Chroniclers’ Criticisms in the reign of King Richard I of England (1189-1199)

by

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ABSTRACT

CHRONICLERS’ CRITICISMS IN THE REIGN OF KING RICHARD I OF ENGLAND (1189-1199)

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The twelfth century chronicles provide a major narrative historical source for the study of King Richard I. The chronicles under study here are Roger of Howden Chronica, William of Newburgh Historia Rerum Anglicarum, Ralph de Diceto Ymagines Historiarum and Richard of Devizes Chronicon De Rebus Gestis Ricardi Primi. These chroniclers were politically astute and their personal perceptions shaped the content and nuance of their histories. They employed historical allusion in order to comment and criticize aspects of Richard I’s reign through analysis of his father Henry II. The authority of chancellor made Thomas Becket and William Longchamp natural choices for comparison, and through them, an assessment of the stability of each king’s reign. The chroniclers equated the Sons’ Rebellion that plagued Henry II in the 1170s with John I’s erratic behaviour and betrayal of Richard I in the 1190s.
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Introduction

The study of Richard I and his reign is a popular topic for historians, both medieval and modern. Richard I was a popular king in his lifetime due to his reputation and martial success on the Third Crusade. This popularity arose despite the problems his reign faced from his frequent absence from England, especially his imprisonment by the Holy Roman Emperor, and the chaos that John I and William Longchamp caused without his oversight. Richard I’s reign was often seen as more stable than John I’s, although not free from criticism in the twelfth century and onwards. Richard I’s reputation can be clearly seen in the chronicles composed during his reign.

Medieval chronicles comprise some of the most used sources for historians of Richard I of England due to the dearth of written sources during the period and the detailed quality of the accounts. Chronicles are some of the major written sources for the Middle Ages and their use shaped the understanding of medieval kingship. These sources have been used almost without question since the time they were written, both by other contemporary writers and by more modern and influential historians. The genre of chronicles tended to include fictions as well as truths because of the medieval propensity to relate the truth of ideas, not necessarily true actions. Due to the inclusion of fictitious elements, chronicles are inconsistent evidence of empirical fact but were tremendous media for the opinions, personalities, and perceptions of the period.

Chronicles constitute an important source base not just for the material they preserved but also because of what the writers implied. The chronicles of William of Newburgh, Roger of Howden, Richard of Devizes, and Ralph Diceto contained
interpretations of the historical events that tended both to favour the kings or to criticize them. These differing viewpoints created a commentary on royal policy of the later twelfth century due to the personal motivations, intentions, and beliefs of the individual chroniclers. These sources presented a fundamentally inconsistent picture of the Richard I. The chroniclers both praised and criticized him for different reasons, at different times. Usually, actions that determined a good king such as support of the church, good rule of law, and military success were praiseworthy, but a king's behaviour did not always match the ideal. Chroniclers rarely criticized the reigning king directly but were far more free, through the use of historical allusion, to comment on his reign through their description of his predecessor. The way in which these chroniclers constructed historical narratives reflects their views, thus a close reading of sources brings out a more nuanced understanding of events and contemporary perceptions. These chroniclers used some major historical events of the earlier part of the century in order to establish a comparison or parallel with events from the 1180s to 1190s which constitute the focus period of the present study. Chroniclers of the reign of Richard I, Roger of Howden, Ralph Diceto, William of Newburgh, and Richard of Devizes, studied the reign of Henry II in order to understand, and comment on, the political turmoil of the 1190s.

All of the chronicles examined in this thesis were crafted in the final decade, or so, of the twelfth century, largely during the turbulent reign of Richard I (1189-1199). The chronicles examined here are Roger of Howden’s Chronica, William of Newburgh’s Historia Rerum Anglicarum, Ralph de Diceto’s Ymagines Historiarum and Richard of Devizes’ Chronicon De Rebus Gestis Ricardi Primi. Roger of Howden was a royal clerk
who accompanied Richard I on crusade and began to compose his chronicle in 1189 after the death of Henry II.\(^1\) His chronicle covered the years from 732 to circa 1202. William of Newburgh was an Augustinian monk at the priory at Newburgh, North of York. He was very well informed, and wrote his history between 1196 and 1198, covering 1066-1198.\(^2\) Diceto was a deacon and later the dean of St Paul’s London, and active in politics. He started to write his history, which covered 1148 to 1202, in 1188, after which point his work became contemporary.\(^3\) Richard of Devizes was a Benedictine monk at St Swithun’s Winchester who wrote a fanatical chronicle in the 1190s, concerning 1189 to 1192.\(^4\) Twelfth-century England was turbulent, with several changes of monarchs, multiple civil wars and an increasing involvement with continental affairs especially Richard I’s leadership in the Third Crusade. Major political events, as well as personal views of the kings influenced the perspective that these histories provide.

Chapter One examines the political turmoil during the reign of Richard I, including key elements such as Longchamp’s abuses of power and John I’s erratic behaviour. In addition, it covers Richard I’s crusade and captivity which directly shaped both the events and the chroniclers’ accounts. Chapter Two investigates the connection and parallels between chronicler portrayals of the Becket Affair (ca. 1170) and the crisis of

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\(^3\) Ibid., 178.

William Longchamp. William Longchamp was the bishop of Ely and became Richard I’s chancellor in 1189. Longchamp created serious problems in England: he reopened the dispute between the archbishoprics of Canterbury and York for primacy of the English church; he became papal legate for a year and overstepped both his political and ecclesiastical authority when working with the barons and other clerics; he alienated royalty such as prince John I, and generally tried to rule like a tyrant. His tenure has been considered one of the primary faults of Richard I’s reign. The chronicles showed a marked similarity between the dual dilemmas of loyalty faced in the Becket affair, in which the writers had to support either king or church, and the Longchamp situation, in which they had to stand for either chancellor or prince. The circumstances are presented as parallel intentionally. Although there were differences of detail, the Becket affair could be used as a model of how to find a way through other crises of divided loyalties. Chapter Three similarly analyzes the impact that the accounts of the Sons’ Rebellion of 1173/1174 had on the depiction of John I during Richard I’s reign. The way the chroniclers treated the Sons’ Rebellion, and their reasons for doing so, was similar to their accounts of John I’s behaviour both for his time under Richard I’s authority and during his own reign. The chroniclers’ purpose in writing about the rebellion was to present John I with an example of poor behaviour or out-right treason from subordinate princes. The chroniclers showed what they thought made a good king. Their inconsistencies display the nuance and ambiguity inherent in their rhetorical approach. They intended their works to offer criticism of the king’s rule in order to

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5 Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 130. The chronicle was understood to include both sacred and mundane information, often to record worthy events and set them in a rational framework. They followed the idea of “history as a lesson in contempus mundi.”
describe good kingship, land, and power. From the tenth to the twelfth centuries, chroniclers debated the nature of the relationship between king and church. The use of historical analogy, and the ambiguity of their writings, allowed the chroniclers to make criticisms, and also protected them from political retribution.

Before the twentieth century, most historical inquiries based themselves on the chronicles, which were less accurate than administrative records. A preference developed among twentieth-century historians to use the seemingly-objective administrative records because, as Warren noted, “exclusive reliance on chronicle material...inevitably subjects the historian to the limitation of the chroniclers themselves.” Lewis Warren, notable for his books *King John* (1961) and *Henry II* (1973) understood that both chronicles and administrative records have their uses, and were best used together. Now the pendulum has swung back to examine the chronicles in their own right as cultural artefacts of the period rather than direct evidence of events.

Modern historical works on English political history have had a direct consequence on the study of twelfth-century chronicles. Kate Norgate’s *England Under the Angevin Kings*, first published in 1887, was the first study to tackle the subject of the Angevin Empire, and she coined the term, Angevin. She revolutionized the field, because the term “Angevin” changed the focus of discourse from the Plantagenets as English, or at best Anglo-Norman, to the consideration of them in the context of all the lands they held in their dominion. She described the Angevin Empire as lands joined

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7 Ibid.
under a single ruler rather than unified into a single Empire.\(^9\) She traced the history of the kings from tenth-century Anjou and its environs in order to establish the contextual importance of Anjou as the ancestral lands of the kings of England.\(^10\) By discussing the Anarchy she examined Geoffrey of Anjou's relative importance, and the consolidation of Henry II's position. She concentrated on Henry II's and Richard I's reigns in which they conquered and maintained the disparate collection of lands which made up their dominions. She also underscored their strength as kings at various points in their careers. Norgate argued that Henry II's nationality was neither English nor French because of the admixture of traditions in his rearing. This book, although slightly romanticized compared with modern approaches, remains insightful and paved the way for later Angevin studies.

Lewis Warren \textit{King John} (1961) and \textit{Henry II} (1973) set the standard that Gillingham then challenged. Warren used many archival sources and included the chronicles as evidence rather than as an artefact to be examined. These two historians have produced excellent research into Angevin kings of England. Warren's \textit{Henry II} (1973) gave a fair and balanced analysis of the king, with consideration of both the major crises and the tedium of his reign. Warren investigated the administration, personality and motives of Henry II, which gave the book an overall English view, although Warren noted the French origin of the king of England. Warren argued that Henry saw his dominions not as a union but a family association, and that he was exhausted by the misdemeanours of his sons. Warren's books are not without their

\(^{10}\) Ibid., vol. 1, chap. 2,3,4.
faults, however, such as the absence of Eleanor of Aquitaine in Warren’s narrative of Henry II’s life and reign. Warren and Gillingham disagreed on the key points of Richard I’s relationship with his queen, John I’s effectiveness as king, and the tone of his rule (whether he was a good or bad king). Warren thought Eleanor of Aquitaine bullied Richard I until he married Berengaria of Navarre. Gillingham, on the other hand, saw real affection and political shrewdness in their relationship.11 Warren denied that any chronicler knew John I personally, and asserted that their perceptions were inevitably distorted by being too removed from events.12 Gillingham in contrast, claimed that Diceto and Howden were serious historians of John I and knew him through their secular roles.13 Warren has produced useful work but needs a critical pruning to fit with modern work on the chronicles.

The most significant author in this field is John Gillingham, who has produced numerous works of insight. He tends to base much of his discussion upon chronicle records more often than he does on archival sources or the pipe rolls. Gillingham’s “Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre,” (1980), “Historians Without Hindsight,” (1999), “Royal Newsletters, Forgeries and English Historians,” (2000), and The English in the Twelfth Century, (2000) are particularly significant.14 He examines specific connections between the court and the wider political theatre in some places. In others he reshapes

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12 Warren, King John.
the narrative of the Angevin Empire, applying a different lens than that used by Norgate in the nineteenth century. “Historians Without Hindsight” examines the perception and portrayal of John I in certain chronicles and correctly concludes that Howden, Coggeshall and Diceto freely criticized John I before and after 1199. In his judgment, the John I they portrayed was unpredictable, erratic, and abandoned allies but misguidedy trusted Philip Augustus. He asserts that these were contemporary opinions, free of the bias created after the loss of Normandy in 1204. According to Gillingham, in both John I’s brief tenure as king, the time period about which the chroniclers Howden and Diceto wrote, and the time before, when he was just a lord, John I failed to meet the chroniclers’ standards, despite the fact that they were writing before the disasters and mischances that befell him in his later years.¹⁵ While Gillingham’s work is valuable, it does not aim to provide a nuanced, in-depth examination of the chronicles.

In 1990, Gabrielle Spiegel challenges the traditional reading of chronicles for their historical content. Instead, she argues, chronicles can more accurately tell us about the period in which they were written. In her article “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages” Spiegel argues that, in order to fully understand the meaning of the chronicle, it was not enough to learn about the historian himself. Rather, it was important to learn about what the work and the genre of history writing meant to its particular medieval audience – what Spiegel refers to as the ‘social logic’ of the work.¹⁶ In Romancing the Past (1993), Spiegel examines the influence of

¹⁶ Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” Speculum 65, no. 1 (January 1990): 59–86. This was republished as chapter 1 of The Past as Text.
patronage and audience on the chronicles' bias, whether royalist or not. Spiegel analyzes the connection between the French kings and the perception of kingship revealed by the chronicles. She focuses on thirteenth-century French sources, leaving room for similar work on twelfth-century Latin English chronicles. Her work fills the void between the fields of history and literature. The socio-political function of chronicles was to relate the past and explain its utility to the present. The “social logic of the text” paved the way for the application of postmodern interpretations on the examination of chronicles, such as the work of Chris Given-Wilson who explores the mental world of the late-medieval chronicler.

Chris Given-Wilson’s *Chronicles the Writing of History in Medieval England* (2004), studies chronicles of the later Middle Ages in their own right. Given-Wilson comments on the perspective, tone, and purposes of chronicles in general and specifically examines the purpose of these written histories. He also touches on some of the chronicles of the twelfth century that set a literary tradition, such as Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum* and William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. He argues that chronicles’ primary purpose was to remember or to immortalize events, and to that end the chroniclers often continued the work of their forbears as an act of preservation. Chronicles acted as a record of domestic, regional, or national history and for that reason, kings read chronicles and brought them into the

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20 Ibid., 59.
court. Consequently, they reflect a history of kings and institutions.\textsuperscript{21} Given-Wilson explained that chroniclers aimed to justify or explain events, and often used portents or prophecies and to provide a theoretical framework in which to do so.\textsuperscript{22} Chronicles also contained wordplay and obscure or rhetorical uses of Latin, what Given-Wilson describes as “verbal acrobatics for intellectuals,” because the chroniclers intended their work to be read by other scholars, and by kings.\textsuperscript{23} Although chronicles often discuss politics at length and the authors maintained connection at court, they were typically unsuitable vehicles for propaganda\textsuperscript{24}. Given-Wilson, like Spiegel, shows that medieval approaches to history differ from the modern and chronicles are artefacts of their time of creation as well as a written record.

Recognizing the inherent value of the medieval chronicles, Antonia Gransden pioneered the study of the English chronicles themselves. In \textit{Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307} (1974), she analyzed all of the chroniclers examined in this thesis. Her main interest was to describe the conditions and context in which each of these chroniclers wrote. In Gransden’s chapter devoted to the chroniclers who wrote during the reigns of Henry II and Richard I, she grouped them into those from religious orders, such as Newburgh and Devizes, and the secular writers, such as Diceto and Howden.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{flushleft}  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 57, 73, 85, 93.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 42.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 147.  
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 206–7.  
\end{flushleft}
Gransden did not frame her discussion around the presentation of the kings in the chronicles, nor around the chroniclers’ opinions, and so she did not connect the chroniclers directly to the Plantagenets except to note that literature flourished in their courts.26 Her interest was not in the content of the chronicles. Nor did she determine whether the political biases of the chroniclers were intended to be propaganda for the kings or critiques of royal policy. Gransden provided the field with detailed background information on the personas of the chroniclers and the character of the royal court. Her descriptions of individual chroniclers were particularly relevant to this thesis because the information about the authors informs any subsequent analysis of their work and its perspective. For example, Gransden argued correctly that because chroniclers were most often churchmen, and were not dependent on the king’s imperium, they were free to criticize the government with impunity.27 According to Gransden, Howden and Diceto shared a preoccupation with the administration and a concern for legal and constitutional matters.28 Most of her discussion of Howden centered around the question of authorship of the chronicle of Benedict of Peterborough not on the Chronica specifically.29 She identified some of the romance elements in Richard of Devizes’s chronicle.30 For Diceto, Gransden noted his public life and friendship with Longchamp, identified his Ymagines Historiarum as a contemporary account written after 1188, and noted that he was positive towards Henry II.31 While she identified this level of detail about the chroniclers, which is especially helpful, she did not investigate the

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 320.
28 Ibid., 220.
29 Ibid., 228ff.
30 Ibid., 248ff.
31 Ibid., 230–32.
consequences of Diceto’s position on his chronicle, which this thesis expands upon.

Gransden identified 1196 as the year Newburgh began his chronicle, and reminded us that Newburgh himself criticized Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* as fiction.\textsuperscript{32} Newburgh’s critical eye assured that his account of the Becket Affair was impartial.\textsuperscript{33} As the first major analysis of the chronicles, Gransden is valuable, but it only begins to scratch the surface of opportunities presented by the study of the chronicles.

Nancy Partner is one of the few historians to write specifically on Richard of Devizes, both in *Serious Entertainments* in 1977, and in “Richard of Devizes: The Monk Who Forgot to Be Medieval,” published in 2011.\textsuperscript{34} She identifies key elements of Devizes’ style, composition, and method of narration. She neither assesses how those elements affect Devizes’ message, nor establishes his political or ideological point of view. Partner’s discussion in “Richard of Devizes: The Monk Who Forgot to be Medieval,” asserts that although Devizes did not match stylistically the more typical trends of the medieval period, his work is the more valuable for it.\textsuperscript{35} *Serious Entertainments* also includes similar treatments of Henry of Huntingdon and William of Newburgh which makes it a trebly fruitful source for modern historical enquiries.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 264.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 265.


Partner, unlike Gransden, believes that Newburgh began to write in 1198, and died in 1201. She assesses the environment in which Newburgh wrote, an Augustinian priory, and concludes that it had surprisingly little effect on his perspective. She judges that his account is non-dogmatic and balanced. Partner comments as well on his personal skill as a historian and, in fact, the discussion seems more about the author than his work. Newburgh paid great attention to veracity, and often attributed his information to trustworthy eyewitnesses. Partner discusses at length Newburgh’s importance in ecclesiastical affairs. She argues that Newburgh’s attacks on Longchamp were because of the bishop’s actions against churchmen, and the chronicler’s dislike of churchmen in secular positions.

The most recent and relevant discussion on the chroniclers is Michael Staunton Historians of Angevin England, (2017). Following Spiegel and Given-Wilson, this study outlines the trends in twelfth-century chronicle tradition. Staunton persuasively and meticulously analyzes key themes of voice, perspective, patronage, and friendships that directed chroniclers’ accounts. His book covers a great many medieval authors and connects them to their historiographic precursors. He devotes one chapter each to nine writers: Roger of Howden, Ralph Diceto, William of Newburgh, Gerald of Wales, Gervase of Canterbury, Ralph of Coggeshall, Richard of Devizes, Walter Map, and Richard de Templo, whom Staunton also compares with other contemporaries to provide a context for the sources. He argues for the importance of the political

37 Ibid., 61–62.
38 Ibid., 92.
40 Ibid., 4–5.
landscape on the slant the chroniclers chose for their presentation of events. Major chapters on each author discuss their individual motivations and purposes for writing, and the authors’ own perceptions. Staunton’s persuasive analysis opens the door to further investigations. If there are limitations for Staunton’s book, they are that he ends his study with Richard I’s reign and does not follow the transition into John I’s. That seems, in part, due to the end dates of the sources because perceptions of John I are often found in later authors. Frequently, the chroniclers who wrote after John I’s loss of Normandy were characteristically unfriendly towards that king, whereas Howden and Diceto, whose works extended into the thirteenth century, were more nuanced than later writers (such as Matthew of Paris, or Ralph of Coggeshall). Staunton is the most recent in a long line of English historiographers and he provides a summative analysis of the twelfth-century chronicles.

While Gransden’s and Partner’s traditional approach has provided context for the chronicles, the newer methods started by the postmodernist movement of the 1990s, notably Spiegel, then more recently Given-Wilson and continued by Staunton, have used the chronicles as a means to study their creators rather than their contents. The influence of postmodernism entails the understanding that medieval people read the past as a way of understanding their present. This thesis follows Staunton’s footsteps, and examines the historiography of the twelfth century to examine Richard I’s rule through the eyes of the chroniclers. While the use of chronicles as evidence is traditional, the study of the chronicles themselves is a relatively new field with much space still available for further work. This thesis will attempt to add to this corpus of
literature a more in-depth examination of chronicler rhetoric, purpose, and critical approach.
Chapter 1 Political Context

The four chronicles were all written at the close of the twelfth century, between 1188 and 1202—a period largely corresponding to the reign of Richard I. Richard I often struggled against Philip of France over the issue of vassal rulership. England in this period faced several problems, primarily due to the abuse of power by Longchamp and John I. These issues affected the maintenance of the Angevin Empire, frequently leading to absentee rulership or administration from a distance.

Richard I often competed against Philip II due to their complex relationship as independent kings, but also as liege and vassal. Richard I had a dynastic claim to and was understood to rule the lands in Aquitaine, which he inherited from his mother in 1170. In practice, the border between Angevin lands and those held by the king of France was not consistent nor agreed upon, nor indeed did either claim match what was actually held and patrolled. Richard I owed fealty to Philip for the Angevin lands because he was the duke of Normandy and Aquitaine and count of Poitou and Anjou. Nevertheless, he remained an independent king and did not owe homage to anyone for England.

This relationship between liege and vassal was different from the experience of the Scottish king William the Lion with Henry II but did include border and land disputes similar to those that existed between England and Scotland. William the Lion had invaded England during the rebellion of 1173/1174 only to be defeated at Alnwick, taken prisoner, and forced to sign the Treaty of Falaise that made him a vassal of Henry for

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the entire kingdom of Scotland. Diceto pointed out that in 1189 William King of Scots did homage to Richard I, and purchased his freedom for 10,000 marks.\textsuperscript{42} This act released William from the terms of the Treaty of Falaise and removed any control Richard I might have had over Scotland.

Ironically, after releasing William the Lion from the terms set by Falaise, Richard I himself remained a vassal of Philip II. The contrast between the two kings often expressed itself through border disputes and positioning for power abroad. According to Newburgh, Richard I and Philip II had already begun to engage in border disputes during Henry II’s reign, regarding possession of Chinon in 1188.\textsuperscript{43} Therefore, continental holdings were vulnerable to sedition orchestrated by the French king and the southern French lords, particularly in the county of Poitou which was traditionally held by the dukes of Aquitaine. The barons of Poitou maintained their tradition of feuding to settle their own inter-baronial conflicts and were not as directly under the command of the king of England as were the English. Henry II and his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine had addressed this problem with itinerant ceremonies and visits to Aquitaine. Richard I solved it by staying almost permanently on the continent when not on crusade or in captivity. To complicate matters, it was not just the outside influence of the Capetians that Richard I combatted but also the internal problems. The display of power was necessary, especially because these were the heartlands of the Angevin Empire. According to Gillingham, Plantagenet monarchs governed England tightly, other lands more lightly.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Diceto, \textit{Opera}, 1965, 2:72.  
\textsuperscript{43} Newburgh, \textit{History of William of Newburgh}, 549.  
The competitive situation between Philip and Richard I influenced Richard I’s decision to marry Berengaria of Navarre. Richard I had been betrothed to marry Alice, the sister of Philip Augustus but ended that obligation because of an alleged affair between her and his father. Breaking the engagement forestalled an alliance with the Capetians. Instead, Richard I allied with Navarre through marriage. Berengaria of Navarre joined Richard I in Sicily and later married him in Cyprus. Navarre was relevant to Richard I’s interests despite its relatively small size in Richard I’s reign, especially between 1191 and 1194 because it bordered on the southern fringe of the Angevin Empire. An alliance with Navarre would ensure that English-controlled lands would not be pinched between Isle-de-France and Navarre. Richard I also had a personal interest in Navarre because he was primarily a southern French lord by culture and temperament.

Compared to England, Angevin continental lands were relatively unstable. English-held-continental lands were the regions more likely to see rebellions and high visibility was needed to keep the lands from falling under the control of the Capetian king, Philip. Visibility took the form of Royal presence. The continental lands were also

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46 Ibid., 157.
47 Martin Aurell, The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224, trans. David Crouch (Harlow: Person Education Ltd, 2007), 88. Navarre was essential to his success twice during his reign. The first occasion occurred in 1192 while Richard I was on crusade, Philip and the count of Flanders attempted to seize Normandy, and Berengaria’s brother Sancho raised and led an army in Richard I’s defence, Gillingham, “Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre,” 167. The second occurred after Richard I’s release from captivity in 1194. John I and Philip tried to invade Aquitaine and incite the duchy to secede, but Sancho raised an army immediately on behalf of Richard I and transported the king to Toulouse in a lightning-fast response, Gillingham, The Angevin Empire, 47. And Jean Flori, Richard the Lionheart King and Knight, trans. Jean Birrell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 157. Sancho also helped to defend the Angevin Empire in 1194 against the alliance John I and Philip after John I’s defection. Furthermore, a son of king Sancho was sent as a hostage to Germany to pay Richard I’s ransom Gillingham, “Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre,” 167.
more divided than those in England, with greater differences between duchies than existed in English counties: Normandy required a different style of rule than Poitou.\(^\text{48}\)

The threat of Capetian invasion of Angevin territories was so strong that when Richard I inherited, he was invested as duke of Normandy before his coronation as king of England. This choice was more than simple expediency. He had been across the channel already because it ensured that the core of Anglo-Norman lands remained intact throughout the transition between rulers. Newburgh reported that Normandy changed size between 1189 and 1194.\(^\text{49}\) Philip had reclaimed some of the border of Normandy during Richard I’s captivity. Newburgh emphasized that upon Richard I’s return he took back the castle in the valley of Rulli, returning the borders to their traditional limits.\(^\text{50}\) Newburgh presented Richard I’s successful defence of territory against Philip II.

Richard I and Philip’s competitiveness expressed itself on crusade as well. In 1189/1190 Richard I prepared for the Third Crusade. He had taken the Cross in 1187 and had been the first king of England to do so; his father had promised to, but never did. For that reason, Richard I was a popular figure. On crusade, Richard I stopped first in Sicily then again in Cyprus. In Sicily it became apparent that Richard I and Philip governed their affairs quite differently. Philip was said to overlook crimes or misdemeanours of his soldiers whereas Richard I famously gave decisive judgement both to his own soldiers and to the locals. For this reason, Richard of Devizes in his chronicle compared Richard I to a lion and Philip to a lamb, helping to establish Richard

\(^\text{49}\) Ibid., 624.
\(^\text{50}\) Ibid., 645.
I's famous epithet. Devizes recorded that, while travelling through Scilly at the beginning of the crusade, the kings of England and France had dealings with the local Griffones. When crimes were committed the two kings judged their cases very differently. Philip of France made no judgement for or against his own troops and ignored the complaints. King Richard I on the other hand judged all cases in the regions near him and tried them according to his law whether they were locals or not. Richard of Devizes stated:

The king of France, whatever the transgression his people committed, or whatever offence was committed against them, took no notice and held his peace; the king of England esteeming the country of those implicated in guilt as a matter of no consequence, considered every man his own, and left no transgression unpunished, wherefore the one was called a Lamb by the Griffones, the other obtained the name of a Lion.

Due to his audacious nature and his policies the local Greek Sicilians called him “Lion,” and praised his sense of justice. Devizes emphasized Richard I’s greater authority and power through this contrast. The chronicler even compared Philip to a lamb, recording that Philip was the lesser lord between them despite their oaths of homage. Richard I outshone Philip again when he stopped to conquer Cyprus before he continued to the Holy Land. Cyprus was relatively small but was a rich port and provided an excellent base from which to control resources for the European armies, while simultaneously denying Saladin's forces access to the port.

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51 Broughton, The Legends of King Richard I Coeur De Lion, 115.
While on crusade Richard I and Philip’s friendship broke down. It had started to degrade in Sicily, and by the siege of Acre the two kings held a mutual enmity so great that Philip abandoned the crusade to return to France, with the intention both to maintain his lands and to undermine Richard I’s continental lands. In Howden’s depiction of Richard I and Philip they were often in conflict concerning their borders, a conflict in which Richard I appeared more successful. Because of their history of land disputes, Richard I and Philip II signed a treaty before they left for crusade, agreeing to defend each other’s lands as if they were their own. Howden further reinforced this agreement when he recorded Philip’s departure from Acre. Richard I gave his permission, only if Philip left in peace the territories and subjects of the king of England. The chronicler made sure to indicate that Philip needed Richard I’s permission to leave. Even though Richard I was the vassal, Howden expressed Richard I’s authority to command Philip not to cross into his territory. The king of France did not obey and attempted to incite Normandy to rebel against Richard I. Howden noted with pride that the men of Normandy stayed loyal to Richard I and denounced Philip. Philip was unable to annex Normandy because his own barons refused to harass the lands of a king away on crusade. Philip also blamed Richard I for the murder of the Marquis of Jerusalem, not without some evidence, which damaged Richard I’s position and created an international incident. For this and for his generally highhanded manner when in control of crusader forces, several other lords developed a personal dislike of Richard I.

54 Ibid., 2:218.  
55 Ibid., 2:270.  
56 Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, 44.  
Newburgh indicated that Richard I’s authority over crusader forces irritated Philip.

Newburgh recorded:

The illustrious king of England, departing Cyprus...landed with all his forces at Ptolemais (Acre) and there he was received by all the chiefs and the whole army with a degree of joy proportionable to the anxiety with which he had been looked for. His surpassing glory, however, had already begun to vex the king of France, and he could with difficulty conceal the venomous workings of his soul on beholding himself far inferior in strength and resources.⁵⁸

Newburgh indicated Richard I’s dominance and superiority over Philip. This was a reversal of the previous vassal relationship shown by Newburgh between Henry and William after 1174, in which Henry was the dominant lord and William the lesser. Despite Richard I’s vassal status, Newburgh emphasized his king’s power and recognized authority over Philip. Richard I, the vassal, was the greater and the chronicler made sure to record it in that way.

Border disputes and Philip II were not the only threats to stability during the reign of Richard I. Richard I was absent from England from 1190 to 1194. During the first two years he led the Third Crusade and the last year and approximately eight months he was held captive by the Holy Roman Emperor.⁵⁹ During his absence, the country seemed to descend into chaos. While he was away Richard I did not succeed in

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⁵⁸ Ibid., 589; Newburgh, Historia Rerum Anglicarum, 1964, 1:352–53. “illustris itaque rex Anglorum...a Cypro digressus, Tholomaidae quae Acra vulgo nunc dicitur, cum univrso comitatu suo applicuit et a cunctis principibus omnique exercitu tanto suspicis est gaudio quanto prius desiderio fuerat exspectatus. Porro regem Francorum tanta ejus iam vere coeperat, et cordis sui austeris tabificos aere dissimulabat, cum se intueretur viribus et opibus longe imparem, illum vero propter virium opumque magnitudinem et successuum claritatem excellentius eminere”

keeping the peace in England. After his return, however, he re-established stability there until his death.

Based on his culture and birth, Richard I was not intended to become king, but became heir through his elder brother’s death. Richard I inherited an “empire” or “conglomerate”—no term quite describes it accurately— that he would have to defend. Richard I’s experience leading armies gave him sufficient skill to administer and to manage resources. As king, these skills allowed him to govern regions efficiently, and his reputation as what modern historians call a “general” led his contemporaries to think of him as the ideal of kingship. Richard I experienced considerable success on his campaign but was unable to retake Jerusalem. Despite that, his contemporaries believed that the crusade was fruitful and considered his actions heroic and a victory, which was reflected in the chroniclers’ descriptions.

In 1193, on the return trip to Europe from the crusade, Richard I’s ships faced a storm and harboured in the Adriatic. There the duke of Austria, whom Richard I had ostracized while on crusade, captured him and held him as a prisoner. The duke was a vassal of the Holy Roman Emperor and turned Richard I over to him. Richard I was held for eighteen months and his incarceration created a power vacuum in England. Before he left Richard I had tried to establish a structure that could survive his absence. He had: appointed new administrative officers, accepted his close advisor William Longchamp as his chancellor, and left his family John I and Eleanor to act as regents. His plan backfired, however, due to the desire for individual power held by both

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60 A particularly poetic description of this common trope can be found in Frank McLynn, Richard and John: Kings at War (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2007).
61 For the relationship between Richard and Leopold of Austria Ibid., 6, 222, 224–26, 232–38, 333.
Longchamp and John I, which divided the kingdom between differing sources of royal authority. Because the administration of England, especially during the tenure of the justiciar Hubert Walter, could handle long absences of the king and had been designed for that purpose before Richard I left for crusade, Richard I did not receive criticism from the chroniclers during his absence. That criticism fell on Longchamp and John I instead for their, in the chroniclers’ view, tyranny and treachery.

On the other hand, the action of his chancellor, William Longchamp, the bishop of Ely, combined with Richard I’s removal from the oversight of the administration except for the infrequent letter, allowed Longchamp to rule England as he pleased. Although it was safer to criticize a chancellor than a king, Longchamp was especially unpopular in England and set himself against John I, Richard I’s younger brother. Longchamp accrued additional authority when he became papal legate in 1190 which, by almost all accounts, he abused. In addition to an imperious and arrogant attitude, Longchamp created dissension among churchmen when he re-opened the York dispute. York and Canterbury had been rivals for supremacy over the English church. By the twelfth century, power had settled with Canterbury until the start of Richard I’s reign. One of Richard I’s first acts was to firmly place his illegitimate brother Geoffrey as archbishop of York. Henry II had planned Geoffrey for the position however the prince had managed to elude ordination, aiming to set himself as Richard I’s rival for the throne. The situation left Geoffrey resentful of Richard I’s authority. Richard I had banned Geoffrey from England, however the bishop secretly arrived at Dover only to be

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62 I treat the chaos of Longchamp in Chapter 2, and John I’s erratic behaviour in Chapter 3.
arrested on Longchamp’s orders. Longchamp and Geoffrey clashed concerning church authority; both wanting to claim as much power for himself as he could.

Not content with ruling the church, Longchamp tried to act the king and seized the royal castle of Lincoln. John I, being the strongest lord, opposed him and garrisoned his own castles of Tickhill and Nottingham, partially dividing England between their rival authorities. John I’s reaction was not an attempt to defend Richard I’s authority but rather served as a means to claim power for himself. Each believed the castles and highest authority was his, in Richard I’s absence. Between them, Longchamp and John I created such chaos that the barons deposed Longchamp as chancellor, and replaced him with Walter, archbishop of Rouen. Gillingham points out that this replacement was a fail-safe, in accordance with the instructions Richard I left before going on crusade. Longchamp and John I threatened civil war and could not keep the peace.

John I’s problematic leadership not only destabilised his brother’s reign but extended into his own reign after Richard I’s death. John I was a complex character. He was firm in his authority and inconsistent in his loyalty, which became a theme for his critics to use in their literature, both Latin and vernacular, twenty-five years before Magna Carta. His father had not intended John I to become king, therefore he had him trained as an administrator, skilled in legislation and jurisprudence. John I betrayed Richard I and several times allied with the king of France between 1193 and 1199, which made him a traitor, and he was repeatedly banned from entering England. John I allied with Philip of France and openly rebelled against Richard I, claiming royal castles

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63 Gillingham, The Angevin Empire, 43.
64 It is the opinion of this author that John I was a good lawyer, and therefore a bad king.
for himself. Together Philip and John I conspired to prevent his release. As a result of the intercession of Eleanor and the chancellor, the English barons and clergy paid a tax that formed most of Richard I’s ransom of 150,000 marks; the rest they paid in hostages to the Emperor. This ransom did not beggar England, but it was still a substantial sum. Paradoxically, the need to acquire this payment strengthened the English bureaucracy. After Richard I returned, he reinstated Longchamp as chancellor, and accepted John I back, but he confiscated John I’s castles because he did not trust him. The head officer of Richard I’s government was the justiciar Hubert Walter, who had accompanied him on crusade; through him Richard I ruled in absentia but maintained immediate oversight or veto of any decision.

When Richard I returned from captivity he held another coronation; the sources call it a coronation but it was a formal crown wearing, the kind his father had had no need for, to reaffirm that he was indeed king of England despite the fact he had become a vassal of the Holy Roman Emperor in order to secure his release. Once back, Richard I intended to re-establish his authority, and to take back the lands that Philip had encroached upon during his absence. To that end, and because of the situation of the continental lands, Richard I spent most of the remainder of his reign on the Continent. While he governed England from a distance, he engaged in an on-and-off war with the Capetians. Richard I died at Chalus in Poitou in 1199 while putting down a

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66 Ruled in absence Ibid., 141.
67 After the year 1158, he and Eleanor did not wear their crowns in England, because their authority was not challenged, and the symbolic image of the crown was unnecessary. Here I follow Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224*, 119. See also Richard Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 128–29.
revolt instigated in part by Philip’s machinations. John I also saw this threat, and married Isabelle of Angoulême to maintain the region.68

After Richard I died in 1199, John I had the strongest claim to the throne, although his nephew Arthur of Brittany, the son of Geoffrey, John I’s older brother, was his rival. The procedures of primogeniture and inheritance were not fixed in the twelfth century, and for that reason it was unclear who had the strongest dynastic claim. In theory the succession should have followed the older brother or his heir. Richard I had previously in 1190 named Arthur his heir, but by 1199 Richard I had forgiven John I, and some sources claim, ordered his followers upon his death to swear fealty to John I. During Richard I’s captivity, the barons swore to accept John I as Richard I’s heir if he had no children. Nevertheless, Arthur was used as a figurehead in order to complicate John I’s accession. John I also struggled to control Arthur when the young duke had allied with Philip Augustus’ court as the true inheritor to Richard I’s French feudal holdings. From 1199 to 1201 John I struggled to reclaim the young prince, and to unequivocally be king.69 During the dispute, John I alienated some lords who had been among Richard I’s most important allies, such as Baldwin of Flanders, Louis of Blois, and the marquis of Montferrat.70 While John I might have held the throne, he deprived himself of powerful networks that held Angevin lands on the continent stable. Eventually, John I quashed all counter-play with the capture of Arthur in 1203, whom he held and probably murdered to secure the throne. Although all the evidence is

68 Clanchy, England and Its Rulers 1066-1272, 186.
70 McLynn, Richard and John: Kings at War, 282.
circumstantial, at the time John I was accused of murdering his nephew in the same year and it is accepted that he did so.

John I’s marriage alliances exacerbated already irritated tempers in England. John I had, at Richard I’s direction, married Isabelle of Gloucester 1189. Henry II had planned the marriage earlier in his reign, but John I divorced her in 1199 X 1200, and instead married Isabelle of Angoulême.\textsuperscript{71} This divorce was a scandal further enflamed by the fact that Isabelle of Angoulême was already engaged to Hugh le Brun. Breaking their engagement created animosity between baron and king and resulted in a court ruling under Philip Augustus, which led directly to the loss of Normandy in 1204.\textsuperscript{72} John I tried and failed to control his continental lands, and eventually English barons refused to raise armies at his call. Eventually, John I became a capable general but only after his failures on the continent. John I also continued Henry II’s legal reforms, and extended the arm of the court system, enabling both the extension of the king’s justice and also exploiting the justice system for profit.

Because John I’s behaviour under Richard I contravened the behaviour expected of a king, his contemporaries disdained him. Later, his paranoid and erratic personality and behaviour alienated some English barons, which led to Magna Carta and other governmental changes. But the chronicles here examined terminate ultimately in 1202, so none of those events coloured the image they later presented, which was uncomplimentary to say the least.

\textsuperscript{72} Richardson, “The Marriage and Coronation of Isabelle of Angoulême,” 299.
The events of the later twelfth century were at the forefront in the minds of the medieval historians under study in this thesis. Richard I’s feudal relationship with Philip II influenced Richard I’s application of power and political goals. The two kings’ political rivalry on crusade drove them apart and led to Richard I’s captivity by the Holy Roman Emperor, as well as feuds along the borders of Aquitaine, Normandy, and Poitou. Richard I and Philip’s animosity additionally provided John I with a powerful ally to work against his brother. Richard I’s absence led to a leadership void in England. William Longchamp attempted to seize power for himself only to be met with resistance from John I and the barons. After a year of tyranny, the barons removed Longchamp as chancellor. Despite this abrupt change, the chroniclers discussed Richard I’s reign positively and focussed their criticisms on Longchamp, John I, and Philip. Richard I’s relationship with his brother John I proved unstable when John I repeatedly attempted to wrest control over the kingdom for himself. Only after betraying his brother and most likely murdering his nephew, Arthur, was John I able to become king, only to face criticism from all sides. These political upheavals directly shaped the content of the chronicles. These events will be discussed in more detail as they pertain to the chroniclers’ depictions and distortion of the narrative of the focus period.
Chapter 2 The Becket Affair and the Tyranny of Longchamp

The chroniclers writing in the reign of Richard I used several historical episodes as a political commentary on contemporary events. These chroniclers employed the Becket Affair twenty years earlier as an historical allusion for the conflict with the church caused by Longchamp in the 1190s. Within these chronicles, the tyranny which Henry II exercised over the church, which led to the assassination of Thomas Becket, was a veiled criticism of the tyranny of the English church, exercised by Richard I’s chancellor, William Longchamp. Discussion of the Becket Affair provided the chroniclers a point of reference to discuss Longchamp through parallels and reversals. Both Becket and Longchamp were chancellors of England, in the former’s case he was considered a martyr who had been wrongly attacked by the king. For the latter, he was considered a tyrant who abused his authority and needed to be removed.

As a young man, Henry II had befriended Thomas Becket, a deacon. They agreed on nearly every point of policy; Henry had been quick to make him his chancellor. A split occurred in their relationship when Becket became the archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. For the next eight years Henry and Becket quarreled over the power of the king and the authority of the church. Henry at one point banished Becket from England, then allowed him to return, the chancellor sought papal arbitration and interdict. At Christmas 1170 four of Henry’s knights entered Canterbury cathedral and murdered Becket at his altar. It is unclear whether these knights acted upon Henry’s direct order or on his suggestion, nevertheless Henry still received blame for the crime.

The tyranny of the king fueled the Becket Affair, but it was the tyranny of the royal chancellor that shaped Longchamp’s regency. While the Chancellor was not the king,
he wielded royal authority during the king’s absence. The chancellor thematically represented Richard I’s authority in these chronicles. In the Becket Affair, chroniclers had had to choose between church and king. In Longchamp’s case, on the other hand, there was no challenging choice to be made. He was just a tyrant. In both examples chroniclers supported good government and kingship but expressed that support through different methods and examples. They denounced Henry II for his action but supported his rule because he was king. Longchamp had no such protection from their scrutiny. The Becket Affair represented the first and most infamous challenge of Henry II’s reign. In contrast, Longchamp represented both the king’s authority and the church’s, as papal legate, and he tyrannized England. The chroniclers used Longchamp as a proxy for Richard I, and for the most part aimed their chronicles to criticize the chancellor. Diceto opposed this trend because he was friends with Longchamp and sought to support him instead. During the Becket Affair the chroniclers criticized the king and idealized the chancellor; under Longchamp they disparaged the chancellor instead.

From a comparative analysis of the accounts of the Becket Affair and Longchamp’s England, these two chancellors illustrate the political concerns of the focus period. Although little is known for certain about readership numbers for the chronicles, they are known to have been circulated throughout the network of monastic houses as well as being read by the king and various of his advisors. A didactic element to the chronicles’ parallel treatment of these two crises can therefore be posited. The chroniclers criticized Henry for his role in the Becket Affair, however their critiques were even-handed or nuanced between king and chancellor. In contrast, during Longchamp’s tenure, the chroniclers criticized the chancellor directly and vehemently.
The dispute had brought Henry into conflict with the pope. This event was more than the crime of murder, rather it was the heinous murder of a cleric, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England. When Newburgh wrote his account of this schism, he did so for the benefit of Henry’s reputation. Newburgh blamed the clergy for their pompous attitudes and their bickering, rather than Henry’s violent temper or his frayed relationship with Becket. This assertion effectively denied Henry’s culpability in the Affair. Furthermore, Newburgh downplayed Henry’s anger at the archbishop of Canterbury.\(^73\) This is of great significance because Henry’s dispute with Becket was one of the most infamous and widespread scandals of the period, for which Henry was repeatedly threatened with interdict.\(^74\) William of Newburgh blatantly diminished the blame he directed at Henry. Although dramatic because of the nature of the dispute, William of Newburgh’s interpretation is unlikely to have caused immediate ripples, because he was writing later, under Richard I. This interpretation benefitted from hindsight (given that Newburgh wrote at least twenty years after Becket’s murder) and was most likely intended for the instruction of Henry’s sons.\(^75\) It indicated Newburgh’s perspective and purpose—to raise the reputation of the king, in this case Henry II, and by extension Richard I. But it was an odd episode because most other chronicles that cover the Becket Affair, even Howden’s, who was Henry’s clerk, were highly critical of

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the king. Newburgh stated outright that he was not a follower of Becket’s cult, and refused to revere the martyr, and from the tone of his account, Newburgh disapproved of both Henry II’s and Becket’s actions. Newburgh described how the breakdown in Henry II and Becket’s relationship was due to “useless obstinacy arising from laudable zeal,” as Howlett noted in the Rolls Series edition of Newburgh’s chronicle. Newburgh attempted to repair Henry II’s reputation through his narration of the Becket Affair.

While the chroniclers occasionally tried to minimize the damage done to the king’s reputation as a result of the Becket Affair, most of their commentary on this issue was overtly negative. This view was because the chroniclers generally did not approve of Henry II’s actions, and William of Newburgh did not approve of either king or bishop. The English clergy and laity latched onto Becket and almost immediately accepted him as a saint and martyr. Due to the popularity of the cult, as well as papal and political pressure, Henry II was forced to accept Becket’s martyrdom and seek penance. Becket’s murder had disastrous consequences for Henry II.

When Howden discussed Becket, the chronicler changed his writing style from a basic annal to a section of direct narration and added details by inserting letters that showed the development of the dispute, from all sides. He used primary evidence to support his interpretation as well as the responses of each side and their supporters. Howden, who usually supported Henry II, could not condone the way in which Henry II had antagonized Becket, leading ultimately to his murder. Early in his account of Henry

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II’s reign Howden foreshadowed Becket’s death. He started in the annal for 1157, with the words “[Henry II] conferred the chancellorship upon Thomas, archdeacon of Canterbury, and bestowed on him many revenues, both ecclesiastical and of a secular nature, and received him so much into his esteem and familiarity, that throughout the kingdom there was no one his equal, save the king alone.” Howden has this in the wrong date, Becket was made chancellor in 1154.

William of Newburgh similarly called Becket “second to none.” These passages accomplished two goals: first, they explained how important Becket was and showed his connection to Henry II; second, they also served to remind the reader that Becket was important later, when he died. Every subsequent mention of Becket before the annal for 1170/1171 was set up to lead to the murder and called Becket “saint” before the annal that recorded his canonization. This reminder established that Becket’s was generally the preferred faction because he was a saint and martyr, while Henry II was merely a power-hungry king. Concerning the saintliness, Diceto included descriptions of his miracles after his martyrdom, but only referred to him as a martyr after his death, unlike the other chroniclers who called the archbishop future martyr during their accounts of the Affair while they foreshadowed his death.

Diceto treated the Becket Affair similarly to Howden, but he put Becket’s appointment as chancellor in the annal for 1154. Diceto placed this section between

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two important descriptions of Henry II’s legitimacy: after the chronicler traced Henry II’s lineage back to Noah and before the papal bull Laudabiliter. Such placement situated Becket as central to Henry II’s authority from the very beginning of his rule. Diceto had more negative things to say about Henry II than he had positive, although initially he admired Henry II. Most of the chronicler’s criticisms stemmed from the Becket Affair and his churchman’s bias; he was in London during the conflict with the king and was a firm supporter of the archbishop. Before and during the Becket Affair and Becket’s death Diceto’s Ymagines Historiarum was anti-Henry. After Becket’s death, Diceto’s chronicle presented a mixed picture. It maintained a pro-Royal outlook but included both praise and criticism for Henry II.

Diceto contained anti-Henry sentiments that portrayed the king abusing his power. The entry for 1164 addressed Henry II putting Thomas Becket on trial for treason, and Diceto said “lest they condemn him unjustly and call it justice.” Diceto became contemporary to the events he recorded in 1188, and was writing 1186 to 1188; with that in mind, this 1164 entry would have been recorded in Henry II’s reign and not an indirect reminder for Longchamp to behave responsibly. Howden likewise acknowledged that Henry II acted petulantly against Becket, when the king ordered the arrest of anyone carrying letters of interdict, or working for Becket, as a traitor. Howden noted that Henry II banished Becket’s family in order to distress the bishop.

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81 Laudabiliter was a famous papal bull issued in 1155 that authorized Henry II to conquer Ireland.
82 Gransden, Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307, 232.
83 Diceto, Opera, 1965, 1:313.
84 Howden, Annals of Roger of Howden, 1853, 1:269; Howden, Chronica, 1964, 1:231.
Howden was unusually direct in his condemnation of the king’s action. He rebuked Henry II directly with the insult

> What art thou doing, thou tyrant? What madness is it that hath overcome thee, that thou shouldst thus drive away from thy kingdom those who have done you no injury, and in whose mouth no guile has been found? There is no reason why the issue of the banished, so long as they observe the laws, should not live in the city!  

It was rare to insult Henry II directly, but Howden was a royal clerk who had lived through the Becket Affair, and published his chronicle long after the murder, once tempers had cooled. This passage indicated Howden’s contemporary opinion because of his personal experience and perspective, as well as the grammatical shift from past tense narration to present tense direct speech. Howden was direct and purposeful in his condemnation of the king, naming him “tyrant” and firmly put himself on Becket’s side in his account. Howden followed this authorial interjection with letters from the pope that called Henry II highhanded.  

Although Howden structured his account to show that Henry II was the party responsible for the dispute and openly wrote against the king, the chronicler stopped short of blaming Henry II for the murder. He did, however, declare that the Son’s Rebellion was retribution for Becket’s murder. Newburgh wrote similarly of the expulsion, “the king of England, consequently, was furiously enraged at his absence; and, giving way to unbridled passion more than became a king, took an unbecoming and pitiful kind of revenge, by banishing all the archbishop’s relatives out of

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86 For further discussion of authorial interjections see Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 149.
England.” Newburgh was not as direct nor vehement as Howden—a rarity!—but he did stress the pettiness of the king and that his actions were driven by revenge, not proper Christian, or kingly, action. Such an assessment was in keeping with Newburgh’s reputation as a moralistic writer.

From the tone and content of Howden’s entries for 1169, Howden disapproved of Henry II’s actions, and believed that the king deserved the interdict, and wanted to present Henry II on the defensive, in fear of the interdict, and not in control of the situation. Diceto further added to this image; he recorded repeated councils and meetings where king and bishop failed to agree, and put the impetus for that failure on Henry II. Furthermore, Diceto’s account was biased because he disapproved of Henry II’s goal to punish clergy. From annals before Becket’s murder, 1164 Diceto wrote “the king of the English wanting that he alone ought to decide the crimes with severe punishment…clerics arrested by his justiciars, were flogged in public.” Diceto, like other churchmen judged that Henry II had overstretched his authority over the church.

Diceto’s treatment of the Becket Affair was complicated. On one side his account reflected this sentiment, however he was constrained on the other by his royal allegiance. Both Staunton and Gillingham claim that Diceto avoided judgment on the

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90 Diceto, *Opera*, 1965, 1:313. “rex anglorum volens in singulis ut diecebat maleficia debita cum severitate punier…cerlicos a suis justiciariis in publico flagitio”
Becket Affair. But it seems more likely that Diceto, as a Becket supporter, did criticize Henry II but not vehemently. His criticism was between the lines, reflecting his complicated position. Unlike, Newburgh, Diceto approved of churchmen holding secular offices. He did not blame Henry II directly for Becket’s murder, but the chronicler made his position clear through his praise for Becket. He drew attention to Becket’s miracles, and immediately accepted him as a martyr. Diceto began writing under Henry II, and because of his support for the archbishop, he seems to have quickly joined the Becket cult. Unlike Howden, Diceto only called the archbishop a martyr after his death, and therefore his account did not contain indications of revision, but instead formed a more nuanced depiction rather than Howden’s rhetorical argumentation.

Unlike Diceto’s nuance, Newburgh criticized Henry II with alacrity. Newburgh praised Becket, and emphasized the anger, indeed irrationality, that drove the king’s actions. Newburgh recorded that Henry II was “enraged beyond measure.”

Newburgh’s own opinion shone through with the words “I by no means deem that these actions of this venerable man are worthy of commendation, however they might proceed from laudable zeal, because no benefit would result therefrom, and they only the more inflamed the royal anger.” These two passages highlighted the rage of the king, which caused him to act inappropriately, and also acknowledged that Becket made his own mistakes. These phrases indicated that Newburgh disapproved of both the

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91 Staunton, “Thomas Becket in the Chronicles,” 99; Gillingham, “Royal Newsletters, Forgeries and English Historians: Some Links between Court and History in the Reign of Richard I.”
92 Newburgh, History of William of Newburgh, 467; Newburgh, Historia Rerum Anglicarum, 1964, 1:142. “tanto vehementius regius in eum furor efferbuit, quanto ipse regali magnificantiae ratione”
93 Newburgh, History of William of Newburgh, 467. Newburgh, Historia Rerum Anglicarum, 1964, 1:142–43. “plane ergo in viro illo venerabili, ca, quae ita ab ipso acta sunt tut nulla exinde proveniret utilitas, sed furor tantum accenderetur regius”
king’s and the archbishop’s behaviour. Newburgh “was a thoughtful and nuanced writer,”\(^{94}\) thus he was not on Becket’s side, because the chancellor was in his opinion, acting out to be purposefully irritating. This assessment meant that his comments on the indecency of Henry II’s actions were his own opinion and did not stem from pious loyalty to the martyr. He went on to say that he was not suited to judge such a great man but found his actions illogical. Newburgh seemed to be trying to keep himself out of the Becket dispute directly.

Henry II desired direct control over the affairs in his kingdom and a major point of his policy was an attempt to control the church, one that expressed itself through the schism of the Becket Affair. On that theme, William of Newburgh wrote “the king was exasperated by the complaints of some of them, and grew angry and indignant beyond measure and losing mastery of himself, in the heat of his exuberant passion, from the abundance of his perturbed spirit, poured forth language of indiscretion.”\(^{95}\) Here Newburgh did not directly claim that Henry II ordered Becket’s death, but all of the chroniclers stressed Henry II’s culpability, and held him accountable for the crime. Newburgh blamed a fit of passion and indiscretion for Henry II’s action, suggesting it was done without malice or cunning, not intended or thought out, but impulsive and a mistake. Henry II had a tyrannical and authoritative approach to kingship, which Becket had previously thrived alongside, but after his elevation he could not tolerate so much royal influence over ecclesiastical affairs. The next few years saw the break-down of the king’s and bishop’s relationship which culminated in the murder of the archbishop in his

\(^{94}\) Staunton, “Thomas Becket in the Chronicles,” 98.  
cathedral in December 1170. In this case the chroniclers presented Henry II as a tyrant, unlike during Richard I’s reign when they presented the chancellor as overstepping his authority.

These three chroniclers intentionally wrote their sections on the Becket Affair with the aim of praising Becket and criticizing Henry II. In contrast, in their accounts of Longchamp, the opposite was true. This intent was particularly apparent in Howden’s chronicle, when he called Becket “archbishop and future martyr.”96 This phrase and others like it are evidence that Howden intentionally reworked and reworded events in the archbishop’s favour, in order to promote Becket’s innocence and the injustice of his murder. Howden revised his earlier chronicle, Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi, to create the account of the Becket Affair that appeared in his Chronica.97 The section in the Chronica was therefore edited and adapted for this particular goal; Howden had more freedom to condemn Henry II after the king’s death. The chronicler criticized Henry II indirectly as well by declaring that his four knights who killed Becket were the “sworn satellites of Satan” both insulting those knights themselves and the lord whose orders they purported to obey. Howden followed that statement with a letter from Theobold of Blois, who offered to present himself as witness to Henry II’s guilt.98 It was not uncommon for Howden to include letters in his chronicle; they are a unique characteristic of his composition. The inclusion of this letter specifically revealed that Howden hid his criticism behind another’s name, while he ostensibly presented

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someone else’s opinion. Howden was pro-Becket during the dispute but fell short of
directly describing Henry II as a murderer. Nevertheless, that did not stop Howden from
allowing others to label him in that way. All the chroniclers wrote about the great extent
of Becket’s piety, and clearly admired him. Howden also used Jesus-imagery, and
claimed the martyr turned water to wine after his return from exile.99 These accounts
were highly partisan in that they presented an idealized image of Becket as a
counterpoint to Henry II’s authority, one that must be respected because he had the
approval of a higher power. The result was that the chroniclers held Becket in much
greater esteem than the king; the king’s reputation was partially at the whim of these
writers. This situation was distinctly different than their treatment of Longchamp when
they praised the king and criticized the chancellor.

The chroniclers’ criticism of Henry II, because of his treatment of Becket, was not
restricted to the accounts of Becket’s death, but also permeated the narratives of the
Sons’ Rebellion. Although the chroniclers sometimes mitigated the damage to Henry II’s
reputation concerning the Son’s Rebellion, they were adamant that it occurred because
of Becket’s murder. This murder was a direct consequence of the coronation of Henry
II’s eldest surviving legitimate son, Henry the Young King, as co-king while his father
still lived. The coronation caused a tension between king and archbishop when both the
archbishop and the pope opposed the practice.100 William of Newburgh was
characteristically opinionated and even declared that the version of the story he related
was his own opinion, that Henry II’s heavy-handed approach drove Eleanor and their

100 Forced the murder: Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224*, 104; Condemned coronation: Ibid.,
117.
sons away from him. Newburgh placed this interpretation in an assessment of Henry II’s life, and it applied to both the Son’s Rebellion and the Brother’s War, as well as to Henry II’s subsequent death. Newburgh wrote “as I believe, [Henry II] had not sufficiently bewailed the rigour of that unfortunate obstinacy which he had entertained towards the venerable archbishop Thomas, therefore I think the end of the great prince was thus miserable.”

Newburgh thought that Henry II had only paid lip-service to the penance he performed at Becket’s grave, and blames the failures of Henry II’s later rule on his mishandling of the situation. The chronicler also pointed out earlier in the description of Henry II’s character, the irony that Henry II begat sons whom he loved, but who then destroyed him. Roger of Howden, in contrast, after he recorded Becket’s death, made no further criticism based on murder, which represented a sharp reversal in the chronicler's policy, and a return to his more typical style. Diceto avoided the issue entirely.

Thomas Becket's murder was paralleled in these chronicles with the expulsion of Longchamp. Both of these chancellors were undone by their relationship with the king, but the chroniclers used the Becket Affair as a reference point to examine the reversal of roles with Longchamp. This reversal is most visible in the accounts of Henry II’s penance and the removal of Longchamp from the office of chancellor.

Despite Henry II’s involvement in Becket’s murder, the chroniclers tried to repair the damage to the king’s reputation through their depiction of his supplication at

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Becket’s tomb. This penance not only reconciled the king with the moral outlook his people expected, it also highlighted the king’s remorse, thus encouraging later tyrants to avoid contest with the church lest they be humbled like Henry II. Similarly to Newburgh, Howden provided much imagery in his description of Henry II’s pilgrimage to Becket’s grave. Howden described the way in which Henry II dismounted and walked three miles barefoot to the grave, cut his feet, and

in humility and compunctions that beyond a doubt it was the work of Him who looketh down on the earth … it was a holy thing to see the affliction he suffered, with sobs and tears, and the discipline to which he submitted from the hand of the bishops… here he passed the night before the sepulchre of the blessed Martyr in prayer fasting and lamentations…. In as much as he was mindful of the Lord in his entire heart the Lord granted unto him victory over his enemies, and delivered them captive into his hands.  

Howden gave precise information of how Henry II humiliated himself to honour Becket when he did penance for the archbishop’s murder. Diceto and Newburgh wrote similar accounts. Diceto related dramatically how Henry II dismounted, walked barefoot in the manner of a pilgrim, made penance, supplication, cried many tears, and spoke over the tomb. Diceto’s interpretation was particularly visible because he recorded “that death of the archbishop [Henry II had] neither mandated, nor wanted nor sought through artifice.”

Diceto denied Henry II’s involvement in the murder and argued that Henry II

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did not intend his men to kill Becket. This historical interpretation was an exceptional opinion at the time.

The chroniclers noted that coincidentally, on the same day Henry II prayed to the martyr, his army in the north captured king William of Scotland. This capture led to the Treaty of Falaise that placed Henry II directly above William, who became Henry II’s vassal. Thus, Henry legally ruled Scotland as well as England, though practically, his direct influence was limited; he did have tremendous influence over Scotland in his lifetime. The chroniclers showed that the intercession of the saint led to victory, because of Henry II’s pilgrimage. Diceto wrote as much, plainly “For that same day of the Sabbath, on which he prayed to the martyr to be given his pardon, kissing frequently the sepulchre of the martyr, God led William king of Scots into his hand, in custody having surrendered at Richmond.” Diceto explained that Henry II’s supplication caused the surrender of William, because Henry II’s pilgrimage removed the stigma against him enough that God favoured him. The Becket Affair was a serious problem for Henry II, and the chroniclers tried to mitigate the effects of the Affair through favourable portrayals of the king. After Becket’s murder, the historians used their descriptions of Henry II’s pilgrimage in order to support the king in their accounts.

In Newburgh’s chapter on the character of Henry II, the chronicler’s penchant for frank discussion became clear, as he analyzed and criticized Henry II’s actions as he saw fit. In this section we read both of Henry II’s renown, and the distress it caused. This multiplicity is the problem of the sources, and here Newburgh proves to be one of

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104 Ibid., 1:384. “Nam ipsa die sabbati, qua indulgentiam sibi dari postulabat a martyre, sepulchrum martyris frequenter deosculans, tradidit Deus Willehlmum regem Scottorum in manus suas, costodiae mancipatum apud Richemunt.”
the most balanced and neutral of the chroniclers. He ran through different aspects of Henry II’s rule: how blessed he was to have sons, but they turned against him; Newburgh blamed Eleanor’s previous marriage, and God’s justice for this betrayal. He also criticized Henry II directly as quoted above: “moreover, because, as I believe, he had not sufficiently bewailed the rigour of that unfortunate obstinacy which he had entertained towards the venerable archbishop Thomas, therefore I think, the end of that great prince was thus miserable.”\(^{105}\) Here the chronicler expressed his personal opinion and understanding of events. Newburgh recorded his own opinion, and, unlike other chroniclers, he indicated when he was communicating his own opinion rather than only the facts. His criticism was even-handed treatment, the rest of the section showed great respect for Henry II’s accomplishments, law, justice, and care of his kingdom, all of which were very positive.

The Becket Affair of Henry II’s reign provided a historical example with which to compare the more contemporary events under Longchamp during Richard I’s. The chroniclers may have known how to handle a king who opposed his own chancellor but what of a chancellor acting as a king? The chroniclers criticized Longchamp with abandon in order to demonstrate his tyrannical behaviour. Howden had done similarly regarding Henry II when he interjected “what art thou doing thou tyrant?”\(^{106}\) On the subject of Longchamp however, the chroniclers gave more detail.


Despite his reputation in English historiography, Richard I’s reign was not free of criticism from his chroniclers. This criticism followed both Richard I personally and his chancellor William Longchamp. Criticism of Longchamp was an indirect reproof of Richard I; a rebuke of the chancellor was a rebuke of royal authority. In the chronicles, Longchamp was a stand-in for the king, and was a way to criticize Richard I without offending him. Almost paradoxically, the chroniclers praised Richard I while in captivity and at the same time criticized his chancellor; this duality reflects the inconsistency of the sources as well as political necessity. They had no choice but to praise the king because Richard I’s captivity was played on the international stage and any other approach was contrary to English policy and would damage the country. The whole reputation of the king and country relied on their accounts, the chroniclers were happy to record their opinions for posterity. At home in England, where they were away from Richard I’s influence, the writers had relative freedom to present their own interpretations and perceptions about Longchamp. The chroniclers disapproved of Longchamp for his abuses of power and his tyrannical approach to political policy, which followed the general ebbs and flows of the country.

Richard I appointed Longchamp as chancellor in 1189 after the cleric had paid 3000 pounds for the privilege, and in 1190 Longchamp also became justiciar. Longchamp dominated the kingdom of England during Richard I’s absence both as chancellor and as papal legate for the year of 1190. Longchamp had a heavy-handed, tyrannical approach to politics which antagonized many, especially among the nobility, leading

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107 Gillingham, Richard I, 121.
108 Howden, Annals of Roger of Howden, 1853, 2:137.
men, and the chroniclers. He especially ran afoul of John I and between the two of them they raised armies, garrisoned castles, and generally destabilised England. In 1191 the aristocracy removed Longchamp and replaced him with Walter the archbishop of Rouen, who served as chancellor until Richard I’s return from captivity. He was removed once again in 1194 upon which occasion Richard I saw need to commission a new seal because Longchamp had misused it. The chroniclers discussed the chancellor Longchamp in place of Richard I while he was on crusade or in captivity. They presented a mixed view of the chancellor: Newburgh and Devizes were vehemently opposed to him, while Howden was not fond of him. Diceto, in contrast, was his friend and no criticism came from that quarter, although Diceto did disparage Richard I himself. Diceto’s silence was balanced by Devizes’s venom. Newburgh provided a full section on the situation in England and the overbearing chancellor, which served to denounce the bishop’s tyranny, but criticism of Longchamp was truly criticism of the monarch. When given a choice between criticizing John I or Longchamp, the chronicler chose to disparage the chancellor. Newburgh wrote that Longchamp wanted to control Arthur, duke of Brittany because John I was the strongest royal and could be a problem. Longchamp defied Richard I’s orders that John I should succeed him and tried to manoeuvre himself into a longer period of authority in the case of Richard I’s death abroad, so that rather than let John I inherit, Longchamp would remain in a

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position of authority. Newburgh emphasized that Longchamp did this in secret, by
artifice or intimidation, but John I quickly discovered it.

While William of Newburgh chose to critique the chancellor directly, Roger of
Howden instead allowed his portrayal of Longchamp’s tyrannous actions to convey the
same message. Howden introduced Longchamp into the narrative before the bishop
became chancellor. The pattern of Longchamp’s appearances was similar to the way in
which Howden set up the Becket Affair. In both cases the chronicler introduced the man
before he became integral to the account, and then detailed the key events that led
towards conflict. This similarity indicated that Howden intentionally worked the portrayal
of Longchamp being mindful of the unrest the chancellor caused. Howden was more
direct in this case than he had been with Becket, because the man under scrutiny was
dishonourable in Howden’s eyes. This chronicler disparaged him from the beginning of
Longchamp’s appearance in the chronicle.¹¹¹

When, in 1191, the bishop of Longchamp was deposed as chancellor and
replaced by Walter archbishop of Rouen, Howden was obviously hostile towards
Longchamp. Due to Longchamp’s unpopularity, all that was needed to depose him was
an excuse, which came when John I claimed royal castles, and Longchamp besieged
Lincoln and Nottingham. During this crisis the chancellor also tried to forbid Geoffrey,
the bishop of York, from entering England. Geoffrey had reopened the dispute for
religious primacy in England between Canterbury and York. He was also a bastard son
of Henry II who had attempted to challenge Richard I for the throne and maintained his

¹¹¹ Howden, Annals of Roger of Howden, 1853, 2:137; Roger Howden, Chronica Magistri Rogeri de
ambitions, however unlikely, despite being locked into his ecclesiastical position.

Howden pointed out that such a ban was contrary to the instructions Longchamp had received from Richard I.\textsuperscript{112} Howden negatively presented all sources of royal authority for this incident: John I, Geoffrey and Longchamp alike. The intrigue continued when Geoffrey slipped into a church where Longchamp abducted him, and Howden specifically claimed that the archbishop refused to come to his own trial for his actions. William Marshall carried letters from the king that deposed the chancellor and replaced him with the archbishop of Rouen, and all swore fealty to Richard I again. Howden ensured he recorded their fealty, because the barons had removed the king’s chosen representative and replaced him with their own who was more in line with their opinions. Such action might be seen to be contrary to the king, and so, to forestall any argument of treason, Howden recorded that they swore fealty to Richard I again.

As expected, Diceto’s view was somewhat different. Ralph Diceto’s chronicle contained a unique perspective on the Becket Affair and Longchamp that combined his royalist outlook and his personal political relationships. After 1162 he was introduced to Henry II through a letter of introduction, making himself active in the political theatre.\textsuperscript{113} From the beginning of the reign Diceto connected himself with Richard I’s rule.\textsuperscript{114} When Richard I took oaths as king, Diceto claimed that alongside the archbishop of Canterbury, he personally officiated the coronation in place of the bishop of London,

\textsuperscript{112} Howden, \textit{Annals of Roger of Howden}, 1853, 2:228; Howden, \textit{Chronica}, 1964, 4:138.
\textsuperscript{113} Introduced to Henry II: Gransden, \textit{Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307, 230}.
because that position was vacant at the time. Diceto was the Dean of St Paul’s, London and had the authority to act in place of a bishop. This is not the only time this writer referred to himself by name in his chronicle; Diceto was a key player in secular and ecclesiastical affairs in London and that role affected his account, especially during Richard I’s absence. As noted above, Diceto was a personal friend of Longchamp and where other chroniclers disapproved of the chancellor, Diceto praised him for himself and as a proxy for Richard I’s authority. They were friends, both churchmen who wielded lay authority as well as ecclesiastical, so they might have held a similar outlook. Because Longchamp represented Richard I’s authority in the king’s absence, Diceto again supported royal authority in his chronicle.

Diceto structured his chronicle in order to improve Longchamp’s reputation. He did not discuss the disputed castle at all and instead focused on Richard I’s campaign, the privileges of the clergy, and the unrest caused by Geoffrey, archbishop of York. Such a glaring omission of events in England was indicative of Diceto’s specific perspective. As an administrative member of St Paul’s, London, Diceto was active in politics both secularly and religiously, and as a politically-active clergyman, he was a compatriot of Longchamp. Throughout Diceto’s account, he avoided portraying the chancellor as aught but an effective source of authority and either refused to depict any action where the chancellor would look like a tyrant, or carefully understated Longchamp’s arrogant approach to power. It was not that Diceto portrayed him as good, but that he refused to portray him as bad. This judgement was apparent because

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115 Ibid., 2:75.
116 Ibid., 2:88–104.
Longchamp’s arrogance was firmly attested to in other chronicles, as well as in the government records. To not address such arrogance without cause would be a type of negligence Diceto was not generally vulnerable to; as Gransden pointed out, Diceto was an administrative historian concerned with the minutiae of government.\(^\text{117}\) The chronicler, therefore, most likely had his own agenda stemming from his friendship with Longchamp. In his introduction to the Rolls Series, Stubbs discussed the friendship of Diceto and Longchamp, in connection with Diceto's political activities, but he did not describe how the chronicler's bias influenced his work. Stubbs only showed his connections to Longchamp.\(^\text{118}\) Diceto praised the chancellor and by extension Richard I because of this friendship. In the section for 1189, Diceto drew attention to the enthronement of Longchamp as the bishop of Ely.\(^\text{119}\) In the same year, Richard I became king. With the benefit of hindsight, Diceto emphasized the importance of his friend’s career, even though Longchamp was unpopular and eventually was deposed. Furthermore, the bishop’s installment was connected to the feast of Epiphany, giving him an even higher status. The Epiphany remembers the “uncovering” of Jesus to the Gentile world represented by the visit of the wise men (most likely Persian priests). By stressing the significance of the feast day, Diceto cast Longchamp in a most favourable light indeed.\(^\text{120}\) This event foreshadowed Longchamp’s importance.

In the entry for the next year, Diceto obliquely reported that Longchamp became Richard I’s chancellor. He did not narrate the controversy over the replacement nor Longchamp’s reputation. Instead Diceto inserted a letter to relate the event that he

\(^{118}\) Diceto, *Opus*, 1965, preface.
\(^{119}\) Diceto, *Opus*, 1965, 2:75.
\(^{120}\) Ibid.
attributed to Richard I. This innocuous-seeming representation is actually highly significant, because by using the king’s own words Diceto gave more credibility to the chancellor. Since the chronicler wrote with hindsight, he knew Longchamp would be deposed and vilified as a tyrant. The letter named Walter of Rouen as co-justiciar, not as a replacement, but did grant him authority to overrule Longchamp if necessary. That letter was the sum entire of Diceto’s input on Longchamp’s tyranny. Howden ignored the installation of the chancellor, and in a list of appointments noted in a single phrase that he became chief Justiciar. Howden drew attention not to the chancellor, but the king’s brothers, Geoffrey of Brittany and John I whom Richard I banned from entering England without his permission for three years, Howden noted that Richard I declared he would immediately remove this ban from John I, if he swore to obey. William of Newburgh similarly glossed over the appointment, and merely said that Longchamp became bishop of Ely in a list of other ecclesiastic appointments. More attention was on the king’s brother than on his chancellor. These other chronicles showed that Diceto’s depiction was not formulaic but was crafted with purpose because it did not match the simpler lists of the others and carried a uniquely-favourable view of Longchamp.

While Diceto deliberately avoided any criticism of Longchamp because of their friendship, Newburgh, like Howden, denounced the chancellor. The chronicler described Longchamp as “an intolerable tyrant…he assumed a double tyranny…his pomp in everything exceeded that of a king…as a chancellor, he was terrible throughout all

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121 Ibid., 2:90. Howden also recorded that trusted messengers brought letters from Richard I removing, or allowing the removal, of Longchamp but did not include the specific content of those letters. Howden was specific about Longchamp’s tyranny.
122 Howden, Annals of Roger of Howden, 1853, 2:137.
123 Newburgh, History of William of Newburgh, 559.
England.”¹²⁴ The chronicle devotes more than two pages to make this point. Newburgh presented a picture of England ravaged by a despot, which both insulted the authority of the chancellor, and explained his removal. This description cleverly attacked the chancellor alone, for the phrase “exceeded that of a king” implied that Longchamp had overstepped not only his authority but also royal precedent: not even the king expected to treat the barons and bishops in this manner. This treatment confined his criticism to Longchamp alone and did not extend it to Richard I. The focus on Longchamp was further intensified by Newburgh’s assurance that Longchamp ruled with both royal and ecclesiastical authority as chancellor, justiciar and papal legate. Newburgh’s opinion was evident: the chancellor had abused royal authority. This treatment was unlike that in the Becket Affair, although Newburgh approved of neither king nor chancellor, the chronicler judged that Henry II abused his authority.

Howden’s chronicle contained implicit criticism of Richard I regarding the description of Longchamp’s removal. For Howden, the expulsion of the chancellor was not the end of the problems, even though the archbishop was removed from power. Howden showed that later in 1191, when Longchamp left England, he removed royal treasures. Howden said that “all the barons of England joined in a letter, and wrote to the king how his chancellor had laid waste the kingdom of England and his treasures, and how, by the common consent of the kingdom, he had been deposed.”¹²⁵ Howden


wrote quite plainly that the barons had chosen the new chancellor, by common consent, not Richard I’s, which implied not only that Longchamp was guilty of endangering the entire kingdom, but also that Richard I had chosen a poor representative, and that they were correcting him. This assessment continued into the next sentence which stated that Longchamp wrote his own letter to the king, discussed how John I wanted to claim the crown and shifted the blame away from himself. This assessment was not strictly true. John I did take castles but held them against Longchamp and not against Richard I at that time, therefore Howden claimed that Longchamp was lying. This situation was ambiguous, because John I was not a stabilizing force at this point, though Howden was anti-Longchamp more than anti-John. Howden actively disparaged the chancellor while also holding Richard I subtly responsible for his representative.

Newburgh proved through his narrative style that the division between king and chancellor in Richard I’s reign was the chancellor’s fault, unlike the Becket Affair of Henry II’s. Newburgh’s version of Longchamp’s expulsion was more colourful than that of Howden. Rather than presenting letters, Newburgh provided a flowing narrative of stroke and counter-stroke. He emphasized the hubris of the chancellor and the indignation of the nobility. Newburgh presented the common consent for Walter of Rouen, and that the nobles swore fealty to Richard I, and he again called Longchamp a tyrant, with the interjection that the kingdom received peace and proper government under its new masters. Newburgh, interestingly, said that Richard I, while wintering in Sicily, heard about the problems that were arising in England. He received “a full

regi, qualiter cancellarius suus regnum Angliae et thesauros suos destruxerat, et qualiter ipse per commune concilium regni dejectus est.”

account of them, through the faithful relation of various persons” who were not named, and in response, he dispatched Walter of Rouen to England.\textsuperscript{127} Walter of Rouen, therefore, became chancellor by both the king’s order and by common consent. Newburgh used this perception to further denigrate Longchamp who “devoured the kingdom like a ravenous wild beast” and who declined to share or surrender power to Walter of Rouen.\textsuperscript{128} This simile reaffirmed how wrongly and disobediently Longchamp had behaved by presenting a foil with which to compare him. It also justified the archbishop of Rouen’s authority as chancellor: Walter followed Richard I’s orders, Longchamp disobeyed them. This situation was a totally different circumstance than in the Becket Affair when Newburgh discussed how Henry II and Becket destroyed each other in their conflict. Between Longchamp and Walter of Rouen, however, Newburgh had chosen a side: he much preferred Walter of Rouen’s approach to power than Longchamp’s. But more strongly than Howden, Newburgh wrote that they elected Walter of Rouen because he had been sent there by Richard I for that purpose, so even though they technically acted against the royal representative, they followed the king’s command. Newburgh ensured that he supported Richard I’s rule while also justifying the regime of the new chancellor.

Devizes criticized Longchamp with alacrity, and, like Newburgh, he used the removal of the chancellor as proof of Longchamp’s tyranny. Devizes, with his typical flamboyance, described the deposition of Longchamp and how it galvanized the English people. Devizes recorded in his chronicle that Longchamp was removed by the

\textsuperscript{127} Newburgh, \textit{History of William of Newburgh}, 580; Newburgh, \textit{Historia Rerum Anglicarum}, 1964, 1:336. “per unius hominis ausus insolentissimos gerentur...universa fidei multorum innotuere relatu.”

\textsuperscript{128} Newburgh, \textit{History of William of Newburgh}, 580; Newburgh, \textit{Historia Rerum Anglicarum}, 1964, 1:337. “singularis ferus Angliam depascebatur”
authority of two communal meetings. The first was held in the chapter house of St Paul’s cathedral, the second took place in the open air near the Tower of London, and was attended by 10,000 people according to Devizes, though that may be exaggeration. Despite the Norman origins of the kings of England, Devizes reiterated the standard slur that Longchamp was a foreigner, a Norman, who was ignorant of the English language, and who insulted the English kingdom through his corrupt regime. Devizes used this episode to promote the ‘Englishness’ of the English, affirming a budding common identity of the English barons reaching a consensus together to criticize Longchamp for his actions.

Unlike all the other chroniclers, Diceto did not explicitly state that the English had deposed Longchamp. He did include a letter from Richard I that named Walter of Rouen coadjutor but not as a replacement. The rest of Diceto’s version included the same major events as Howden and Newburgh, except Diceto omitted implications of Longchamp’s guilt. As it is known, Diceto was friends with Longchamp and avoided criticizing him, but he was unable to remove all indication of Longchamp’s tyranny and did not describe the opinions at the time, merely related the actions. Even he could not deny that the chancellor was deposed, but he did refuse to acknowledge Walter of Rouen as the new chancellor and did not directly mention his election. This omission was contrary to the widely-held sentiment that Longchamp was unpopular. If Newburgh presented a factual account, then Diceto twisted Richard I’s words in his letter, which itself was an indication that he did not agree with Richard I’s action to replace the

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chancellor. Diceto completely disagreed with the other chroniclers about their depiction of Longchamp and kept his subtle criticism not for Longchamp but for Walter of Rouen.

The chroniclers did not restrict their criticism of Longchamp solely to the period when Richard I was absent from England but continued to portray him negatively once Richard I returned. Gillingham has suggested that the choice to replace Longchamp with Walter of Rouen as a fail-safe seems to resolve the problem of Longchamp’s reinstatement; Richard I restored Longchamp only because he was personally available to keep an eye on him, and eventually had him replaced as chancellor. In Howden’s *Chronica* there was no explanation for why, once Richard I returned, he immediately restored Longchamp as chancellor. Suddenly in 1194, after the Richard I’s re-corporonation, Howden called Longchamp the chancellor, without narration of any kind nor any story of reunion.133 Diceto mostly avoided Longchamp after Richard I’s return, focussing instead on Walter of Rouen, which further indicates that he structured his account to support his friend.134 Newburgh indicated that Richard I left Walter of Rouen as a hostage in Germany and accepted back as his chancellor Longchamp who “said many things which were derogatory to [Walter of Rouen] and to the king, for he had a prejudice against him.”135 Newburgh agreed that this quick reconciliation was an oddity, and maintained his typical position against Longchamp. The next oddity appeared also in 1194 when Richard I dismissed the chancellor. Howden wrote that this dismissal was on account of the chancellor’s misdeeds in Normandy, and that Richard I had needed to make a new seal. The chronicler explained that a new seal was necessary because the

chancellor had repeatedly forged documents under the king’s old seal and presented
them to leading men in England and in the Angevin Empire abroad. Here Howden
inserted his own judgment and called Longchamp’s actions a “shameful disgrace.”136
The new seal meant that the former chancellor had abused his position and destroyed
the integrity of the Great Seal of England. William of Newburgh claimed that the people
of England lamented but little when Longchamp died, and “England rejoiced at his
death, for the fear of him had lain as an incubus upon her…it was evident he would plot
evil against the land.”137 Howden, Newburgh and Devizes did not like Longchamp and
disapproved of his actions. They made sure their accounts depicted his infamy, in much
the same way as they structured their earlier records of Henry II.

The Becket Affair served as historical allusion for chroniclers to examine and
criticize Longchamp. In their descriptions of the Becket Affair, chroniclers used the
king’s tyranny in order to explore the chancellor’s despotism during Richard I’s absence
in the early 1190s. Like Becket, Longchamp represented a secondary focus of power
that was not Richard I but unlike the martyr, Longchamp’s actions forced the criticism to
be aimed at him instead of John I during Richard I’s absence. Ostensibly, these
chroniclers blamed Longchamp himself for his tyranny and overbearing approach to
politics, as well as for his illicit activities. Nevertheless, some of their reproaches
extended towards Richard I. Longchamp represented thematically and literally the
absent royal authority, and the theoretical approval of the captured king did not
necessarily apply to his officers who actually wielded his authority in the kingdom and

137 Newburgh, History of William of Newburgh, 666; Newburgh, Historia Rerum Anglicarum, 1964, 2:490.
“Laeta est Anglia in morte ejus, quia incubuerat timore ejus super illam…manifestum erat, quod
terrae…crebo machinaretur malum.”
who tried to dominate it in his absence. This way of simultaneously criticizing and praising royal authority is indicative of the contradictory nature of the texts, as well as the mercurial opinions and political canniness of the men who wrote them.
Chapter 3 Sons’ Rebellion and Critiques of John I

John I was not the most loved king in either contemporary sources or modern historiography and was especially disliked in the 1190s. The chroniclers criticized John I through the lens of the Sons’ Rebellion alongside direct reproaches. The accounts of these chroniclers frequently condemned the sons Henry the Young King, Geoffrey, and Richard I and not their father Henry II for the troubles of the rebellion. This shift of blame showed similarity to John I’s treatment during Richard I’s reign and marked the beginning of a pattern in the chronicles for the method in which to present troublesome heirs. The chroniclers used the Sons’ Rebellion was an allusion in order to criticize John I’s abuses of power.

In 1173, with Becket’s murder still not resolved, Henry II’s sons engaged in open rebellion against him, led by Henry the Young King; for a second time in the twelfth century, England experienced civil war. Henry II crowned his eldest son as co-king alongside him, a practice that was uncommon at the time. Many disapproved of the appointment, including the Pope. Henry the Young King was king in title only and neither controlled personal lands nor made law. He demanded one of Normandy, England, or Aquitaine for himself; Henry II’s refusal led the Young King and his brothers into the arms of Philip of France, and eventually into open rebellion. Leading nobles of England, as well as William, king of Scotland, Philip king of France, and the earl of Flanders joined the war against Henry II. Henry II kept the allegiance of many of his nobles and managed to fight a war on multiple fronts; the tipping point occurred in 1174 when Henry II’s army defeated William the Lion at Alnwick. William became Henry II’s prisoner and they signed the Treaty of Falaise forcing William to do homage to Henry II.
for the entire kingdom of Scotland. The Treaty of Falaise rearranged the relationship of the two kingdoms. Due to the nature of this new relationship, Henry II imposed stricter control over Scotland than any previous English king. He was liege-lord, and William owed fealty for the entire kingdom of Scotland and all his other lands.¹³⁸

This power imbalance appeared in Howden’s chronicle. Howden wrote that in 1175 Henry II held a council at Northampton and summoned William of Scotland who came “obedient to the command of the king.”¹³⁹ Howden reinforced the idea that William was subservient to Henry II, not just on paper but in fact, and that the king of England indeed could and would command the king of Scotland. Howden compared the kings and judged Henry II to be superior. Warren argues that Henry II did not press his rights of over-lordship over Scotland, nor did he often intervene in Scottish affairs except to arbitrate disputes, and his direct power over Scottish affairs may therefore have been limited.¹⁴⁰ The chronicles on the other hand, depicted a Henry II who was dominant over all his lands, and even over the king of the Scots, his vassal, but that image represented the chronicler’s opinion, and did not necessarily depict historical truth.

After William’s capture, Henry the Young King and Geoffrey were defeated, and Richard I held out for some time but surrendered later. The war ended by autumn 1174, and Henry II’s sons all did homage to their father. The treatment the chroniclers gave the Sons’ Rebellion, and their reasons for doing so, were similar to their accounts of John I’s behaviour both for his time under Richard I’s authority and in his own reign. The

¹³⁸ Ibid., 84.
chroniclers’ purpose in writing about the rebellion was to present John I with an example of poor behaviour or out-right treason from subordinate princes. Whether or not this example was intended to change John I’s behaviour, or simply serve as a cautionary tale, it ensured that this was how the story was recorded for posterity.

While both modern and medieval historians considered the rebellion to be dishonourable, contemporary knights had a more temperate view. Many thought the rebellion lawful and within the scope of regular activity, because of the acceptance of the juvenis, young knights with little purpose, who commonly caused mischief or adventure but not treachery. Therefore, the Young King was a juvenis not a traitor.141 The chronicles presented a mixed picture, but they usually favoured Henry II over his sons.

Roger of Howden was, at one point, Henry II’s clerk and knew the events intimately.142 He began his description of the rebellion by relating that, in an attempt to assert himself against his father Henry the Young King had demanded Normandy, Anjou or England for himself; all part of the heartland of the Angevin Empire. When he was denied a land grant he rebelled. Howden, however, asserted that key lords of his administration, Richard Barre his chancellor, Walter his chaplain, Aliward the chamberlain and William Blund his apparitor were loyal to Henry II and did not follow the Young King into rebellion. Howden placed this description in a section devoted to land grants and the marriage that king Henry the father arranged for John I. This placement

141 Aurell, The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224, 106. “a youth,” in Classical modes, one that was stereotypically brash, ambitious, and undisciplined.
142 Howden, Chronica, 1964., xv.
shows the presentation of John I as Henry II’s favourite yet not his heir, further dividing the kings from each other thematically.

Howden also besmirched the Young King’s reputation, which he did consistently throughout his account of the rebellion, by writing that “he could not speak in a peaceable manner on any subject” and after his lords remained loyal to his father he reportedly “lost his feeling and his senses, he repulsed the innocent, persecuted a father, usurped authority seized upon a kingdom; he alone was guilty.”143 Howden blamed Henry the Young King entirely and not the father for the rebellion. In contrast, William of Newburgh employed cliché to blame youthful impishness and bad advice, while Ralph Diceto blamed the king of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine.144 Scholars and contemporaries usually claim that Henry II’s reign was plagued by an inability to control his sons, which was true.145 What is less convincing is the interpretation that Henry II was unable to control his sons because, in Howden’s account, there are many instances in which he did just that. Whether Roger of Howden truly believed Henry II to be at fault or not, the chronicler actively used his history to dismiss all blame from Henry II and place it on the son. Howden tried to show that it was not Henry II’s inability to control his sons that fostered rebellion and weakened his rule, but his sons’ impetuousness and mistakes. Howden repeatedly emphasized the Young King’s guilt.

144 Diceto, Opera, 1:373.
Howden continued to condemn and vilify the sons and their allies when he reported that they arose against the king of England the father and laid waste to his lands on every side with fire, the sword, and rapine: they also laid siege to his castles and took them by storm, and there was no one to relieve them… for raving with diabolical frenzy they laid waste to the territories of the king of England on both sides of the sea.  

By insulting the Young King and the rest of the rebels, Howden's interpretation of the rebellion favoured Henry II, but the chronicler also justified the later success of the father, who retained his authority. This narrative cast the Young King as the villain and made Henry II the sympathetic character who had been damaged by his sons. There was also a fair amount of moralizing, with words like “diabolical frenzy” and “fire, sword and rapine” that both demonized the rebels and provided incentive for barons to remain loyal lest they cast their lot with the immoral traitors. It is important to note here, that Howden wrote his chronicle during the reign of Richard I and had the benefit of hindsight to adjust retroactively events in royal favour. In addition, this moralization was also Howden’s personal opinion.

Ralph Diceto similarly vilified the sons. He recorded that their behaviour was unacceptable because it represented patricide and unchristian values: “son armed against his father, where whatever place out of respect of the lord’s day they put aside arms for passion of Christ… the sons for extermination rising up against parents for patricide “  

Diceto followed this description with Bible verses and other historical

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147 Ralph Diceto, Radulfi De Diceto Decani Lundoniensis Opera Historica: The Historical Works of Master Ralph De Diceto Dean of London Edited from the Original Manuscripts, ed. William Stubbs, vol. 1, Rolls
instances of sons’ betrayal which he used to moralize about the fate of disobedient sons.\textsuperscript{148} For fully eleven pages (Rolls Series) Diceto ranted on the fate of rebellious sons. Moreover, this rebellion constituted treason, both as attempted patricide and a rejection of feudal oaths. It was more complicated than simple treason, though: Henry the Young King was just that, a king of England, and his father had refused to accept his homage after the young man’s coronation because it was unseemly for a king to be a vassal in his own kingdom. The Young King therefore was not bound as were other lords, to his father’s authority, and he had a legitimate claim; his right to his inheritance had not yet been granted alongside his crown,\textsuperscript{149} but instead offered to his younger brother, as yet a child. He was probably also safe from execution if he failed, because English attitudes towards rebellions had changed, and it was not common to execute aristocratic rebels.\textsuperscript{150} Diceto used this type of parallel in other places as well when he wanted to make a particular point or compare two things to show them to be equal.

Diceto provided a list of reasons why lords chose to join the rebellion. For example, Robert, count of Leicester and William, chamberlain of Tankerville withdrew “from justice and commendable causes” because they wanted more dignity, they chafed under Henry II’s authority, they suffered from lofty arrogance, and they wanted castles.\textsuperscript{151} This behaviour was later repeated by John I in Richard I’s reign. Then Diceto intimated that Henry II was abandoned by some of his friends, which indicated the

\textsuperscript{148} Gransden, \textit{Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307}, 235.
\textsuperscript{149} Bartlett, \textit{England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225}, 54.
chronicler’s sympathy for the king and the perils of civil war.\textsuperscript{152} Both Diceto and Howden chose to cast the rebellious sons and their allies as the villains.

In addition, the chroniclers agreed that the sons were forced to sue for peace. Henry II did defeat his sons by manipulation and battle once, and at a conference offered them terms. Henry the Young King and Richard I refused, and were promptly defeated in war once again by their father who demanded the same terms, but with additional restrictions. When Diceto recorded their surrender, he included the phrase “if afterwards, in their manly years, they will have come to be judged penitent, they will give satisfactory dignity to the father, they exhibit honour with devotion, the past undertaking will have been washed away.”\textsuperscript{153} Stubbs, the editor of the Rolls Series edition, commented that Diceto hoped their future would prove their penitence, but that was not what Diceto wrote. He wrote that “if they should be deemed penitent, they will give satisfactory dignity to their father.” Consequently, it was Diceto’s judgement that the sons were, or should be, subordinate entirely to their father, and should do sufficient penance, not just the cursory motions of penance, before they could be received back at all. Howden, Newburgh and Diceto all described the sons’ homage in similar language. Diceto wrote that the sons “should be restored into the former familiarity and returned into grace in order to remove all inward sinister suspicion, to do homage and fealty to their father, in all ways stand by him.”\textsuperscript{154} Henry the Young King did homage as a vassal, not as a co-king, and the chronicles specified this difference, in contrast to his

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 1:374.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 1:393. “si postquam ad viriles annos pervenerint poenitentia jugis, satisfactio digna patri debitus honor exhibitus cum devotione, praeterita commissa diluerit”
former position. For obvious reasons, the Young King was subordinate to his father, but the chronicles also described him as a vassal not as a son, reinforcing the depiction of Henry II’s authority over his sons in a period when that control was often loose or purely literary. Diceto also specified that Henry II accepted the peace for the good of his sons, despite their treachery, which showed him to be a generous father who wanted to forgive his sons, not a weak king who had no choice but to accept his sons back. The distinction between the two possible readings is in the clarification that it was for his sons’ benefit, not his own. These accounts were mostly written during Richard I’s reign, after Henry the Young King had died and both he and his brother Geoffrey of Brittany had fallen into ill-repute in the Brothers’ War. Praising Henry II also thematically reinforced the Young King’s failure and premature death, therefore also strengthened Richard I’s rule and supported the relationship between Henry II and Richard I, which was often volatile or non-existent. This description was probably close to what happened, and additionally it assured thematic continuity in the description of two very different rulers. It also provided a point of comparison between the Young King’s rebellion under Henry II and John I’s temperament under Richard I: Henry II trusted his sons again with their lands but not their positions, while Richard I, on the other hand, trusted John I to obey but did not return his castles.

Howden continued his presentation of Henry II’s successes throughout the Sons’ Rebellion. He reported that Henry II attacked Louis of France, slew many, retook Verneil and took Damville, and captured many knights and men-at-arms. He specified that Henry II’s Brabanter mercenaries took seventeen knights notable for their valour.\footnote{Howden, \textit{Annals of Roger of Howden}, 1853, 1:371; Howden, \textit{Chronica}, 1964, 2:50–51.}
Howden provided an exaggerated portrait of Henry II’s personal success in keeping with his pro-Royal stance. By glorifying Henry II’s enemies, Howden inflated Henry II’s success, and provided more honour for victory. This style used elements common in romances and *chanson de geste*.156

In the same way that Howden blamed the sons, he blamed lords other than Henry II for the failure of a peace conference. He showed Henry II trying to institute order and peace and to restore the kingdom to stability.157 Other lords, rebels, and the French caused the kingdom to remain broken, as opposed to Henry II’s famous temper and stubbornness. This shift in blame was a recurring theme in Howden, that other foreign powers, commonly the Capetian king or the Young King, were held accountable for the continued dissent. But according to Howden this conference was held after Henry II’s victories, so Henry II had tried to end the rebellion quickly, yet he did not succeed in doing so. Indeed, despite Howden’s praise, Henry II chose to submit to papal arbitration in order to resolve the Son’s Rebellion.158 This submission was a significant concession: it had taken years of the Becket dispute, interdict and threat of excommunication to make Henry II even consider arbitration but in the span of less than a year, according to Howden’s pro-Royal chronicle, the king was undone by the rebellion. Howden even commented plainly and was neutral here. He did not elaborate as he did elsewhere when moralizing, and he did not criticize Henry II, although, similar to the treatment of the last conference, the chronicle did blame Henry II’s opponents for the failure. Howden explained that the Philip of France was unhappy with the meeting

and that the earl of Leicester used abusive language and drew a sword on Henry II, which ended the conference.\textsuperscript{159} Subsequently, Howden related that Henry II’s army defeated the earl of Leicester at Fornham and captured him “by virtue of God and the martyr.”\textsuperscript{160} He made a politicized point by this statement: that Henry II had the nobler cause, because his enemies were defeated decisively, without need for him to be there personally. Howden organized the whole section with the goal of making that point: despite their divide, Henry II’s penance regained Becket’s favour, which made the king’s cause just, not the rebellion. In the same vein as the defeat of the earl of Leicester, both Howden and Diceto reported that William of Scotland entered Northumberland with an army and committed atrocities, killing not only soldiers but also children and pregnant women.\textsuperscript{161} This graphic description was probably intended to demonize William I and thematically it led to Henry II’s victory at Alnwick, the treaty of Falaise, and the end of the rebellion. The rebellion was an opportunity for Henry II’s enemies to attack him, which is why William the Lion invaded Northumbria. The defeat of Leicester foreshadowed and paralleled William’s famous defeat at Alnwick which marked the beginning of the end of the Sons’ Rebellion.

Though the chroniclers’ criticism of John I was implied through the lens of the Sons’ Rebellion it was quite pointed through more direct depictions. John I was not the most popular Plantagenet king in either contemporary sources or modern historiography. In twentieth-century scholarship he has received the attention of scholars who have presented his legal and administrative strengths as evidence that he

\textsuperscript{159} Howden, \textit{Annals of Roger of Howden}, 1853, 1:374; Howden, \textit{Chronica}, 1964, 2:54.
\textsuperscript{160} Howden, \textit{Chronica}, 1964, 2:55. (1173). “in virtue Dei et martyris”
\textsuperscript{161} Howden, \textit{Annals of Roger of Howden}, 1853, 1:374; Howden, \textit{Chronica}, 1964, 2:57. (1174), this is also in Diceto, \textit{Opera}, 1:376 (1173).
was a strong king. Such depictions are contrary to the traditional narrative of “bad prince John” who was as incapable as he was ill-tempered. Such a divide is clear within both the modern and medieval historiography and reflects contemporary medieval attitudes towards the king which the chronicles delivered through their works, especially in the chronicle of Richard of Devizes. John I was a complex personality and was both praised and critiqued in the chronicles. These attitudes were more often visible than with any other kings, excepting perhaps Henry II during the Becket Affair. The chronicler’s opinions depended on context especially concerning the question of whether John I were acting as a decent prince and earl should, in support of Richard I or if he acted selfishly.\textsuperscript{162} Newburgh equated John I and Longchamp for their arrogance. The chronicler insulted the character of the chancellor, regularly calling him “tyrant”, “haughty” and drew attention to his “pride.”\textsuperscript{163} This was particularly relevant to John I because the prince and Longchamp were each a rival axis of royal authority and Newburgh directly stated that the chancellor “feared John alone, and, hearing him, did many things unwillingly, though it was evident that he heard him with awe.”\textsuperscript{164} Newburgh found them equally arrogant. Devizes stood apart from the trend, because he never looked favourably on John I at all.\textsuperscript{165}

In their chronicles, Howden, Newburgh and Diceto consistently praised John I when he acted against Longchamp during Richard I’s absence. Although he was not

\textsuperscript{162} Support is not technically the correct word because John I actively quarrelled with Richard I’s chancellor, and thus went against Richard I’s authority but the chronicles present him as acting as a strong source of royal authority because they did not like Longchamp or Richard I’s absence.\textsuperscript{163} Newburgh, \textit{History of William of Newburgh}. Throughout all sections that relate to Longchamp, but specifically on pages 580-81.\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 581.\textsuperscript{165} As will be discussed in the next chapter.
technically the regent, John I had significant influence in England during Richard I’s absence as a leading lord and the king’s heir (if he had no sons) and he was active against Longchamp. For example, in the annal for 1191, Howden recorded that “a serious dissension arose in England between the king’s chancellor and John I, Earl of Mortaigne, the king’s brother, relative to the castle of Lincoln.”¹⁶⁶ The chancellor besieged the castle of Lincoln and rearranged who held the office of sheriff. In response, John I occupied the royal castles of Nottingham and Tickhill which belonged to Richard I and threatened Longchamp. Longchamp gave up the siege, and the two lords reached an agreement, we are told in a letter, mediated by the archbishop of Rouen, and all the castles were surrendered into the care of trustworthy lords.¹⁶⁷ The chroniclers described John I quite favourably here, despite the threat of civil war, because he acted, and was seen to act, for the stability of the kingdom and the defence of the status-quo Richard I had established before he left. Ironically, he did this by claiming Richard I’s castles. Howden portrayed the chancellor as wrong, and the chronicler proved it by claiming mediation of many bishops and trusted lords such as William Marshal, and the archbishop of Rouen.

William of Newburgh’s version established the context of the castle in order to explain why the chancellor wanted it. Newburgh explained how Longchamp pretended to have a reason to dispute the custody of the castle with Gerard de Camville who had purchased the castle from Richard I, and it was in his wife’s hereditary lands.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ This mediation was before the bishop of Rouen replaced Longchamp as chancellor!
¹⁶⁸ Newburgh, History of William of Newburgh, 580.
Newburgh stated explicitly that the chancellor wanted to control all royal castles in the kingdom and manufactured an opportunity to seize this one as well. Newburgh described Longchamp’s position, because he was “indignant, and purposing to besiege the castle, hastily collected an army from his surrounding provinces; but as he suspected many of the nobility, and justly conjectured that they were more inclined towards John I, he sent a foreign force.”169 Newburgh agreed with Howden about John I’s response, but remarked that after making peace, Longchamp broke his treaty once his mercenaries arrived. In multiple ways Newburgh depicted the bishop of Longchamp having abused his authority through tyranny and having betrayed the treaty. Conversely, Newburgh showed John I’s just position. The nobles supported John I, and he acted in a way that was in keeping with Richard I’s instructions, as befitted a good and seemingly loyal lord. This position was distinct from both later descriptions of John I, after his betrayal of Richard I, and from the depiction of Henry the Young King in the Sons’ Rebellion. For both cases the chroniclers disapproved of the abuse of power, but in 1174 for Henry II, the king was the tyrant whereas in 1191 the tyrant was Longchamp.

In the Sons’ Rebellion the chroniclers pitted the sons against their father, during Richard I’s absence; however, they contrasted a prince against a king. Devizes consistently portrayed John I as an inadequate lord and put him in direct comparison to Richard I and his successes on crusade. Devizes was not the only chronicler to do so, but he was a most visible one. The general tone of the chronicles was that everybody hated John I. Yet, however unconventional Devizes’ work was, William of Newburgh

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shared his opinions. Even the supposedly calm Howden barked at John I, and Diceto sounded closer to Devizes on certain subjects, especially concerning the French king, with whom John I was connected. Modern historians Gillingham, Holt, and Turner agree that the chroniclers’ opinions of John I varied with his relative position and the pattern of his career. That is to say, chroniclers’ opinions of John I changed not just as he gained or lost power but while he respected or contested the king’s authority. While he was under Richard I, and while John I obeyed, the chroniclers found no issue with him, and in some circumstances, they even praised him. Nevertheless, most frequently, they found great fault with him.

The chroniclers often depicted John I as a destabilizing force while Richard I was away on crusade, or in captivity just like the depiction of the Young King during the rebellion. For example, during another dispute, this time between Geoffrey the archbishop of York and the Longchamp, bishop of Ely circa 1190, Newburgh claimed John I raised an army. John I was an active participant in the chaos Richard I’s absence left in England. The dispute continued with strife concerning the castle of Dover, which led to the capture of Geoffrey and the expulsion of Longchamp. Both Longchamp and Geoffrey repeatedly acted unilaterally and inappropriately however John I followed suit and he himself created further disruption. William of Newburgh often depicted John I as acting against the interests of England. Richard of Devizes held a similar opinion of John I and Longchamp and showed them both to be tyrants. Devizes particularly hated

John I and his cutting remarks showed John I not as a counterpoint to Longchamp’s authority but instead yet another source of injustice.

Newburgh followed up such sentiments. Newburgh denounced John I as nature’s enemy, with descriptions such as “unnatural John” and recorded that John I broke the laws of nature when he allied with the French army 1193/4. After the deterioration of Richard I and Philip’s relationship on crusade, the two kings shared a mutual tension. John I infamously befriended the French king which went directly against Richard I’s directives and the political trends of the time. Although they had been on friendly terms before, John I’s friendship with Philip in Richard I’s absence weakened English policy and was unpopular among the barons. Criticism of the association between John I and the French king appeared commonly in these chronicles. Their association provided ammunition for the chroniclers, especially Devizes and Newburgh, who exploited it to denounce John I. This defection provoked the exact same reaction in 1193/4 as it did twenty years earlier when the younger Henry tried it. In addition to his relationship with the king of France, John I also was criticized by Newburgh for his actions against Longchamp. William of Newburgh intentionally and directly defamed John I and declared that his actions were not consistent with English policy. Newburgh called the king of France dishonourable and by extension, John I as well. The chronicler went on to say that John I and a “troop of miscreants deviously took castles.” These actions were distinct from other times when other chroniclers praised John I for fortifying castles against the chancellor because in this instance, the only pressing need was John I’s

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greed and not the direct threat of rebellion or civil war. From the chronicler’s perspective, John I began to be the lodestone for chaos during Richard I’s captivity, in contrast to how he previously had acted as a counterweight to the chancellor’s intentions. While the chroniclers did not like the chancellor, and they almost certainly did not approve of his actions, it is possible that they disliked chaos even more, which, in addition to John I’s arrogant personality, may account for their treatment of him. Such disdain could have been personal to the prince, or a general chafing at authority at a time when royal rule was more lax than usual due to Richard I’s imprisonment. William of Newburgh emphasised the problem John I posed so strongly that he explicitly stated that Eleanor was necessary to mediate between John I and Richard I. This inclusion is significant because it brings Eleanor into the political spotlight again, literally at least, which could have made her a target for further criticism, but which certainly shows how important Newburgh thought this issue was. Such was the nature of the division between brothers that Newburgh said her presence was necessary to reconcile the two. John I had started serving in the French army in 1193/4, a clear defection from his brother’s service and a technical betrayal of the kingdom of England, an act which Newburgh judged “broke the laws of nature.”174 Such a sentiment was expressed in much more severe language than the chroniclers used against the sons in the rebellion. Newburgh pushed the division between John I and Richard I more than Howden did, and in this manner, was similar to Devizes. Were their intentions similar? It is unclear, but both were critical of John I though Devizes exaggerated his support of Richard I

while Newburgh appeared more pro-stability or at least anti-tyranny and took particular exception to John I.

In the same way that he described the Young King as demanding more personal authority, Howden on occasion included similar jibes against John I when the prince’s actions seemed to be an attempt to gather authority to himself, especially while Richard I was in captivity. Howden claimed that Richard I said John I could not subdue a country if a single person resisted him.¹⁷⁵ Such a sentiment was remarkably like Newburgh’s tone, but not out of keeping with how Howden had earlier reported Richard I’s manner of speech. It is possible that this was indeed Richard I’s opinion, but by its inclusion it was doubtless Howden’s opinion as well. Such dismissal of a prince was scathing indeed. As Howden wrote after the events and continued to record into John I’s reign, perhaps he knew of John I’s martial shortcomings and failed campaigns on the continent. But regardless, John I was not popular in England during his brother’s reign. To put a barb in the king’s mouth showed the severity of the claim and gave it credence. It was more than just malicious gossip, or, perhaps malicious gossip that had reached the political theatre and had become a weapon to denigrate John I. It was also a direct critique of an active prince, something unheard of in Henry II’s reign when the chroniclers held their lips and quills till his death. Such voices were common around John I’s actions.¹⁷⁶

Similarly to the way in which the chronicler besmirched the Young King in 1173, Howden depicted the dysfunction of the relationship between Richard I and John I at the

time of the former’s captivity. In the entry for 1193/4, Howden recorded that John I worked alongside Philip of France for the benefit of French policy so closely that Philip warned him that “the devil is unleashed” when Richard I gained his release.177 This event is frequently considered by historians, nevertheless, here it serves as a specific example, one not at all out of place within Howden’s chronicle or in the wider trends of the twelfth-century chroniclers. Howden also specified that John I fled to France to escape the scrutiny of Richard I, and implied he was a coward by “not daring to wait for the arrival of the king, his brother, in England.”178 Howden related that John I feared Richard I’s release, and that John I’s intentions with Philip were so at odds with his duty as brother and vassal that Richard I was a devil to him. This sentiment followed the trend Howden established in his treatment of rebellious sons. First, Howden denigrated the sons and glorified the king, this time again Howden insulted John I and by doing so, praised Richard I.

According to Newburgh, the king of France and John I conspired to keep Richard I in captivity. Together they sent messengers to the Holy Roman Emperor, and finally persuaded him to hold Richard I, by paying the same amount of money that Richard I was to pay as his ransom. As it turned out, they succeeded only in delaying his release. The attempt, though, led to further criticism of John I by Newburgh who referred to him alongside the king of France, and directly named him “unnatural John.”179 Howden also included this event, and although his style was generally more restrained than

Newburgh’s, Howden did indeed detail John I and Philip’s attempt to detain Richard I, and included the sardonic comment “Behold how they loved him!” The comment provided a direct and sarcastic opinion on John I’s actions, through his relationship with Philip and his betrayal of his brother’s cause. The level of treachery the chroniclers constructed here is reminiscent of the treatment of the Sons’ Rebellion.

The next year, Howden presented Richard I’s dismay at the conference for his liberation because John I had worked with Philip and tried to stop his release. Howden asserted that John I, during the time of Richard I’s release, and in the period immediately following his release, willfully acted against his brother and, as a result, the majority of the criticism focussed on him not on other agents of chaos such as Longchamp. John I even fortified the castles of Nottingham and Tickhill, this time against Richard I himself. The castles would have surrendered, Howden related, despite John I’s orders, but John I compelled them to hold firm against Richard I’s forces. The castles did fall and placed themselves at the king’s mercy, as he commanded which indicated that the men at least accepted Richard I’s authority even if their lord did not which only further emphasized John I’s treachery. Howden’s account showed that Richard I and John I’s relationship was damaged. Although Richard I forgave his younger brother, he did not trust him. He returned John I’s lands, but not his castles. Howden presented the reconciliation of the brothers, but not the restoration of trust.

In summation, the chroniclers employed the Sons’ Rebellion as a historical allusion for John I’s abuses of power. Through the lens of the Sons’ Rebellion of 1173/4 the chroniclers denigrated the sons and glorified the father. With this pattern established the chroniclers similarly insulted John I for his treachery against Richard I. During the rebellion the sons resisted their king, their father. John I rebelled not against his father, but his brother, the king. Nevertheless, the chroniclers employed the same methods of analysis, and extended the same critiques of the Sons’ Rebellion to include John I’s betrayals of Richard I. The chroniclers intentionally wrote their accounts of the rebellion to favour Henry II; conversely, they deliberately intended to belittle John I. A general pattern emerges in the chronicler’s depictions that when John I acted in accordance with Richard I’s rule, he was seen to be doing what was good for England, but when John I resisted his brother or was left to his own devices his actions were destructive. John I provided an opportunity for comparison with the Sons’ Rebellion because both instances presented princes attempting to seize power and in doing so overstepping their given authority.
Conclusion

To summarize the discussion, chroniclers of the reign of Richard I, Roger of Howden, Ralph Diceto, William of Newburgh, and Richard of Devizes, studied the reign of Henry II in order to understand, and comment on, the political turmoil of the 1190s. They examined the Becket Affair as a method to evaluate Longchamp’s regency and the relative powers of king or chancellor. Through the Son’s Rebellion in Henry II’s reign these chroniclers analyzed John I’s behaviour in Richard I’s reign. As might be expected these chroniclers often praised the king but their criticisms were especially telling and indicated contemporary opinions of kingship, and the chroniclers’ judgement of good kingship.

Richard I’s feudal relationship with Philip II influenced Richard I’s application of power and political goals. The two kings’ were political rivals on crusade, driving them apart and leading to Richard I’s captivity by the Holy Roman Emperor. Feuds along the borders of Aquitaine, Normandy, and Poitou maintained tensions between the two kings. Richard I’s and Philip’s animosity additionally provided John I with a powerful ally to work against his brother. Richard I’s absence gave William Longchamp an opportunity to seize power for himself only to be met with resistance from John I and the barons. After a year of tyranny, the barons removed Longchamp as chancellor. Despite this abrupt change, the chroniclers discussed Richard I’s reign positively and focussed their criticisms on Longchamp, John I, and Philip. John I repeatedly attempted to wrest control over the kingdom for himself. Only after betraying his brother and most likely murdering his nephew, Arthur, was John I able to become king. These political upheavals directly shaped the content of the chronicles.
The chroniclers used the Becket Affair as a means of explaining the crisis of Longchamp. Henry II’s actions represented a tyranny of the crown over the church whereas Longchamp’s behaviour combined royal and legatine authority. The chroniclers presented a story of a despotic king attacking his chancellor in Henry II’s reign, but Longchamp was a chancellor who abused his authority. For the Becket Affair, Newburgh’s treatment of Henry II was fairly even handed, preferring neither bishop nor king. In contrast, Newburgh especially denounced Longchamp, even preferring John I to whom he was notoriously unfavourable. Howden, a royal clerk, had chastised Henry II for his behaviour, and instead had hailed Becket as a martyr, even claiming the bishop had turned water into wine. Later, however, Howden totally reversed his pro-chancellor opinion and criticized Longchamp with abandon. Howden thoroughly narrated the expulsion of the chancellor and explained the nobles’ decision to instate Walter of Rouen instead, claiming continued loyalty to Richard I while doing so. Howden called both Henry II and Longchamp tyrants, and like Newburgh, presented John I as more reasonable than Longchamp. Howden even recorded that Richard I was required to commission a new seal because of Longchamp’s abuse of authority. Both Howden and Newburgh agreed that Richard I confirmed Walter of Rouen as chancellor via a series of letters. In opposition to them, Diceto asserted that Walter of Rouen was merely co-justiciar and not a replacement. Diceto held no criticism for Longchamp at all. This strange sentiment was because the two were friends and colleagues. Diceto had been active in the politics of London since 1162 when he presented a letter of introduction to Henry II and continued to move in high circles through Richard I’s reign, even claiming to officiate at Richard I’s coronation. Due to Diceto’s unwillingness to criticize
Longchamp, the chronicler presented Becket and Longchamp in similar ways. In both cases Diceto introduced the churchman before he reached the office of chancellor, connected them to royal power, and then presented them in a positive light. Devizes criticized Longchamp with alacrity. He used the removal of the chancellor as proof of Longchamp’s tyranny. Devizes vehemently and repeatedly disparaged Longchamp who the chronicler felt had insulted the English nation through his corrupt regime. The depiction of Longchamp in the chronicles represented a reversal from the more normal method of evaluating a chancellor that was used to describe Becket: Longchamp was a tyrant, Becket was a martyr.

The chroniclers criticized John I through the examination of the Sons’ Rebellion. In the Sons’ Rebellion, the chroniclers condemned the sons and praised the father. This perspective was similar to the way in which the chroniclers criticized John I but supported Richard I. John I and Henry the Young King both fit the pattern of troublesome heirs. Howden denounced the Young King both due to his unreasonable demands of land and his behaviour. Howden claimed that the Young King lost his senses when he rebelled, and that he could not speak peaceably on any subject. Howden blamed the sons but not Henry II; in a similar way, the chronicler blamed John I not Richard I for the chaos John I caused. Newburgh explained that the cause of the rebellion was youthful impishness and bad council. Diceto explicitly blamed the king of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Diceto also expressed that the rebellion represented unchristian values, which he proved with biblical examples of rebellious sons. Diceto condemned nobles as well who supported the rebellion when they claimed castles, and the chronicler repeated that opinion when describing John I’s behaviour in 1194 when
he fortified Nottingham and Tickhill against Richard I. In a similar manner as Diceto, Newburgh criticized John I when he fortified castles against Richard I although the chronicler had previously praised the prince for the same action against Longchamp. Devizes consistently defamed John I with vicious vehemence. Devizes found John I an inadequate lord compared to Richard I, and while he was the most vocal, the other chroniclers generally agreed. Chronicler opinions of John I depended on whether he respected or contested Richard I’s authority. In the Sons’ Rebellion the sons were compared to the father; with John I, a prince was compared to a king. Like the Young King before him, John I was a destabilizing force while not directly under the ruling king’s thumb, especially concerning their relationship with the Capetian king Philip II. Newburgh, Devizes, and Diceto criticized John I for allying with Philip in 1194 and starting to act alongside the French army. This defection led Newburgh to denounce him repeatedly for unnatural treachery. Similarly, the chroniclers criticized Henry the Young King when he allied with the king of France against Henry II. Howden disliked John I’s tendency to assert personal political power in another king’s reign, a tendency the prince shared with the Young King. Howden went so far as to report Richard I’s dismissal of John I’s ability. Richard I reportedly said that John I could not subdue a kingdom if a single man resisted him. Therefore, as they had his brothers earlier, the chroniclers disparaged John I when he did not support his brother. These descriptions were written during Richard I’s reign, and the chroniclers disparaged both John I and the Young King which served to praise Richard I’s success.

The abundance of chroniclers’ inconsistencies and criticisms proves that twelfth-century historians wrote political commentary on both Henry II’s and Richard I’s kingship
into the chronicles. They analyzed the reign of Henry II in order to better understand the political crises of the 1190s. Their work cannot be accepted as evidence without an understanding of the author’s motivations and the chroniclers’ political views.
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