N. B.

Regarding the Anglo-Saxon, the subscript numeral seven (‘$_7$’) represents the Anglo-Saxon ‘and’ symbol.

Stories of the Death of Kings:

Retelling the Demise and Burial of William I, William II and Henry I

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This paper examines the accounts that describe the death and burial of three successive kings: William the Conqueror, William Rufus, and Henry I. The manner in which the monarch died, and the later treatment of his corpse, provided the opportunity for authors to critique the deceased's reign and present their assessment of his legacy. The conflicting accounts show how authorial biases owing to theological affiliations shaped the expressed view, affecting which details were recorded and which were omitted, and how biblical, historical, and literary allusions were employed to shape historical events into a religious *exemplum*.[1]

In September 2012, an archaeological excavation in a car park in Leicester uncovered a fully articulated skeleton in the location believed to be the burial place of Richard III. Researchers announced that the skeleton 'on initial examination, appear[ed] to have suffered significant peri-mortem trauma (near death injury) to the skull which appears consistent with (though certainly not caused by) an injury received in battle', that 'a bladed implement appear[ed] to have cleaved part of the rear of the skull', and that a 'barbed metal arrowhead was found between the vertebrae of the skeleton's upper back'.[2] If further scientific tests can confirm that the remains are those of the monarch killed at Bosworth, it will be possible to know exactly how Richard III met his end.

The deaths of the three kings in this article cannot be subjected to such research. We can surmise how the monarchs considered their own mortality. Two of the three monarchs were buried, at a distance from their place of death, in religious houses they had founded;[3] 'hardly', as Stephen Church noted, 'the acts of kings who saw their passing out of this world as unimportant'.[4] Writing later than the kings in question, Abbot Suger, in his *Vita Ludovici grossi regis*, noting the success of his subject's desire to be buried in Saint-Denis, quoted Lucan:

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[2] For the press statement, see < http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/media-centre/richard-iii>.

[3] For the place of death as a 'mirror of their activities and the geographical spread of their rule', see Michael Evans, *The Death of Kings: Royal Deaths in Medieval England* (London, 2003), p. 23.

[4] S. D. Church, 'Aspects of the English Succession, 1066–1199: The Death of the King', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 29 (2007): 17–34 (p. 30).

Felix qui potuit, mundi nutante ruina,
Quo jaceat precise loco.[5]

Beliefs concerning relics during reformations and revolutions removed such certainties. The remains of William the Conqueror, transported eighty miles to Caen for burial from a religious house near Rouen where he died in 1087 – six weeks after he had been injured fifty miles away at Mantes – were destroyed (with the exception of a single thighbone) when the tomb was ransacked by Calvinists in 1562; the sole remnant was removed in the revolutionary riots of 1793.[6] The Conqueror's son and heir, William Rufus, buried in Winchester Cathedral after being killed by an arrow by Walter Tirel while hunting in the New Forest in 1100, had his remains placed along with other earlier royal relics in mortuary chests when the bishop altered the design of the presbytery. In 1642 Cromwell's forces ransacked these chests, and an oolithic stone coffin with Purbeck marble lid later said to contain Rufus's remains was also disturbed.[7] The final monarch to be discussed, Henry, son of the Conqueror and brother of Rufus, died at Saint Denis-en-Lyons in 1135; his entrails were placed twenty miles away at Rouen, and his corpse was buried at Reading Abbey. During the reformation, the Reading tomb was removed to make space for a stable.[8] As a consequence of these upheavals, it is now only textual sources that provide information concerning the death and burial of these three monarchs.

The period after the conquest up to 1130 saw the production and circulation of a number of historical manuscripts. These included earlier historical sources such as Orosius, Eutropius, Justinus, Josephus, Eusebius, Victor of Vita, Paul the Deacon,[9] and, seemingly the most transcribed historical text, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.[10] These texts presented history as moral *exempla*, a commonplace of classical history neatly expressed in Bede's preface to his *Historia*:

> Sive enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de pravis, nihilominus religiosus ac pius

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[5] 'Happy the man who knows in advance the exact place where he will lie when the whole world totters into ruins': Suger, *Vie de Louis VI le Gros*, ed. and trans. H. Waquet, 2nd edn (Paris, 1964), p. 286; Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard C. Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington, DC, 1992), p. 159.

[6] David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror: The Norman Impact Upon England* (New Haven, Conn., 1999), p. 363.

[7] Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (New Haven, Conn., 2000), pp. 430–1.

[8] Francis Sandford, *A Genealogical History of the Kings of England and the Monarchs of Great Britain, &c. From the Conquest, Anno 1066. to the year 1677* ([London], 1677), p. 28.

[9] Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c. 1066–1130)* (Oxford, 1999), p. 37.

[10] Gameson, *Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, p. 36.

> auditor sive lector devitando quod noxium est ac perversum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognoverit, accenditur.[11]

One reoccurring feature was judgment being passed upon the manner in which a historical figure died: regardless of medical accuracy, pain, torment, foul stenches and a corrupted cadaver indicated the earthly sins of the character,[12] whereas the opposite indicated the religious qualities of the dying figure. The monks themselves were witnesses to a ritualised form of death: the dying would receive unction, confess their sins in front of the whole chapter, and receive absolution.[13] If the washed corpse appeared as miraculously white as snow or milk,[14] and had a sweet smelling odour of sanctity, it was seen as evidence of a pure and holy life. An inversion to this norm would be readily noticed. The way a death was represented in textual sources, whether a 'good' or 'bad' death, could be manipulated for didactic purposes.[15] David Crouch has noted 'the real dichotomy in the twelfth century was between whether one died an idealised and studied good death, or an unregenerate and impatient one'.[16] After what Antonia Gransden calls 'a generation of silence',[17] Anglo-Norman authors produced historical accounts concerned with contemporary times. Examining the depictions of the death and burial of William I, William Rufus and Henry I, this article argues that these presentations were pedagogically reshaped, following the earlier traditions of historiography, to provide political and theological lessons for later audiences.

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[11] 'Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God': Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1991), pp. 2–3. Translation? For William of Malmesbury's similar statement, see *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. R. B. Mynors, rev. R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), pp. 150–1 (henceforth *GRA*).

[12] Thomas Africa, 'Worms and the Death of Kings: A Cautionary Note on Disease and History', *Classical Antiquity* 1 (1982): 1–17.

[13] Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066–1550* (London, 1999), p. 30; for an explanation of the tradition, see Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London, 1996), pp. 29–33.

[14] David Crouch, 'The Culture of Death in the Anglo-Norman World', in *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the 12th-Century Renaissance*, ed. C. Warren Hollister (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 157–80 (p. 161).

[15] Binski, *Medieval Death*, pp. 33–50. See also Gerhard Jaritz, 'Der "gute" und der "böse" Tote. Zur zeichenhaften Visualisierung des Leichnams im Spätmittelalter', in *Körper ohne Leben: Begegnung und Umgang mit Toten*, ed. Norbert Stefenelli (Vienna, 1998), pp. 325–35.

[16] Crouch, 'The Culture of Death', p. 180.

[17] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), p. 135.

Surviving complete in one manuscript of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* is a short almost contemporaneous account of the Conqueror on his deathbed.[18] In the presence of bishops, family members, and chamberlains, he hands his son Rufus his crown, sceptre and sword. Nevertheless, the monarch is talked into giving his estranged son, Robert Curthose, the duchy of Normandy. Since the sword is the symbol of the Norman Duchy, and the crown and sceptre that of England, John Le Patourel noted this may symbolise the Conqueror's wish that 'Rufus should have the entire inheritance'.[19] This however is taking the text at face value. Following the work of L. J. Engels, who showed that *De obitu Willelmi* is a conglomeration of the ninth century *Vita Hludouuici* and the *Vita Karoli Magni* (albeit with minor alterations),[20] Katherine Lack argued that the text was a propaganda exercise supporting Rufus by denigrating his rival Robert. The earlier texts therefore were either a 'useful short cut', or employed to 'enhance' the symbolism.[21]

A more moral version of the Conqueror's death appears in the annal entry in one of the late continuations of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that is commonly known as the Peterborough Chronicle. After lamenting the plagues and famine that occurred in the year, the scribe asserts that the country is ravaged by greed. Focus then turns to the Conqueror burning down the town of Mantes, including the holy ministers and two holy men living in an anchorite's cell. The rhetorical questions that follow make the annal entry stylistically close to a homily.

> Reowlic þing he dyde, 7 reowlicor him gelamp. Hu reowlicor? Him geyfelade, 7 þet him stranglice eglade. Hwæt mæg ic teollan? Se scearpa deað þe ne forlet ne rice menn ne heane, seo hine genam. He swealt on Normandige on þone nextan dæg æfter Natiuitas Sancte Marie, 7 man bebyrgede hine on Caþum æt Sancte Stephanes mynstre; ærer he hit arærde 7 syððan mænifealdlice wela. Se þe wæs ærur rice cyng 7 maniges landes hlaford, he næfde þa ealles landes

[18] *Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigini*, ed. and trans. Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, 2 vols (Oxford, 1992–5), II, 184–91. Regarding dating, see Katherine Lack, 'The *De Obitu Willelmi*: Propaganda for the Anglo-Norman Succession, 1087–88?', *English Historical Review* 123 (2008): 1417–56 (p. 1439). For a different dating, but similar argument concerning the construction of the text, see George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure 1066–1166* (New York, 2007), pp. 167–70.

[19] John Le Patourel, 'The Norman Succession, 996–1135', *English Historical Review* 86 (1971): 225–50 (p. 232). For *De obitu Willelmi* in regards to Curthose and the duchy, see R. H. C. Davis, 'William of Jumièges, Robert Curthose and the Norman Succession', *English Historical Review* 95 (1980): 595–606 (p. 600).

[20] L. J. Engels, 'De obitu Willelmi ducis Normannorum regisque Anglorum: Texte, modèles, valeur et origine', in *Mélanges Christine Mohrmann: Nouveau recueil offert par ses anciens élèves* (Utrecht, 1973), pp. 209–55.

[21] Lack, '*De Obitu Willelmi*', pp. 1419–20. For a less-politicised, more style-orientated reading, see Crouch, 'The Culture of Death', p. 167.

> buton seofon fotmæl, ⁊ se þe wæs hwilon gescrid mid golde ⁊ mid gimmum, he læg þa oferwrogen mid moldan.[22]

This is followed by an end-rhymed poem that Bartlett Jere Whiting named 'The Rime of King William',[23] which complains about the Conqueror's establishing of the New Forest and the harsh penalties on poaching (with his seeming preference for animals over men). Stefan Jurasinksi has shown how these arguments '[betray] its author's rhetoric surrounding the implementation of the forest law',[24] and its connections with the anti-Forest polemics that appear in the twelfth century.[25] Since all of the entries up to 1131 are written in the same hand, the manuscript is likely to have been produced to replace an older copy destroyed in the disastrous 1121 fire at Peterborough cathedral.[26] It is therefore probable that the entry concerned with the death of the Conqueror was expanded to permit criticism of his reign. The moral aspect of the entry is expressed in a manner reminiscent of the Bede quotation above, immediately following the rime.

> Ðas þing we habbað be him gewritene, ægðer ge gode ge yfele, þet þa godan men niman æfter þeora godnesse ⁊ forleon mid ealle yfelnesse ⁊ gan on ðone weg þe us lett to heofonan rice.[27]

Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingon, used this annal or one similar as a source for his *Historia Anglorum* (first completed 1129, reworked to 1154).[28] Omitting the rhyme,

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[22] 'He did a pitiful thing, and more pitiful happened to him. How more pitiful? He became ill and that afflicted him severely. What can I say! The sharp death which spares neither powerful men nor lowly – it seized him. He died in Normandy on the day immediately after the Nativity of St Mary, and was buried in Caen at St. Stephen's minister; he had built it earlier and afterwards endowed [it] in many various ways. Alas! how false and unstable is the prosperity of the world. He who was earlier a powerful king, and lord of many a land, he had nothing of any land but a seven-foot measure; and he who was at times clothed with gold and with jewels, he lay then covered over with earth': *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 7, *MS E*, ed. Susan Irvine (Cambridge, 2004); *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Michael Swanton (New York, 1998), p. 218. Which is the text and translation used here?

[23] Bartlett Jere Whiting, 'The Rime of King William' in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. T. A. Kirby and H. B. Woolf (Baltimore, 1949), pp. 89–96 (p. 89).

[24] Stefan Jurasinki, 'The *Rime of King William* and its Analogues', *Neophilologus* 88 (2004): 131–44 (p. 140).

[25] For comments on the death of the Conqueror's offspring (Richard and Rufus) in the chronicles, see *GRA*, pp. 502–05, Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica: The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford, 1969–80), V, 282–5 (henceforth *HE)*, and Walter Map, who asserts that since Rufus took church property for beasts, he was slain like a beast: *De Nugis Curialium: Courtier's Trifles*, ed. and trans. M. R. James, rev. C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), pp. 464–7.

[26] *MS E*, ed. Irvine, pp. xiii, xviii.

[27] 'We have written these things about him, both the good and the evil, that good men may take after the goodness and wholly flee the evil, and go on to the path that leads us to the kingdom of heaven': *MS E*, ed. Irvine, p. 98; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Swanton, p. 221. Whose translation?

rearranging the complaints, inserting a classical allusion, and making the Bede-like statement twice, Huntingdon's adaptation of a probable reworking shows the possibility of pedagogically reshaping material.

The pedagogical intent is apparent in Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (1135, revised 1139), and William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (produced by 1126, revised by 1135). Though both include scenes in which the dying Conqueror puts his affairs in order and dies a 'good' death, both claim he was directly punished. They both assert the fire he ordered against the rebels at Mantes, which engulfed churches (and, in Malmesbury's account, a female hermit), was the cause of his illness.[29] Malmesbury's *Gesta* reports another version: the Conqueror was injured because of the size of his stomach when his horse leapt over a ditch. To modern readers these accounts of the monarch's death seemingly conflict, though to Malmesbury's audience they reinforce the shared moral of the event: by his own deeds, the Conqueror brought about his own demise.

Both writers use the burial of the deceased ruler to comment on his reign. The passage from Malmesbury's *Gesta* stresses the monastic theme of *contemptus mundi*, and inserts an allusion to classical literature to emphasise an interpretation.

> Corpus regio sollemni curatum per Sequanam Cadomum delatum; ibi magna frequentia ordinatorum, laicorum pauca humi traditum. Varietatis humanae tunc fuit videre miseriam, quod homo ille, totius olim Europae honor antecessorumque suorum omnium potentior, sedem aeternae requietionis sine calumnia impetrare non potuit: namque miles quidam, ad cuius patrimonium locus ille pertinuerat, clara contestans voce rapinam sepulturam inhibuit, dicens avito iure solum suum esse, nec illum in loco quem violenter invaserat pausare debere.[30]

The brief allusion, concerning a loud voice maintaining robbery, is to Lucan's *Pharsalia* (iii. 121–2). In that source, the tribune Lucius Caecilius Metellus tries to stop Caesar's soldiers from robbing the treasury. A recent translator of the Latin poem has suggested the scene is an *exemplum* on the love of money, one to 'satisfy

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[28] For Huntingdon's use of a 'E' recension, see Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford, 1996), pp. xci–xcviii (henceforth *HA*).

[29] *GRA* 510–1; *HE*, IV, 78–9.

[30] 'The king's body, honoured with the rites due to a monarch, was carried down the Seine to Caen, and there buried with a large attendance of clerics but few laymen. At that point the pitiful ups and downs of human life were well displayed: the great man, who at one time reflected honour on the whole of Europe and was the most powerful of all his line, could obtain no place for his eternal rest without due process of his law; for there was a knight to whose ancestral property the land belonged, and he, "maintaining with a loud voice that this was robbery", forbade the interment, saying that the soil was his by inheritance from his forebears, and that the king ought not to rest in a place which he had seized by brute force' (*GRA* 512–13).

the need for a concrete illustration of an abstract moral or political principle'.[31] Given that at an earlier point Malmesbury's text criticises the Conqueror for his love of money,[32] the allusion to a text familiar to those at Malmesbury Abbey uses the burial scene to reiterate a critical interpretation of the ruler.[33]

A similar reiteration of previous criticism of the ruler appears in Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Though writing Norman history for Normans,[34] the English-born but Norman-raised Vitalis toned down the laudatory nature of his Norman sources and inserted criticism of their behaviour in their conquered territories.[35] This aspect is apparent in his depiction of the Conqueror's dying speech, and Vitalis, wanting the audience to be aware of his interpretation, draws attention to it by claiming it deserves to be remembered for all time.[36] The monarch, weighed down by his sins, gripped by fear, aware of the blood he has shed, admits to treating the conquered populace severely. Conscious of the sins that were required to conquer the kingdom, he entrusts the realm to God.[37] However, in Vitalis's account, God has little concern for the worldly ruler. Realising their monarch is dead, the physicians and colleagues flee to secure their own property; in contrast, the servants steal everything, leaving the corpse almost naked on the floor. The funeral procession is small: only a few religious men, and a single knight, one Herluin, at his own expense embalms the corpse, hires a hearse to the Seine, and transports it by water to Caen. There, an outbreak of fire interrupts the funeral procession. Further commotion occurs inside the abbey. After the bishop of Evreux begs God to forgive the sins of the corpse lying on the bier, Ascelin, a local, loudly claims the land is his usurped birthright and successfully demands money in compensation. Then, the corpulent cadaver is found to be too large for the coffin; on forcing it in, the bowels burst. A foul stench is released, overpowering the incense and causing the priests to hurry the service and rush home. Vitalis's monastic audience would recognize the irreligious details of the Conqueror's death and burial. The monarch's internal pains and

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[31] Lucan, *Civil War*, trans. Susan H. Braund (New York, 1999), p. xxxiii.

[32] *GRA* 508–09.

[33] For Lucan in Malmesbury Abbey, see Joan Gluckauf Haahr, 'William of Malmesbury's Roman Models: Suetonius and Lucan', in *The Classics in the Middle Ages: Papers of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin (Binghamton, NY, 1990), pp. 165–73 (p. 170).

[34] *HE*, III, 6–7.

[35] Roger D. Ray, 'Orderic Vitalis and William of Poitiers: a Monastic Reinterpretation of William the Conqueror', *Revue belge de philology et d'histoire* 50 (1972): 1116–27 (p. 1119).

[36] *HE*, IV, 80–1.

[37] *HE*, IV, 94–7; note also the suggestion of a divine plan in the Conqueror's words to his son Henry.

external stench are reminiscent of the biblical sufferings of Herod and Antiochus,[38] and the exploding belly caused by 'disgracefully' eating too many delicacies echoes the anti-hagiographical ends of Judas and Arias.[39]

Though minor compared to his father, Rufus's reign was marked by military and political achievements, and shrewd *realpolitik*. He made donations, predominantly to legitimise his inheritance,[40] and founded churches, to aid his territory.[41] The latter years of his reign were marked by conflict with Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, over the investiture of bishops. Rufus, proclaiming his right as king, took hold of church property which had become vacant, and used the income in a practical manner to fund mercenaries for his increasingly successful border campaigns;[42] Anselm, to the consternation and irritation of some at Canterbury, went into self-imposed exile to discuss matters with Pope Urban II. After Rufus's sudden death by a 'misaimed arrow of some blundering archer'[43] in the New Forest, it was probably his colleague, Ranulf Flambard, Bishop of Durham, who saw to the slain king's *obit* being remembered at Durham cathedral.[44]

Unfortunately for Rufus's legacy, the sudden nature of his death lead to an outpouring of literature, and the predominant interpretation of his reign came from ecclesiastical authors. One of the first was a follower and companion of Anselm: Eadmer. In his two major works, the *Vita Anselmi* and the *Historia Novorum in Anglia* (composed 1109–1114, both expanded up to 1122), Eadmer provides accounts of the death of the monarch. The first text portrays the community surrounding the archbishop in exile receiving omens and premonitions relating to the monarch's demise.[45] Giles Constable noted that visions 'often served as a way of giving assurance and guidance and of resolving doubts and problems that an individual was

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[38] Evans, *Death of Kings*, pp. 69–70; Africa, 'Worms and the Death of Kings', *passim*.

[39] Danielle Westerhof, *Death and the Noble Body in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 30.

[40] For his donations to his father's churches at Caen, see Frank Barlow, *The Godwins: The Rise and Fall of a Noble Dynasty* (Harlow, 2002), p. 110; for his donations to Battle Abbey, see C. Warren Hollister, 'The Strange Death of William Rufus', *Speculum* 48 (1973): 637–53 (p. 639), and *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. Eleanor Searle (Oxford, 1978), pp. 98–9.

[41] For his founding of a church at Lewes to assist with the colonization of the Welsh, see Emma Cownie, *Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England, 1066–1135* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 180.

[42] Emma Mason, 'William Rufus: myth and reality', *Journal of Medieval History* 3 (1977): 1–20 (p. 3).

[43] Hollister, 'Strange Death', p. 653.

[44] *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis nec non Obituaria duo eiusdem ecclesiae*, ed. J. Stevenson (London, 1841), pp. 141, 151; Barlow, *William Rufus*, pp. 431–2.

[45] Eadmer, *The Life of St. Anselm: Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1979), pp. 122–4 (henceforth *VA*).

unable to handle alone'.[46] Rufus was clearly seen as a troublesome adversary, since Eadmer presents a range of ecclesiastical figures – from Hugh, abbot of Cluny, to lowly monks – receiving visions relating to the king's death.[47] The dispute between archbishop and king is presented parallel to a previous conflict between two former holders of those positions: St. Dunstan and King Eadwig. Eadmer presents Anselm responding to the king's sudden death in the same manner St. Dunstan responds to Eadwig's demise: by weeping.[48] His later text, the *Historia Novorum*, is similarly influenced by viewing contemporary events via the prism of St. Dunstan's history.[49] The major event of the king's death is shaped by other historical concerns. Eadmer describes it thus:

> Siquidem illa die mane pransus in silvam venatum ivit, ibique sagitta in corde percussus, inpoenitens et incofessus e vestigio mortuus est, et ab omni hominem ox derelictus. Quae sagitta utrum, sicut quidam aiunt, iacta ipsum percusserit, an, quod plures affirmant, illum pedibus offendentem superque ruentem occiderit, disquirere otiosum putamas; cum scire sufficiat eum iusto iudicio Dei prostratum atque necatum.[50]

Though Eadmer suggests he is uncertain how Rufus was killed, his claim that the majority declare the king hastened his own death by falling on the arrow sides with this view. In doing this, Rufus becomes comparable to the biblical Saul, whose

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[46] Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2002), 35.

[47] These visions are similarly shaped by a literary tradition. Macrobius' *Interpretatio in somnium Scipionis* establishes distinctions between types of dreams; for a detailed account, see Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 21–3, 35. At top is the *oraculum*, revealed to a figure of authority; the next highest, the *visio*, is not clearly divine and rooted in the everyday world. Copies of Macrobius existed at Canterbury – see Helmet Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A list of manuscripts and manuscript fragments written or owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ, 2001) – and was still copied there in the twelfth (see Gameson, *Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, p. 122). In Malmesbury's retelling, the revelation Eadmer ascribes to Hugh, lord abbot of Cluny, which also features in Gilo of Paris's *Vita Sancti Hugonis* in *Hugues: Abbé de Cluny 1024–1109*, ed. A. L. Huiller (Solesmes, 1888), pp. 565–617 (p. 571), is described as an *oraculum* (*GRA* 572–3). The other premonitions mentioned by Eadmer – disappearing bearers of news and parchment mentioning the death of the king – display characteristics of *visio*. It is probable that Eadmer employed the distinctions of Macrobius while composing his text.

[48] *VA* 126; Eadmer, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, ed. and trans. Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (New York, 2006), pp. 106–09.

[49] See Mark Philpott, 'Eadmer, his Archbishops and the English State', in *The Medieval State: Essays Presented to James Campbell*, ed. J. R. Maddicott and D. M. Palliser (London, 2000), pp. 93–107 (pp. 96–7).

[50] 'On that day after having breakfasted he went out into the forest to hunt and there, struck by an arrow that pierced his heart, impenitent and unconfessed, he died instantly and was at once forsaken by everyone whether, as some say, that arrow struck him in its flight or, as the majority declare, he stumbled and falling violently upon it met his death, it is a question we think it unnecessary to go into; sufficient to know that by the just judgment of God he was stricken down and slain.' Translation by Bosanquet? Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia, et opuscula duo: De Vita Santi Anselmi et Quibusdam Miraculis eius*, ed. Martin Rule (London, 1884), p. 116; *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England: Historia Novorum in Anglia*, trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet (London, 1964), p. 120.

falling on his sword was seen as divine punishment.[51] The stepping away from details and into potential allusion also covers the fact that Eadmer did not name the likely killer, Walter Tirel, probably owing to his being a benefactor to Anselm's former see of the Abbey of Bec.[52] The monarch's surprise death is thus presented as divine confirmation of Anselm's position in the argument.[53]

Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* similarly uses the death of Rufus as a means to emphasise the authority of the church while criticising the deceased king. The unanticipated event in the New Forest is presented as forewarned, with omens of bubbling blood, the appearance of the Devil, and visions. In addition to presenting Eadmer's account of Hugh of Cluny's prophecy, Malmesbury inserts a technique from Anglo-Saxon historiography: the king sees himself in a nightmarish vision being bled so greatly that a spurt of blood darkens the day.[54] This is followed by a dream received by a monk in which the king entered a church and proceeded to gnaw on a crucifix until the figure responded with a kick, knocking the king backwards and causing a flame to be emitted from his mouth to reach the stars.[55] In addition to asserting that Rufus's demise was preordained, Malmesbury uses it to condemn the ruler. Rufus is depicted as dismissing the warnings, disdainfully offering money to the monk who wishes to warn him,[56] and therefore appears as refusing to follow the right path.[57] Malmesbury ironically restates this when he describes Rufus on the morning of his death by attending to the serious business of drinking heavily. The judgment Malmesbury places on Rufus however is clear. After establishing that Tirel

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[51] See also *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1946–61), V, 290–1.

[52] Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 421.

[53] Hugh of Flavigny's *Chronicon*, containing the death of Rufus, in *Chronicon Hugonis monachi Virdunensis et Divionensis, abbatis Flaviniacensis*, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz in *MGH SS* 8 (Hanover, 1848), pp. 280–502 (p. 495), can similarly be seen as part of a polemic stressing the authority of Gregorian reforms: see Patrick Healy, *The Chronicle of Hugh of Flavigny: Reform and the Investiture Contest in the Late Eleventh Century* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 6, 138.

[54] *GRA* 572–3; for Malmesbury's familiarity with Anglo-Saxon historians, see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, pp. 167–70; for examples of Anglo-Saxon visions received by kings, see William A. Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Berkeley, CA, 1981), pp. 153–4.

[55] *GRA* 572–3; Malmesbury used the word *somnium*, which Macrobius defined as a dream like the higher forms of the *oraculum* and the *visio*, but presenting the truth in fictional form, making it seemingly incomprehensible at the time. See Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 23.

[56] Mason, 'William Rufus', pp. 3–4; Paul Antony Hayward, 'The Importance of Being Ambiguous: Innuendo and Legerdemain in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum* and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 33 (2011): 75–102 (pp. 101–2). For an example of a monastic reading of a display of wealth, see *GRA* 556–9.

[57] See also the use of Proverbs 18: 3 by Hugh of Flavigny, *Chronicon*, p. 495. Canon law permits the withholding of the anointing of the sick upon those who obstinately persevere in sin.

shot the fatal arrow while aiming at a stag, the text features the interjection 'Deus bone', which Malmesbury employs in other accounts of divine prophecies and divinely caused deaths,[58] followed by the statement that Rufus hastened his own death by breaking off the shaft and falling on the wound.[59] This inglorious end has a suitably inglorious epilogue. His court abandons him, fleeing for refuge (or to carry off spoils).

> Pauci rusticanorum cadauer, in reda caballaria compositum, Wintoniam in episcopatum devexere, cruore undatim per totam viam stillante. Ibi infra ambitum turris, multorum procerum conventu, paucorum planctu terrae traditum.[60]

Malmesbury's use of a pejorative term for peasants[61] emphasises to his audience the reversal of Rufus's fortune, and the excess of blood may be a criticism.[62] He closes the account by insinuating that interring the body in Winchester was the cause of the Cathedral's tower collapsing in 1107.[63]

The version that features in Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* is similarly crafted to express clearly an interpretation of the reign.[64] After noting the king's wealth and the discontent among his populace, the *Historia* describes a vision received by a monk in which a female personification of the church pleads at the feet of Christ, who responds by stating that soon she will be avenged.[65] Peter Dinzelbacher, interpreting

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[58] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: The History of the English Bishops*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson (Oxford, 2007), pp. 38–41 (where Dunstan receives prophecies concerning future kings), and pp. 460–1 (where Roger, the royal larderer, is named Bishop of Hereford by Henry I, only to die eight days after his nomination).

[59] [*sed*] *lingo sagittae quantum extra corpus extabat effracto, moxque supra vulnus cadens, mortem acceleravit* (*GRA* 574).

[60] 'A handful of the country folk, with a horse and cart, picked up the king's body and carried it to the cathedral at Winchester, with the blood dripping freely the whole way. There it was laid in the ground, within the tower, many noble being present, but few to mourn him' (*GRA* 574–5).

[61] For an explanation of its use in learning, see Tina Steifel, *The Intellectual Revolution in Twelfth Century Europe* (London, 1985), p. 63.

[62] For bleeding and punishment, see Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff, 2006), pp. 63–4. The name Rufus related to his red hair, a traditional sign of anger; for an example, see *The Ruodlieb*, ed. and trans. C. W. Grocock (Warminster, 1985), pp. 90–1. For the belief red hair occurred when a menstruating woman became pregnant, see Danielle Jacquart and Claude Tomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Oxford, 1998), p. 73. For the connection of anger to an excess of blood, see *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, 3 vols (New York, 1994–2004), III, 83–4.

[63] For the different versions of this statement, see *GRA* 574–5. For the view that this change was a response to scepticism, see C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 39–40, 226. For the suggestion on learned innuendo, see Hayward, 'The Importance of Being Ambiguous', p. 79. For a comparison, see *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, ed. Winterbottom and Thomson, pp. 160–9.

[64] The gloss Evans draws attention to (*The Death of Kings*, p. 51) is more likely an indication of a marking for a moral reading.

[65] *HE*, V, 284–7.

the following dream as part of the medieval desire for divine intervention, viewed the politicised dream as more akin to a monastic forgery relying on imagination than evidence.[66] Vitalis is keen to stress the *relatio autentica*, the transmission of the source, from the monk to the venerable Abbot Serlo to Rufus, who jokingly dismisses them. Alexander Haggerty Krappe noted similarities to a vision in the *Gesta Romanorum*, to which Vitalis had access, which foretold the unexpected death of Julian the Apostate who had imprisoned Basil of Caesarea.[67] Vitalis, stressing this point, includes another prophecy: a sermon by Fulchred, the abbot of Shrewsbury.[68] England is described as a woman's body riddled with leprosy, run by effeminates, which Fulchred warns

> Ecce arcus superni furoris contra reprobos intensus est et sagitta velox ad vulnerandum de pharetra extracta est. Repente iam feriet, seseque corrigendo sapiens omnis ictum declinet.[69]

The presentation of Rufus on the day of his death is similarly deliberately weighed with knowing symbolism. In the text, the king 'unwittingly made remarks which foretold his doom in detail'.[70] Distributing arms to Tirel, Rufus comments 'the sharpest arrows should be given to the man who can shoot the deadliest shots', and, later, tells him to 'do what is right'.[71] Though the hunt is explained, with the dispersion of the huntsmen being described as customary, Vitalis tells his audience Rufus was chasing a 'beast' (*ferus*), rather than the word for stag (*cervus*), when he was killed. When describing the corpse being abandoned by the rich and robbed by the poor, Vitalis employs the same vocabulary as he did picturing the Conqueror's demise,[72] and presents an image stressing Rufus's reversal of fortune:

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[66] Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981), pp. 59–60.

[67] Alexander Haggerty Krappe, 'The Legend of the Death of William Rufus in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Ordericus Vitalis', *Neophilologus* 12 (1927): 46–8 (p. 47).

[68] This scene, with its mentioning a sermon from a pulpit, is earlier than the example given in Leo Carruthers, ' "The Word Made Flesh": Preaching and Community from the Apostolic to the Late Middle Ages', in *Speculum Sermonis: Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Medieval Sermon*, ed. Georgina Donavin, Cary J. Nederman and Richard Utz (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 3–27 (p. 11). Regarding the original language and form of the sermon, see the distinctions by Augustine Thompson, 'From Text to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event', in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden, 2002), pp. 13–37 (pp. 16–18, 25). For the later relationship between Abbot Fulchred and Henry I, see W. Farrer, 'An Outline Itinerary of King Henry the First', *English Historical Review* 34 (1919): 303–82 (p. 317).

[69] 'Behold, the bow of divine anger is bent against the wicked and the arrow swift to wound is taken from the quiver. It will strike suddenly, let every wise man avoid the blow by amending his life' (*HE*, V, 288–9).

[70] Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 423.

[71] *HE*, V, 288–9.

[72] The terms *manicare* and *clientuli* appear in both accounts: *HE*, IV, 102, and V, 292.

> Clientuli quidam cruentatum regem uilibus utcumque pannis operuerunt, et ueluti ferocem aprum uenabulis confossum de saltu ad urbem Guentanam detulerunt.[73]

Vitalis summarises the life of Walter Tirel: marries well, produces a heir, and dies a penitent, 'following the way of God', *en route* to Jerusalem. This is in stark contrast to the indignity laid on Rufus's corpse. The clergy and the poor bury him out of reverence for the royal dignity, while the ecclesiastical elite had a different interpretation.

> Porro aecclesiastici doctores et prelati sordidam eius uitam et tetrum finem considerantes tunc iudicare ausi sunt et aecclesiastica ueluti biothanatum absolutione indignum censuerunt, quem uitales auras carpentem salubriter a nequitiis castigare nequiuerunt.[74]

This judgement of *biothanatus*, suggestive of violence and damnation,[75] is apparent in the actions following the burial: church bells, which 'had often sounded long peals for the meanest of the poor and for common women' are silent, and no money is distributed. The only mourners are those lamenting a loss of income: mercenaries, scroungers and harlots.

Though authors continued with critical presentations,[76] a text written in the French vernacular between 1136 and 1137 presents strikingly different account of the incident. Geoffrei Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis*, written for a female aristocratic patron with a possible wish for a commission from another,[77] similarly uses it to

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[73] 'Some of the humbler attendants covered the king's bloody body as best they might with wretched cloths and carried him like a wild boar struck with spears from the wood to the town of Winchester' (*HE*, V, 292–3).

[74] 'But the doctors and prelates of the Church, considering his squalid life and dreadful death, ventured to pass judgment, declaring that he was virtually past redemption and unworthy of absolution by the Church, since as long as he lived they had never been able to turn him from his vices to salvation' (*HE*, V, 292–3).

[75] For the nuance of the word *biothanatus*, including its fifth-century usage to refer to Judas, see Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, *The Curse on Self-Murder* (New York, 2000), pp. 474–6.

[76] Suger, *Vie de Louis VI le Gros*, ed. and trans. H. Waquet, p. 12, asserts Tirel swore oaths that he was not responsible, and sees the will of God via Job 12:18. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge, 2000), p. 118, and *Vita Anselmi* (*PL* 199: 1031a), show the genre of the text altering the presentation of the event. For the connecting of Rufus's death with criticism of local complaints, see *Liber Monasterii de Hyda*, ed. Edward Edwards (London, 1886), pp. 302–04, *The Historia Ecclesie Abbendonensis: The History of the Church of Abingdon*, ed. and trans. John Hudson, 2 vols (Oxford, 2002–07) II, 60–2, *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. Searle, pp. 106–07. *HA* 446–9 follows *MS E*, ed. Irvine, pp. 109–10, with one major omission. While retaining the criticism of Rufus, reference to Anselm, who was against clerical marriage, is omitted in Huntingdon's text; Huntingdon was, like his father (from whom he inherited his position), married. See Nancy F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: The Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 41–7.

[77] For the influence of the commission on the text, see Joan M. Ferrante, *To the Glory of her Sex: Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington, IN, 1997), pp. 111–12.

assert a different set of values.[78] Before describing his death in the New Forest, Gaimair describes Rufus in glowing terms.

> Cest rei gentil par grant baldur
> teneit son regne par honour.[79]

His death and burial is used to stress this interpretation. Rufus is praised for his friendliness, particularly to foreigners, such as Tirel, whom Gaimar considered a foreigner. In contrast to the previously discussed texts, Tirel's fleeing of the scene of the crime is presented as evidence of his guilt rather than as a comment on the morality of the king and his court. These, by contrast, Gaimar presents as conscientious Christians: though having taken consecrated bread the previous Sunday, the king is fed a handful of grass and flowers after crying for the host by a huntsman as an impromptu communion. The corpse is treated differently. After tearing their hair in uncontrollable grief, the barons construct a bier. In addition to the focus on material worldly objects, in contrast to the *contemptus mundi* theme of the monastic authors, the passage is worth quoting at length to show the confirmation of social bonds.

> Donc veïssez vallez desendre
> e ven[ë]ors lur haches prendre:
> tost furent trenché li fusel
> de quai firent li mai[e]nel;
> dous blest[e]runs trovent trenches,
> mult sunt leger e bien secchez,
> ne sunt trop gros, mes longs estaient,
> tut a mesure les conreient.
> De lur ceintures e de peitrels,
> lïent estreit les mai[e]nels,
> puis firent un lit sur la bere
> de beles flurs e de felgere.
> Dous palefreis unt amenez
> od riches freins, bien enselez,
> sur ices dous cuchent la bere –
> n'ert pas pesante, mes legere –
> puis i estendent un mantel
> envols de paille tut novel:
> le fiz Heimon le defublat,
> Robert, ki son seignur amat.
> Sur la bere cuchent le rei
> ke portouent li palefrei.
> Ensepelit fu de un tiret

[78] John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 257.

[79] 'This noble monarch governed his kingdom honourably and with great displays of splendour': Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis/History of the English*, ed. and trans. Ian Short (Oxford, 2009), pp. 338–9, lines 6248–9 (henceforth *EDE*).

dunt Willam[e] de Munfichet
le jor devant ert abudé;
n'aveit esté k'un jor porté
le mantel gris dunt il l'ostat,
desur la bere estendu l'at.[80]

Escorting the corpse to Winchester, the barons walk, not ride, behind the bier, followed by the attendants, and then the huntsmen. At Winchester, a bishop keeps watch over the corpse until the morning. The next morning, Rufus's burial features solemn services, masses being sung, and alms distributed. Though historically inaccurate,[81] and prone to inserting values of his contemporaries onto those of the past,[82] Gaimar's *Estoire* was written for an aristocratic audience likely to be familiar with the event; it therefore must feature some truth.[83]

Soon after the death of Rufus, his brother Henry seized the throne. Defeating his older brother Curthose, Henry amalgamated his father's divided territory. Although, like his predecessor, he used the church as a source of income, he was able to placate the Church,[84] and though he had a tendency towards cruelty and violence, his reign was predominantly peaceful. The issue of succession between his daughter Matilda and his nephew Stephen subsequently led to a lengthy civil war.

His death appears to have been a surprise.[85] According to Vitalis, who continued to expand his *Historia* up to 1141, while the king's huntsmen were preparing for the next morning, the king, who was staying in the castle of St. Denis-en-Lyons, took ill. His death is depicted as a good death: six days are spent

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[80] 'Then you should have seen the attendants and the huntsmen dismounting, taking out their hand-axes and making short work of cutting down the pieces of wood to make the cross-pieces. They find two saplings, ready-cut and dried, very light, not too thick, and long, and these they trim to the required size. They use their horses' straps and harnesses firmly to secure the cross-pieces, and then construct a bed of ferns and beautiful flowers on the bier. They had brought with them two palfreys with fine saddles and decorated bridles, and on these they place the bier – it was light and not too cumbersome – and then spread out on top of this a brand-new silken cloak which Robert fitz Haimo, as a token of his love for his lord, took off from around his shoulders. They place the king on the bier, and the palfreys bear him off. For a shroud the body was wrapped in a richly decorated cloth which, the day before, had been presented to William de Montfichet; he had worn the fur-lined cloak from which he took it for only one day, and he spread it out on top of the bier' (*EDE* 344–7, lines 6377–404).

[81] For example, Bishop Walchelin, who Gaimar presents as being present at Rufus's death, had died in 1098; Hollister, 'Strange Death', p. 648.

[82] For the word 'chevaler', see Elizabeth Freeman, 'Geoffrei Gaimar, Vernacular History, and the Assertion of Authority', *Studies in Philology* 93 (1996): 188–206 (p. 193); for Gaimar's place in Romance, see A. R. Press, 'The Precocious Courtesy of Geoffrey Gaimar', in *Court and Poet*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess (Liverpool, 1981), pp. 267–76.

[83] Paul Dalton, 'The Accession of King Henry I, August 1100', *Viator* 43 (2012): 79–110 (p. 82). For a traditional view of Gaimar, see Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, p. 211.

[84] C. Warren Hollister, 'William II, Henry I and the Church', in *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L. T. Bethnell*, ed. Marc Antony Meyer (London, 1993), pp. 185–205.

[85] C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I*, ed. Amanda Clark Frost (New Haven, Conn., 2001), p. 468.

confessing his sins, receiving spiritual counsel, paying wages, returning seized property, and such affairs. After receiving penance, absolution, anointment with holy oil, and the Eucharist, he dies. A group of counts pledge to escort the body to the coast; 20 000 people reportedly accompanied the body to the cathedral. There, tears are shed by all strata of society, and the body is placed in the archbishop's chamber where a skilled embalmer fills it with fragrant balsam. The entrails are deposited at his mother's church in Rouen. After a four-week wait for good weather, the corpse is transported across the channel for a suitable burial in Reading Abbey. Vitalis concludes the account with a poetic elegy, lamenting the king's death and bewailing the anarchy and the civil war that had arisen.[86] A letter from Peter the Venerable, the abbot of Cluny, to Henry's sisters, Adela of Blois, confirms many of the details in Vitalis's account.[87] The abbot laments the death of the ruler, explains the consideration taken with his corpse in accordance with his wishes, and explains how Cluny will remember him. It should be noted that both writers would have been influenced by the late king's benefactions. Henry had given privileges and had feasted with the monks of Vitalis's abbey of Saint-Evroul,[88] and was a benefactor of Cluny. Reading Abbey, which he had founded and where he had desired to be buried, followed the Cluniac system.

Texts concerned with the civil war employed the death of Henry as an opening to stress the change in affairs. William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella*, an unfinished continuation of his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* begun around 1140, portrays Henry, having taken ill while hunting, on his deathbed assigning all his land to Matilda in the presence of nobles. Malmesbury includes a letter from Hugh, bishop of Rouen, to Pope Innocent, intending to show the Christian fashion in which the monarch died. Henry receives absolution three times in three days, contemplates Christ, arranges almsgiving, and receives the anointing of the sick.[89] Malmesbury's account of the treatment of the body is similarly sympathetic.

> Funus regaliter curatum, proceribus vicissim portantibus Rotomagum usque delatum est. Illic in quodam recessu aecclessiae maioris extinteratum est, ne diuturnitate corruptum nares assidentium vel astantium exacerbaret. Reliquiae interaneorum in cenobio sanctae Mariae de Pratis iuxta urbem humate; quod ipse, ut audio, a matre sua inchoatum, non paucis compediis honoraverat.

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[86] *HE*, VI, 448–53.
[87] *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. Giles Constable, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1967), I, 22.
[88] *HE*, VI, 180–1.
[89] William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella: The Contemporary History*, ed. Edmund King and trans. K. R. Potter (Oxford, 1998), pp. 22-7.

> Corpus Cadomi servatum, quousque serenas auras Paulo clementior hiems inveheret, quae tum aspera inhorrebat.[90]

Malmesbury describes the peaceful transporting of the corpse to its burial in Reading in the presence of Stephen.[91] The anonymous *Gesta Stephani* (begun 1148) uses the event of Henry's death to rhetorically describe the changing state of the kingdom.

> Cum rex Henricus, pax patriae gentisque suae pater, ad extrema deveniens morti debitum exsoluisset, luctuosum infortunium universam regionis faciem turbidam reddidit et omnino confusam. Vbi namque, eo regnante, iudicii caput, iuris inerat domicilium; ibi, eodem ruente, iniquitatis copia, totiusque malitiae succrevit seminarium. Anglia siquidem, iustitiae prius sedes, pacis habitaculum, pietatis apex, religionis speculum, perversitatis postae locus, dissensionis recessus, inquietudinis disciplina, omnisque rebellii effecta est magistra.[92]

The two accounts, on different sides of the conflict, opt for different presentations: Malmesbury, supporting Matilda, upholds the succession by stressing the peaceful Christian death of the monarch, whilst the anonymous author of the *Gesta Stephani*, desiring his subject to be seen as a pacifier for all, emphasises the resulting chaos.[93]

The previous manner of describing the death and burial of a king however still persisted.[94] Huntingdon expanded his *Historia Anglorum* to feature the death and burial of King Henry. Book seven closes with the king consuming lampreys, a dish regarded as a luxury for the rich,[95] and receiving a chill in his bowels that causes his

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[90] 'The dead body was attended to as befits a king and brought to Rouen with nobles acting as bearers in turn. There it was disembowelled in a corner of the cathedral, lest it should rot with lapse of time and offend the nostrils of those who sat or stood by it. The innards were buried near the city in the convent of Notre-Dame-du-Pré, which had been founded by his mother and distinguished by himself, I hear, with no small endowments. The body was kept in Caen until winter, which was then raging fiercely, should grow a little milder and bring gentle breezes' (Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, ed. King and trans. Potter, pp. 26–7).

[91] Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, ed. King and trans. Potter, pp. 30–1.

[92] 'When King Henry, the peace of his country and father of his people, came to his last moments and paid his debt to death, the grievous calamity made the entire aspect of the kingdom troubled and utterly disordered. For where, during his reign, had been the fount of righteous judgment and the abode of law, there, on his decease, grew up abundance of iniquity and a seed-plot of all manner of wickedness; insomuch as England, formerly the seat of justice, the habitation of peace, the height of piety, the mirror of religion, became thereafter a home of perversity, a haunt of strife, a training-ground of disorder, and a teacher of every kind of rebellion' (*Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K. R. Potter, Oxford, 1976, pp. 2–3).

[93] *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. Potter, pp. 6–7. On allegiances, though, note Edmund King, 'The *Gesta Stephani*', in *Writing Medieval Biography: Essays in Honour of Frank Barlow*, ed. David Bates, Julia Crick and Sarah Hamilton (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 195–206 (pp. 203–06).

[94] For other accounts, including later versions, of Henry's death, see Dietrich Lohrmann, 'Der Tod König Heinrichs I. von England in der mittellateinischen Literatur Englands und der Normandie', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 8 (1972): 90–107.

[95] Giraldus Cambrensis, *The First Version of the Topography of Ireland*, trans. John J. O'Meara (Dundalk, 1951), p. 18.

death.[96] Huntingdon continued this criticism of the monarch when he wrote about his corpse in what would become the tenth book of his *Historia*. In contrast with Malmesbury's *Historia Novella*, Huntingdon's depiction of the preparation of the corpse dwells on the unpleasant and the putrid.

> Cuius corpus allatum est Rotomagum. Et ibi viscera eius et cerebrum et oculi consepulta sunt. Reliquum autem corpus cultellis circumquaque dissecatum, et multo sale aspersum coriis taurinis reconditum est, causa fetoris evitandi, qui multus et infinitus iam circumstantes inficiebat. Unde et ipse qui magno precio conductus securi caput eius diffiderat, ut fetidissimum cerebrum extraheret, quamvis lintheaminibus caput suum obvoluisset, mortuus tamen ea causa precio male gavisus est. Hic est ultimus e multis quem rex Henricus occidit.[97]

Laid in the church where his father had been buried, problems continue: though wrapped in many hides, a black fluid leaks from the corpse causing concern and fear in the attendants. Huntingdon revels in the *contemptus mundi* theme.

> Vide igitur quicumque legis, quomodo regis potentissimi corpus, cuius cervix diadematizata auro et gemmis electissimis, quasi Dei splendore, vernaverat, cuius utraque manus sceptris preradiaverat, cuius reliqua superficies auro textili tota rutilaverat, cuius os tam deliciosissimis et exquisitis cibis pasci solebat, cui omnes assurgere, omnes expavescere, omnes congaudere, omnes admirari solebant: vide, inquam, quo corpus illud devenerit, quam horribiliter delicuerit, quam miserabiliter abiectum fuerit! Vide rerum eventum ex quo semper pendet iudicium. Et disce contempner quicquid sic disterminatur, quicquid sic adnihilatur.[98]

Huntingdon's criticism however seems not specifically directed at Henry, but rather generally a disdain for worldly vanities. Between the accounts of the monarch's death and burial, Huntingdon included in his *Historia* a letter to the ruler that urged him to consider the lasting kingdom rather than the vanishing one,[99] and a letter to

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[96] *HA* 490–1.

[97] 'His body was brought to Rouen, and there his entrails, brain, and eyes were buried together. The remainder of the corpse was cut all over with knives, sprinkled with a great deal of salt, and wrapped in ox hides, to stop the strong, pervasive stench, which was already causing the deaths of those who watched over it. It even killed the man who had been hired for a great fee to cut off the head with an axe and extract the stinking brain, although he had wrapped himself in linen cloths around his head: so he was badly rewarded by his fee. He was the last of many whom King Henry put to death' (*HA* 702–03).

[98] 'See, then, whoever you are reading this, how the corpse of a most mighty king, whose crowned head had sparkled with gold and the finest jewels, like the splendour of God, whose hands had shone with sceptres, while the rest of his body had been dressed in gorgeous cloth of gold, and his mouth had always fed on the most delicious and choice foods, for whom everyone would rise to their feet, whom everyone feared, with whom everyone rejoiced, and whom everyone admired: see what that body became, how fearfully it melted away, how wretchedly cast down it was! See, I say, the outcome of events, upon which final judgment always depends. And learn to hold in contempt whatever is put to such an end, whatever is reduced to nothing in this way' (*HA* 702–05).

[99] *HA* 556–7; regarding the probability that the letter was written after the king had died, see Diana E. Greenway, 'Henry of Huntingdon and the Manuscripts of his *Historia Anglorum*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 9 (1987): 103–26 (p. 110).

Walter, the archdeacon of Leicester, entitled *De contemptu mundi*,[100] concerned with the reversal of fortune of notable men. Huntingdon notes that the body of King Henry was met at Reading Abbey by bishops and nobles, and buried with respect due to his status.[101]

In the sources discussed, it is possible to see not only the events described, but also the authors and their intended audiences. The view provided of ecclesiastical writers creating good and bad deaths with didactic intent allows us to see the variety of factors, such as the background, allegiance, and bias of the author, affecting the choice of which biblical or historical model to select. The result is that, unlike the possible remains of Richard III that will inform us how the ruler was killed, the textual sources show how others wished for the monarchs, for their own purposes, to be remembered and understood.

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[100] *HA* 584–619.
[101] *HA* 704–05.

List of Abbreviations

EDE Geffrei Gaimar, *Estoire des Engleis/History of the English*.

GRA William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*.

HA Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*.

HE Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica: The Ecclesiastical History*.

VA Eadmer, *The Life of St. Anselm: Archbishop of Canterbury*.

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