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Gewaltgenuss, Zorn und Gelächter

Die emotionale Seite der Gewalt in Literatur
und Historiographie des Mittelalters
und der Frühen Neuzeit

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Vorwort

Quæ tunc spectacula latitudo! quid admirer? quid rideam? ubi gaudeam, ubi exultem, spectans tot ac tantos reges qui in cælum recepti nuntiabuntur, cum ipso Jove et ipsis suis testibus in imis tenebris congemiscentes? item præsides, persecutores dominici nominis, sævioribus, quam ipsi contra Christianos sævierunt, flammis insultantibus, liquescentes? (cap. XXX)¹

Wie groß wird da das Spektakel sein? Worüber werde ich staunen? Worüber werde ich lachen, worüber mich freuen, worüber jubeln? Wenn ich sehe, wie so viele Könige, von denen verkündet worden ist, dass sie in den Himmel eingingen, zusammen mit Jupiter selbst und ihren eigenen Zeugen in der äußersten Finsternis seufzen und wenn die obersten Verfolger des Namens Gottes in schrecklicheren Flammen als denen, mit denen sie spottend gegen die Christen wüteten, zugrunde gehen.

Gewalt, ihre Ausübung, ihr Erleiden wie auch ihre Betrachtung – wie hier von Tertullian beschrieben – sind häufig von Emotionen begleitet. Gewalt wird durch Emotionen vorbereitet, vorangetrieben und inszeniert und erweckt ihrerseits Emotionen, die zu einer Eskalation von Gewalt, zu Kontrollverlust und im Fall von kollektiv verübter, kollektiv erlittener oder kollektiv wahrgenommener Gewalt zu einer Intensivierung des Gemeinschaftsgefühls führen können. Die Emotionalisierung erstreckt sich hierbei gleichermaßen auf Täter, Opfer und Zuschauer. Gewalterfahrungen sind in der Regel mit einem Bündel gemischter Emotionen verbunden, die von Zorn und Schmerz sowie Rachebedürfnis bis hin zu Genugtuung und Genuss reichen können. Literatur und Kunst bereiten zudem Gewalt oft so auf, dass sie zu einem ästhetischen Genuss wird, der als solcher zu einer Positionierung des Rezipienten in der Gemengelage der Gewalt beitragen kann. Ein Genuss von Gewalt etwa kann mit ihrer Wertung als gerecht und von höherer Seite legitimiert einhergehen und ein Überlegenheitsgefühl der Gewaltakteure oder der auf ihrer Seite stehenden Gewaltzeugen unterstreichen. Das Mitgefühl mit dem Leidenden geht umgekehrt oft mit Un-

1 Tertullian, De spectaculis. PL 1, 701–738, hier 736 A.

rechtsempfinden einher und kann in Furcht oder aber in Hass gegen die Gewalttäter umschlagen.

In der Moderne wird die Vorstellung eines ästhetisierten ‚Gewaltgenusses‘ häufig mit dem Begriff des ‚Horror‘ in Verbindung gebracht, der zwischen einem ‚Wonneschauer‘ und einem ‚Gruseln‘ changiert.² Die Sicherheit, die der Rezipient von Horrorliteratur besitzt, dass die Schrecken ein absehbares Ende haben und er nicht tatsächlich bedroht wird, ist konstitutiv für die eigentliche „Angstlust“;³ durch den Fiktionalitätskontrakt zwischen Rezipient und Erzähler ist das Furchterregende gefesselt und können reale Ängste oder aber Gewaltphantasien im kontrollierten Raum durchgespielt werden. Was dabei entsteht, ist nichts elementar anderes als ein klassischer Katharsis-Effekt, verbunden mit einer Schwellenerfahrung. Inwiefern diese Form des Gewaltgenusses eine historisch und kulturell bedingte ist und ob sie für ältere Zeiten in ähnlicher Weise angenommen werden kann, ist umstritten.⁴ Deutlich ist jedenfalls, dass sie eine kontextbedingte ist. Jenseits der für den ‚Horror‘ konstitutiven Fiktionalität und Sinnlosigkeit der Gewalt nimmt Gewaltgenuss eine ganz andere Qualität ein, wie etwa in der eingangs zitierten Beschreibung des Spektakels des Jüngsten Gerichts bei Tertullian, das für die Gerechten zu einem Genuss wird, der sie ihrer rechten Position versichert und der sie für die ihnen entgangenen Freuden im Leben entschädigt.

Literatur, Historiographie und Publizistik haben die Möglichkeit, Gewalt nicht nur zu beschreiben und zu ästhetisieren und damit einen Gewaltgenuss auf der Handlungsebene darzustellen und auf Rezeptionsebene zu ermöglichen, sondern auch durch eine Sinnzuweisung die Gewalt und den Genuss derselben zu werten und den Gewaltgenuss ebenso wie andere mit der Gewalt verbundene Gefühle zu lenken. Welche Strategien hierzu verschiedene Texte des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit eingeschlagen haben und wie sie das Verhältnis von Emotionen und Gewalt werten, ist Leitfrage des vorliegenden Sammelbands. Am Beispiel ausgewählter Vertreter unterschiedlicher Textsorten, die sich weder eindeutig im fiktionalen Raum bewegen noch eindeutige Faktenwahrheit beanspruchen, sondern zu den Historie und Heilsgeschichte deutenden Textsorten zählen, wird der Frage nach der Abhängigkeit von Gewaltdarstellungen von historischen, kulturellen und soziologischen ebenso wie von gattungsspezifischen Faktoren nachgegangen.

Der Band ist im Kontext der Gießener DFG-Forschergruppe ‚Gewaltgemeinschaften‘ entstanden, die ihr Augenmerk auf Gruppen richtet, die gemeinsam Gewalt üben und nicht etwa wie stehende Heere durch äußere insti-

2 Hans D. Baumann, *Horror. Die Lust am Grauen*. Weinheim, Basel 1989, 29.

3 Baumann (wie Anm. 2), 33.

4 Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart*, New York, London 1990, 57.

tutionelle Bedingungen, sondern durch das gemeinsame Ausüben von Gewalt zusammengehalten werden.⁵ Daher richtet sich im vorliegenden Band der Blick auch besonders intensiv auf gemeinschaftlich verübte Gewalt und auf die Frage, ob eine kollektive emotionale Gewalterfahrung Gewaltgemeinschaften stabilisieren kann, ob Gewaltgenuss, ob Zorn und Hass (die zunächst individuelle Regungen sind) oder andere Emotionen zu den Kohäsionsfaktoren von Gewaltgemeinschaften zählen.

Dass die Rekonstruktion historischer Emotionen sowohl auf Handlungsebene als auch auf der Ebene der Rezeption kaum und nur unter Vorbehalt möglich ist, ist im Kontext der jüngeren historischen Gewaltforschung mehrfach zu bedenken gegeben worden.⁶ Die Autoren dieses Bandes sind sich der Grenzen des Rekonstruierbaren bewusst und gehen daher strikt von den Texten aus. Sie fragen danach, welche Emotionen die Texte beschreiben, wie sie sie werten und wie sie sie mit Gewalt, insbesondere kollektiver Gewalt, in Verbindung bringen. Sie fragen auch nach den Macharten der Texte und schließen von dort auf die durch sie suggerierte Stellung zur Gewalt. Zudem berücksichtigen sie mögliche Rezipientenerwartungen, die bei einem literarisch gebildeten Publikum aufgrund intertextueller Bezüge und Gattungskonventionen erweckt werden könnten.

Den Einstieg in den Band bildet ein Beitrag zur englischen Historiographie des 11. bis 13. Jahrhunderts, deren Verfasser in der Regel Geistliche waren. DAGMAR SCHMIDT legt dar, wie diese Texte den Rezipientenerwartungen, dass Gewalttaten in solchen Texten zwar weitgehend wahrheitsgemäß referiert werden, aber keineswegs ungedeutet stehenbleiben, entsprechen. Die Texte binden ihre Wertung und Ästhetisierung von Gewalt klar an die Vorstellungen von Legitimität und rechter Herrschaft. Sie zielen bei ihrem Rezipienten auf Gewaltgenuss als eine gemeinschaftsstiftende und herrschaftsstützende Empfindung im Sinne eines Genusses von Gerechtigkeit; ungerechte Gewalt dagegen wird mit harter Kritik gegeißelt und zielt ihrerseits auf eine emotional gestützte Herausbildung einer nicht zuletzt auch moralisch definierten Gruppenidentität.

Einen ganz anderen und durchaus kritisch beleuchteten Fall des Gewaltgenusses durch die Rezipienten von Gewaltdarstellungen stellt SILVAN WAGNER vor: Die im 13. Jahrhundert entstandene *Der Wiener Meerfahrt* imaginiert in ironischem Ton, wie Gewaltdarstellungen, speziell Kreuzzugsdarstellungen, beim Vortrag von einem bürgerlich wienerischen Publikum aufgenommen

5 Vgl. Cora Dietl, Vorwort, in: *Rules and Violence/Regeln und Gewalt. Zur Kulturgeschichte der kollektiven Gewalt von der Spätantike bis zum konfessionellen Zeitalter*, hrsg. von Cora Dietl und Titus Knäpper. Berlin/Boston 2014, VII–XV, hier X.

6 Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt*. Frankfurt a. M. 1996, 7–27; Manuel Braun/Cornelia Herberichs, *Gewalt im Mittelalter: Überlegungen zu ihrer Erforschung*, in: dies. (Hrsg.), *Gewalt im Mittelalter. Realitäten, Imaginationen*. München 2005, 7–37, hier 8.

werden und als falsch verstandene Muster für das künftige Gewalthandeln der Zuhörerschaft wirken. Die in der Historiographie begrüßte Identifikation der Rezipienten mit den Parteigängern der Gerechten, die mit höchster Legitimität Gewalt ausüben, wird hier nicht nur negativ beleuchtet, sondern ins Groteske verzerrt, auch als Kritik an einem mangelnden Fiktionalitätsverständnis der Rezipienten von Gewaltdarstellungen. Dabei wird klar, dass Gewaltdarstellungen in der höfischen Literatur auf ein Publikum mit spezifisch ständischem Moral- und Literatur- bzw. Fiktionalitätsverständnis zielen.

Gewaltdarstellungen in der höfischen Literatur sind die folgenden Beiträge gewidmet. Am Beispiel des *Eneasromans* Heinrichs von Veldeke zeigt CHRISTOPH SCHANZE, wie gebildete Dichter des Hochmittelalters einen Gewaltgenuss nicht nur durch markierte Fiktionalität bändigen, sondern ihn eher ablehnen und das Verhältnis von Emotion und Gewalt mit einem kritisch-warnenden Unterton versehen. Heinrich von Veldeke zeichnet eine Verbindungslinie zwischen Zorn, Rachegeleuten und Gewalt, die er in der Irrationalität und im Kontrollverlust findet. Der Rezipient kann nur mit Entsetzen auf die den Parametern eines klassischen Tragikkonzepts folgende Gewalt reagieren.

Mit dem Phänomen des nicht nur zum heldenhaften Kampfesruhm, sondern auch zu brutaler Gewalt führenden Zorns setzen sich auch Artusromane auseinander. TITUS KNÄPPER zeigt, wie der arthurische Wert der Affektkontrolle eine positive Wertung von Zorn und Gewalt letztlich verbietet – zumindest im Artusroman Hartmann'scher Prägung. Eine Freude am Hören/Lesen von Gewalthandlungen erwächst, wie er zeigt, aus der Anteilnahme am Sieg über den unhöfischen oder zumindest weniger vollkommenen Kontrahenten. Im *Prosa-Lancelot*, der das fiktional Arthursche sowohl mit Modellen der Historiographie als auch mit der Idee des Grals konfrontiert, geht die Affektkontrolle der Artusritter verloren; die Gewaltdarstellungen werden drastischer und auf der Handlungsebene verbinden sich Zorn und Gewaltgenuss, was freilich auf der Rezeptionsebene keineswegs mit einer positiven Wertung der emotional gesteuerten Gewalt einhergeht, sondern eher mit einer Kritik am Artushof.

Die sich durch Emotionen wie Zorn, Rachegefühl und Hass gegenseitig hochschaukelnden und immer wieder die Freude der siegreichen und sich im Recht fühlenden Seite begleiteten Gewalttaten zweier Geschlechter beschreibt die altfrz. Geschichtsdichtung der *Geste des Loherains*. CLAUDIA ANSORGE demonstriert an ausgewählten Passagen des Textes, wie hier die Spirale der Gewalt nicht nur, wie in Heinrichs *Eneasroman*, in ihrer erschütterlich destruktiven Qualität aufgedeckt und die Maßlosigkeit einer emotionsgetriebenen Gewalt kritisiert wird, sondern zugleich eine klare Sympathie lenkung zwischen den beiden Familien stattfindet – durch unterschiedliche Akzentsetzungen in den Darstellungen der Emotionen.

Wie sehr die Art der emotionalen Reaktion auf Gewalt zu einem Merkmal der Gruppenzugehörigkeit werden kann, spielt, wie MARINA KLAMT zeigt, die frühneuzeitliche Erzählung von den *Haymonskindern* durch. Ein Teil der Tragik der in diesem Text dargestellten Handlung beruht darauf, dass die ständisch vorgegebenen Reaktionen auf Gewalt und der Code der Äußerung von Emotionen der persönlichen und natürlichen Reaktion des Helden widersprechen, aber auch von verschiedenen Figuren unterschiedlich gelesen werden. Die *Haymonskinder* stellen damit die Möglichkeit eines verbindlichen Gruppenkodex im Umgang mit (individuell empfundenen) Emotionen in Frage.

Eine recht eindeutige Gruppenidentität ist in den von WERNER RÖCKE untersuchten Texten gegeben: Er stellt das Gewalthandeln der Teufel den intendierten Reaktionen des Publikums in spätmittelalterlichen geistlichen Spielen (*Redentiner Osterspiel*, *Alsfelder Passionsspiel*) gegenüber. Zorn und Schadenfreude erscheinen dort als integrale Bestandteile der Gewaltlogik der Teufel. Sie entspringen, wie Röcke zeigt, keineswegs einem Kontrollverlust der Teufel, sondern ruhen auf einer skrupellosen Sicherheit der Teufel auf. Genau diese Sicherheit und Unveränderlichkeit der Teufel aber gibt sie angesichts der sie widerlegenden Heilswahrheit dem überlegenen Verlassen der Zuschauer preis.

Die falsche Freude der unheiligen Figuren und das Leid der der Gewalt ausgesetzten Gerechten steht im Zentrum der Johannesdramen der Frühen Neuzeit. CORA DIETL vergleicht verschiedene vorreformatorische, protestantische und katholische Spiele und zeigt in ihnen neben einer durchaus ähnlichen Sympathienlenkung durch eine exponierte Verbindung von Freude, Gewalt und Ungerechtigkeit einen konfessionell und individuell unterschiedlichen Umgang mit dem Konzept des Mitleids, verbunden mit je unterschiedlicher Deutung der Gewalt.

Das Ideal der Affektkontrolle, eine Bindung des Gewaltgenusses an die Gerechtigkeit und eine Warnung vor übermäßigem Zorn ziehen sich als roter Faden durch die Literatur des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit. Die Frage aber, wo die Grenzen zwischen Kontrolle, Angemessenheit und Übermaß, zwischen Gerechtigkeit und Ungerechtigkeit liegen, wird von Text zu Text anders beantwortet, immer wieder aber mit Verweis auf Gruppenidentitäten – auf ständisch, sozial, verwandtschaftlich oder religiös oder auch historisch-epochal definierte. Eine objektive, allgemeingültige Haltung und emotionale Stellung zur Gewalt kann es nicht geben, nur eine gruppenbezogene, ebenso wenig ist ein Genuss unsinniger Gewalt in der mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Literatur und Historiographie denkbar. Um genießbar zu sein, muss sie Ausdruck höherer Werte sein, die durch sie genossen werden. Damit aber hat sich das Thema „Gewaltgenuss, Zorn und Gelächter“ als zentral für die Untersuchung von Kohäsionsphänomenen historischer Gewaltgemeinschaften erwiesen. Durch die gemeinsame Definition angemessener Reaktionen auf Gewalt, ange-

messener Zurschaustellung von Emotionen und angemessener Gewaltausübung finden die hier untersuchten Gewalt übenden oder Gewalt erfahrenden Gruppen zu einer gemeinsamen Identität.

Als Herausgeber eines Bands, der auf der Grundlage der Diskussionen und einiger ausgewählter Beiträge zweier Kolloquien im Jahr 2013 (des Gießener Workshops „Emotionen und Gewaltgemeinschaften“ und der Sektionen „Pleasure in Violence“ auf dem IMC Leeds) hervorgegangen sind, sind wir an erster Stelle unseren Autoren, die sich der Mühe unterzogen haben, ihre Beiträge dem Konzept des Bands entsprechend umzuarbeiten, dankbar. Zu Dank verpflichtet sind wir aber auch all den anderen Teilnehmern der Kolloquien, die uns durch ihre Diskussionsbeiträge zu diesem Band inspiriert haben. Wir danken der Forschergruppe „Gewaltgemeinschaften“ für die Unterstützung des Buchprojekts und der DFG für die freundliche Gewährung eines Druckkostenzuschusses. Last not least möchten wir uns herzlich beim Verlag V&R unipress bedanken, bei dem wir – wieder einmal – eine ringsum herzliche, nachsichtige und hilfsbereite Betreuung des Bands gefunden haben.

Im Januar 2015

Cora Dietl
Claudia Ansorge
Titus Knäpper

For Blood, for Glory, and the Greater Good. Depicting a King's Violence in 1066–1216 England¹

Abstract. In der englischen Historiographie des 11. bis 13. Jahrhunderts gibt es zahlreiche Beispiele dafür, wie Chronisten gewalttätiges Handeln ihrer Herrscher gutheißen, rühmen, und sogar mit großer erzählerischer Detailverliebtheit auf keineswegs missbilligende Weise schildern. Solchen Passagen erzählerischen Gewaltgenusses steht auf der anderen Seite immer wieder härteste Kritik an übermäßiger Gewaltausübung gegenüber. Dabei scheint es, als seien die Maßstäbe, mit denen herrscherliches Handeln gemessen wird, nicht zwingend immer die gleichen. Könige üben Gewalt insbesondere in ihrer Funktion als Rechtsprecher und als Verteidiger ihres Reiches aus, und in beiden Rollen lassen sich bei einem Vergleich verschiedener Gewaltbewertungen von Seiten der Chronistik Muster erkennen für das, was Gewalthandeln ausmacht, dass erzählerisch zelebriert werden kann. Die Reputation eines Herrschers spiegelt sich nicht nur in der Bewertung eines solchen Gewalthandelns durch Zeitgenossen; sein Ansehen und die Darstellung von Gewalthandlungen beeinflussen sich auch in nicht geringem Maße gegenseitig. Bis die Möglichkeit der positiven Erzählung solcher Taten allerdings gegeben war, mussten sowohl Herrscher als auch ihre Handlungen gewisse Voraussetzungen erfüllen: Erfolg, Legitimation, Übereinstimmung mit Idealen und auch schwerer fassbare Konzepte wie Charisma finden sich unter diesen Bedingungen – sind diese Bedingungen nicht gegeben, gerät gewaltsames Handeln schnell in Kritik.

The explicit violence encountered in many works of historiography may, at times, cause astonishment. Our understanding of the authors (men of the Church, most of them; monks, living – or at least having vowed to live – a secluded contemplative life in a monastery, most of them with little or no experience in fighting) hardly lends itself to the assumption that they would glorify violence; and our understanding of the world view they themselves express in their works might easily lead us to infer that they ought to have possessed a natural aversion to violence. Yet, with at times remarkably gruesome detail, we find them relishing in blood shed, and in pain suffered.

¹ This essay is a reworked and expanded version of a paper presented at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, 2013. All examples that the line of argumentation presented in this essay draws on ultimately stem from my dissertation project on the genesis of the reputation of the eight English kings between 1066 and 1272.

There is, of course, a certain tradition of the excessive use of violence in the persecution of men of the Church, whose countless afflictions illustrated the nefariousness of the world as much as the goodness of the respective churchmen. It is a tradition that does, eventually, culminate in the gory scenes of bloodshed and manslaughter that forged martyrs – but this is by far not the only strand of historiography that employs violence for its means. Narrated violence is a versatile concept, and medieval historiographers would by no means only limit it to the confines of the church. In times of crisis, such as civil war or a king who maintained insufficient justice, they would regularly have the kingdom positively engulfed in violence. At such occasions, brothers would fight brothers, and fathers their sons, while family members would be sold and subsequently tortured. Robbery generally abounds in such accounts, with the rapacious men swarming across the countryside as pillaging hordes, inevitably causing a universal failing of harvests and consequent misery.²

Often, one might argue, such depictions of a widespread breakdown of law and order and ensuing terror among the populace serve to underline the perceived disorder within the realm, the author's very own desperation at the situation within which he found himself; his wish, perhaps, that later generations might learn from the cruel example thus given, and do better in their turn. These examples criticise kings and their adherents, they bewail the lack of justice and mankind's overall inclination towards evil when not led down the right path. It is

2 For the period in question, the reigns of Stephen and John, both of which had the kingdom facing civil war, provide the best examples for depictions of excessive violence being used in such a way. For Stephen's reign see for instance: William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella*, the *Contemporary History*, ed. E. King and trans. K.R. Potter (Oxford Medieval Texts), Oxford 1998, III. 37 and III. 39, in which the author details, at length, the terrors perpetrated in England. There were, so the chronicler, numerous castles all over England, each of which had been originally meant to defend its own district, but had then taken to devastating it. Not only were goods plundered, the people dwelling in these districts were themselves captured, imprisoned, tortured and not released until they offered up ransom, many of them dying in the process. In a particularly vivid example, Malmesbury portrays prisoners being smeared with honey and hanged outside to be stung by insects. For other accounts of the general turmoil, see: *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. K.R. Potter, with a new introduction and notes by R.H.C. Davis, Oxford 1976, 68–71, 84–87 and 152–57; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. B. Thorpe (Rolls Series), 2 vols., London 1861, vol. 1, 382–83; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. M. J. Swanton, London 1997 [1996], 264–65 [E-Version]; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. D. Greenway, Oxford 1996, X.12; *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, Volume III: the Annals from 1067 to 1140 with the Gloucester Interpolations and the Continuation to 1141, ed. and trans. P. McGurk, Oxford 1998, 216–17. For the reign of John, the descent into chaos is not depicted until the years of the interdict. See, for instance: *A Continuation of William of Newburgh's History to A.D. 1298*, in: *Chronicles of the Reign of Stephen, Henry II., and Richard I.*, vol. 2, ed. R. Howlett (Rolls Series), London 1885, 520–21 (the continuation is otherwise referred to as “Stanley Annals”) and, in detail reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and William of Malmesbury, the gruesome depictions in: Roger of Wendover, *Chronica sive flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, ed. H.O. Coxe, London 1841, 348–52.

not hard to find examples for violence being employed in this way;³ most famous among them, perhaps, is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's lament on the civil war during King Stephen's reign as a time when "Christ and his saints slept" – a statement that the writer saw fit to underline impressively with narrated slaughter and detailed torture.⁴

Given this grim introduction, pleasure is not something we would habitually expect in a historical narrative, particularly not pleasure taken in violence. However, within the historical narrative, violence is not only used as a measure of dread. There was a field where different rules appear to have applied: the depiction of rulers exercising violence. From fiery battle speeches to heroic last stands and draconic punishments – many chroniclers would not forego the possibility to elaborately savour their king's exploits, gory though they were. What moral justification could they have seen that caused them to be prepared to perform so dramatic a volte face in terms of values? In a spirit of cynicism, one might be inclined to presume that historiographers liked a good fight as much as fellow men, but this hardly bears close scrutiny. Chronicles are not, by nature, action-intense; their writers tend to explicitly profess a purpose to edify, not to amuse. Logically, within the narrative structure of medieval historiography, extensive elaborations on violence that had been perpetrated by royal will are no slips of the pen; they serve a plan and a purpose. In particular, they tend to have the most drastic repercussions on how a king was judged and perceived. There is no great surprise in that, seeing that the exercise of violence, and most importantly, the exercise of just and legitimate violence, is the cornerstone upon which all contemporary expectations of good kingship build. Inextricably tied up with the king's duty to dispense justice as vicar of God on earth, the justification of any action of the monarch – and especially so, of course, such actions as were likely to cost lives and limbs – was a decisive category in the judging of kings.⁵ These judgements can, of course, go either way: towards glorification and

3 To verify that statement, see note 2.

4 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1861) (see note 2); The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1997 [1996]) (see note 2).

5 The relationship of kingship and divine justice is elaborated upon in most contemporary treatises of kingship. The king himself was expected to possess a sense of divine *aequitas* that would render him abject to unjust acts, and automatically legitimate his actions. It is only in the course of time that this perception gradually shifts to a view that would have the king adhere to the laws of the kingdom, and acknowledge that even an anointed king could commit acts of plain injustice. For views on the king's connection to the divine, the so-called Norman Anonymous, which has acquired considerable fame through Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton 1957, is especially interesting, as it proposes an intensely Christian kingship, allowing for the king to possess power exceeding that of the pope. See: G.H. Williams, *The Norman Anonymous of 1100 A.D.: toward the identification and evaluation of the so-called Anonymous of York* (Harvard Theological Studies XVIII), Cambridge, London 1951, 128–29, 164–65, 175. The tract has been made

towards condemnation, they are susceptible to change and highly partial. Nonetheless, this volatility would gradually diminish as time wore on and the memory of royal exploits moved along further in society's shared memory. If it was found to be based on shared values, a vivid depiction of violent ferocity could endure long, and eventually crystallise into one definite mode of interpretation for the king's deeds, thus solidifying royal reputation. There are violent royal acts and, as a result, literally bloodied kings, that we find justified, approved of, even enjoyed, but likewise, there are those that are described as despicable. Against which backgrounds, then, would writers find themselves able to approve of their king's exercise of violence?

In its most spectacular form, we find royal violence on the battlefield, in the scope, nature and motives of warfare. Away from arms and armour, 'domestic' royal violence encompasses the exercise of justice within the realm. Halfway between these two poles, chroniclers were wont to discuss the way in which the king would deal with defeated rebels. In each of these contexts, different modes of narration were chosen to codify the king's behaviour in accordance with virtues and ideals. These codes, as I would like to call them, are highly repetitive and fairly simple – they would praise or condemn in accordance with the respective authors' value systems. It is upon them that the ultimate verdict on an action depends. In this context, it is important to note that violence is not, in itself, viewed as negative. Reporting an act of violence is, initially, a neutral action on the part of the writer. It is only because of the inestimable importance of the exercise of violence for kingship, and, specifically, good and legitimate kingship, that verdicts become attached to acts of violence and, by that means, to kings.

If the cause for an act of violence was impulsiveness, anger, only the most exceptional of circumstances, only the most dramatic provocation of emotion, would redeem the king in the eyes of writers. Otherwise, in accordance with contemporary political thought, the king's failure to control his own feelings, his

available online through the Electronic Norman Anonymous Project (ENAP, <http://norman-anonymous.org>). Among other assertions of royal power, the Norman Anonymous maintains that unction turned the king into a carrier of divine virtue and spirit (ENAP, tract. 24a, 154). See also: Hugh de Fleury, *Tractatus de regia potestate et sacerdotali dignitate*, in: *Patrologiae cursus completus*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Series Latina 163), Paris 1893, prologus, 939. Although the divine element in kingship receded to some extent with the resolution of the investiture controversy, divine intervention in royal affairs remained very much accepted. See for instance: *Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis, Policratici sive de Nugis Curialium Et Vestigiis Philosophorum Libri VIII*, ed. and commented by C.C.I. Webb, Frankfurt am Main 1965 [1909], book IV, chapter 1, 513–13: *Proculdubio magnum quid divuinae uirtutis declaratur inesse principibus, dum homines nutibus eorum colla submittunt et securi plerumque feriendas praebent ceruices, et impulsu diuino quisque timet quibus ipse timori est*; and *ibid.*, chapter 3, 515 for the observation that while the king was not subject to earthly laws, his link to the heavenly *aequitas* would prevent him from abusing his position in any way.

inability to live up to the expectations of *constantia*, *moderatio*, *temperantia*, would serve as the ultimate and heavily used marker that the king's violence could not possibly be tolerated.⁶ The counterpart to this mode of depiction is idealised violence. It can be found in the portrayal of the legitimate warfare of the protector of the people, the firm but just punishment of wrongdoers and, less conventional, the stylisation of the king as a chivalric warrior-knight, excelling in prowess and bravery. That being said, the infinitely more interesting step is to see which circumstances drove chroniclers to choose which mode of depiction. It seems reasonably clear that the events themselves cannot have been the decisive criterion for that choice. The individual acts of violence that could occur throughout a king's reign were naturally, taken for themselves, rather similar – they encompassed battle casualties, mutilations, beheadings, hangings, torture or other sentences of corporeal punishment. It is not on the what, but on the how that historiographic judgement hinges. It is this “how” that I want to take a closer look at in the following.⁷

The perhaps most straightforward assessment of royal violence is found in the depiction of doing justice. A king had to be rigorous without being cruel; merciful without being lenient.⁸ Striking the appropriate balance between the two extremes seems difficult. However, given the great uniformity that characterises the judgement of contemporaries, it would appear that it seems more difficult today than it may have been. There were certain standards and expectations to punishment. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the treatment the justice of Henry I received posthumously. He has been accused of

6 The demand that any king who wished to rule people should first of all be able to keep himself in check is fairly widespread; see, for instance: Giraldus Cambrensis, *De principis instructione liber*, ed. G.F. Warner, in: Giraldi Cambrensis opera, vol. 8 (*Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 21), Wiesbaden 1964 [1891], chapter 1; Hugh de Fleury (see note 5), caput IV. Any of the treatises on kingship hitherto mentioned detail ideals and prescriptions for the royal character, so that a full citation of all instances in which the above-named virtues are discussed would by far exceed the scope of a single footnote.

7 With view to the limited scope of this paper, these modes of depiction are, of course, not exhausted to their full potential, but discussed here in highly exemplary fashion, with only a handful of episodes selected for the purpose of illustrating the line of argumentation.

8 For views on the king's exercise of justice, see (in roughly chronological order), K. Jost (ed.), *Die “Institutes of polity, civil and ecclesiastical”: Ein Werk des Erzbischofs Wulfstans von York* (*Swiss Studies in English* 47), Bern 1959, 42–54; Hugh de Fleury (see note 5), caput IV and caput VI; Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis (see note 5), book IV, chapter 3 and chapter 8; Giraldus Cambrensis (see note 6), chapter X, chapter VII; *The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England Commonly Called Glanvill*, ed. with introduction, notes and trans. G.D.G. Hall, with a guide to further reading by M.T. Clanchy (*Oxford Medieval Texts*), Oxford 1993 [1965], 1; Henry of Bracton, *De Legibus Et Consuetudinibus Angliae*, vol. 2 (available online on <http://bracton.law.harvard.edu/>; last accessed in December 2013), 19, 33, 305.

cruelty and harshness in modern times⁹ – but contemporary comments on the king's justice indicate quite the contrary. Eadmer of Canterbury, for instance, would at length list the depravities committed by the court while his brother had still held sway over it, and, with a measure of righteous zeal, he jubilantly declares how the king had brought any miscreants guilty of such crimes to justice. He ordered eyes to be gouged out, hands, feet and other limbs to be amputated. The effect was immediate. Those who had not been punished witnessed the king's measures, and, out of fear that their own physical integrity might be similarly compromised, abstained from committing further atrocities.¹⁰ There is an impressive wealth of such examples from the reign of Henry I. Yet the most remarkable aspect of these episodes is their respective context: fitted into a narrative of praise for the king's justice, the extreme rigour that the king is depicted to exercise must be read as a mark of distinction; they are employed to illustrate excellent justice. Despite this praise, there are indications that Henry I, with his apparent inclination to inflict corporeal punishments, was treading the very line of what was acceptable. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, for example, would note for the year 1124 that the king had caused a great number of thieves to be hanged, and many castrated. The severe punishment caused, as the chronicler notes, many "honest" men to speak of injustice, as those who suffered it had previously been deprived of their goods (by royal courts and taxes) and were hanged on top of it all.¹¹

It is a criticism that appears to not be aimed at the violence of the corporeal punishment as such but predominantly at the king's selection of its recipients. While perceived as inadequate in the situation at hand, it was acceptable in another, as an entry from the following year indicates. There had been, the writer notes, such a decrease in the value of money that the king had caused all moneyers to be seized. He had ordered them to be castrated and their right hands to be cut off. "And it was all very proper," the writer concludes with undeniable relish, "because they had done for all the land with their great fraud, which they

9 Cf., for a discussion of the king's alleged cruelty: J.A. Green, *Henry I. King of England and Duke of Normandy*, Cambridge 2009, 314–16.

10 Cf.: Eadmeri *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, ed. M. Rule, London 1884, 192–93: *Huic malo rex Henricus mederi desiderans, indicto edicto omnibus qui aliquid eorum quae dixi fecisse probari poterant aut oculos erui, aut manus, vel pedes, vel alia membra constanti justitia strenuus faciebat amputari. Quae justitia in pluribus visa caeteros, integritatem sui amantes, ab aliorum laesione deterrebat*. Eadmer, who, apart from indicating the positive consequences, speaks of *constanti justitia* and calls the punishment *strenuus*, could hardly indicate more clearly that he approved of the king's approach to the matter.

11 Cf.: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1861) (see note 2), 376; The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1997 [1996]) (see note 2), 254 [D-Version].

all paid for.”¹² Admittedly, these men did not suffer death, contrary to many of the thieves the year before, but it seems sufficiently clear that the writer’s allotted store of pity for people who had been driven to crime in the face of the king’s exploitation would tolerate needy thieves, but ran out when it came to money-makers.

The chronicler was not alone with that sentiment. The mutilation of the money-makers was greeted with widespread enthusiasm among contemporary writers. Henry of Huntingdon, with a delight similar to that of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, remarked that “it was good to hear how severely the king bore down on the wicked,”¹³ while William of Malmesbury asserted that with his condemnation of the money-makers, the king had shown “particular diligence”.¹⁴ According to Eadmer, “much good was, at that time, effected for the entire kingdom” due to the king’s rigorous measures.¹⁵ It is only the writer of the Worcester Chronicle, who otherwise repeats Eadmer’s statement about the beneficial effect on the kingdom that admits that the punishment was particularly severe, while taking note that the culprits were not allowed any other way of redeeming themselves.¹⁶ That particular aspect is expounded upon by the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*. The great defender of justice and most rigorous punisher of injustice, the writer praises fulsomely, could have made thousands of talents by accepting ransom to be paid for the moneyer’s limbs, but, he concludes ecstatically, the king had spurned money out of his love for justice¹⁷ – and, we must conclude, preferred to sever body parts instead.

Quite naturally, the tone of these comments on the king’s justice is close to the one employed in accounts on the treatment of defeated rebels. Yet there is a very crucial difference: while a misjudged step across the thin line between adequate and inappropriate violence would generally have little consequence in “everyday” justice, apart perhaps from sporadic complaints about the king’s severity, it

12 The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1861) (see note 2), 376; The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1997 [1996]) (see note 2), 255 [D-Version].

13 Henry of Huntingdon (see note 2), VII. 36: *Opere uero preicium est audire quam seuerus rex fuerit in prauos*.

14 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regvm Anglorvm*. History of the English Kings, ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford Medieval Texts), Oxford 1998, v. 399: *Contra trapezetas, quos uulgo monetarios uocant, precipuam sui diligentiam exhibuit [...]*.

15 Eadmeri *Historia Novorum in Anglia* (see note 10), 193: *Ex quo facto magnum bonum ad tempus toti regno creatum est*.

16 The Chronicle of John of Worcester (see note 2), 113–15.

17 The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni, vol. 2, ed. and trans. E.M.C. van Houts (Oxford Medieval Texts), Oxford 1992, VIII. 23: *O uirum defensorem iustitie et iniquitatis acerrimum punitorem! O si uellet redemptionem accipere pro tot hominum impiorum menbris, quanta milia talentorum posset inde lucrari, sed, ut diximus, spreuit pecuniam amore iustitie!*

could be positively fatal if the men on the receiving end of the misjudged judgement were among the realm's powerful and could seriously destabilise the situation within the realm. Determining with what extent of violence a king could get away with under these circumstances is notoriously difficult to determine. Out of context, the judgements seem haphazard; within context, we are almost forced to conclude that chroniclers would approve of whatever, in the end, when all was said and done, worked. Since the effects of such judgements tended to be very swift, most comments are comments made in hindsight that not only make mention of the impact a royal decision had, but base their very verdict on this impact, indicating that praiseworthy violence was violence that solved a problem. Still, much more so than in the case of domestic justice, where comments remained relatively uniform, these depictions show the predicament kings found themselves in as they had to estimate how much violence they could use without risking their vassals' loyalty. Accounts often comment profusely on the process of decision-making, thus allowing glances at the unwritten code of conduct that lay underneath the king's punitive actions.

Orderic Vitalis, for instance, recounts how Henry I, after he had captured a number of rebels, passed judgement on them. Two of them were to lose their eyes for treason, a third to be blinded for mocking him. The king's harsh penalties are not too well received among the attending nobility: from among them, a single noble gathers up his courage to approach the king and confront him with his view on the matter. He reminds the king that what he was doing was not entirely in line with "our customs", according to which knights that had been captured while they had been serving their lords were not usually subjected to the punishment of mutilation. The king appears remarkably unperturbed, and answers, entirely sure of himself, with an elaborate explanation of why he was acting the way he did – and how he was entirely justified in doing so. Orderic Vitalis grants the king the narrative licence to expound, in direct speech, on the reasons for his punishment of choice. Henry I recounts the lengthy history of misdeeds that the rebels had accumulated; he explains how two had pledged their fealty to him and then deliberately broke their faith to commit treason, and how the third of the accused had previously been pardoned by royal grace – a good turn that he sought fit to repay by acting against the king as soon as he could and composing songs that mocked the king, which he had been wont to perform publicly. It could have been nothing but the hand of God, so the king claims, that had delivered that particular culprit into his hands so that he might exercise justice on him. The monarch's argumentation leaves the lone noble at a loss of what to say or do: according to Orderic, he "was silenced, for he had nothing that he could reasonably bring forth as a counter-argument."¹⁸

18 The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis, vol. 6: Books XI, XII, and XIII, ed. and trans. M.

Henry I, according to the narrative, had settled the situation masterfully – but this is often the case if there are no negative consequences to a decision. In the reign of William the Conqueror, the beheading of the rebel Waltheof caused a stir primarily because of his alleged repentance and piety. As last English earl, he had few supporters, and his death did not cause lasting damage to the king's reputation. Only miracle stories that became attached to his tomb in passive protest remained of the allegedly wrongful royal act.¹⁹ The sentences of exile, mutilation and financial ruin that hit Waltheof's co-conspirators are barely mentioned. Some fifty years later, King Stephen is reported to have hanged rebels within the sight of the enemy castle walls during a siege,²⁰ and to have hanged or otherwise put to death ninety-three rebels, ignoring their pleas for mercy; both were shows of strength that yielded the desired results, with the rebels at once coming to heel, and were, therefore, praised. If the tactic employed by the king did not work, matters would turn out dramatically different: in the case of Stephen, mercy rather than cruelty was seen as the decisive flaw. Henry of Huntingdon comments the end of a lengthy siege with the words that the king, "making use of the worst counsel", had refrained from exacting revenge on the traitors. The author did in no way hold back that his wisdom stemmed from regarding the events in hindsight: "for if he had done so then", he asserts, "fewer castles would have been held against him later."²¹ There evidently was some need for justification, as the siege is described in great detail by the *Gesta Stephani*, a chronicle favourably disposed to the vast majority of Stephen's decisions. The author elaborated on the dreadful plight that the besieged had to endure; a misery against which the king hardened his heart, refusing even to hearken to the tearful, bare-footed supplication of the wife of a besieged rebel. In doing so, he was following the advice of his brother, Henry bishop of Winchester, who had claimed that the besieged would eventually find themselves so tormented by hunger and thirst that they would surrender on any of the conditions that the king prescribed. That course of action (and the chronicler leaves no doubt that it would have been the right course to follow) was abandoned because of the intercession of the questionable nobles that surrounded the king. Several of their number had approached him, attempting to persuade the king to raise the siege. Their motives

Chibnall (Oxford Medieval Texts), Oxford 1978, book XII, IV. 459–61. The quoted passage reads: *His auditis Flandriae dux conticuit quia quid contra haec rationabiliter obiceret non habuit.*

19 Cf.: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1861) (see note 2), 349; The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1997 [1996]) (see note 2), 210 [E-Version and D-Version]; 212 [E-Version and D-Version]. The accounts differ; D tends to put greater stress on Waltheof.

20 *Gesta Stephani* (see note 2), 30.

21 Henry of Huntingdon (see note 2), X. 4: *Sero tamen redditum est ei castellum, et uindictam non exercuit in proditores suos pessimo consilio usus. Si enim eam tunc exercuisset, postea contra eum tot castella retenta non fuissent.*

were not entirely commendable: some felt pity for those of their relatives who found themselves beleaguered by the king's troops, some simply sympathised with the rebels' cause themselves and would not see those who shared their ideas to come to any harm. Whatever their motivations, they certainly knew how to play to the king's insecurities: they approached him with a great number of arguments, the gist of which underlines the dilemma that the king – and, ultimately, every other king in a situation such as that – found himself in: They asserted that he had obtained a complete victory over his enemies, and that, in the resplendent glory of this victory, it would be befitting for his royal piety and dignity that he should grant life and limb to the besieged rather than inflicting further punishment on them. Eventually, the king's resolve faltered, and he yields to these counsels.²² The nobles had been well aware of the king's precarious position, his need to secure as much support as he possibly could. It was a predicament that would, in some way or the other, apply to every medieval monarch; but it was at its most pressing when, just as in Stephen's case, there was a second contender to the throne, or the king's overall hold on the realm (and particularly its nobility) had become unstable. Yet the enormous problems a single misjudged punishment could have is nowhere testified more dramatically than in the case of King John and his nephew Arthur.

Some fifty years after Stephen's predicament during the siege, the Angevin king had captured his nephew, whose claim to the throne was as strong as John's, in the course of the siege of Mirebeau that the king endured in one swift strike. The fate of Arthur is the single incident over which any depiction of John's exercise of justice is bound to stumble eventually, not least because the unlucky captive, aptly named like the legendary king, turned into a rallying-point for continental malcontents and essentially formed the basis of Philip II of France's legitimation to move against King John. What happened to the young nobleman swiftly became shrouded in rumour and evolved into a disastrously discrediting affair for the king – although it remains relatively unclear why. That John, at the very heart of the problem, had not necessarily done anything wrong, or rather “unjust”, is argued – of all people – by Roger of Wendover, a chronicler otherwise notoriously hostile towards the king.

He portrays papal messengers treating with the French party, in an attempt to prevent them from setting out to England, which had, by then, become subject to the papal see. Throughout the discussion, the party of the French king maintains that John could no longer be considered a king, and could therefore not have

22 *Gesta Stephani* (see note 2), 38–43, especially: *Dicebant namque regi plenum se de hostibus conquisisse triumphum, dum quod sui erat iuris, praeualentibus uiribus suis, tandem conquisisset; ideoque dignitati suae esse aptius, regiaeque pietati competentius, captiuis supplicibus uitam donare, quam usque ad mortem punitis, quod parum uitae supererat immiseri-corditer auferre.*

bestowed his kingdom to the pope – which would make it unproblematic for Prince Louis to answer the call of the rebellious barons and set sail to claim England for himself. John, they claimed, had been disinherited following the act of treachery he had committed when he allied with the king of France against his absent brother Richard the Lionheart, and could therefore never have acquired the title of a true (*verus*) king. Even if this early condemnation of John should, in some way, come to be disregarded, the French maintain that John would (at the very latest) have forfeited any legitimate claim to the kingdom when the French royal court found him guilty of murder.²³ It was an alleged sentence that went well beyond discrediting the king: a knight from the French party steps forward to assert that John had been found guilty of having killed Arthur “with his very own hands” – a monstrous crime for which he had not simply forfeited the title of king, but which had caused him to be sentenced to death in the trial of the French court. In spite of these accusations and John’s by then already unsavoury reputation (which Roger of Wendover would not hesitate to comment on otherwise), the pope, in writing, repudiates every single charge raised against John.²⁴ With rather unchristian forthrightness and a pinch of scorn, he states:

Many emperors and princes, and even French kings, have, as we read in annals, killed many innocents, and yet we do not read that any of them abandoned to death; and when Arthur was captured at the castle of Mirebeau, he was not captured as innocent, but as guilty, a traitor to his lord and uncle, whom he had done homage and sworn allegiance, and he could lawfully be condemned to even the most disgraceful death without trial.²⁵

Despite the strong papal support for John after he had surrendered his kingdom into the hands of the papacy, there was a wide range of contemporary verdicts on John’s reputation with regard to the fate of Arthur. The marked differences in depiction, ranging from neutral to condemning, illustrate that there must have been a wealth of stories circulating about the possible fate of the young heir – none of them complimentary.

The Barnwell Annals, still very neutral, note that Arthur had vanished “in obscure circumstances” while he was in his uncle’s custody, and that his grave had never been found. The writer regarded the lamentable fate as at least partly owed to divine intervention: his demise had been a signal to the overbearing

23 Cf.: Roger of Wendover (see note 2), 364.

24 Roger of Wendover (see note 2), 365.

25 Roger of Wendover (see note 2), 374. Pages 373–78 have the entirety of the charges brought against John and their repudiation by the pope. The cited passage from the papal argumentation reads, in the original: *Multi imperatores et principes, et etiam Francorum reges, multos in annalibus occidisse leguntur innocentes, nec tamen quenquam illorum legimus morti addictum; et cum Arthurus apud Mirebellum castrum, non ut innocens, sed quasi nocens et proditor domini et avunculi sui, cui homagium fecerat, captus fuerit, potuit de jure morte etiam turpissima sine iudicio condemnari.*

Britons, who had assumed him to be the once and future king reincarnate that would return to them the kingdom of England.²⁶ From that neutral, perhaps even slightly favourable starting point, accounts of the fate of Arthur increase in accusatory tone. Gervase of Canterbury mentions, in an almost offhand way, that Arthur had been kept in close confinement after he had been captured by the king, and that soon rumours had begun to spread that the king himself had killed him.²⁷

The most impressive narrative feat was accomplished by the Coggeshall chronicle.²⁸ It traces the fate of Arthur in elaborate detail, while providing a sinister glimpse into the machinations of the royal court. The writer maintains that the continental malcontents had repeatedly demanded that John hand over his captive, and, when they met with the king's refusal, had begun to rebel against their overlord. John's advisers, who believed that they would not cease rebelling as long as there was a chance that Arthur might return and govern them, suggested to the king that he might cause the young man to be bereft of his eyes and genitals, and, thus mutilated, return him to the rebels, whose cause he would hardly be able to lead. Hard-pressed by the massing of his enemies and their threats, and thus not in full command of his mental faculties, the king, *in ira et furore*, ordered the *opus destabilile* that had been suggested to him to be carried out. Of the servants he sent to do his bidding, two fled from his court, because they did not want to "perpetrate such a detestable deed on so noble a youth", but three reached the castle in which Arthur was imprisoned, languishing under the weight of triple chains. Yet when they brought the news of the king's order to the young man's jailors, great lamentation broke out among the knights who had been stationed at the castle to keep watch over Arthur. After the commotion between the guards and the prospective executors of the king's will had died down, Hubert de Burgh, Arthur's main guardian, decided that it would be more profitable for John's reputation and respectability if the sentence were not

26 *Memoriale Fratris Walteri de Coventria*. The Historical Collections of Walter of Coventry, vol. 2, ed. W. Stubbs, Wiesbaden 1965 [1873], 196: *Arthurus in prisiona patru sui Johannis regis angliae, dubium quo casu, de medio factus est, nec est inventum sepulcrum ejus usque ad diem hunc, ut dicitur, sed non absque vindicta Dei, Qui frangit omnem superbem. Britones quippe quasi de nomine augurium sumentes, Arthurum antiquum in isto resuscitatum imprudenter et imprudenter jactitabant, et Anglorum internecionem [sic!], regnique ad Britones per istum imminere translationem.*

27 Cf.: Gervase of Canterbury, *The Minor Works*, comprising the *Gesta Regum* with its continuation, the *Actus Pontificum*, and the *Mappa Mundi*, in: *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, vol. 2, ed. W. Stubbs (*Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 73), London 1880, 94.

28 Cf.: for the following, Radulphi de Coggeshall, *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. J. Stevenson, Wiesbaden 1965 [1875], 139–41.

carried out – for certainly it had been pronounced in wrath, and the king would sooner or later come to regret his harsh words, and would begin to bear a hatred against those who had implemented his misjudged outburst. Rather than openly defying the king's orders, de Burgh had it made public that the sentence against Arthur had been carried out as the king had wished, and that the youth had perished from the heavy wounds he had sustained and the sorrow in his heart. The deliberately-spread rumour even named the place of his burial. However, the story fell lamentably short of the aims it had sought to accomplish: instead of disheartening the rebels, it fanned the rebellion. Arthur's role in the narrative did not end with his death: Philip II demanded that John surrender him, and took the king's refusal as sufficient reason to invade Normandy and capture a number of castles.²⁹ Having heard that the young nobleman had been plunged into the Seine (and thereby killed), the king of France would flatly refuse to enter into peace negotiations as long as he had not been handed the living prisoner.³⁰ From the gloom of that account, it is not far to Roger of Wendover's far less explicit claim that Arthur had put such unreasonable demands before his uncle that the king had him imprisoned. After a certain time, he vanished from captivity, and rumour rapidly spread that the king had personally killed the youth.³¹ The last writer to serve as example here does not leave even a shred of such rumour. The Magran Annals flatly state that John had kept the young man in a tower in Rouen, until one

Thursday before Easter, after his meal, drunken and full of a demon, he killed him with own hand, and, having tied a great stone to his body, threw him into the Seine; it was found in the nets of fishers and, having been dragged to shore, recognised; and was buried secretly for fear of the tyrant.³²

The situation, if (definitely) not the outcome, is strikingly similar to the relationship of Henry I and his nephew William Clito. Like Arthur, Clito was a potential successor to the throne, and, allied with the French king, fought his uncle, inciting rebellion as he did so. Clito died while campaigning; we can but speculate what might have happened to him had he been captured – but with castration and blinding being approved practices against rebels, there may at least have been chance that he would have suffered a fate similar to that of Arthur

29 Cf.: Radulphi de Coggeshall (see note 28), 143.

30 Cf.: Radulphi de Coggeshall (see note 28), 145.

31 Cf.: Roger of Wendover (see note 2), 170–71.

32 *Annales de Margan*, in: *Annales Monastici*, vol. 1, ed. H.R. Luard, London 1864, 1–40, here: 27: [...] *cum rex Johannes cepisset Arthurum, eumque aliquamdiu in carcere vivum tenuisset, in turre tandem Rothomagensi, feria quinta ante Pascha, post prandium, ebrius et daemonio plenus, propria manu interfecit, et grandi lapide ad corpus ejus alligato, projecit in Secanam; quod reti piscatorio, id est, sagena, inventum est, et ad littus tractum, cognitum; et in prioratu Becci, qui dicitur Sanctae Mariae de Prato, occulte sepultum, propter metum tyranni.*