyalty: the fate of Thomas Becket's learned household', in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts, and Cult*, ed. Anne Duggan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) pp. 1-18.

[53] For an example of Duggan's output see the collection of essays in Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts, and Cult*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[54] Richard Fraher, 'Thomas Becket by Frank Barlow', *Speculum*, 63.3 (1988), pp. 618–20 and Ilicia J. Sprey, 'Review of Thomas Becket, by Anne Duggan', *Speculum*, 81.1 (2006), p. 180.

both discussed Becket's position in medieval historiography.[55] These works are centred on the more famous historians of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, such as William of Newburgh, Ralph of Diceto and Gerald of Wales. This focus on more established authors provides a valuable point of reference when considering the annals written by their contemporaries.

Chronicles have been selected from the British Isles and mainland Europe, providing perspectives from within and beyond the Angevin domains. Texts in this set have not been classified as "annalistic" by any rigid criteria. Rather, if the memory of Becket was expressed in chronologically ordered entries organised by each year (i.e. annals), the account is considered a viable contribution. This approach includes both brief annals, in some cases dedicating only a few words to Becket's memory, and more expansive accounts, where a single year may have several sentences relating to Becket. There will be occasional reference to texts not usually considered as annalistic, including universal chronicles such as Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, or histories produced by authors like William of Tyre. The more discursive style of these texts and their less rigid chronological structure separates them from the stereotypically annalistic works which are the main focus of the thesis. However, including such texts reveals the common processes at work across all levels of medieval historiography, and offers a more encompassing view of the literary context of the briefer and simpler annals proper.

[55] Staunton, *Historians*, pp. 165-184 and Michael Staunton, 'Thomas Becket in the Chronicles', in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, eds. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 95-112.

The selected chronicles were written approximately between Becket's death and the mid-thirteenth century. The flourishing of local history and ecclesiastical biography from 1150-1220 identified by Antonia Gransden provides a varied set of works to reference, encompassing both the testimony of those who lived through events and the accounts compiled by monks who were born afterwards.[56] There was a great interest in recent and national events during this period of English historiography and an increasingly active political writing culture developed.[57] This vibrant and shifting historiographical climate provides a variety of factors whose influence on annalistic writing can be assessed. Much of the preceding scholarship discussing annals has focused on texts produced in the early Middle Ages.[58] By focusing on later texts, a different perspective on annals will be revealed. In addition, this focus will draw several under-utilised texts from the shadows. Early medieval annals (especially texts such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles) have already enjoyed a degree of scholarly attention, in part from necessity, as there is a lack of alternative records of the periods they discuss. In contrast, several of the briefer chronicles of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have

[56] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 269 See also Michael Clanchy's discussion of the "masses of writings" being produced and preserved in this period, Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 21.

[57] Staunton argued that Henry II's reign saw a concentration on recent events with a greater focus on narration and explanation rather than didactic or political objectives, while Ashe has suggested that in thirteenth century political ideology became more explicit. Michael Staunton, 'Did the Purpose of History Change in England in the Twelfth Century?', in *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), pp. 9 and 26 and Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 199-205 and 370-378.

[58] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', Stafford, *After Alfred* and Erik Goosmann, 'Politics and Penance: Transformations in the Carolingian Perception of the Conversion of Carloman (747)', in *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

been overlooked in favour of the wealth of more expansive histories produced in this period. A discussion of later annalistic texts also serves to demonstrate the fallacy of considering annals simply as a precursor to a more expansive style of chronicle.[59] Annalistic writing still served a valuable purpose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was intentionally employed because of the advantages it could provide.

The thesis will follow the annalistic format of its sources, progressing sequentially through Becket's life while discussing the varying presentation of the archbishop and the different thematic elements crucial to understanding these texts and the communities that produced them. The thesis begins with a brief exposition of annalistic writing. This preliminary chapter establishes the fundamental features of the genre through a discussion of Becket's election as archbishop. The second chapter will consider the annals which recorded Becket's conflict with Henry and his exile in the 1160s. This complex and controversial part of Becket's life will be used to explore the relationship between these texts and their sources, and demonstrate the discerning nature of copying and editing annals. Chapter three will concentrate on Becket's martyrdom, recorded in 1171 in most texts. This was the centrepiece of annalistic accounts of Becket's life and provides an opportunity to consider the role of narrative. Chapter four discusses miracles, those found generally in annalistic chronicles and, more specifically, Becket's; a topic which introduces the broader commemorative functions of these texts. The final chapter revolves around Becket's legacy, and references to him in annals outside of his lifespan. Here, the focus is on the political context of annalistic writing, both the capacity of these texts to provide political

[59] For this teleological view of the development of medieval historiography see Walter Pohl, 'History in Fragments: Montecassino's Politics of Memory', *Early Medieval Europe* 10, no. 3 (November 2001), p. 17 and Foot 'Annals and Chronicles', p.354 and Kempshall *Rhetoric and the Writing of History*, p. 84.

commentary and the influence of contemporary politics on their production. Rather than discussing each text in turn, this structure aims to facilitate comparison between texts, an approach which contextualises individual editorial decisions, and demonstrates the trends and themes apparent in annalistic writing. This structure will demonstrate both the permanent and mutable elements of Becket's memory, while allowing a close comparison of the differing editorial approaches. Across these texts an image emerges of the myriad concerns that were embodied by Thomas Becket and something of the common perspective of these annalists. Their conservatism and aversion to disorder and change, their fear of secular violence, their spirituality and intermeshed sense of identity are all writ large in their accounts of Becket. Yet at the same time, each account reflected the specific needs of the institution which produced the text. The idiosyncratic position of each monastery produced a different version of Becket, each annal was shaped by the institutional context of its production and its proximity to events.

The thesis is focused on the moment of remembering crystalised as a scribe put ink to page: the influences at work as Becket's memory was articulated**,** the form and meaning this articulation was given and what this aimed to achieve. The objective is to show that, far from being a vestigial limb of medieval historiography, annals are just as immersed in the concerns and attitudes of their creators as more expansive historical works, and that even within a single annal there is a valuable opportunity to explore how medieval communities navigated the past. The use of Thomas Becket as a case study not only facilitates these goals, but also provides a new perspective on a figure whose legacy is still disputed to this day. This thesis will employ under-utilised texts, alongside the frameworks of narrative and memory, to continue the rehabilitation of annals started by previous scholarship. Annalistic writing was not a limited precursor

to more sophisticated forms of historiography, but a valuable tool that continued to be employed because of the specific advantages that such a style brought. The interrelated processes of remembering and forgetting created annals that could achieve a variety of commemorative goals, whether individually, in tandem with other annals, or by contributing to themes that structured the entire text. These chronicles were the product of a creative and discerning editorial process which simultaneously exploited the past to suit contemporary needs and defused its more problematic aspects. Each individual annal offers an opportunity to learn more about its authors and the world in which they existed.

Chapter One

The Foundations of Annalistic Writing

Introduction

"To some extent the historian and the chronicler have the same goals and use the same material, but their method of handling it is different, as is their form. They share a common purpose, because both strive for truth. The form of their work is different because the historian proceeds in a roundabout and elegant manner, while the chronicler adopts a direct and straightforward course … It is the duty of the historian to strive for the truth, to delight his hearers and readers with sweet and eloquent words, to relate the deeds, manner of living and lives of those whom he portrays truthfully, and to include nothing apart from what reason declares to be the province of history. The chronicler, on the other hand, calculates the years, and months and days of the years, of the Lord's Incarnation, briefly relates the deeds of kings and princes that took place at these times, and records events, portents and miracles. There are many authors of chronicles and annals, however, who go beyond these limits…"[60]

- Gervase of Canterbury in the introduction to his chronicle, written in the late twelfth century.

Gervase of Canterbury identified the chronological structure of annalistic writing as its essential feature. The passage of years, calculated from the Incarnation, governed

[60] Gervase of Canterbury, '*Chronica'*, in *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury,* ed. William Stubbs, (London: Longman, 1879-80), vol. 1, Rolls Series 73, pp. 87-89, quoted and translated in *Prologues to Ancient and Medieval History: A Reader*, ed. and trans. Justin Lake (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p. 266.

both the content and form of annals. This chronological focus has led some historians, such as Reginald Poole, to suggest that annalistic writing evolved from marginal records added to the annual entries of Easter-tables.[61] Modern scholarship has increasingly scrutinised this hypothesis; David Dumville has questioned the Anglo-centrism and anachronism of the traditional version of the theory,[62] and Rosamond McKitterick and Sarah Foot have suggested that annals did not directly evolve from Easter-tables, but were a concurrent development.[63] Yet even without a direct connection to the liturgical calculations of Easter-tables, there remained a strong theological element to the chronological focus of annals.[64] When writing annals, monks sought out the moments of a given year which revealed something of God's plan, and the divine machinery which operated on earth. This could be incredible moments where God intervened directly, or the more mundane deeds of the kings who ruled only with God's consent. Annals explored and catalogued God's presence in the temporal realm. Beyond their content, the form of annals also conveyed a Christian message. The disposition of regular annals across the pages of a text reflected the underlying divine order which governed the world. By setting out a record of events year by year, the lives of men and the plans of God were united into a single system. Annals curated the chaos of reality into a grand providential structure. There was also a distinctly eschatological flavour to annals. The annalists not only provided a record of their own times, but extended their work back into the past, and left it open to be

[61] Poole, *Chronicles and Annals,* p. 26

[62] David Dumville, 'What Is a Chronicle?', in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle, Driebergen/Utrecht, 16 - 21 July 1999*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 5-9.

[63] Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 68 and Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', pp. 92-94.

[64] Foot, 'Annals and Chronicles in Western Europe', p. 356.

continued into the future.[65] By structuring a text around the sequential passage of years, it was possible to connect the Biblical past, the present and the eventual end of the world into a continuous temporality. Each year was an ordained moment in the journey from the world's creation to its end. Form and function mirror each other in annalistic writing. The order and coherence suggested by the regimented layout of annals on the page is also communicated in the content of the annals themselves. It was an act of devotion to write annals, to find and demonstrate God's truth and presence in the temporal world. Rather than being a defective or precursory form, the chronological focus of annals created texts with a distinct theological aesthetic, part of a varied series of medieval literary efforts to record the past.[66] Yet the position of annals within the broad movements of monastic literary endeavour is complicated by the blurred genre-boundaries within medieval historiography.

While some theoretical separation existed between the chronological formats of chronicles and the more descriptive mode of histories, in practice there was no consistent demarcation.[67] Gervase's introduction to his chronicle is a contemporary acknowledgement of these blurred boundaries.[68] His division between the recording of years and events in a chronicle, and the informing and guiding of a reader that took place in a history was idealised, and he complained that this theoretical distinction

[65] McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past,* p. 91 and Foot, 'Annals and Chronicles in Western Europe', pp. 347, 354-5 and 365.

[66] Foot, 'Annals and Chronicles in Western Europe', pp. 363-365.

[67] Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 90, Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 1 and Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History,* pp. 450-2.

[68] Gervase of Canterbury, '*Chronica Gervasii*', in *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury,* ed. William Stubbs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 1, p. 88, Michael Staunton, *Historians,* p. 114, Poole, *Chronicles and Annals*, pp. 7-8, Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p.xix Foot 'Annals and Chronicles' p. 356 and Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History,* p. 89.

between the two was not being followed closely enough in practice by his contemporaries.[69] Furthermore, Gervase suggested that his own work should not be considered a chronicle because he intended it for the private use of his brother monks, and so had focused primarily on Canterbury affairs.[70] Despite his suggestion that form was the key point of distinction between genres, Gervase categorised his own work in terms of its content. Indeed, the discursive style and level of detail in Gervase's chronicle is a far cry from the brief records typically associated with annalistic writing, even though it too was organised around sequential annals, discussing the events of a given year. There is no simple measure with which a text can be definitively categorised as annalistic. Most texts referenced in this thesis fluctuated between briefer and more expansive entries, or employed a more annalistic style for the pre-contemporaneous records, before switching to a more discursive style when recording events as they happened. Yet despite this ambiguity, it is necessary to acknowledge the difference between a chronicle such as Gervase's and the texts which form the basis of this thesis. Gervase's record for 1162 is three pages long in the printed edition, one page of which contains an extended discussion of Becket's consecration as archbishop, filled with information gleaned from several of the *vitae*.[71] For many annalistic chronicles a single sentence was sufficient to record consecration. Despite the permeability of genre in medieval historiography, a clear distinction can be drawn between Gervase's expansive account and the brief record found in an annalistic chronicle. The concision of this later approach should not be dismissed but

[69] Roger Ray, 'Rhetorical Scepticism and Verisimilar Narrative in John of Salisbury's *Historia Pontificalis*', in *Classical Rhetoric & Medieval Historiography*, ed. Ernst Breisach (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), p. 61.

[70] Staunton, *Historians of Angevin England*, pp. 114-117.

[71] Gervase of Canterbury, '*Chronica Gervasii*', vol 1, pp. 169-172 and p. 169 fn. 2.

appreciated on its own terms as an idiosyncratic form of historiographical expression. Becket's consecration provides a range of quintessentially annalistic records which fully encompass Gervase's criteria of brevity and directness. The following discussion demonstrates the significance and implication of these seemingly mundane records and the multiple purposes that they could fulfil. This establishes a broad overview of what annalistic writing entailed and conveys both the advantages and limitations of this style of historiography. For some authors, though the structure and order conveyed by a brief annalistic approach was attractive, the intricate reality of the past demanded a more expansive response.

Succession, order and continuity

Records of institutional succession, such as Becket's consecration, were commonplace in annalistic texts and in many there was a consistent pattern of noting the consecrations of archbishops of Canterbury. This included not only English texts such as the Winchester, Winchcombe, Waverley and Dunstable chronicles, but also the Scottish chronicle of Melrose and that of Dore abbey, an Anglo-Welsh abbey caught between the dioceses of Hereford and St Davids.[72] In these chronicles, Becket's consecration was part of a chain of moments stretching through the text. Royal coronations and papal elections were also repeatedly recorded, as was the succession of local abbots, providing other contiguous strands. Such strands partitioned time into more accessible units, ordering the past not only through the numerical passage of years, but also through the reigns of kings, popes and

[72] David H. Williams, 'The Abbey of Dore', in *A Definitive History of Dore Abbey,* ed. Ron Shoesmith (Woonton Almeley: Logaston Press, 2000), p. 17.

archbishops. These terms of office guided a reader, just as today we can orient ourselves in the past by considering the government in power at the time. For example, “New Labour” or “the Thatcher years” function as chronological units for most British people. It was a convenient form of periodisation that contextualised the past. An event had a different meaning if it happened during the reign of “bad” King John, for example, or during the saintly archiepiscopacy of Anselm. Annalistic texts did not function in a single temporality. On the one hand, there was the numerical sequence of years, but interspersed within this was a timescale organised by the succession of institutional offices, which gave an additional point of orientation. The Winchcombe chronicle recorded the regnal years of English kings alongside the date from the Incarnation to juxtapose these two temporalities. The Rushen Chronicle marked the deaths of the kings of Man with a marginal cross, providing visual cues to help a reader to navigate the text and the past (Fig. 2). However, the use of this symbol was highly selective and only certain royal deaths were marked. The first cross was next to Godred Crovan (d. 1094, although recorded here in 1072), the first king to claim ownership of the entire island.[73] Magnus Olafsson’s death (1102) was not marked, suggesting that the chronicler rejected this Norwegian conqueror, despite his six year reign over the island.[74] The crown then returned to Olaf, son of Godred Crovan, whose murder by his brothers was marked.[75] The death of Olaf’s son, Godred Olafsson (d. 1187), who reclaimed the throne from his murderous uncles, was also marked, but the death of the Norse-Gaelic warlord Somerled, who briefly usurped him was not. [76] Both Godred’s sons, Reginald (d. 1229) and Olaf (d. 1237), who ruled consecutively after him, had

[73] London, British Library, Cotton MS Julius A VII, f. 33v.

[74] Rushen, pp. 10-12.

[75] Cotton MS Julius A VII, f. 36v.

[76] Ibid., f.40r.

crosses placed next to their deaths.[77] Olaf Godredson's is the final cross in the manuscript, Olaf's son's death in 1249 was unmarked, despite his legitimacy and seeming popularity.[78] Although this trend was not continued into the contemporary annals (the chronicle was produced in the mid-thirteenth century), the chronicler was otherwise consistent, legitimate kings of Mann, descended from Godred Crovan, had their deaths marked with a cross, petty kings and usurpers did not merit this treatment.

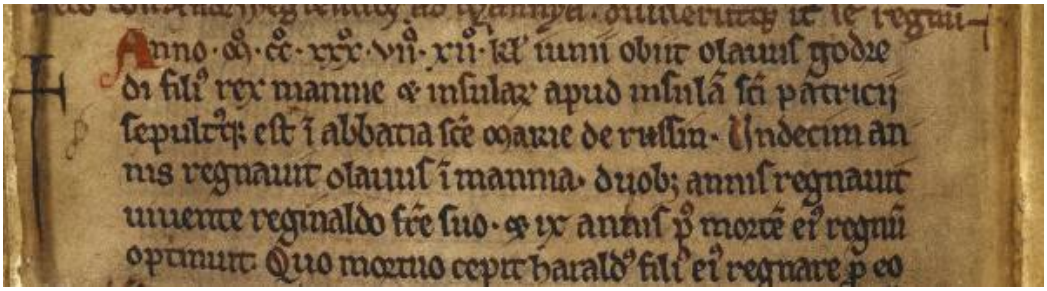

Fig. 2: In the left-hand margin is a cross marking the death of Olaf Godredson in 1237. London, British Library, Cotton MS Julius A VII, f. 44v.

This emphasis on succession also located events within an overarching, spiritual framework. The repeated succession of notable figures was like a metronome, a regular beat that imposed a larger pattern on the past. This was "the universal, the unchanging, the perennial Christian time",[79] a cyclical rhythm occurring within the "Christian chronological framework" of events ordained by the Lord.[80] Seasons passed, kings rose and fell, all within the functioning of the divinely ordered machinery of reality, the persistent progression of offices emphasising order and stability. Elizabeth Freeman has noted the importance to medieval historians of creating a

[77] Cotton MS Julius A VII, f.44r-v.

[78] Rushen, p. 40.

[79] Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', p. 201.

[80] Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 102 and Innes and McKitterick, 'The Writing of History', p. 201.

sense of continuity with the past, and that change and rupture could be "subsumed to a story of greater continuity".[81] A continuous record of episcopal succession, stretching back through the centuries and being actively extended into the future, conveyed a powerful message of this continuity. This emphasis can particularly be seen in the Melrose or Coggeshall chronicles, where Becket's consecration, and the death of his predecessor, Theobald of Bec, were combined into a single annal, despite the events occurring in different years.[82] By recording both these events in the annal for 1161 the continuity of England's principal metropolitan see was emphasised, even at the cost of subverting the fundamental chronology of the events. These chains of succession framed time as a divinely ordained progression; a third temporality that existed in annalistic texts, which imbued the office and its holder with a divine legitimacy.

There was an emphasis on the performative ritual that enacted these successions. Most texts used the verb *consecrare* in their annal for 1162,[83] focusing on the act which made Becket archbishop, rather than his election, and only two stated that he was "made" (*fieri*) archbishop.[84] Several texts noted that it was Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, who consecrated Becket. For the Winchester and Waverley chronicles this may indicate an interest in a local bishop, as both were produced in the diocese of Winchester.[85] These texts provided enthusiastically positive obituaries for Bishop Henry in their annals for 1171,[86] and the Winchester chronicle also recorded the consecration of archbishop William of Corbeil in 1123 by William Giffard, another

[81] Freeman, *Narratives of a New Order*, p. 168.

[82] Melrose, p. 77 and Coggeshall, p. 15.

[83] Lowlands 139, Winchcombe p. 530, Winchester, p. 56, Dore, p. 525, Waverley, p. 238 Burton, p. 187 and Ps-William Godel, p. 676

[84] Tewkesbury p. 49 and Dunstable p. 18.

[85] Winchester, p. 56 and Waverley, p. 238.

[86] Winchester, p. 60 and Waverley, p. 239.

bishop of Winchester.[87] Yet the chronicles of Dore abbey and Winchcombe, which were produced outside of the diocese of Winchester, also recorded the role of Henry of Blois in 1162.[88] These two texts are phrased almost identically and were presumably derived from the same source. They recorded the absence of the bishops of London, Worcester and Bangor at the consecration, although in the Dore text Bangor has been inaccurately copied as *bathoniensem*.[89] These chronicles showed little interest in Henry of Blois otherwise and offered no endorsement of his qualities, commenting only at his consecration that he was the nephew of Henry I.[90] The incidental details concerning Becket's consecration that they included did not reflect any local interest, but rather corresponded to an inconsistent pattern across these chronicles of recording who had performed the consecration. In many cases this reflected some unusual element of the consecration, such as the involvement of the pope.[91] It was normally the role of the archbishop of Canterbury to consecrate his diocesan bishops, and these texts often noted when consecrations deviated from the norm. Waverley recorded the consecration of William of Lincoln by William, bishop of London, specifically because this contravened the responsibility of the archbishop of Canterbury to fulfil this duty.[92] However, as Hubert Walter was ill, the duty had fallen to William of London. Gilbert Foliot's consecration as bishop of Hereford by Archbishop Theobald in 1148 was noted in the Winchcombe chronicle, as it took place at St Omer

[87] Winchester, p. 47.

[88] Dore p. 525 and Winchcombe p. 530.

[89] Dore, p. 525.

[90] Winchcombe, p. 520 and Dore, pp. 523

[91] Winchester and Winchcombe noted Thurstan of York's consecration by Pope Calixtus II in 1119. Winchester, pp. 45 and 80, Winchcombe, p. 518. Dore, Winchester and Waverley recorded that Stephen Langton was consecrated by Pope Innocent III in 1207. Dore p. 527, Winchester, p. 80 and Waverley, p. 259, Tewkesbury, p. 58 and Coggeshall, p. 163.

[92] Waverley, p. 255.

under the orders of the pope, but without the approval of King Stephen.[93] The legitimacy of these consecrations was an important issue, indeed at the time of Becket's death, half a dozen bishoprics were vacant – no replacements could be consecrated while the archbishop of Canterbury had been in exile. Several texts listed consecrations made by an archbishop of Canterbury when he assumed office, or returned from exile, and cleared the backlog of vacant sees.[94] These examples indicate that unusual consecrations often merited additional comment, which may explain the references to the involvement of Henry of Blois in 1162. It was the traditional right of the bishop of London to consecrate the archbishop of Canterbury, but with London vacant, there was debate over whether the bishop of Winchester or Rochester should take his place.[95] Eventually it was agreed that the duty should fall to Henry of Blois. Although these texts did not elucidate the procedural debate that took place at Becket's consecration, their preoccupation with the traditions and rituals of succession meant that Henry's role stood out as a detail worth recording.

However, there were plenty of annals which made no mention of who had performed a consecration. The choice of these four chronicles – Waverley, Winchester, Winchcombe and Dore – to record that Becket was consecrated by Henry of Blois was not the result of a consistent editorial policy, but an erratic trend across twelfth- and thirteenth-century annals. This trend reflects the fixation on succession within these texts, and their desire to fit the past into the theo-political hierarchy that they idealised. In reality, this hierarchy was frequently threatened by schism and usurpation, a vulnerability that birthed anxiety about the validity of each individual succession. The

[93] Winchcombe, p. 526.

[94] Winchester, pp. 47 and 57, Winchcombe, p. 516 and Waverley, p. 246.

[95] Herbert of Bosham, in Staunton, *Lives,* pp. 65-66.

unwillingness of several English bishops to be consecrated by Stigand, who at best was guilty of pluralism and at worst had usurped the see of Canterbury, is ample demonstration of the importance of this issue.[96] Rather than risk an illegitimate consecration, these bishops sought consecration abroad at the hands of reputable continental prelates. This same concern affected the writers of these annals. A nagging unease at the vulnerability of the structured and ordained succession that they promoted made details about consecration stand out as worthy of inclusion, worthy of remembering. The regular records of consecrations were part of the wide focus within these texts on succession and presented an image of order, legitimacy and stability. This provided a sound foundation for the history of the author's institution. It embedded the monastic community within institutional and Christian temporalities, providing a permanence to their identity. The succession of their own abbots mirrored and contextualised the passage of kings and prelates while also being incorporated into the grand scale of sacred time. These unassuming records of succession structured and informed the texts, creating thematic strands which shaped the textworld of these chronicles. As annalists created their texts, they returned again and again to these moments of stability and coherence, which had a significant influence on how the past was curated within an annalistic chronicle. It is difficult to categorically state whether these chronicles were read sequentially in their entirety by the monks of their community, or whether a reader would only reference the particular annals that were relevant to them. The use of marginal marks, as in the Rushen chronicle,[97] would

[96] H. E. J. Cowdrey, 'Stigand (d. 1072), Archbishop of Canterbury', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), accessed 25/06/2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26523. and Norman F. Cantor, *Church, Kingship, and Lay Investiture in England 1089-1135* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p.166.

[97] See above pp. 27-28.

certainly have facilitated the latter use, helping a reader navigate towards relevant passages, but this does not preclude that these texts were read comprehensively as well. In either case, any reader of the chronicle would be presented with a message of continuity as they turned the pages of the manuscript. Repeated records of succession were a universal element of annalistic writing, a feature present across all these chronicles, and the ubiquity of their occurrence represents a vital insight into how these authors presented the past.

Saint Thomas the controversial archbishop

Yet Becket's consecration was not always part of this focus on succession, and several texts that recorded it did not contain the consecration of other archbishops of Canterbury. In continental works, such as the chronicle of pseudo-William Godel,[98] this omission is unsurprising: the succession of Canterbury was not as meaningful for monasteries outside of the English Church. The Burton chronicle also ignored the succession of all archbishops of Canterbury prior to Becket, [99] and instead focused on the affairs of their diocesan bishops at Coventry, local interest trumping the primacy of Canterbury.[100] The Tewkesbury and Lowlands chronicles concentrated on the more prominent archbishops. Tewkesbury missed out the consecration of two early twelfth-century archbishops, Ralph d'Escures and William de Corbeil, who had shorter and less notable periods of offices than those of Anselm, Theobald of Bec and Becket, who were all included.[101] The Lowlands chronicle focused only on the consecrations

[98] Ps-William Godel, p. 676.

[99] Burton, p. 187.

[100] Ibid., pp. 185-186.

[101] Tewkesbury, pp. 44-5.

of two saints, Anselm and Becket, although it did note the deaths of some other archbishops of Canterbury.[102] It was Becket's sanctity that prompted the inclusion of Becket's consecration for the Burton and pseudo-William Godel chronicles as well. These two texts referred to him in 1162 as "glorious" and "saint" Thomas respectively.[103] While it was unusual to explicitly communicate Becket's sanctity in an annal for 1162,[104] for these chronicles Becket's consecration was not simply another point in a list of archbishops. Becket's sanctity meant that this consecration merited recording where other Canterbury consecrations did not. It fulfilled a different purpose and fitted a different pattern. Important though the message of continuity and succession was, annalistic chronicles should not be reduced to a static series of regnal dates. Rather their authors integrated records of events that demanded recognition into their overarching narrative of order and stability.

There was a balance to be struck between the recurring preoccupations of annalistic history and the specific issues of Becket's life. The consecration had been a controversial moment, with many expressing doubts about Becket's suitability for the role. Becket had moved from being chancellor, hunting companion and military commander of the king to the highest ecclesiastic office in the country. There was some contemporary opposition to clergy serving in secular offices in the late twelfth century. John of Salisbury, Becket's associate since they had been in the household of Theobald of Bec together, had written on the need to maintain separation between

[102] Lowlands, pp. 111 and 139.

[103] Burton, p. 187 and PS-William Godel, p. 676.

[104] For example, the Dunstable annal introduced Becket as *Thomas, Cantuariensis archidiaconus, Beverlaci praepositus* and only referred to him as *beatum Thomam* in 1172, after his martyrdom. Dunstable pp. 17 and 20.

secular and spiritual offices.[105] Yet two of Becket's predecessors, Robert of Ghent and Philip of Harcourt, had been deans while they were chancellor, and Geoffrey Rufus was both bishop of Durham and Henry I's chancellor.[106] There were even specific contemporary precedents for bishops being chancellors, as Ralph of Diceto noted.[107] The practice would become commonplace after Becket's death, when these texts were written. Becket's resignation from the chancellorship on becoming archbishop was not necessarily a rejection of the principle of serving both as bishop and chancellor, but instead may have been a perceptive realisation of the impossibility of acquitting both roles in an acceptable manner. Indeed, as Anne Duggan has noted, neither of the examples of bishop-chancellors suggested by Ralph of Diceto proved especially reassuring. Rainald of Dassel was roped into supporting Frederick I's schismatic faction and excommunicated, while Conrad of Wittelsbach was replaced by the emperor for following his conscience and removing his support from the anti-pope.[108]

The majority of these chronicles introduced Becket as the king's chancellor with no implication that this was controversial. The chancellorship was an important enough role to merit note and was a useful way to distinguish Becket from the many other Thomases in medieval England. Other individuals were described as the chancellor when they were elected to episcopal seats and many prelates were named both as chancellor and bishop at their death, with no suggestion that there was a tension between their two offices. A handful of such examples include Ralph Neville,[109] William

[105] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 27.

[106] Cantor, *Church, Kingship and Lay Investiture*, pp. 10 and 293 and John Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England, 1170-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 151-2

[107] *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 308.

[108] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 32.

[109] Tewkesbury, pp. 67 and 75 Waverley, p. 333 and Dunstable, p. 77.

Longchamp,[110] and Eustace of Ely.[111] This was by no means consistent however, some, like Hubert Walter or Geoffrey Ridel, were not referred to as chancellor. Equally, texts that otherwise showed no interest in other English chancellors, such as the chronicles of Melrose and Dore, still described Becket as the "chancellor of the king".[112] There was no insinuation that it was inappropriate for Becket, or indeed any of these men, to be chancellors. They were simply being identified in terms of the offices that they had held. Titles and offices were central to organising time and navigating the past in annals, and individual characters were defined in these terms as well.

It seems then, as both Anne Duggan and Frank Barlow have suggested, it was Becket's personal inappropriateness for the role that prompted the resistance to his appointment.[113] A chancellor who had so actively promoted the crown's goals, who so obviously lacked any of the spirituality, intellectualism or monasticism that would mark a promising candidate for the head of the English Church was a controversial choice, especially as his penchant for fine food and clothes made his inadequacies all the more conspicuous.[114] These texts were comfortable to acknowledge that Becket was chancellor, but his behaviour and actions in that office went largely unmentioned. Indeed, the Dunstable chronicle, one of only two texts to record an event from Becket's chancellorship,[115] edited its source to avoid any uncomfortable reminders of his secular behaviour. While Ralph of Diceto, the Dunstable chronicle's source, recorded

[110] Tewkesbury, p. 55, Winchester p. 64, Waverley p. 247.

[111] Winchester, p. 66.

[112] Melrose, pp. 77-8 and Dore, p. 525.

[113] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 25 and Barlow, *Becket*, p. 66.

[114] Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 36-7.

[115] The Dore chronicle recorded Becket's selection as archdeacon in 1154, Dore p. 524.

the great splendour (*apparatus magnum*) of Becket's arrival in Paris when he was sent to receive Margaret of France in 1156, this detail was omitted in an annal that was otherwise directly copied.[116] The reference to Becket's propensity for lavish display as a chancellor was quietly forgotten.

In contrast, Becket's hagiographers dwelt on his early life, using it to explore their subject's character and the themes of his life. Michael Staunton has argued that the hagiographers saw in Becket's consecration the culmination of threads of sanctity that had run through his early life, now come to fruition in his new glorious purpose.[117] The hagiographers did not deny Becket's lavishness and carousing as a young man, indeed some hagiographers delighted in recording his secular grandeur.[118] Rather his consecration made manifest those elements of personal sanctity that so far had remained hidden from the public eye. This change used pre-existing hagiographical motifs of rebirth: the old man becoming the new. The hagiographers presented this as part of Becket's journey towards sainthood that had started with his birth; it was an evolution more than a transformation.[119] This narrative helped to sow the seeds for Becket's conflict with Henry and for his eventual martyrdom, and was steeped in familiar themes; it was an approach shaped by the goals of his hagiographers, constructed with the benefit of hindsight. The motif of the changed man proved impactful and was employed in several texts outside of Becket's immediate hagiography. The *Liber Eliensis* ended with an extended account of Becket's life which featured the motif, suggesting that on his consecration Becket was miraculously filled

[116] Dunstable, p. 18 and *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 302.

[117] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 81-90.

[118] Ibid., p. 78.

[119] Staunton, *Biographers*, p. 82.

with the Holy Spirit.[120] This led Becket to vigorously defend the estates of the Church and to criticise the bad clerics of the court, who in turn poisoned the king against him. In the Battle Abbey chronicle Becket's new quality, which exceeded the great secular power he had held before, gave him the strength to stand up to Henry's oppression of the church.[121] Ralph of Diceto argued that Becket's change of character made him focus only on the affairs of the church and resign from the chancellorship, incurring Henry's displeasure.[122] The motif not only addressed the uncomfortable memories of his worldly early life, but also served a narrative function in explaining the dispute between Becket and Henry that would follow his election as archbishop. It was an effective and comprehensible way to suggest a causal connection between Becket's burgeoning piety and his subsequent conflict with Henry.

In annalistic texts the motif was far less common, although it was used in an abbreviated form in the Coventry chronicle. The annal for 1162 recorded that Becket "suddenly changed into another man, just as he surpassed many in order and dignity now he was also preeminent in virtue and piety" following his consecration.[123] The juxtaposition of entries in the Coventry chronicle suggested that it was this new quality that caused the dispute: the description of Becket's moral transformation during the consecration is immediately followed in the next annal by his resistance to the wild decrees of his king.[124] As in the Battle Abbey version, Coventry stated that Becket's newfound spiritual virtues transcended the secular powers which he had previously

[120] Janet Fairweather ed. and trans., *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh to Twelfth Century; Compiled by a Monk of Ely in the Twelfth Century*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005) p. 483.

[121] *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. Eleanor Seale, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) p. 272.

[122] *Ymagines Historiarum,* pp. 306-8.

[123] Coventry, p. 684.

[124] Ibid.

enjoyed. This was not only a comment on Becket, but also an assertion of the privileged position of clergy. The Melrose chronicle's annal for 1162 rejected that Becket had had a secular past, instead stating that, despite his time at court, he had always despised the secular world.[125] There was no change of character, instead Becket had always resisted worldly sin. Melrose had some precedence of saintly figures emerging from secular backgrounds. Waltheof, their saintly abbot who had died a decade before Becket, had been raised at David I of Scotland's court, as had Aelred, abbot of Melrose's mother house, Rievaulx.[126] The *vita* of Waltheof was keen to demonstrate that, despite Waltheof's noble stock, the secular world held no interest for him. One anecdote recorded that he avoided going hunting with his stepfather King David so that he could instead read and pray in seclusion.[127] Melrose's version of Becket was adapted to match these local models of sanctity, and again there was a clear message of the superiority of ecclesiastic to secular values. It was an affirmation for the monastic community of their own group identity and its worth, setting them aside from the inferior secular world.

Two annalistic chronicles consciously chose not to include the motif, despite their sources having employed it. The Winchester chronicle referred to Becket ironically laughing at his own unsuitability for the position of archbishop, saying: "what a holy and religious man you have chosen to put in command of the people of God!" in

[125] Melrose, p. 129.

[126] Derek Baker, 'Waldef [Waltheof] (c. 1095–1159), Abbot of Melrose', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 02/11/2019, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128- e-28647.

[127] George Joseph Mcfadden, 'An Edition and Translation of The Life of Waldef, Abbot of Melrose, by Jocelin of Furness' (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1952), p. 220

1161.[128] This anecdote, like much of Winchester's account of Becket was derived from Herbert of Bosham's *vita* of the saint. In Herbert's *vita* the response acknowledged Becket's worldly lifestyle, serving to set up his dramatic shift towards ascetism and to foreshadow his conflict with Henry,[129] but the Winchester version did not mention Becket's worldly pursuits or his change of character at his consecration. As in Melrose and Coventry, the overall purpose was to convey Becket's quality through his humble reluctance to take office, rather than to suggest that he had become suddenly inspired. The Dunstable chronicle, which used Ralph of Diceto as its source, presented Becket's resignation as the key origin of the dispute. It stated that this act incurred Henry's wrath, but made no reference to Becket's character development at his consecration. The priority for Dunstable was to establish the roots of Becket's dispute with Henry. The detail served a structural purpose, as it connected the annal recording Becket's consecration with the later annals discussing the dispute. Like most annals recording the consecration of 1162, Dunstable made no mention of Becket's character, changed or otherwise.

These differences in approach in part follow a chronological pattern. The Coventry and Melrose chronicles (like the texts produced at Ely, Battle, and by Ralph of Diceto) were written within two decades of Becket's death, while Dunstable and Winchester, which

[128] Winchester, p. 56.

[129] "And he added, 'It is my wish that you be archbishop of Canterbury'. To whom the chancellor, looking down and pointing with a smile at the florid clothes he was wearing said, 'How religious, how saintly a man you wish to appoint to such a holy see and above such a renowned and holy community of monks! I know most certainly that if by God's arrangement it happened thus, very quickly you would turn your heart and favour away from me, which is now great between us, and replace it with the most savage hatred. I know indeed that you would demand much, and even now you presume a great deal in ecclesiastical matters, which I would not be able to tolerate with equanimity. And so the envious would take advantage of the opportunity, and as soon as favour is extinguished they would stir up endless hatred between us'." Herbert of Bosham in Staunton, *Lives* p. 60.

referenced similar issues without using a change of character motif, were written in the early thirteenth century. Interest in the specifics of Becket's consecration waned twenty years after his death and the event was folded into a sterile narrative of succession. The emphasis on legitimate succession in annalistic writing meant that matters of controversy were frequently avoided; the omission of Becket's early life from annalistic accounts could result from this tendency to sanitise and simplify. Only two texts referenced Becket before his consecration: the Dunstable chronicle, as mentioned earlier, and Dore abbey, which recorded him becoming archdeacon of Canterbury in 1154.[130] Across both these texts was no real suggestion of Becket's unsuitability for the position of archbishop and no reference to his actions as chancellor. Becket's hagiographers had invented edifying stories about his youth, noting the devotion to the Virgin Mary instilled in him by his mother, or the visions she had received while pregnant with him.[131] These chronicles ignored such anecdotes and either categorically stated his sainthood when introducing him, or followed their chronology more strictly and waited until his sanctity was demonstrated either through his constancy during the dispute or at his martyrdom. Rather than resolve the inconsistencies of Becket's early life these annalistic texts forgot them, and presented him as another legitimate part of the succession of Canterbury and as an unequivocal saint. This uncontroversial version of Becket was a better match to the message of order and stability that was central to these texts.

While an annal recording Becket's consecration could form a thematic strand which structured the entire text, it could also reflect the idiosyncratic context of this moment. In the Coventry and Melrose chronicles a popular motif was adapted to bolster the

[130] Dunstable, p. 17 and Dore, p. 524.

[131] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 16 and Staunton, *Biographers*, p. 77.

communities that produced these texts with a comforting affirmation of the superiority of spiritual life. The Winchester chronicle focused on Becket's humility, using the celebrated saint to promote positive values. The Dunstable chronicle was more functional, and its annal provided a causal origin for the dispute between Henry and Becket. These two texts added additional narrative detail to emphasise different aspects of this moment and to consider it from different perspectives. Just as annalistic chronicles operated in several temporalities, a single annal also had multiple narrative levels. Becket's consecration was an event that could be exploited to achieve a variety of purposes; it initiated an account of an important medieval figure and, at the same time, it fitted into a theme of succession which structured the entire text.[132]

Conclusion

An annalistic approach allowed a medieval historian to reveal the stability and coherence that existed within the seemingly chaotic past. The focus and brevity of the form was central to this message. Repeated entries recording the succession of holders of key offices conveyed a sense of continuity, and disruptive elements could be easily omitted, hiding uncomfortable details. It was an approach which endorsed the established theo-political hierarchy with a divinely ordained authority. This conservative justification of the existing power structures provided a durable and ordered foundation in which the authors' own institutions could be located. Furthermore, the annalistic form offered a helpful ambiguity. Brief entries allowed annalists to avoid commenting, to avoid editorialisation, and to enjoy a pragmatic neutrality rather than tying themselves in knots with complex justifications. However,

[132] As is discussed in chapter one, pp. 26-33, the regular records of successions were one of the key building blocks of annalistic writing.

these texts were not simply an inert list of consecrations. Many other events demanded recording; other details were needed to help a reader understand their world. Becket's consecration was not just about the succession of archbishops of Canterbury, but in many texts was significant for contextualising an important saint, or for providing a demonstration of the pre-eminence of ecclesiastic virtue. Becket's consecration was an event caught between the annalistic desire on the one hand to impose Christian order, continuity and coherence on the past, and on the other to reflect the idiosyncrasies of individual events, manipulating them to achieve a variety of commemorative goals. For the most part these details were not too disruptive, and a consistent image of a legitimate succession emerges, but the disastrous reality of Becket's subsequent term of office would prove less easy to accommodate. The following chapters will explore the efforts of the annalistic chroniclers to address the dispute that defined Becket's term of office, the murder that ended it, the subsequent miracles and the lasting legacy of the saint. These elements proved more urgent than Becket's early life and were not as easily consolidated into the background rhythm of annalistic history.

Chapter Two

Editing the Past: Conflict, Exile and Coronation

Introduction

"Meanwhile, the king began to wish to suppress ecclesiastical privileges, demanding the assent of the archbishop and his suffragans. Though the bishops consented, the archbishop did not, standing forth as the defender of the Church, not its attacker. The king, along with the bishops and magnates of the realm, was so enraged against him that the old fondness was nothing in comparison with the hatred he now conceived against him. None the less he [Becket] stood firm for the church; but he stood alone. All were against him; none acted with him, and acting alone he could accomplish little or nothing. Seeing dangers following dangers, he chose rather to undergo a voluntary exile than to stay and see the wasting of ecclesiastical privilege. Removing himself from the midst of evil, he went to France, seeking the peace on alien soil that he did not have at home."[133]

- The chronicle of Battle Abbey's description of the dispute between Becket and Henry, written within fifteen years of Becket's death.

The conflict between Thomas Becket and Henry II dominated the decade following Becket's consecration as archbishop and has garnered interest ever since. The dispute was tied to vital questions of legality and jurisdiction, while the friendship that had existed between Becket and Henry added a certain drama to the situation. This

[133] Eleanor Searle, ed. and trans., *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 275-6.

has proved an enticing combination for study, and scholars have endeavoured over the years to unpick the series of issues at stake during the dispute, the objectives and motivations of Henry and Becket and the intellectual context, justification and novelty of each side's proposals.[134] This was a complicated matter which dragged out over several years, escalating from Becket's resignation of the chancellorship to heated financial and jurisdictional clashes, before leading to a series of showdowns at councils organised by Henry, where Becket had somewhat inconsistently opposed the royal propositions.

Charles Duggan's research provides a helpful overview of the political and legal context of the dispute. He saw the central question to be one of authority, which originated from Henry II's desire to restore the English church to its pre-Anarchy status and to combat the expansion of canon law and papal ideology: restoring the rights of the Crown and isolating the English Church from continental interference.[135] This overarching struggle was manifested in a shifting series of specific policy disputes, encompassing sheriff's aid, the codification of ancient customs, the position of ecclesiastics within the feudal hierarchy and the rights of Canterbury.[136] After initial skirmishes between king and archbishop matters came to a head at the council of

[134] See Charles Duggan, *Canon Law in Medieval England: The Becket Dispute and Decretal Collections* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), Richard M. Fraher, 'The Becket Dispute and Two Decretist Traditions: The Bolognese Masters Revisited and Some New Anglo-Norman Texts', *Journal of Medieval History* 4, no. 4 (1 December 1978) pp. 347–68, James W. Alexander, 'The Becket Controversy in Recent Historiography', *Journal of British Studies* 9, no. 2 (1970) pp. 1–26 and for an earlier view F.W. Maitland, 'Henry II and the Criminous Clerks', *The English Historical Review* VII, no. XXVI (1892), pp. 224–34.

[135] Charles Duggan, 'The Significance of the Becket Dispute in the History of the English Church', *Ampleforth Journal* 75 (1970), p. 367 and Alexander, 'The Becket Controversy', p. 4.

[136] Alexander, 'The Becket Controversy', pp. 7 and 18 and D. J. A. Matthew, 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket', in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 298.

Clarendon, where Henry attempted to enforce and codify a series of rules aimed at restoring the ancient customs of the land. The issue of clerical immunity, clause three of the Constitutions of Clarendon, occupied the limelight. Henry argued that clerics who committed secular crimes should be handed over to secular courts for punishment after having been defrocked, while Becket held that such double punishment contravened the scriptures. However, James W. Alexander and Charles Duggan have both emphasised that this should not be seen as the sole point of friction, even if it was the most bitterly fought battleground of the dispute.[137] Traditionally, Henry was deemed to have been better supported by canon law, although Charles Duggan has challenged this assumption, arguing that the opposite was in fact true.[138] In contrast, Richard Fraher has suggested that "there was an element of the conservative and of the innovator both in king and in archbishop", and that it was not until after Becket's martyrdom that there was consensus in decretist thought on the issue of clerical immunity.[139] After Henry attempted to put Becket on trial at the Council of Northampton, Becket fled into exile in France for six years. The dispute dragged on during this period, as subsequent negotiations abjectly failed to reconcile king and archbishop. When Becket did finally return to England, he would be murdered within a month.

It was no simple task to fit the complexities of the dispute into the rigid structure of a set of annals, and the following chapter will demonstrate how this incident was edited into a form suitable for an annalistic text. The term "editing" here refers to a series of processes: the inclusion and omission of events, the narrative framing of such events,

[137] Alexander, 'The Becket Controversy', p. 7 and Charles Duggan, 'The Becket Dispute and the Criminous Clerks', *Historical Research* 35, no. 91 (1 May 1962), p. 2.

[138] Duggan, 'The Significance of the Becket Dispute', p. 367.

[139] Fraher, 'The Becket Dispute and Two Decretist Traditions', p. 362.

and the employment and adaptation of sources. This editing simplified and sanitised the dispute to make it more accessible and palatable, fitting it to familiar patterns and the overarching themes of annalistic writing. It was this editorial process which determined whether an event was to be remembered or forgotten, and critically, what form the memory would take. Even the decision to repeat the interpretation of a previous text should be seen as significant – it represents annalists choosing to collaborate in promulgating a specific version of the past. These texts followed a creative and considered editorial process that reflected the context of the monastery where it was produced.

Hiding the controversy: history through omission

The dispute was not only a complicated matter, it was also a contentious one, difficult to reconcile with the version of reality promoted by annalistic history. It represented a fundamental clash between *sacerdotium* and *regnum*, indeed Beryl Smalley described the dispute as the high point of defence of Church authority.[140] The dispute should not be understood in only these terms (as discussed above, there were also more specific issues being contested), yet many twelfth-century authors did see the dispute as a clash between the two fundamental authorities of medieval society.[141] Such a clash was an uncomfortable challenge to the narrative of ordered, hierarchical power that annals suggested in their repeated records of succession. Where Church and Crown

[140] Smalley, *Becket Conflict,* p. 215 and Duggan, 'The Becket Dispute and the Criminous Clerks', p. 1.

[141] Fraher, 'The Becket Dispute and Two Decretist Traditions', p. 1.

should have worked as complementary elements of the same *ecclesia*,[142] these authorities had instead disrupted the essential order of the realm with this dispute. It was uncomfortable for an ordained and legitimate king such as Henry to have so aggressively oppressed the Church and persecuted his spiritual father, while Becket's actions had been criticised as a selfish abjuration of his duties, or at worst, as borderline treasonous.[143] Becket's self-imposed exile was particularly contentious: Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London, and Becket's great rival, saw it as unnecessary theatrics and an abandonment of his episcopal duties toward his flock.[144] Becket's hagiographers did not shy away from recording the dispute, but treated it carefully. They offered legalistic arguments and drew comparison with established traditions of sanctity to emphasise the universality of Becket's cause and to justify his actions; even his controversial exile became a step on the path to sainthood.[145] At the same time, they endeavoured to mitigate Henry's culpability by emphasising the role of the "vipers" at court who had opposed Becket and antagonised the king.[146] This framing was indicative of the general desire for reconciliation which existed after Becket's martyrdom and as the hagiographies were being written.[147] Henry was presented as a king who had failed his sacred duty, rather than as a tyrant, and there was no suggestion that Becket had been unpragmatic or unprincipled in his opposition.

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[142] Mayke de Jong and Rosamond McKitterick, 'Conclusion', in *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 283.

[143] Kay Brainerd Slocum, *The Cult of Thomas Becket: History and Historiography through Eight Centuries*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2019) pp. 276 -280 and Barlow, *Becket*, p. 168.

[144] Gilbert Foliot, in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 223-6.

[145] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 127-8 and 181-2.

[146] Ibid., p. 115.

[147] Ibid., pp. 106 and 113-4.

It would have been difficult, however, to fit such careful justifications within an annalistic account of the dispute, since the focused progression of annals would be hindered by asides and caveats. Many annalists writing within Henry's realm did not mention the controversy of the dispute, and made no reference to the contested policies or the failed negotiations. This omission suggests that they had little desire to criticise Henry or saw no reason to remember this contentious moment. Whether this decision was motivated by an active agenda or not, by omitting the dispute, these annalists contributed to a programme of forgetting which avoided the tensions of this uncomfortable episode. The Waverley chronicle offered no cause for Becket's exile, instead recording in 1164 simply that *sanctus Thomas archiepiscopus Cantuariensis exulatus est*.[148] A thirteenth-century copy of the Coggeshall chronicle (Paris, *Bibliotheque nationale de France*, MS Latin 15076, known as the V text) contains a marginal addition next to the annal for in 1165 recording that "archbishop Thomas endured [*subire*] exile", but in other versions of the chronicle the exile was ignored entirely.[149] The Burton chronicle simply ignored both exile and dispute entirely. In these accounts there was no dispute and no reference to Henry. This approach is particularly surprising in the Waverley chronicle, which, unlike many contemporary texts, did reference the clashes between Anselm and William II, and between Theobald of Bec and Stephen.[150] These earlier Waverley annals were created from an identifiable source, the Peterborough version of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle.[151] The later twelfth-century annals were partially based on Robert of Torigni's chronicle.

[148] Waverley p. 238.

[149] *Thomas archiepiscopus subiit exilium.* Coggeshall, p. 15 n. 8.

[150] Waverley, pp. 206, 209 and 233.

[151] Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 412 and Henry H. Howorth, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Its Origin and History', *Archaeological Journal* 65, no. 1 (1 January 1908), pp. 312-313.

Robert, a staunch ally of Henry's, ignored the dispute, but the Waverley annalists, like those who created the V version of the Coggeshall chronicle, felt that a complete omission risked stretching credibility to breaking point. They chose to reference the exile, since it was a key part of Becket's memory, but did so as briefly as possible. Rather than endeavour to explain the dispute, these texts omitted it, providing no explanation for the exile, and no clear statement of the conflict between king and archbishop.

The Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Dore chronicles adopted a different approach. Rather than deny the part that Henry played in Becket's exile, they reinterpreted the cause of events to avoid mentioning the dispute. The Tewkesbury annal for 1164 recorded that Becket crossed the channel because he had incurred the king's displeasure.[152] Winchcombe and Dore recorded that "discord" arose between Becket and Henry, and subsequently the archbishop was driven into exile due to his fear of the king.[153] The phrasing of these two texts is near identical, although Dore is more detailed, including references to the council of Northampton and Becket's secret flight from the court. Although both texts acknowledged the disagreement that had occurred between the king and archbishop, this was not a battle between *sacerdotium* and *regnum*. Rather, Becket had angered the king and therefore had to leave his presence. The role of anger in the conflict was not inconsequential, Hugh Thomas has explored the position of this anger within the context of shame, honour and masculinity. He has suggested that Becket's ongoing resistance in the face of Henry's furious combination of plausible and implausible threats escalated the dispute irrevocably.[154] Anger was

[152] *Thomas cantuariae archiepiscopus regi invisus effectus transfretavit.* Tewkesbury, p. 49.

[153] Winchcombe, p. 530.

[154] Hugh M. Thomas, 'Shame, Masculinity, and the Death of Thomas Becket', *Speculum* 87, no. 4 (2012), pp. 1075, 1084-5 and 1088.

an ambiguous trait for a medieval king. Although *furor*, wild fury, was clearly inappropriate, controlled anger could serve legitimate purposes, and was an accepted, perhaps even expected,[155] tool at a king's disposal.[156] As Thomas has argued, and as Becket's eventual martyrdom clearly proved, royal displays of anger should not be seen as purely symbolic actions,[157] but the approach of Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Dore placed the dispute within a widely recognised pattern of royal behaviour.[158] These annals did not justify Henry's anger, but neither did they define it as frenzied and uncontrolled, thus avoiding either condemning or rationalising Henry's actions. Michael Staunton has noted that the main criticism of Henry levelled by the hagiographers, who were writing during Henry's lifetime and in the "atmosphere of reconciliation" that followed the settlement of Avranches in 1172, was that he had failed to keep his anger in check.[159] Rather than passing judgement, recording Henry's anger simply communicated the common belief that rational clerical counsel was needed to control royal passion.[160] These chronicles diplomatically avoided acknowledging Henry's specific actions, and instead framed events with a common trope of secular sin. If such a display of anger was an accepted part of secular rule,

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[155] Stephen D. White, 'The Politics of Anger', in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (New York: Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 129.

[156] Thomas, 'Shame, Masculinity and Anger', p. 1073, H. J. Orning, 'Royal Anger between Christian Doctrine and Practical Exigencies', Collegium Medievale, xxii (2009) p. 50 and Stephen J. Spencer, '"Like a Raging Lion": Richard the Lionheart's Anger during the Third Crusade in Medieval and Modern Historiography', *The English Historical Review* 132, no. 556 (June 2017), pp. 500-1.

[157] Thomas, 'Shame, Masculinity and Anger', p. 1074.

[158] Gerd Althoff, '*Ira Regis*: *Prolegomena* to a History of Royal Anger', in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 59 and 62-67.

[159] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 113-4.

[160] Spencer, '"Like a Raging Lion"', pp. 515-6 and Nicholas Vincent, 'The Court of Henry II', in *Henry II: New Interpretations*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), p. 312.

then the exile fell into a more conventional pattern of royal behaviour, rather than being an exceptional event.

These three texts, the chronicles of Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Dore, shared a common source. Paul Anthony Hayward has identified similarities between the Winchcombe annals from 1123-1181 and those written at Tewkesbury, with both connected to a network of texts including Gervase of Canterbury's *Chronica* and three texts produced at St Peter's, Gloucestershire, namely: a version of John of Worcester's *Chronicula*, the fragmentary chronicle of Gregory of Caerwent and St Peter's surviving chronicle.[161] Hayward explains the connection through a lost Gloucester chronicle (based in part on the surviving St Peter's chronicle and the *Chronicula*), which was used by Winchcombe, Tewkesbury, Gervase of Canterbury and Gregory of Caerwent.[162] There is little evidence of identical phrases or constructions between these texts, so perhaps the source was a series of notes rather than a full chronicle. The Dore chronicle shares some features with this group identified by Hayward, suggesting that it too was based on this source. For instance, the entries for 1066 and 1159 are identical to the matching passages in Winchcombe, and the entries for 1102 and 1136 are rephrased but very similar.[163] The 1110 annals of Tewkesbury and Dore are identical, and 1104, 1128 and 1139 entries are close in content.[164] Equally the entries for 1100, 1104, 1134, 1135 in Dore contain material, which, although absent from Winchcombe and Tewkesbury, was recorded by John of

[161] Paul Antony Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles: Hitherto Unnoticed Witnesses to the Work of John of Worcester*, 2 vols (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2010), vol. 1, p. 124.

[162] Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 124 and 141 for a diagram mapping these textual affinities.

[163] Dore, pp. 520-525 and Winchcombe, pp. 506, 514, 524 and 528-530.

[164] Dore, pp. 522-523 and Tewkesbury, pp. 44-46.

Worcester.[165] The Dore annals are not so similar as to suggest they were directly copied from any one of these texts, but it is reasonable to propose that the Dore chronicle was based on the same source, Hayward's lost Gloucester chronicle. The Winchcombe, Tewkesbury and Dore annals are not identical, but they share a largely similar approach, despite the differing context of each chronicle. Winchcombe and Tewkesbury were both English Benedictine foundations, but Tewkesbury's chronicle was written some forty years after Winchcombe's.[166] Dore, on the other hand, was a Cistercian abbey on the border between England and Wales, and its annals were produced c. 1240, twenty-five years later than Tewkesbury.[167] The differences in phrasing indicate that each annal was not unthinkingly copied from the shared source. Yet each text referenced Henry's anger in a way that drew attention away from his misdeeds during the dispute. By using the familiar trope of royal anger, these chronicles avoided undermining both the legitimacy of Henry, and the integrity of the continuous, ordered succession of English kings which their annals suggested.

These chronicles further downplayed the controversy of the dispute when recording the coronation of Henry's son (the Young Henry) in 1170. With Becket still in exile, Henry the Elder had trampled over Canterbury's privilege by having Becket's longstanding rival Roger of Pont L'Évêque, archbishop of York, crown his son. D. J. A. Matthew has argued that it was this moment that broke the deadlock of Becket's exile and forced him to negotiate, as he could not countenance the erosion of

[165] Dore, pp. 522-523 and John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. and trans. P. McGurk (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 96-106 and 212-214.

[166] Henry Richards Luard, ed., "Preface", in *Annales Monastici*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 2, p. xxxi.

[167] Katrin Beyer, "Annals of Dore Abbey", in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 62.

Canterbury's traditional rights.[168] Yet the annals of Dore, Tewkesbury and Waverley reported the coronation as a neutral event, simply stating in 1170 that Henry crowned his son.[169] These annalists made a conscious decision not to comment on the significance of the coronation nor to provide any explicit glossing of the event to their readers. The coronation in these chronicles was inert, part of the ongoing beat of royal coronations, deaths, marriages and births, which, gave structure and context to the passing of time, but did not receive any expansion. As recorded in the Coggeshall chronicle, the significance of the coronation was that it took place while Henry II was still alive, rather than because of any connection to Becket.[170] It was significant as part of the story of Henry and his son, foreshadowing the coming conflict between father and son, but was compartmentalised away from Becket. Although these texts suggested that the coronation was not relevant to Becket's story, the Winchcombe chronicle did acknowledge Becket, saying that due to the "absence of the archbishop of Canterbury" Roger of York crowned the Young Henry.[171] This sentence construction discreetly avoided mentioning the exile directly or even naming Becket. All of these chronicles actively avoided remembering the controversy of the coronation. Just as these texts had deliberately lowered the stakes of the dispute, they avoided suggesting that the coronation of the Young Henry had been controversial or that it represented any form of conflict between king and archbishop.

The Gloucester group of Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Dore, and the chronicles of Coggeshall and Waverley provide a set of twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts

[168] Matthew, 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket', p. 293.

[169] Dore, p. 525, Tewkesbury p. 50 and Waverley, p. 239.

[170] Though the *Chronicon* is only partially annalistic, the section dealing with the dispute is recorded in a series of annals. Coggeshall, p. 16.

[171] *propter absentiam* [*archiepiscopi*] *Cantuariensis.* Winchcombe, pp. 532-4.

produced in Cistercian and Benedictine monasteries in which the severity of the dispute was diminished. The editing of these annals suggests that their authors were unwilling to reference Henry's role in the persecution of Becket. This attitude continued into their accounts of Becket's death. Henry was not mentioned in relation to the martyrdom; there was no suggestion, for example, that Becket's murderers had come from the royal court. The Tewkesbury and Winchcombe chronicles went on to categorically exonerate Henry by recording his oath, on relics, that he had neither ordered nor wished for Becket's death.[172] There would appear to be no condemnation of Henry, nor was he portrayed as the adversary of Becket. These chronicles isolated events, either ignoring any connection to Becket or reinterpreting them in such a way as to be uncontroversial. It would seem to have been preferable to skim over or omit Henry's controversial actions rather than attempt to justify them. These were all texts written in institutions within England (or in the borderlands in Dore's case), and their approach could reflect the authors' trepidation at recording aspects of Henry's behaviour that could seem to be shameful. Yet it is unlikely that the Dore annalists, writing 70 years after the martyrdom and 50 years after Henry's death, would have a similar need to be so cautious. Perhaps then, these annalists preferred to forget the dispute as it would seem to be antithetical to the message of ordered succession that their annals suggested; or possibly these authors saw no utility in remembering this aspect of Becket's story, and so did not preserve the dispute in their accounts.

Several texts that ignored the dispute were certainly unconcerned with protecting Henry's legacy. The Lowlands chronicle's account of the exile was similar to the Gloucester group, stating that "Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, crossed over to

[172] Tewkesbury, p. 50 and Winchcombe, p. 536

France due to the hostility of Henry".[173] Equally, the coronation was not presented as an affront to Canterbury, but rather, like Coggeshall, its salient feature was that it occurred while Henry the Elder was still alive.[174] Yet in contrast to the English texts, the Lowlands chronicle did connect Henry to Becket's martyrdom, stating that the archbishop was killed by the king's knights. When it came to recording Henry's death, the Lowlands text was unreservedly critical.[175] Antipathy toward Henry was hardly surprising following his victory over William I of Scotland in 1174 and the "personal and national humiliation" of Scotland and its king in the treaty of Falaise.[176] A similar trend is apparent in the work of pseudo-William Godel, completed before 1180,[177] and in the thirteenth-century chronicles of Saint-Martin of Tours and of Robert of Auxerre which were both closely based on it.[178] These texts explicitly connected Henry to the martyrdom but not to the exile, and they ignored the dispute. [179] Their entries for 1164 recorded that Becket went into exile, but without providing any reason or context. They were instead concerned with emphasising his relationship with France, naming the places where he stayed and stressing that he was sustained by gifts from Louis VII.[180]

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[173] Lowlands, p. 189.

[174] Ibid., p. 191.

[175] Lowlands, pp. 193-4.

[176] Matthew H. Hammond, 'Royal and Aristocratic Attitudes to Saints and the Virgin Mary in Twelfth- and Thirteenth- Century Scotland', in *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland*, eds. Steve Boardman and Ellie Williamson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), p. 75.

[177] Keith Bate, 'Godel, Ps-Guillaume', in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 717.

[178] '*Ex Chronico Turonensi'*, in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules,* ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1869), vol. 12, p. 439 and Régis Rech and Carol Neel, 'Man's Restoration: Robert of Auxerre and the writing of history in the early thirteenth century', *Traditio* 44 (1988), p. 257.

[179] Ps-William Godel, pp. 676-677, '*Ex Chronico Turonensi',* pp. 476-477 and '*Roberti Antissiodorensis Chronicon'*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* XXVI, ed. G. Waitz, vol. 27 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1882), pp. 238-240.

[180] Ps-William Godel, p. 676.

This point was repeated in their record of the coronation, which stressed Becket's presence in France.[181] These annalists do not seem to have been aiming to exonerate Henry, but they still treated the dispute as largely unimportant, instead preferring to emphasise the connection between the saint and the French realm that was fostered during Becket's exile. The *Gesta regum Francorum usque ad annum 1214*, a thirteenth-century chronicle recording the history of the French kings,[182] also emphasised Louis' hospitality towards Becket during the exile.[183] The same pattern is apparent in the chronicle of Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, who also proudly recorded that there were as many Frenchmen as Englishmen present at the translation of Becket in 1220.[184] Just as there was a trend among English texts to gloss over the dispute, French texts tended to focus on the exile rather than the contentious proposals that had instigated the dispute.

The lack of interest in the dispute in these texts was not the result of a desire to exonerate Henry, but rather suggests that the urgency of the dispute faded somewhat after Becket's death. The programme of reform proposed at Clarendon was comprehensively ended by Becket's martyrdom, rendering the dispute somewhat moot. Critical though these issues may have seemed to Becket and his allies, there was no reason that they would have had the same relevance to annalists in Scotland or France. Indeed, for many English bishops, and perhaps even Pope Alexander III

[181] Ps-William Godel, p. 677, '*Ex Chronico Turonensi'*, p. 477 and '*Roberti Antissiodorensis Chronicon*', p. 240.

[182] Marigold Anne Norbye, "*Gesta regum Francorum usque ad annum* 1214", in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), accessed 25/03/2022, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_000744.

[183] '*Historia regum Francorum usque ad annum* 1214', in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules,* ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1869), vol. 17, pp. 220-221.

[184] Trois-Fontaines, p. 910.

himself, Henry's proposed reforms were not worth the struggle of opposing.[185] For the Lowlands chronicle there were more pressing events to record in 1164. William the Lion of Scotland, a benefactor of the abbey,[186] won a decisive victory over the warlord Somerled, the full convent of monks arrived at Coupar from their mother house of Melrose and their beloved Abbot Fulk was blessed by Gregory, bishop of Dunkeld.[187] The Lowlands chronicle concentrated on these events of local significance rather than considering the dispute in any detail. Equally, Henry's skilful co-option of Becket's cult in the 1170s eroded the tension that had existed between him and his archbishop. His children continued this patronage of the cult: John and Richard both visited Canterbury several times,[188] and his daughters Matilda and Leonor were instrumental in encouraging the cult in Saxony and Castille respectively.[189] Canterbury welcomed such royal patronage and his hagiographers worked tirelessly to "universalize" Becket, using established patterns of sanctity to ensure his legacy "transcended issues of royal-clerical relations".[190] At his triumphant translation in 1220 Becket was as much a symbol of reconciliation with royal power as resistance to it.[191] The enthusiasm with which his cult was promoted by the kings of England, Scotland and France indicates

[185] Alexander, 'The Becket Controversy', p. 13 and Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 134-5.

[186] 'Document 2/136/9 (Scotia Pontificia, no. 163A)', *People of Medieval Scotland*, accessed 05/04/2021, https://www.poms.ac.uk/record/source/3746/.

[187] Lowlands, pp. 143-144.

[188] Paul Webster, 'Crown versus Church after Becket', in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, eds. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), p. 148.

[189] See Colette Bowie, 'Matilda, Duchess of Saxony, and the cult of Becket' and José Manuel Cerda, 'Leonor Plantagenet and The Cult of Becket in Castille', in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, eds. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016) pp. 113-132 and 133-146.

[190] Richard Eales, 'The Political Setting of the Becket Translation of 1220', *Studies in Church History* 30 (1993), p. 127.

[191] Ibid., p. 138.

the success of these efforts to move Becket's cult beyond the struggle between *sacerdotium* and *regnum* embodied in the dispute. Royal endorsement of Becket's cult made his anti-authoritarian resistance to his king incongruous, and the dispute was obscured as Becket was assimilated into the political establishment.

It was not only Henry's behaviour which was sanitised by this approach; ignoring the dispute also facilitated the forgetting of less edifying aspects of Becket's actions. Modern biographers of Becket such as Frank Barlow and W. L. Warren have characterised Becket as unreasonable and proud, his stubbornness being seen as the main impediment to a settlement being reached between him and the king.[192] Becket's actions antagonised Henry and alienated potential allies.[193] His initial resistance to Henry's proposals was undermined by his verbal acceptance of the Constitutions of Clarendon, a temporary submission which Becket subsequently reversed in favour of a more hard-line stance. This vacillation from resistance to acquiescence created a confused position which proved impossible for his fellow bishops to follow.[194] Criticism of Becket was rare in the texts written after his death, the remarkable success of Becket's cult had largely settled the controversies of his life. However, after discussing Becket's resignation, Ralph of Diceto cited other examples of bishops who had been chancellors, thus making a subtle suggestion that Becket's resistance to serving in both positions was unnecessary.[195] William of Newburgh, in his *Historia rerum*

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[192] Slocum, *The Cult of Thomas Becket,* pp. 276 -280. Anne Duggan has questioned this characterisation of Becket, emphasising that Henry was the aggressor at Northampton and Clarendon and that Becket was no more responsible than Henry for the continuing failures of the subsequent negotiations: Duggan, *Thomas Becket* pp. 80-81 and 142.

[193] Smalley, *The Becket Conflict*, pp. 166 and 182, Alexander, 'The Becket Controversy', p. 6.

[194] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 98-99, Smalley, *Becket Conflict* p. 237 and Duggan, *Canon Law in Medieval England*, p. 370.

[195] *Ymagines Historiarum*, pp. 307-8 and 345-6.

Anglicarum, repeated the concerns about Becket's methods that were prevalent during the dispute.[196] He did not question Becket's sanctity, but felt that his zeal led him to go too far, when compromise and recompense would have caused less damage.[197] By ignoring the dispute, the annalistic chronicles did not need to justify Becket's actions**.** Instead, these texts concentrated on his exile, a more palatable part of his story which demonstrated his patient endurance. Phyllis Roberts' has identified a similar trend in the liturgy dedicated to Becket. While the dispute was occasionally referenced, it was Becket's martyrdom that was a more convincing demonstration of his dedication to ecclesiastic liberty and of his status as a good shepherd to his flock.[198] His victimhood in exile and martyrdom better matched expectations of sanctity, rather than his active resistance to his king. The image of the saint as an anti-authority figure in the age of persecution had long since been replaced by a more corporate image of sanctity, embedded within the established hierarchy.[199] The efforts of these annalists contributed to defusing the contentious memory element of Becket's uncompromising resistance to royal authority.

These brief records of the dispute did not simply result from the lack of detail within annalistic texts. There were reasons why annalists may have chosen to consciously forget the dispute, to omit it or remove it from the limelight. For some English annalists, this approach offered an opportunity to move beyond the trauma of the dispute, by leaving unacknowledged the contentious conflict which had occurred between the secular and spiritual fathers of England. The dispute had seen England's spiritual head

[196] Staunton, *Historians,* p. 284.

[197] Staunton, *Lives,* p. 242.

[198] Roberts, *Preaching*, pp. 34-5 and 43-4.

[199] Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 130.

exiled, many of the chief prelates suspended and the king within a hair's breadth of excommunication. These had been troubling times, which stood in stark contrast to the success of Henry's early reign when he had restored order after the chaos of the Anarchy.[200] For French texts, ignoring the dispute could allow authors to concentrate on the saint's connection to France and its king. The Lowlands chronicle focused on matters more directly relevant to Coupar Angus abbey instead of addressing the specifics of the dispute. Whilst in some cases (namely the Gloucester and pseudo-William groups) this decision involved following the approach of their source, other texts independently came to employ a similar approach in their annals for 1164 and 1170. The forgetting of the dispute was not the result of a single interpretation or aimed at achieving a single goal, but was the result of a broad array of processes. The efforts of Becket's hagiographers, and the cult at Canterbury to make him into a more universal and less controversial saint, the focus of liturgical writers on his experience in exile and martyrdom rather than his juridical resistance, the success of the Angevin family in aligning themselves with the saint, the fading significance of the reforms in question, and the desire for reconciliation all contributed to this regime of forgetting. And all these chronicles played their own role as well; by avoiding the contradictions and intricacies of the dispute, to instead offer a simplified and sanitised version of the past, these annalists, whether it was intentional or not, contributed to the process of forgetting. This trend, apparent in English, Scottish and French texts written from the 1180s to the 1240s, is perhaps too broad to represent a form of social or collective memory, but the response to the dispute in these texts is valuable evidence of how these processes of forgetting and remembering functioned. They occurred in different contexts, achieved different goals, but directly or indirectly worked together to promote

[200] Staunton, *Historians*, pp. 168-171.

a certain version of the past. The fact that these annalists ignored the dispute was not necessarily accidental but could result from considered editorial decisions. By considering omission in this way, the role annals could play within a broader commemorative movement can be better appreciated.

Embracing the controversy: the impact of the dispute on Church and Crown

Not all annalistic texts downplayed or ignored the dispute, however. Several chronicles directly acknowledged the conflict that had taken place and presented it as a vital struggle. This approach still served to simplify the dispute and make events sit more comprehensibly within the framework of annalistic history, but it resulted in considerably different representations of both Henry and Becket. It was no easy task to reduce the complexities of the dispute to a single annal, as the work of Alberic of Trois-Fontaines shows. This text, written at the Cistercian house of Trois-Fontaines in Champagne between 1232 and 1250, was highly idiosyncratic. Although organised by sequential annual entries, it was hardly a conventional annalistic chronicle, occasionally following its own account of an event with an alternative version, with the source of the alternative noted. Due to the chronicle's varied contents and wide range of sources it has been described as an encyclopaedic as well as a historiographical text.[201] Alberic largely followed the chronicle of Helinand of Froidmont, written during the period 1211-1223, for his account of Becket. [202] While some events involving

[201] Antoni Grabowski, 'Alberic of Trois-Fontaines' Genealogies', *The Medieval History Journal* 23, no. 2 (November 2020), pp. 241-2.

[202] Régis Rech, "Alberich of Troisfontaines", in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), accessed 22/03/2021, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_00059.

Becket, such as the coronation of 1170 (here recorded in 1168) and the negotiation of peace in 1170, were copied directly, Helinand's version of the dispute needed more reworking, since only a single sentence was directly copied. Helinand's account was focused on Becket's arrival at Sens, a dramatic retelling of his conversation with Alexander III.[203] Alberic tried to contextualise this scene by placing it within the broader sequence of events. This involved condensing Becket's consecration as archbishop, change of character, clash with the king, exile and the subsequent persecution of his family into a single annal.[204] Alberic's attempt to provide greater context to the dispute eroded the chronology of his work, as he suggested that Becket's election in 1162 and his exile in 1164 occurred in the same year.[205] This is in part a demonstration that Alberic's work was not a purely annalistic exercise. The text was not only structured by the chronological passage of time, but also by the genealogical lineage of noble families.[206] Alberic frequently interrupted the chronology of his annals to record the ancestors or descendants of an individual, and this flexible approach explains his willingness to adapt the chronology of the dispute. Yet it is also a reflection of the difficulty in creating a comprehensible account of the dispute. While Alberic did not mention the councils at Clarendon or Northampton directly, he did reference the "articles with which the king tried to oppress ecclesiastic freedom in England", citing the Constitutions as the reason for Becket's exile. By not specifying Henry's policies, Trois-Fontaines' approach positioned the dispute as part of the Church's ongoing

[203] '*Helinandus Frigidi Montis Monachi Chronicon*', *Patrologia Latina,* ed. J. P. Migne, accessed 22/03/2021, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:pld&rft_dat=xri:pld:ft:all:Z300078493.

[204] Trois-Fontaines, p. 847.

[205] *…electus fuit hoc anno et consecratus regis anglie cancellarius Thomas … et eodem anno exul ab Anglia aufugit…*, Trois-Fontaines, p. 847.

[206] Grabowski, 'Alberic of Trois-Fontaines' Genealogies', pp. 256-7.

struggle for freedom from secular oppression and presented Becket as the defender of the Church. This image of Becket had been popularised in hagiography and liturgy,[207] and was an approach to the dispute taken by several annalistic chronicles as well, namely those of Anchin, Melrose and Coventry. These texts avoided muddling the chronology by condensing matters further, using the annal for 1164 to record only Becket's exile and its cause.

The annals written at Anchin abbey, as a continuation of Sigebert of Gembloux's chronicle, recorded that Henry snatched away the rights of the Church, while Thomas battled for its liberty in its annal for 1164.[208] The Melrose chronicle stated that Becket left England "due to injuries inflicted on the Church by the king".[209] The Coventry chronicle was slightly more specific, and referenced Becket's resistance to the "wild edicts" given by Henry at Salisbury (referring to Clarendon presumably), which were contrary to the Church.[210] None of these texts specified the Constitutions contested at Clarendon, or mentioned the trial at Northampton. Instead, a general reference was made to Henry tyrannising the Church, which was used to explain Becket's exile. This was a narrative to inspire an ecclesiastic audience and remind them of the threat from secular tyranny and was an important endorsement of Becket. As has been noted earlier, there was some contemporary suspicion of Becket's motivation, Gilbert Foliot in particular saw him as following his ego rather than the needs of the Church.[211] Julian Haseldine and D. J. A. Matthew have more recently argued that Becket was

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[207] Phyllis B. Roberts, *Thomas Becket in the Medieval Latin Preaching Tradition: An Inventory of Sermons about St. Thomas Becket, c. 1170-1400.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), p. 34-5 and 43-4.

[208] Anchin, p. 411.

[209] Melrose, p. 79.

[210] Coventry, p. 685.

[211] Gilbert Foliot, in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 223-6.

fundamentally motivated by a desire to protect his own interests and those of Canterbury itself.[212] Becket's hagiographers went to great lengths to demonstrate that Becket had died on behalf of the Church, since it was the cause, after all, that made the saint's death a martyrdom.[213] Self-interest left Becket no better than a Donatist, committing suicide by martyrdom, rather than a true saint. Equally, as Beryl Smalley has shown, papal theorists employed Becket's cult as a "weapon" to confirm the supremacy of the Gregorian movement.[214] While Norman Cantor has acknowledged that Gregorian doctrines were "archaic" by Becket's time, he still described Becket as "the last Gregorian", and both Smalley and Raymonde Foreville have suggested that Becket was inspired by Gregorian ideals to some degree.[215] The chronicles of Trois-Fontaines, Anchin, Melrose and Coventry did not propose any specific ideology that Becket was following, but by placing the dispute in terms of a clash between *sacerdotium* and *regnum* in broad terms, they elevated Becket, denigrated Henry and fitted events within an ongoing and familiar strand of history, rather than becoming caught in the specific intricacies of the dispute. Where many English texts had attempted to hide the division between the king and his archbishop, Coventry and the non-Angevin texts explicitly placed the two men on opposite sides of a vital conflict.

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[212] Matthew, 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket', p. 294 and Julian Haseldine, 'Thomas Becket: Martyr, Saint - and Friend' in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, eds., Richard Gameson, and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) p. 306.

[213] Staunton, *Biographers*, p.127.

[214] Smalley, *Becket Conflict,* p. 38.

[215] Cantor, *Church, Kingship and Lay Investiture*, pp. 320 and 180, Smalley, *Becket Conflict,* p. 135 and Raymonde Foreville, 'Thomas Becket', in *Thomas Becket dans La Tradition historique et hagiographique* (London: Variorum, 1981), ch. IV, p. 2.

This narrative was reinforced in these chronicles by the juxtaposition of the exile with the coronation of the Young Henry in 1170. The texts written at Anchin, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines all emphasised that the specific duty of archbishops of Canterbury to anoint English kings had been usurped. They recorded that Henry, with the assistance of Roger, archbishop of York, rode roughshod over Canterbury's rights and the dignity of Archbishop Thomas – an obvious insult, but also a provocative challenge to the status of England's primal see.[216] The Coventry chronicle, on the other hand, recorded only that the coronation took place in the presence of the earls and barons of England, not mentioning the presence of any prelates.[217] This was presumably to avoid recording the role of Richard Peche, bishop of Coventry, who was probably one of the bishops who participated.[218] Local considerations discouraged the Coventry annalists from linking the coronation to the exile. The other chronicles, however, used this moment to provide a specific demonstration of Henry ignoring privilege and tradition, and noted the shameful collaboration of certain bishops. While these texts ignored the specifics of the dispute, they described more clearly the specific offence that had occurred during the coronation. The emphasis on succession within annalistic texts makes this inversion of the traditional order stand out. Furthermore, these texts were produced at institutions that had their own privileges that needed to be fiercely protected, and these chronicles themselves were an important means to create an authoritative record of such rights.[219] Henry's cavalier treatment of Canterbury was a worrying reminder of the threats that existed for the traditional rights of the annalists' own monasteries. The chronicle of Pseudo-William Godel (and those texts derived

[216] Anchin, p. 413, Melrose p. 82 and Trois-Fontaines, p. 853.

[217] Coventry, p. 686.

[218] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 196.

[219] Lake, 'Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography', 347.

from it) may have ignored the dispute, but they too recorded the travesty of this coronation.[220] The chronicle of Rushen, an abbey on the Isle of Man, utilised the chronicle of Melrose for non-Manx events, but ignored Melrose's account of the dispute and exile in 1164, and included only a brief account of the martyrdom. The description of the coronation was copied in Rushen's entry for 1171, although Melrose's subsequent account in the same annal of Becket's suspension of the participating bishops, and his return to England was omitted.[221] Once again the shock of Henry's transgression proved worth remembering, but this response also reflected Rushen's specific preoccupation with succession and coronations. In general, the Rushen chronicle showed little interest in English affairs, but it did include a brief note from Melrose's account of Stephen's coronation, recording that the peace of God was forgotten to be offered to the people present.[222] This section of the text was produced in the mid-thirteenth century,[223] a period when details of English coronations would have seemed particularly relevant to Manx annalists. Harald Olafsson was driven from Man by agents of the Norwegian king after Harald failed to present himself at the Norwegian court in 1238.[224] He did not regain his throne until 1242, having finally sailed to Norway to have his rule confirmed. On his return, he further reinforced his legitimacy in 1247 when he was knighted by Henry III, just as his father had done,[225] indicating that English royal rituals were a valuable currency on Man. His brother

[220] Ps-William Godel, p.677, '*Ex Chronico Turonensi'*, p. 477 and '*Roberti Antissiodorensis Chronicon*', p. 240.

[221] Rushen, p. 22.

[222] Rushen, p. 14 and Melrose, p. 70.

[223] The annals are in a single hand until 1257, although the author may have been recording events contemporaneously before this point. An account of a local miracle in 1247 ends: *haec sicut ab ore eius didicimus, scripsimus.* Rushen p. 104.

[224] Rushen, p. 38.

[225] Ibid.

Magnus was also knighted by Henry III, after reclaiming the throne from his usurping cousin.[226] This was a tumultuous period for the Crovan dynasty who ruled the Isle of Man, threatened by both their immediate and more distant family, vulnerable to the demands of their powerful Norwegian overlords. English royal rituals and ceremonies in England provided a valuable endorsement and it seems likely that royal reform on Man was partially modelled on Angevin experiences.[227] It is unsurprising that the chronicler should have shown an interest in the coronation of Henry III's uncle. The Rushen annalists used only a slightly abbreviated version of Melrose's account of the coronation, yet it fitted into a very different story in this text. Here, it was part of an ongoing series of local dynastic struggles; it contributed to a discussion on kingship and succession, not of the liberty of the Church or the failings of Henry II.

While the Coventry chronicle, like many other English works, avoided discussing the controversy of this coronation, for texts created outside of Henry's domain it was an indictment of Henry which spoke to ubiquitous concerns across monastic chronicles about the vulnerability of their precious privileges. Unlike the English chronicles discussed earlier, here the coronation was an event within Becket's story; these texts used their annals for 1164 and 1170 in tandem to create a more convincing image of Henry's persecution of the Church and Becket. The chronicles of Anchin, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines bookended Becket's exile with assaults on the freedom of the church orchestrated by Henry. It was not only a way to endorse Becket and fit his story into a wider theme of the liberty of the Church, but it also specifically demonstrated Henry's failures as a king, matching the trend within the narratives of these texts to denigrate

[226] Ibid., p. 42.

[227] R. Andrew McDonald, *Manx Kingship in Its Irish Sea Setting, 1187-1229: King Rǫgnvaldr and the Crovan Dynasty* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 130 and 170-171.

Henry. In the Anchin chronicle Henry was described as a “worthless apostate” and Alberic of Trois-Fontaines spoke of his “unheard of cruelty”, while the Melrose chronicle compared him to Herod, and suggested that in 1169 he concocted a “base and detestable plot” against Alexander III and Becket.[228] All three texts questioned the validity of the peace that Henry had negotiated with Becket in 1170. Anchin suggested that it palliated the dispute, rather than offering Becket any protection, and Alberic copied Helinand’s accusation that Henry specifically avoided giving Becket the kiss of peace.[229] On the other hand, Melrose claimed that Henry had given Becket the kiss of peace, but used this assertion to make the king’s subsequent involvement in the murder all the more duplicitous.[230] Where these texts imply a degree of duplicity on Henry’s part, there was no such suggestion in the English chronicles mentioned earlier. Dore and Winchcombe both recorded that Becket returned to England *cum pace et voluntate domini regis Henrici*, but offered no further glossing of the event than that and no text referenced the kiss.[231] In the non-Angevin texts however, the dispute contributed to a wider narrative of Henry’s tyranny. The editorial policy of these texts aimed to remember the infamy of a foreign ruler, and, by specifying Henry’s crimes against Becket, to contest the efforts in England to reconcile king and saint. For the French texts, this went hand in hand with efforts to stress Becket’s connection with France and the support he received from Louis.

The dispute was more impactful and more useful to the chronicles of Anchin, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines as a battleground for ecclesiastic liberty in general, rather than for the actual contested reforms proposed at Clarendon. This approach facilitated a

[228] Anchin p. 413, Trois-Fontaines, p. 847 and Melrose, pp. 81 and 83.

[229] Anchin, p. 413 and Trois-Fontaines, p. 853.

[230] Melrose, p. 81.

[231] Dore, p. 525 and Tewkesbury, p. 50.

more proactive endorsement of Becket, and a more damning condemnation of Henry. While the Coventry chronicle, produced in England, did frame Henry's actions as an attack on the Church, it stopped short of the explicit condemnation of the king which is seen in the non-Angevin texts. Outside of Henry's realm, these annalists emphasised rather than avoided the controversies of the dispute, escalating the affair into an essential battle for the liberty of the Church with an explicit reminder of Henry's sins. As with the discussion of Henry's anger, Becket's exile was positioned as part of a familiar framework which had continued from the Roman persecution of early Christians, through the Investiture Controversy, to the writers' own time.

In both approaches extraneous details were replaced with established motifs that turned the complexity of the dispute into another episode in an ongoing strand throughout history. This editorial process made the past comprehensible, by providing a cause for Becket's exile without becoming bogged down in the details of the dispute. Yet while chronicles of various affiliations employed a similar methodology, this contributed to competing movements within Becket's memory. English texts were endeavouring to forget the dispute, frame Becket's exile as the result of royal displeasure and create an uncontroversial memory of Becket and Henry. They contributed to the reconciliation of the two men that occurred after Becket's death. The chronicles of Anchin, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines formed an alternative consensus, each independently constructed a similar image of the dispute. For these three texts, the conflict between Becket and Henry was an integral part of the archbishop's memory. They not only remembered the dispute, but framed it in a way that gave it universal relevance, elevating Becket as a defender of the Church, denigrating Henry as tyrant and using Henry's usurpation of tradition as a reminder of the peril of ignoring the vulnerability of monastic privilege. They wished to make this part of Becket's story

as memorable and evocative as possible. These two trends, either to forget the dispute or to redefine it, did not completely dominate how the dispute was remembered. The Rushen chronicle employed Melrose's account selectively, remembering the controversy of the coronation, but showing no interest in the long dispute that preceded it. So too Coventry adapted this narrative to suit its particular perspective to be critical of Henry, yet avoid embarrassing its own bishop. The pseudo-William Godel group employed elements from both approaches. There was variation and alterations in the editorial decisions made in these texts. They did not blindly follow the prevailing interpretations of the past but chose to follow and contribute to a movement if it was appropriate, or adapt it if it was not.

Editing an "annalistic" account of the dispute: Dunstable

For most annalistic chronicles, the dispute and exile could be resolved in two entries: one in 1164 recording Becket's conflict with Henry and his exile, and one in 1170, recording the coronation of the Young Henry and Becket's return.[232] The detailed and sequential accounts of the dispute found in the Dunstable and Winchester chronicles are clearly outliers then. In contrast to Alberic of Trois-Fontaines' somewhat confused efforts to condense the dispute into a single annal, these two chronicles were able to provide a detailed, annalistic response to the dispute. Through careful editing of a more expansive source, both these texts were able to create an internally coherent account that included the most significant moments of the dispute while still following an annalistic structure. The processes at work here were not dissimilar to the

[232] The Winchcombe chronicle did mention a dispute in 1163, before recording Becket's exile in 1164, but this was a vague reference to a conflict between Henry and his bishops over certain taxes. Winchcombe p. 530.

approaches taken by the texts mentioned above. A central framework was used to make sense of the dispute, rather than recording an exhaustive description of each stage of the conflict. Because these two chronicles offer more content to be assessed, and critically, because their sources are still extant, they represent perfect case studies with which to consider in greater detail the mechanics of editing in annalistic texts and what this achieved.

The Dunstable chronicle offers a clear demonstration of the editorial options available to a medieval annalist. The dispute was first referenced in the annal for 1162, which recorded that Becket immediately resigned the position of chancellor on becoming archbishop, and so incurred Henry's wrath.[233] The annals following this included a series of events relating to the dispute: the Constitutions of Clarendon and the trial at Northampton in 1164, Becket's excommunication of Richard de Luci, Chief Justiciar of England, and others at Vézelay, attempts at reconciliation between Henry and Becket at Montmirail and Amboise, Henry's penance and his reparations after Becket's death.[234] Though Dunstable's annals are generally quite detailed from the start of Stephen's reign onwards, particular attention was paid to Becket's archiepiscopacy. Incidents relating to Becket almost invariably ignored in other annalistic chronicles, such as his presence at the council of Rouen and his role in the marriage of the Young Henry and Margaret of France, were included.[235] However, other seemingly significant elements such as Becket's reception by Louis VII during his exile or the coronation of 1170, which were recorded by other chronicles, were not recorded.

[233] Dunstable, p. 18.

[234] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[235] Ibid., p. 18.

Richard of Morins, the prior of Dunstable, oversaw the production of the annals in the early thirteenth century. The early annals were copied from Ralph of Diceto's *Ymagines Historiarum,* while Richard's own recollection of events formed the basis of the annals from 1200-1210. The next ten years of annals were written up from previous notes (possibly made by Richard) in 1220, from which point onwards events were recorded contemporaneously.[236] Richard was an influential academic, administrator and diplomat; alongside his work on Dunstable's chronicle, he also produced several treatises, primarily focused on canon law. [237] The level of attention to Becket and the legal aspects of the dispute may represent Richard's own personal interest in the matter; he was a widely respected authority on canon law, a reputation derived from his teaching at Bologna and his written publications.[238] However, this suggestion is not entirely convincing. The punishment of criminal clerics, an issue that Richard returned to several times and on which he altered his opinion on in his academic treatises, was a key element of Becket's conflict with Henry, but here it was ignored. C. R. Cheney has cautioned against linking Richard too closely with the text, citing errors uncharacteristic for a scholar and diplomat such as Richard and suggesting it would be "unwise" to explain all the entries through connection to him.[239] It is difficult to determine the level of Richard's editorial involvement; while he seems to have marked

[236] C. R. Cheney, 'Notes on the Making of the Dunstable Annals, AD 33 to 1242', in *Essays in Medieval History*, ed. T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powicke (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 96.

[237] Robert C. Figueira, 'Morins, Richard de [Called Ricardus Anglicus] (Early 1160s–1242), Canon Lawyer and Historian', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) accessed 24/04/2019 http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23518.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Cheney, 'Notes on the Making of the Dunstable Annals', pp. 222-29.

on the St Albans manuscript of the *Ymagines* which entries were to be copied by his scribes,[240] it is unclear how much further he was involved although the recurring interest in legal aspects of the dispute and the role of papal legates suggests that his influence, if not his participation, was not negligible.

It is more fruitful to consider the relationship between the chronicle and its source. The use of the *Ymagines* provided the monks of Dunstable with an extensive resource to employ, but it is inaccurate to dismiss the Dunstable account as "a straightforward crib".[241] The table below (fig. 3) shows the different approaches contained within Dunstable's editing process, by comparing presentation of the same event in both texts. Phrases in bold are common in both.

Event	Dunstable chronicle	*Ymagines Historiarum*
1162 Becket's consecration	Eodem anno fit Thomas archiepiscopus Cantuariensis, statim **cancellariae sigillum resignans**, unde regis indignationem incurrit.	Clero totius provinciae Cantuariorum generaliter Lundoniae convocato, praesente Henrico filio regis et regni justiciariis, Thomas Cantuariensis archidiaconus et regis cancellarius, nemine reclamante, sollenniter electus est in archiepiscopum. … [the proceedings of the consecration] … Nam curiae curis interesse non approbans, ut eximeretur a curia, vacans orationi, superintendens ecclesiae suae negotiis nuntium in normanniam regi direxit renuntias **cancellariae, sigillum resignans**. Quod altius in cor regis ascendit, in se solum causam resignationis tam subitae retorquentis ... [followed by examples of bishops who were chancellors]
1164 Constitutions of Clarendon	Rex apud Clarendonam impetravit, **ut regni consuetudines**	MCLXIIII. Ex mandato regis, convenientibus episcopis et proceribus apud Clarendune viii.

[240] Gaynor Bowman and Joshua A Westgard 'Dunstable', in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 63.

[241] Figueira, 'Morins, Richard de'.

	archiepiscoporum et episcoporum auctoritate, firmarentur et scriptis. Quod Thomas dum ad cognitionem Papae pertulisset, ab obligatione, quam inierat, absolutionem petiit et impetravit.	kalendas Februarii, post immensos tractatus, rex tandem ad hoc animos praelatorum inflexit, **ut regni consuetudines archiepiscoporum et episcoporum auctoritate firmarentur et scriptis. Quod Thomas Cantuariensis archiepiscopus, dum ad cognitionem summi pontificis pertulisset ab obligatione quam inierat absolutionem petiit et impetravit.** [Followed by a description of Henry's policy of punishing criminal clergymen]
1166/1167 Conference at Montmirail	Duo legati **apud Munmirail regem et archiepiscopum convocarunt**. Sed **licet archiepiscopus eos** certa ratione susceptos haberet, tamen sibi et suis restitutionem fieri petiit, paratus postmodum subire judicium super principali, quia nudus contendere non debebat. **Quod cum illi nec vellent nec possent, infecto negotio ad curiam redierunt.**	Willelmus Papiensis, Johannes Neapolitanus cardinales a latere summi pontificis destinati, **regem et archiepiscopum convocaverunt apud Mumnirail**; et **licet archiepiscopus eos** in partem regis inclinatiores sensisset, rem tamen in judicium ea ratione deduci concessit, illis publice residentibus, ut secundum ordinem ecclesiasticum, tam sibi quam suis prius fieret ablatorum in integrum restitutio. Nec enim spoliatus subire judicium voluit, nec cogi potuit aliqua ratione. **Quod cum illi nec vellent nec possent,infecto negotio redierunt ad curiam.**

Fig 3: comparison of the text of the Dunstable annals and Ralph of Diceto's Ymagine Historiarum. Dunstable, pp. 17-22 and Ymagines, pp. 306, 312 and 329.

These three examples demonstrate the varied nature of the editorial process. The Dunstable annalists created an original entry for 1162, which completely changed the narrative of the event. Ralph of Diceto represented Henry's reaction as sadness at the resignation, which he implied was unnecessary and unexpected by noting several

other bishops who had acted as chancellors.[242] In the Dunstable text this justification of the king's grievance was ignored. There, Becket immediately resigned the position of chancellor on becoming archbishop, an act which incurred Henry's displeasure.[243] This dramatically altered the event so that instead of reading as Henry's heartfelt surprise at Becket's over-dramatic posturing, it set the stage for the subsequent conflict and Henry's persecution of Becket.

On the other hand, the record for 1164 opened with a passage copied directly; here Ralph's version of the event was satisfactory for Dunstable. The Dunstable annal followed Ralph's overview of the dispute and copied his record of Becket's misstep in submitting to Henry's policy, an error for which the archbishop was subsequently absolved by Alexander III. The preamble was removed, reducing the content to better fit the brevity of a set of annals. Ralph's description of Henry's specific policy towards criminal clerics was also omitted, and instead the confirmation and codification of the customs of the realm was presented as the point of contention. This pruning explained events in general terms but removed the more specific elements that the Dunstable annalists deemed superfluous.

An intermediary approach was taken when recording the conference at Montmirail, where some phrases were borrowed directly within an otherwise original composition. These entries are somewhat confused, Ralph of Diceto recorded this as a meeting called by the legates William of Pavia and John of Naples in 1166, which Dunstable transposed to 1167. Ralph seems to have conflated a meeting on the French-Norman border near the castles of Gisors and Trie in 1167, arranged by the legates William

[242] *Ymagines Historiarum*, pp. 307-8.

[243] *unde regis indignationem incurrit*. Dunstable p. 17.

and Otto, with the meeting at Montmirail which took place in 1169 and was organised by a different group of papal emissaries. The Dunstable version corrected the year and left the legates unnamed, thus avoiding mention of John of Naples, who was not there, but it followed Ralph in placing the event at Montmirail. The Dunstable annals did not compound the error by also including a second conference at Montmirail in the correct year, as Ralph did. The narrative of the meeting in 1167 was largely similar to Ralph's version and conveyed the same message: that Becket was suspicious of the legates, and the meeting failed because restitution could not be provided to Becket and his followers. Appropriate material was copied into an original composition to avoid repeating the more obvious mistakes which Ralph had made and to concentrate the account on the elements the Dunstable annalists considered significant. The final sentence was copied exactly, Dunstable's narrative of this event was close enough to its source that it could share the same conclusion.

These examples demonstrate how the Dunstable annalists copied, adapted, or ignored their source while editing. This was clearly an involved and deliberative process which achieved more than simply reducing Ralph's work to better suit a set of annals. Rather, it created a unique account of Becket which matched the needs and expectations of the priory. Several of the editorial decisions created a humbler image of Becket. Ralph's description of the "great splendour" (*apparatus magnus*) of Becket's arrival in Paris when he was sent to escort Margaret of France to England for her forthcoming marriage to the Young Henry was removed, eliminating the reference to Becket's propensity for lavish display as a chancellor.[244]On the other hand, Ralph's record of Becket's humble petition for absolution from Alexander III was retained

[244] Dunstable, p. 18 and *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 302.

exactly, and Ralph's description of Becket's desperate flight from Northampton and perilous journey in a fragile boat across to Flanders was repeated with only minor alterations.[245] However, the dramatic image of Becket marching with his cross before him from the court the day prior to his flight, which did not create the same image of vulnerability and humility, was omitted.[246] This message was further reinforced by language chosen when re-writing Ralph's work. Becket was described as *nudus* (stripped naked) rather than *spoliatus* (robbed or plundered) in regards to his lost rights and possessions, a change which focused attention on Becket's pitiful condition and alluded to Saint Jerome's adage to follow naked Christ, naked (*nudus nudum Christum sequi*), paralleling Becket's humility with Christ's.[247] This was a popular device, which in the twelfth century had transitioned from hagiographical texts into wider usage, and would have been a recognisable allusion even in a truncated form.[248] Though Ralph had endeavoured to defend the actions of Henry during the dispute, the Dunstable chronicle created a different account by ignoring Ralph's justifications and offering a more edifying image of Becket. The Dunstable chronicle was written several decades after Ralph was writing the *Ymagines*. Henry was dead and there was less need for Dunstable to guard his legacy. At the same time, Canterbury had become one of the most celebrated pilgrimage sites in Europe. Becket represented an established figure of sanctity and so elements which conformed to this image, such as his humility, were

[245] Dunstable, pp. 18-19 and *Ymagines Historiarum*, pp. 313-14.

[246] *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 314.

[247] Franco Mormando, "'*Nudus Nudum Christum Sequi*': The Franciscans and Differing Interpretations of Male Nakedness in Fifteenth-Century Italy", in *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, eds. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), p. 172.

[248] Giles Constable, '*Nudus nudum Christum sequi* and Parallel Formulas in the Twelfth Century: A Supplementary Dossier', *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays Presented to George Hunston Williams on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Forrester Church and T. George (Leiden: Brill, 1979), pp. 85-90.

emphasised and the controversies forgotten. Ralph's approach of creating an even-handed discussion of the specifics of the dispute was incompatible with Dunstable's memory of Becket the saint, and so it was altered accordingly.

Yet the Dunstable chronicle's approach was not only the result of its chronological distance from events, but also the specific political context when it was written. Dunstable's editorial policy indicates several clear preoccupations, one of which was a consistent interest in the role of the Papacy in the dispute. This chronicle referenced Becket's absolution by Alexander III in 1164 and his subsequent appeal to the Pope at Northampton.[249] The role of papal legates was noted in the negotiations of 1167, in absolving those Becket exiled at Vézelay and later, in settling matters with Henry after the martyrdom at the Compromise of Avranches in 1172.[250] In contrast, implications of disunity within the English church were hidden. The Dunstable chronicle did not record, as Ralph's work did, that Becket feared unfair judgement from his fellow bishops at Northampton, instead referencing only the judgement of the nobles (*proceres*).[251] Only Ricard de Luci was named among those excommunicated by Becket at Vézelay, the bishop Josceline of Bohon and archdeacon Richard of Ilchester, who were both named by Ralph, went unmentioned.[252] Perhaps most dramatically, Dunstable made no mention of the coronation of the Young Henry, an event that for many was a shocking usurpation of the rights of Canterbury by the bishop of London and archbishop of York. Dunstable's selection criteria highlighted

[249] Dunstable, pp. 18-19.

[250] Ibid., pp. 19-22.

[251] Dunstable, pp. 18-19 and *Ymagines Historiarum*, pp. 313-14.

[252] Dunstable, p. 19 and *Ymagines Historiarum*, pp. 318-10.

the role of the Apostolic See in the dispute and hid the degree of conflict between Becket and his fellow clergy.

These trends reflect the political circumstances of the early thirteenth century. If the St Albans manuscript of the *Ymagines* was copied at Dunstable in 1209 or 1210 as Cheney has suggested,[253] then those annals recording the dispute were written during a period of significant tension for the English church. Stephen Langton was still in exile following his contested appointment as archbishop of Canterbury and King John had been excommunicated by Innocent III. The pope and his legates played a prominent role in English politics in the early thirteenth century, which made their appearance in Becket's story seem more relevant and significant. Equally, the stronger corporate identity of the English Church in the thirteenth century,[254] made the memory of the conflict between Becket and his bishops seem incongruous, and thus better to forget. The Dunstable annalists may have wished to create an image of a unified English Church to match the actions of contemporary bishops, only two of whom broke ranks and refused to follow Langton into exile.[255] Furthermore, while doubts remain as to the extent of Richard of Morins' influence on the Dunstable annals, his involvement with the production of the text would fit with the interest in papal affairs. In 1203 he had been John's ambassador to the pope and in 1212 he would be selected to calculate the damages and losses within the diocese of Lincoln during the interdict.[256] His participation in such events may well have led him to view Becket's clash with Henry in terms of papal diplomacy and jurisdiction. The Dunstable annalists edited Ralph of

[253] Cheney, 'Notes on the Making of the Dunstable Annals', pp. 215-217.

[254] S. T. Ambler, *Bishops in the Political Community of England, 1213-1272* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 9.

[255] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 45.

[256] Figueira, 'Morins, Richard de'.

Diceto's account to match their contemporary concerns. The chronicle also included a particularly detailed account of Langton's translation of Becket in 1220, a moment which directly linked contemporary events to Becket's life.[257] Nor was this trend limited to Becket. Events on the continent were generally omitted, but the interdict placed on Louis VII did merit inclusion, as did the excommunication of Philip I.[258] These incidents were not explicitly used to comment on current affairs, but as the past was curated in these annals, moments such as these, which related to both contemporary concerns and the interests of the text's supervisor, stood out as worthy of recording, and other elements were forgotten. Dunstable's editorial process also provided events with a narrative consistency that made events more comprehensible. Rather than trying to reflect the depth and detail of Ralph's work, shared causal explanations were used to link events into a more straightforward account. For example, Henry's anger was noted both at Becket's consecration and at Avranches. The Dunstable annalists specified that Becket excommunicated at Vézelay the men who were named earlier as upholding the Constitutions of Clarendon. The negotiations of 1167 were said to have failed because restitution had not been made to Becket, but in a later annal, recording the meeting at Amboise in 1170, peace was attained precisely because Henry promised to make restitution to Becket and his followers. Becket's bold assertion of his immunity from secular judgement at Northampton was repeated at his martyrdom. While this approach lacked nuance and did not provide as full a picture, it seeded shared narrative points between different annals, linking them together so as to guide a reader through the progression of this account, just as the chronicles of Trois-Fontaines, Anchin and Melrose connected their annals for 1164 and 1170 to create a

[257] Dunstable, p. 58.

[258] Ibid., pp. 16 and 13.

more compelling account. In this way, editing not only promoted a particular version of the past, but also made the past more comprehensible, with simplified causal connections. The Dunstable annals were not just a list of events, but rather each separate annal connected with and provided meaning to the others.

Far from being a "crib" of Ralph's work, it was through an extensive and creative process that the *Ymagines* was adapted into an account appropriate to the Dunstable chronicle. The source material was discerningly used, adapted or ignored to create a series of annals that provided a coherent and accessible account of events. This process not only demonstrates the condensing of an account to suit the focused, chronological structure of the annalistic form, but also reveals the concerns and perspective of the institution where the text was produced. The controversies of the dispute seemed largely settled, Dunstable did not qualify its celebration of Becket or justify the actions of Henry as Ralph had done. Yet the disunity of the English Church was an uncomfortable memory, which was studiously avoided. Instead, Dunstable preferred to present the dispute in terms of papal mediation, influenced surely by the interests of its prior Richard of Morins. This provides not only a different view of the dispute and its significance, but it is also an opportunity to understand the perspective of the monks of Dunstable. This is an account of the dispute, but it is an account of Dunstable Priory as well.

Editing an "annalistic" account of the dispute: Winchester

The Winchester chronicle, written at St Swithun's, the priory of Winchester cathedral, offers a revealing comparison to Dunstable's approach. Winchester's selective employment of its source also aimed to create a more focused account of events, but

the result was markedly different to Dunstable's version. The section of the Winchester chronicle containing the dispute was written c.1200.[259] While Richard of Devizes, a monk of St Swithun's, has been associated with the annals, John Appleby has suggested that the section from 1139–1190 "could have been written by almost any literate monk in England".[260] In Appleby's view, there is nothing in the section discussing Becket indicating the particular influence of Richard of Devizes. As in the Dunstable text, the Winchester account of the dispute was segmented over multiple entries, following the course of events. Every annal in the Winchester chronicle from 1161-1171 contained a reference to Becket, and the story was interrupted only by a handful of entries on storms and notable deaths.

The Winchester annals were also based on a specific authority, in this case the *vita* of Becket written by Herbert of Bosham. Unfortunately, the exact manuscript used by the monks of Winchester cannot be identified. The only extant manuscript of Herbert's *vita* that can be dated to the twelfth century is from the Cistercian abbey of St Mary Ourscamp, near Arras, which has no obvious connection to Winchester.[261] The Winchester chronicle contains nothing about Becket that cannot be found in Herbert's account and it includes several idiosyncratic anecdotes specific to this *vita*. However, there was far less direct borrowing in Winchester than in Dunstable; Herbert's text was a particularly verbose and complicated work of hagiography and as such was more difficult to integrate into a set of annals than Ralph of Diceto's chronological history.

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[259] John Appleby, 'Richard of Devizes and the Annals of Winchester', *Historical Research*, 36.93 (1963), p. 71.

[260] Ibid., pp. 74-5.

[261] 'CalmView: Overview', *Lambeth Palace Library Database of Archives and Manuscripts,* accessed 03/09/2019, https://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=MSS%2F5048&pos=10.

Nevertheless, Herbert's work was discerningly employed to create an accessible version of the dispute focused on Becket himself, establishing him as an imitable model of virtue.

Herbert, in contrast to his co-hagiographers and the Dunstable chronicle, did not suggest that the conflict between king and archbishop began in 1162, after Becket's consecration, but instead suggested that there was a period of concord up until the Council of Woodstock in 1163.[262] The Winchester chronicle, however, used the annal for 1163 to record Becket's consecration of several bishops and dedication of the abbey of Reading.[263] Instead it was at Clarendon in 1164 that Winchester introduced the dispute. This was followed by a description of Becket's trial at Northampton, his exile in France, Henry's persecution of his family and allies, the failure of the negotiations at Montmirail and Montmartre, the coronation of the Young Henry and Becket's subsequent return.[264]

This account was enlivened with specific details taken from Herbert, such as Alexander III's ecstatic reception of Becket at the Council of Tours in 1162, and Becket's adoption of the name "Christian" as he fled in disguise from Northampton. The former moment confirms that the Winchester annals were not based on the *Quadrilogus*, a composite life that included abridged elements of Herbert's text, as that version omitted the Tours anecdote.[265] These elements provided a theatrical

[262] Staunton, *Biographers*, p. 108.

[263] Winchester, p. 57.

[264] Ibid., pp. 57-60.

[265] '*Quadrilogus'*, in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173)* ed. James Craigie Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 4, p. 294 and Herbert of Bosham, '*Vita Sancti Thomæ Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi et Martyris, Auctoribus Willelmo Filio Stephani et Herberto de Boseham*', in *Materials for the History of*

memorability to the story, offering a colourful vignette for a reader. Such an approach was occasionally employed in the Dunstable chronicle, most conspicuously in Becket's perilous flight from Northampton, but it is more prominent in the Winchester text. These anecdotes conveyed Becket's sanctity, noting the esteem in which the head of the Christian Church held him, or by showing him to embody the Christian faith in his pseudonym, or in Dunstable's case by emphasising his vulnerability and courage. They were memorable scenes to endorse a popular saint, which affectively connected a reader to Becket. Bosham's expansive and personal *vita* provided such moments in abundance, yet this prolixity also required simplification, and much of his material was omitted to create an account suitable for an annalistic text. In some cases, this could lead to inaccuracy. For example, the Winchester chronicle wrongly recorded that Henry dispatched a negotiating team of bishops to Rome in 1165, when in fact Pope Alexander was based in Sens at the time.[266] Such a mistake is understandable, as Herbert wrote that these bishops set out, but did not state their exact destination.[267] As was mentioned in the previous chapter's discussion of Becket's consecration, Winchester recorded Becket's laughter at Henry's suggestion that he should be archbishop.[268] In Herbert's *vita* Becket's response was a humble acceptance of his worldly lifestyle, but in the Winchester annals much context is missing, leaving the impression that little more was said other than a wry acknowledgement of the inappropriateness of the suggestion.

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173), ed. James Craigie Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 3, pp. 253-4.

[266] Winchester, p. 58, fn. 2.

[267] Herbert of Bosham, '*Vita Sancti Thomæ'* p. 323.

[268] *Quam religiosum inquit et sanctum virum decrevisti populo Dei praeponere.* Winchester, p. 56. See also chapter one, p. 27.

It is hard to believe that this was the intention, however, as the Winchester chronicle presented an unremittingly positive image of Becket. As in Dunstable, Winchester's editing created an account that was less supportive of Henry, including none of Herbert's "elaborate laudations of Henry as a sovereign".[269] Herbert did not finish his *vita* of Becket until 1184-6, while Henry was still alive, and while Herbert was desperately trying to regain his property in England, something he would not achieve until 1187.[270] This is not to say that Herbert did not criticise Henry, he compared him to the devil when discussing a meeting between the king and archbishop in 1170,[271] but Winchester included no compliments towards Henry, no discussion of his early friendship with Becket, and did not lay any blame on the courtiers who had turned Henry against his archbishop. Winchester did record Henry's attempt to prevent other rulers from offering Becket sanctuary, his confiscation of Becket's assets and those of his family and allies. Winchester stated that Henry prohibited prayers on Becket's behalf and included his threats towards the Cistercian order as a whole in order to intimidate them into abandoning Becket. The chronicle did not specifically denigrate Henry's character, but these annals constructed the image of a vicious and vengeful monarch. This antipathy towards Henry could demonstrate, as in the Dunstable

[269] James Craigie Robertson suggested this was an attempt by Herbert to regain influence and favour during his fallow years in France following Becket's death, although Staunton has shown that Herbert's complaints of being ostracised were overstated. See James Craigie Robertson, 'Introduction' in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 3, pp. xxii-xxiii and Michael Staunton, 'an Introduction to Herbert of Bosham', in *Herbert of Bosham: A Medieval Polymath* (York: York Medieval Press, 2019) pp. 11-12.

[270] Staunton, *Lives*, p. 10 and Frank Barlow, 'Bosham, Herbert of (d. c. 1194), Biographer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, September 2004), accessed 09/12/2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13014.

[271] Staunton, *Biographers,* p. 112.

chronicle, that annalists working in the early thirteenth century felt no need to provide a sympathetic portrayal of the king. Yet the Winchester annals were more explicit in their condemnation of Henry than Dunstable was. This perhaps stemmed from Henry's imposing Richard of Ilchester as bishop on the cathedral in 1173, an appointment which had been actively resisted by the monks.[272] The chronicle recorded Richard as being "of good memory" at his death, but this was far cooler than the eulogies for Richard's predecessors William Gifford and Henry of Blois.[273] Alternatively, the Winchester annalists may have recorded Henry's persecution of Becket in order to emphasise the saint's steadfast endurance of suffering. It showed that each injury inflicted on the archbishop only highlighted his courage and dedication. This matched the trend across many annalistic chronicles to present Becket as a victim, rather than a militant opponent of tyranny.[274] In addition, while Richard of Ilchester was firmly Henry's man and had been excommunicated by Becket for implementing the Constitutions of Clarendon, Henry of Blois (who was far more popular with the monks of Winchester) had been a resolute ally of the archbishop. The celebration of Becket within the chronicle may have been a reflection of the support that he had received from a fondly remembered local bishop. This focus on Becket was no doubt also influenced by the nature of Winchester's source, a work of hagiography that encouraged the Winchester annalists to concentrate on the saint himself and his

[272] John Hudson, 'Ilchester, Richard of (d. 1188), Administrator and Bishop of Winchester', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, September 2004) accessed 05/09/2019, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23515.

[273] Winchester, pp. 48-9 and 60.

[274] See chapter three, pp. 96 and 111-112.

virtue. Yet these writers were not unthinking in their employment of Herbert's *vita* and adapted as they saw fit.

The Winchester authors, like those working at Dunstable needed to condense the dispute into an account suitable for an annalistic chronicle. Again, this required creating a more focused narrative, but the resulting account was notably different to that of Dunstable. The Winchester account did not discuss ancient customs as the point of contention at Clarendon, but instead specified Henry's proposed reform to the punishment of criminal clerics, and Becket's counter-position, namely that such men should be disrobed, or, if that was insufficient, disrobed and exiled.[275] This missed out Herbert of Bosham's extensive glossing of another key issue, the prohibition on clergy leaving England without the king's permission,[276] in favour of a simpler narrative. The Winchester annalists did note that there were other causes of the conflict, but that for the sake of brevity they would remain silent on them,[277] an explicit acknowledgement of the need for annalists to be concise. While Winchester recorded the confiscation of Becket assets and those of his allies', this was not presented as a stumbling block in the negotiations. Instead, it was recorded that at the negotiations in 1168 "only three words prevented the restoring of peace, namely: 'saving the honour of God'",[278] and in 1169 failure was explicitly blamed on Henry's refusal to give Becket the kiss of peace.[279] The latter point is fairly self-explanatory, but the former requires knowledge of the significance of this phrase as a caveat which prevented Becket and his fellow bishops from agreeing to Henry's proposals; they could not agree to anything which

[275] Winchester, p. 57.

[276] Staunton, *Biographers,* p. 100.

[277] *multae sunt causae dissensionis quae brevitatis causa silemus*. Winchester p. 57.

[278] *tria tantum verba obfuerunt paci reformandae, scilicet salvo honore Dei*. Winchester p. 59.

[279] Winchester, p. 59.

undermined the Church, and Henry was unwilling to accept anything less than complete consent.[280] This illustrates the difference between Dunstable and Winchester's approaches to causality. Dunstable offered a broader overview, the dispute was over "ancient customs", and the failure of negotiations was linked to Becket's desire for restitution. Winchester provided more precise information: the dispute was sparked by disagreement over the punishment of clergy by secular courts, and it was stated that negotiations were impeded by a specific phrase or ritual, and recorded exact anecdotal details of what Becket said and did.

The two chronicles diverged not only in their narrative, or presentation, of events but also in terms of story, or which events they chose to record. Both accounts included the meetings at Clarendon and Northampton in 1164, but after that they created very different versions of the exile, with Winchester paying greater attention to Becket himself. The Winchester annals focused on Becket's experience in France, his reception by Louis VII, his meeting with Alexander III at Sens and the various monasteries at which he stayed during his exile. Dunstable's annals ignored all this, but instead included Becket's excommunications at Vézelay and the subsequent absolution of the excommunicates by a papal legate. In the Winchester text, Henry's confiscations were explicitly recorded in 1166 (alongside his threats towards the Cistercians) to emphasise the king's relentless persecution of Becket, while the Dunstable annals only alluded to this event when noting that Becket's desire for restitution prevented reconciliation. For Dunstable, the confiscations were important

[280] This interpretation is reminiscent of Timothy Reuter's argument that the dispute moved beyond the actual rules in question into an intractable technical argument over the terms of satisfaction or reconciliation, ensuring that events continued to drag on. Timothy Reuter '*Velle sibi fieri in forma hac*: symbolic acts in the Becket dispute', in *Medieval Polities and Modern Mentalities*, ed. Timothy Reuter and Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 187-8.

as an explanatory causal link, for Winchester on the other hand, they provided an illustration of Becket's victimhood. Dunstable's annal for 1170 recorded the final meeting between Henry and Becket when peace was agreed, noting the presence of Rotrou of Rouen as mediator, and including a lengthy quote from Henry promising Becket peace and instructing his son to restore the archbishop's goods. For Winchester, the significant aspect of 1170 was the coronation of Henry's son and the excommunication of Roger, bishop of York, and the other bishops who usurped Becket by participating in this event. The reconciliation was added as an afterthought, the annal simply noting that "the same year peace was made between king and archbishop, and the archbishop returned to England and was received by the majority with honour".[281] The Winchester annalists omitted any reference to the papal legates who featured prominently in Dunstable's account and were more than willing to acknowledge the divide between Becket and his co-bishops. Where Dunstable recorded that it was the nobles who exacerbated the divide between Henry and Becket at Northampton, Winchester instead emphasised how Becket was abandoned by his fellow bishops due to their fear of the king. Winchester explicitly named the bishops (Roger of York, Gilbert Foliot, Roger of Worcester, Hilary of Chichester, Bartholomew of Exeter) who argued the royal case to the pope in 1165, and suggested that Becket's fellow bishops had encouraged him in his misguided endorsement of the Constitutions of Clarendon. This approach emphasised Becket's isolation and exceptional courage in opposing Henry. While similarities exist between the texts in both their content and editorial process, each was clearly acting to its own interpretation of what merited recording, and what each event signified. Where Dunstable connected events with

[281] Winchester, pp. 59-60.

shared causal threads, Winchester used the central figure of Becket to draw the annals together.

Like the Augustinian canons of Dunstable Priory, the Benedictine monks of Winchester were using a comprehensive work, written by an author who witnessed events, to create their account of the dispute. Both texts needed to adapt their sources into a more straightforward, sequential account of what took place, yet this was not merely a matter of picking material from their source to create a list of events. The careful editing of these chronicles produced an account that guided a reader through the complexities of the dispute, fixing events in narratives that provided them with structure and meaning. Dunstable created a somewhat procedural account that structured the initiation, escalation and reconciliation with causal connections. The influence of contemporary politics and the interests of Richard of Morins encouraged a focus on the dispute itself and the negotiation arising from it**.** Winchester's version was more interested in Becket, using Herbert's *vita* to follow Becket's movements and promote his virtues in a more hagiographic account of the dispute. While the Dunstable chronicle concentrated on the legalistic aspects and the role of papal arbitration, Winchester's account centred on how the dispute impacted Becket. The distinct focus of each text is demonstrated by the different purpose that recording Henry's confiscations fulfilled. For Winchester, Becket's story was constructed from individual anecdotes that were connected by what they said about the saint. The confiscation emphasised his perseverance in the face of cruel suffering, as well as contributing to a narrative of Henry II's inadequacies as a king. For Dunstable, the confiscation connected the annals of 1167 and 1170 into a narrative unit. In the former, negotiations failed because of the lack of restitution, in the latter peace was achieved when it was promised. These moments did not contribute as explicitly to an image of Becket's

sanctity or Henry's perniciousness but did fit within an ongoing interest in legal conflicts mediated by papal agents that ran through the text. These differences demonstrate how the priorities and interests of each institution impacted their approach; each made its own decision as to what the significance of the dispute was. It was a feat of some ingenuity to create a brief and focused account which not only informed a reader of the events themselves but positioned these events within a multi-layered discussion of the life of Becket, the reign of Henry, Christian values or legal arbitration. The creative editing of these annals produced an account that reflected the institution and its specific perspective on the dispute and allowed these texts to ignore the controversies that their sources had felt it was necessary to address. The Dunstable and Winchester chronicles did not need to justify the actions of either Henry or Becket, their efforts made the dispute reflect only about the exact issues they wanted it to speak about.

Conclusion

The dispute between Henry and Becket posed several challenges to a medieval annalist. It was a convoluted episode, both in terms of the wide range of issues that were contested, and the events themselves, as initial clashes escalated into the showdowns at Clarendon and Northampton before falling into a pattern of failed mediations and reciprocal recriminations. It was also a sensitive matter. The actions of both Henry and Becket had been seen as controversial, perhaps even unacceptable, and the dispute had brought to the fore persistent and difficult questions about royal authority and the status of the clergy. While Becket's faction had presented affairs as an essential battle for the liberty of the Church, royalists had accused him of

histrionics. A robust editorial policy was needed to reduce the dispute to only its most significant moments and to navigate its contentious elements. There was both diversity and creativity in the efforts of these texts to simplify and sanitise such a challenging memory.

Annalists had an array of possible sources to employ when creating their account of the dispute. The most direct resource was a written account, be it a *vita*, historical text, or another annalistic chronicle. Yet these accounts were built from other, less direct, influences as well. Literary tropes and motifs, ideas and narratives promoted by liturgy, popular conceptions of the past and contemporary political circumstances all could play a role in the editing process. The annalists' employment and adaptation of this array of available responses made the complexities of the dispute comprehensible by placing it within a unifying narrative, while contradictory elements were omitted.

Royal anger was a familiar trope employed by several English texts that reduced the severity of the dispute from an urgent political crisis to a squabble. On the other hand, in the Anchin, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines chronicles the dispute was framed in terms of secular tyranny and ecclesiastic liberty. The exile of 1164 and the coronation of 1170 were connected to celebrate Becket and disparage the oppression of the Church. The Dunstable chronicle focused on the dispute itself, the questions of jurisdiction and recompense that it raised, and was shaped by a broader interest in papal politics and censure. In Winchester, the dispute helped to tell the story of Becket, demonstrating the qualities of a pre-eminent saint and providing memorable anecdotes. A central narrative strand was vital to processing the dispute and fitting it to the needs of the text. Yet just as significant was the decision to avoid uncomfortable narratives, to isolate events from each other and ignore their context, or to impose an alternative narrative that facilitated the forgetting of elements that did not fit.

There was variety and originality in these responses. It cannot be taken for granted that a chronicle would follow the interpretation of its source, and there was a discerning editorial process at work in these texts. The reinterpretation that occurred within texts such as the Dunstable or Winchester chronicles indicates that it was an active decision for a text to follow an existing interpretation, not an unthinking one. The authors at Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Dore consciously chose to follow their Gloucester source and downplay the dispute, though each used their own narrative phrasing to convey this message. The chronicles derived from pseudo-William Godel's work chose to copy his words and emphasise Becket's connection to France, an approach also apparent in other French texts not based on the pseudo-William chronicle. At the same time, the important role of source and consensus means that any decision to deviate from previously established interpretations of the past is purposeful. The Coventry and Rushen chronicles adapted existing approaches to match their needs. Coventry saw the dispute as an assault on the Church but avoided embarrassing their local bishop when it came to recording the coronation. Rushen's annalists only selected elements from the chronicle of Melrose that had a broader relevance to affairs on Man, and otherwise ignored their source.

This purposeful editing made sense of the dispute and reflected the concerns and priorities of the institution that produced it. The approach of Anchin, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines seems to have been influenced by their location outside of Henry's lands. They wanted the dispute to be remembered as a key battleground for ecclesiastic liberty, with Becket as a popular saint who endorsed this cause and Henry as a villain who opposed it. Dunstable's response also seems to have been influenced by contemporary political circumstances, and to some degree by the interests of its prior, Richard of Morins. The dispute here served to help the reader to understand their own

times. In contrast, Winchester's account of the dispute revolved around the central image of St Thomas, inspiring and encouraging their monks through the memory of his Christian virtue. Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Dore largely followed their source, the lost Gloucester Chronicle, and perpetuated a narrative that stabilised and sanitised the history of their realm. This was the goal of other Angevin texts such as Waverley or Coggeshall which endeavoured to ignore the dispute as much as possible. There was no clear distinction between twelfth- and thirteenth-century attitudes, no universal rule that governed the response of an institution. Rather, as each team of monks created an account of the dispute, they also created an account of themselves, their interests, their assumptions.

Yet while it is important to stress that these texts were not monolithic in their response, there are nevertheless trends from which more general conclusions can be drawn. The most immediate conclusion is that most texts were unwilling to record specifics of the dispute, with only the Winchester and Dunstable texts dedicating more than a couple of annals to the matter. Some precise details appeared regularly within the annals, such as references to the council which took place at Clarendon, indicating that, then as now, this was seen as a key moment in the dispute. Most elements did not enjoy this permanence, however, and only the Winchester annals offered an example of one of the contested policies. The punishment of clerics, an issue which featured prominently in hagiographic records of the dispute and in modern scholarship, was almost entirely ignored.[282] For the most part, there was little desire to provide an exact record of the causes and arguments of the dispute. Even the texts which explicitly focused on the defence of the Church from secular tyranny did not record the

[282] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 127-8 and 181-2.

exact policies that Becket had opposed. Henry's disregard for Canterbury's right to crown a king of England proved more memorable than any element of the Constitutions of Clarendon. This specific violation of an established privilege was more relevant to the monastic annalists, who had their own traditional rights that required diligent protection. It seems that Becket's martyrdom was a far more convincing demonstration of his commitment to the cause of the Church than his arguments during the dispute.

The main function of recording the dispute was to provide a cause for the exile, which remained a fundamental aspect of Becket's memory, even in texts that attempted to reduce the degree of conflict between him and Henry. The exile helped to facilitate an image of Becket as a persecuted victim, a view of the saint more compelling to the annalists than that of Becket as the litigious defender of the Church. Becket's suffering in this period was communicated in many different ways. Dunstable stressed Becket's humility and changed its source's account of Becket's flight to create the image of a naked, vulnerable man who emulated Christ. Winchester used the confiscation of Becket's goods and the expulsion of his associates to demonstrate the cruel persecution he suffered at Henry's hands. Alberic of Trois-Fontaines copied from his source Alexander III's benediction for Becket as he departed, and by using reported speech emphasised the heavy burden carried by Becket in exile. The Gloucester group of texts made Becket a meek victim of royal rage, while other texts used the coronation to show the personal damage inflicted on Becket's dignity by Henry. Becket as a passive victim was preferred to Becket as the combative litigant.

The overarching trend was to forget the specifics of the dispute. In part it was because these elements were no longer as relevant, but also because forgetting facilitated reconciliation and presented Becket as a more recognisable figure of sainthood. Even

texts which emphasised the conflict between Henry and Becket focused on Becket's suffering and persecution, rather than his suspension of opponents or challenges to Henry's authority. It was defence, a conserving, reactive action that Becket had undertaken, not a pro-active militant action. However, it is important to reiterate that forgetting was not necessarily a passive, inevitable process, but could be the result of intentional editorial decisions. As annalists edited the dispute into a simpler and more relevant memory, less valuable elements were left behind. This ultimately was the knack of annalistic history: to convert a frequently complicated and disordered past into something comprehensible, which served the monastery that produced the text. From direct sources, ideas popularised in hagiography and liturgy, and popular interpretations of the past, annalists had a varied array of resources from which they could construct their text. In turn just as these texts were influenced by existing movements within a broad social or cultural memory, they also contributed to it, reinforcing or challenging the prevailing memory. Events were remembered or forgotten, and narratives were repeated or re-interpreted actively and discerningly to process and utilise the past. These accounts were not uniform or indiscriminate, but considered and purposeful. The varied responses are evidence of the complexity of annals, their value as a historiographical form capable of revealing much about their authors and their world.

Chapter Three

The Martyrdom of Thomas Becket and the Narrativity of Medieval Annals

Introduction

"No doubt you are well informed about the passion of the glorious martyr Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, who lights up not only his own church but both the English provinces with many mighty wonders; and so I do not think I should dwell long on it, especially since I have only a short time in which to write, and the theme is widely and commonly known throughout almost the whole Latin world by many folk's relating. Silent I could not think to be, however, with such a God-given opportunity, about something which fills all men with wonder, to God's and his martyr's glory".[283]

- John of Salisbury in a letter to John of Canterbury, bishop of Poitiers, written soon after the martyrdom.

John of Salisbury's letter to Bishop John of Poitiers is the earliest surviving account of Becket's martyrdom. This letter was written within a month of the murder, and it contained many details that would become universal in Becket's hagiography.[284] In the passage quoted above John highlights an interesting friction between the ubiquity of Becket's story and his own desire to re-tell it. News of the martyrdom had already

[283] John of Salisbury, *Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. W. J. Millor and Christopher Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), vol. 2, p. 727.

[284] Anne Duggan, 'Becket Is Dead! Long Live St Thomas', in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, ed. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), p. 27.

spread across Europe like wildfire. Anne Duggan has tracked the spread of the first reports from England to William, archbishop of Sens. William relayed the news to the bishops and abbots of his diocese and then beyond, to the papal court.[285] Yet, as John identified, this was such a significant event that it demanded further discussion; the meaning of each aspect needed to be explored and contextualised. The martyrdom was exceptional, and John was not alone in seeing it as requiring special attention.

The *Liber Eliensis* ended with a mini-*vita* of Becket, that is an extended entry for the year 1171 that recounted his life from his election as archdeacon to his death. Despite the author's self-proclaimed relief at having completed his work, he wrote that he could not think to finish without referencing the recent death of Thomas Becket, which provided the *Liber* with a "pleasing end".[286] Ely took little part in Becket's conflict with Henry II; although Nigel, bishop of Ely, had attended the Constitutions of Clarendon, he suffered a stroke soon after and retreated from public life, dying in 1169.[287] The urgency with which the writer conveyed his desire to record the life of the new saint is a valuable insight into the excitement elicited by Becket's martyrdom. Whereas much of the rest of the *Liber's* historical narrative existed to contextualise its account of the monastery, its charters and local saints,[288] Becket's death demanded a record on its own merits and was an appropriate ending to the author's work. The importance of Becket's martyrdom was felt outside of England as well. William of Tyre, a twelfth-century prelate, diplomat and historian in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, ended his

[285] Duggan, 'Becket Is Dead! Long Live St Thomas', pp. 25-26.

[286] *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake, (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962) p. 391.

[287] John Hudson, 'Nigel (c. 1100–1169), Administrator and Bishop of Ely', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 14/10/2019, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128- e-20190.

[288] Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, p. xvii.

chapter on the events of 1170 with an account of the life and death of Thomas Becket, a man who lived at the opposite end of the Christian world, had no connection to the Levant and was mentioned only in this brief section.[289] The significance of the martyrdom was such that William, like the author of the *Liber Eliensis*, deemed it necessary to include in his *Historia* a mini-*vita* dedicated to Becket. These two texts did not record a sequential record of his life in the style of a set of annals, but instead included the entire story in one go. Becket's death demanded attention in a manner that his previous life had not.

In a similar manner as for the *Liber Eliensis*, Becket's death was a watershed moment for the chronicle of Melrose, though it was the beginning, "the very germ" of the chronicle, rather than its end. [290] This moment divided the early section of the chronicle from its contemporaneous records. A. A. M. Duncan has suggested that Becket's death may have been the impetus for the creation of the chronicle, as the then abbot, Jocelyn, was "profoundly moved by the martyrdom".[291] Duncan has argued that Abbot Jocelyn split the work between two monks. The first, anonymous, monk was to compile a history from 731 up to the martyrdom of Becket, and the second, whom Duncan identifies as a certain Reinald, was to commence recording contemporary history which would be later added to the manuscript.[292] Dauvit Broun's later work on the

[289] William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986) vol. 63a, p. 940.

[290] Simon Taylor, 'Introduction', in *Kings, Clerics, and Chronicles in Scotland, 500-1297: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the Occasion of Her Ninetieth Birthday*, ed. Simon Taylor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 17.

[291] A. A. M. Duncan, 'Sources and Uses of The Chronicle of Melrose, 1165-1297', in *Kings, Clerics, and Chronicles in Scotland, 500-1297: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the Occasion of Her Ninetieth Birthday*, ed. Simon Taylor (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), p. 150.

[292] Ibid., pp. 149-150.

chronicle suggests this first section was largely written up in 1174, while the subsequent section (i.e. the annals from 1171 to 1191) was copied into the manuscript in the first decade of the thirteenth century.[293] This keystone for the text was given a suitably expansive record, the account of Becket's death in the annal for 1171 is about a page long in the printed edition.[294] Duncan has proposed that this entry was written before the chronologically earlier annals, [295] and there is some redundancy between this 1171 annal and the account of Becket's life recorded in the previous annals. 1171 referenced Becket's exile and the negotiation of peace and his return that had been already discussed in the annals for 1164 and 1170, disrupting the annalistic structure of the text somewhat by referencing material that occurred outside this year.[296] The 1171 annal was more detailed than the previous, more strictly annalistic entries, commentating on Henry's cruelty in expelling Becket's family, and suggesting that Henry had given Becket a kiss of peace before he returned. Stylistically, the 1171 entry is also unusual, opening with a dramatic exclamation (*O scelus nefandum*) and ending with the author's assertion that all those who had participated in the murder would soon be punished by God. For Melrose, the constraints of annalistic history were too restrictive to deal adequately with Becket's martyrdom, so a more expansive approach was taken, which moved backwards and forwards in time, and was interspersed with discursive interjections.

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[293] Dauvit Broun, 'Recovering the Chronicle of Melrose', in *The Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Julian Harrison, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007) p.53-55 and Dauvit Broun, 'Charting the Chronicle's Physical Development', in *The Chronicle of Melrose Abbey: A Stratigraphic Edition*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Julian Harrison (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007) p. 127-9.

[294] Melrose, pp. 83-84.

[295] Duncan, 'Sources and Uses of The Chronicle of Melrose', p. 156.

[296] Melrose, pp. 79-84.

For William of Tyre and the chroniclers of Ely and Melrose, Becket's martyrdom prompted an extensive response, even when this was at odds with the style or the content of the rest of the text. This is indicative not only of the importance that contemporaries assigned to the matter, but also of the inherent contradictions of the event. As John of Salisbury had said, this was a complicated moment that merited further discussion to explore its meaning. On the one hand writers were repulsed by the brutal murder of a high-ranking cleric, but at the same time they celebrated the emergence of a glorious new saint, whose triumph was evidenced by widespread reports of miracles and a swift canonisation. It was a moment which both shocked and inspired. Writers, then as now, were fascinated by the dramatic controversy of the murder, but for medieval authors, especially Becket's hagiographers, there were deeper levels of spiritual meaning to be glossed in the details of the murder. This importance, complexity and depth of meaning posed a particular historiographic challenge for annalists. A brief and simple record that in 1171 *obit Thomas archiepiscopus Cantuarensi* was clearly inappropriate, since this was not a memory that could be brushed aside as easily as the dispute. Rather the martyrdom was fundamental to Becket's identity and needed to be conscientiously narrativised, framed in such a way that a reader would appreciate its multifaceted significance.

The detailed account of the martyrdom in the chronicle of Melrose represents one extreme of a spectrum of responses, but at the other end, there were texts that were comfortable in using a more annalistic approach. Whether in a brief or expansive response, similar narrative details and approaches were employed. The chapter that follows will explore the narrative of the martyrdom in these chronicles, and investigate how annalists responded to the complexities of this incident. This provides a broader view of how the martyrdom was conceived outside of Becket's hagiography, and the

concerns and priorities of the monastic writers, in particular their preoccupation with the violence of the incident. It is also an opportunity to explore how annalistic texts employed narrative. Far from being devoid of narrative, or employing only grand narratives that spanned the entire text, narrativity existed both in the shortest of annals, and in the interaction that occurred between several individual annals within a text. As the case study of Becket's martyrdom shows, an annal could contain not only a nuanced narrative of a single event, but also contributed to a broader narrative strand as well.

Narrativising a murder: transgression and sanctity

The most immediate narrative goal of the annalists was to convey the extent of the transgression that had occurred. This was manifested in almost universal references to the violence that Becket had suffered, alongside contextualisation that demonstrated how this violence had contravened more than just the proscriptions against harming clerical bodies. This violence was central to Becket's claim to sanctity and marked out his exceptional position as a saint. His hagiographers drew a parallel between his suffering with that endured by early Christian martyrs at the hands of Roman pagans, rather than using more contemporary saints as models.[297] Though the hagiographers endeavoured to argue that Becket's spectacular death had been the culmination of a holy life (the mixing of Becket's white brains with his red blood was said to symbolise the faultless life that had preceded his death), it was the violence of Becket's death, the red martyrdom, that stood out.[298] Many of the hagiographers

[297] O'Reilly, 'The Double martyrdom of Thomas Becket', p. 192.

[298] O'Reilly, '"*Candidus et Rubicundus*"', p. 314.

were eyewitnesses to the horrifying scenes – one, Edward Grim, was himself mutilated while trying to protect Becket – and their emotive accounts of Becket's injuries had a profound impact on the annalistic chroniclers.

Several of the annals specifically editorialised the cruelty (*crudeliter*) of Becket's death. The Coventry chronicle recorded that he was "cruelly martyred",[299] and Winchcombe and Dore that he was "cruelly murdered".[300] Other texts aimed to convey the physicality of his death rather than qualifying the murder in moral terms of cruelty. The Plympton annals recorded that he was "struck down by a sword" (*corruit ense*), Waverley that he was "pierced by a sword" (*gladio percussus*) and Dunstable that Becket died "pierced with wounds" (*percussus occubuit*).[301] The Rushen and the Anchin chronicles both described Becket as "mutilated" (*detruncatus est* and *mutilato* respectively), with the latter going on to describe the flowing of Becket's brains (*effusoque cerebro*).[302] The Lowlands chronicle described him as killed or assassinated (*interfectus*).[303] The Burton chronicle said Becket suffered (*passus est*) in 1171,[304] while the accounts found in the pseudo-William Godel, Margam, Tewkesbury and Stade chronicles recorded that Becket was felled (*occisus est* or *occiditur*).[305] These last few examples are less dramatic than the other texts, but they

[299] Coventry, p. 686.

[300] Winchcombe, p. 534 and Dore, p.525.

[301] '*Annales Plymptonienses'*, in *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen*, ed. F. Liebermann (London: Trubner & co., 1879), p. 30 Waverley, p. 239 and Dunstable p. 20.

[302] Rushen, p. 69 and Anchin, p. 413.

[303] Lowlands, p. 151.

[304] Burton, p. 187.

[305] Ps-William Godel, p.677, Margam, p. 17, Tewkesbury, p. 50 and '*Annales Stadenses*' in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* XVI, ed. G. Waitz, vol. 16 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1859). p. 347.

were more charged than *obit*, which was the term conventionally used to describe deaths.

These annalists were not using the violence of Becket's death in the same way as the hagiographers, however. They did not draw a parallel between him and Christ or the martyrs of the early church, or explore the sacred meaning of each injury. While the chronicle of Anchin specified Becket's injury to his head, there was no gloss provided for this detail, the focus was on its grisly nature. Only Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, a less conventionally annalistic author,[306] provided an explicit image of religious symbolism by recording that Becket had suffered five wounds, a detail designed to remind a reader of Christ's injuries during the Passion. The violence did not stand out to the annalists because they wished to explore Becket's sanctity, although there was of course an implicit element of this in a record of his suffering. Instead, it was the violence itself that was the focus. The annalists wanted to confront a reader with a demonstration of the threat of physical harm that was all too present in their lives. These writers belonged to a group that "all too frequently was the victim of knightly aggression and despoliation".[307] Although monks often faced threats of brutal violence, such acts usually, though by no means invariably, translated into harm inflicted on the servants, animals and possessions of a monastic community rather than upon the monks themselves.[308] The prohibition of violence against clerical bodies was well established. Henry himself acknowledged during the dispute that corporal punishment could not be inflicted on a member of the clergy until their clerical status had been removed.[309] Regardless of the sanctity or criminality of the individual, violence against

[306] See chapter two, pp. 62-63.

[307] Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 8.

[308] Thomas, 'Shame, Masculinity and Anger', pp. 1053-1056.

[309] Ibid., p. 1071.

a clerical body was unacceptable. Guibert of Nogent, writing around half a century before Becket's death, explicitly stated this belief. He argued that, though Bishop Gaudry of Laon's manifold sins had made him an utterly unsuitable prelate, his violent murder in 1112 was still a disturbingly inappropriate treatment for a bishop.[310] Becket's death was a reminder that they themselves could easily become the victims of brutal violence. William of Canterbury, one of the witnesses to the murder explicitly stated that he, like everyone else, believed "that I likewise was to be 'struck' with the sword".[311] These records of Becket's suffering were not just a testament to his endurance or bravery, but were a cautionary reminder of the threat that existed for monastic communities. The violence did not stand out because it exalted Becket, but because its transgressive nature was so threatening to the theoretical separation of the monastic world from the savagery of the secular.

This message was made all the starker by the annalists' contextualisation of the murder in both space and time, framing the event in a way that demonstrated the sacrilegious violation that had occurred. The location of the murder proved an enduring detail. For John of Salisbury, it supported his argument that Becket's murder was an event more cruel even than the death of Christ, which had occurred outside Jerusalem and so had not soiled the city, while Becket's murder profaned a sacred church.[312] Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence, author of the first vernacular life of Becket, suggested that Canterbury was Becket's Golgotha, drawing a clear parallel between

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[310] Guibert of Nogent, '*Monodiae'*, in Paul Archambault, (ed.), *A monk's confession: the memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) pp. 156 and 162-3.

[311] William of Canterbury, '*Vita et passio s. Thomæ auctore Willelmo, monacho Cantuariensi'*, in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173)* ed. James Craigie Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 1, p. 135

[312] *Letters of John of Salisbury*, vol 2. p.727.

the saint and Christ.[313] The murderers themselves seem to have been uncomfortable in killing Becket within the church; according to Edward Grim they at first grabbed him "intending to kill him outside the church, or carry him away in chains, as they later admitted".[314] Only the briefest of chronicles failed to mention the location of the murder. In some texts it was enough to record that he died in the church of Canterbury (i.e. Christchurch).[315] This was an obviously sacrilegious act, ignoring the sanctuary and refuge that should have been provided by this sacred space while also profaning it with spilt blood. Other texts emphasised the relationship between Becket and the place of his murder. Waverley and Rushen recorded that he died in "the church of his see" (*in basilica/ecclesia sedis suae*) and Winchester "the church that he had been in charge of" (*in ecclesia cui praefuerat*).[316] The Trois-Fontaines chronicle specified simply that he died in his church (*in ecclesia sua*).[317] This underscored the troubling vulnerability of Becket. Even at the centre of his power, in the physical and symbolic place of his authority,[318] he was defenceless against secular violence. On the other hand, for the chronicles produced at Anchin and Stade it was enough to note that the murder took place in a church; neither text specified that it was Canterbury, nor that it was Becket's own seat. In these texts it was not necessary to note that the murder occurred within Becket's own church: it was significant enough that the murder should have taken place in any church. The annalists demonstrated the shocking violation of

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[313] Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence, '*Vie Saint Thomas le Martyr de Cantorbire'*, in *Garnier's Becket*, ed.and trans. Janet Shirley (London: Philimore, 1975), p. 137.

[314] Edward Grim, in Staunton, *Lives*, p.201 and Barlow, *Becket*, p. 247.

[315] Ps-William Godel p. 677, Margam, p. 17, Tewkesbury, p. 50, Coventry, p. 686, Winchcombe, p. 534 and Lowlands, p. 151.

[316] Waverley p.239, Rushen, p. 69 and Winchester, p. 60.

[317] Trois-Fontaines, p. 854.

[318] Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 56-57.

both a holy space and Becket's ecclesiastic authority by stressing the location of the murder. Whatever protection should have been provided by the physical space of sanctuary, or the conceptual protection from being in the seat of his power had been brutally ignored. This aspect of the murder – the callous indifference of Becket's attackers – was further emphasised by some annalists through temporal contextualisation of the murder. The majority of texts recorded the date of the martyrdom, a detail that had liturgical significance, yet for others the time of the murder had even greater significance and provided an additional transgressive element to it. The chronicles of pseudo-William Godel, Coggeshall, Dunstable, Anchin, Alberic of Trois-Fontaines and Margam all noted that it occurred during vespers. A holy service had been interrupted by the violence, and indeed it would be a year before the church was reconsecrated and services could be held there again. There was a dramatic contrast between the monks' orations for the benefit of the wider Christian community, and the savage attack that their father had suffered. Even in the midst of their devotions, monks were not safe from violence.

Through the language used to describe the murder and its contextualisation, the annalists created a narrative of unsettling violation. These efforts set the death of Becket aside from the normal rhythm of succession and continuation that formed the backbone of monastic annals. Violence occupied an ambiguous position in twelfth-century Europe, but these annals provide a vital reminder that though it could be justified, it could also be illegitimate and shocking.[319] The most senior bishop in England was hacked to death in his own church. This was a brutal challenge to the

[319] For a discussion of medieval ambivalence toward violence see Hannah Skoda, *Medieval Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 242. See also Warren Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe,* (Harlow: Longman, 2011) p. 2 and Albrecht Classen, ed., *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 3.

theoretical inviolability of both a sacred space and a sacred body. Across these texts, regardless of their date of production, location or affiliation, there was a shared conception that Becket's death needed to be remembered as an event of shocking and transgressive violence. The hagiographers used the identity of the attackers to further strengthen this point, stressing that they were Christians, and as members of Becket's flock, his spiritual sons. This aspect was ignored by the annalists however, with only three texts (Dunstable, Trois-Fontaines and Coventry with a marginal note) taking the trouble to record their names, and not one text emphasised the horror of Christians slaying their father in the womb of their mother (i.e. Canterbury).[320] These were details that for the hagiographers marked out Becket's death as worse even than the death of Christ.[321] The annals were more concerned with the violence itself than with Becket's claims to sanctity. No parallel was drawn between Becket and Christ and his injuries were not glossed; only the chronicle of Melrose, whose account of the martyrdom was closer to the hagiography than to the annalistic response, showed any marked interest in such elements. The annalists concentrated on the immediate circumstances of his brutal murder. They remembered this event as monks with their own concerns about, and perhaps experiences of, secular violence. The trauma of the murder left a heavy shadow on these texts separate from the discussion of Becket's sanctity.

[320] William Fitzstephen, in *The Life and Death of Thomas Becket Chancellor of England and Archbishop of Canterbury based on the account of William FitzStephen his clerk with additions from other contemporary sources,* ed. and trans. George Greenaway, (London: Folio Society, 1961) p. 157, *Letters of John of Salisbury*, vol. 2*,* p.729 and Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis*, p. 484.

[321] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 214-5.

For the hagiographers, in John of Salisbury's words, "every circumstance in the archbishop's death agony conspired to glorify the dying man forever".[322] In contrast, the annalists' preoccupation with the murder as an act of violation was not because it amplified the glory of the martyr, but because it spoke to the fears of the monks themselves. Their memory of this incident was shaped by their own relationship to violence more than by a desire to explore the sacred significance of this moment. This is not to suggest, however, that Becket's sanctity was ignored by the annalists; these accounts certainly included brief details that provided powerful endorsements of Becket. In some cases, this was as simple as the language that was used to describe Becket. Several chronicles (pseudo-William Godel, Burton, Waverley and Dore) referred directly to Becket as "Saint Thomas"; others (Coggeshall, Winchester, Trois-Fontianes, Margam and Rushen) "blessed Thomas". The chronicles of Egmond,[323] Coggeshall and Winchester specifically stated that Becket was a martyr. In addition, narrative elements from the hagiography emerged in these annals, albeit in a more restrained manner than the exuberance of Becket's propagandists. The location of Becket's death within his church retained symbolic significance, for example, even if the annalists did not expand on this theme in the manner of the hagiographers. In the hagiography and liturgy dedicated to Becket, the motif of Becket as the "good shepherd", willing to lay down his life for his flock, was often employed.[324] The frequent references to Becket dying within his own church in these annals are obliquely referencing this motif, connecting his death to his episcopal duty. While they did not explicitly communicate this idea, the emphasis on his death within his church would

[322] *Letters of John of Salisbury*, vol. 1, p. 727.

[323] Egmond, p.467.

[324] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 189-192 and Roberts, *Thomas Becket in the Medieval Latin Preaching Tradition*, pp. 34-34.

surely have been connected to the “most frequently cited theme” in his liturgy,[325] that of the good shepherd. The narrative within the annals built upon the imagery a reader would already connect with Becket. While the annalists did not make any direct parallel between Becket and Christ, by emphasising the location of his murder, and his death on behalf of his flock, they did indirectly introduce a Christo-mimetic element.

This idea was suggested more strongly in several texts that specified the position of his martyrdom before the altar. The exact location of the murder was a somewhat contentious point. Though some hagiographers, such as John of Salisbury and the Anonymous II, suggested that it took place before the great altar, the chronicles of Melrose and Coggeshall instead followed the example of Anonymous I and stated that it occurred before the altar of St Benedict.[326] Dunstable, Anchin and pseudo-William Godel did not specify the exact altar. Regardless of the exact location, the symbolism was obvious: Becket was juxtaposed with the Eucharistic rite to create a powerful image of the “murder as a sacrifice, with Thomas as both priest and victim”.[327] The connotations of sacrifice suggested by the presence of the altar are enhanced by the transformation of Becket from the intermediary between Christ’s sacrifice and the congregation, to himself becoming a sacrificial victim. The reader was reminded of Becket’s sacral duties and his commitment to their defence. Such a message also served to counter the claims of Becket’s detractors. Gilbert Foliot had argued that Becket had abandoned his episcopal duty when he went into exile, leaving the ship of the English Church “without an oarsman amidst the waves and the storm”.[328] The image of Becket as a sacrifice contradicted this criticism: rather than having

[325] Roberts, *Thomas Becket in the Medieval Latin Preaching Tradition,* p. 32.

[326] Staunton, *Biographers,* p. 195, Melrose, p.241 and Coggeshall, p. 16.

[327] Staunton, *Biographers,* p.195.

[328] Gilbert Foliot, in, Staunton, *Lives*, p. 232.

abandoned his episcopal duties, Becket was willing to die for them. The narrative imagery employed by the annalists contributed to his claims of sainthood, implying an element of Christ-like sacrifice to his death, while at the same time imbuing his victimhood with a spiritual symbolism. He was not just the tragic victim of secular violence but also a model of clerical duty and dedication. This image elevated Becket and provided an imitable figure for the monastic community remembering him.

Memorable and shocking though Becket's murder was, this form of edification was vitally important to his saintly status. Despite the huge popularity of Becket's cult, there was some uncertainty over the validity of his martyrdom, and whether it was truly enough to make him a saint. It was not enough simply to die, especially if it was one's own failings that had caused this death.[329] Gilbert Foliot had argued since Becket's consecration in 1162 that it was the archbishop's self-interest and vanity that had needlessly antagonised Henry.[330] Caesarius of Heisterbach recorded a dispute that occurred in Paris soon after Becket had died between Master Roger and Peter the Chanter, where the former argued it was Becket's obstinacy that led to his death.[331] Peter refuted the point by referencing the many miracles that Becket was glorified with, and it was these miracles that Pope Alexander III emphasised when justifying Becket's canonisation.[332] The widely-reported miracles that followed Becket's death did much to cover any cracks in his saintly credentials, although Herbert of Bosham felt they existed to impress only those of little faith, and instead desired his readers to imitate

[329] Nicholas Vincent, 'The Murderers of Thomas Becket', in *Bischofsmord Im Mittelalter: Murder of Bishops*, ed. Natalie Fryde and Dirk Reitz, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), p. 245.

[330] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 267-8.

[331] Caesarius of Heisterbach, in Staunton *Lives*, pp. 237-8.

[332] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 267-8.

Becket's deeds.[333] It was for this reason that the unexpected revelation of Becket's hairshirt was of such significance to the hagiographers, since it was evidence that he had lead a life of asceticism and private holiness. This detail, along with the hagiographers' discussions of Becket's chastity and charity, suggested that Becket's holiness had preceded his death, that he had combined the white lily of a virtuous life with the red rose of his martyrdom. In addition, they made sure to challenge the suggestion that Becket had been acting out of self-interest, instead arguing that he had always been committed to the Church's cause.[334] His rejection of Henry's constitutions was a protection of the essential ecclesiastic liberty and his resistance to his attackers in Canterbury was a principled assertion of the Church's authority. Details of Becket's private sanctity are absent from annalistic records of his life, yet this latter point, the association of his life, and perhaps more significantly his death, with the defence of the Church was referenced by several annalists. The chronicles of Coventry, pseudo-William Godel, Melrose, Coggeshall, Waverley, Trois-Fontaines, Margam and Rushen all explicitly stated that Becket died in defence of the Church. These texts were following the example established in the hagiography, and further promulgated in the liturgy dedicated to Becket.[335] Of these texts, those written at Coventry, Melrose and Trois-Fontaines, had already referenced Becket's defence of the Church in 1164, while the other texts did not. Other than the Coventry chronicle, these texts were all produced at Cistercian monasteries, and this detail is indicative of the prominent role the Order played in promoting Becket's cult.[336] These authors were

[333] Herbert of Bosham, '*Vita Sancti Thomæ Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi*', in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket,* vol. 3, p. 156.

[334] Staunton, *Becket and his Biographers*, p. 213.

[335] Roberts, *Thomas Becket in the Medieval Latin Preaching Tradition*, p. 37.

[336] Eales, 'The Political Setting of the Becket Translation of 1220', p. 128, and Donald Prudlo, 'Martyrs on the Move: The Spread of the Cults of Thomas of Canterbury and Peter of Verona', *Peregrinations*

not only defending Becket's legacy by demonstrating that he fulfilled the proper criteria for a saint, but they were also placing his martyrdom within the context of the centuries-long struggle between Church and Crown. Such an approach endorsed Becket, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, but placing Becket's struggle in this context also reflected favourably on the Order that had housed him during his exile. Henry's threats towards the Cistercian Order (which were intended to bring to an end to their assistance to Becket) may have further encouraged their support for the saint. At the same time, the enthusiastic promotion of Becket may have aimed to obscure the Order's eventual submission to Henry's demands. The Order ultimately encouraged Becket to leave Pontigny and return to Sens.[337] Notably, none of these Cistercian chronicles referenced this incident (although the Benedictine Winchester chronicle did), suggesting that their abandonment of the saint was a somewhat uncomfortable memory for Cistercian authors. In any case, the annalists were following the example of Becket's propagandists by positioning him as the heroic defender of the Church or emphasising the location of his death before the altar: demonstrating his sanctity and answering the questions about the validity of his martyrdom. Simple narrative insertions addressed important theological issues and ensured that a convincing account of St Thomas was created. These texts contributed to the establishment of Becket as a legitimate saint, even if they were not quite as bombastic as his hagiographers had been.

Indeed, though Becket's hagiography and liturgy impacted the annalistic accounts of his life there was much that was omitted. The extended account of the martyrdom in

3, no. 2 (2011), p. 41 and L. A. Desmond, 'Becket and the Cistercians', *CCHA Study Sessions*, no. 35 (1968), p. 9.

[337] Desmond, 'Becket and the Cistercians', p. 25.

the chronicle of Melrose noted several additional moments popularised in the hagiography, albeit in a more generalised manner. The chronicle noted that one of Becket's clerics was injured during the attack, although the victim is not specified as Edward Grim. Becket was explicitly compared to Christ, but the Melrose annalists stopped short of repeating, as the majority of hagiographers did, John of Salisbury's claim that Becket's murder was a crime more heinous than the killing of Christ.[338] Equally Melrose's description of Becket's attackers as wicked and detestable (*sceleratissimus baronibus* and *detestandis militibus*) falls short of the descriptions of them as "sons of Belial" and "agents of Satan" or as *lictores* and *gladiatores*, words designed to evoke the Roman persecutors of the early Christian martyrs.[339] Finally, Melrose recorded that Becket's prayer was to his attackers as he died, rather than to the Virgin Mary and the saints of Canterbury as the hagiographers recorded him doing.[340] The association with Mary derived from Becket's alleged childhood devotion to the Virgin, while referencing Canterbury saints situated Becket within the English saintly hierarchy.[341] Anonymous I was more precise, and recorded Becket's prayer as to Alphege specifically, tying Becket to Canterbury's previous archbishop-martyr,[342] and Edward Grim suggested that Becket invoked St Denis.[343] In the Melrose chronicle, Becket's final prayer is less specific; praying for his attackers created an obvious

[338] Staunton, *Biographers*, p. 214.

[339] William of Canterbury '*Vita et passio s. Thomæ auctore Willelmo*', vol. 1, p. 135, Garnier, '*Vie Saint Thomas le Martyr de Cantorbire',* p. 146 and p.138 and Fitzstephen, in *The Life and Death of Thomas Becket* p. 729.

[340] Michael Staunton, *Thomas Becket and His Biographers* (Woodbridge, 2006) p. 196.

[341] Duggan, *Thomas Becket*, p. 9.

[342] Staunton, *Thomas Becket and his Biographers*, p. 195.

[343] Edward Grim, in Staunton, *Lives*, p.202.

parallel to Christ and was a trope of hagiography that stretched back to Stephen the protomartyr.[344]

Details such as these, even in the abbreviated form in which they are found in Melrose are absent from the more annalistic records of Becket's life in other chronicles. None mentioned Edward Grim's intervention or Becket's final prayer, and Becket's attackers were referred to simply as *milites* or *satellites*; only pseudo-William Godel, one of the longer annals, described them as *impiis*. Though placing Becket before the altar as he died introduced some imagery of Christ-like sacrifice, there was no explicit equation of the archbishop with previous martyrs, and certainly no implication that the martyrdom exceeded Christ's Passion in cruelty. Even the longer accounts made no mention of Becket's hairshirt, the breaking of one of the attackers' swords, or the physical struggle that took place between him and his attackers. Only the Dunstable chronicle recorded his exchanges with the murderers, which stressed his commitment to the defence of the Church. Becket's final prayer to Mary and St Denis was not included, though this detail could be found in Dunstable's source, the *Ymagines* of Ralph de Diceto. The Winchester chronicle, despite using Herbert of Bosham' *vita* as its source, ignored Herbert's militant image of Becket as he rebuked and resisted his attackers.[345] The annalists presented a simpler image of Becket's sainthood that focused on his meek victimhood and suffering, his angry words and physical resistance was forgotten, and they avoided the controversial claims that Becket had exceeded all previous martyrs. This was in contrast to the hagiographers' efforts to gloss each individual detail of the murder in an effort to demonstrate Becket's personal

[344] See for example St Jerome, 'letter against Vigilantus', in *Patrologia Latina*, ed., J. P. Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1844-1864), vol. 23, pp. 359-360.

[345] Staunton, *Biographers*, pp. 203-4.

piety and to reveal the exceptional nature of the martyrdom. This simplification of Becket was common to both the more expansive and the briefer annalistic texts, and to both those written in the decades following the martyrdom and those in the following century. There was a general trend towards presenting Becket as a more accessible and less controversial figure. The annalistic writers aimed to communicate Becket's quality in relation to the broader needs of the Church, to stress that he laid down his life in his church and for the Church. It was this message of principle, rather personal sanctity, that the annalists saw as key in conveying what Saint Thomas was. This approach made the triumph of Becket's martyrdom all the sweeter by presenting it as a victory for the whole Church. While his hagiographers sought to stress Becket's own unique quality and sanctity, the annalists broadened his sanctity into a victory that included the monastic communities that produced these texts, tempering the horror of the murder.

A final opportunity for annalists to communicate the complexities of the martyrdom was in the codas that completed their accounts. The desired interpretation of the event could be reiterated by adding a concluding clause or statement to the annal. The chronicle of Melrose finished its account with an assertion that the Lord would prove a swift avenger and punish those who had taken part in the murder or encouraged it. The chronicle of Anchin followed Melrose's example and ended its annal by recording that Alexander III anathematised Becket's killers, and that all held Henry to be a "worthless apostate" for his role in the murder. In a similar vein, a later scribe returned to Coventry's record of the martyrdom to add a list of the names of the murderers. In these cases, there was a desire to record for posterity the infamy of Becket's attackers and remind a reader of their crime. For Melrose and Anchin this meant emphasising the role of both the murderers and Henry. For Coventry, this was a retroactive decision,

which focused purely on the attackers; perhaps its location in England made its author more wary of denigrating Henry as explicitly as the French and Scottish texts did. There is a sense of retaliation in this approach, these annalists responded to the outrage of the murder by recording the villainy of the killers.

In other texts, the conclusion instead focused on Becket's sainthood. In the chronicles of Egmond, pseudo-William Godel and Trois-Fontaines, and in longer texts such as the *Liber Eliensis* and William of Tyre's chronicle, this involved a description of Becket's miracles. As has been mentioned, the widely reported miracles that followed Becket's death were the least controversial aspect of his claim to sanctity and will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. The miracles were an unambiguous and undisputed divine endorsement of the archbishop, so ending with this alleviated the shock of the murder by providing a demonstration of God's hand at work in the world. These miracles were not just a statement of Becket's sanctity, but also a reassuring proof of the monastic writers' faith and conception of reality. The Winchcombe chronicle ended its accounts with an alternative endorsement of Becket, stating that Becket "rested (*quievit*) with the Lord". This message focused on Becket's posthumous peace, a victory in Heaven that contrasted with the horror of his death. In a similar manner Robert of Torigni's account of the martyrdom ended by stating that the "flower of the world" had been plucked and now flourished in heaven.[346] Like those texts that mentioned his miracles at the end of the account of the martyrdom, this concluded matters with a hopeful note. With this final emphasis, Becket was shown to have overcome the violence inflicted upon him, it was he who was ultimately triumphant and rewarded with passage to Heaven. This was a clear message of

[346] Torigni, p. 249.

Becket's own sanctity, although it also provided some comfort to a reader who could, in emulating Becket, hope to achieve the same eternal reward.

The Waverley chronicle also included a reference to Becket's posthumous triumph, recording that he was "happily brought (*migravit*) to the Lord", but this was not the final word on the matter. Waverley's annal for 1171 continued with a brief poem reading:

Annus millenus centenus septuagenus

Primus erat, primas cum ruit ense Thomas

Or: "It was the year one thousand, one hundred and seventy-one, when the primate Thomas by the sword was undone". Internally rhyming verses of this kind were popular throughout the medieval period.[347] The earliest recorded written use of this particular example occurs in the original "working copy" of Robert of Torigni's chronicle (Avranches*, Bibliothèque patrimoniale,* MS 159) in his annal for 1171, which was written around 1174.[348] The verse and the subsequent reference to the *flos orbis* was written over an erasure and continued into the margin, suggesting that it was a later addition to Robert entry for 1171.[349] This would lend credence to Thomas Bisson's suggestion that the verse was a convenient euphemism that allowed Robert to avoid mentioning Becket's death directly and embarrassing his prospective patron, Henry II.[350] The Waverley annalists certainly had access to Robert's work, since several of

[347] Matthew Payne and Warwick Rodwell, 'Edward the Confessor's Shrine in Westminster Abbey: The Question of Metre', *The Antiquaries Journal* 98 (2018), p. 146.

[348] For a discussion of the dating of this addition and the strained political circumstances governing Robert's editorial approach to Becket see chapter five, pp. 197-201.

[349] See fig. 7 p. 199.

[350] Thomas Bisson, ed., *The Chronography of Robert of Torigni* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 288 n. 618.

their entries contain material lifted almost exactly from the text.[351] So too was this verse copied into Waverley's otherwise original record of the martyrdom. Several other chronicles that included this verse may also have been inspired by Robert's chronicle, which circulated widely and formed the basis of many medieval historiographical works.[352] The Plympton chronicle, produced in the twelfth century, ends with an intriguingly similar line: *Anglorum primas corruit ense Thomas.*[353] Perhaps this was a prototype of the verse recorded by Robert. There may have been several similar versions of the verse and although the version recorded by Robert went on to be most commonly copied, it represents only the remnant of a broader oral tradition.

Gerald of Wales recorded the verse in three of his works. In the *Expugnatio Hibernica* and the *De instructione principis* he attributed it to a certain person (*unde quidam* and *unde a quondam)*, and in his *vita* of St Remigius, he stated the verse was coined by a "*Turbo*" of Norwich (*Unde Norwicensis Turbo*), presumably William Turbe, bishop of Norwich.[354] Roger of Howden suggested that the verse was written on the tomb of Becket's killers in Palestine, following their penitential pilgrimage.[355] Both suggestions are possible and indeed not incompatible, the phrase could have been coined by Turbe and subsequently inscribed on the tomb. Turbe was an "enthusiastic advocate"

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[351] Luard, ed., "Preface", in *Annales Monastici,* vol. 2, p. xxxii.

[352] David S. Spear, "Torigni, Robert de [called Robert de Monte] (c. 1110–1186), chronicler and abbot of Mont-St Michel." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 09/08/2021, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23732.

[353] Plympton, p. 30.

[354] *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, eds. J. S. Brewer, et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877), volume 5, p. 262, vol. 8, p. 162 and volume 7, p. 56.

[355] Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri De Houedene,* ed. William Stubbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), volume ii, p. 17.

of the cult of William of Norwich, a boy allegedly murdered by the Jews of Norwich in 1144; perhaps this experience guided him in creating a memorable couplet about Becket.[356] There were certainly connections between the two cults, the *vita* of William ended with a record of a joint miracle worked by Becket and St. Edmund as the supplicant travelled to William's shrine in Norwich.[357] Turbo died in 1174 and all four of Becket's murderers were dead soon after 1173,[358] around the same time that Robert of Torigni's wrote the verse into his manuscript, which would imply that it was popularised around the time of Becket's canonization in February 1173. Whatever its exact origins, the verse appears in a wide variety of texts from across Europe. A late twelfth-century manuscript written at Cîteaux, containing a copy of Bede's historical works and *vitae* of Cuthbert and Becket, included the verse at its end.[359] It was added to a thirteenth-century translation of Galen,[360] and was noted at the end of a copy of Jean Beleth's *Summa de Ecclesiasticis Officiis*.[361] It can be found in a thirteenth-century miscellany produced at Admont Abbey, following the verse life of Becket written by Simon Chèvre d'Or.[362] It provided a memorable device to record two key details of the martyrdom for posterity: the date and the method of the martyr's death, both important details for the subsequent commemoration of the saint. Robert of Auxerre's account of the martyrdom is largely identical to that of his source, the

[356] Christopher Harper-Bill, 'William [Called William Turbe] (c. 1095–1174), Bishop of Norwich', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 26/07/2021, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29466.

[357] Denise L. Despres, 'Adolescence and Sanctity: The Life and Passion of Saint William of Norwich', *The Journal of Religion* 90, no. 1 (2010): pp. 61-62.

[358] Vincent, 'The Murderers of Thomas Becket', p. 262.

[359] Dijon, *Bibliothèque Municipale*, MS 574, f. 114v.

[360] Oxford, Merton College Library, MS 222, f. 90r.

[361] London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 176, f. 154v.

[362] Admont, *Stiftsbibliothek*, Cod. 128, f. 101v.

chronicle of pseudo-William Godel. However, Robert ignored the lengthy extract from a *passio* of Becket that followed the pseudo-William account of the martyrdom.[363] Instead, a different scribe to the writer of the body of the text added the Becket verse into the margin (fig. 4). The Auxerre chronicle was written at least ten years later, perhaps more,[364] and as such the extended section in pseudo-William was probably deemed unnecessary, but this short verse concisely added a valuable extra detail.

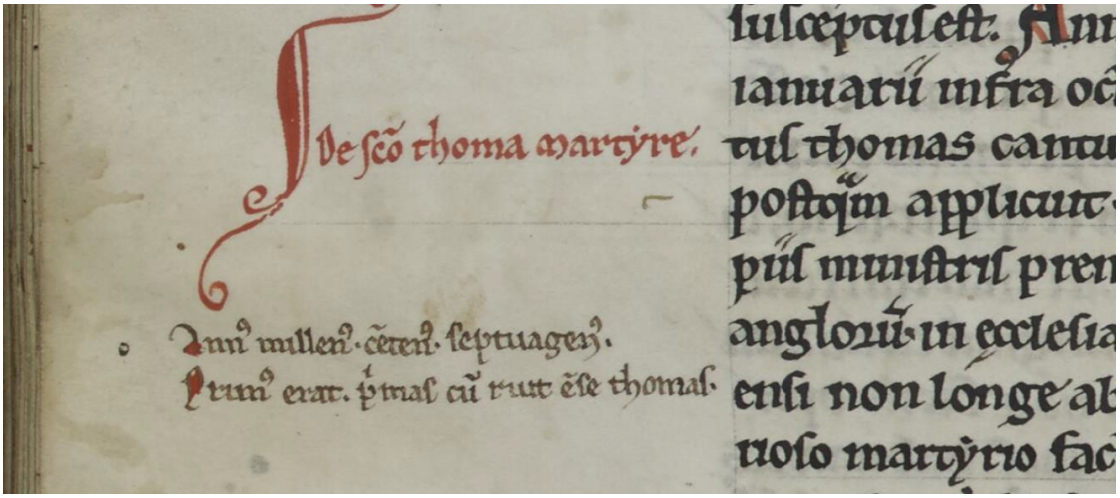

Fig. 4: The verse was neatly added into the margin of Robert Auxerre's chronicle, next to a description of Becket's martyrdom. Auxerre, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 145, f. 306v.

Gerald of Wales in *De instructione principis* praised exactly this clarity and succinctness in the verse. In some ways the verse can perhaps be thought of as an annal itself, it is formed of a specified year and an event that took place within it. Yet 1171 was not just the year in which Archbishop Thomas died, it was pointedly the year in which he was felled by the sword. The verse was an impactful, memorable and,

[363] Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits*. MS Latin 4893, ff. 58r-59r.

[364] Régis Rech, "Robert of St. Marianus in Auxerre", in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), accessed 26/07/2021, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_02201.

critically, succinct condensation of Becket's martyrdom. While its studied ambiguity may have initially made it attractive to Robert of Torigni, its continued usage is a testament to its practical and symbolic significance: it provided a helpful record of the key martyrological detail of Becket's death and reflected the ongoing discomfort caused by the sacrilegious violence. This image of Becket as the victim of secular violence again proved fundamental to his memory.

The annalists made an extended effort to convey the fundamental duality of the martyrdom. This was not an event that fell into the background narrative of succession; instead, its distinctive combination of horror and celebration needed to be remembered and communicated. In their choice of language and contextualisation of the murder, the annalists strove to communicate the trauma caused by the act of violation and extreme violence of this incident. At the same time, by adapting motifs from the hagiography the annalists were able to create an encompassing, and less controversial message of Becket's sanctity. The codas, or epilogues, that ended these annals demonstrate the tension between the shock and wonder of the martyrdom, with annalists adding a final thought that encompassed one aspect or the other. Even in the shortest of responses to Becket's death there was some effort to juxtapose these two elements. The chronicles of Burton, an English Benedictine foundation in Staffordshire, and Park, a Premonstratensian abbey outside Leuven, recorded respectively that "St Thomas, archbishop, suffered" and "St Thomas archbishop of Canterbury was martyred".[365] These entries represent the most succinct attempts to convey the violence and the holiness encapsulated in the year 1171. These two annals specified Becket as a saint and used an evocative verb to describe his death in a way

[365] Burton p. 187 and '*Annales Parchenses'*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptorum* XVI, ed. G. Waitz, *Scriptores* vol. 16 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1859) p. 606.

that gave a sense of the violence. This was the essential point, and with careful word selection this message could be suggested even by the briefest of annals. For most texts however, such an approach was too ambiguous. The martyrdom required more expansive narrativisation to convey its exceptional nature and to explore its contradictions as an event to be both reviled and celebrated.

Henry's guilt and the narrative strands of annals

Perhaps the most conspicuous aspect of the chronicle of Melrose's account was its denunciation of Henry II and direct association of him with the murder. Melrose's entry in 1171 reminded a reader of Henry's extended persecution of Becket and his family, and suggested that Henry, a second Herod, was so incensed with Becket that members of his household (*domesticis … regis*) murdered him, only a few days after the king had restored him to his see and given him the kiss of peace. Whatever the exact words Henry uttered to send his barons to Canterbury, the interdict placed upon his continental lands, and subsequently on his own person, demonstrated the widespread belief in his culpability for the crime.[366] Yet there was an unwillingness on the part of the hagiographers to implicate Henry too heavily in the murder.[367] Most included some form of angry outburst on Henry's part, but did not suggest that he categorically ordered Becket's death. Some, like Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence and William Fitzstephen, moved the blame to Roger of York and the other bishops censured by Becket, stating that their complaints provoked the king's disastrous outburst.[368] Others recorded that Henry attempted to recall the killers after they

[366] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 220.

[367] Ibid., pp. 220-221.

[368] Staunton, *Biographers*, p. 188.

departed, but that his agents were unable to catch up with them before they crossed to England.[369] This same caution can be seen in contemporary historiographical works as well. For example, the author of the Battle Abbey chronicle carefully specified that the four knights came from the royal court, but were not sent from the royal court, a clarification that made clear that they were not acting on Henry's orders.[370] Indeed for all the histrionics in the chronicle of Melrose, it too stopped short of saying explicitly that Henry ordered the murder, although the pointed final sentence, stating that any who had planned, assisted with, or consented to, the murder would be punished by God, seems to have been written directly to overcome attempts to distance Henry from the murder.

For most annalists, the brevity of their form meant they did not require the careful semantics of the Battle Abbey chroniclers. If they did not wish to associate Henry with the murder, it was enough simply to write that Becket was killed, without mentioning who it was the perpetrator. This was the approach taken by the chronicles of Robert of Torigni, Winchcombe, Coggeshall, Winchester, Tewkesbury, Waverley, Margam and Rushen. Henry's connection to the murder was uncomfortable for several reasons. Some authors, like the Winchcombe annalists and Robert of Torigni, were writing while Henry was still alive, and although his penance in 1174 had successfully reconciled king and saint, there may well have still been some discomfort in remembering Henry's association with this shameful act of murder. Later authors may have wished to avoid embarrassing Henry's sons who reigned while they wrote, or it may represent the successful efforts of both the Angevin royal family and the cult of Becket at Canterbury to lessen the controversy of Becket's life and accommodate

[369] Staunton, *Biographers*, p. 188.

[370] Searle, *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey,* p. 275.

royal patronage of his cult. Furthermore, Henry's culpability raised uncomfortable questions about his legitimacy as a king and highlighted the extent of the rift between Crown and Church that had occurred. The narrative of ordered succession, which was fundamental to annalistic writing, would have been severely undermined by connecting this trauma to an ordained king. Just as elements of Becket's sanctity were generalised and made less controversial, so too were the more divisive moments of the story smoothed out.

Some texts did, however, bring Henry into their account of the martyrdom. The chronicles of Coventry, Anchin, pseudo-William Godel, Lowlands, Dunstable and Stade all mentioned Henry in connection to the martyrdom. Only the Anchin text came close to matching Melrose's aggressive denunciation of Henry, stating that the murderers were his courtiers (*satellites*), and that Henry was condemned by all for his part in the killing. Dunstable, on the other hand, took a similar approach to the Battle Abbey chronicle, recording that the four attackers came from the entourage of the king (*ex parte regis venerunt*), but not suggesting they were sent by the king, which seems to have been a diplomatic way to record matters. Pseudo-William described the attackers as impious agents or attendants (*impiis ministris*) of Henry, which does imply some level of connection between Henry and the murderers, while the other texts simply described them as knights of the king (*militibus regis*). Melrose, Anchin and to a lesser degree Pseudo-William seemed willing to associate Henry with the murder. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, these texts took a combative approach to recording the dispute between Henry and Becket in the 1160s, their location outside of England making them more confident in challenging the English king. In isolation, the remaining texts' description of the attackers as Henry's knights does not seem to bear with it particularly heavy implications of his guilt. The Coventry and Dunstable

chronicles, like those of pseudo-William, Melrose and Anchin also recorded that Becket had fought for Church liberties. These texts were perhaps positioning Becket as a champion of the Church, while placing Henry as its adversary. The Lowlands chronicle does not fit into this pattern however, neither presenting the coronation or the exile as evidence of Henry's persecution of the church, though it does mention him in its record of the martyrdom. Furthermore, Becket's defence of church liberty did not have to be a partisan point: as has been discussed earlier, it was also significant as a means of bolstering his saintly credentials. As such, it is difficult to categorically state the significance of this narrative detail. In the case of Coventry, the narrative significance of mentioning Henry during the martyrdom can be explained by considering the representation of his reign as a whole in the text. Indeed, looking for broader narrative themes that connected multiple annals is a vital approach in understanding the narrativity that these texts employed.

Where the chronicles of Melrose, Anchin and pseudo-William made their antipathy towards Henry clear, a more subtle response can be found in the Coventry chronicle, where a narrative of Henry's flawed rule was carefully constructed. Henry was introduced positively in the chronicle, which stated that he took to the throne as a friend of peace (*pacis amicus*), the annalists drawing a clear contrast between the horrors of the Anarchy described in Coventry's previous annals and the restoration of order under this new king.[371] Yet although Henry represented a welcome change from the previous disorder, he proved himself a deficient king. His decrees were described as dangerous and illegitimate (*feralibus edictiis … spuriis decretis*) in 1164, and the annal for 1172, which recorded Henry's conquest of Ireland, made sure to qualify his

[371] Coventry, p. 680-684.

success. His way had been “prepared by the efforts and exploits of others”, most notably Richard, count of Striguil.[372] The contrast between the two is stark. Where Henry had piggybacked off the work of earlier invaders, Richard had arrived first, and subjugated many with only a few followers. The chronicle also showed considerable sympathy towards Henry’s rebellious son the Young Henry, viewing him not as a parricidal upstart, but as a heroic figure mourned by many at his death.[373] A pattern is apparent across these annals, downplaying Henry’s success, showing sympathy to his rivals and questioning the effectiveness of his rule. This is further evidenced by Coventry’s record of Henry’s invasions of Wales. Henry’s first campaign was in 1157, where he was able to force Owain ap Gruffydd to negotiate peace despite Welsh successes on the battlefield and the failure of Henry’s attempted raid on Anglesey.[374] Coventry avoided acknowledging the successful outcome of the campaign, its annal for 1157 recorded only that the king took an army into Wales, with no comment on the outcome.[375] Henry’s invasion in 1165 on the other hand was an obvious disaster, with bad weather, insufficient supplies and a ferocious guerrilla campaign by the Welsh soldiers seeing Henry’s army devastated as it moved through the mountains and dense woodland of north Wales. Henry abandoned the campaign and retreated to England, where he mutilated and executed the Welsh hostages that he held.[376] Coventry recorded this failure, laying the blame on Henry’s lack of caution as he advanced, which led him to lose many knights as the Welsh “attacked the ill-prepared

[372] Coventry, p. 687.

[373] Ibid., p. 689.

[374] Paul Latimer, ‘Henry II’s Campaign against the Welsh in 1165’, *Welsh History Review Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru,* 14 (1988), pp. 525 and 529.

[375] Coventry, p. 685.

[376] Latimer, ‘Henry’s Campaign against the Welsh in 1165’, pp. 535-539.

army and savagely massacred them".[377] These annals fit together to convey a continuous message of Henry's inadequacies, and it is in this context that Coventry's record of the martyrdom, which mentioned Henry's association with the killers and Becket's defence of the Church, needs to be read. The preceding narrative of Henry's shortcomings makes his connection to Becket's murderers more significant; it was another failure of his reign. Equally, the annal for 1164 that described Henry's decrees at Salisbury (i.e. the Constitutions of Clarendon) as contrary to the rights of the Church (*contra iura ecclesiastica*), made the reference to Becket's defence of the Church at the martyrdom all the more charged, since viewing the two annals together establishes a clear opposition between the king who threatened the Church in 1164 and the archbishop who was murdered by royal knights for its defence in 1171.[378] Coventry extended the point by stating that Becket was martyred also for his steadfast defence of justice or fairness (*justitiae*) – a stance that further juxtaposes Becket with the many failures of Henry's rule beyond his persecution of the Church. This attitude towards Becket and Henry may reflect the reverence Richard Peche, bishop of Coventry until 1182, came to have for St Thomas, despite his participation in the coronation of 1170.[379] Alternatively, it may represent the antipathy between local midlands nobles and Henry II. The earls of Chester were generous donors to the cathedral, and the chronicle showed a marked interest in affairs of the earls of Leicester, particularly Robert III.[380] Both Robert and his contemporary, Hugh, fifth earl of Chester, joined the

[377] Coventry, p. 685.

[378] Ibid., pp. 684-687.

[379] M. J. Franklin, *Coventry and Lichfield: 1160 – 1182* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xxix.

[380] William Page, 'Houses of Benedictine monks: Priory of Coventry', in *A History of the County of Warwick: Volume 2*, (London, 1908), accessed 11/03/2020, http://www.british-

rebellion against Henry II that occurred in 1173 and were imprisoned by the king.[381] They had lands confiscated and were excluded from court for several years. Whatever the motivation, Coventry's critical assessment of Henry's reign can be understood, when the account of the martyrdom is viewed in conjunction with other annals in the chronicle. Annals were interspersed with small narrative details that were seemingly ambiguous in meaning, but, when read alongside previous and subsequent annals in the same text, reveal carefully constructed narrative strands. Just as a set of annals could operate simultaneously in multiple temporalities, so too did an individual annal function on multiple narrative levels.

Melrose's account of Henry's reign was more aggressive in its denunciation. Becket's exile in 1164 was not presented as being due to his resistance to illegitimate policies, but rather due to the intolerable injuries inflicted on the Church by Henry.[382] Coventry suggested that Henry governed poorly, but Melrose positioned him as an existential threat to the Church. The chronicle of Melrose also uniquely recorded in 1169 that Henry had concocted a "base and detestable plot" against both Becket and Pope Alexander.[383] This was a far more damning accusation than anything that could be found in Coventry. The different approaches and the different narrative strands created

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history.ac.uk/vch/warks/vol2/pp52-59 and Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles*, vol. 1, pp. 155-7.

[381] David Crouch, 'Breteuil, Robert de [Robert Ès Blanchmains, Robert the Whitehanded, Robert de Beaumont], Third Earl of Leicester (c. 1130–1190), Magnate', *Oxford database of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 23/03/2020, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1883> and T. F. Tout and Thomas K. Keefe, 'Hugh [Hugh of Cyfeiliog], Fifth Earl of Chester (1147–1181), Magnate', *Oxford database of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 13/03/2020, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-14059.

[382] Melrose, p. 79

[383] Ibid., p. 81.

in both texts are further demonstrated by their accounts of the invasion of 1165. In the Coventry chronicle, this was a disaster brought about by Henry's poor planning. The Melrose version, however, dwelt on the cruelty of Henry and recorded that he rendered justice (*justiciam fecit*) on the children of King Rhys and his nobles, putting out the eyes of the boys and cutting off the ears and noses of the girls.[384] There is no mention of these victims being hostages nor any justification offered for Henry's actions. This was to be read as a cruel and excessive punishment, a dark indication of what the "justice" of Henry entailed. Melrose's dramatic and emotional extended account of 1171 was the culmination of this tale, a final damning indictment of a cruel and duplicitous king. This was a more aggressive condemnation than that of Coventry, where the martyrdom formed part of a strand focused on Henry as an ineffective king. In Melrose, Becket died a victim of Henry's tyranny.

Yet these narrative strands did not only exist as a subversive tool, a means to criticise a king subtly, in Coventry's case, or bombastically, as Melrose preferred. Other sets of annals created narrative strands that were more sympathetic to Henry. The Waverley chronicle used Robert of Torigni as its source and followed his example to present Henry as an effective and powerful king. The Waverley annal for 1157 was copied directly from Robert's work, recording a triumphant statement of Henry's subjugation not just of the Welsh people, but of Wales itself, cutting down trees and opening roads.[385] Henry's military defeats during this campaign were ignored. The Waverley annalists avoided acknowledging the failure of the 1165 campaign as well, instead recording that "[Henry] himself led his army into Wales a third time and killed

[384] Melrose, p. 79.

[385] Winchcombe, p. 237 and Torigni, p. 195.

the hostages of king Owain."[386] This differed however from Robert's approach. In 1165, Robert recorded that Henry mustered a great army, omitting the embarrassment of the actual campaign, and in 1166 noted that Henry strengthened his defences at the Welsh border. For Robert the 1165 campaign was best ignored, and instead he wished to present Henry as an active militaristic ruler in these years. Waverley's account also ignored the failure, but its record of the campaign had a less glaring omission at its heart than Robert's otherwise more detailed account. The Waverley account also differed from Robert by recording the execution of the hostages. This brutal act was presented as part of the duty of a king to dispense justice, equivalent perhaps to Robert's record of Henry increasing the defences at the border. The previous annal, for 1164, in the Waverley chronicle recorded that "– "justice [was enacted] upon the Welsh hostages" (*justitia de obsidibus Wallensium*). The exact meaning is unclear, but an earlier entry in 1158 recorded: *justitia de monetariis* referring to Henry's reform of coinage.[387] *Justitia* seems to have been used in the Waverley as word for the exercise of royal authority, and the execution of the prisoners was intended to be seen in this light. Melrose emphasised the cruelty of Henry's mutilation of the Welsh hostages, but Waverley viewed their execution as a justified act. In his study of medieval hostage taking, Adam J. Kosto has argued that although the execution of hostages was rare and normally condemned, there were also plenty of contemporary justifications and notes the "surprisingly dispassionate" response of John of Salisbury to the hanging of a Brescian hostage in 1168.[388] It was for this reason that Melrose needed to emphasise the excessive nature of Henry's actions, to push it

[386] Waverley, pp. 238-9.

[387] Waverley, p. 238.

[388] Adam J. Kosto, *Hostages in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 202-203.

beyond the expectation of acceptable behaviour. For Waverley on the other hand, the incident represented Henry dispensing appropriate punishment. Waverley, like Robert of Torigni, wished to construct an image of Henry as a powerful king, yet it was not following Robert's lead blindly and was instead making its own decisions about how this narrative could be constructed, referencing Henry's execution of hostages where Robert did not. Furthermore, where Robert of Torigni avoided recording the dispute with Becket, Waverley dismissed it as simply as a display of Henry's anger. While Waverley implied there was no controversy during Henry's coronation of his son in 1170, Robert offered justification, by citing other occasions that a royal coronation had been carried out by the archbishop of York. By omitting and justifying Henry's actions both these texts were able to create a triumphant narrative of Henry's reign that minimised his failures and avoided his controversies, presenting the image of a powerful and successful king. Henry's shameful connection to the murder could not be accommodated in this narrative, so it was ignored. Robert of Torigini's enthusiastic promotion of Henry may have influenced the Waverley chronicle's support of the king, yet the abbey had its own reasons to present him favourably. Waverley enjoyed a positive association with subsequent Angevin kings. Both Richard and John confirmed the privileges of the abbey, and Waverley seems to have suffered less from John's predations on the Cistercian order than other Cistercian monasteries in England.[389] Relations with Henry III were "very friendly" despite further arguments between that king and the Cistercians.[390] It seems likely then that these royal connections made the

[389] "House of Cistercian monks: Abbey of Waverley," in *A History of the County of Surrey: Volume 2*, ed. H E Malden (London, 1967), *British History Online*, accessed 03/08/2021, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/surrey/vol2/pp77-89.

[390] Ibid.

abbey well-disposed towards Henry II when it came to create its chronicle in the first quarter of the thirteenth century.

The Winchcombe chronicle offers a valuable further demonstration of use of narrative strands in annalisitic works. Paul Anthony Hayward has identified similarities between the Winchcombe and Coventry chronicles in their annals up to 1121, and between the second section of the Winchcombe chronicle (the annals up to 1181, its end point) and the chronicles of Tewkesbury and of Gervase of Canterbury. The annals produced at Dore Abbey can also probably be added to this group as annals in this text match entries in the three other texts.[391] While the presentation of Becket and Henry within the chronicles of Winchcombe, Tewkesbury and Dore is largely similar, Winchcombe's editorial decisions provided a more coherent overarching narrative to understand the reign of Henry II. These three texts all suggested that Becket's exile was caused by fear of Henry rather than a dispute over the liberty of the Church, a cause that also went unmentioned at Becket's martyrdom. The coronation of the Young Henry was presented as uncontroversial, and these texts did not reference Henry in relation to the murder. Like Waverley then, they seemed to have been more sympathetic towards Henry and presented his reign as less controversial than his detractors would have suggested. Winchcombe's account, however, is slightly more nuanced than this.

Henry was represented as a powerful ruler, who matched the glory of Louis VII when escorting him through France in 1159 and who forced the French king to retreat with his energetic leadership in 1174.[392] Yet Henry has little else to commend him; Louis was described as an "outstanding protector of the clergy" and as "most pious", no such

[391] See chapter two, pp. 52-53.

[392] Winchcombe, p. 528 and 536-8.

compliments were paid to Henry.[393] Furthermore, the chronicle noted Louis' prayer at Becket's tomb in 1180, but it skimmed over Henry's visit in 1172, a far cry from the depictions of Henry as a penitent biblical king popularised by twelfth-century historians.[394] The tax he raised in 1160 was described as an unheard of imposition, and the tax of 1163 was said to have turned his bishops against him. The Winchcombe chronicle acknowledged Henry's successes, but with some reservation about their cost. Its version of Henry's first invasion of Wales (recorded here in the annal for 1158), was far less celebratory than the accounts written by Robert of Torigni and Waverley. Winchcombe recorded that Henry captured castles and took hostages, but this was at the cost of great slaughter of his own men. Likewise, rather than ignoring the campaign of 1165 or suggesting it was successful, Winchcombe instead recorded that Henry achieved little (*parum profecit*). The chronicle's approach to Henry is best exemplified in its annal for 1170, where it recorded an inquiry ordered by Henry into the excessive tax collections that had occurred while he had campaigned abroad to subdue his enemies.[395] This carried no explicit criticism of Henry, but reminded a reader of the cost of his policies. Local corruption was the price of his successful campaigns outside of England, just as there was a great human cost to his Welsh campaign in 1157.

The Winchcombe annalists did not want to undermine Henry, so they strove to defuse the potentially explosive implications of Henry's dispute with Becket, and presented the expedition of 1165 as an inconclusive, rather than disastrous, event. In Winchcombe's account Henry was neither a threat to the Church, nor was he a failed military commander. Its account of the murder avoided referencing Henry, but earlier

[393] Ibid., p. 541.

[394] Winchcombe, pp. 541 and 536 and Staunton, *Historians*, pp. 201-203.

[395] Winchcombe, p. 534.

the annal emphasised that peace had been restored between the king and archbishop, perhaps an effort to distance Henry from the subsequent violence.[396] Even though its account contained no suggestion that Henry was involved, the annal for 1172 stressed that Henry swore on relics that he had nothing to do with the murder, and uniquely suggested that the murderers corroborated this to the pope. Whatever reservations about Henry's kingship were implied by Winchcombe's account, there was no implication that he was a tyrant, and the narrative of the martyrdom fitted this pattern. The Winchcombe annalists seem to have been uncertain of how to record the complexities of both Henry's reign and the dispute, and although the annalistic form gave opportunities to hide and defuse the toxic implications of these events, at times the uncertainty and tensions of the annalists revealed themselves. Tewkesbury and Dore contained similar accounts of Henry and Becket, the former using an identical entry for its account of Henry's first campaign in Wales and the latter using the same words to describe Henry's invasion in 1165 for example. Yet they do not share Winchcombe's overwrought response and were far happier to ignore moments that in Winchcombe's account implied some uncertainty over the effectiveness of Henry's rule. The Dore chronicle ignored the Welsh campaign of 1157 and Tewkesbury ignored that of 1165. Dore recorded the unprecedented tax of 1160 that Tewkesbury ignored. Neither text mentioned Henry's taxing of the church in 1163 or concerns over corrupt tax collection during the king's absence; indeed it is because Winchcombe mentioned these unfavourable moments that it needed to work harder than these other texts to assert Henry's innocence in relation to the murder. The Tewkesbury and Dore annals used some of the same entries as Winchcombe, but they did not build into the same overarching narrative that can be seen within this text. Both were written in the

[396] Ibid., p. 534.

thirteenth century, several decades after Winchcombe and once Henry was dead, so the doubts over his kingship may have seemed less important. While Henry's rule had been a more pressing concern for the Winchcombe annalists, these writers preferred to hide the controversies and create a more straightforward and stable narrative of Angevin history. Even though Winchcombe retained some doubts over the effectiveness of Henry as a king, and aimed to provide a record of contemporary events, it showed no desire to subvert the authority of the current monarch.

This difficult navigation of support for the institution of the kingship even where an individual king erred, and of conflicting loyalty to both king and archbishop mirrors the experience of many English prelates during the dispute. Roger of Worcester, bishop of Winchcombe's diocese, trod a careful path through the conflict, endeavouring not to antagonise Henry, but at the same time he strove to obey Becket and acknowledge his authority. By 1170 he was more vocal in his support of the archbishop, abstaining himself from the Young Henry's coronation and having a forceful argument with King Henry when he saw him before the meeting at Frétval.[397] Yet Roger assisted during the subsequent negotiations, desperate to make peace between king and archbishop, and after the murder he was among the delegation of English prelates that sped to the pope to plead Henry's case.[398] Roger supported and sympathised with Becket, but he still served his king and wished to prevent a papal interdiction. Many Angevin annalists struggled with a similar challenge. They wished to celebrate the sanctity of Becket, and record the trauma of his murder, but at the same time were uncomfortable acknowledging that Henry's misdeeds had played a vital role in this event. They did

[397] This argument seems to have been centred on Henry's treatment of Roger's family rather than the Becket affair, so Roger's support for Becket should not be overstated. Barlow, *Becket*, p. 208.

[398] Ibid., p. 256-7.

not wish to undermine royal authority, one of the constituent elements of their society's order and the narratives of Henry's reign that they created reflect these tensions.

These are only a handful of examples of different narrative strands that were created within these texts. In the chronicle of Melrose, those annals that demonstrated Henry's cruelty and cunning found their culmination in their extended discussion of Becket's murder. The Coventry chronicle's editorialisation of incidents from Henry's reign created the story of an ineffective and fool-hardy king who had persecuted his archbishop. Waverley's story of Henry was a tale of unmitigated successes, conquest and justice. The chronicle of Winchcombe contains perhaps the most nuanced story. There Henry was a powerful king, but not a virtuous one, and his successes came at great cost. Winchcombe chose to neither endorse nor condemn Henry; whatever the author's doubts about his qualities as a ruler, they did not desire to undermine his authority. Not all annals contributed to such narrative strands but their existence within these texts suggests that narrativity can be found within annalistic texts by assessing how the individual annals within a chronicle contribute together to a wider narrative structure.

Conclusion

1171 was a difficult annal to write. Becket's death carried a complex significance that demanded not only recording but also discussion. Indeed, there was some uncertainty whether an annalistic approach was sufficient for such a momentous moment. The Melrose chronicler wrote an extended account of Becket's martyrdom filled with discursive flourishes rather than trying to employ the simpler style more common to annalistic writing. Other texts added a short verse to their account, perhaps concerned

that the account in their annal was not enough. Yet while the martyrdom may have required special attention, Melrose's approach remains an outlier, and in other texts the annal for 1171 was able to frame and structure this event, narrativise it, in such a way that reflected its significance. Despite the apparent difference between the more annalistic and the more extended accounts, three consistent concerns appear in their narratives of Becket. First, there was the desire to convey the chilling violation that had occurred in both the physical harm inflicted on Becket's body and the invasion of a sacred environment. Second, there was a discussion of Becket's sanctity that centred on representing Becket as a sacrifice on behalf of the whole Church. The writers achieved this with elements from the hagiography and liturgy dedicated to Becket, though they stepped back from the most excessive hyperbole concocted by Becket's hagiographers, and presented a more accessible version of the saint. Henry's involvement with the murder was the third preoccupation of these accounts and the main point of distinction between them. Most chronicles followed the general sense of reconciliation that prevailed from the later twelfth century onwards and avoided implicating Henry in matters. Shrewd omission separated Henry from the martyrdom and ensured that Henry's reign remained largely uncontroversial. A handful of texts, mostly produced outside of England, did record his connection to the murder, in some cases even directly condemning his involvement. The Coventry chronicle, written within Henry's realm, was more discreet, yet it too was able to convey a subtle narrative of Henry's failings. An annal for 1171 was far more than just a record of Becket's death, it conveyed the urgent concerns that this event encompassed. While the texts shared a common revulsion at the transgressive violence and a shared desire to convey the sanctity of Becket, the flexibility of the form meant that their authors could find different ways of conveying these narratives of violence, sanctity, or guilt.

Each annalist made their own decision of how to record this event and had an array of tools with which to construct their narratives. The annalists skilfully editorialised the language they used to describe the murder, carefully contextualised it, adapted hagiographic and liturgical tropes and added emphatic codas to produce their narratives of the murder. Yet this narrative did not only exist within a single entry. Individual annals within a text linked together to create narrative strands within the text. Becket's martyrdom connected not only to the other entries discussing his life, but it was also a key part these texts' account of Henry II's reign. By retaining certain details, and reinterpreting or omitting other, contradictory elements, an annalist could link together annals to construct a narrative which could suggest either Henry's innocence or culpability.

Far from having an absence of narrativity, there existed multiple levels of narrative within a set of annals. An individual entry was discerningly edited to frame the event it recorded in the manner the author saw as appropriate. Several annals could work together to present a narrative strand, a consistent approach to interpreting the events of a particular individual or a particular reign. Finally, the text as a whole proposed overarching narratives, and it was specifically to preserve an overarching narrative of ordered continuity and succession that many Angevin texts were unwilling to mention Henry's culpability in the murder, even long after he had died. These narrative levels were not isolated, for an annal could simultaneously tell several stories. By framing Becket's death with a triumphant spiritual message an annal contributed to a narrative of divinely-ordained sacred history. Equally, ignoring the failings and controversies of Henry's reign contributed to the stable rhythm of the past that these texts proposed. Narrative was an intrinsic and nuanced element of annalistic history. By appreciating and engaging with annalistic narrative there is an opportunity to better understand the

authors of these intriguing texts and their world. The stories they told about Becket's death reveals deep anxiety about secular violence and its capacity to brush aside social norms. Yet these accounts also demonstrate the comfort that was brought by the ascension of a saint to Paradise, a narrative that suggested a possible triumph even over unrestrained aggression. There was a fascinating desire to preserve the status quo in many of these accounts, embodied by an unwillingness to connect a king to the traumatic violence enacted in his name. At the same time, there existed more complex attitudes towards royal authority in the chronicles of Coventry and Winchcombe, whose authors presented discrete judgements of Henry's reign. While this subtlety hinders easy interpretation, it provides stories as engaging and intense as can be found in any part of medieval historiography.

Chapter Four

Why Record Miracles and Why Write Annals?

Introduction

"Without question his glory came to be multiplied far beyond the injury inflicted. For, to be brief, the report of wonders not only reached the innermost and outermost corners of England, but also spread rapidly through many people of foreign races. It roused cities, towns, villages and even huts everywhere in England to such an extent that from the lowliest up to the greatest, few remained who did not come to see and honour the tomb of the famous martyr."[399]

- The author of the Lansdowne Anonymous discussing the miracles of Thomas Becket in their *vita* of the saint.

While allowing for some degree of hagiographic hyperbole, this account from the Lansdowne Anonymous gives a sense of the excitement inspired by Thomas Becket's miracles, which would provide the subject for the two largest English miracle collections of the medieval period.[400] The miracles had begun within days of his death, according to hagiographers such as John of Salisbury and William Fitzstephen,[401] and continued with remarkable frequency. The miracles spread from Canterbury across southern England and on to the continent, with several reported in France and

[399] 'The Lansdowne Anonymous', in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173)* ed. James Craigie Robertson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), vol. 4, p. 159, translated in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 211.

[400] Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 126.

[401] Staunton, *Lives,* p. 20.

Flanders within a year of his death.[402] Herbert of Bosham and Gerald of Wales both claimed that a miraculous vision of Becket appeared to a bishop in Jerusalem on the same night as the martyrdom.[403] These miracles attracted pilgrims to Canterbury from across Europe, as the promise of a miraculous cure or a transcendent experience proved compelling. Miracles were a powerful and prominent part of medieval Christian life, and Becket's posthumous reputation as a miracle worker was key to establishing his cult as one of the most popular in Europe.

The miraculous featured prominently in medieval historiography. It imbued chronicles with a sense of wonder that may seem unsophisticated to a modern reader expecting rationality and empiricism from the genre of historiography. Yet for medieval annalists there was no incongruity; it was their duty to record portents and miracles as well as the deeds of kings,[404] and the stories of a well filling with milk or implausibly heavy snowfall were not incidental.[405] Michael Staunton has cautioned against imposing convoluted symbolism on these moments, rejecting the notion that they encapsulate the whole text in a "play-within-a-play" manner.[406] However, this is not to say that records of the miraculous were without purpose. As was discussed in the chapter one, the basic structure of annalistic history aimed to imbue the past with a deeply theological flavour, suggesting it was divinely ordered and ordained.[407] Marvels and wonders provided an important additional element to this narrative; these were

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[402] Donald Prudlo, 'Martyrs on the Move: The Spread of the Cults of Thomas of Canterbury and Peter of Verona', *Peregrinations* 3, no. 2 (2011), pp. 39-40.

[403] Katherine Lee Hodges-Kluck, 'The Matter of Jerusalem: The Holy Land in Angevin Court Culture and Identity, c. 1154-1216.' PhD diss. (University of Tennessee, 2015), pp. 48-49.

[404] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 21.

[405] Margam, p. 18 and Melrose, p. 106.

[406] Staunton, *Historians,* pp. 126-7.

[407] See chapter one, pp. 24-25.

moments where God's hand could be seen at work. John of Salisbury stated that a chronicler had a duty "to relate noteworthy matters, so that the invisible things of God may be clearly seen by the things that are done".[408] These events were a demonstration of the incredible power of God, which, if correctly interpreted, could guide a reader to a better understanding of their world. There was revelatory significance to miracles that meant they demanded inclusion alongside more mundane events. Yet, significant as miracles were, and despite Becket's celebrated thaumaturgic reputation, many of the annalistic accounts of Becket's life did not mention his miracles. This absence is particularly conspicuous among English texts, with only the Winchcombe and Tewkesbury chronicles including them. To consider the inclusion and omission of Becket's miracles, it is first necessary to take a broad view of the position of miracles within annalistic chronicles.

For medieval thinkers, supernatural events fell within two categories: marvels (*mirabilia*) and miracles (*miracula*). Marvels were events, such as eclipses and comets, which contravened the limited human understanding of the laws of nature.[409] These incidents were incredible, but not impossible, only reflecting the witness' incomplete comprehension of the natural processes at work.[410] The second category, miracles, referred to the natural order being directly overturned by God. Such events were incredible because they represented the unknowable and overwhelming nature of God's omnipotence. This distinction was widely accepted by the thirteenth century, but it was not always consistently applied.[411] A plague, which may appear at first

[408] *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p. 3.

[409] Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Wonder', *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 1 (1997), pp. 4-5.

[410] Heffernan, *Sacred Biography,* p. 95.

[411] Bynum, 'Wonder', p. 8 and n. 31.

glance to be a natural event, could be interpreted as miraculous if it was created by God to punish a sinner. At the same time, Jesus' transformation of water into wine was not entirely unnatural. To medieval theorists water was malleable, and through natural processes could become ice or blood.[412] While the instant transformation of water to wine remained miraculous, it conformed to an established natural phenomena. Despite these ambiguities, this second category of *miracula* offers a useful focus for this chapter. Such incidents, especially those manifested around saints and their bodies, provide a direct point of comparison with the miracles worked by Becket.

Miracles, like records of succession, were a consistent and recurring feature of annalistic chronicles. This ubiquity not only provides valuable context for Becket's miracles, but also offers an opportunity to explore the overarching commemorative functions of these texts**.** Annals were never incidental; like any acts of memory they had a purpose,[413] and the prevalence of miracles throughout annalistic chronicles reveals the intersecting commemorative needs that these texts fulfilled. Three fundamental preoccupations governed the recording of annalistic miracles. Firstly, annalistic memory was shaped by a desire to demonstrate that the past, and the present, conformed to Christian ideals. Annals promoted a version of reality in which God was an active agent, the virtuous were rewarded, and the sinful punished. Secondly, annals were a repository of institutional memory, recording events that reflected the specific context of the community that produced the text. In so doing, a chronicle reinforced the multi-faceted collective identity of that monastic community. Finally, annalists had an obligation to catalogue contemporary events for posterity,

[412] Michael Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), p. 15.

[413] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, p. 12.

and to connect past and present into a continuous unit. The earlier annals were a tool to make sense of the author's present, and in turn, contemporary annals would help future annalists comprehend their own time. Miracles were at once visceral and affective, but also were carefully considered and theorised, even a brief or obscure record of a miracle embodied the complex position that it occupied. Yet by systematically considering the inclusion of miracles, and the roles they fulfilled, a better understanding of the varied functions of an annalistic chronicle can be achieved.

The narrative framing of miracles and the creation of a miraculous textworld

The significance of miracles in the Middle Ages largely derived from the revelatory meaning that could be gleaned from them. They gave an insight into God's intentions, demonstrated divine omnipotence and were a reassuring proof of Christian truth. Miracles were memorable in a manner that could aid preaching and pedagogy, encouraging virtue and disseminating Christian doctrine. Yet this very conspicuousness meant some caution needed to be employed; miracles could distract or mislead if people focused on their spectacular nature rather than their underlying meaning. Formalised conventions for discussing miracles developed to confirm their validity and to place them within the correct theological context. Annalists were influenced by these conventions, and endeavoured to promote the orthodox interpretation of miracles, but they also included incidents which did not match the contemporary expectations of miracle-recording. Whether conventionally or unconventionally recorded, miracles made God an active presence in an annalistic chronicle's textworld and introduced a strand of supernatural events throughout the chronicle. Miracles could be employed to convey specific theological ideas, but they

also provided an opportunity for annalists to demonstrate more broadly that the past and present may be seen to conform to a divinely ordained plan.

The most common narrative framing of miracles was alongside a record of a particular saint's virtue. The Waverley chronicle's annal for 992 cited both the virtue of Odilo of Cluny's life and the miracles which illuminated him as evidence of his piety.[414] The same approach was taken for Waverley's eulogies of Pope Eugenius and of Edmund of Abingdon, archbishop of Canterbury.[415] This connection between virtue and miracles can be seen in Melrose's description of Robert of Courcon,[416] Winchester drew a parallel between Fulk of Neuilly's preaching and his miracles,[417] and the Tewkesbury chronicle's statement that Jesus extended (*pandere*) miracles for Robert, their pious abbot.[418] The Dore chronicle in its annal for 715 noted St Guthlac's private sanctity and hermitic lifestyle, and that he miraculously conversed with angels.[419] Dore also stressed that Bernard of Clairvaux was conspicuous for his combination of sanctity, knowledge, virtue and miracles (*signa*) in 1132.[420] This emphasis represented an important aspect of Christian theology; though recording miracles could facilitate salvation by inspiring readers,[421] it was the virtue of the saint that should be imitated, not their miracles.[422] However, while medieval theologians endeavoured to emphasise the importance of virtue, miracles remained the *de facto* proof of sanctity for most

[414] Waverley, p. 169.

[415] Waverley, pp. 235 and 327. A similar approach for Edmund of Abingdon's death was taken in the Dunstable chronicle, see Dunstable, p. 156.

[416] Melrose, p. 137.

[417] Winchester, p. 67.

[418] Tewkesbury, p. 155.

[419] Dore, p. 515

[420] Ibid., p. 523.

[421] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 20.

[422] Walker-Bynum, 'Wonder' p. 10 and Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders*, p. 31

people in this period.[423] The annals united the two elements within the same entry; they presented sainthood in a way that reflected theological concerns by stressing the Christian virtue of the saint, and also the more evocative and popular fascination with the miracles worked by these individuals.

At the same time, several annals were carefully phrased to convey that miracles were worked by God, not by the saints themselves. The Manx chronicle stressed the role of God, through the intercession of St Maughold and Mary, in 1158 and 1248.[424] The Winchester annal for 1182 recorded that miracles were performed by God at Hyde because of the merits of St Barnabas.[425] The Dunstable annals for 1216 and 1240 recorded miracles worked by SS. Fremund and Edmund of Abingdon respectively, but emphasised that these miracles were not worked by the saints alone, but by God on their behalf,[426] and the same framing can be found in the Tewkesbury annal for 1240.[427] The role of God within these annals represented a significant contemporary concern in distinguishing between true and false miracles. It was accepted that Satan and Pharoah's magicians had worked supernatural deeds that could confound Christians,[428] and the chronicles of both Winchester and Burton include extended accounts of false miracles being worked by deceivers.[429] The reference to God's presence confirmed the miracle as genuine, and positioned the saint as a conduit of

[423] Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders,* p. 45 and André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the later middle ages*, trans. Jean Birrell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 36.

[424] Rushen, pp. 20-22 and 36.

[425] *innotuit se primum Sanctus Barnabas apud Hidam per miracula a Deo meritis eius perpetrata.* Winchester, p. 62.

[426] Dunstable, pp. 39 and 156.

[427] Tewkesbury, p. 117.

[428] Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders,* pp. 69 and 85-86.

[429] Winchester, pp. 74-76 and Burton, pp. 290-293.

supernatural power, rather than its source. God was not consistently referenced in records of saintly miracles, but this tendency, alongside the emphasis on virtue, suggests that annalists were conscious of the nuanced position of miracles within medieval theology. Indeed, there were some reservations among contemporaries about the pedagogical employment of miracles. They could awe "slow learners" or non-believers with the power of God, but for the truly faithful such demonstrations should not be necessary.[430] It was the admirable behaviour and quality of the saints, and the divine power of God that made these moments significant. The annalists endeavoured to reflect this dynamic and present miracles in a way that could inspire a Christian reader without validating magicians' tricks as miracles.

While some annals suggested that miracles were God's endorsement of a virtuous life, other incidents showed the miraculous punishment of those who had sinned, such as the destruction or confounding of non-believers. The Coventry and Winchcombe chronicles both recorded that Olympus, an Arian bishop, was consumed by fire as punishment for heresy in 509, and that, in the following year, another Arian was miraculously prevented from undertaking a heretical baptism.[431] Waverley's annal for 766 included a miracle that occurred after a group of Jews mocked an image of Christ.[432] Miracles which demonstrated the punishment of secular persecutors of the Church were even more common. The Waverley chronicle explicitly presented the deaths of Robert Marmion and Geoffrey of Mandeville in 1144 as divine vengeance

[430] Simon Yarrow, 'Miracles, Belief and Christian Materiality: Relic'ing in Twelfth-Century Miracle Narratives', in *Contextualizing Miracles in the Christian West, 1100-1500: New Historical Approaches*, ed. Matthew M. Mesley and Louise E. Wilson (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2014), p. 46 and Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, p. 102.

[431] Winchcombe, p. 414 and Coventry, p. 590.

[432] Waverley, p. 157.

for their sacrilegious acts.[433] The Coventry chronicle included a story of a Brabançon mercenary who had gambled in a church and damaged a statue of Virgin and Child, which subsequently began to bleed. For his disrespect he, and his "companions in wickedness", were driven mad and died.[434] The Melrose chronicle framed the smiting of 2,000 Danes following the murder of Alphege and the sack of Canterbury in 1011, the death of the warlord Somerled in 1164, and the defeat of an "impious" group of Flemish mercenaries in 1173, all as examples of divine punishment of the wicked.[435] The Tewkesbury and Winchcombe chronicles both depicted the ravaging of the schismatic imperial forces by plague in 1167 as divine vengeance.[436] These miracles provided a clear message that sinful behaviour would be punished, just as the earlier examples indicated that virtuous behaviour would be rewarded. Records of divine punishment also provided a response to the pervasive fear of secular violence which permeated monastic annals, suggesting that secular aggression could be rebuked by a supernatural reaction. This can be seen in a miracle recorded in both the Melrose and Lowlands chronicles, where a band of Norman soldiers, led by William the Conqueror, were turned back by St Cuthbert in 1072 or 1069.[437] Melrose's account is briefer, simply recording that William became terrified and fled, while the Lowlands annalists expanded the story, stating that Cuthbert brought a dense fog down on the soldiers to confound them. In both accounts secular aggression was humbled by the incredible power of the saint. In the Manx chronicle, the annal for 1158 digressed into an extended, discursive account of a miracle which had occurred on the island. Saint

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[433] *ecce Dei laudabilis omnibus sanctis praedicanda eiusdem sceleris eadem vindicta.* Waverley, p. 230.

[434] Coventry, p. 691.

[435] Melrose, pp. 42, 79 and 86.

[436] Winchcombe, p. 532 and Tewkesbury, p. 50.

[437] Melrose, p. 56 and Lowlands, p. 109.

Maughold appeared to a chieftain who was planning to loot his church and struck him with his staff, leaving him paralysed until his death later that day, which caused his men to flee.[438] Alternatively, rather than being a preventative measure, a miracle could show ecclesiastic triumph after violence was enacted. The chronicles of Melrose, Waverley and Dunstable recorded the miraculous healing of Pope Leo after he was mutilated by the Roman mob.[439] This story showed God intervening to overcome the violence inflicted upon a man of the Church. These miracles provide a combative response to the threat of raiding, injury or murder. They were a way for the annalists to reassure a monastic audience that in the face of such persecution, God's power could protect, restore or avenge the victims of secular violence.

The humbling of irreverent aggressors contributed to another broad trend across annalistic texts, namely the suggestion that the clergy enjoyed a particular connection to the miraculous. Miracles took place before relics or tombs within a church, and the saints referenced were mostly ecclesiastic: popes, abbots, or preachers. Miracles relating to secular saints were much rarer and although some were occasionally included, such as those connected to King Edward the martyr,[440] the miracles still took place within a church at the saint's shrine. Annalistic records demonstrated that miracles manifested around clerical bodies and in clerical spaces, at the shrines and tombs under their guardianship and through the relics that they owned. A handful of annalistic miracles explicitly demonstrated that God was present in clerical activity. The Dore chronicle's account of a volcano where sinful souls were punished, provided a demonstration of the power of intercessory prayer, as the prayers of the faithful (and

[438] Rushen, pp. 20-22.

[439] Melrose, p. 12, Waverley, p. 158 and Dunstable, p. 9.

[440] Winchester, p. 25 and Melrose, p. 36.

most effectively the monks of Cluny) were able to save the damned from the punishment of devils.[441] The Winchcombe chronicle included an account of a cross miraculously flying into the air at the abbey of Stanway in Gloucestershire.[442] Gerald of Wales recorded a similar story and used it to portend the death of Becket in the same year.[443] In Winchcombe, however, there was no reference to Becket, and the story served only to remind a reader of the mystical power present during a divine service. This idea was developed in the final annal of the Winchcombe chronicle, which recorded that a Eucharistic host miraculously transformed into a piece flesh with a human face on it after a woman hid it in her handkerchief.[444] The annal reported that "many miracles were celebrated" following the woman's confession.[445] These three miracles in the Dore and Winchcombe chronicles imbued Christian rituals with a mystical element and reminded a reader of the power of monastic prayer and the service of mass, and the presence of God in these rituals. In some cases, the decision to abandon the secular world to take up monastic or eremitic life was rewarded by a miracle. Waverley recorded miracles which occurred for Arsenius, after the senator became a monk, and Winchester recorded miracles that took place in Rome after Ine of Wessex and his wife renounced the throne to become pilgrims.[446] Arsenius and Ine were rewarded with miracles for leaving their secular lives behind. Powerful though they had been, it was the assumption of a spiritual lifestyle that brought them closer to the incredible, supernatural power of God. Annalistic chronicles contained a variety of

[441] Dore, p. 520.

[442] Winchcombe, p. 532.

[443] Henry Mayr-Harting, *Religion, Politics and Society in Britain, 1066-1272* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2011), p. 96.

[444] Winchcombe, pp. 540-2.

[445] Ibid., p. 542.

[446] Waverley, p. 143 and Winchester, p. 6.

miracles, but they prioritised those which endorsed ecclesiastic figures, which punished secular oppressors, and which situated God in a monk's world. God was everywhere, but He was especially present in churches, and the relics and tombs within them; He was more present in the lives of monks and ecclesiastic saints. This message did not require any subversion of the conventional understanding of the importance of virtue or the role of God as the creator of a miracle, but was an assertion of the privileged position of the clergy.

Annalistic writers appreciated the orthodox understanding of miracles and employed them to promote a specific clerical agenda. Yet many of the records of miracles in annalistic chronicles lacked such framing and remain frustratingly obscure. Across these texts are annals which simply recorded that miracles had occurred at a tomb,[447] or in relation to a relic,[448] or to an individual,[449] without any further specification as to what these miracles were. There was no explication of the virtue of these individuals, no gloss and sometimes no obvious ecclesiastic context to the miracle. While the use of verbs such as *clarare* or *clarescere* in the Burton and Waverley chronicles may have suggested that a saint was illuminated by a miracle, rather than being its creator,[450] there was otherwise no indication that the miracle had been produced by God. The Coventry chronicle provides the best demonstration of this variation in miracle recording. Its annal for 1200 recorded the death of the "venerable" Hugh of Lincoln, listed the many notable people who attended his funeral, and cited several specific miraculous cures worked at his tomb through Hugh's intercession.[451] The following

[447] Melrose, p. 36, Dore, p. 524 and Dunstable, p. 61.

[448] Tewkesbury, p. 115.

[449] Anchin, p. 407 Melrose, p. 91.

[450] Burton, pp. 209 and 366 and Waverley, p. 253.

[451] Coventry, p. 700.

annal for 1201 recorded simply that “miracles began to happen at Burton on Trent”.[452] Where the first annal demonstrated the miracles that resulted from the intercession of a respected prelate, the latter annal provided nothing other than a note that miracles had occurred.

This approach was a far cry from the increasingly forensic attitude to detail apparent in contemporary miracle collections. As papal control over the process of canonisation increased in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, miracles came under greater scrutiny to ensure that they were a valid demonstration of sanctity.[453] Monks hoping for official recognition of their local saint needed to provide detailed records of miracles, supported by reliable witness testimony, to satisfy papal commissioners. A miracle collection had to follow the conventions of its genre, and the accepted stereotypes of miracles, to be authentic and convincing.[454] These requirements meant that miracle stories tended to follow a generic structure: an issue was identified with the supplicant, contact was made with the saint, a miracle occurred and the story was concluded with a moral gloss.[455] Yet many annalistic miracles did not even specify the nature of the miracle (whether it was a cure or vision or punishment), or record who had experienced it, even in broad terms. Equally, witness testimony, an expected feature of accounts of miracles from the eleventh and early twelfth centuries onwards,[456] was referenced in only a handful of cases. The Coventry chronicle contained a miracle that was witnessed by Henry, bishop of Winchester, and included in the Rushen chronicle was

[452] Coventry, p. 700.

[453] Vauchez, *Saints in the later middle ages*, pp. 33-37 and 54 and Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate,* pp. 205-6.

[454] Goodich pp. 4-6.

[455] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate,* pp. 28-31.

[456] Vauchez, *Saints in the later middle ages,* p. 33.

a story recounted by a Manx chief named Donald, who was freed from captivity by the intercession of Mary.[457] The Melrose chronicle repeated a story from a certain William, identified as the son of the earl and nephew of the king, concerning miraculous cures worked with a relic from their abbey.[458] These few examples of witness authentication are found in discursive asides within the text, rather than in the annalistic records, and are the exception rather than the rule. This willingness to ignore witness attestation indicates that annalistic texts were happy to include brief and vague accounts of miracles, even as contemporary miracle collections became increasingly focused on precise detail.

Other twelfth- and thirteenth-century trends also had limited impact on annalistic miracle recording. Healing miracles became increasingly ubiquitous in the twelfth-century miracle collections, perhaps encouraged by the contemporary interest in, and increased access to, medical texts.[459] Some chronicles included detailed accounts of such miracles, specifying the exact cure which had occurred or the engagement with the saint or relic that had prompted the healing. For example, the Coventry chronicle specified particular cures that had occurred during Hugh of Lincoln's funeral, at his shrine, or through his intercession.[460] Such precise detail of a miraculous cure was rare however, and, as with witness testimony, it normally only occurred in non-annalistic asides within a chronicle.[461] At the same, there was a growing trend of using miracles as *exempla*, direct lessons connected to a memorable incident, and

[457] Rushen, p. 136.

[458] Stevenson suggested this William was the son of Patrick, fifth earl of Dunbar. Melrose, p. 151, n. q.

[459] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate,* pp. 134-135 and Sally Crumplin, 'Modernizing St Cuthbert: Reginald of Durham's Miracle Collection', *Studies in Church History* 41 (2005), p. 185.

[460] Coventry, p. 700.

[461] For the rare examples of such detail see Burton, p. 343 and Tewkesbury, pp. 84-86.

collections of such didactic stories became popular in the thirteenth century.[462] Yet few of the miracles recorded in annals served this purpose. The Dore account of souls being miraculously saved by the power of intercessory prayer, and Coventry's record of the punishment of an impious mercenary offered this kind of direct lesson, but such explicit glossing of a miracle was uncommon. The miracle concerning the Eucharistic host in the Winchcombe chronicle could easily have been employed to teach the importance of communion and confession, but the annalists left such a message implicit. Equally, the annals which connected saintly virtue with miracles could have formed the basis of an *exemplum*, but the annalists did not expand on the theme themselves nor provide any direct exhortation to follow the example of the saint. While some of these annals contained a pedagogical element or recorded an anecdote that could form the basis of an *exemplum*, annalists seem to have felt no need to explicate a lesson. The annalists were influenced by contemporary trends in miracle collection, but they were not obliged to follow such conventions. The annalists were not papal commissioners, who could be sent back to do their job again if the miracles they collected were not sufficiently detailed or well-evidenced.[463] They were not constructing a compelling case for an individual saint's miraculous power, nor providing a repertoire of miraculous *exempla*, but rather they were assembling an assortment of different miraculous stories. Miracles *could* achieve these goals within a chronicle, yet alongside the more expansive or precise accounts of miracles there was a multitude of unconfirmed or vague incidents, stories which seem to have done little but record that a miracle had occurred. These examples are a valuable reminder that despite the trend towards more "rationality" in miracle collecting in the twelfth and

[462] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate,* p. 204.

[463] Vauchez, *Sainthood in the later middle ages*, p. 54.

thirteenth centuries,[464] the excitement elicited by these events cannot be underestimated. The exceptional nature of miracles meant that they merited inclusion even without the proper verification or conventional framing.

Simon Yarrow has suggested that miracle collections represent "a *kind of reality* [original emphasis]", which obfuscated some aspects of the past while privileging others.[465] In a similar way, the miracles that occurred in these annals presented, and promoted, a certain version of reality. The textworld of these chronicles proposed a specifically Christian, monastic reflection of the world. In the annalistic textworld, miracles endorsed figures worthy of emulation and punished sinners; it was a place where the sick could be healed by the power of sanctity and the laws of nature inverted. This version of reality celebrated the special proximity of the clergy to God and assuaged monastic fears of secular violence. Yet alongside this more precise employment of miracles, there were unspecified or unattested records which served a broader purpose: a recurring demonstration of God's power. Just as the repetitive beat of successions gave a sense of structure and order to the past, regular miracles provided it with a consistent divine presence. The annalists were making a case that reality conformed to their faith, unifying the acts of man and God through the repetition of an ordered succession of offices and supernatural interventions ordained by God. Even an imprecise record of a miracle could still serve to demonstrate God's presence in the textworld of a chronicle and such moments may have provided a comforting affirmation of the annalists' faith.

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[464] Simon Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth Century England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1-2.

[465] Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, p. 214.

Miracles as a function of institutional identity

Christianity had a profound impact on annalistic memory. The miracles recorded in these texts are indicative of the efforts of the annalists to transmit Christian doctrine, and to demonstrate that God made frequent interventions in the world. Yet a chronicle reflected more than its authors' status as *oratores*, it also embodied the specific institutional context of its production. The decision to include a miracle was influenced by the regional location of the annalists, the monastic order to which they belonged, and the local cults which they venerated. The annalists were members of a monastic community created from an overlapping set of identities. Miracles were pragmatically employed to promote the saints, patrons and members of the monastic community to unify these varied elements into a cohesive institutional identity. Furthermore, these efforts connected the community to the overarching narrative of the miraculous in the chronicle. Annals not only promoted a certain Christian version of reality, but they also served a formative function, establishing and solidifying the multi-faceted identity of the authors' community.

Most chronicles included at least one miracle that was directly connected to their monastery. The Dunstable chronicle recorded a miracle that occurred at the abbey in 1212 relating to Fremund, to whom the abbey had dedicated several altars.[466] The Burton chronicle referenced miracles worked by Modwenna, one of the patron saints of the abbey, alongside those of Wulfstan in 1201.[467] Melrose noted the discovery of their abbot Waltheof's incorrupt body in 1171, and the miraculous cures worked by his

[466] Dunstable, p. 39 and Wiesje Emons-Nijenhuis, 'St Fremund, Fact and Fiction', *Revue Bénédictine* 123, no. 1 (June 2013), p. 99.

[467] Burton, p. 209.

relics in 1240.[468] In other chronicles, attention was paid to miracles relating to nearby abbeys, as well as local incidents. The Tewkesbury chronicle included several miracles that occurred at Tewkesbury, such as those in 1232, 1250 and 1254, but also recorded miracles worked by Wulfstan of Worcester, in 1201 and 1221.[469] Tewkesbury was gifted some of Wulfstan's relics by Isabel of Gloucester in 1235,[470] and may have gained other relics earlier, when relics of the saint were distributed after Wulfstan's translation in 1218.[471] Yet the interest in Wulfstan predates this; the annal for 1201 is in line with the previous and subsequent annals (See fig. 5), indicating that it was not a retroactive addition after the abbey received relics in either 1218 or 1235. Instead, the Tewkesbury annalists were comfortable promoting a local saint.

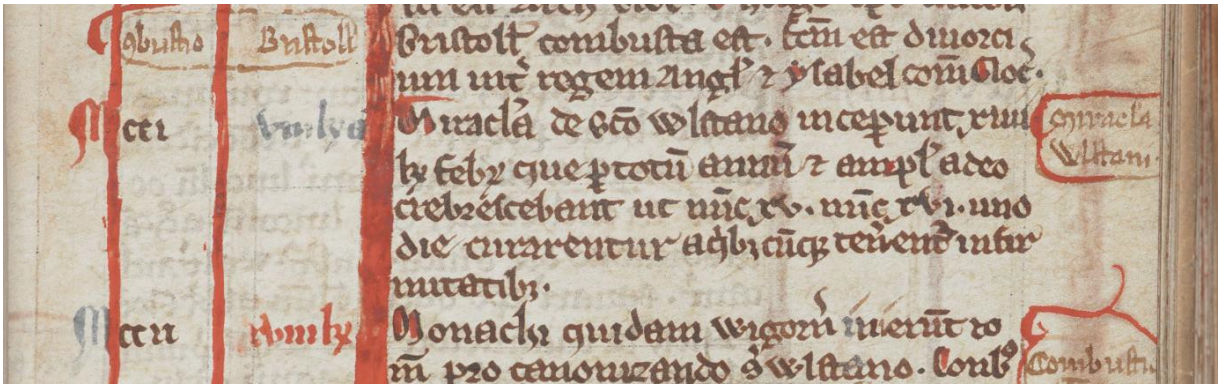

Fig. 5: The annal for 1201 shows no sign of being a retroactive addition. London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra A VII f. 14r.

[468] Melrose pp. 84 and 151.

[469] Tewkesbury pp. 84-86, 141 and 155-6, 56 and 65.

[470] Richard K. Morris and R. Shoesmith, *Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art & Architecture* (Almeley: Logaston, 2003), p. 45.

[471] Paul Webster, *King John and Religion*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), p. 177.

Wulfstan had a shrine at Worcester Cathedral and an altar at Great Malvern dedicated to him, both less than fifteen miles from Tewkesbury.[472] The chronicle did not record multiple miracles for English saints who did not have an immediate connection, such as Edmund of Abingdon or Robert Grosseteste.[473] This Tewkesbury annalists' sense of local identity extended beyond the walls of their own abbey to encompass other nearby monastic communities, forming a network, connected through shared saints and miracles.

The Winchester chronicle showed a similar focus on emphasising local miraculous connections. Its annals recorded the miracles of St Swithun, to whom the Winchester priory was dedicated, and those of St Barnabas, which had occurred at the nearby abbey of Hyde in 1182.[474] Furthermore, the annalists endeavoured to connect other saints from further afield back to Winchester. An account of the miracles related to Ine of Wessex was followed by a record of his gifts to Winchester,[475] and the same technique was used to connect miracles worked by Edward the Confessor to Winchester in the annal for 1043.[476] Indeed, the only saintly miracle in the pre-contemporaneous section of the chronicle which was not connected to Winchester was that of Edward the Martyr in 975.[477] This creative approach stressed the miraculous connections not only of Winchester and its saints, but provided

[472] Ian Styler, *Establishing and analysing the sphere of influence of saints Oswald and Wulfstan of Worcester, c. 950 to c. 1400,* PhD diss. (University of Birmingham, 2014) pp. 20-21.

[473] Tewkesbury, pp. 117 ad 159.

[474] Winchester, pp. 22-25 and 62.

[475] Ibid., p. 6.

[476] Ibid., p. 25.

[477] Ibid., p. 13.

Winchester's monks with a connection to saints and miracles which occurred across the country.

The Winchcombe chronicle took a different approach, and instead prioritised miracles that matched those worked by St Kenelm, who was buried at the abbey. Paul Anthony Hayward has identified that the first section of this chronicle (1-1122) is extremely similar to the same section within the Coventry chronicle and suggests that both texts were based on a now lost work by John of Worcester.[478] The miracles which appear in the 1-1122 section of Winchcombe, but not in Coventry (i.e. those which either the Winchcombe authors added to their mutual source or which the Coventry scribes decided not to copy) were focused on miracles relating to holy bodies. These included the sea parting before Pope Julius as he translated the body of St Clement, divine providence saving the bones of John the Baptist, and the remains of Gervasius and Protasius being revealed by God.[479] Kenelm too had miracles associated with the discovery and transportation of his body, which explains why these stories had a significance for Winchcombe's annalists which was not shared by those at Coventry.[480] In the later section of the chronicle, stories relating to St Mathias and Richard Strigueil continued this fascination with miracles which took place in the immediate presence of the body or tomb. Kenelm's legacy had turned Winchcombe into the centre of its own popular cult, said by William of Malmesbury to be among the most popular shrines in England.[481] Winchcombe had an established and successful

[478] Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles*, vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

[479] Winchcombe, pp. 395, 397 and 401.

[480] Winchcombe, p. 472.

[481] William of Malmesbury, 'Oxford Medieval Texts: William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum, Vol. 1', *Oxford Medieval Texts*, eds. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, accessed 11/05/2020, https://www-oxfordscholarlyeditions-

image of sanctity within its own walls, manifested in the “hede of St Kenelm, sylver and gylde”.[482] These miracles provided precedents and antecedents for the miracles relating to St Kenelm. Though Winchcombe’s approach was more idiosyncratic, it matched a general trend across these chronicles of representing local saints in their annals. The miracles that were recorded promoted the thaumaturgic power of these saints and provided the monks with immediate and accessible figure of sanctity to celebrate. Although this desire to emphasise local saints was common across a number of chronicles, the exact approach taken varied. Some chronicles focused only on miracles which had occurred within their own abbey, and others looked to saints in the surrounding area. The Winchester annalists found ways to connect a variety of saints to their cathedral and priory, while the Winchcombe annalists looked for examples which matched St Kenelm, their patron. In each case a sense of “self” can be seen in the annalists’ approach, an aspect of their identity embodied in their abbey, region or saint.

In contrast, the Lowlands chronicle focused on a national cult, rather than a local one. The text showed relatively little interest in miracles, apart from those relating St Cuthbert. Cuthbert was referenced in the annals for 676, 685 and 687, and the chronicle recorded his miraculous intervention against a Norman army in 1069 and that his body was discovered to be incorrupt when translated in 1104.[483] Marjorie and Alan Anderson have suggested that this material was gathered from a *vita* of

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com.ezproxyd.bham.ac.uk/view/10.1093/actrade/9780198206781.book.1/actrade-9780198206781-div2-605.

[482] Islwyn Geoffrey Thomas, *The Cult of Saints’ Relics in Medieval England* (London: University of London Press, 1974) p. 421.

[483] Lowlands, pp. 13-4.

Cuthbert's that the annalists had access to.[484] Neither Holyrood, where this section of the chronicle was originally written, nor Coupar Angus, where these annals were copied, had an immediate connection to Cuthbert. However, Cuthbert had gained significant popularity in Scotland from the later eleventh century onwards and Holyrood Abbey's calendar shows his feast day was venerated along with other local and insular saints.[485] Cuthbert was perhaps the most popular saint in southern Scotland, and his veneration at Holyrood continued into the later Middle Ages.[486] The records of his miracles in the Lowlands chronicle is indicative of this widespread popularity, and demonstrates the influence of a national identity in the chronicle.

The Rushen chronicle used miracles to promote the Crovan dynasty, who ruled the Isle of Man from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Rushen was "an integral part of the corporate royal identity",[487] and the miracles that the chronicle recorded introduced a mythical element to Crovan rule, associating the dynasty with these supernatural events and thus suggesting that divine intervention would thwart their rivals. The chronicle included no miracles from the chronicle of Melrose, its source up to the thirteenth century. It did record three original miracles, however, all of which were recorded as discursive asides, rather than as brief annalistic entries. The first was a vision of St Olaf of Norway, which appeared to Magnus Barefoot in 1098.[488] The

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[484] Ibid., p. 13.

[485] Matthew H. Hammond, 'Royal and Aristocratic Attitudes to Saints and the Virgin Mary in Twelfth- and Thirteenth- Century Scotland', in *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland*, ed. Steve Boardman and Ellie Williamson (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 84-85.

[486] Tom Turpie, 'A Monk from Melrose? St Cuthbert and the Scots in the Later Middle Ages, c. 1371–1560', *The Innes Review* 62, no. 1 (May 2011), pp. 48 and 66.

[487] Peter J. Davey and J. R. Roscow, *Rushen Abbey and the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the Isle of Man* (Isle of Man: Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, 2010), p. 3.

[488] Rushen, p. 10.

saint instructed him to leave Norway, and Magnus subsequently conquered the kingdom of Man and the Isles. The entry stressed Magnus' authority over the Welsh, Irish and men of Galloway; in this way the defeat of the Manxmen was made less humiliating by recognising the widespread successes of the Norwegian king. Furthermore, the miracle which began this story added a wondrous element, suggesting that these events were pre-ordained, as did a reference in the same entry to a comet being seen, which the annalists glossed as prefiguring some great disaster.[489] The entire account had a semi-mythic quality, the defeat of the Manxman became a divinely ordained reversal of their fortune. The annalists also stressed that this conquest was only temporary. Magnus's death six years later was recorded in the same entry, an approach which minimised the length of his rule, and the annal ended with the return of the rightful ruler, Olaf Godredson, and the restoration of Crovan rule. This miracle helped the annalists to present a foreign conquest as only a temporary interruption to the reign of the Crovan dynasty. The second miracle, in 1158, related to another foreign invader, the erstwhile-usurper Somerled. The entry recorded that St Maughold, the patron saint of the island, struck down one of Somerled's chieftains and drove his army into flight.[490] The following annal for 1164, reported that divine punishment overcame Somerled, when he was and his men were killed.[491] Here the chronicler offered a suitable punishment for the invader who had "brought ruin" to the kingdom and driven the rightfully king into exile.[492] The final miracle was recorded in the year 1249, where Mary, to whom the abbey of Rushen was dedicated, intervened

[489] *maxime autem in obitu regis aut in excidio religionis apparet.* Rushen, p. 10

[490] Rushen, pp. 20 -22.

[491] Ibid., p. 22.

[492] Ibid., p. 20.

to save a prisoner of the usurper-king Harald Godredonson.[493] Andrew McDonald has argued that this scene aimed to discredit Harald by presenting him as a tyrant and oath-breaker. His prisoner, a chieftain named Donald, was divinely supported in his attempt to escape, and significantly Harald Olafsson, one of the rightful kings of Man in the annalists' eyes, was presented as a friend of Donald.[494] Again, a miracle was used to show God thwarting a usurper, and to offer a tacit endorsement of the Crovan dynasty, legitimising them with God's favour. The Rushen chronicle ignored the miracles recorded in Melrose to focus instead on three miracles that related to Man. These miracles not only had resonance to the monks because of their geographical location, they also demonstrated the connection between the institutional identity of the Rushen monks and the Crovan kings.

For Cistercian annalists, miracles which related to the Order and its saints were prioritised, regardless of whether they had a local connection or not. The affiliation to the Order and the sense of Cistercian identity was manifested in their chronicles. The Dore chronicle showed little interest in saints' miracles in its annals for the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, although Bernard of Clairvaux's miracles in 1132 were recorded.[495] Waverley recorded that miracles occurred at the tomb of Pope Eugenius, the first Cistercian pope.[496] The chronicle of Melrose suggested that Philip II was miraculously protected at the Battle of Bovines by the intercession of the Cistercian

[493] Ibid., p. 36.

[494] R. Andrew McDonald, *Manx Kingship in Its Irish Sea Setting, 1187-1229: King Rǫgnvaldr and the Crovan Dynasty* (Dublin; Portland, Or: Four Courts Press, 2007), p. 99.

[495] Dore, p. 523.

[496] Waverley, p. 235.

order before God.[497] These were miracles that went unmentioned in other texts, but were significant to these chroniclers because of their Cistercian affiliation. The Cistercian general chapter meetings provided an opportunity for such stories to be exchanged between monks.[498] The Margam chronicle, for example, recorded in its annal for 1226 the story of a certain German Cistercian abbot, who came to the general chapter meeting (*ad generale capitulum venit*) and was healed by God.[499] The inclusion of these miracles contributed to a trend within Cistercian texts of promoting the Order. Cistercian chronicles included glowing eulogies of important figures such as Bernard of Clairvaux or Pope Eugenius.[500] The Coggeshall chronicle recorded that St Malachy of Armagh, who was instrumental in introducing the Cistercians to Ireland,[501] was carried to heaven by angels.[502] The Waverley chronicle directly reminded a reader of the affiliation of Cistercian monks who became bishops.[503] The creation of the Order was often noted,[504] as was the foundation of Cistercian abbeys.[505] This fixed the early Cistercian houses with a historical stability and gave a sense of permanence to the Order, while noting later foundations demonstrated its spread and success. Visual strategies could further emphasise these details; Melrose

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[497] [Philip] *Cisterciensis ordinis apud Deum intercessione protectus* Although the chronicle does also cite divine mercy and the courage of Philip's men as other reasons for his survival. Melrose, pp. 116-117.

[498] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate*, p. 15.

[499] Margam, p. 35.

[500] Coggeshall, p.13-14, Rushen, p. 14.

[501] Marie Therese Flanagan, 'Saint Malachy and the Introduction of Cistercian Monasticism to the Irish Church: Some Suggestive Evidence from Newry Abbey', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 22, no. 2 (2009), p. 8.

[502] Coggeshall, p. 13.

[503] Waverley pp. 233, 243, 252, 253 and 291.

[504] Dore, p. 521, Coggeshall, p. 4 and Waverley, p. 207.

[505] Margam, p. 26, Melrose, pp. 61 and 70, Coggeshall, pp. 12-14.

rubricated the foundation of Cîteaux and Rievaulx.[506] The Rushen chronicle used marginal symbols to mark the foundation of Cîteaux, the birthplace of the Order, and Furness, the motherhouse of Rushen (see fig. 6), just as it marked the succession of the legitimate kings of Man.[507] Cistercian authors employed varied strategies to ensure that the Order played a prominent role in their text. Miracles were a key part of this, celebrating Cistercian figures and connecting the Order to divine intervention.

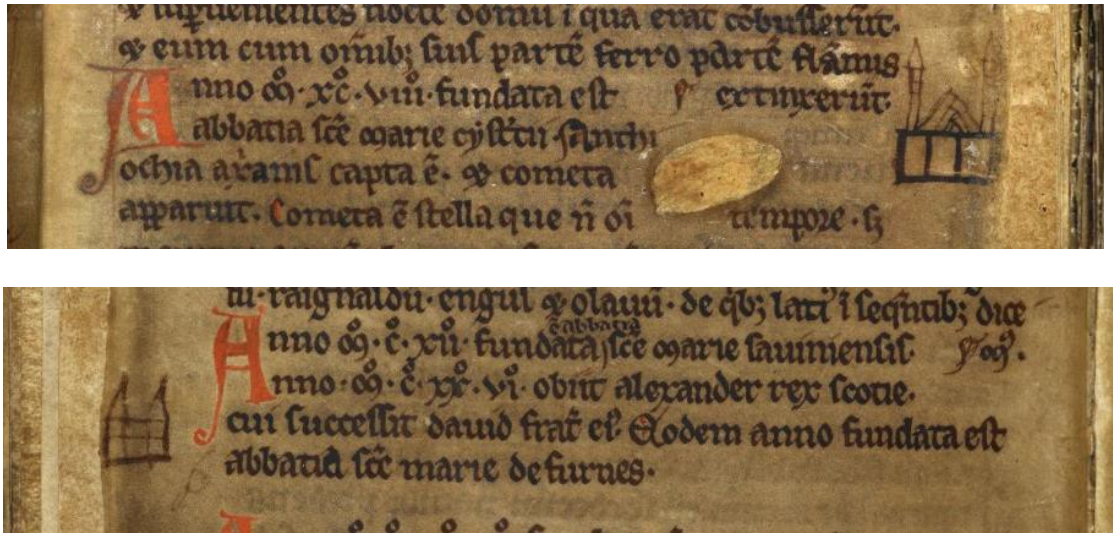

Fig 6: Marginal illustration marking the foundation of Cîteaux (above) and Furness (below). London, British Library, Cotton MS Julius A VII ff. 34r and 35v.

The miracles recorded in these texts reflected the local, national, or international connections of a monastery. These were institutions that existed at the intersection of different social groups. They belonged to an immediate, cloistered community, but also to an international monastic order, with connections through their lines of filiation. These were spiritual refuges, which celebrated local saints and deceased members of their own fraternity. Yet they were also the location of relics and shrines which wider society could access, and through patronage were tied to noble and royal families.

[506] London, British Library, Cotton MS Faustina B IX, ff. 16v and 18r.

[507] See chapter one, pp. 23-24.

The annalists recorded miracles that fostered a communal identity capable of encompassing the varied influences and connections within these institutions. Annalists also used miracles to promote their monastery, their saints, their people, and their Order. Yet while annalistic chronicles served an important purpose in uniting the varied aspects of monastic identity, only two texts, the Lowlands and Manx chronicles, were so narrowly prescriptive as to record the miracles of just one saint or one region. For the most part, miracles were a flexible aspect of the chronicle, they could be recorded in different ways and could serve multiple purpose simultaneously. Miracles could imbue the text with a theological character, but they could also be used to construct and promote the specific institutional identity of a monastic community. Miracles supplemented the records of local affairs and the succession of abbots to create a chronicle that was a manifestation of the community that produced it, and the decision to include each event was coloured by the unique institutional context of the annalists.

Past, present and future miracles: annals as a record for posterity

Annalistic chronicles simultaneously created an uplifting, Christian image of the world and constructed a communal identity for the monks who produced the text. Yet the significance of this religious and institutional context should not distract from the historical function of these texts. Annalistic chronicles were not simply an exercise in evangelism or propaganda, but also preserved historical records of the past, and provided an account of events in the present. The importance of maintaining a record

of important events for posterity was widely recognised in the Middle Ages,[508] and annals provided an effective means to archive such moments. The annalists were part of a continuing historiographical effort; just as they employed pre-existing historical texts to write the early annals of their chronicles, the annalists needed to record the incidents of their own time for future historians. This curatorial duty saw annalists include more miracles in the contemporaneous annals written as events were unfolding. There was an obligation to record these moments of revelatory significance to remind readers of God's presence in their own times and to help future Christians navigate God's plan. The increased frequency of contemporary miracles (even when they did not contribute to the religious or institutional objectives of the text) was part of a key shift that occurred as an annalistic text reached the writers' present day. Although the early annals were usually created through the assembly and editing of authoritative sources, the later annals required the integration of contemporary sources with the author's own memory and first- and second-hand experiences. The changing approach to recording miracles in pre-contemporaneous and contemporaneous annals is indicative of the idiosyncratic nature of annalistic writing. While consistent concerns and themes ran through the entirety of the text, the shift to contemporary reporting required a change in approach as the writer gained a new responsibility to record events as they occurred.

In some chronicles, miracles were almost entirely absent from the early annals, but became common in the writers' own times. The Burton chronicle became more

[508] Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), p. 40, Foot, 'Annals and chronicles', p. 364 and Janet E. Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 192.

detailed and original from its annal for 1211 onwards.[509] This would suggest that it was produced around this time, as the annalists could employ their own knowledge of events to create a more detailed account. Before 1211, the only miracle included in the chronicle was in the annal for 1201, a decade before this provisional start date and within living memory for the annalists.[510] After 1211, miracles relating to St Wulfstan, Robert Grosseteste and Little Hugh of Lincoln, a boy allegedly murdered by Jews, were recorded, as were the false miracles of Pastoureaux.[511] The first section of the Dunstable chronicle, the annals from 1-1210, was almost entirely devoid of miracles except for the divine healing of Pope Leo following his mutilation in 796.[512] Even miracles clearly mentioned by the chronicle's source, Ralph of Diceto's *Ymagines Historiarum*, went unmentioned.[513] However, there are miracles in the annals for 1212, 1225, 1233, 1240 – all of which had occurred as the text was being written.[514] The Tewkesbury chronicle did include several miracles in the early section of the text, such as a monk who heard a mysterious voice in 1112, the smiting of Frederick Barbarossa's army in 1167, and those miracles worked by Becket in 1171 and St Wulfstan in 1201.[515] After the annals started being recorded contemporaneously from 1219,[516] miracles became a far more regular occurrence, appearing in the annals for 1219, 1232, 1240, 1250, 1252, 1254, 1257.[517] The same pattern is present in the

[509] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 408.

[510] Burton, p. 209.

[511] Ibid., pp. 211, 291, 336, 343 and 344.

[512] Dunstable, p. 9.

[513] *Ymagines* p. 346 and 373. For the connection of the death of Count Matthew with Saint James see Yarrow, *Saints and their communities,* p. 201.

[514] Dunstable, pp. 39, 95, 97, 135 and 156.

[515] Tewkesbury, pp. 44, 50 and 56.

[516] Gransden, *Historical Writing,* p. 412.

[517] Tewkesbury, pp. 64, 84-86, 115, 141, 148 156 and 159.

Winchcombe and Coventry chronicles. Both contained several miracles in their annals from 1-1122, entries which were derived from a shared source. These miracles mostly occurred in the fifth to ninth centuries, and the annals for the following centuries rarely mentioned miracles. Winchcombe recorded miracles worked by St Mathias in 1127, but made no other mention of saintly miracles until 1165, where, a late twelfth century hand added a marginal note recording the miracle of a flying cross in a church.[518] The Winchcombe chronicle ended in 1181, and these final 16 years of annals contain a flurry of miracles. These include the divine destruction of Frederick's army in 1167, Becket's miracles in 1171, a miracle at the tomb of Richard Strigueil in 1176 and a Eucharistic miracle in France in 1181.[519] These later annals were added to the text in a single campaign, by two twelfth-century scribes working simultaneously, and while some miracles may have been derived from the lost Gloucester chronicle on which Winchcombe was partially based, others were original to this text. There was also a marked increase in miracles at the end of the Coventry chronicle. The second scribe, who wrote the annals from 1123 to 1150, included no miracles and only two marvels.[520] The next scribe showed even less interest, and there were no more miracles or wonders in the text until 1187, the start of the final section of the text, where multiple scribes were working to record events contemporaneously. Several miracles are recorded in this section: a statue of Christ bleeding when struck by a stone in 1187, miraculous cures occurring at the tomb of Hugh of Lincoln in 1200 and a vague reference to miracles happening at Burton in 1201.[521] In this twenty-year span there

[518] Winchcombe pp. 530-2 and Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry* Chronicles, vol. 1, 142.

[519] Winchcombe, pp. 532-542.

[520] Coventry, pp. 676-678 and 680-683.

[521] Ibid., pp. 690-701.

are more miracles than in the previous 200 years of annals. In Winchcombe, the final fifteen years of annals contain more miracles than the previous 300.

However, this tendency of recording more contemporary miracles was not always so pronounced, as the example of the Winchester chronicle demonstrates. The chronicle exists today in two manuscripts, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 339 (A) and London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian, A. xiii (B).[522] The former is written in a single hand to 1139, where it ends. B includes continuations up to 1277, but was written from the incarnation to the year 1202 in a single hand.[523] Noël Denholm-Young has argued that the later section of the B text, the annals from 1202 to 1277, were not recorded contemporaneously at Winchester, but rather were copied from a text (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 91) produced at the nearby Hyde Abbey.[524] If so, this would explain the pattern of miracles within the text. Like Winchcombe, Coventry and Dore, Winchester included several early miracles, but avoided recording any miracles for several centuries worth of annals, interrupted only by its account of the trial of Queen Emma in 1043 and the miraculous intervention of St Swithun.[525] A couple of miracles are recorded in 1182 and 1198,[526] which would have been fairly recent to the first scribe of B, while the next spate of miracles in 1261, 1262 and 1276 were recent for the scribe who copied the continuation from Hyde around 1277.[527] This pattern in Winchester is too tenuous to be conclusive, but it does not contradict the

[522] Here following John Appleby's nomenclature in Appleby, 'Richard of Devizes and the Annals of Winchester', pp. 70-71.

[523] Luard, 'Preface', in *Annales Monastici*, vol. II, p. x.

[524] N. Denholm-Young, 'The Winchester-Hyde Chronicle', *The English Historical Review* 49, no. 193 (1934), pp. 86-87.

[525] Winchester, pp. 22-25.

[526] Ibid., pp. 62 and 67.

[527] Ibid., pp. 99-100 and 122.

trend noticed in other contemporary chronicles.[528] Whether they were writing in 1190 or 1240, annalists recorded more miracles when writing the annals of their own time.

This trend is best understood as a function of the annalistic chronicle's purpose as a record for posterity. Contemporary events mattered and needed recording. To fail to do so would risk losing a valuable opportunity to learn something about God's world,[529] and incur the opprobrium of later authors, just as twelfth-century English miracle collectors had condemned the negligent failure of their predecessors in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[530] Each annalist was a curator of contemporary miracle stories. Brief, unglossed, accounts of miracles appeared more frequently in the contemporary section of a set of annals, as the annalists recorded miracles that they had experienced or had heard of directly, even if they were not aware of the full context. The Coventry chronicle's vague reference to miracles happening at Burton in 1201 was included despite the annalists having little idea what had actually occurred. The annalists may have written this brief entry after hearing from a traveller that miracles had occurred at Burton. This was the penultimate annal in the text, and none of the Coventry annalists returned to the annal to provide the key context that this note needed: that these miracles were in relation to Wulfstan and Modwenna, as the records in the chronicles of Waverley, Burton and Tewkesbury (all written at least a decade or more later) show.[531] For the Coventry annalists it was worth noting that miracles had happened even if they had no further details to add. Contemporary miracles merited inclusion even if they did not promote an ordered, orthodox version of reality, or have a

[528] The Lowlands chronicle is the only text that clearly contradicts the pattern recording only a handful of miracles related to St Cuthbert at the beginning of the text, see Lowlands, pp. 13-4.

[529] Damien-Grint, *The new historians*, pp. 40 and 96.

[530] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate*, p. 97.

[531] Waverley, p. 253, Burton, p. 209 and Tewkesbury, p. 56.

connection to the author's community. Miracles were not only rhetorical devices, but an exciting and important part of the monks' lives, which they had an obligation to catalogue. It was a key function of annalistic writing to record the important events of the present day, and there was a conspicuous change within these texts as the annalist's role shifted away from editing existing sources towards curating contemporary reports. Yet this does not mean that the early and contemporary sections of a chronicle should be considered distinct. Annalists endeavoured to demonstrate the continuing presence of the miraculous in both the preliminary and contemporary sections of chronicles, forming a link between past and present. Early miracles provided the theological framework in which later records of miracles were to be understood, while later miracles reassured a reader that God's presence was in no way diminished in their own time. The annalistic form was flexible, providing an opportunity both to curate the past, and to process and archive the unfolding events of the present.

The miracles of Thomas Becket

Three overlapping factors influenced the recording of miracles in annalistic chronicles and are indicative of the purpose of these texts as a whole. The first of these factors was theological, the desire to demonstrate that reality conformed to Christian truth. The second was institutional, annals and the miracles within them aimed to foster a shared identity for the monks who produced the text. The third factor was historical, reflecting the need for annalists to catalogue contemporary events for posterity. By considering these three factors alongside one another, the inconsistent of inclusion and exclusion of Becket's miracles in annalistic chronicles can be better understood,

allowing a deeper appreciation of the needs that these texts fulfilled for a monastic community. As the decades passed after Becket's martyrdom, there was a transition as his miracles changed from being a recent event that demanded recording for posterity to a more distant memory that could be omitted. In some cases, the immediacy of events had a profound effect on the annalists, who endeavoured to convey the exceptional nature of what was occurring, but later writers employed more orthodox methods for recording miracles. A general pattern is apparent, but exceptions existed where the needs of the authors' institution trumped the historical trends and theological conventions of miracle recording.

Annalists writing soon after the martyrdom, such as the pseudo-William Godel and Egmond chronicles, reflect the excitement prompted by the initial reports emerging from Canterbury. The pseudo-William chronicle ended abruptly in 1173, with the next year marked, but without any content,[532] which suggests that it was around this point that the annalists were working.[533] The dating of the Egmond chronicle is more complex, as the distinction between the two principal scribes ("C" and "F") is occasionally unclear. The annal for 1170, which referenced Becket's miracles, may have been the work of C, who was writing c. 1173 or, if C's contribution had ended by this point, then it was the work of F, who was writing between 1170 and 1180.[534] Regardless of the exact dating of the Egmond annal, it is most likely that both chronicles were written within a decade of the event. This conclusion is further evidenced by the similarity of both these accounts to John of Salisbury's letter to John, bishop of Poitiers, which contains the earliest surviving record of Becket's miracles.

[532] Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France,* MS Latin 4893 f. 59r.

[533] Bate, 'Godel, Ps-Guillaume', p. 717.

[534] Nivardus, *Ysengrimus*, ed. Jill Mann (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 176 n. 564.

John of Salisbury had utilised Jesus' instruction to his apostles to go out and perform miracles when he described the cures being performed by Becket. John wrote that: "in the place where Thomas suffered … the palsied are cured, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk, folk suffering from fevers are cured, the lepers are cleansed…", which as, W. J. Millor and N. L. Brooke have noted, was a clear allusion to Matthew 10:8 and 11:5.[535] This parallel made Becket another apostle of Christ, his sanctity reminiscent of an earlier sacred time. It proved a compelling comparison; the *Liber Eliensis*, also written soon after the martyrdom, used the same refrain of "the leprous are made clean, the blind see, the deaf hear, the dead rise again…" to emphasises the incredible and extraordinary nature of Becket's miracles.[536] William of Tyre, writing at most fifteen years after the martyrdom,[537] made the comparison more explicit by stating that Becket's miracles suggested a second age of the apostles had come.[538] The pseudo-William Godel and Egmond annalists followed John's example, employing a list of maladies and cures to equate Becket's thaumaturgy with that of the apostles.[539] The Pseudo-William Godel annalists did not copy directly from John, instead they stated that, by Becket's virtue and God's mercy, "the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame stand straight and the mute speak. The dead rise, lepers are healed, those possessed by demons are freed and all languid men are healed."[540] While the list of cures was not identical, it was clearly building on the same

[535] *Letters of John of Salisbury*, vol. 2, pp. 736-737.

[536] *Liber Eliensis*, p. 485.

[537] Peter Edbury and John Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East*, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1988) p. 26.

[538] *ut apostolorum videantur innovata tempora,* William of Tyre, 'Chronicon', in *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986) vol. 63a, p. 940.

[539] Ps-William Godel, p. 677 and Egmond, p. 467.

[540] Paris, *Bibliothèque nationale de France,* MS Latin 4893 f. 59 r.

allusion. The Egmond annal had a shorter list: the dead were resurrected and the blind, deaf, paralysed and leprous were healed, but it drew an explicit comparison by stating that these miracles were "in no way dissimilar from the saints of old".[541] These records demonstrate how exceptional Becket seemed. In the years immediately following his martyrdom, John's assertion that the miracles were reminiscent of a different age was accepted and promulgated in these chronicles. Their response indicates the excitement inspired by Becket's miracles and in part explains the early momentum and popularity of his cult.

The Winchcombe chronicle, written later, in the 1180s, also recorded Becket's miracles, although the approach it took was markedly different. While the annals of Egmond and pseudo-William referenced Becket's miracles in their account of the martyrdom, Winchcombe did this in the following annal, 1171, recording that "with many clear signs of miracles throughout the world the Lord declared the sanctity of his martyr, Thomas".[542] This was a more measured response, there was no hagiographic allusion, but instead a largely conventional record that emphasised the presence of God in miracles. Here, Becket's miracles fitted into the overarching narrative of the miraculous in the text: the miracles were impressive, but not exceptional. The initial excitement provoked by Becket's miracles seemed to have dissipated by the time the Winchcombe annalists were writing, a decade after the martyrdom. Indeed, Becket's miracles were entirely absent from the annals of texts written c. 1190, such as the Coventry and Coggeshall chronicles. This omission in the Coggeshall chronicle is particularly notable, since, although the pre-contemporary annals ignored Becket's miracles, the main, non-annalistic, section did included a miracle of his. During an

[541] *ut antiquis sanctis in nullo videatur dissimilis.* Egmond, p. 467.

[542] Winchcombe, p. 535.

interlude concerning St Alpais, a marginal note in the C manuscript of the Coggeshall chronicle (London, British Library, Cotton, MS Vespasian D X) recorded that she had a vision of Becket who healed her hand, which was then written into the main text of V (Paris, *Bibliotheque Nationale de France*, MS Latin 15076).[543] While the preliminary annalists, writing around 1187, felt that Becket's miracles did not merit inclusion, one of the authors of the main section (perhaps Ralph of Coggeshall) heard of a recent Becket miracle that was relevant to his current entry, and so added it into the text. After ten years the miracles had lost something of the immediate wonder which inspired comparison to the apostles, and after fifteen years Becket's miracles were being ignored. The prioritising of recent miracles identified earlier is apparent here. Remarkable though Becket's miracles had initially seemed, by the late twelfth century, and certainly by the thirteenth century, they no longer held the same fascination, and annalists did not have the same obligation to record them.

The chronicle of Melrose deviated from this pattern, however. The Melrose annalists started working on their chronicle around the time of Becket's martyrdom, and the first section (the annals to 1171) was completed by 1174.[544] Becket's miracles were unmentioned in Melrose's extended, hagiographic account of the martyrdom, even though this was written within a few years of the event. Instead, Becket's miracles were referenced in 1173, with the annalists recording that "great and unheard of" (*magna et inaudita*) miracles were worked by Becket throughout England.[545] The 1173 annal falls within the second section of the chronicle (the annals from 1172-1197) which was copied into the text at the start of the thirteenth century.[546] As such, Becket's

[543] Coggeshall, p. 128.

[544] Broun, 'Recovering the Chronicle of Melrose', pp. 53-55.

[545] Melrose, p. 86.

[546] Broun, 'Charting the Chronicle's Physical Development', pp. 127-9.

miracles were hardly contemporary at the time of writing. This apparent inconsistency resulted from the privileging of local saints and miracles that occurred within annalistic chronicles. In the same year as Becket's martyrdom, a miracle was witnessed when the tomb of Waltheof, Melrose's saintly abbot, was opened. His body was found to be miraculously incorrupt, and was placed in a new shrine as part of a campaign by Melrose's abbot, Jocelyn, to promote Waltheof's sanctity.[547] Jocelyn had become abbot after his predecessor, William, was ousted by the monks of Melrose for attempting to prevent the veneration of Waltheof. In contrast, Jocelyn arranged for a new marble cover to be placed on Waltheof's tomb following the *revelatio* of his incorrupt body.[548] While Becket's martyrdom was a dramatic event which demanded recording, to include Becket's miracles in the annal for 1171 would have overshadowed a key moment for the burgeoning cult of Waltheof. By concentrating on the horror and ignominy of the martyrdom, rather than the miracles which would attract so many pilgrims to Canterbury, the chronicle was able to discredit Henry II, a rival of Melrose's benefactor, King William the Lion of Scotland, without reducing a local saint to subordinate status. The monks of Melrose had no wish to diminish Becket's sanctity, they simply did not want to jeopardise their local cult. Later, the attitude at Melrose changed, not least because the monks had begun to exploit Becket's sanctity to their advantage. The *vita* of St Waltheof, which was written in the early thirteenth century, around the same time as the 1173 annal was copied into the Melrose chronicle, included a story of a clerk who wished to visit Canterbury to seek a cure. On the way,

[547] Melrose, p. 84.

[548] A. A. M. Duncan, 'Jocelin (d. 1199), Abbot of Melrose and Bishop of Glasgow', in *Oxford Database of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) accessed 03/12/2019, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-14828.

St Thomas appeared to him and told him instead to travel to Waltheof's tomb at Melrose, where he was cured.[549] Furthermore, Helen Birkett has suggested that the account of Becket's canonisation in the chronicle of Melrose was mirrored in Waltheof's *vita* to suggest that the process of papal canonization had begun for Waltheof, while in reality he never received official recognition.[550] Once the monks of Melrose had worked out how to use Becket to support their local cult, they were more comfortable including his miracles in the chronicle. William the Lion's subsequent patronage of Becket's cult (he dedicated Arbroath abbey to the saint in 1178), may have further encouraged the monks to promote Becket's miracles, as it was politically expedient to support saints associated with Scottish royalty.[551] The Melrose annalists were better able to suit the needs of their institution by ignoring Becket's miracles in 1171, and instead including them in the annal for 1173.

A similar motivation influenced the omission of Becket's miracles in the Lowlands chronicle. Becket's martyrdom was the last entry in a series of annals running from 1152 to 1170, a section of the chronicle which was copied at Coupar Angus from a text originally written initially at Holyrood. From 1163 onwards material which related to Coupar was inserted into the annals, although incidents relating to Holyrood were often still retained, making it difficult to know how far this section differs from its now

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[549] Jocelyn of Furness, '*Vita* Waldevi', in *The Life of Waldef, Abbot of Melrose*, ed. and trans. George Joseph McFadden, PhD diss., Columbia University (1952) pp. 350-2.

[550] Helen Birkett, 'The Struggle for Sanctity: St Waltheof of Melrose, Cistercian in-House Cults and Canonisation Procedure at the Turn of Thirteenth Century', in *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland*, ed. Steve Boardman and Ellie Williamson, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 212-2.

[551] A. A. M. Duncan, 'St Kentigern at Glasgow Cathedral in the Twelfth Century', in *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of Glasgow*, ed. Richard Fawcett (Leeds: British Archaeological Association, 1998), p. 10.

lost source. Marjorie and Alan Anderson have suggested that Coupar gained a version of the Holyrood chronicle between 1171 and 1186, both points that mark a change in style within the text.[552] The Holyrood account of Becket's martyrdom was written soon after the event then, perhaps even contemporaneously, and the annal was copied at Coupar within fifteen years of the event at most.[553] A reference to Becket's miracles would be expected, but no such reference was included in the Lowlands account of the martyrdom or anywhere else in the chronicle. The annal for 1170 instead followed Becket's death with a record of the passing of Fulk, the first abbot of Coupar. It was an emotional account, which finished with the invocation "may he rest in peace. Amen. Amen. Amen."[554] It seems likely that the Coupar annalists abridged the account of the martyrdom in their source, and omitted reference to Becket's miracles, because they did not want to overshadow the death of a figure with greater relevance to Coupar and its monks.

The Winchester chronicle gives a further example of a local figure obscuring Becket. Despite the extensive interest that the chronicle showed in Becket's dispute with Henry,[555] its account of the martyrdom was surprisingly short and contained no reference to his miracles. Miracles were sporadically recorded throughout this thirteenth-century chronicle, so the omission was not necessarily simply because of the time that had passed since the martyrdom. It is more likely that the death of Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, a few months after Becket influenced the decision to ignore the miracles. In the Winchester chronicle both events are in the annal for 1171, and Bishop Henry's death received much more detail, with his qualities and effective

[552] Lowlands, p. 38.

[553] Ibid., p. 35.

[554] Ibid., p. 151.

[555] See chapter two, pp. 82-92.

leadership emphasised.[556] To have included more about Becket in the annal would have distracted from the eulogy of an important bishop of Winchester. At the same time, there are several other incidents in the Winchester chronicle which suggests that a concerted effort was made to avoid mentioning Becket's cult at Canterbury. The chronicle did not mention Henry II's visit to Becket's tomb in 1174, and although the chronicle included a marginal note to record Louis' visit to England in 1179, the annalists did not mention the French king's pilgrimage to Canterbury, which for most contemporaries was the purpose of his trip![557] As was discussed earlier, the chronicle tended to record saintly miracles when they could be connected to Winchester,[558] which suggest the Winchester annalists made a particular effort to celebrate their institution in this text. The omission of Becket's miracles not only focused attention on the commemoration of a local bishop, but also avoided endorsing Canterbury, a rival pilgrimage site. The desire to promote a local identity clearly had a profound impact on the Winchester annalists, influencing their decision to include or omit miracles. Tellingly, in both Melrose and Winchester it was the death of the local abbot or bishop which was rubricated in the margin, rather than a reference to Becket (see fig. 7).[559]

[556] Winchester, p. 60.

[557] London, British Library, Cotton MS Domitian A XIII, f.35v. For other discussions of this incident see Winchcombe, p. 541, Tewkesbury, p. 241 and Dore, p. 526.

[558] See chapter four, p. 159-60.

[559] London, British Library, Cotton MS Faustina B IX, f.21r and London, British Library, Cotton MS Domitian A XIII f. 34v. Although a much later hand did add a note to Melrose next to 1171 marking Becket's martyrdom.

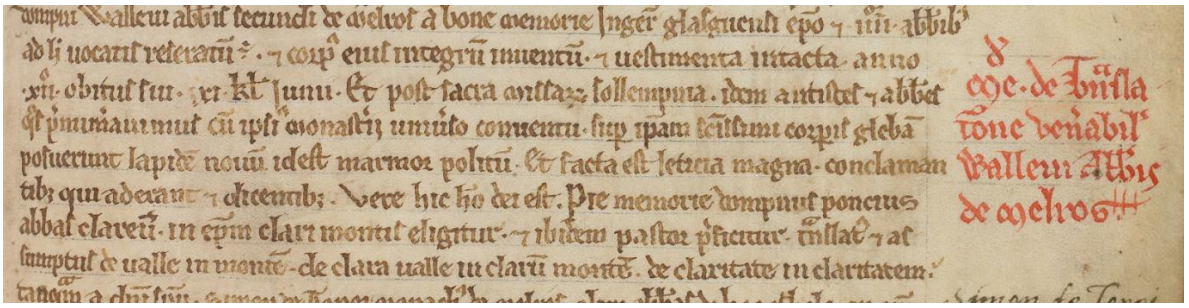

Fig. 7: The marginal rubrication in the Melrose chronicle marking a "memorandum de translatione venerabilis Walleui abbatis de Melros" rather than the death of Becket. London, British Library, Cotton MS Faustina B IX, f.21r

This was the aspect of the annal that was considered most important; a glance at the margin would tell a reader that 1171 was the year when Abbot Waltheof or Bishop Henry died, not that it was the martyrdom of St Thomas. The difference is all the more noticeable in Winchester, where the annals for 1162 and 1164 did have rubricated notes in the margin referencing Becket, while the martyrdom did not.[560] In the earlier annals, Becket's life did not clash with affairs at Winchester, but for 1171, the rubricator gave priority to Bishop Henry. In the Melrose, Lowlands and Winchester chronicles Becket's miracles were manipulated or omitted to suit the commemorative needs of the annalists' institution.

At the same time, a connection to Becket and his cult prompted some annalists to include his miracles even if they were writing long after the martyrdom. The Tewkesbury chronicle was written in 1219,[561] yet referenced Becket's miracles in its annal for 1171. Becket's martyrdom had been recorded in the previous annal, and 1171 opened by stating that "God worked great miracles for Thomas archbishop of

[560] London, British Library, Cotton MS Domitian A XIII f. 33 r and v.

[561] Gransden, *Historical Writing,* p. 412.

Canterbury".[562] Like Winchcombe, this was a conventional record of a miracle, validating a saint while emphasising the role played by God. The Tewkesbury and Winchcombe chronicles were derived from the same source,[563] yet the accounts do not use identical phrasing, or have any words in common, so they were not copies of the same original entry.[564] Furthermore, the Dore chronicle, which also was derived from the same source, did not reference Becket's miracles at all, so the inclusion in Tewkesbury was not automatic or unthinking. As Tewkesbury was written around 1220, Becket's imminent translation may have made his miracles seem more important. Yet the Dunstable chronicle, written at the same time and also using a source that mentioned Becket's miracles,[565] did not reference them. Tewkesbury's decision to record the miracles reflects the specific relationship of the abbey with Becket. Alan of Tewkesbury, abbot of the abbey from 1186 to 1202, was previously the prior at Canterbury. He had edited Becket's correspondence, prefacing this collection with his *Explanatio*, a *vita* of Becket, based on that of John of Salisbury.[566] There can be "no doubt" of Alan's personal veneration of the saint, and as prior of Canterbury he had campaigned to have Becket translated to a more fitting shrine.[567] Alan would have surely fostered the celebration of Becket at Tewkesbury during his

[562] Tewkesbury, p. 50.

[563] See chapter two, pp. 52-53.

[564] *Magna miracula fecit Deus pro sancto Thoma archiepiscopo Cantuariae* in contrast to Winchcombe, p. 534: *[m]ultis et manifestis per orbem terrarum miraculoruom indiciis declaravit Dominus sanctitatem martiris sui Thomas*.Tewkesbury, p. 50.

[565] *Ymagines Historiarum,* p. 347.

[566] A. J. Duggan, 'Tewkesbury, Alan of (b. before 1150, d. 1202), Abbot of Tewkesbury and Compiler of a Manuscript Collection' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 17/10/2021 https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/269. and Staunton, Lives, p. 8.

[567] Margaret Harris, 'Alan of Tewkesbury and St Thomas of Canterbury', *Reading Medieval Studies* XVI (1990), pp. 46-7.

abbacy, and if he did not bring his own personal relics of the saint to the abbey, as Benedict of Peterborough (another monk of Canterbury and biographer of Becket) did when he moved on from Canterbury,[568] Tewkesbury certainly gained some of Becket's relics in 1235.[569] Alan's presence gave the abbey a clear association with Becket and his cult, and though the source material and chronological proximity to Becket's translation may have influenced the annalist, it was this connection to the saint that made Becket's miracles worth recording fifty years after the event.

A connection to Becket's cult could explain other records of his miracles in chronicles written several decades after the martyrdom. The chronicle of Alberic of Trois-Fontaines was written between 1230 and 1250, yet nevertheless referenced Becket's miracles when discussing his martyrdom in 1171. The annal used the same Biblical parallel as John of Salisbury and the chronicles of Egmond and pseudo-William Godel; it listed miraculous cures to evoke an earlier and more wondrous era of Christian history.[570] While Alberic used a variety of sources throughout the chronicle, his account of the miracles was an original composition, even if it employed a common trope. Significantly, the account ends by noting that these miracles were recorded in many books,[571] a reference to the miracle collections that had been produced at Canterbury. It is very plausible that Trois-Fontaines had access to a copy of one of these collections, perhaps from the nearby fellow-Cistercian abbey of Igny. A second miracle collection had been sent to Igny after the first had gone missing, and it may even be that this replacement was required because the copy borrowed by Trois-

[568] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate*, p. 156.

[569] Tewkesbury, p. 96

[570] Trois-Fontaines, p. 854.

[571] *de quibus miraculis a multis multi facti sunt libri.* Trois-Fontaines, p. 854.

Fontaines was not returned.[572] Furthermore Alard, abbot of Trois-Fontaines, attested a miracle of Becket's that was collected by William of Canterbury.[573] Trois-Fontaines connection to Becket's miracle collections explains the anachronistic reference to his miracles in the chronicle.

The Anchin chronicle, a continuation of Sigebert of Gembloux, also referenced Becket's miracles in its record of his martyrdom. The annal stated that "the Lord made miracles" at the place where Becket was martyred.[574] This work was written by Andreas of Marchiennes, a monk of Anchin,[575] who was active in the late twelfth-century, working on his *Historia succincta de gestis et seccessione regum Francorum* between 1184 and 1196.[576] There was a change of handwriting in the Anchin chronicle after the annal for 1201, which would suggest that the material relating to Becket was written around then, either by Andreas or copied from notes he had written in 1190s.[577] By this point, some thirty years after the martyrdom, interest in Becket's miracles had waned for most annalists. Yet Anchin was located in an area where Becket's cult was active, and a cluster of Becket's recorded miracles had occurred in Arras, the diocese in which Anchin was located.[578] The monks of Anchin supposedly possessed Becket's chasuble, and the nearby abbey of Marchiennes, where Andreas was subsequently

[572] Anne Duggan, 'Aspects of Anglo-Portuguese Relations in the Twelfth Century', in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts, and Cult*, ed. Anne Duggan, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), Ch. X, p. 7.

[573] Duggan, *Becket,* p. 233.

[574] Anchin, p. 413.

[575] *The Chronicle of Andres*, ed. and trans. Leah Shopkow (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), p. 102, n. 211.

[576] Régis Rech, 'Andreas of Marchiennes' in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds. Graeme Dunphy and Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 38.

[577] Anchin, p. 436, n. b.

[578] Prudlo, Martyrs on the Move', p. 45.

prior, was said to have Becket's pallium, although these claims are unverified.[579] A *passio* adapted from John of Salisbury's letter to John, bishop Poitiers, does survive in a lectionary produced at Marchiennes.[580] There may have been a miracle collection circulating between the monasteries of this area as well. Douai, *Bibliotheque Municipale*, MS. 860 is a late twelfth-century copy of Benedict of Peterborough's miracle collection. Douai is only a few miles away from Anchin, although, while this manuscript was certainly produced in France, it cannot be definitively connected to Douai before the 17th century.[581] Four other copies of the miracle collections were circulating through northern France at this time,[582] and inscriptions and iconographic representations commemorating Becket's flight can be found throughout the region.[583] Though it is difficult to connect Anchin itself categorically to Becket's cult, it was located in a region actively commemorating St Thomas, and an association with the saint would explain the chronicle's interest in his miracles. While Tewkesbury's association with Becket was more concrete, the evidence for both Trois-Fontaines and Anchin is tantalising, but somewhat inconclusive. The pseudo-William Godel and Egmond chronicles, written soon after the martyrdom, did have direct connections to Becket's

[579] Élie Benjamin Joseph Brun-Lavainne, ed., *Revue Du Nord: Archive de l'ancienne Flandre* (Lille: Vanackere, 1835-1836), vol. 5, p.354 and John Morris, *The Life and Martyrdom of Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: Burns and Oates, 1885) p. 563

[580] Anne Duggan, 'Becket Is Dead! Long Live St Thomas', in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, ed. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), p. 27.

[581] 'MS 860', *Catalogue collectif de France*, accessed 18/10/2021, *https://ccfr.bnf.fr/portailccfr/ark:/06871/004D06A14161*.

[582] Anne Duggan, 'The Santa Cruz Transcription of Benedict of Peterborough's *Liber miraculorum beati Thome*: Porto, BPM, cod. Santa Cruz 60' in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts, and Cult*, ed. Anne Duggan, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), ch. XIII, pp. 36-7.

[583] Raymonde Foreville,'Le culte de saint Thomas Becket en France. Bilan provisoire de recherches', in *Thomas Becket dans La Tradition historique et hagiographique* (London: Variorum, 1981), ch. XI, p. 169.

cult, which does make some level of association more likely for Trois-Fontaines and Anchin. Egmond abbey had a relic of Becket's, and in the same manuscript as its chronicle was a *vita* of Becket, the first written in Flemish.[584] If the chronicle of pseudo-William Godel was written by a Cistercian monk at Pontigny, as Keith Bate has suggested it "almost certainly" was,[585] then it too had a clear connection to Becket. Becket spent six years of his exile at Pontigny and the abbey created its own copy of Benedict of Peterborough's miracle collection.[586] Taken together, these connections are a testament to the phenomenal success of Becket's cult. Continental monasteries outside the diocese of Canterbury, in some cases with only limited connections to Becket's cult, still made a point of recording his miracles. These annalists believed that St Thomas had a particular relevance to their community in the same way that a local saint did, a remarkable demonstration of the international acclaim which Becket enjoyed.

The intersection of the three functions of annalistic writing outlined in this chapter can be used to explain annalistic responses to Becket's miracles. Two narratives were employed to describe Becket's miracles: an apostolic narrative derived from John of Salisbury's letter or a more conventional narrative that stressed God's role in the miracles. These two responses reflect the differing theological significance miracles could have within these chronicles. The first narrative was used in the chronicles of Pseudo-William Godel, Egmond and Trois-Fontaines, where martyrdom and miracles

[584] Louise Hampson and John Jenkins, 'A Barber-Surgeon's Instrument Case: Seeing the Iconography of Thomas Becket through a Netherlandish Lens', *Arts* 10, no. 3 (26 July 2021): 49, p. 13 and Marijke Gumbert-Hepp, , 'Annales Egmondenses', in *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, eds., Graeme Dunphy, Cristian Bratu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 63-4.

[585] Bate, 'Godel, Ps-Guillaume', p. 717.

[586] Duggan 'The Santa Cruz Transcrption', pp. 33-34.

appeared in the same annal. Here, the miracles manifested around a clerical body and triumphantly overcame the secular violence that had brought him low. The list of cures was a ringing endorsement of Becket's intercessory power, an exhilarating record of the miraculous that endeavoured to convey the awe inspired by Becket's miracles. The second narrative appeared in the Winchcombe and Tewkesbury chronicles, where the miracles appeared in a separate annal to the martyrdom. In these annals, the miracles were less a demonstration of the incredible thaumaturgy of Becket, but instead contributed to the existing schema of the miraculous which existed in their textworld. The focus shifted to God and his recurring supernatural interventions. These two approaches encapsulate the complex position of miracles within medieval society. They were carefully scrutinised to assess their validity and their revelatory meaning, and certain conventions became commonplace for recording miracles to ensure that such moments did not mislead or distract the faithful. Yet at the same time this very capacity to tangibly demonstrate God's presence in the world was intoxicating. There was an excitement and vibrancy to miracles that captured popular imagination. To witness a miracle or hear a first-hand report of one was a transcendent experience that could not always be conveyed by the conventions of miracle collection.

In the earliest texts, written within a decade of the martyrdom, the excitement inspired by reports of miracles made annalists more likely to employ the apostolic narrative. This was a device that connected the author's present with early Christian history, forming a bridge between lived experience and Biblical past. Interestingly, while the Anchin chronicle did not parallel Becket's miracles with the works of the apostles, this motif was used in its annal for 1198 when describing the miracles of Fulk of Neuilly.[587]

[587] Anchin, p. 434.

These miracles had occurred as the Anchin annalists were writing, which made them more evocative than those relating to Becket. As time passed, interest in Becket's miracles waned, and by the thirteenth century it was unusual for them to be referenced. These later annalists had no obligation to record for posterity events that had become ubiquitous through the widely disseminated miracle collections dedicated to Becket. When Becket's miracles were recorded in the later twelfth century, they tended to be integrated within the ongoing narrative of the miraculous. For many later annalists, it would seem that the initial excitement had faded, and the miracles were not presented as something exceptional. Instead, a more level-headed view of Becket's miracles can be discerned, one that was more consistent with the orthodox understanding of thaumaturgy.

There were exceptions to this pattern which were prompted by the institutional context of a chronicle's production. The needs of local cults could encourage the exclusion of Becket's miracles, as annalists ensured their own community's saints were not obscured. Other monasteries had a connection to Becket's cult, prompted either by possession of his relics, or access to his miracle collections, or due to their location in regions where Becket was enthusiastically commemorated. This led them to record his miracles long after their immediate significance had faded. Yet in addition to these specific points of context for each monastery, there was a more general distinction between English and continental responses to the miracles. Becket's miracles were only recorded in two English annalistic chronicles, in contrast to the frequent references to them by the more expansive twelfth- and thirteenth-century chroniclers, such as Ralph of Diceto, Roger of Howden or Gervase of Canterbury.[588] This may

[588] *Ymagine Historiarum*, p. 347, Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri De Houedene,* vol 2, p. 17 and Gervase of Canterbury, '*Chronica Gervasii'*, vol. 1, pp. 229-231.

reflect the threat Becket's popularity posed to the existing saints' cults of England. There was certainly a surge in the creation of miracle collections for other English saints following Becket's death.[589] These new collections were partly inspired by the work of the Canterbury collectors, but they were also a response to them as their authors asserted that Becket did not have a monopoly on miracles in England. Nor was Melrose the only abbey to take advantage of the success of Becket's cult, many English miracle collections also contained stories of a supplicant praying to Becket, but then being healed by the local saint.[590] For English annalists, Becket's miracles were not as exceptional as the apostolic narrative of continental texts suggested. Rather, they were treated in the same way as other miracles, and were ignored by authors writing more than a couple of decades after the event, or, where they were included in Winchcombe and Tewkesbury, dealt with in a largely conventional manner. The violent martyrdom of Becket was universally evocative for the annalists in a way that his miracles simply were not.

Becket's miracles span the varied concerns informing annalistic writing. For those in the immediate aftermath of the martyrdom, the miracles stood out as exceptional, and the annalists employed a Biblical motif to convey this. Subsequent authors were not so much in awe however, and followed a more conventional approach to recording the miracles, fitting them into the existing pattern of miracles which existed in their chronicle's textworld. While some communities felt connected to Becket and his cult, and were happy to promote him, others were intimidated by this new saint who threatened to distract from local cults and figures. The inclusion or exclusion of

[589] Koopmans, *Wonderful to relate*, p. 134.

[590] Ibid., p. 125.

Becket's miracles in these chronicles was not inconsequential but represented the influence of factors that were fundamental to annalistic writing.

It is clear that miracles occupy a significant yet complex position within annalistic chronicles. Annalists were influenced by contemporary conventions for recording miracles, and in some cases non-annalistic interludes were directly inserted, but they did not need to be as scrupulous as miracle collectors or as expansive as preachers. Annalists were free to include brief and unsubstantiated miracles alongside the miracles which were attested or glossed. These were organic texts, which integrated asides and changes of style to match the content they included, and the perspective of the annalists changed as their account reached their own time. The decision made by annalists to include or exclude Becket's miracles, and how to do so, reflects the intersection of theological, institutional and historical needs combined within an annalistic chronicle and the idiosyncratic context of each monastic community that produced a text**.** These overlapping and sometimes inconsistent needs had a significant influence on what was included within a chronicle and demonstrate the commemorative functions that these texts could fulfil. It was the flexibility of the annalistic form that allowed them to achieve these varied goals. Rather than following a single authorial design which shaped the entire work, multiple authors worked together to create texts that suited these needs, though the emphasis of each text may differ. These concerns are by no means exclusive; chronicles could serve other functions as well. Paul Antony Hayward has convincingly argued that the Winchcombe and Coventry chronicles were used to assist monks with learning *computus*.[591] Equally, there were many chronicles where curation and preservation (or even

[591] Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry Chronicles,* vol 1, pp. 146 and 168.

falsification) of charters and privileges was an intrinsic part of the text. Both the Burton and Tewkesbury chronicles have been described as “archival” works, intended to collect legal documents which were then connected with intermediate annals.[592] However, to focus on pragmatic functions for these annalistic chronicles runs the risk of reducing the annals within them to ballast designed to package these core goals. The annals themselves, even when brief and unstylish, were anything but inconsequential. They were a considered response to the complexities of the past, aimed at fulfilling needs in the present. These chronicles represent an act of archival commemoration, they recorded the past and catalogued the present for posterity, shaping events to suit agendas derived from their faith and the specific context of their production. Each annal included in a chronicle was a result of this active and considered remembering.

[592] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 408-9 and Luard, *Annales Monastici,* vol 1, pp. xxi and xxix.

Chapter Five

Becket's Legacy and the Political Component of Annalistic Writing

Introduction

"Thus it will be written in the annals of the Roman Church, and by God's mercy annalists will surely not be wanting: that on the petition and under the threats of the English king [Henry II], whose insupportable deeds he [Becket] had borne so long, he, deprived of the power of his office as if he were criminal, truth's herald, liberty's defender, the preacher of justice in God's cause, the man who is now in his fourth year of exile with a vast multitude of innocent men, setting aside due process of legal arguments and right; and this not for their deserts but to please a tyrant."[593]

- John of Salisbury in a letter to John of Canterbury, bishop of Poitiers, written in May 1168.

John of Salisbury urged annalists to record the misdeeds of Henry II. His appeal suggested that annalists had a duty to remember Henry's tyrannical actions and demonstrate their illegitimacy. This suggests a vital political element to annalistic texts: that they had an obligation to record the deeds of kings and to offer some degree of judgement upon them. Roger Ray has insisted that this statement "was no appeal to the usual medieval annalists", implying that such writers were incapable of political commentary.[594] Instead, John was using the term "annalists" to refer to historians

[593] *Letters of John of Salisbury*, vol. 2, pp. 578-583.

[594] Roger Ray, 'Rhetorical Scepticism and Verisimilar Narrative in John of Salisbury's *Historia Pontificalis*', p. 62.

generally, rather than to a specific sub-genre. Though Ray was correct to identify the ambiguous nomenclature of medieval historiography, his dismissal of the "laconic" annalist surely requires some deeper discussion. It seems to follow the traditional assumption, discussed in the introduction of this thesis, that annals were a defective form of historiography. Similarly, while V. H. Galbraith may have coolly stated that the medieval chronicler was more comfortable with ecclesiastic history than political,[595] this implies a somewhat anachronistic distinction. Annals aimed to fit the past within an orthodox theo-political structure, the acts of kings existed within this framework just as much as those of popes. Furthermore, annals are political texts in the degree that contemporary politics intruded on their production. These texts were not isolated from the outside world of politics and secular affairs. It was not unheard of for kings or their agents to demand monastic chronicles be sent to them,[596] and visitors to an abbey, or local nobles, may have read their works.[597] There was a degree of self-censorship when it came to recording controversial, contemporary events within monastic chronicles. Annalists needed to balance recording significant political events while carefully navigating their contemporary political context.

This chapter will demonstrate that annalistic texts form an inconsistent, yet nevertheless valuable, component of the medieval political discourse. To discuss this topic, the focus of this chapter moves beyond Becket's life to his legacy, his presence in annals after his martyrdom. Becket's death cast a shadow over Henry's subsequent reign, his association with the murder and persecution of the archbishop was

[595] V. H. Galbraith, 'Good Kings and Bad Kings in Medieval English History', in *Kings and Chroniclers: Essay in English Medieval History*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (London: Hambledon, 1982), p. 92.

[596] Antonia Gransden, 'The Chronicles of Medieval England and Scotland: Part I', *Journal of Medieval History* 16, no. 2 (January 1990), p. 141-2 and Given-Wilson, *Chronicles,* pp. 74-5

[597] Gransden, 'The Chronicles of Medieval England and Scotland: Part I', p. 142.

uncomfortable, if not toxic. For many Angevin historians the political crises of Henry's later reign, like the civil war of 1173-4, or the conflict preceding his death in 1189, were a providential punishment for his treatment of the saint. Likewise, for several annalistic texts these moments provided an opportunity for considering Henry's rule, though the annalistic responses diverged from the consensus established among the more expansive historians of this period. The annals recording Henry's later reign demonstrate that there was an important political element to these texts; their authors were preoccupied with questions of kingship and the political health of the realm, and their annals were shaped by the political situation at their time of writing. Though some of these annalists adopted a more expansive style to provide explicit analysis, it was also possible to exploit for leverage the brevity of the form to provide political commentary. Indeed, in some cases this brevity was an invaluable tool, allowing annalists to reinterpret or avoid subversive or contradictory material. As ever the flexibility of the for allowed for a range of approaches and different emphasises in the annalistic chronicles, but underpinning their varied discussion of kingship and royal policy were hints of a shared political ideology.

1174: Penance, Punishment and the Chronological Context of Production

Only a few years after Becket's death, a bitter conflict began between Henry II and the Young Henry and his allies. Though the rebel faction was ultimately defeated, Henry II's position had proved to be troublingly vulnerable and his relationship with his sons would continue to be turbulent. For many contemporary historians, this conflict and its resolution was significant not only for the self-evident political turmoil involved, but also because it provided a satisfying conclusion to Becket's story. The events of 1173 and

1174 proved a suitably dramatic aftermath to the martyrdom and ultimately reconciled king and saint following Henry's humble penance at Canterbury and the defeat of his opponents. Elements of this approach can be seen in annalistic texts, but, for the most part, when it came to writing the annals for 1173 and 1174, annalists were more influenced by their contemporary political circumstances than a desire to conclude Becket's story.

Robert of Torigni's response to the events of 1174 is indicative of the cautious navigation of contemporary politics that could be achieved by employing an annalistic style. Robert was a twelfth-century chronicler and the abbot of Mont-St-Michel from 1154 to his death in 1186. His chronicle was a continuation of Sigebert of Gembloux's world history, which he extended with a contemporary account of the reign of Henry II. Robert was an ally of Henry's, entertaining him at Mont-St-Michel three times and participating in his daughter's baptism in 1161.[598] He was also actively courting his patronage; from as early as 1148, Robert had planned to present the chronicle to Henry as a gift, something he was finally able to do in 1184.[599] The text follows an annalistic structure, that is, entries were organised into sequential years, but the level of detail and expansive style makes the chronicle a less "annalistic" text than the others mentioned in this thesis. However, the editing and juxtaposition of the more, and less, annalistic entries within the chronicle was key to Robert's negotiation of Henry's political controversies. Robert wished to present Henry as a triumphant and good king, but this image was challenged by his shameful persecution of Becket. Robert relied on brief annalistic entries to discuss Becket's life, deliberately obfuscating Henry's

[598] Spear, 'Torigni, Robert de'.

[599] Bisson, *The Chronography of Robert of Torigni*, p. lx and Richard Howlett, 'Preface', in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett, 4 volumes, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889), vol. iv, p. xx.

behaviour. He omitted any reference to the dispute between Henry and Becket or to Becket's exile when discussing the events of 1164 and the negotiations between Henry and Louis in 1167 and 1169.[600] In 1170, he recorded the coronation of the Young Henry, but without any suggestion this was a controversial event. Robert stated that the coronation was carried out by Roger of York simply because Thomas had been staying (or perhaps delaying, the Latin verb was *morari*) in France for the last six years, without offering any explanation as to why Becket was abroad.[601] Short, annalistic entries allowed Robert to move swiftly past, or indeed avoid entirely, uncomfortable references to Becket. Robert had originally ignored Becket's martyrdom entirely. In his autograph copy (*Avranches Bibliothèque Municipale,* MS 159), the record of Becket's death was squeezed into the annal for 1171 and spilled out into the column containing the date, suggesting that it was a later addition for which adequate room had not been left.[602] Becket's canonisation was written over an erasure in the annal for 1172, with a marginal note referencing his addition to the catalogue of saints and his widespread veneration.[603] Both entries were written in the same hand, which may have belonged to Robert, and did not lie flush in the body of the text, suggesting that were added retroactively (see fig. 8).[604]

[600] Torigni pp. 220-224, 231 and 241.

[601] *nam Tomas Cantuariensis citra mare per continuum fere sexennium in Galliis morabatur*. Torigni, p. 245.

[602] Torigni p. 249 and Avranches, *Bibliothèque Municipale*, MS 159, f. 221r.

[603] Torigni, p. 250 and Avranches, *Bibliothèque Municipale*, MS 159, f. 221r.

[604] Torigni, p.250 n. 3 and Benjamin Pohl, 'The date and context of Robert of Torigni's *Chronica* in London, British Library, Cotton MS. Domitian A VIII, fols. 71r-94v' *Electronic British Library Journal (eBLJ)*, vol. 2016, no. 1, p. 9.

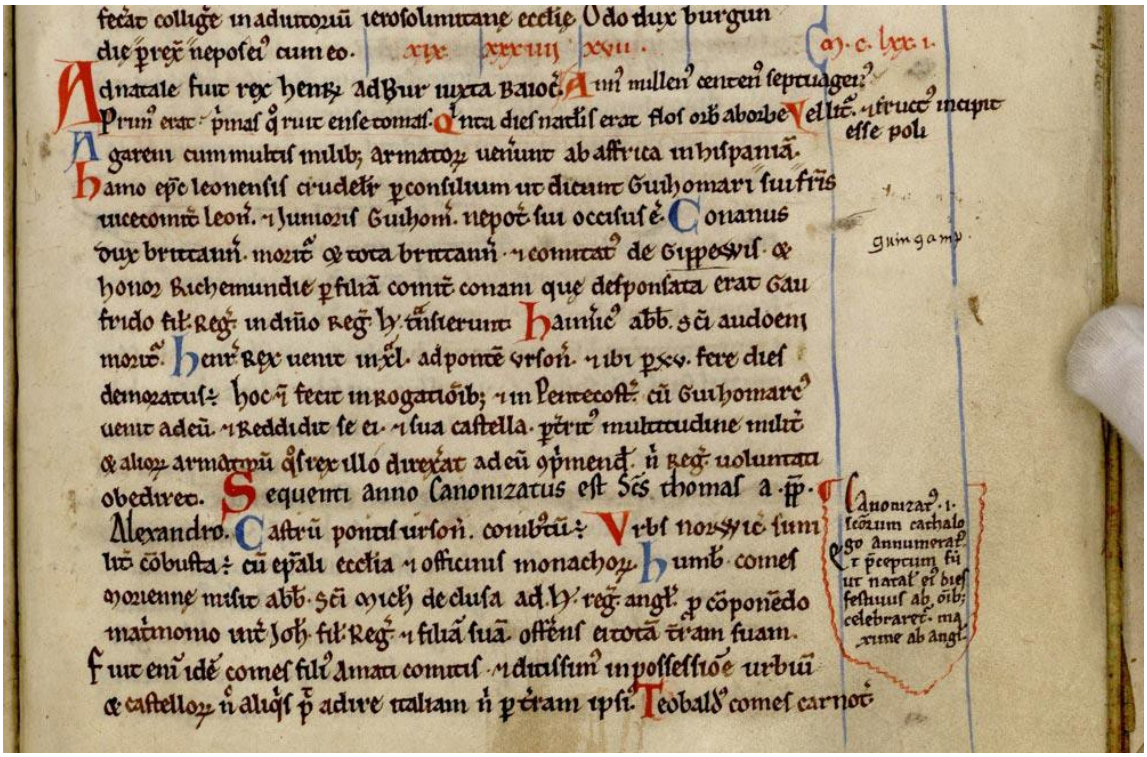

Fig. 8: At the top of the image, the record of Becket's canonisation can be seen running into the margin and at the bottom right of the page is the addition made to reference his subsequent canonisation. Avranches, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 159 f.221r.

The reference to the martyrdom remained characteristically opaque; Robert employed a rhyming couplet which described the martyrdom in an abstract manner.[605] This was an extended version of the verse found in the Waverley chronicle discussed in the previous chapter.[606] Rather than including a more conventional record of Becket's death, he used a verse as a euphemism for the matter. In the aftermath of the murder, Robert felt it was better not to mention Becket's death or subsequent canonisation at all, ignoring both events and continuing his chronicle. However, later he decided to acknowledge these moments and updated the earlier entries, albeit while avoiding any mention of Henry. Later copies of the Avranches MS integrated the Becket section into

[605] Torigni p. 249.

[606] See chapter three, pp. 119-123.

the main body of text (see fig. 9).[607] As such, the amendment was certainly made before 1182 as the Cotton MS (London, British Library, Cotton MS Domitian A. VIII), was copied from Avranches MS 159 in this year, and it was probably well before that, as the Lyre version (Paris, *Bibliotheque nationale de France*, MS Latin 4861) was copied earlier, from Robert's notes, rather than the updated manuscript of 1182.[608]

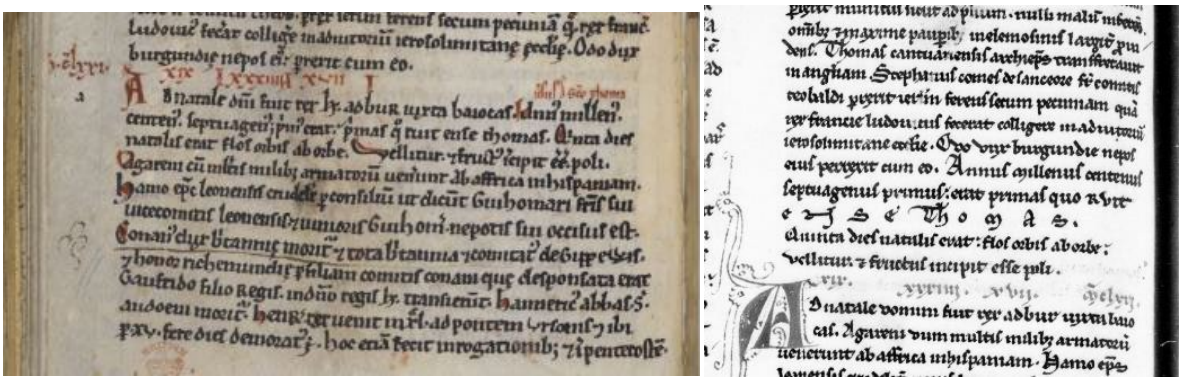

Fig. 9: In these later copies Becket's death was written in line with the rest of the entry, rather than being a later addition. Left: London, British Library, Cotton MS Domitian A. VIII, f.84v and Right: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 4861, f. 128v-129r.

It is most likely that the alteration in Avranches MS 159 was made following Henry's penance at Canterbury in 1174. This event was written directly into the chronicle, rather than being a retroactive addition and marked Henry's public acceptance and appropriation of Becket's cult. While Henry's meeting with the papal legates at Avranches in 1172 was also included directly in the text, Robert's approach was less confident than when discussing 1174. In the annal for 1172, he recorded a series of

[607] Robert of Torigni, 'Chronicle', pp. 249-250. Joseph Stephenson incorrectly states that the section on Becket's death is omitted in the Lyre manuscript (Paris 4861), but in fact the author of that version chose to record the murder as the final of 1170. Joseph Stevenson, ed., *The Church Historians of England*, (London, 1851), vol.4, part ii, p. 775, n. 3.

[608] Pohl, 'The date and context of Robert of Torigni's Chronica', p. 18.

meetings between Henry and the legates concerning Becket,[609] where, after some to-ing and fro-ing, Robert stated that the matter was finished, without specifying what was discussed.[610] In reality, this had been a key moment for Henry to stress his innocence while compromising over some of the contentious elements of the Constitutions, such as secular punishment of clergy.[611] Robert was more assured when he moved on to Henry's penance at Canterbury in 1174. This moment was preceded by a lengthy section on the progression of the war. Henry was said to have secured his Norman castles by removing untrustworthy custodians and encouraging others by reminding them of their ancestors' battles with French kings.[612] Following this energetic display of leadership, Robert recorded that Henry crossed to England and visited the tomb of the "blessed martyr" Thomas, the first time in the chronicle that Robert explicitly described Becket as a martyr. Robert continued with a melodramatic account of Henry's visit, stressing the moral quality of the king. He recorded that Henry walked barefoot to the tomb and was scourged the following morning, his devotion caused onlookers to weep.[613] Robert suggested that this display of piety was immediately rewarded; as Henry departed Canterbury, William the Lion of Scotland, a leading member of the rebel faction, was captured at Alnwick. Where previously Robert had hidden or obfuscated refences to Becket and his martyrdom, here Becket was twice referred to as a martyr. King and saint were reunited by this event, a joyous circumstance sealed with the capture of one of Henry's key opponents and followed by the total collapse of the rebel faction and the restoration of peace. In this extended

[609] *pro causa piae memoriae Thomae*. Torigni, p. 253.

[610] *ubi causa illa finita est.* Torigni, pp. 253-4.

[611] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 254.

[612] Toringi, pp. 263-4.

[613] Robert of Torigni, 'Chronica' in *The Chronography of Robert of Torigni,* ed. and trans. Thomas Bisson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 313.

account of 1174, Robert offered an enthusiastic endorsement of Henry as a king. Just as important as Henry's leadership was his piety, Robert combined Henry's secular qualities as a commander with his moral qualities as a penitent. Robert was presenting an ideal of medieval kingship: intelligent, diplomatic and humble; success came both from his own talent and from divine favour earned by his holy actions.

This discussion of kingship was articulated in the more discursive, un-annalistic, sections of Robert's text, but it was facilitated by his use of an annalistic style. He was faced with events, such as the dispute and the martyrdom, that demanded recording, but that fundamentally undermined the exemplary image of Henry's kingship that he wanted to create. He employed annalistic writing to obfuscate these moments, and when (after the penance of 1174) the climate had shifted towards a reconciliation between king and archbishop, he returned to the earlier entries to recognise Becket. Gabriele Passabì has identified another point in the *Chronica* where Robert employed this strategy. When writing in the 1160s, Robert was unsure whether Henry would support Frederick Barbarossa's antipope Octavian (Victor IV) or Alexander III, and so avoided criticism of the emperor.[614] Once it became clear that Henry had thrown his support behind Alexander III, following the negotiations at Avranches in 1172, Robert felt confident in returning to his earlier annals and amending them to show his contempt for Frederick.[615] Matthew Innes has described medieval texts as "soft", never fixed in a final, published form,[616] and it was this malleability that allowed Robert to match the shifting political circumstance. His ability to adapt was enhanced by the

[614] Gabriele Passabì, 'An archaeology of Robert of Torigni's Chronica: the second redaction and change in political discourse', *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 129 (2019), pp. 336-337.

[615] Ibid., pp. 338-341.

[616] Matthew Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past & Present*, no. 158 (1998), p. 14,

flexibility provided by an annalistic style; he could juxtapose his more expansive sections with brief entries that avoided explicit comment. Though Robert's chronicle is rarely categorised as annalistic, he was comfortable exploiting the advantages that such a style provided.

Robert was not alone in using the events of 1174 to create a comprehensible, providential framework to understand the tumultuous period which had followed Becket's murder. Many twelfth- and thirteenth-century writers employed a version of this 'penance narrative', which connected Henry's eventual victory with his visit to Canterbury.[617] In general, the narrative suggested that Henry's sins against Becket were punished by his sons rising against him, but his remorseful penance at Canterbury made amends and his enemies were subsequently defeated through Becket's intercession. This narrative was employed by hagiographers, such as Edward Grim and Herbert of Bosham,[618] but also by many historians writing in the twelfth century. The chronicle of Battle Abbey emphasised the precariousness of Henry's situation, stating that he was cornered, facing an invincible army, before he learned humility and was rewarded by God and Becket.[619] The vernacular historian and poet Jordan Fantsome recorded that Henry admitted his guilt during his prayer to St Thomas, while Ralph of Diceto, Roger of Howden and William of Newburgh all largely followed Edward Grim's interpretation of events, with some minor additions.[620] This narrative framing was reminiscent of Biblical figures such as David and Nineveh, penitents whose fortunes were changed by God.[621] By using such an approach

[617] Staunton, *Historians*, p. 203.

[618] Ibid., p. 177.

[619] Searle, *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey,* p.276-277.

[620] Staunton, *Historians,* pp. 200-202.

[621] Ibid., pp. 177 and 202.

authors demonstrated how reality conformed to Biblical truth and conveyed a clear lesson on the primacy of divine power over temporal, and the importance of admonishment of sin. At the same time, the penance marked Henry's public acceptance of Becket's cult and was a hugely important statement of reconciliation between king and bishop. Whether Henry's actions were motivated by political expediency or by genuine conviction as Anne Duggan has argued,[622] the impact of the penance was monumental. Becket's cult at Canterbury now enjoyed royal support, Henry banished the spectre of his involvement in Becket's persecution and death, and the capture of William the Lion demonstrated the intercessory power of Becket. The penance drew a line under the dispute. Becket's status as a pre-eminent miracle worker was demonstrated, Henry's sins were acknowledged, but ultimately forgiven, his victory in 1174 was not despite his sinful nature, but because of his penance.

Yet in contrast to these versions, Robert of Torigni did not acknowledge that Henry had wronged Becket, so there was no suggestion that the civil war was a divine punishment for Becket's martyrdom.[623] Although Robert stated that Henry repented his sins at Canterbury, he did not specify what these sins were.[624] He also did not explicitly suggest that Becket had interceded, but rather suggested it was through the will of God and the Virgin Mary that peace was achieved.[625] The penance narrative still provided a valuable tool to celebrate Henry's success, but Robert focused on Henry's piety, rather than his sins. This different emphasis is illustrated by Robert's

[622] For a fuller discussion of Henry's motivation, see: Anne Duggan, 'Diplomacy, Status, and Conscience: Henry II's penance for Becket's murder', in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts, and Cult*, ed. Anne Duggan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) pp. 265-6.

[623] Torigni pp. 255-256 and 305.

[624] Ibid., p. 264.

[625] Ibid., p. 265.

use of Biblical comparison. He did not compare Henry to a penitent, but sinful Old Testament king, as his contemporaries did, but instead suggested that when he submitted himself to the scourging of the Canterbury monks, he was like Christ.[626] He moderated this somewhat by noting that Henry suffered for his own sins rather than mankind's, but the alteration is significant. Robert suggested that Henry's actions were not reminiscent of a king humbled by God, but rather demonstrated Christ-like piety. Robert was writing with Henry in mind as a prospective patron, and although he used a framework similar to that of other authors understand Henry's kingship, his proximity to the king made him unwilling to acknowledge Henry's culpability for Becket's death. To do so would have undermined Robert's celebration of Henry as an ideal king.

The penance of 1174 stood out to medieval historians as a key moment for understanding the reign of Henry II and the providential aspect of kingship more generally. It was a sensational event, which facilitated the application of a Biblical framework to Henry's reign and provided a case study to explore questions of piety and power. While Angevin historians and Becket's biographers had established a broadly accepted interpretation of the events, Robert of Torigni's chronicle shows an alternative version that reflected his political allegiance to Henry II. However, popular though this narrative was, it appeared infrequently in more annalistic texts. Where it was included, the penance narrative was abridged or rejected to reflect to suit the annalists' perspective, matching the political context at the time of writing, and their own understanding of kingship.

In the chronicles of Melrose and Anchin, texts created outside of Henry's realm, the penance narrative was condensed to convey a more general spiritual message instead

[626] Torigni, p. 264.

of reconciling Becket and Henry, or emphasising Henry's specific piety. Both these annals were written around 1200,[627] and while they followed the general pattern, neither suggested that the civil war was a direct punishment for Henry's treatment of Becket. Rather, they referenced the role played by Eleanor of Aquitaine in their annals for 1173: Melrose suggested the conflict was started on her advice and Anchin recorded that she conspired with her sons against Henry.[628] Unlike Robert's account of Henry's successful leadership, these texts emphasised the precariousness of his position. In the Melrose chronicle, the penance followed immediately after an account of William the Lion's successful campaigning in the north of England, and it was through this tempest (*inter hec tonitrua*) that Henry travelled to Canterbury.[629] Anchin instead focused on the conflict in northern France, and stated that once Henry discerned that he was beset from all sides, he headed to Becket's shrine.[630] This was followed with accounts of Henry's humble petition to St Thomas at Canterbury, although neither text emphasised his personal piety nor made an explicit Biblical parallel. Anchin reminded a reader of Henry's injurious treatment of the archbishop and stated that the penance brought Henry victory.[631] The chronicle included a minor error in suggesting that it was the king of Wales (*rex Gualensium*) who was captured rather than William of Scotland, but this mistake was incidental to the narrative which Anchin presented. Melrose's version was a little more ambiguous. The author did not explicitly link the penance to Henry's subsequent success, but the capture of William the Lion was recorded as having happened the following morning, which did imply a

[627] Although Melrose may have been earlier, see chapter four, p. 178-179.

[628] *et hoc ex consilio matris suae ut dicebant*. Melrose, p. 85 and Anchin, p. 414.

[629] Melrose, pp. 86-87.

[630] [Henry] *cernens se ab omnibus impeti...* Anchin, p. 414.

[631] *que res* [the penance] *ei, ut credimus, victoriam contulit.* Anchin, p. 414.

causal connection between the two events. In both texts there was a clear message that Henry had been able to reverse his disastrous position in 1174 through his penance, although neither text included a specific address to the reader explaining the importance of spiritual virtue in a king. Although this lack of explicit glossing perhaps excludes these annals from being considered as *exempla* (although the genre is not easy to define),[632] there was still a distinct pedagogical element to these two accounts. Even without an explicit gloss, the annals of Melrose and Anchin demonstrated the key role of spirituality in medieval kingship by juxtaposing Henry's perilous position, contrite penance and subsequent victory in their annals. While for Robert, the events of 1174 showed a powerful king reinforcing his temporal successes with divine favour earned by his piety, for Anchin and Melrose, the incident showed the awesome power of God – that a sinful king could overcome desperate circumstances through Christian faith and practice. The victory was God's as much as Henry's. Anchin and Melrose had no immediate connection to Henry and were more concerned with the universal significance of the moment, the general lesson about kingship that could be drawn from it and they abridged the penance narrative accordingly.

In contrast to the adaptation of the penance narrative found in the chronicles of Anchin, Melrose and Robert of Torigni, the Winchcombe chronicle included only the vaguest outline of the motif. Written soon after the events, Winchcombe's approach shared some similarities with Robert's efforts to promote Henry, but this chronicle had a very different focus. Rather than being a celebration of Henry as an exemplary king, Winchcombe's response was motivated by a fear of disorder and insurrection. The annal for 1174 opened by noting that as Henry travelled to Becket's shrine, his knights

[632] Stefano Mula, 'Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Cistercian *Exempla* Collections: Role, Diffusion, and Evolution', *History Compass* 8, no. 8 (1 August 2010), p. 903.

captured the king of Scotland.[633] Henry's visit to Canterbury was not framed as a penance, rather he went there to "venerate" Becket.[634] The capture of William the Lion occurred as Henry was travelling, not after his visit and there was no mention of Henry's sins or his humility, and no suggestion that Becket had interceded. Although the juxtaposition of Henry's journey and William's capture perhaps implied a causal connection, such a message was more obvious in texts where the capture followed Henry's visit to Canterbury. The account of the civil war in the Winchcombe annals for 1173 and 1174 offered no criticism of Henry or a cause for the civil war. The annalists recorded a series of Henry's victories, such as lifting the siege of Verneuil, the capture of the earls of Leicester and Chester, and the death of the count of Boulogne in 1173.[635] In the 1174 annal, William the Lion's capture was followed by further defeats for Henry's enemies in England and France, and the restoration of peace.[636] These sequential records created a clear account of Henry's success, in contrast to the precarious position suggested in the Anchin and Melrose's accounts, and there was no suggestion that victory came through divine intervention. The essential elements of the penance narrative were included in this account, but they were not connected either to offer a moralistic explanation for the course of events, or to present Henry as a model of good kingship, or to create a lesson on the rewards of penance. Instead, this account reflected the Winchcombe annalists' horror at the disorder of the civil war and was a polemic attempt to encourage political stability by discrediting the rebels and emphasising Henry's success.

[633] Winchcombe, p. 536.

[634] *ob venerationem beati Thomae*. Winchcombe, p. 536.

[635] Ibid., p. 536.

[636] Ibid., pp. 536-8.

The annal for 1173 began with a marvel: the sky turned red as if the world was aflame.[637] This immediately preceded the beginning of the discord between Henry and his sons, and was a dramatic representation of the "sword and flame" inflicted on the realm. The annal for 1175 began with Henry's return to England with the Young Henry, whereupon he proceeded to harass and humble those who had rebelled against him.[638] These two moments which bookended the conflict are key to understanding Winchcombe's perspective. The dramatic opening to the annal reflected the annalists horror at the violence and disruption caused by the Young Henry and his allies, but this story ended with an emphatic statement of Henry the Elder's victory. The annals sought to demonstrate that the rebellion was not only harmful and discordant, but also futile. Henry achieved a comprehensive victory, the rebels were crushed, the disruption of the rebellion was soon reversed, and order was restored. The 1174 annal noted that Henry regained all the castles that had been taken from him. In 1173, Winchcombe recorded that ecclesiastic elections had been prevented by the Young Henry,[639] but after Henry the Elder's victory, the bishops could finally be consecrated, and the sacred order of the country restored.[640] While demonstrating Henry's restoration of order to the realm, the annalists also stressed the downfall of Henry's rebellious enemies. Robert of Leicester was captured in disgrace, the Flemings who had come to lay waste to England were put to the sword (*gladio ceciderunt*), and, after his capture, William the Lion was taken in chains to Normandy. The civil war had been a violent disruption to the order of the realm and to its spiritual health, but

[637] Winchcombe, p. 536.

[638] [Henry] *multipliciter vexavit et afflixit omnes qui Angliam turbaverant.* Ibid., p. 538.

[639] Ibid., p. 536.

[640] Ibid., p. 538.

Winchcombe's account stressed Henry's complete victory over the rebels and the humiliating result of these men's treachery.

The Winchcombe chronicle did not celebrate Henry as Robert of Torigini did. Indeed, Winchcombe specified moments where Henry's policies disrupted the status quo of the realm, such as in 1160, when his campaign in France achieved nothing but fostering discord between him and Louis, or in 1162 when the tax he raised antagonised his bishops.[641] Yet of far greater concern to the annalists was the chaos of rebellion, and to have undermined the legitimacy of Henry's rule in 1173 or 1174 would have validated the exact discord which the text deplored. Where other contemporary writers employed the penance of 1174 to reconcile Henry with Becket and resolve the dispute, Winchcombe instead used the meeting at Avranches in 1172 to demonstrate Henry's innocence of the murder. The annal for 1172 drew a firm line under the Becket debate. It recorded that Henry presented himself to the papal legates and swore on relics that he neither wished, nor ordered that Becket be murdered. Moreover, it stated that this was corroborated under oath by Becket's murderers in the presence of the pope.[642] The chronicle only acknowledged Henry's culpability when he could be exonerated, using the testimony of the attackers to emphasise this point. The Young Henry had used his father's treatment of Becket and abuse of the Church to justify his actions,[643] to repeat these charges would have added further fuel to the fire. For this reason, the chronicle moved swiftly past the dispute, Becket's murder and the penance; and categorically emphasised Henry's innocence in 1172. Winchcombe

[641] Winchcombe, pp. 538-540.

[642] Ibid., p. 536.

[643] Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King, 1155-1183,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016, 2016), pp. 156, 173 and 175.

did not need the penance narrative because in its account Henry had done nothing wrong.

Whatever Henry's faults, he was an ordained king and an intrinsic part of the social order which Winchcombe wished to preserve. Likewise, his son Henry, despite his role in the rebellion, was still the heir apparent and a consecrated king in his own right (following the controversial coronation of 1170),[644] and was not criticised as the other rebels were. The Winchcombe chronicle ended in 1181, and while the exact date it was written is unclear, it may well be that this was before the death of the Young Henry in 1183 and certainly before the death of Henry II in 1189. Its attitude reflected the contemporary reluctance to undermine living, ordained kings; even opposition to tyrannical rulers was contentious. John of Salisbury wrote in *Policraticus*, his treatise on medieval kingship, that the killing of tyrants could be legitimate, but "not by [anyone] who is bound to him by the obligation of fealty or a sacred oath".[645] John's approach was inspired by Old Testament precedent, and he felt that ending tyranny was not a justification for breaking an oath of fealty made in the eyes of God. It was better to let tyrants receive the divine punishment awaiting them.[646] Though Winchcombe saw Henry as a flawed king, efforts to oppose (and perhaps even dethrone) him were unacceptable. A bad king was easier to endure than the strife caused by trying to remove him. Because of this, the Winchcombe chronicle grudgingly supported Henry and celebrated his victory over the rebels.

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[644] Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, p. 321

[645] John of Salisbury, '*Policraticus*', in, *John of Salisbury: Policraticus*, ed. Cary J. Nederman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 209.

[646] Ibid., pp. 209-213.

Winchcombe was written soon after events, when the exact outcome of Henry's reign was still unclear. The tensions between Henry and his sons, and the threat of a return to open conflict would not be resolved until his death.[647] In such circumstances, Winchcombe did not remind readers of Henry's failures in 1174, but demonstrated how a strong king had comprehensively overcome the disorder of rebellion. Yet, Winchcombe did not celebrate Henry's personal qualities or suggest that he gained the special favour of God or St Thomas. The penance narrative distracted from the political unity that Winchcombe was trying to promote, so the chronicle instead focused on Henry's victory and the humiliation of his opponents. While the chronicle did not provide an explicit political commentary on Henry's reign, its delicate negotiation of Henry's shortcomings, reflected the political uncertainty of the period in which it was written, and Winchcombe's effort to maintain the established status quo reflects a significant conservative dynamic in medieval political discourse.

The Dunstable chronicle concentrated on a completely different aspect of Henry's visit to Canterbury and rejected the penance narrative entirely. This text was based on the work of Ralph of Diceto, although, as has been discussed in chapter two, Dunstable's editing of its source was far more involved than has been traditionally thought.[648] Ralph wrote a largely conventional version of the penance narrative, although his account of the civil war also included a discussion of historical precedents for sons rebelling against their fathers and how such incidents should be interpreted.[649] When recording the penance, Ralph paralleled Henry with King David, saying that he repeated the latter's prayer ("*peccavi Domino, peccavi Domino*").[650] He recorded Henry asserting

[647] Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, pp. 318-321.

[648] See chapter two, pp. 71-81.

[649] Staunton, *Historians*, p. 187-191 and *Ymagines Historiarum* pp. 355-366

[650] *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 383.

that he had not ordered, desired or contrived the murder of Becket,[651] although he acknowledged that his words had caused it. After this, Henry's prayers were answered and God delivered William the Lion into his hands.[652] The Dunstable account showed little interest either in Ralph's glossing of previous rebellions or his sympathetic discussion of the penance. The narrative of forgiveness and intercession was rejected: Dunstable recorded the capture of William as happening *before* the penance took place, with no suggestion this event was providential.[653] Dunstable did not equate Henry to a Biblical character or suggest that God intervened to defeat his opponents. Henry was simply another penitent, eating bread and water, walking barefoot, begging for absolution and having his body scourged. The chronicle's focus was on the king's humbling treatment and the costly gifts (*praeter munera*) that he gave to Canterbury, including the money he distributed to each monk present and the annual rent of fourteen pounds that he supplied to maintain a continual light around the tomb. Dunstable's account ignored the providential aspects Ralph's story in favour of remembering the penitential rituals and the expensive restitutions which had occurred. The same editorial pattern is true of Dunstable's account of the meeting at Avranches in 1172. Again, Dunstable did not exonerate Henry in this annal as Ralph of Diceto did. Ralph had recorded Henry admitting that his passionate words, spoken with a lack of caution, had caused malefactors to take the opportunity to kill the bishop; a careful construction that distanced Henry from the murder itself.[654] In contrast, Dunstable showed no such trepidation and stated that Henry acknowledged that it was his anger

[651] *nec mandavit nec voluit nec actificio perquisivit*. *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 383.

[652] Ibid., p. 384.

[653] Dunstable, p. 20.

[654] *sed quoniam malefactores ex verbis quae iracundiae calore succensus minus caute protulerat, occasionem sumpserant virum sanctum interficiendi. Ymagines Historiarum*, pp. 351-2.

that caused his men to slaughter Becket.[655] The Dunstable chronicle ignored references to Henry's humility, but again copied word for word from Ralph's work a lengthy list of Henry's restitutions, such as paying for knights to defend Jerusalem and compensation to Becket's family and allies.[656] Just as in 1174, Dunstable was not interested in Ralph's excuses for Henry, but focused on the exact terms of his restitutions for the murder.

Dunstable included a business-like record of a king's punishment, not a celebration of his absolution and reconciliation. This involved both ignoring Ralph's interpretation of events and rejecting his chronology. Rather than establishing a satisfying narrative of reconciliation by following the penance narrative, the Dunstable chronicle inverted events. Brief, annalistic notes recorded the capture of Henry's opponents before the penance of 1174 so that the annal could focus on the punishment of a sinful king. This approach to 1174 was the result of several factors. In part, it reflected a general trend within the chronicle of ignoring Ralph of Diceto's attempts to exonerate Henry II. Where Ralph's account stressed Henry's innocence, his reconciliation with Becket, and the divine support he enjoyed, these elements were ignored in Dunstable. This was not motivated by a particular partisan spirit, as the chronicle was not overly concerned with criticising Henry either. It followed Ralph's lead in suggesting that it was the nobles who turned the king against his archbishop.[657] Becket's murderers were not described as courtiers (*satellites*), a term which Ralph used and that directly connected them to the king, and the Dunstable chronicle never stated that Henry had sent them.[658] Ralph, who had moved in Henry's court circles and carried out delicate

[655] s*ed quia iratus ei fuerat, sui eum occiderunt.* Dunstable, p. 20.

[656] Dunstable, p. 20 and *Ymagines Historiarum*, p. 352.

[657] Dunstable, p. 18.

[658] Dunstable, p. 20 and *Ymagines Historiarum,* p. 343.

diplomatic missions for the king,[659] struggled to justify Henry's actions and downplay the controversy of events with his use of historical precedent. The Dunstable chronicle was written several decades after Henry's death and was unconcerned either with denouncing Henry or exonerating him. For the Dunstable chronicle such efforts were unnecessary, and so the penance did not need to exonerate Henry.

Yet it was not only Dunstable's distance from events that influenced its response to 1174, but also the contemporary political circumstances of its production. These annals were written soon after 1210, a period of considerable turmoil. King John had lost Normandy in 1204, he had been excommunicated in 1209 and his excessive programme of taxation had alienated both the nobles and clergy within his realm.[660] The Dunstable chronicle certainly had a low opinion of John, citing his cruelty and exactions,[661] and the interest Dunstable showed in Henry's restitutions may have been inspired by the contemporary crisis of John's reign. The treatment of Henry in 1172 and 1174 gave a precedent for the treatment of a sinful king; Dunstable specified the compensation that Henry had been forced to provide and the rituals of purging with which he had been humbled before his reacceptance by the Church. Nor was this the only time when Dunstable showed an interest in royal censure. The excommunication of Philip I and the interdict placed on Louis VII (and his subsequent promise to make amends by going on crusade) were among the few incidents from mainland Europe

[659] J. F. A. Mason, 'Diceto, Ralph de (d. 1199/1200), chronicler and ecclesiastic.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) accessed 29/01/2019, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-7591.

[660] Ralph V. Turner, 'England in 1215: An Authoritarian Angevin Dynasty Facing Multiple Threats', in *Magna Carta and the England of King John*, ed. Janet S. Loengard (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), pp. 10-12 and 23-4.

[661] Dunstable, pp. 32 and 34.

that were included in the pre-contemporaneous section of the chronicle.[662] The chronicle was clearly concerned with examples of reprimand of a king, and Henry's penance in 1174 was recorded in this light. Dunstable's prior Richard of Morins, who instigated the production of the annals, may well have encouraged this interest in royal punishment and recompense. In 1203 he had been King John's ambassador to the pope, in 1212 he was selected to calculate the damages and losses within the diocese of Lincoln during the interdict and he frequently appeared in court acting as a judge-delegate, litigant or proctor.[663] Though his exact degree of involvement in the annals production is disputed,[664] it is reasonable to suggest that this famous canon lawyer may have encouraged the focus on legalistic, procedural elements of Henry's visit to Canterbury in 1174.

For Dunstable, 1174 was significant in demonstrating the treatment of an erring king. It was a reminder that kings should be corrected and what form this correction could take; not just in moral terms, but in specific material reparations as well. This approach reflected an ongoing interest throughout the work in the punishment of kings, born in part from the influence of Richard of Morins, but also from the contemporary political situation. John's shameful behaviour demanded a response, and the Dunstable annalists drew moments from the past to show a king being reprimanded. Unlike authors writing while Henry II was alive (such as Ralph of Diceto or the Winchcombe annalists), Dunstable was unconcerned with defending his legitimacy. Yet Henry's punishment was relevant to Dunstable's contemporary concerns about John, and so the chronicle included far more precise detail than the universalised accounts of

[662] Ibid., pp. 13 and p. 16.

[663] Figueira, 'Morins, Richard de'.

[664] See chapter two, pp. 71-72 and 80.

Melrose and Anchin. By rejecting the penance narrative, Dunstable's annalists were instead able to use 1174 to reflect the political circumstances of its production.

The penance narrative provided twelfth and thirteenth-century historians with a helpful explanation for the events of the civil war, but annalistic writers chose to adapt this narrative. By concentrating on different aspects of events, and framing 1174 in different ways, each text was able to achieve different goals. Robert adapted the narrative to demonstrate that Henry's combination of secular and spiritual qualities made him a model of medieval kingship. Melrose and Anchin simplified it to provide a direct demonstration of the importance of penance and the power of God. Winchcombe ignored the narrative to consider instead the dangers of political unrest and instability and Dunstable rejected it to concentrate on the spiritual and material restitutions made by Henry, and the system of judicial punishment for errant kings. These different interpretations were in part the result of the different political context of each text. Robert of Torigini and the Winchcombe annalists were writing within ten years of the penance and while Henry II was still alive. This necessitated a cautious approach and both texts avoided discussing his greatest failures. Robert was hoping for patronage, while the Winchcombe annalists saw Henry as the legitimate alternative to the unrest fomented by his rebellious sons. Melrose and Anchin were writing outside of Henry's realm and after he had died, and universalised the penance to give it a broader relevance. For Dunstable, the calamities of John's reign in the early thirteenth century gave significance to the specific details of Henry's penance. These texts adapted the popular interpretation of the events of 1174 to refocus on the contemporary concerns, a demonstration of the profound influence that the political context of a chronicle's production had on its content.

Annalistic writing allowed these chronicles to move past undesired moments from 1173 and 1174 and focus attention on the matters which the authors did explicate more expansively. Their analysis of this political crisis rested on the juxtaposition of both styles, the combination of obfuscation and detailed explanation. For other annalistic texts, it was simpler to ignore the penance and move over the civil war as swiftly as possible. The subsequent deaths of both Henry the Elder and the Young Henry made matter less important, an ugly memory of parricidal rebellion. The Lowlands chronicle was only interested in the actions of King William of Scotland during 1173 and 1174.[665] Dore referenced discord beginning in 1173 and in 1175 recorded that peace was made between Henry and his sons, with no information on the penance or the course of the war, and Waverley's account was much the same, adding only a reference to the capture of Robert of Leicester.[666] Burton ignored affairs entirely. The Coventry chronicle ignored the penance, but still commented that divine will granted Henry victory against the rebels.[667] Winchester and Tewkesbury also ignored the penance and instead concentrated on the capture of Henry's opponents.[668] These last two accounts hint at a focus on the defeat of the rebels reminiscent of Winchcombe, but there was little desire to expand on this theme. Becket was consistently absent from those chronicles which ignored the penance, there was no mention of Henry's persecution of Becket or of Becket's intercession on his behalf. Rather than acknowledging the toxic legacy of Henry's treatment of his archbishop, and trying to use his penance to explain his success, it was easier for most annalistic chronicles to dismiss the events of the rebellion briefly. In so doing, they avoided

[665] Lowlands, p. 153-157.

[666] Dore, p. 525 and Waverley, p. 240.

[667] Coventry, p. 686.

[668] Winchester, p. 61 and Tewkesbury, p. 51.

undermining the structure and order fundamental to annalistic texts by either remembering the extent of turmoil caused by the Young Henry's rebellion or returning to the trauma of Becket's dispute and martyrdom.

The death of Henry II and annalistic discussions of kingship

While the contemporary political situation had a clear impact on the approach of annalistic chroniclers, it seems, so far, that strictly annalistic entries were better suited to avoiding political commentary than to providing judgement. The Coggeshall chronicle is a case in point. The first section of the chronicle, which consisted of brief annals covering the years from 1066 to 1186 largely ignored Becket. His exile was only referenced in the description of his murder,[669] although one later copy of the chronicle (Paris, *Bibliotheque Nationale de France*, MS Latin 15076) did refence the exile in the marginal addition.[670] Even in this text, Henry was still not mentioned, nor was there any reference to the dispute. The settlement of Avranches and Henry's penance at Canterbury were also ignored, indicating a general trend across this section of the Coggeshall chronicle of avoiding references to Henry's persecution of Becket. However, in the second stage of the chronicle a different approach was taken. From 1187 to 1206, entries in the chronicle were more detailed and expansive as Ralph of Coggeshall took a more active role in the chronicle's production. Like many Angevin historians,[671] Ralph included an extended assessment of Henry's reign when he came to record his death in 1189, facilitated by the switch to a more expansive mode, and in this section, he discussed Henry's shameful treatment of Becket. Yet the

[669] Tewkesbury, p. 49, Waverley, p. 238 and Coggeshall, p. 15.

[670] Coggeshall, p. 15, n. 8.

[671] Staunton, pp. 178 to 184

more annalistic records of Henry's death found in other chronicles also introduced a degree of judgement on his reign. The failures which these annalistic authors succinctly identified reflected similar concerns and conceptions of kingship as could be found in the more expansive records, indicating that political commentary was not incompatible with an annalistic style.

The Coggeshall account of Henry's death gives a sense of contemporary responses to this moment and helps to contextualise the briefer annalistic response. The Coggeshall chronicle described Henry as most blessed or fortunate (*fortunatissimus*), but despite these gifts he was plagued by his rebellious sons.[672] This internal strife was a punishment from God for his persecution of Becket,[673] and the entry continued with a description of Henry's overreaching greed in the form of his predations on the Church, a failing which ultimately obscured his royal majesty. Historians such as William of Newburgh and Gerald of Wales reached a similar conclusion: despite Henry's talents, his treatment of Becket caused God to punish him.[674] Unlike the penance narrative, there was no redemption for Henry here. Rather, this was written after the king had died, outmanoeuvred by his opponents and abandoned by his remaining sons. In the Coggeshall chronicle Henry's reign was used to demonstrate the cost of greed and tyranny. Though Henry had enjoyed unprecedented power, greater than all previous kings of England,[675] his oppression of the Church saw him humbled by God. The last image of the story of Becket and Henry was of the downfall of a king whose sins outweighed his advantages.

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[672] Coggeshall p. 26.

[673] *quae persecutio intestina atque domestica ideo ei justo Dei judicio, ut credimus, illata est, quia in beatum Thomam plurimum deliquerat*. Coggeshall p. 26.

[674] Staunton, *Historians*, pp. 169 and 211.

[675] …*prae cunctis regibus Angliae, qui ante eum regnaverant, praepolleret…* Coggeshall p. 26.

The Coggeshall account provided a moralistic framework to draw together the different elements of Henry's reign. Annalistic records of Henry's death also used his death to consider his rule, although rather than writing a discursive eulogy that encompassed the span of Henry's reign, they tended to focus on a single aspect of the myriad concerns about kingship which Henry embodied. Such comments were rarely positive, but the degree of criticism varied from implicit to explicit. The Dunstable chronicle noted the length of Henry's reign and the location of his death and burial in its annal for 1189, before recording an abridged version of a verse found in Ralph of Diceto's work.[676] This verse, allegedly inscribed on Henry's tomb, read:

> This tomb is sufficient for the one to whom the world was not enough,
>
> A small thing is enough for one to whom [even] a large/ample thing was small.[677]

Contained within these lines was a criticism of Henry's overreaching ambition. In Ralph of Diceto's work, the verse continued by stating Henry's great power and reminding a reader to consider their own mortality.[678] Ralph invited a reader to prepare for death and to do good deeds to mitigate against an unexpected end. In the Waverley chronicle a somewhat similar message was included in the annal for 1189, which simply recorded that Henry went the way of all mortal flesh.[679] Dunstable's record reflected this sense of the universality of death and the transitory nature of secular power (which was the most popular medieval framing of a royal death),[680] but by

[676] Dunstable, p. 24 and *Ymagines Historiarum,* p. 65.

[677] *Sufficit hic tumulus, cui non suffecerat orbis, res brevis est ampla, cui fuit ampla brevis.* Dunstable, p. 24.

[678] Staunton, *Historians*, p.180

[679] *ingressus est viam universae carnis Henricus secundus rex Anglorum.* Waverley, p. 246.

[680] Staunton, *Historians,* p. 180.

recording only the first two lines of Ralph of Diceto's verse, the Dunstable version conveyed a more pointed criticism of Henry. Similar to Ralph of Coggeshall's assessment, Dunstable's version suggested that Henry was undone by his greed. He had been dissatisfied with great temporal power he had enjoyed, and a small tomb was the reward of his ambition. The Dunstable annalists recorded Henry's predations against the Church had in earlier annals,[681] and his modest end was the result of overstepping his allotted authority. The Lowlands chronicle concentrated on Henry's more recent behaviour in a more explicit condemnation of the king. The entry recording his death began by stating that rather than committing to the Third Crusade, Henry had abandoned the cross to continue instead his customary warlike machinations (*solita werre machinamenta*) and attack Philip II of France.[682] Again Henry's overreaching ambition was being criticised, but here the emphasis was on his desire for another king's lands. Rather than criticising his encroachments on the Church, the Lowlands chronicle stressed his failure to fulfil his obligation towards it, prioritising his own greed over the needs of the whole Church.[683] The Lowlands chronicle contextualised Henry's death with an incident that provided a damning indictment of his reign, presenting him as a cunning war-monger who abandoned his duty by not going on crusade.

The Burton chronicle, rather than conveying a moralistic judgement on Henry, concentrated on his fiscal policy in the annal for 1189. The chronicle recorded that Henry was prudent (*prudens*), but that his successful defence of Normandy was achieved more with money than with his arms, draining the treasury as if it were a

[681] The annal for 1172, for example, explicitly described his actions as *contra libertatem ecclesiae*. Dunstable, p. 20.

[682] Lowlands, pp. 171-172.

[683] *comperta totius sancte ecclesie necessitate*. Lowlands, p. 172.

font.[684] Burton was written around 1211,[685] in the aftermath of the loss of Normandy and it was this event that seems to have governed the annalists' response to Henry's death. He appreciated the efforts Henry had made in defending the duchy, but saw in the expenses incurred the long-term roots of defeat. Burton's annals for 1202-1205 are frustratingly incomplete,[686] so there is no record of John's campaign and defeat in Normandy, but the entry for 1189 implies that the annalists looked for an earlier reason to explain a contemporary political crisis. The Burton annalists also connected Henry and John in the annal for 1211. At a meeting between John and the papal legates, John attempted to cite his father as precedent for his own treatment of the Church, but he was reminded not to repeat Henry's errors, which had seen him forced to make amends to the Church.[687] The Burton annalists were suggesting that Henry was the origin of these later evils, both in his fiscal and ecclesiastic policies. The lengthy conversation between John and the legates in this annal contained a far more explicit denunciation of Henry than anything earlier in the chronicle, and it included the suggestion that Henry had ordered Becket's death.[688] Like Dunstable, Burton considered Henry's reign in terms of the consequent failures of his son, but it was his mismanagement of finances that the Burton annalists concentrated on in their annal for 1189.

The annals for 1189 in the Anchin and Coventry chronicles focused on the conflict between Henry and his son Richard that had led up to Henry's death. This was

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[684] …*sic exhauriebat quasi de fonte thesauros…*Burton, p. 188. For a discussion of the cost of Henry's reliance on mercenaries, see Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, p. 193.

[685] Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 408.

[686] Burton, p. 209.

[687] Ibid., pp. 213-214.

[688] *reversus est Sanctus Thomas ad ecclesiam suam, et ibi per praeceptum patris tui martyrium subiit.* Burton, p. 214.

symptomatic of the familial strife that had dogged his later reign and continued even after the death of the Young Henry in 1183. Anchin recorded that Henry fell into melancholy and illness as Richard and his ally Philip II pursued him to Chinon, where he died.[689] The Coventry version made Henry less pitiful; though the annal for 1188 ended with Henry's curse on Richard for joining Philip II, the 1189 annal suggested that the two were reconciled at Henry's deathbed.[690] This may reflect that the Coventry chronicle was written during the reign of Richard, and this reconciliation helped exonerate Richard from accusations that he had hounded his father to his death. Coventry's claim that it was Philip's intervention that reconciled father and son nevertheless emphasised Henry's powerlessness at the time of his death: it was his French rival who was able bring peace to the warring Angevin family.[691] Henry was reduced to a state of passivity in the narrative, and his decline and defeat contrasted dramatically with his earlier success in 1174. This focus on his conflict with Richard was also indicative of the fascination of twelfth-century historians with the fractious nature of the Angevin dynasty. Henry, Richard, Geoffrey and John all rebelled against their father, with all but John also allying with the French king against him. Medieval historians looked for Biblical precedents for this animosity, with some suggesting Henry's bloodline was tainted because of his allegedly illegal marriage to Eleanor or turning to the prophecies of Merlin to make sense of the strife.[692] This discord implied a serious fault in Henry's kingship. The struggles between Henry and his sons were dangerous and undignified, a far cry from the idealised genealogies of kings written in the period or the ordered succession suggested by annals. For a son to rebel against

[689] Anchin, p. 426.

[690] Coventry, pp. 692-694.

[691] *prece sua* [i.e. Philip] *interveniente rex angliae et filius reconciliati sunt.* Coventry, p. 694.

[692] Strickland, *Henry the Young King*, p. 9 and Staunton, *Historians*, pp. 181-184 and 209-215.

his father contravened social, theological and natural laws. Many Angevin historians described the Young Henry as parricidal and were horrified at this challenge to the hierarchy of the family and of the nation.[693] It is little wonder then that it was the image of Henry defeated and surpassed by his son Richard that stuck in the mind of the Anchin and Coventry chroniclers. This familial conflict represented rupture to a vital component of medieval kingship and a failure on Henry's part to establish an ordered succession.

In several chronicles no comment was made at all about Henry's reign, but this decision not to gloss his death becomes more significant when compared to the treatment of his rivals. The Winchester chronicle did not editorialise Henry's death, commenting only that he was the son of Matilda.[694] In contrast, the Young Henry was described as "the flower and mirror of youth and generosity and the glory of all soldiers" in the annal recording his death in 1183.[695] The contrast between the deaths of father and son in the annals could not be more pronounced. As has been discussed in the second chapter, the Winchester chronicle showed clear antipathy toward Henry, resulting perhaps from his imposition of Richard of Ilchester as bishop on the cathedral in 1173.[696] Whatever the reason, when it came to recording Henry's death the Winchester had nothing positive to add, but his rebellious son was praised as an exemplar of chivalry. In a similar manner, the Waverley chronicle commented only in a generic manner for the death of Henry II, as mentioned above, while it described the

[693] Staunton, *Historians*, pp. 194-199.

[694] Winchester, p. 63.

[695] *flos speculumque juventutis ac generositatis, et totius decus militiae*. Winchester, p. 62.

[696] John Hudson, 'Ilchester, Richard of (d. 1188), Administrator and Bishop of Winchester', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004) accessed 05/09/2019, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128- e-23515.

Young Henry at his death as illustrious and wonderful of character.[697] The Coventry chronicle stated that the Young Henry was mourned by many when he died; no similar statement of grief was recorded for his father.[698] Anchin too noted the Young Henry's popularity, recording that he was buried with tears and sorrow as he was loved by all.[699] Where annalistic omission could be used to endorse Henry, the studied neutrality in some annalistic records of Henry's death subtly demonstrated the shortcomings of the king.

Ralph of Coggeshall used Henry's death to return to moments that the annalistic section of his chronicle had avoided. He discussed Henry's rule, acknowledging his temporal power, but also his dynastic instability. Ralph ultimately employed a providential narrative to make Henry's reign comprehensible; his persecution of Becket and the Church saw him brought low by God. Annalistic authors responded to Henry's death differently, using precise statements to convey specific criticisms of his reign, and these criticisms indicate how the annalists considered kingship. There was a distinctly religious element to Dunstable and Waverley's reminder of the ephemeral nature of temporal power, in contrast to Burton's pragmatic consideration on his fiscal policy. The Lowlands chronicle noted Henry's failure to serve the Church, and like Dunstable, condemned his greed, focusing on Henry's personal moral failings. Anchin and Coventry juxtaposed Henry's death with an account of his defeat by his son and his rival neighbour. In these texts it was the squabbling of Henry's family that was the important final thought. Yet there were many texts that again employed the annalistic shield of omission to avoid commenting on Henry's kingship at all. Yet this omission

[697] *vir illustris et miraae indolis.* Waverley, p. 243.

[698] Coventry, p. 688.

[699] …*cum multis lacrimis et incomparabili omnium luctu*… Anchin, p. 421.

is telling since it indicates that Henry was not considered as charismatic as his son Henry was, and not as pious as Louis VII or early English martyr-kings. Henry's vexed reign highlighted many contemporary discussions around kingship and his death gave annalistic writers the opportunity to precisely highlight such issues.

In the brief annalistic obituaries the chroniclers found little good to say about Henry and recorded an array of his inadequacies. Yet even after Henry's death these authors were unwilling to decry Henry's tyrannical treatment of Becket in the way that John of Salisbury had urged them too. Ralph of Coggeshall's account did specifically remind a reader of Henry's oppression of Becket and the Church, yet the annalistic authors seemed unwilling to do so. For some English texts this may have reflected their trepidation at accusing Henry directly while his sons reigned. Yet this seems unconvincing, as several twelfth-century historians were willing to reference Becket at Henry's death, and even annalistic texts which had mentioned Henry's culpability for the martyrdom in 1171 did not reference Becket in 1189. In part this demonstrates the success of the Angevin rulers and their supporters in defusing the dangerous anti-authoritarian implications of Becket's struggle. Becket was assimilated as a royal saint not just through Henry's famous penance in 1174, but through the continued patronage of the saint's cult by Henry and his children.[700] The annalists seem to have accepted these efforts and by the time of Henry's death, and certainly by the thirteenth-century, there was little desire to reopen old wounds. For some, like the Lowlands annalists, there were more fruitful avenues of criticism for Henry's reign than his treatment of Becket. Though these chronicles offered varied criticisms of Henry's reign, his treatment of Becket was less prominent, just as John had feared.

[700] Anne Duggan, 'Becket Is Dead! Long Live St Thomas', pp. 40-47.

The Margam chronicle and the political "ideology" of annalistic texts

As in the more expansive historical works of this period, the events of 1174 and 1189 provided annalists with an opportunity to consider Henry's reign. This political commentary, although somewhat inconsistent, focused on precise editorial interventions that reflected either the specific political context at the time of writing or the ongoing concerns of medieval kingship. Yet there were many annalistic texts which consciously avoided discussing the wider implications of these moments. While this conscious forgetting could concentrate the narrative on the writers' main concerns, it was also a tool to sanitise the past and avoid passing judgment. The absence of references to Becket in annals post-1171 is indicative of this trend. However, one annalistic chronicle did directly bring Becket into the wider political context, drawing together previous and subsequent crises to form an engaging discourse on the political health of the realm. This was the chronicle of Margam Abbey, and its approach demonstrates not only a more developed consideration of Becket's legacy, but also offers an articulation of the political preoccupations hinted at in other annalistic texts.

The Cistercian abbey of Margam was founded in 1147, in south Wales. A daughter house of Clairvaux, it was positioned on an important route of travel from Ireland to France and England, and regularly received high status guests.[701] As such, Margam retained a close connection with Clairvaux and the continental heart of the Order. It was not the first Cistercian foundation in Wales, nor did it establish any daughter houses, but it nevertheless held an influential position. Its abbot was one of five British abbots selected in 1218 to give counsel when matters were too urgent to await a

[701] Janet E. Burton and Karen Stöber, *Abbeys and Priories of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015) p. 139.

General Chapter meeting,[702] and of the thirteen Welsh Cistercian monasteries, Margam was among the four most frequently commissioned to investigate, resolve and report back to the chapter on disputes between monasteries.[703] The chronicle produced at this abbey survives today in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.4. The annals begin in 1066 and continue in a single hand until ending abruptly in 1232, suggesting that the final leaves of the manuscript have been lost and the true end point is unknown. Robert Patterson has identified similarities between this text and Dublin, Trinity College, MS 507, indicating that both texts shared a common source (referred to as "G" by Patterson).[704] The "Dublin" MS ends in 1235, which suggests that the Margam chronicle may have originally continued to this date. It seems then, that Margam's annals were copied from G by a single scribe in the mid-thirteenth century, presumably after 1235 and, judging from stylistic features, before 1250.[705] This matches the period in which the same scribe was working in Margam's scriptorium, recording donations from local nobles.[706] By comparing the Margam chronicle to the Dublin manuscript it is possible to identify what material was added while the Margam scribe copied G. For the most part, these additions related to Margam Abbey itself and the surrounding area, but significant material concerning Becket was also added.[707] Becket was mentioned at four points in the annals: in relation to Anselm's trip to Rome in 1103 and the coronation of Henry the Young King

[702] F. G. Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales, 1066-1349* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1977) p. 115.

[703] Ibid., p. 114.

[704] R. B. Patterson, 'The author of the "Margam annals": early thirteenth-century Margam abbey's compleat scribe', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 14 (1991) pp. 198-201.

[705] Ibid., p. 209.

[706] Ibid.

[707] Ibid., pp. 199-200.

in 1170, at his martyrdom in 1171 and at his translation in 1220. In the first two of these appearances, concerns over stability, royal governance and the independence of Church were manifested in the story of Becket.

For the Margam annalists the conflict between Henry I and Anselm was part of a broader pattern of royal tyranny that ran through history. The annal for 1103 recorded that Anselm rightfully did not promote Henry I's cause in Rome, as the royal measures were not ancient rights but the "catachresis of a tyrant" (*tyrannicae abusiones*), and the "inventions of devils" (*diabolicae adinventiones*) designed to subvert ecclesiastic liberties.[708] The annal continued by saying that such impositions were the cause of conflict between Anselm and William Rufus, Anselm and Henry I, and Becket and Henry II. In the Margam annalists' eyes, the despotic new customs and laws proposed by these kings threatened the Church, created discord*,* led to the exile of both Anselm and Becket, and caused many other evil things (*mala)*. The Margam annal for 1103 jumped both backwards and forwards in time to demonstrate the threat and cost of royal oppression. This approach abandoned the strict chronological progression of a set of annals, and instead used parallelism to help a reader comprehend the past and established an important lesson, namely that strife followed attempts to oppress the Church. Becket was remembered as part of this discussion. While Becket's election in 1162 and his exile in 1164 went unmentioned, he was referenced again in 1170 annal's record of the coronation of the Young Henry. The annal opened with a short section which contextualised the coronation, naming the bishops who had participated in it and referencing the ancient right of Canterbury to crown English kings. It continued with a passage copied, with some minor rephrasing, from *Quadrilogus II*, a composite

[708] Margam, p. 8.

vita of Becket that itself derived its account from Herbert of Bosham's work. The coronation was described by Bosham as profane and distasteful,[709] and it led to a series of disasters: bishops being placed under anathema, the murder of Becket, conflict between Henry and his sons, and the death of the Young Henry.[710] The annalists again referenced later events to suggest a causal connection which fitted their argument that the imposition of tyrannical inventions would lead to disaster. Similar concerns arose when Margam recorded the election of Stephen Langton in 1207. That annal stated that discord began between John and Innocent III following this election, because it was made in opposition to John's tyrannical will.[711] The language was reminiscent of the incidents mentioned above, with the annalists dismissing royal laws and liberties as profane constitutions.[712] John's conflict with Langton was not explicitly paralleled with either Anselm or Becket, but again a list of bad consequences followed: another archbishop exiled, the kingdom placed under interdict, clergy persecuted and again, many other unspecified *mala*.[713] In 1103, 1170 and 1207 the chronological progression of Margam's annals was interrupted to demonstrate the manifold ills that came from the imposition of novel royal contrivances, be they new policies, coronations that contradicted tradition or contrived opposition to a legitimate election.

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[709] …*quam profana vero unctio haec odiosa…* Margam p. 16.

[710] Margam, p. 16 and 'Quadrilogus', in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury (Canonized by Pope Alexander III, AD 1173): Volume 4: Anonymous Lives, Quadrilogus, Etc.*, ed. James Craigie Robertson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 368 and Herbert of Bosham, '*Vita Sancti Thomæ'*, vol 3 pp. 258-261.

[711] Margam p. 28-29.

[712] …*profanas illas consuetudines, quas vocant avitas leges et regias libertates.* Margam., p. 29.

[713] Ibid., p. 29.

This demonstrates a clear pedagogical element to the chronicle. It presented a lesson on the cost of bad kingship, illustrated with historical examples. The account of Becket was framed with a thematic, rather than purely chronological, structure, and through the annalists' composition it became an *exemplum*, an explicit lesson from the past. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the use of *exempla* and their collection into specialised texts had become commonplace by the thirteenth century. The Cistercians were particularly active in writing these collections, especially monasteries in Clairvaux's line of filiation, such as Margam.[714] The Margam annalists were no doubt familiar with the concept and implemented an *exemplum* into their annals. This idea was established in the annal for 1103, and was developed by employing *Quadrilogus II* in 1170, and continued in the entry for 1207. It was in this context that Becket was remembered. When it came to Becket's martyrdom, Margam referenced Becket's defence of ecclesiastic liberty and position as a papal legate, but did not connect this moment to wider events, nor did it suggest that Henry was involved in the murder.[715] While the Margam annalists made extensive additions to the entries relating to Anselm and to the Young Henry's coronation, they were happy to follow the account of Becket's martyrdom found in G. The annal for 1103 ended by telling a reader that they could look to Becket's *vitae* to learn more, but clearly the Margam annalists felt no need to add further biographical detail to their chronicle. It was not the story of Becket's life that Margam was concerned with, but how royal impositions eroded tradition and threatened the stability of the realm.

[714] Mula, 'Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Exempla', pp. 905 and 907.

[715] Margam, p. 17.

This approach may in part have been inspired by local concerns. While Margam's monks were largely disciplined and conscientious,[716] the same was not true of the lay brothers. Between 1190 and 1206, the lay brothers proved themselves unruly and ill-disciplined, rising in revolt in response to attempts to curb their drinking.[717] Conan, the abbot in the 1190s, was reproached by the General Chapter for his failure to maintain the peace.[718] These issues were within living memory at the time of writing, and, like the innovations of the king, were a threat to the established order and stability of the realm. *Exempla* aimed to teach moral lessons and strengthen the sense of community among Cistercians.[719] Becket's case provided an opportunity to instruct monks in the importance of defending the established authority of the Church, and also fostered a shared ecclesiastic identity in opposition to volatile secular tyranny. Antipathy towards King John may also have influenced the chronicle's approach. Although Margam was one of the only Cistercian monasteries to escape the taxes imposed by John on the Order, perhaps in recognition of the hospitality he had received there as he travelled to and from Ireland in 1210,[720] the chronicle was highly critical of him. There were frequent references to his tyranny, and the chronicle contains the unique story that he had murdered his nephew Arthur of Brittany with his own hands.[721] The chronicle explicitly condemned John in a way that it did not for previous English kings, and the

[716] Cowley, *The Monastic Order in South Wales*, p. 18.

[717] Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priories of Medieval Wales*, p. 139. and F. G.Cowley, 'Margam Abbey, 1147-1349', *Morgannwg, Transactions of the Glamorgan Local History Society*, 42, (1998) p. 17.

[718] Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priories of Medieval Wales*, p. 139.

[719] Mula, 'Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Cistercian Exempla', p. 906 and William J. Purkis, 'Memories of the Preaching for the Fifth Crusade in Caesarius of Heisterbach's Dialogus Miraculorum', *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 3 (July 2014), p. 342.

[720] Burton and Stöber, *Abbeys and Priories of Medieval Wales,* p. 139.

[721] Margam, pp. 27-28.

contrast between the damning account of John's murderous activity and the disinterest in Henry's involvement in Becket's murder is noticeable. In the annal for 1199, the annalists argued that both John's previous treachery against his brother Richard and the superior claim of Arthur of Brittany made John's coronation illegitimate, and stated that William de Briouze, and others who had participated in the coronation, would be punished by God.[722] The vivid depiction of John's failing suggests that he was prominent in the annalists' mind and Margam's political commentary may have aimed to contextualise his reign. This antipathy toward John, Margam's position within the literary traditions of Clairvaux and its own experience of disorder all contributed to its unique response to Becket, weaving him into an ongoing discussion of royal power.

The Margam chronicle raised issues about kingship apparent in other chronicles. There was condemnation of royal overreach and intrusion into ecclesiastic affairs, concern at the results of royal misrule, interest in dynastic succession and familial conflict, horror at discord within the realm and challenges to the established hierarchy. The Margam annalists articulated more clearly Winchcombe's emphasis on the damage caused to both the realm's spirit and body by discord. In Margam, the *mala* which followed royal misrule was not only punishment of the king, but was detrimental to the whole kingdom. This was most clearly explained in 1170, when the result of the coronation included not only bishops being placed under anathema and an archbishop being murdered, but also parricidal civil war, and the premature death of the heir apparent. The exile of the chief prelate put the souls of all men at risk and meant that many newly elected bishops could not be consecrated. The collaborating bishops may have deserved anathema, but what then of their pastoral duties? Furthermore, the

722 Margam, pp. 27-28.

death of the Young Henry was presented not as a punishment for his father, but a loss to the realm as an illustrious (*egregius*) consecrated king died without ever taking the throne. The discord which the chronicle decried represented a threat to the fundamental structures of society. It was the duty of prominent secular and religious leaders of the realm (two groups who in thirteenth-century England belonged to the same political community)[723] to protect the status quo and prevent the worst excesses of royal avarice. To the Margam annalists, John's rule was illegitimate not just because it contravened the traditional system of succession in England, but also because he had been judged a traitor by all the prelates and nobles of the land for his actions during Richard's reign.[724] The Margam chronicle also categorically named those bishops who participated in the coronation of 1170, and emphasised William de Briouze's role in the coronation of 1199. The notables of the realm had a duty to prevent the subversion of tradition, and Margam kept an ignominious record of those that failed to do so. These men formed an important element of the political structure suggested in the Margam chronicle, a structure in which the rights of the realm and Church were firmly entwined. Disruption to this structure was a manifest disaster for all.

Margam's holistic understanding of kingship was symptomatic of thirteenth-century thinking. Sophie Thérèse Ambler has argued that English bishops in this period developed a strong sense of corporate identity and of political responsibility for the health of the realm beyond ecclesiastic matters.[725] Margam's denunciation of royal policy stopped short of Stephen Langton's view of royal power as intrinsically

[723] Ambler, *Bishops in the Political Community of England*, p. 30.

[724] John was crowned … *contra judicium archiepiscoporum, episcoporum, comitum et baronum et omnium aliorum magnatum Angliae.* Margam, p. 24.

[725] Ambler, *Bishops in the Political Community of England*, p. 9.

oppressive,[726] but like Langton and Robert Grosseteste (another thirteenth-century theorist), the chronicle advocated the urgent need for the correction of wayward kings.[727] In Margam's three cases (concerning Henry I in 1103, Henry II in 1170 and John in 1207) it was the promotion of new laws or the erosion of existing traditions that was decried rather than the king himself. Just as earlier annalistic chronicles had sought to criticise Henry without naming him as tyrant or supporting the rebels in 1174, Margam found a way to condemn misrule without encouraging dissent. The chronicle did not question the legitimacy of the ruler, but of his actions, and it was the disastrous policies that were tyrannical, not the king himself. In the case of John, there was explicit criticism of the ruler, but the 1207 annal still cited his "profane constitutions" as the cause of his conflict with Pope Innocent III. For Margam, though John was a tyrant, he should never have been king anyway, as his coronation was illegitimate. If tradition had been followed, then John and his disastrous policies would not have been inflicted on the country. Earlier writers such of John of Salisbury or the chroniclers of Anchin and Melrose had a more providential outlook: God's intervention would deal with tyrants or reward righteous kings. Margam however suggested a more proactive approach, that bishops and noblemen should prevent royal misrule by opposing illegitimate coronations at the outset. Margam's commentary built on concerns apparent in earlier annalistic texts, but also reflected thirteenth-century developments.

Margam's idiosyncratic approach to Becket's story reflects the varied discussion of kingship in annalistic texts. These elements were drawn together across several annals to form an *exemplum*. Margam did not merely draw a parallel between Henry

[726] Langton argued that God only provided kings to the Israelites at their behest, this flawed system was not part of God's ideal plan and so the moral authority of kings was not unquestionable. Ambler, *Bishops in the Political Community of England*, pp. 38-39.

[727] Ambler, *Bishops in the Political Community of England*, pp. 39-41.

II and John, but presented a wider pattern of history that encompassed Henry I, William Rufus, Anselm and Becket. Margam demonstrated the necessity of maintaining the established structures of power and supporting legitimate succession (which formed the very backbone of annalistic history) by showing the *mala* which occurred when tradition was subverted. This was a deeply conservative outlook, deploring any challenge to established practice. Henry I's proposed customs were presented as contrary to ancestral laws, the Young Henry's coronation contravened the "ancient" right of Canterbury and John's "profane constitutions" had opposed the legitimate election of Stephen Langton. Margam had great faith in the customs of the land, and royal attempts to alter or reform these traditions were false impositions, despite how they may be misrepresented as ancient rights or royal liberties. While royal disruption to the system was condemned, the chronicle did this without challenging the authority of legitimately consecrated kings, who were themselves a vital constituent element of the hierarchical society that Margam promoted. Indeed, Margam did not suggest that direct action should be taken even against the "tyrant" John. The Baron's war was skipped over: the annal for 1213 only recorded the resignation of Margam's abbot, Gilbert, and the annal for 1214 only included Gilbert's subsequent death.[728] The entry for 1215 was a retroactive addition in the margin, which recorded the Fourth Lateran Council. The 1216 annal included John's death and Henry III's succession with no comment.[729] For Margam, John should never have become king, but once consecrated, the question of removing him became uncomfortable. Writing during the reign of Henry III, the Margam annalists seemed unwilling to draw the new king directly into their political discourse, or to legitimise active resistance to his father, John.

[728] Margam, pp. 32-33.

[729] Ibid., p. 33.

Margam identified royal policy as a major threat to the established hierarchy, but it still stopped short of encouraging insurrection. The same was a true of annalistic responses to Henry II. Criticism of his reign, though sometimes subtle, was common across these texts, but almost universally these chronicles aimed to move past the most damning charge (from their perspective) against him: his treatment of Becket and the Church.

Conclusion

A multi-faceted image of Henry's reign emerges from these texts. The king existed at the centre of a web of political concerns and there were many lenses through which a reign could be assessed. Henry was framed in terms of his own qualities and within providential frameworks. He was the answer to chaotic instability, but also the cause of later defeats. Dunstable focused on the exact details of Henry's restitutions, Anchin and Coventry turned him into a universal lesson and Margam fitted him into a pattern of specific cases running through history. The conclusions of Angevin historians influenced the work of the annalists, but they were happy to adapt or reject these interpretations as they saw fit. There were difficulties in trying to offer a discussion of kingship within the limitations of an annal, but at the same time, the flexibility of the form facilitated a variety of approach and focus. In many texts the juxtaposition of annalistic and more expansive records focused the reader's attention on the authors' specific commentary, while Margam was able to construct a sophisticated *exemplum* from its annals. The different approaches were often indicative of the various political circumstances of each author. Winchcombe's account of 1174 reflected the simmering threat of rebellion that dogged Henry's later reign; the disasters of John's reign in the

early thirteenth century encouraged annalists to use Henry for causes and explanations; and Margam's account reflected mid-thirteenth century developments in political theory. These authors were by no means removed from the political issues of their time, and they used their annals to comment on contemporary concerns.

Yet while these texts were influenced by the varied political context of their production, there was, in a limited sense, some level of shared political ideology. Across their annals lurked a pervasive fear of instability and political discord. Winchcombe's account of the war of 1173-1174 and Margam's inventory of *mala* following illegitimate coronations clearly showed the cost of turmoil (as did Coventry's horrified record of the Anarchy, or the Dunstable chronicle's description of the impact of the interdict of 1208, with bodies buried unshriven outside of cemeteries).[730] The decision of many texts to obfuscate the civil war of 1173-4 was precisely to hide an uncomfortable reminder of such discord arising. This fear led to a conservative outlook in the texts, that prioritised stability and the preservation of the status quo. Disruption to the established order was deeply threatening. Margam's political commentary, the most explicit in an annalistic text, was fundamentally focused on opposing invention, on resisting novel impositions. The presentation of Becket as a defender, not a reformer or champion, of Church liberties revealed a similar attitude.[731] Henry's greed, the most common charge against him, was a threat to the established order. Henry had coveted that which was outside his reach, whether it belonged to the Church or the neighbouring kings of France, and in so doing he had exceeded the power allotted to him. The king himself had been the root of instability and this failure on his part

[730] Coventry, p. 690 and Dunstable, p. 30.

[731] It is telling perhaps that Henry himself made the same appeal: he argued that his policies were simply to restore the kingdom to the rightful system that had existed under his grandfather.

explains the low opinion of Henry across these texts after his death. Henry II avoided the outright condemnation that his son John would receive, but the monastic chronicles took a dim view of the instability of his later reign.

In more expansive works of medieval historiography Becket was key to making sense of the conflict between Henry II and his sons, and for assessing Henry's reign in its entirety, but the annals recording 1174 or 1189 rarely mentioned the archbishop. Annalists may have been unwilling to disrupt the chronological progression of their texts by returning to previous events, and Henry's success in subsuming Becket's cult and making him the patron of the Angevin dynasty, disassociated him from his earlier persecution of the saint. Yet for Angevin writers, Becket's death was profoundly troubling and had exposed fault lines that ran through the ordered hierarchy that annalists endeavoured to promote in their works. They moved past this controversy and folded it into an overarching structure of continuity and stability. The dispute had set the institutions of Church and Crown in opposition, placing the subjects of the English realm in a difficult, if not impossible, position. Becket's death, despite the protestations of innocence from Henry and his allies, raised uncomfortable questions about Henry's right to rule. The annalistic chroniclers did not want to undermine Henry's legitimacy or provide ammunition to rebels. To continue to remember the Becket controversy in annals after his death was to keep this wound open.

This fear of discord and desire for stability is key to understanding the political element of these texts. It was fundamental to their discussion of kingship, but it was also key to the active role that these texts played in protecting the established political order. These texts were aware of their own role in shaping these discussions. They preferred to sanitise the past rather than to risk undermining the legitimacy of the king and contributing to the disorder that they feared. Henry wished to defuse the toxic legacy

of his treatment of Becket, and while his propagandists actively emphasised his reconciliation with the saint in 1174, the annalists were willingly complicit by turning a blind eye and forgetting about Becket after 1171. It is important to acknowledge that absence of explicit political commentary in an annalistic text is not necessarily evidence of the form being divorced from such types of discourse. Rather, omission was a conscious decision and represents these texts playing their part in fostering a community of forgetting that could evaporate challenging or uncomfortable memories to protect the status quo. It was exactly this attitude that John of Salisbury was addressing in the letter that opened this chapter. He was urging annalists not to let Henry's shameful actions succumb to same fate and be absorbed and sanitised. John challenged their conservatism, their desire to defuse controversy and promote their structured, ordered world. For John, Henry's misdeeds demanded a response, but for these annalists, whatever their doubts about Henry's kingship may have been, there was a fear of what cost would be entailed by remembering and of the damage Becket's legacy could do to the order they strove to maintain.

Conclusion

Becket, annalists and annalistic writing

As this thesis has explored the nature of annalistic writing, the chapters have themselves followed a pseudo-annalistic style. The chapters progressed through a chronological sequence of Becket's life, separating these moments into distinct sections to be discussed in turn. Admittedly, these chapters, and the periods of Becket's life which they discussed, did not follow as strict a chronological pattern as the annals which formed one of these chronicles, but the parallel was not accidental. The progression through Becket's life in a sequence from early life and consecration, through the dispute, martyrdom, posthumous miracles and subsequent legacy provided a coherent and accessible framework in which to explore the annalistic memory of Becket. Just as an annalistic structure layered multiple temporalities and levels of narrativity throughout a chronicle, this thesis has endeavoured to present several concurrent discussions about Becket's life and its representation, the authors of these texts, and the nature of annalistic writing. When drawing together the conclusions of the thesis, it is necessary to consider each of these elements in turn: the memory of Becket created within these annals, the attitudes and objectives of those remembering (i.e. the authors), and the function and nature of annals as a "relic",[732] or articulation of memory. The purpose of such an approach is to establish the value of annalistic texts, both by revealing the important perspective that their content provides on a particular topic (in this case the life and legacy of Thomas Becket), and the insight that these accounts offer into the lives and beliefs of the

[732] See introduction p. 10.

authors of these texts. This demonstrates the key contribution which annalistic texts can make to the study of the Middle Ages.

Thomas Becket provided the case study which facilitated this thesis. His life was recorded frequently enough to provide a meaningful array of accounts to compare and was contentious enough to provide points of divergence between these accounts. Yet Becket's story, the series of events which were recorded to remember his life, was largely consistent. The essential event was, unsurprisingly, his martyrdom, and no account could omit this central moment. Despite the efforts of Robert of Torigni and Ralph of Diceto to downplay the uniqueness of the martyrdom by juxtaposing it against other similar events, it stood out to the annalists as exceptional. In the Plympton chronicle, the shortest account, this was the only event necessary: a note in 1170 which recorded that Thomas, Primate of the English, was felled by the sword.[733] Such drastic abridgement was rare however, and it was more common for these chronicles to use a series of annals to create their account of Becket. In most cases three annals at least were necessary: 1162 to record his consecration as archbishop, 1164 for the dispute and his exile, and 1171 for his martyrdom. The first of these events embedded Becket within the sacred succession of archbishops of Canterbury and the last reflected the most exceptional and impactful moment of his life. 1164 provided an opportunity to exonerate or excoriate Henry II and provide some context to the subsequent murder. To this essential skeleton, other events could be added as required. Some texts framed the coronation of the Young Henry as part of an account of Becket, but others suggested it was unconnected. Becket's return to England in 1170 was occasionally noted, an event that bridged the exile and martyrdom by

[733] 'Annales Plymptonienses', p. 30.

explaining Becket's presence in Canterbury in 1171. In the chronicles of Winchester and Dunstable numerous events were added in the annals covering the 1160s so that a more comprehensive account of the dispute was created, but such attention to detail was uncommon. Outright invention of events was rare. The chronicle of Melrose suggested that Henry had conspired against Pope Alexander III, and that he had given Becket the kiss of peace before his death, additions aimed at discrediting Henry. In contrast, Winchcombe was original in suggesting that Becket's killers swore an oath before the pope in 1172 which proved Henry's innocence. Both Melrose and Winchcombe were among the earliest of the texts discussed in this thesis; Melrose's inventions were recorded around 1171, and Winchcombe was written in the early 1180s. As time passed, the growing body of hagiography and liturgy dedicated to Becket cemented the events of his life, and most annalists were content to select a handful of these accepted events, rather than invent their own. Events from before Becket's consecration were almost entirely ignored. This omission demonstrates the annalistic tendency to sanitise controversy, in this case by ignoring Becket's early life which undermined his subsequent sanctity. Where the hagiographers had made great efforts to reconcile the two sides of Becket, worldly chancellor and saintly archbishop, for the annalists it was easier to ignore his early life. Instead, the annalists focused on the events which facilitated the account they wished to create, events which could be framed within an appropriate narrative.

The narrative in these accounts of Becket showed a strong degree of variation. Trends existed, but there were also differences of approach and emphasis. For instance, most texts presented some kind of dispute with Henry as the cause of Becket's exile. However, there was a clear divide between the texts that suggested the dispute was due to Henry's anger, his oppression of the Church, or his policies as the accounts of

Winchester and Dunstable suggested. Equally, the narrative tools employed to portray the martyrdom simultaneously as both a wondrous and horrifying event varied across the texts. The clearest point of division between the narratives of these texts was the representation of Henry, and in particular his persecution of Becket. There was a tendency for Cistercian authors to frame the dispute as an assault on the liberty of the Church, and Becket as a martyr in its defence. In contrast, it was common to find English and Welsh texts lower the stakes of the dispute and downplay Henry's culpability. Alongside these broad trends were more specific approaches as well: Winchcombe categorically stated Henry's innocence, where other texts in the "Gloucester group" simply denied Henry's connection to events. Melrose and several of the French texts decried Henry as a tyrant, whereas Coventry constructed a subtle critique of his rule. These were competing interpretations of Becket's memory. While the story of his life had been largely established, these texts still disputed how some events should be remembered.

The annalists were influenced by contemporary hagiographers and historians, and the narrative devices popularised in the decades after Becket's death appeared frequently in their texts. A couple of texts referenced Becket's change of character on becoming archbishop, several were influenced by the "penance narrative" of 1174, and some hagiographic motifs were included in accounts of Becket's martyrdom. These elements were abridged, adapted or altered by the annalistic writers as they created their accounts. In part, this reduced the narrative to its essential features to create a comprehensible account of the past. The annalists did not try to reflect every intricacy of Becket's life; a single cause, for example, was enough to explain Becket's exile. Even in the most detailed accounts of the dispute this simplification occurred, with Dunstable concentrating on a handful of key points of contention, and Winchester on

Becket's persecution. The annalists did not need work as hard to make the case for Becket's sanctity and were more concerned with Becket as a sacred victim of violence than as a model of saintly virtue. There was a similar simplification of Henry: most annalists focused on a single aspect of Henry's rule to discuss at his death. This condensation of Becket's life not only made matters more readily comprehensible, it also served to remove uncomfortable or controversial elements.

Saint Thomas was streamlined and simplified in these annals. Rather than struggling to excuse his early life or justify his more confrontational decisions during the dispute, the annalists avoided these elements altogether, and offered an unequivocal statement of his sanctity in 1171. At the same time, the focus on Becket's victimhood, rather than his defiance to secular authority in the dispute, defused the somewhat anti-authoritarian implications of his legacy.[734] By simplifying Becket's sanctity he could be celebrated without validating the very resistance to authority which had alienated so many of his contemporaries.[735] This tendency was more pronounced in English chronicles, where even Becket's defence of the Church often went unmentioned. This omission played a key role in reconciling Church and Crown after the rupture of Becket's archiepiscopacy by making a more conventional saint of Becket. Equally, a largely consistent image of Henry appeared in the annals. Robert of Torigni's celebration of Henry as a ruler was unusual even among the texts more sympathetic toward Henry. Henry was not condemned as heavily as John would be, but these texts rarely dwelled on the successes of his early reign, and offered far more criticism than praise when recording his death. While his rebellious son the Young Henry was admired by several annalists for his gallantry, there were no similar compliments for

[734] Roberts, *Preaching*, p. 43.

[735] Smalley, *Becket Conflict*, p. 166.

Henry the Elder. The annalists seem to have been operating within broadly similar framework: Becket was a saint and archbishop made conspicuous by his exile and martyrdom, while Henry's legacy was ultimately difficult to celebrate, even if he was not himself a tyrant.

However, this process of refining Becket's life was not some gradual progression toward a final, universal version, and there was nothing inevitable about the decisions that were made by these authors. The simplification of Becket that occurred in annalistic texts also allowed authors to focus on the specific elements of his legacy that were relevant to them. Authors writing in the immediate aftermath of Becket's death for example, tended to be more dramatic when discussing his miracles. The miracles were considered less exceptional in the 1180s, and were largely ignored from the 1190s onwards. Yet texts with a direct connection to Becket's cult continued to reference the miracles into the thirteenth century. Angevin writers who recorded the conflict of 1173 and 1174 while Henry was still alive, such as Robert of Torigni and the Winchcombe annalists, showed a degree of support for Henry's faction and emphasised his victory. Henry's death and the succession of Richard settled such matters, and later annalists showed far less interest in the rebellion. The tumult of John's reign influenced several thirteenth-century texts such as the chronicles of Burton, Dunstable and Margam. Their accounts of Becket, and more specifically Henry, were partially aimed at commenting on John. It was not that the memory of Henry's culpability was simply eroded over time, but that annalists' took a different approach to Henry depending on their own political circumstances. The historical context of writing had a significant role in determining annalists' approach, but this does not represent a teleological progression towards a final, definitive account of Becket. Rather, it demonstrates that Becket was undergoing a continual process of

reinterpretation within these texts. The chronicle of Melrose illustrates this point. Towards the end of the chronicle, in the entry for 1268, the annalists drew a parallel between Simon de Montfort and Becket. The comparison rested on the struggle of both men on behalf of legal rights, for Simon, those of the realm, and for Becket, those of the Church.[736] It was also noted that both men wore hair shirts on the day of their death. While Becket's defence of Church liberties was repeatedly referenced at his consecration, exile and death, his hair shirt went unmentioned in the Melrose chronicle before this point. This detail was unknown or unimportant to the annalists writing in the 1170s, but it gained a new significance when Becket was remembered again in the late thirteenth century. Details concerning Becket were not lost to a gradual process of degradation, but were remembered when they had meaning to the rememberer.[737] Becket's life could be adapted in many ways, and each annalist made individual decisions to reflect their understanding of Becket.

The narrative approach of these annals adapted Becket's memory to the contemporary concerns of their authors and integrated his story into other strands running through the text. Dunstable's discussion of Henry's reparations in 1172 and 1174 was not just an epilogue to its account of Becket, but it also fitted the events into a discussion of the punishment of kings. The Rushen chronicle was more interested in the coronation of the Young Henry than Becket's exile because it was this moment from Becket's story that was relevant to a broader discussion of kingship and royal legitimacy. For Coventry, the account of Becket was part of a criticism of Henry's shortcomings, while Margam cast the net wider and placed Becket in a more general

[736] Melrose, p. 212.

[737] Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, p. 73 and Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literature', pp. 31-32.

discussion of royal misrule which connected Henry I, Henry II and John. At the same time, narrative could separate Becket from other elements of a text. In several chronicles there was a conspicuous effort to avoid connecting Henry to Becket; the coronation was treated as an uncontroversial event in Henry's story, not in Becket's, and Henry was not mentioned when discussing the martyrdom. Becket's story provided a chronicle with more than just an account of his life, but also contributed to multiple concurrent discussions running through the text. The "textworld" of an annalistic chronicle was constructed from multiple such narrative strands. These could span the entire text with eschatological or national strands, in the manner discussed by Sarah Foot or McKitterick.[738] Yet the strands could also be shorter, created by a series of annals either in sequence or dispersed across the text: the reign of a king or the lifespan of an individual, a continued interest in coronations as in the Rushen chronicle, or an ongoing discussion of royal censure as in Dunstable. Narrative was key to drawing these strands together, each individual event being framed to form a sequence. Annalists needed to decide which of these ongoing threads Becket's life should be connected to. This is not to say that no account of Becket himself existed; a self-contained record of his life from consecration, to exile, to martyrdom was apparent in almost all these texts. Rather it is to emphasise that these texts were not simply a list of events, and that considerable effort was made to both connect and disconnect individual annals to construct larger strands that shaped and gave meaning to the chronicle as a whole.

Becket was a valuable resource, his life could speak to a variety of strands within these texts, but his legacy remained somewhat volatile and required careful treatment.

[738] See Introduction pp. 3-5.

Becket's claims to sainthood somewhat dubious, and both he and Henry had acted in a highly controversial manner during the dispute. There was deep discomfort over resistance to an ordained king, even one who oppressed the Church. At the same time, Henry's persecution of Becket, and perhaps even culpability for the murder, raised the uncomfortable conclusion that he was a tyrant undeserving of fealty. The murder was a traumatic rupture to the ordered version of reality that these annalists promoted; following a dispute between the core authorities of the realm, Christians had murdered their spiritual father in their mother church. The streamlined version of Becket in these texts' accounts not only made his story comprehensible and relevant, but also contributed to the forgetting of the more controversial and uncomfortable elements of his legacy. These annals played an active role in the "universalisation" of Becket,[739] creating a version of the saint which did not pose any challenge to the established institutional hierarchy. In much the same way, St Francis had been brought into the fold after his death, the radicalism of his life forgotten in favour of a more orthodox, conformist interpretation of his legacy.[740] It was ultimately for each author to determine how far to take this process of sanitising Becket, or how far to let their account of his life disrupt the ordered and ordained version of reality which the annalistic form suggested. The accounts of Becket in these texts are testament to the adaptable, but potentially hazardous, nature of Becket's legacy. His life was at once a significant opportunity to find providential meaning and pragmatic lessons, and to promote an inspiring saint, but it also exposed fault lines in the political hierarchy, and raised uncomfortable questions that needed to be handled delicately. Just as

[739] Eales, 'Political setting of the Becket translation', p. 127 and Smalley, *Becket Conflict*, p. 193.

[740] André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, trans. Michael F. Cusato, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), pp. 143 and 227.

significant as what these annalists remembered about Becket, are the parts of his life that they chose to forget.

Both the idiosyncrasies and trends of annalistic responses to Becket provide valuable insights about the monks who produced these texts, and how they perceived and interpreted their world. These chronicles do not represent a single authorial voice. They were usually produced over extended periods of time by teams of monks working collaboratively to combine existing historical sources, reported accounts and their own experiences. They were "soft" texts,[741] susceptible to later revision or alteration. Even in cases such as the Dunstable and Coggeshall chronicles, where specific named individuals can be connected to the text, the extent of these individual's influence is often unclear. The fluid authorship of these texts means that there was not a sole guiding authorial vision. Rather, these texts were produced by collectives and reflect the multi-faceted identities and concerns which embodied these groups. Yet these texts also served to create and delineate their communities. It was a bilateral relationship: the text reflected the community, and the community was created by the text. Because of this, an annalistic chronicle offers a tangible articulation of the multi-faceted identity of a monastic community.

Unsurprisingly, the monastic context of these texts engendered a deeply Christian perspective. God made frequent, incredible interventions in these texts, *exempla* and direct commentary showed a reader the importance of Christian ritual and dogma, heresy and unorthodoxy was reviled, the deeds of popes and bishops featured regularly, and kings were most enthusiastically complimented when they emulated spiritual values. The annals reflected the community's membership of a broad

[741] See chapter five, pp. 202-203.

Christian nation, and interpreted events to match their religious convictions. These communities were not isolated from their temporal surroundings, however, and there was also a regional aspect to their perspective. The chronicles prioritised events that occurred in the province or country where the community was located, as demonstrated by the attention French texts paid to Becket's actions and travels during his exile in France. Equally, the deeds of local rulers in peace and war, their marriages and the births of their children were all prominent in these annals. There tended to be a partisan element to this focus, with Angevin texts more likely to hide Henry's controversies, while texts produced in French and Scottish monasteries were far more confident in condemning him. All these communities were firmly embedded within the established theological and political order, they had an institutional perspective which focused on the hierarchical offices of power. The succession of kings, popes, bishops and abbots was a temporality as fundamental to these texts as the chronological passage of years. God set kings above men, bishops above their flock and abbots above their monks, and the permanence and legitimacy of these offices was emphasised with repeated records of succession. These records of elections and consecrations, and especially the accounts of the coronation of the Young Henry in 1170, were preoccupied with tradition. Rituals of succession needed to be followed correctly to ensure that the transfer of authority was legitimate and divinely endorsed. As the chronicle of Margam explained, disaster would follow the abandonment of the correct procedure. The annals did not question or undermine the established system and interference, such as disruption to elections, was routinely decried. There was a profoundly conservative element to these communities: they understood their world in terms of established, hierarchical institutions and wished to preserve the status quo in which such structures existed. This stretched into a broad desire for stability,

resistance to novel legal impositions or taxes, and fear at discord and disruption. The historical record of these chronicles reflected the fundamental connection between the institutional identity of these communities and the theo-political establishment.

The annals also provided a historical foundation on which the community could locate itself. Important historical and contemporary events were recorded alongside moments of local significance. The story of the community was solidified by juxtaposing it against the large-scale strands of national and Christian history, giving the community a sense of permanence and validity. The chain of succession of their abbots mirrored the successions of kings and popes. At the same time, there was also an opportunity to promote and encourage local cults. Annals established a saint's life and achievements within the greater historical context, while drawing parallels between them with other illustrious Christian figures. The annals celebrated local saints and miracles, and recorded emotional eulogies for their dead; even a character as famous as Becket could play second fiddle to these records of local significance. In Cistercian texts, this extended beyond individuals connected to the monastery, to a promotion of saints, notable figures and events important to the Order as a whole. In part this reflects the highly developed "historical consciousness" of the Cistercians,[742] but it also demonstrates a strong sense of shared community across the Order. The historical record created in these chronicles not only established an ordered and stable world in which the community existed, but also elevated the community itself, commemorating their stories, their abbots and their miracles. Furthermore, an annalistic approach created a functional and sterile historical record, stretching back to the Conquest, the Nativity or earlier, connecting the present monastic community to

[742] Elizabeth Freeman has identified this strong "historical consciousness" in more expansive works of Cistercian historiography. See Freeman, *Narratives of a new order*, p. 23.

the past and facilitating the recording of contemporary events for posterity. The early annals gave vital context to later, contemporary events, and provided a framework with which to understand the chaotic and threatening present. For several texts, Henry's actions against Becket were an opportunity to better understand the actions of John. The Margam chronicle's political commentary indicated a particular horror at disorder that reflected the monastery's own history of internal division, as well as the predations of John. The Waverley chronicle's sympathetic account of Henry's reign resulted from the ongoing patronage of the abbey by the Angevin dynasty**.** These chronicles were a means to strengthen the immediate, local identity of the community and speak to their specific concerns. The history of the monastery was given permanence and legitimacy by the annals, figures connected to the community were celebrated, and it offered some answers to the problems its community faced.

Finally, annalistic writing also presented a sinful, threatening, secular world in opposition to the spiritual community in which the monks resided. The secular world was frequently portrayed as corrupt and impious. It was filled with oppressive nobles and violent mercenaries, who were often miraculously punished for their sins. Yet this distinction was not merely a rhetorical device to create an out-group to solidify the monks' clerical identity.[743] It also represented a pervasive (and justified) fear of secular violence. Becket was the manifestation of this fear, and even texts which aimed to exonerate Henry and reduce the stakes of the dispute were still horrified by Becket's violent end. Yet there are throughout these texts other incidents of sacrilegious violence. In 1186, the Lowlands chronicle reported that holy peace of Coupar Angus

[743] Walter Pohl and Ian Wood, 'Introduction: Cultural Memory and the Resources of the Past', in *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 9.

Abbey was ruptured when a certain Adam, who had been taking sanctuary there, was beheaded in front of the altar, and his companions were killed in the abbot's guest house.[744] The Winchester chronicle reported a shocking outrage in 1188, when armed men, acting on the orders of certain nobles, kidnapped several monks without any respect for God.[745] In the Tewkesbury chronicle, the violent expulsion of Tewkesbury monks from the nearby church of Fairford in 1231 was explicitly stated to be an affront unheard of since the time of Becket.[746] This type of transgressive violence was troublingly commonplace for these communities, and while the involvement of king and archbishop (and the subsequent miracles) made Becket's case extraordinary, it was by no means unique. The world outside their monastery contained credible threats and the barrier between monastic life and the secular world was all too permeable. While violence could be demonstrative or symbolic in the Middle Ages, it was also real and imminent. The accounts of Becket's life in these texts, and their emphasis on him as a sacred victim of violence, highlight this.

Annals were an effective tool to reflect the overlapping identities that made up a monastic community. An annalistic chronicle provided the community that produced it with an ordered version of reality and located the community within this system. The monastic identity was firmly embedded within the established hierarchy ordained by God, and rejection of this order was a direct threat to the community's understanding of their world and their place within it. The accounts of Becket in these chronicles actively endeavoured to maintain this established hierarchy. At the same time, these were local texts, and the annalistic chronicle provided a structure in which records of

[744] Lowlands, pp. 171-172.

[745] Winchester, p. 63.

[746] Tewkesbury, pp. 82-83.

local importance could be embedded. The annals of these chronicles were fundamentally shaped by the priorities and concerns of the community that produced them, and Becket was remembered in a way that made him relevant to its concerns and needs. These texts were a manifestation of the community and integral to its sense of self. The annals told stories of these monks and their concerns, as well as reflecting the world in a way that suited them. These communities established an overarching, Christian, interpretation of reality which shaped their memory of events. They enjoyed a privileged position within this system, superior to the violent and sinful secular order. These texts contained a clear regional or national perspective as well, and a deeply entrenched loyalty to local rulers and noble patrons. They were profoundly influenced by contemporary politics as well as orthodox theology, indeed the two were inexorably combined. Annals mediated the past in a way that constructed a shared identity for the monastic community which created the text, unifying the varied elements into an overarching structure that made sense of the world, past, present and future. An annalistic chronicle fulfilled a variety of commemorative purposes, educating, proselyting and recording for posterity, but fundamental to these texts was their ability to foster and solidify a communal identity for the monks who created them.

Annalistic chronicles provide an important alternative perspective on the events of the Middle Ages, and offer a valuable insight into the communities that produced them. It is misguided to dismiss them as an immature historiographical format; the annals that formed these texts were purposeful, not incidental. Annalists narrativised and interpreted the events they recorded in diverse ways, and even simple records of events were the product of a creative and considered editorial process. These were multi-faceted and multi-functional texts, which operated simultaneously in several

temporalities and on several narrative levels. Despite the seemingly prescriptive nature of annalistic writing, there was room for a strong degree of flexibility and adaptability. Longer and more discursive entries could be integrated into a set of annals, as well as *exempla*, or charters and letters. The annals surrounding these more expansive entries gave them meaning and context. Margam's political discursions needed the broader framework of the preceding and subsequent annals to make its point. The Melrose chronicle used its briefer annals to set up the context of Becket's life, and its extended account of the martyrdom was made more dramatic because it stood out from the normal run of its annals. While following a strict chronological progression was not naturally conducive to discussing the causes and effects of an event, this did not prevent annalists from inserting multiple layers of narrativity into their work. Whatever its limitations, the annalistic form remained helpfully modular, capable of using entries individually, in sequence, or as part of a thematic strand, and it allowed future writers to easily continue or edit the chronicle.

Although the brevity of annals has been framed as preventing invention, rhetoric or expansion,[747] in reality it brought several advantages to authors. Annalistic entries were a valuable tool for Robert of Torigni to avoid the controversies of the dispute, and the Winchester chronicle's short record of Becket's martyrdom avoided detracting from the death of Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester. The brevity of annals could be liberating: an annalist did not have to be as conscientious when recording a miracle as a miracle collector did. An annalistic approach provided greater precision than the more expansive forms of medieval historiography: the past could be streamlined to concentrate only on the desired narrative, and contradictory or uncomfortable

[747] See introduction pp. 1-3.

elements could be ignored. The past was rendered more comprehensible and less threatening by the annalists' work. To return to Hayden White's comment quoted at the beginning of this thesis: annalistic writing should be seen as an alternative historiographical format rather than an inferior one. The difference between an annalistic and a more expansive style is akin to the difference between theatre and film. While some may find theatre more immersive, a film director has more control over what an audience sees, framing their perspective more precisely. It is not that one medium is superior to another, but that different things can be achieved with each.

There is more to annals than meets the eye; deeper meanings and considered decisions hide behind even seemingly innocuous entries. However, there are methodologies which can be employed for a better utilisation of these texts. For example, rather than viewing such texts in isolation, a comparative approach provides an opportunity to consider how far an individual annal conformed to, or deviated from, other records of the same event. In this way it is easier to determine if seemingly minor editorial decisions indicate that there was an attempt to make a specific narrative point (such as the various accounts of Henry's campaigns in Wales), or if these decisions were variations on a similar theme (like the different references to Henry's anger). There is a risk when analysing annals of reading too much into brief entries, and a comparative approach helps mitigate this by identifying trends and using more discursive annals to contextualise the briefer ones. Furthermore, while it is necessary to consider these texts as the product of communities rather than individuals, it can be difficult to identify the motive behind an editorial decision without a clear author-figure to consider. A comparative approach allows the juxtaposition of different texts produced by monasteries that belonged to the same order or that were located in the same region. In this thesis, the influence of Cistercian or Angevin identities can be

clearly felt, but so too can the influence of contemporary politics. By viewing multiple texts simultaneously, the different facets of monastic identities can be considered, and the influence of these factors an editorial decision-making can be better assessed.

It is equally beneficial to consider the relationship between an annalistic chronicle and its source, and to think more precisely about the process of "copying". When reading the preface to many of these annalistic chronicles in Henry Luard's editions (which remain frequently the most up to date edition in print), it is common to find sections dismissed as being derived from a certain earlier historical work and therefore of little value over the original.[748] Yet while identifying the source is vitally important to understanding these texts, it is equally important to assess how this source was employed. That is to say: analysis should go beyond simply considering where the "facts" of an annalistic account were derived from, and instead look at how the phrasing and emphasis of the original was altered or preserved. Paul Anthony Hayward's recent edition of the Winchcombe and Coventry chronicles deserves praise for his scrupulous indexing of the differences between these texts and their sources.[749] Such attention provides an opportunity not only to consider whether new perspectives on a historical moment can be found, but also to consider what informed the annalists' decision to reject or accept the account found in their source. The Dunstable chronicle's alteration of Ralph of Diceto, Winchester's use of Herbert of Bosham, Waverley's employment of Robert of Torigni, and the variation between the texts in the Gloucester group, all demonstrate that copying was not a passive or undiscerning process. It should not be taken for granted that annalists would parrot the interpretation

[748] 'Preface', in *Annales Monastici,* vol. 1, p. xxviii, 'Preface', in *Annales Monastici*, vol. 2, p. xxxiii and 'Preface', in *Annales Monastici,* vol. 3, p. xiv.

[749] See Hayward, *The Winchcombe and Coventry*, vol. 1, pp. 198-353.

of their source, and a close evaluation of the editorial decisions involved in the creation of an annalistic account is vital to understanding the purpose of these texts.

Alongside analysis of the content of these chronicles, attention should be paid to the manuscript and material features. The rubrication, *mise-en-page* and corrections of a chronicle offer an insight into the construction of these texts. Winchester's marginal subheadings demonstrate its prioritisation of Henry of Blois' death over Becket's; the physical evidence of Robert of Torigni's editing indicates the political uncertainty which followed Becket's death, whereas the Rushen chronicle's *sigilla* reveals the authors' focus on Manx royalty and Cistercian affairs. The paleogeographic features of these texts have been gainfully assessed to date them and understand the stages of their production, but taking a more holistic approach to the manuscript opens new avenues for analysis and better appreciates the malleability of these texts. These material features offer clues as to the stages of production which occurred in the creation of a chronicle, and reveal the shifting priorities of the annalists who created it.

Finally, a more nuanced consideration of narrative in annalistic writing is necessary to appreciate fully the nature of these texts. Narrativity was an intrinsic part of annalistic writing. By using a broader definition of narrative (that includes any type of representation of an event) it becomes easier to appreciate the specific ways in which annals could create narrativity. This involves precise, close reading to determine if generic terminology (such as that of an obituary) was being employed or if a more specific message was intended. If an annal is only six words long, then it is worth considering the nuance of each word. Narrative devices and models used within contemporary histories and hagiography, such as Henry's penance narrative in 1174 or Becket's prefiguring on early Christian martyrs, provide a valuable point of comparison. These devices were simplified, adapted, or rejected in annalistic texts to

create a bespoke narrative that suited the annalists' institutional context. Understanding annalistic narrative also requires consideration of the pivotal role omission played in these texts, with unwanted elements being removed or reinterpreted to ensure that the desired narratives remained convincing. It is also important to consider how the interplay of separate annals within a chronicle provided a further level of narrativity. Narrative not only exists within a single annal, but also in the repetitive beat of connected annals, fitting the past to the rhythm of an ordered and Christian theo-political structure. Early annals and the regular records of successions and miracles established the textworld in which later moments would be understood. At the same time, individual annals could be linked together to create a narrative strand, with events being associated or disconnected as needed to create a specific interpretation of the past. By employing a more varied understanding of narrative, both the multiplicity of simultaneous narratives strands within an annalistic chronicle, and the subtle narrative of an individual annal, can be better appreciated.

Annalistic chronicles are a key part of medieval historiography and, when employed on their own terms, represent a fruitful resource for the study of the Middle Ages. Annals contain the same events, motifs and concerns as other contemporary historiographical texts and offer a valuable additional perspective. They are as much a result of, and lens into, the context of their production as any other text. Perhaps the most useful approach is not separating "sets of annals" and "chronicles" as distinct categories of historiography, but recognising that an annalistic style was a tool in the hands of a chronicler. A single text could move between annalistic and non-annalistic styles; rather than being a concrete genre (underdeveloped or otherwise), annalistic writing was a flexible and adaptable style, which could make up for its limitations by integrating other modes if needed. Annals were not an early medieval precursor to

more sophisticated historical modes, and they continued to be employed in the thirteenth century precisely because of the advantages that they provided.

This rehabilitation of annals as not only a valid resource, but vital one, provides myriad opportunities for further research. It would be helpful, for example, to consider annalistic writing through a different case study, especially one that was contemporary to the authors. The chronicles discussed in this thesis were considering Becket's legacy retroactively. Even Robert of Torigni's chronicle, which was partially written during Becket's lifetime, went through an extensive process of revision in the following decade. There is no annalistic equivalent to the verse chronicle *Draco Normannicus*, which was written in the 1160s, and was notably negative in its discussion of the archbishop.[750] In contrast the earliest annalistic texts, those of Pseudo-William Godel and Egmond, were written after Becket's canonisation and once he was largely beyond reproach. The reign of John would provide a case study that was contemporaneous for many of the annalistic chronicles. While annalistic texts have been employed by some scholars to consider the events of John's reign,[751] there remains an opportunity to consider the period more specifically in terms of annalistic writing. Was John's rule disastrous enough to overcome the conservatism of these texts, and encourage more direct criticism of the king? Did the authors' proximity to events see them abandon an annalistic style in favour of more discursive writing, or, as with Becket, did the form still prove a useful tool in processing difficult and controversial events? On the other hand, an earlier figure would provide a different comparison. William I and Stephen are both invariably present in Anglo-Norman chronicles, and it would be interesting to see if there was the same degree of variation

[750] Staunton, *Historians,* pp. 36-7.

[751] Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 332-344.

in accounts of their lives in twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts as there was for the more recent Becket. The presentation of national ruptures such as the Conquest of 1066 or the Anarchy stand out as particularly important: such events needed careful treatment to fit the overarching annalistic narrative of order and stability, or perhaps enough time had passed to render them less volatile. Alternatively, many of the themes identified in the preceding chapters would easily merit being the subject of further research. The fear of secular violence, promotion of the status quo, representation of miracles and sanctity, or employment of *exempla* in annalistic texts are all subjects that could be assessed for their recurrent appearance throughout these texts, rather than purely in connection to Becket. The use of Becket as the central focus to this thesis was a convenient way to frame these subtle and varied texts, but this by no means suggests that the value of annalistic texts ends with the study of England's most famous martyr.

To utilise annals more effectively, it is necessary to approach them on their own terms. This means appreciating what annals accomplished for their authors, rather than what a modern scholar wants them to provide. While it may be frustrating to explore the occasionally enigmatic records in these texts, a failure to meet modern expectations of what historical writing should achieve is not an indication that these texts were purposeless or unsophisticated. The authors made considered and discerning decisions to create these texts. Rather than being a simplistic or limited form, there were distinct advantages to annalistic writing. It was a precise and effective way to process the past, allowing authors to manipulate different temporalities and narrative strands. These texts presented a specific version of reality and located the community that produced them within this system. Just as important to this process of active remembering, was the corollary process of forgetting, by removing or defusing

memories that would have challenged the version of reality that they wished to promote. By remembering and forgetting, an annalistic text proposed a coherence and order to the past which extended forward into the present. Becket was something of a stress test for annals. His story questioned the stability and order suggested by annalistic history, and the controversy and intricacy of the dispute discouraged easy interpretations. Yet the annalists were still able to accommodate Becket, and the variance in approach demonstrates the ways in which his story was adapted to local needs. Accounts were detailed or evasive, Becket was fitted into a larger thread of conflict between Crown and Church, or Henry was removed from the story and exonerated. Each chronicle found a way to make sense of Becket, to separate his story into individual annals and still convey the exceptional elements of his life.

These authors wrote annals because they were useful. Annalistic writing should not be seen as a limited genre, but as a tool of remembering, and a way to achieve a variety of goals that depended on the context of production. The past was an uncertain but valuable resource, it provided an opportunity for these communities to better understand themselves, their world and their God. Annals mediated the past, not only providing a record for posterity, but exploiting the past to make it conform to their expectations and beliefs. Such an act of memory can never be considered accidental or dispassionate, and a wealth of conscious and unconscious decisions informed the creation of these texts. Annals must be seen not as a deficient failure, but as a vital and valuable element of medieval historiography.

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