Villain and Saint: Chronicler Agency Following the Civil Wars and Deposition of Edward II

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ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates how chroniclers engaged with the "truth" of Edward II's reign, as they perceived it within their contemporary social and religious frameworks, to explain the first deposition of an English monarch. The constructed narratives of *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* [also known as the *Chronicon*] and the *Anonimalle* [also known as the Short Continuation of the *Brut*] are compared. Both were written approximately ten to fifteen years after the deposition by members of the English clergy, but they presented opposing versions of Edward's life, depicting him as either a saint or a villain. To better understand the dichotomy between these chronicles, the paper examines the sanctification and vilification of Edward and other key figures of his reign: his wife Isabella of France, Thomas earl of Lancaster, Piers Gaveston, and Hugh Despenser the younger. The chroniclers used their agency to include, exclude, alter, or invent different events and details to support their chosen narrative. Through this manipulation of facts, Geoffrey le Baker and the *Anonimalle* chronicler interpreted Edward's deposition and death in Berkeley Castle as a holy martyrdom for his kingdom or as a result of God abandoning his reign, respectively.

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INTRODUCTION

Edward II (r. 1307-1326) has the infamous distinction of being the first deposed English king. His marked the first rulership to end with his successor, his eldest son Edward III, being crowned while the previous king still lived,[1] a social upheaval that the contemporary chronicler needed to explain within his history. Edward II's father, Edward I the "Hammer of the Scots," was a powerful and militaristic king, often considered a successful ruler. Near the end of his illustrious reign, however, tensions with his barons had grown to a near-boiling point.[2] Spurred on by an unsuccessful campaign against France beginning in 1297 and William Wallace's Scottish victory over the English at Sterling Bridge in the same year, a heated dispute between the king and the earls of Norfolk and Hereford caused a tumultuous end to Edward I's reign.[3] It is undeniable that Edward I set a difficult precedent to follow militarily, but whether or not his baronial tensions were inherited by his son is hotly debated.[4] Due to Edward's own actions or the baronial dissatisfaction his father left behind, from the very start of his reign conflicts between the king and his earls—the most powerful barons who helped govern the realm—were quicker to violence and both sides punished their opposition more brutality than ever.[5]

The legacy of Edward I notwithstanding, Edward II's reign was troubled from the start. The king's favorite and dear friend—and possibly either his adopted blood-brother or homosexual lover—the Gascon knight Piers Gaveston threw oil on the fires of discontent.[6]

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[1] Claire Valente, "The Deposition and Abdication of Edward II," *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 453 (1998), 852.
[2] Seymour Phillips, *Edward II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 2-3.
[3] Kathryn Warner, *Edward II: The Unconventional King* (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2014), 17, 23.
[4] Claire Valente, *The Theory and Practice of Revolt in Medieval England* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 122; Natalie Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II, 1321-1326*, 1st ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16; Phillips, *Edward II*, 2-3.
[5] King, "Treason and Rebellion," 35, 42; Valente, *Revolt in Medieval England*, 122-123.
[6] Pierre Chaplais, *Piers Gaveston: Edward II's Adoptive Brother* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 109; Valente, *Revolt in Medieval England*, 123.

Edward's first official action as king was to grant the traditionally royal earldom of Cornwall to Gaveston, passing over more logical candidates like his cousin Thomas the earl of Lancaster.[7] Furthermore, Gaveston was exiled from England three times; the first in 1307 by Edward I, who either wished to punish Edward II for misbehaving or to remove a poor influence from his son's life.[8] The second (1308) and third (1311) exiles, on the other hand, occurred during Edward II's reign and were instigated by his barons.[9] The second exile in 1308 happened only one year into Edward's rule, while tensions were still relatively low, in comparison to what would later follow. The king worked tirelessly to sooth his angry magnates, persuading the earls to sign Gaveston's re-enfeoffment to the earldom of Cornwall, thus allowing his friend to return.[10] Gaveston's third and final exile from England in 1311 did not end so peaceably. In the face of the knight's ever-growing haughtiness and control over royal favors he acted as England's "second-king," causing the barony to draft a set of petitions called the Ordinances in response.[11]

The Ordinances declared that Edward had failed to keep his coronation oaths, and in retribution they limited his powers as a medieval king.[12] In the early Middle Ages, kingship relied on the giving of gifts, such as gold and rings in return for fealty, as depicted in the epic

[7] J. S. Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston, Earl of Cornwall, 1307-1312: Politics and Patronage in the Reign of Edward II* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 37; Valente, *Revolt in Medieval England*, 123; Warner, *Edward II*, 27. Edward did, however, make Gaveston a member of the royal family shortly afterwards, marrying the knight to his niece Margaret de Clare. The *Vita* wrote, "The lord king married Piers to his sister's daughter, the daughter of the late Gilbert, earl of Gloucester. This marriage tie did indeed strengthen his [Gaveston's] position considerably; for it greatly increased the goodwill of his friends and restrained the hatred of the baronage." See *Vita Edwardi Secundi: The Life of Edward the Second*, trans Wendy Childs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 7.
[8] Phillips, *Edward II*, 77.
[9] Roy Martin Haines, *King Edward II: Edward of Caernarfon, His Life, His Reign, and Its Aftermath, 1284-1330* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2003), 69; Phillips, *Edward II*, 127, 179.
[10] Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 74. In an unusual bought successful politicking, Edward managed to garner the signature of every earl except for Lancaster.
[11] Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 75; *Vita*, 5. The author of the *Vita* described Gaveston's behavior writing, "For the great men of the land hated him, because he alone found favour in the king's eyes and lorded it over them like a second king, to whom all were subject and none equal."
[12] Warner, *Edward II*, 61.

poem *Beowulf*.[13] The exchange of wealth for military support functioned as a contract between lord and follower.[14] During the time of Edward II this paradigm had shifted from the gifting of valuable goods to the granting of lands and titles, called favors.[15] Because Edward had distributed favors almost exclusively to Gaveston and his other friends, the rest of barony felt slighted and commandeered the role for themselves through the Ordinances, severely inhibiting the king's influence.[16] This limitation on Edward, however, was not the petition which upset him the most; the Ordinances also demanded the immediate exile of Piers Gaveston from all English lands and holdings.[17] Edward defied this demand, throwing his reign into a civil war, which ended with Gaveston's death by the order of the earl of Lancaster.[18]

Gaveston's death solidified the immense hatred between the king and his cousin, Thomas earl of Lancaster, the most powerful earl in England following the death of the earl of Lincoln.[19] This rancor between king and cousin reached its peak during the Marcher rebellion of 1321-1322, another of the reign's several civil wars.[20] Edward had found a new favorite to bestow his gifts and attention upon since Gaveston's death: Hugh Despenser the younger, a man almost universally reviled for his cruelty and greed.[21] A group of lords along the Welsh Marches,

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[13] Lars Kjær and A. J. Watson, "Feasts and Gifts: Sharing Food in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval History* 37, no. 1 (2011), 4; Stephen Pollington, "The Mead-Hall Community," *Journal of Medieval History* 37, no. 1 (2011), 20.
[14] Stephen White, "Kinship and Lordship in Early Medieval England: The Story of Cynewulf and Cyneheard," *Viator* 20, (1989), 18.
[15] Gwilym Dodd, "Kingship, Parliament and the Court: The Emergence of 'High Style' in Petitions to the English Crown, c.1350–1405," *The English Historical Review* 129, no. 538 (2014), 516.
[16] Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 72.
[17] Phillips, *Edward II*, 156.
[18] Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 93, 95; Warner, *Edward II*, 74; *Vita*, 39. The author of the *Vita* described Edward's decision to recall Gaveston writing, "At this the king, angered beyond measure that he was not allowed to keep even one member of his household at his own wish … recalled Piers out of hatred for the earls, swearing, as he was wont, on God's soul that he would freely use his own judgement." The earls of Hereford, Arundel, and Warwick were also involved in Gaveston's death along with Lancaster.
[19] J.R. Maddicott., *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307-1322: A Study in the Reign of Edward II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 114-115.
[20] Phillips, *Edward II*, 283, 399-402.
[21] Warner, *Edward II*, 147, 148, 160-162, 165, 166, 172.

including Roger Mortimer the Lord of Wigmore, rose up in response to the partitioning of the late earl of Gloucester's lands, yet another instance of Edward's poor allocation of favors leading to strife.[22] Although Lancaster was not a lord of March himself, he supported the rebellion and came to lead it.[23] Edward and Despenser successfully suppressed this civil war; Roger Mortimer was imprisoned in the Tower of London and the earl of Lancaster was executed for treason.[24] This execution marked an important turning point not only in Edward's reign but in the history of English rebellion, since Lancaster "was the first English earl to be executed on the king's authority since Waltheof, earl of Northumbria, had been beheaded in 1076."[25]

Even with Lancaster dead, turmoil and the threat of civil war continued to plague Edward's reign. The king and Despenser had returned to power, but they gained a new and unexpected enemy: the queen. Isabella of France and Edward had been married since 1308 and they had four children.[26] From the beginning of Edward's reign to the Marcher rebellion, Isabella supported her husband, and although it is uncertain whether their marriage was at any point a happy one, it was at least stable.[27] When war started with France in 1323 over Edward's failure to pay homage to the new king Charles IV for his lordship of Gascony, however, the king treated Isabella with suspicion. Charles was her brother, and in order to apply pressure on the French king, Edward seized most of Isabella's lands and ordered her French servants imprisoned.[28] This restriction of the queen's power and household might have been Despenser's idea; the two hated

[22] Phillips, *Edward II*, 368.
[23] Warner, *Edward II*, 144, 155.
[24] Haines, *Edward II*, 140-141. Phillips, *Edward II*, 404, 406, 411.
[25] Andy King, "False Traitors Or Worthy Knights? Treason and Rebellion Against Edward II in the Scalacronica and the Anglo-Norman Prose Brut Chronicles," *Historical Research* 88, no. 239 (2015), 35.
[26] Alison Weir, *Queen Isabella: Treachery, Adultery, and Murder in Medieval England*, 1st ed (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), 25, 163. Weir argues that the several year gap between the births of their children shows that the marriage was a highly intimate one (61). This argument, however, is too simplistic as it does not consider any other factors which might have slowed down the conception of their children.
[27] Weir, *Isabella*, 48, 58, 250.
[28] Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 88, 135, 146.

each other.[29] Even though she suffered poor treatment by the king and his followers, Edward still trusted his wife to barter a peace with her brother, and she left for the French court in 1325.[30] Isabella quickly negotiated a truce with Charles under the condition that homage for Gascony be paid quickly.[31] At the same time, however, tensions between Despenser and the barony were so high in England that Edward feared if he left the country then his favorite would be attacked. To avoid this, the king chose to send his oldest son, the later Edward III, to France in his stead to pay homage to Charles.[32] The heir to the throne was now isolated in France and under the control of his slighted mother and the many other English enemies who had fled to the French court, including Roger Mortimer who had escaped imprisonment.[33]

Isabella refused to return their son to Edward, and in 1326, she invaded England with Roger Mortimer and her other allies.[34] Upon her arrival, the many individuals disgruntled by either Edward or Despenser flocked to the banner of the crown prince and his mother, and Edward and Despenser were quickly defeated.[35] Despenser was condemned to a brutal death and Edward was imprisoned, forced to abdicate his throne to his son, and likely died imprisoned within Berkeley Castle.[36] Edward II's reign ended much as it had begun: with civil war and disgruntled barons.

To understand the deposition of Edward II, the medieval chronicler, unlike the modern historian, did not have the framework of political science to understand the relations of power and leadership within their world. They used instead the institutions of their time to interpret the

[29] Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 147; Weir, *Isabella*, 144.
[30] Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 146; Phillips, *Edward II*, 472-473.
[31] Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 147.
[32] Phillips, *Edward II*, 477-478.
[33] Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 148; Phillips, *Edward II*, 459.
[34] Weir, *Isabella*, 229.
[35] Warner, *Edward II*, 216-225; Weir, *Isabella*, 230-233.
[36] Phillips, *Edward II*, 516-518, 552-553, 560-565; Warner, *Edward II*, 226, 229, 232.

events they recorded, especially religion. Biblical allusions, godly portents, and hagiography—accounts of saints' lives—permeated English chronicles. According to the historian Chris Given-Wilson in his book *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England*, in the Middle Ages "that God ordained all earthly matters was a question which admitted of little doubt, and, given that assumption, it is in fact difficult to see how any chronicler *could* ignore terrestrial manifestations of His will."[37] Any preternatural occurrences, therefore, carried significant symbolic meaning as portents of God's will, often as warnings that the behavior of one or more people in power had displeased the Divine.[38]

Natural disasters and events were direct manifestations of God's will within the chronicle, and the behavior of the individuals recorded therein was also understood through the Christian paradigm. Given-Wilson argued that the primary goal of the chronicler was not to simply record the facts of the past but to present the "truth" of these events. For the medieval historian there were several "universal truths" to which events conformed—for example, the disciplined, God-fearing, victorious army versus the tumultuous defeated army with its quarrelling leaders—and the chronicler chose to construct their narrative to align with these motifs.[39] Furthermore, medieval historians intended for these themes of victory and defeat, holy rulers, or tyrannical despots to be instructional for future generations of readers; they intentionally constructed narratives to provide examples of good and bad behavior and the consequences of each.[40] The chronicle was a guide not only to the past but to Christian morality.

[37] Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 21.
[38] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 22.
[39] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 1.
[40] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 2.

The connection between religion and history in England dates all the way back to the Anglo-Saxon period. Written in the eighth century, the Venerable Bede's landmark *Ecclesiastical History of English People* recorded the conversion of the English, focusing on the actions of holy men and saints like King Oswald of Northumbria and Saint Aidan.[41] Hagiography and miracles did not end with the Anglo-Norman Invasion (1066). For example, Eadmer of Cantebury's *Historia novorum in Anglia*, written at the turn of the twelfth century, was widely used by his contemporaries and contained a hagiographical account of Anslem the Archbishop of Canterbury.[42]

Within the study of medieval English chronicles, the reigns of Edward II and Edward III comprise an important transitionary period. During the fourteenth century, the creation of history shifted from almost exclusively Latin chronicles written within a monastic context to more vernacular chronicles, many not even written by clerics.[43] Vernacular chronicles—in French or English—could be written in a monastic setting, such as the French-written *Anonimalle* chronicle, and Latin chronicles could be written by secular clerks—clerics that served a non-religious administrative role—such as the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* written during Edward's reign.[44] One contemporary chronicle was not written by a cleric at all but a nobleman, Sir Thomas Gray, during the reign of Edward III. In her comprehensive historiography, historian Antonia Gransden writes, "Sir Thomas Gray, author of the *Scalachronica*, was, as far as is known, the first English

[41] Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England: c. 550 to c. 1307* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 16. Eoghan Ahern, "Bede's Miracles Reconsidered," *Early Medieval Europe* 26, no. 3 (2018), 282.
[42] Charles Rozier, "Between History and Hagiography: Eadmer of Canterbury's Vision of the Historia Novorum in Anglia," *Journal of Medieval History* 45, no. 1 (2019), 3.
[43]Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 141; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England: c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 2, 3.
[44] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 156. The *Anonimalle* might have been written by a secular clerk, or several, but it is unclear, and due to the chronicle's antipathy towards Edward, it is unlikely that the clerk worked during the king's reign. See King, "Treason and Rebellion," 37.

nobleman since Aethelweard the ealdorman to write a history."[45] Although his interpretation of the past is not as overtly religious as that of his clerical peers, focusing much on chivalry and heroic prowess instead, his understanding of the past was still defined by medieval Christian morals. Religious characterizations, such as saint, martyr, sinner, and pagan, influenced contemporary and near-contemporary accounts of Edward II's reign.

Although these chroniclers shared a similar cultural and religious background, the narratives they created split into two general types which follow the divide between the opposing sides of Edward's civil wars: baronial supporters who condemned Edward and his favorites or royal loyalists who condemned Thomas of Lancaster and Isabella. Despite being favored by Edward, Hugh Despenser the Younger does not fit cleanly within this binary; he is almost universally reviled and blamed for the unrest by both his peers and chroniclers. It is likely his actions were so reprehensible that no chronicler, even the wildly loyalist Geoffrey le Baker, could portray them positively.

Among loyalist accounts that favored the king, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker of Swinbroke* (originally entitled the *Chronicon*) became the most prominent among them. Written shortly after 1341, much of his account of the reign of Edward II comes from a slightly earlier chronicle by Adam Murimuth, but le Baker's pro-Edward embellishments deviated from Murimuth's account and are crucial to understanding how le Baker deviated from the common narrative surrounding the king's reign.[46] Stories such as the infamous death via hot poker—seemingly created by le Baker since it first appeared within his chronicle—served to promote a

[45] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 62.
[46] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 37, 38. The chronicle was in fact published anonymously, but historians have confidently attributed it to le Baker based on his other writings.

certain viewpoint: the extreme cruelty of Edward's unholy tormentors and the humiliating suffering the king endured.[47]

Why le Baker chose to create such a biased narrative towards Edward is not entirely clear, but sympathy towards the overthrown king during the reign of his son likely influenced le Baker's viewpoint. At the time of writing, Edward III reigned and many writers wanted to distance the rule of the current king from the deposition and death of his father, whose chief culprits, Isabella and Roger Mortimer, had already been discredited. Furthermore, the saint cult of Edward II, growing in response to his possible murder, flourished in the 1340s.[48] These factors would have shaped le Baker, and his pro-Edward account helped promote the attempt to canonize the king and create a "cult of royal sanctity."[49] Whatever the reason for le Baker's sympathies, as a learned and well-read individual, he must have been aware of the many negative opinions regarding the past king and his widespread unpopularity.[50] Indeed, le Baker's saintly depiction of Edward stands alone amongst other English chroniclers.[51] Le Baker thus chose to present a different version of Edward II and included details which supported this retelling.

Not every chronicle written during Edward III's reign reacted to the previous king the same way. The *Anonimalle* chronicle, also known as the Short Continuation of the *Brut*, was written circa 1337 by one or more clerics.[52] It created an almost opposite narrative to le Baker, elevating Edward II's rival and enemy, Thomas of Lancaster, therein promoting the baronial opposition to the king's reign. It too was written by a clerk, though anonymously and possibly in

[47] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 38; Phillips, *Edward II*, 535; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 39-40.
[48] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 40.
[49] Phillips, *Edward II*, 22.
[50] Edward was largely unpopular during and after his reign with both the majority of the chroniclers and many of the common people; see Phillips, *Edward II*, 11-15, 17, 19.
[51] Phillips, *Edward II*, 5.
[52] King, "Treason and Rebellion," 36, 37.

connection to St. Mary's abbey in York, but instead of Latin, it used the French vernacular.[53] Likely due to its more accessible language and location, its narrative promotes the popular saint cult of Lancaster which had developed in England, especially in York.[54] Despite the few years separating le Baker's and the *Anonimalle* chronicler's writing, the two historians chose to record narratives with opposing meanings. As much as le Baker promoted Edward, the *Anonimalle* advocated Lancaster and debased the king.

Although the saint cults of Edward and Lancaster came to an impasse,[55] the *Anonimalle*'s poor opinion of the king more closely resembles the prevailing attitude towards his reign. The *Polychronicon* by Ranulf Higden, completed in the 1360s, established the accepted historical narrative of Edward II for subsequent generations of chroniclers.[56] He described the king writing,

> King Edward [II] was a handsome man, of outstanding strength, but his behavior was a very different matter. For, underrating the company of magnates, he was devoted to choristers, actors, grooms, sailors, and others skilled in similar avocations…. He was prodigal in giving, bountiful and splendid in living, quick and unpredictable in speech, most unlucky against the enemy…and passionately attached to one particular person, whom he cherished above all, showered with gifts and always put first; he could not bear being separated from him and honoured him above all others. As a result the loved one was hated, and the lover involved himself in odium and ruin.[57]

Within this passage, Higden presented why he believed that Edward's reign ended in deposition: the influence of Piers Gaveston, the so-called "loved one," and the king's supposed homosexual relationship with him.[58] This is a constructed narrative, one in which Higden presented the

[53] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 111.
[54]Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 320, 329-30.
[55] Phillips, *Edward II*, 602-603.
[56] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 1, 44; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 1.
[57] Translation of the *Polychronicon* by Ranulf Higden from Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 1.
[58] Haines, *Edward II*, 42.

"truth" of Edward's reign, not the facts of it. Gaveston had died over a decade before Edward's deposition; although, the conflicts between Edward and the barons helped to establish the turbulent royal and baronial relation that would persist throughout his rule. Higden, despite the more recent pressures on the reign, blamed everything on Gaveston and how the king's "passionate attachment" to his "lover" led him to "odium and ruin," alluding to Edward's supposed moral degeneracy causing his downfall. This conclusion can be seen mirrored in other chronicles, such as Sir Thomas Gray's *Scalachronica*, written from 1355-1359.[59]

Many of these medieval historians' assumptions concerning Edward's reign and sexual misconduct have been challenged in more modern work, especially the debate regarding the nature of his relationship with Piers Gaveston. The belief that the two were involved sexually, though subtly implied in some chronicles written after his death, made its way into popular culture. The play *Edward II* by Christopher Marlowe (*c.* 1592) and its modern reproductions greatly amplified this assumption.[60] Higden, Gray, and other near-contemporary chroniclers created the story of the sexually deviant king and his favorites, but Marlowe and his peers' imaginations promulgated the tale. Notably, le Baker and the *Anonimalle* chronicler did not allude to these taboo behaviors within their chronicles; for le Baker especially, sodomy would have been counterproductive to his sanctification of the king.

[59] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 93; Haines, *Edward II*, 42; Phillips, *Edward II*, 3-4. Gray's account shows a complex navigation of loyalties and sympathies as well. Despite serving the Despenser family, he portrayed both them and Edward quite negatively; see Sir Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica 1272-1363*, Vol. 209, ed Andy King and Surtees Society (Rochester: Surtees Society, 2005), xxxi. It is possible that he wanted to avoid showing any sympathy towards the family following its fall from grace and the executions of Hugh Despenser the Older and the Younger, or he might not have gotten the chance to become committed to the family as he served them only shortly, so changing alliances would have been easy. Gray simply may have never liked the Despensers—a sentiment he would have shared with many. Whatever his reason, Gray's narrative favored the baronial rebels, and he also explained Edward's deposition through implications of deviant sexual behavior, claiming that the king took part in "the delights of the flesh" after discussing the unusual attention he paid his male favorites; see Gray, *Scalacronica*, 91.

[60] Warner, *Edward II*, 29.

The popular interpretation of the king's reign changed again in the late twentieth century as new cultural norms regarding same-sex relationships caused Edward's reign and sexuality to be reevaluated, even going so far as to depict him as a gay icon.[61] Despite providing a new angle through which Edward's reign can be understood, this "queer" retelling is flawed. In order to make a modern social argument, this revision disregards the fact that gender and sexuality were perceived very differently in the chivalric fourteenth century. Additionally, no matter the stigma or lack thereof placed on same-sex coupling most biographers of Edward II do not question the assumption that the king was attracted to men.[62]

Homosexuality or bisexuality, however, are not the sole interpretation of the extraordinary nature of Edward and Gaveston's relationship. Recent scholarship has attempted to better understand it within the norms of the fourteenth century, attributing the special favors, attention, and undeniable affection that Edward paid to Gaveston to the practice of blood brotherhood.[63] There is also the question of Edward's relationship with his later favorite Despenser and Despenser's wife Eleanor. Like the Gaveston affair, a combination of popular culture, modern history, and several chroniclers insinuated that they were sexually involved.[64]

To justify the removal of Edward from the kingship, chroniclers needed to show that the former king was unfit to rule, beyond just insinuations of sodomy. The most common reason given for the civil wars, such as the Marcher rebellion and Isabella's invasion, was poor council,

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[61] Derek Jarman, *Queer Edward II* (London: BFI, 1991), 3. This piece takes the form of a play to contrast itself with the earlier Marlowe play which casts Edward's supposed sexuality in a negative light.
[62] P. C. Doherty, *Isabella and the Strange Death of Edward II*, 1st Carroll & Graf ed. (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 25; Harold Hutchison, *Edward II* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), 30; Sandra Raban, *England Under Edward I and Edward II 1259-1327* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 81; Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson, *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives* (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press in association with The Boydell Press with the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, 2006), 17-8.
[63] Chaplais, *Edward's Adopted Brother*, 109.
[64] Doherty, *Strange Death*, 101. This passage refers to the chronicles which claim this, using the one from Hainault as an example.

and his favorites such as Piers Gaveston and Hugh Despenser the younger received most of the blame.[65] This need to justify why events occurred comes from the nature of medieval historical writing. Fourteenth-century chroniclers intended for their work not only to recount events but to provide a lesson as well. Unlike histories such as the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, which read like a catalog of events, later chroniclers desired not only to describe what happened but why it happened, offering an explanation to both current and future readers.[66] Even accounts written during Edward's reign, such as the monastic chronicles of *St. Albans'*, the continuation of Trevet's *Annals*, and the *Lannercost Chronicle*, tended to portray the ruler, Gaveston, and Despenser in a negative light, despite their straightforward nature.[67] The *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, written by a secular clerk shortly before the end of Edward's reign, is often considered the most unbiased accounting of his rule and also does not flatter Edward or his favorites.[68] Similar to the accounts that would be published following the king's death, this chronicler also blamed Edward's failures on poor council; he claimed that the king had been a promising prince but an ineffective ruler who chose poor associates, like Gaveston.[69] Unlike the later *Anonimalle*, *Scalachronica*, *Polychronicon*, or *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, histories written during Edward's reign cannot be used to understand chroniclers' reactions to the deposition, which occurred later.

The *Anonimalle* and *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* presented two conflicting reactions to the deposition written near-contemporaneously. Both of their authors wrote within a decade of one another, both were members of the English clergy, and both used similar Christian

[65] Chaplais, *Edward's Adoptive Brother*, 1.
[66] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 2.
[67] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 2.
[68] Chaplais, *Edward's Adoptive Brother*, 7; Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 3.
[69] *Vita*, 5.

moral and hagiographical frameworks. Despite these parallels, le Baker and the *Anonimalle* chronicler could not have constructed more dissimilar narratives. These chroniclers exercised a considerable amount of agency while writing; their choices of what events to include, change, or invent and how to portray certain individuals changed the meaning of their histories. While writing, they both utilized the behavior of the king, his supporters, his enemies, and his wife to illustrate the morality or immorality of Edward and his enemies. Le Baker presented Edward as a holy martyr, Gaveston as sympathetic, and Isabella as a cruel, adulterous pagan; within this narrative Edward was not to blame for the strife of his reign. Le Baker's Edward was a victim of the evils of others. On the other hand, the *Anonimalle* chronicler portrayed the king as having lost divine favor, Gaveston as an evil councilor, Despenser as a degenerate pirate, Isabella as sympathetic, and Thomas earl of Lancaster as a saint. The *Anonimalle* blamed Edward for the disintegration of his reign, contrasting his amoral actions and followers with the supposed martyrdom of Lancaster.

CHAPTER 1: POSTHUMOUS SANCTIFICATION

To fit their opposing explanations for who was to blame for the civil war and deposition, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* and the *Anonimalle* chronicle elevated either King Edward II or his bitter rival and cousin, Thomas earl of Lancaster. The *Anonimalle* constructed a pro-baronial account, especially regarding the executed Thomas of Lancaster, and pinned the strife on the king. This allowed the chronicler to present Lancaster as a saint through miracle stories. On the other hand, to portray Queen Isabella and the magnates who aided her in the civil wars as the villains responsible for the deposition, le Baker posthumously sanctified Edward within his account and portrayed him as a martyr, equating his suffering and death to the Passion of Jesus Christ.[70] By making Edward's suffering Christ-like, he elevated the king to the saintly position of martyrdom, dying for his kingdom due to the evil intentions of his unfaithful wife. In fact, the historian Seymour Phillips argued that le Baker specifically intended for his account to be read as such, altering events and inventing others to support the narrative of Edward as a martyred king.[71]

Before le Baker could make a martyr out of Edward II, he first needed to dispute the negative interpretations of the king's reign. He achieved this through smoothing over the failings of Edward's kingship, such as the crimes and exiles of his favorites like Gaveston and Despenser, either by blaming someone else for the faults, minimizing them, or not including them at all. For example, le Baker depicted even Edward's widely unpopular favorite Piers Gaveston the earl of Cornwall—killed by Thomas of Lancaster and several other disgruntled members of the barony—positively his chronicle. Unlike Ranulf Higden's scathing assessment

[70] Geoffrey le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker of Swinbroke*, trans David Preest (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), 27, 29-32.
[71] Phillips, *Edward II*, 535.

of Gaveston leading Edward to "odium and ruin," le Baker described Gaveston as "handsome, nimble, quick-witted, of an inquisitive disposition and fairly well-practiced in the arts of war."[72] Praising the Gascon knight this way was practically unprecedented; despite coming from one of the most prominent Gascon families, most of the English nobility considered him to be an outsider and deeply despised him. [73] Many chroniclers shared this prejudice as well, such as Higden. Even the temperate author of the *Vita* wrote, "So seeing the young king's ingratitude, that he was trying to promote the unknown over the known, the stranger over the brother, and the foreigner over the native … the barons strove to destroy this unlawful lord, this insolent earl."[74] Le Baker's "handsome" and "quick-witted" characterization of Gaveston is almost unrecognizable compared to his typical historical representation as being proud, insulting the other magnates, and acting as England's self-appointed "second-king."[75] From reading le Baker's account of Gaveston and Edward, one would not be able to tell that the threat of civil war between king and earls began in just the second year of his reign.

Beyond the positive description of the Gascon, le Baker also greatly altered Gaveston and Edward's behavior to better suit his narrative. This change can be clearly seen in his account of Gaveston's second exile from England in 1308. Led by the powerful, elderly earl of Lincoln, the barony forced Edward to exile Gaveston, now the earl of Cornwall, from England under the threat of civil war.[76] Edward avoided dishonorably throwing his friend from the kingdom by instead installing Gaveston as his lieutenant in Ireland, managing to distort the banishment into a

[72] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 3.
[73]Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 28.
[74] *Vita*, 29.
[75] *Vita*, 5. The chronicler described Gaveston saying, "For the great men of the land hated him, because he alone found favour in the king's eyes and lorded it over them like a second king, to whom all were subject and none equal." This is the characterization of Gaveston that became most common.
[76] Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston,* 50.

royal assignment.[77] Le Baker, however, made no mention of the exile while describing Gaveston's appointment in Ireland: "The king wanted to put to rest the minds of those envious of Piers and to quieten the mutterings of his detractors. So he sent Piers in person with a strong force across to Ireland to deal with the rebels."[78] Additionally, while explaining the end of Gaveston's life in 1312, le Baker neither mentioned the Ordinances which exiled him from England under the threat of excommunication, nor how Edward unlawfully recalled Gaveston anyways, leading to the earl of Cornwall's beheading.[79]

Le Baker even blamed two of the most destabilizing factors of the king's reign—Edward's losses in Scotland and his animosity towards Thomas of Lancaster—not on the king's military and political failings, but on the severe grief brought on by Gaveston's murder distracting the king from his duties.[80] Furthermore, throughout the whole chronicle, le Baker made no allusions of untoward behavior between the king and the favorite. He sanitized the entire Gaveston affair to absolve Edward of fault. In this version of Edward's reign, he was not poorly advised or sexually deviant, and his choices were not to blame for the conflict and strife that erupted.[81] According to le Baker, Edward, a good and pious king, was a victim of the schemes of others.

After smoothing over the negative aspects of Edward's reign and establishing him as a victim of others' evil, le Baker was able to turn the king's final moments into a tale of

[77] Warner, *Edward II*, 48.
[78] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 4.
[79] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 5. The details of the exile and excommunication can be found in *Vita*, 33.
[80] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 6, 10.
[81] Le Baker even whitewashed Edward's execution of his cousin Thomas of Lancaster at the end of the Marcher rebellion following the Battler of Boroughbridge (1322) writing, "When they had been lawfully convicted of conspiracy against the king's person, they were punished in various ways by the verdict of the law, so that their acquittal should not provide an incentive for others in the future to commit the same offense." From le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 13.

martyrdom. He intentionally wove a story—with most of its details likely fabricated[82]—to make the suffering leading to Edward's death Christ-like. First, le Baker recounted how Edward was convinced to relinquish his crown to his fourteen-year-old son, the future Edward III. Supposedly, several bishops were sent by Queen Isabella to the king to convince him to give up his throne, threatening to crown someone not of the royal family if he did not agree. Filled with the selfless desire to preserve the Plantagenet dynasty—his royal family—and all it represented, Edward gave in. Le Baker wrote, "knowing that a good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, he was more ready to end his life as a follower of Christ than to look with the eyes of a living body upon the disinheritance of his sons or a lengthy civil war in his kingdom."[83] Like Jesus, Edward too was called a "good shepherd," but he was a shepherd not of the faith but of his realm and kingship. Despite Edward's captors being both English and Christian like himself, le Baker depicted them as pagan to further conflate the king's suffering with the Passion of Jesus. Just as pagan followers tortured Jesus, Edward's tormentors were shown as a non-Christian evil. Le Baker described them as "servants of Belial," a name for Satan.[84]

To make Edward's suffering holier, le Baker described his torments as mirroring the Passion. Analogous to Roman soldiers crowning Jesus with thorns, the knights escorting Edward to Berkeley Castle, where he would die, crowned the king with hay: "That villain Gournay made a crown out of hay and, daring to touch the Lord's anointed, put it on the head which had once been consecrated with holy oil, while the knights mocked him and said in bitter irony, 'Avaunt

[82] Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 38, 78. Le Baker had a great love of storytelling and often changed, or invented, episodes into order to fit his intended narrative.
[83] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 26. Le Baker references John 10:11 in this passage, further connecting Edward's suffering to Jesus. Le Baker also compares Edward's suffering Job: "Like the blessed Job he had been robbed of his temporal kingdom, though not by foreigners but by his own wife, servants and maidservants, and he had been deprived of the control exercised through honours and advantages. Now he waited for the heavenly kingdom to replace the earthly" (30).
[84] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 29.

sir king,' which is to say, 'Proceed, my lord king.'"[85] Like the Romans crying, "Hail, King of the Jews," as they mocked Jesus crowned with thorns in the suffering leading to his death, Edward was placed in a crown of hay to jeers of "Proceed, my lord king" as he was being take to his final destination. This deliberate conflation of the narrative of the Passion with the narrative of Edward's death served to make the king's demise not just a tragedy or a murder, but a holy "martyrdom."[86]

Not only was Edward humiliated in the events of his death in a Christ-like manner within this narrative, the violent death that le Baker described completed his tale of martyrdom. After describing all the ways in which Edward was mistreated and how the king bore it all with piety, le Baker ended his section on the life of Edward with a dramatic and climactic death and torment in the dungeons of Berkeley Castle:

> First they shut him [Edward] in the closest of chambers, and for many days they tortured him almost to suffocation by the stench of corpses placed in a cellar underneath his chamber. Indeed one day the servant of God at the window of his room lamented to some carpenters working outside that the unbearable stench was the heaviest punishment he had ever endured. But those tyrants saw that the stench could not of itself cause the death of a very strong man. And so on 22 September they suddenly seized him as he lay on his bed, and smothered and suffocated him with the great, heavy mattresses, in weight more than that of fifteen strong men. Then, with a plumber's soldering iron, made red hot, and thrust through the tube leading to the secret parts of his bowels, they burnt out his inner parts and then his breath of life. For they were afraid that if a wound was found on the body of this king, where friends of justice are accustomed to look for wounds, his

[85] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 29-30.
[86] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 29. He writes, "Almighty on high kept his confessor for a more public martyrdom." Furthermore, le Baker goes into much greater detail about Edward's humiliating torment on the way to Berkeley Castle including being fed poison, prevented from sleeping, under-dressed for the weather, and fed inedible food, all with the supposed goal of causing the king to die from the ill-treatment.

> torturers might be compelled to answer for an obvious injury and suffer punishment for it.[87]

Le Baker began the story by reiterating the cruelty of Edward's captors, keeping the king in a small room inundated with the stench of corpses in the hopes of making him sick to the point of death. After finding that this could not kill a "very strong" king, as le Baker described him, Edward's supposed killers then decided to murder the king directly, martyring him. The details are absurd: that even after all the abuse the king suffered only a mattress weighing as much as "fifteen strong men" could pin him and that Edward was killed via a hot soldering iron into his bowels. This lurid method of murder is not attested to in any of the contemporary accounts of Edward's death, and first appeared several decades later, around the time *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* was written.[88] Le Baker used this version of Edward's death differently from his peers, however. Often, the hot poker was used to imply that Edward was a sodomite and that dying due to a painful wound to the bowels was a poetically just way for him to die, a proper punishment for his sins.[89] When viewed as a whole, however, le Baker clearly did not intend for his chronicle to suggest that Edward was a sodomite. It was the king's tormentors and murderers who were implied to be sodomites instead, violating not only the sanctity of the crown through killing Edward but the sanctity of his body as well.

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[87] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker,* 32.

[88] Phillips, *Edward II*, 561-562; Warner, *Edward II*, 242. According to Phillips, although there are several more contemporary chroniclers—Adam Murimuth, the Lanercost chronicler, the Bridlington chronicler, the *French Chronicle of London* chronicler, and the Litchfield chronicler—who all wrote that Edward had likely been murdered, the hot poker story comes later and is most likely fabricated. It is included in the continuations of the *Brut*, in the *Polychronicon*, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, the chronicle from Meaux abbey, and the chronicle by Henry Knighton. Furthermore, when it appeared in le Baker's account, it was intended to show the extreme cruelty of Edward's tormentor. In other versions of Edward's life which are less royalist, however, the lewd death of a hot poker inserted through the anus is depicted as a fitting death for a sodomite, a claim later leveled at Edward due to his extreme favoritism towards Piers Gaveston and Hugh Despenser the younger.

[89] Phillips, *Edward II*, 14.

This lewd end concluded le Baker's narrative of humiliation ending in an even more degrading death, inspiring pity for the late king and elevating his suffering to a holy sacrifice. The last sentence which le Baker wrote about Edward II before recording the early reign of his son encapsulated his intended interpretation of the Christ-like Edward. He wrote, "Thus the kingdom of the angels in heaven received one hated by world, just as it had hated his master Jesus Christ before him. First it received the teacher, rejected by the kingdom of the Jews, and then the disciple, stripped of the kingdom of the English."[90]

The anonymous chronicler of the *Anonimalle*, on the other hand, did not find much about Edward praiseworthy and instead promulgated a pro-baronial narrative. Unlike le Baker's holy king, this chronicle depicted Thomas of Lancaster, who was put to death by Edward, as a saint and reported the many miracle stories which followed the magnate's death. By describing him as such, the *Anonimalle*'s Lancaster played a similar role as le Baker's Edward: a paradigm of moral good opposed to the villainous intentions of his enemies and eventually killed in response. Like le Baker smoothing over Edward's actions during his kingship to make him more sympathetic, the *Anonimalle* chronicler also whitewashed Lancaster's life, especially the Ordinances and the Marcher rebellion (1321-1322), to pave the way for his postmortem miracles.[91]

The Ordinances of 1311, which Thomas of Lancaster helped champion, are central to the *Anonimalle* chronicler's portrayal of the earl. This set of petitions to the king claimed that Edward was not upholding the dictates of the Magna Carta and gave power to a group of magnates called the Ordainers, of which Lancaster was a member, to enforce their constitutional

[90] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 32. In this passage, le Baker references John 15:24.
[91] The Marcher rebellion is sometimes referred to as the Despenser War.

reforms.[92] Passed by parliament, these petitions greatly restricted Edward's power; they partially subsumed the king's management of his treasurer, household, and exchequer; limited his control over the dispensation of royal favors—an essential part of medieval kingship—and most importantly to Edward, they banished Piers Gaveston for a third and final time.[93] Edward fought against these restrictions, especially Gaveston's banishment, until the conflict ended with his favorite's death within Lancaster's lands.[94]

Through the creation of the Ordinances, the *Anonimalle* chronicler presented Lancaster, and the other "most loyal and wise" magnates, as combatting the "evil intention[s]" of both Gaveston and the king.[95] Although Edward was susceptible to the ill advice of his "evil counsellors," who led the kingdom astray, the loyal and wise barons, such as Lancaster, fought against these villains for the good of the realm.[96] This was the only petition which the chronicler mentioned specifically: "In the said Ordinances one point was made to the effect that all the evil counsellors of the king should be removed and dismissed from the king. Because of this, the said Piers Gaveston…was again exiled from the country."[97] Through the creation of the Ordinances, Lancaster was able to directly oppose the evils within Edward's reign, such as his poor choice in advisors and friends—especially Gaveston and later Despenser. Intentionally, however, there was no mention within the *Anonimalle* of the barony's usurpation of Edward's power, often for

[92] Phillips, *Edward II*, 172.
[93] Phillips, *Edward II*, 156; Warner, *Edward II*, 61-62.
[94] Phillips, *Edward II*, 194; Warner, *Edward II*, 74; *Vita*, 33. Even though many of the most essential parts of his royal power were limited by the Ordinances, Edward does not seem to have been as concerned about the reduction of his influence, such as control over royal favors. Instead, Edward was much more incensed by the third and final banishment of Piers Gaveston. The *Vita* author wrote, "Whatever things have been ordained or decided upon…however much they may redound to my private disadvantage, shall be established at your request and remain in force for ever. But you shall stop persecuting my brother Piers, and allow him to have the earldom of Cornwall."
[95] *The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1307 to 1334: From Brotherton Collection MS 29*, Vol. 147, trans Wendy Childs (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1991), 85, 105.
[96] *Anonimalle*, 85.
[97] *Anonimalle*, 85.

their own gain, including Lancaster.[98] They wanted to remove Gaveston not just because of his poor advice but because he had benefitted more from royal favors, chief among them the earldom of Cornwall, due to his close relationship to the king. The more land and power that Gaveston received, the less that was given to the established barons.[99] Only the selfless aspects of the Ordinances were recorded within this chronicle and none of the selfish motivations.

Furthermore, the *Anonimalle* chronicler rewrote the Marcher rebellion which Lancaster helped lead.[100] Unlike le Baker's description of this civil war as a "rebellion against the laws of the land," the *Anonimalle* chronicler ensured that the rebels', especially Lancaster's, actions appeared just.[101] He presented the conflict not as a revolt against the king but as an attempt to suppress the lawless Despensers who had previously been banished. The chronicler wrote, "[The] earl of Hereford, the Mortimers, Mowbray, and Clifford and many other lords of the land came with great forces; and they came to London completely armed, not in contempt of the king, but to get rid of his evil counsellors such as sir Hugh Despenser, both the father and son."[102] For the chronicler, fighting against the crown was not treasonous so long as it was necessary to fix the damage done to the realm through misrule, such as the promotion of evil men like the Despensers.[103] The way he distorted the Marcher rebellion to promote his constitutional convictions was very similar to le Baker's exclusion of Gaveston's exiles; by changing the

[98] Phillips, *Edward II*, 181-182.
[99] Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 37, 44; Warner, *Edward II*, 37; *Vita*, 29. The *Vita* states, "Piers alone received the king's favour, welcome, and goodwill, to such an extent that, if an earl or baron entered the king's chamber to speak with the king, while Piers was there the king addressed no one and showed a friendly countenance to Piers alone."
[100] Phillips, *Edward II*, 399, 405 While Lancaster was not openly allied with the Marcher rebels at first, he was still clearly in cahoots with them. At the time, he was the steward of England (since 1308) and claimed that he would repress any rebels he happened to discover, but because he was working with the rebels, he never did. Furthermore, the civil war ended when he and the remaining rebellious earls, Hereford, Pembroke, and Richmond, were defeated.
[101] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 12.
[102] *Anonimalle*, 101.
[103] King, "Treason and Rebellion," 43. This concept is deeply tied into that of the Magna Carta and the constitutional tradition which it inhabits; see Robert Blackburn, "Magna Carta and the Development of the British Constitution," *Historian* no. 125 (2015), 26.

barons' target to the Despensers from the king, the *Anonimalle* chronicler warped the meaning of the Marcher rebellion. The restyling of this rebellion changed its meaning from being an attack on the king and royal authority to the noble mission of the loyal magnates to expel the evil pirate Despenser from the realm, even if that meant fighting the king.

Although the *Anonimalle* chronicler did not make Thomas of Lancaster's execution dramatic, he did ensure that it carried a powerful message: martyrdom for England. His death, however, was not portrayed as being at the hands of a pagan enemy, but as the cost of attempting to uphold justice and the common good of the realm during a poor kingship. After Lancaster's capture following his defeat at Boroughbridge in Yorkshire, the chronicler narrated the events of the earl's trial and execution:

> At this [the] earl of Arundel, and sir Robert Mablethorp were appointed his [Thomas of Lancaster's] judges by the king, and there by record of the king, which now was taken for law, they condemned him to be beheaded on 20 March, that is St. Cuthbert's Day, in a place which the said earl liked greatly to frequent for pleasure. And this was [in retaliation] for the beheading of sir Piers Gaveston named above whom the king greatly loved. Alas! what grief there was! For on the same day that the noble earl was thus beheaded for the great faithfulness he had shown in upholding right and the royal estate of the king for the common profit of all the realm, six great lords, barons, were drawn and hanged with him at Pontefract.[104]

Although less detailed and creative then Edward's demise in le Baker's chronicle, the execution of Lancaster was also recorded with a narrative intent. Just as he had beheaded Gaveston for leading England to ruin, Lancaster too was beheaded as Edward's revenge for the death of his favorite. The *Anonimalle* chronicler, however, believed that it was not an equal vengeance;

[104] *Anonimalle*, 107-109.

"noble earl" Lancaster was killed for ordering the death of "sir" Gaveston. Even though both men were earls at the time of their death, the chronicler employed the form of address of a knight for Gaveston. Executing a member of the royal family, an earl, and an alleged champion of goodness and justice was, in the opinion of the chronicler, more significant than the death of a thrice-exiled foreign knight. Additionally, the chronicler included that Lancaster was beheaded on St. Cuthbert's Day. Cuthbert was one of the most important saints of England, especially connected to the region around York where Lancaster was based.[105] Connecting Lancaster and his death to the pre-eminent saint of Northern England linked him to the holy men of the past and further sanctified the earl. To create this narrative, the *Anonimalle* chronicler had to choose to leave out several more controversial events at the end of Lancaster's life, such as his dealings with the Scots, which would have been considered treasonous.[106] It was not, the chronicler believed, those who rose up against the king who were traitors, but those who fought against Lancaster and his allies as they attempted to right the kingdom.[107]

It was after Lancaster's death, however, that the *Anonimalle* chronicler began to sanctify the earl through miracles. While le Baker focused his attempts to hallow Edward on his death and the events preceding it, the *Anonimalle* chronicler used events that happened after Lancaster's death to render him holy. Although none of the miracles recorded within the chronicle are detailed, they begin right after Lancaster's death: "And the body of the noble earl of Lancaster was handed over by the king's order to the monks of the same town where his body lies buried in their church close to the high altar. And soon after…Our Lord Jesus Christ did many miracles for love of him."[108] In many ways, validating Lancaster's sainthood and

[105] John R. E. Bliese, "Saint Cuthbert and War," *Journal of Medieval History* 24, no. 3 (1998), 215.
[106] King, "Treason and Rebellion," 40.
[107] King, "Treason and Rebellion," 44.
[108] *Anonimalle*, 109.

martyrdom through miracles was a simpler task than making Edward's suffering Christ-like. Posthumous miracles were proof that a person was in heaven and thus able to intercede with God on behalf of the living. By stating that "many miracles" were done for the love of Lancaster, the *Anonimalle* chronicler was able to assert that not only was Lancaster in heaven but that God was on his side in the conflict against Edward, Gaveston, and the Despensers to protect the justice of England.

While not a dramatic murder like le Baker's Edward, Lancaster's death in the *Anonimalle* was still holy. The chronicler digressed from his account of one of the king's failed campaigns in Scotland to report that "at the time Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is aware of all righteousness, wished of His divine grace to show that the said noble earl of Lancaster had died in a just cause…He worked a number of miracles for the love of him, which are genuine, and found to be so by good investigations."[109] This could hardly be more blunt in its assertion that Lancaster was saintly and in the right. What greater approval for your actions was there than Jesus's? What greater proof than miracles could the chronicler provide of Lancaster's "just cause" in the Marcher rebellion? Whereas le Baker conflated the death of Edward with Jesus using biblical references, the *Anonimalle* chronicler took a much simpler route. He plainly stated that Lancaster was holy, in the right, and blessed by God. There was no need for an intricate narrative or brutal murderer, just a holy man who was unjustly killed, interceding after his death for the good of the people.

The Lancaster miracles within the *Anonimalle* chronicle are intrinsically linked to justice and legality; almost all were connected to the Ordinances. The chronicler must have considered these petitions to be the greatest and holiest accomplishment of the earl's life: after the initial

[109] *Anonimalle*, 113.

reports of miracles, all his other intercessions were connected to the Ordinances in some way. When Edward removed the painted board within St. Paul's church in London which Lancaster had dedicated in commemoration of the Ordinances, two more miracles occurred. Like the other records of the earl's intercession, there were no details given besides the date and location: "After Trinity Sunday [22 May], God preformed miracles in the church of St Paul of London at the board which the said earl of Lancaster had painted and hung on a pillar, in memory of the fact that the king had granted and established the Ordinances."[110] By associating the Ordinances with the miracles, the chronicler reaffirmed not only Lancaster's saintly status but the justness of the Ordainers and their actions in restricting the king.

Using miracles to demonstrate the goodness of Lancaster, the *Anonimalle* chronicler engaged in hagiography—the practice of writing about saints' lives—a tradition which had been in England for as long as Christianity. Writing shortly after the Anglo-Saxon conversion (eighth century), the venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* helped establish English historical conventions, and his writing heavily featured miracle stories and hagiography.[111] Bede even demonstrated how to use hagiography to portray a magnate as holy through his depiction of St. Oswald, the king of Northumbria. Like le Baker's Edward, Bede excluded those responsible for the death of Oswald from Christendom. The Anglo-Saxon king died in battle due to the "callous impiety of the British king Cadwalla and the insane apostasy of the English kings (Osric and Eanfrid): for it has been generally agreed that the names of these

[110] *Anonimalle*, 115. The other miracle took place about two months later "at this time at the feast of the translation of St Thomas at the beginning of the [seventeenth] year [3 or 7 July], the said board in St Paul's church, was removed by a certain Robert Baldock, a false and evilly inclined man, on the most express instructions of the king, and subsequently the wax that was offered there in devotion of the said Thomas of Lancaster [was removed]. But although the people's devotion was entirely removed, so that offerings were not made at the pillar where the said board hung, such were the miracles that God worked for the said Thomas overtly and publicly that many people attached themselves to him."

[111] Ahern, "Bede's Miracles," 283.

apostates should be erased from the list of Christian kings and the year of their reign ignored." [112] Even though many of Oswald's enemies were likely pagan, as the island of Britain was still being Christianized at the time, even those enemies who had been converted—Cadwalla himself was a British Christian—were omitted from Christendom. Despite Edward dying in captivity and Oswald in battle, their deaths both came at the hands of supposedly non-Christian enemies.

Miracles were also an essential part of Bede's hagiography of Oswald. Following his death, Bede reported many miracles that occurred due to the intercession of Oswald. Although Bede's conception of what a miracle was would have differed from that of a fourteenth-century chronicler's—Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274) changed the definition of miracle to be occurrences outside of the typical laws of nature[113]—Bede and the *Anonimalle* chronicler used miracles similarly. Miraculous intercessions were able to demonstrate that an individual was truly holy, as seen in "Oswald's great devotion and faith in God was made evident by the miracles that took place after his death. For at the place where he was killed fighting for his country against the heathens, sick men and beasts are healed to this day."[114] Bede also recounted many more miracles connected to Oswald such as healing the sick with dust from his grave, a great pillar of light shining upon his remains, saving the possessed, healing a paralyzed girl, and stopping an epidemic.[115] For Bede, these miracles were direct signs from God and proof of Oswald's martyrdom, not just extraordinary occurrences.[116]

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[112] Saint Bede the Venerable, Saint Egbert, and Abbot of Jarrow Cuthbert, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People: with Bede's Letter to Egbert and Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede*, trans Leo Sherley-Price, David Hugh Farmer, and R. E. Latham (London: Penguin, 1995), 157.
[113] Ahern, "Bede's Miracles," 284.
[114] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 158.
[115] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 158, 160, 162, 227-228.
[116] Ahern, "Bede's Miracles," 292, 301. Like le Baker, Bede too referenced biblical stories in the creation of his hagiographies: "A central tenet of Christian exegesis as practised by Bede was that many of the events of Scripture should be understood as genuine historical happenings, in which could also be discerned a spiritual or allegorical meaning" (294).

Bede's Oswald, however, was a more fully realized hagiography than le Baker's Edward or the *Anonimalle*'s Lancaster. Oswald was canonized while neither Edward nor Lancaster's cults were able to achieve Vatican recognition.[117] Not only had Thomas of Aquinas narrowed the definition of a miracle since the time of Bede; by the fourteenth century the church had tightened the restrictions on becoming a saint.[118] While there was a monarch canonized at that time—Louis IX of France (r. 1226-1270)—it required the current king of France, Phillip IV "the Fair," actively championing his forebearer's sainthood.[119] Neither Edward's nor Lancaster's saint cults had the force of a king behind them following the turmoil of the deposition and youth of the new king. Moreover, Bede's hagiography of Oswald was more detailed than either le Baker or the *Anonimalle*. More than just smoothing over the events of Oswald's life, Bede recounted that the king's "humble, kindly, and generous" actions were able to performs miracles while he was still living.[120] Lancaster's nondescript miracles are lackluster compared to the detailed accounts of Oswald's intercession. Furthermore, unlike Oswald's noble death in battle, le Baker chose to detail Edward's death in Berkeley Castle in more dramatic terms in order to conjure pity for the dead monarch. Although both le Baker and the *Anonimalle* chronicler contorted their narratives to better fit the mold of hagiography to sanctify the two magnates, neither were successful in the end. Neither were able to conjure a recognized martyr from the pages of their history.

[117] Phillips, *Edward II*, 603.
[118] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Philippe De Mézière's Life of Saint Pierre De Thomas at the Crossroads of Late Medieval Hagiography and Crusading Ideology," *Viator* 40, no. 1 (2009), 227-228.
[119] M. C. Gaposchkin, "Boniface VIII, Philip the Fair, and the Sanctity of Louis IX," *Journal of Medieval History* 29, no. 1 (2003), 1-2.
[120] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 144, 152. There are two miracles within Bede which are directly connected to Oswald's actions while he was still living. In the first, a young man is healed by a cross that the king erects. The second occurs when, after Oswald gave his Easter meal to the poor, Bishop Aidan, who also later became a saint, declared that the hand which distributed the food should "never wither with age." According to Bede, the hand did not decompose following Oswald's death.

CHAPTER 2: VILIFYING MAGNATES AND QUEENS

The intentions of chroniclers had not changed much between Bede and the fourteenth century; they still intended for their writing to serve as a guide for future generations and to provide examples of both good and bad behavior from which one could learn.[121] Because of this intention, both *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* and the *Anonimalle* vilified those whom they blamed for the conflicts of Edward II's reign. For the king to be proven a martyred hero, the barons that overthrew him had to be evil. Conversely, if Thomas of Lancaster were a saint, then the followers of the king who killed him needed to appear villainous as well.

Unlike le Baker's description of Piers Gaveston as Edward's talented, dear friend, the *Anonimalle* chronicler vilified the king's first favorite during his reign. The chronicler did not carefully circumvent any mention of Gaveston's exiles; instead, he made the Gascon's irreputable expulsions central. The first description of the knight within the *Anonimalle* reads, "Gaveston who had been exiled by the good king his father and by the good peers of the land; but…he [Edward II] had the said Piers recalled against his father's prohibition and without the consent of his baronage, and gave him the earldom of Cornwall."[122] Concealing Gaveston's exile aided le Baker's royalist account of Edward's rule, but the pro-baronial *Anonimalle*'s narrative, with its sanctification of Thomas of Lancaster, was strengthened by emphasizing the lawlessness of Edward's favorite. Furthermore, the narrative offered an opposing explanation for why most of the barony hated Gaveston. Le Baker insisted that the other earls could not help but be jealous of the knight, as he was so skilled and favored.[123] The *Anonimalle*, however, attributed the animosity to Gaveston's behavior: "[He] was again exiled from the country, because he advised

[121] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 2.
[122] *Anonimalle*, 83.
[123] Le Baker, *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 3.

the king to do otherwise than he should, against his own estate and that of his crown, and because he caused blank charters to be sealed, and did other totally wrong things."[124] This account of Gaveston is similar to that of the *Polychronicon* and the *Vita*; unlike le Baker who chose to deviate from the common narrative to support his representation of Edward as a martyr, the *Anonimalle* followed the usual account closely to reinforce its pro-baronial retelling.

Although le Baker was able to spin Gaveston's short earldom more positively, his characterization of Hugh Despenser the younger, the earl of Winchester, was negative like most of the contemporary accounts. Despenser's actions were so reprehensible and he was so reviled that there was no way for le Baker to twist events to reflect better on the king's chamberlain. He illustrated Despenser as, "extremely handsome in physique, excessively haughty in attitude and deeply depraved in deed. It was his spirit of ambition and greed that precipitated him from the disinheriting of widows and orphans to the murder of the highest nobles of the king."[125] Despenser's actions such as stealing land from prominent widows, including Lancaster's,[126] were so deplorable and well-known that le Baker could only present him as a villain. It was necessary, therefore, for him to portray the earl as evil without also damaging the saintly image of Edward he had constructed.

Le Baker made sure within his chronicle that all blame for Despenser's knavery fell only upon the earl, not the king. He stated, "All the friends of the knights and the two bishops were

[124] *Anonimalle*, 85. Additionally, this ties into the *Anonimalle*'s high opinion of the Ordinances, as set of early constitutional legislation that a large part of the earldom, led by Thomas of Lancaster, which greatly restricted the power of the king. It also called explicitly for the exile of Piers Gaveston from all English lands and holdings, purposely preventing Edward from being able to send his friend to Ireland once more to avoid the full weight of his exile. Shortly afterwards in defiance of the Ordinances, Edward recalled Gaveston, causing him to be excommunicated and eventually leading to his death at the hands of the earls of Lancaster, Warwick, Arundel, and Hereford. For the Ordinances see *Vita*, 49; Warner, *Edward II*, 61. For the final exile and death of Piers Gaveston see *Vita*, 39; Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 93, 95; Warner, *Edward II*, 74.
[125] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 6.
[126] Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 113.

against the Despensers. With their minds weighed down by a sickening sorrow, they were ready for the fury of rebellion and it was only their reverence for the king's peace that held back their hands."[127] By this logic, the king was not to blame for the civil wars and unrest of his rulership, but the malevolent Despenser who drove the otherwise faithful barony to violence: "[The] two earl Hughs [were] hated by everybody, not only because the king loved them more than all the others but because, being driven on by their proud, ambitious spirits, they were pauperizing high-born knights by demanding cruel ransoms, and were disinheriting their sons by knocking down their fathers' estates for nothing."[128] The way in which le Baker deflected the entire burden of baronial discontent onto Despenser was just as misleading as his earlier tendency to exclude Gaveston's exiles. It was Edward's preferential treatment towards Hugh Despenser the younger, such as the incredible amount of favor that the king paid him, that enabled this earl's poor behavior. Without the kingly patronage, Despenser would not have been in the high position of power he then exploited; without Edward's help, Despenser would not have been able to do so much damage. The omission of Edward's culpability for the actions of his followers was essential to Le Baker's treatment of both the beginning and the end of the reign.

The *Anonimalle*, on the other hand, stressed Edward's responsibility for Despenser's actions, which the chronicler deliberately presented as a betrayal of England.[129] It was through Edward that Despenser had power within the kingdom, and the chronicler ensured that the reader

[127] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 16. He also wrote, "Everybody thought that the enduring of three kings in England at the same time was a burden too big to be borne. Many loved the king greatly, but many more hated the two Hughs out of fear." This further blames the Despensers, especially the younger, for the turmoil.
[128] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 16.
[129] King, "Treason and Rebellion," 46. Interestingly, the *Anonimalle* chronicler never explicitly accused Gaveston of traitor nor did he allude towards the quasi-legal nature of his beheading. This is due in part to the changing definition of treason around the time of Edward I and his son Edward II, making treason more specifically crimes against the king, as opposed to against the kingdom. Although the chronicler did refer to Despenser as a traitor, he mainly described him as a "betrayer" of England. Because everything he did was supposedly accomplished with the support of the king, it could no longer be considered to be treason, but the chronicler could still present it as against the best interests of the country.

knew of the earl's worst crimes. He gave a lengthy description of the Despensers' exile (shortly before the Marcher rebellion) and the younger's resulting piracy:

> [The Despensers] were exiled from the realm of England as traitors, on pain of beheading if they ever returned into the power and lordship of the king. Then sir Hugh Despenser the father quickly took himself overseas and cursed his son because thanks to his (the son's) evil behavior he had incurred this misadventure. The king kept Despenser the son in the realm, at sea, with the help of the Cinque Ports, so that this Hugh Despenser the son, with the force gathered by him, robbed at sea dromonds, which were coming to England with a great many goods, and other ships, to the great dishonor of the king and all the king's people. This piracy did great harm to the realm, and the pope excommunicated all those who committed this piracy or who were party to it.[130]

According to the *Anonimalle* chronicler, not only did the younger Despenser become a pirate, but he did so under the aegis of the king. Despenser the pirate was rendered as not only a menace to the magnates of England, but an enemy to the common people through his attacks on trading vessels and to Christendom as a whole, a claim the chronicler strengthened by referring to Despenser's excommunication by the pope. Le Baker, conversely, made no mention of the piracy, only a vague reference to Despenser spending some time on the sea.[131] The piracy was too objectionable and Edward's connection to it too problematic; its inclusion could not aid le Baker in his attempt to absolve the king of any guilt for Despenser's crimes. For the *Anonimalle*, on the contrary, focusing on the piracy not only vilified Despenser, but also held Edward accountable for these transgressions, further hallowing Lancaster.

[130] *Anonimalle*, 101. Sir Thomas Gray also mentions this piracy within his chronicle, but his account is much more sedated and brief, see Gray, *Scalachronica*, 91; "Whilst in exile, he [Despenser] robbed two merchant ships full of merchandise at sea, which cost the realm of England dearly afterwards."
[131] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 11.

While the *Anonimalle* strove to laud Thomas of Lancaster, le Baker slandered Edward's cousin and enemy. According to le Baker, although it was Despenser's deplorable actions that created the discontent within the barony, it was Lancaster who took this anger and through it manipulated the barony into failed revolts. Le Baker placed the guilt of the Marcher rebellion on "the principal perpetrator of this great disaster, Thomas earl of Lancaster, whose noble birth and immense wealth had attracted others to support in the belief that he was 'immortal,' was sentenced by public court on the sixth day after the king's triumph to death by hanging."[132] Despite Thomas of Lancaster dying almost five years earlier than Edward, le Baker still placed much of the onus for the deposition on the earl. Lancaster was the one who killed Gaveston, stirring the king to sadness and revenge. He was the one who urged the other earls to take up arms against the Despensers. He was the "perpetrator of this great disaster" which caused Roger Mortimer to flee from his imprisonment to France where he would eventually help plot the overthrow of the king. In le Baker's royalist account, it was imperative for the chronicler to vilify Edward's greatest rival during most of his reign, Thomas of Lancaster, the king's cousin, ruler of five earldoms following the death of the earl of Lincoln, and a man second in wealth and power in England to only the king.[133] He was a man so powerful and seemingly untouchable that he had considered himself "immortal."

Moreover, le Baker needed to respond to the outrage and shock caused by Edward's execution of his powerful cousin, the earl of Lancaster. Following the death of the most influential earl and a member of the royal family, many people—especially near York, the seat of Lancaster's power—such as the *Anonimalle* chronicler, began to believe that the executed lord

[132] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 13. Le Baker also claimed that Lancaster had openly been a part of the rebellion from the start, that he "supported them ardently and openly" (11).
[133] Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 114-115.

was a saint.[134] Within his narrative of Edward's reign, le Baker needed to counter these beliefs of sainthood to demonstrate Lancaster's culpability for the Marcher rebellion.[135] Lancaster, in this account, not only began the conflict but escalated it until it culminated in his execution as "the resolve of the barons wavered, and some of them suggested that they should throw themselves on the king's grace and mercy…. But this advice was hateful to the earl of Lancaster. He…was afraid of none, especially since he claimed that he had taken up arms not against the king but against that traitor to the kingdom, Hugh Despenser."[136] Furthermore, to continue discrediting Lancaster, le Baker almost immediately thereafter contrasted the earl's negative choices with the noble earl of Hereford, also a Marcher rebel, to make Lancaster's role in the conflict appear even worse. He wrote, "So the chivalrous earl [of Hereford], because of his innate goodness, chose to be defeated in war and to die what seemed to him a good death, rather than to have his god-fearing mind long tortured by the carrying off of his fellow-soldiers…or their punishment by death."[137] Through this contrast of the two earls, le Baker was able to fulfill two of the main purposes of his chronicle (1) to provide examples of both good and bad behavior for his future readers to learn from and (2) to vilify the enemies of his martyred king. Both earls participated in the uprising, but the earl of Hereford accepted his defeat chivalrously and humbly while Thomas of Lancaster's pride in challenging the king led to his dishonorable death.[138]

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[134] Phillips, *Edward II*, 601-603. There was also a movement which tried to canonize Edward as saint, reacting similarly to the death of a king as others did to the death of the earl. Both attempts at sainthood for Lancaster and Edward, however, received little traction in Rome.

[135] Le Baker is not the only fourteenth century chronicler who disputed that Lancaster was a saint. Within the *Scalachronica*, his death is explained as retribution for his many "villainies," such as killing Gaveston, whom the chronicle describes surprisingly temperately; see Gray, *Scalachronica*, 71, 87.

[136] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 13.

[137] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 13.

[138] Swinbroke (sometimes Swinbrook) laid within the Chadlington hundred which Humphrey le Bohun earl of Hereford controlled. At the time of writing, the hundred was still controlled by the Bohun family, and it is possible that le Baker altered his account of the earl of Hereford to better reflect on the predecessor of his ruling baron. See Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to the Sixteenth Century*, 39.

Even more than Thomas of Lancaster, le Baker blamed the deposition on the queen, Isabella of France, and her invasion. Le Baker illustrated the queen as a poor ruler, unable to keep the country functioning, only able to gather followers through lies and rumors, and the cause of her husband's death.[139] Comparatively, it was much easier for chroniclers to vilify other magnates like Gaveston and Despenser, or even Thomas of Lancaster, than it was to make an antagonist out of Isabella. Due to their actions or pride, they could be shown as damaging to England and her people but making a villain of the queen was more complicated. In fact, le Baker dedicated much more of his chronicle to demonstrating how evil Isabella was than he did making a martyr out of Edward. He strove to demonstrate what he perceived to be the queen's culpability in the deposition by replacing her agency with greed, by showing her excessive cruelty, and by revealing her moral degeneracy.

Unique to le Baker's account of the reign is the claim that Isabella did not plan the invasion of England in 1326 herself, but that Adam Orleton, the bishop of Hereford, was the true mastermind.[140] Through this, le Baker blamed the deposition of the king on the petty, greedy, and cruel Isabella, who was manipulated into causing great evil through a crafty bishop who desired revenge on the king:

> As the bishop…refused to reply to this allegation [of helping Roger Mortimer escape], this…traitor was stripped of all his temporalities on the authority of the king. Adam conceived a bitter hatred against the king and his friends as a result. He had a great deal of natural cunning, very much experience of worldly wisdom and was capable of committing large-scale crimes, and now I must tell the story of how the bishop drank the

[139] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 22, 23.
[140] Doherty, *Strange Death*, 110.

> poison of the anger aroused in him and plotted to overthrow the king and to remove many of the nobles.[141]

Le Baker tried to prove that not only was Isabella responsible for the overthrow and death of the king, but that she did not have the "natural cunning" necessary to devise the plot. Instead, he claimed that it was the bishop of Hereford who devised the plan. Isabella was a powerful tool who allowed herself to be wielded by others to devasting effect; her influence as queen, in the hands of the cunning bishop of Hereford, ended the life of the holy Edward.

According to le Baker, not only did the bishop of Hereford use Isabella to damage the realm, but she surrendered her agency willingly in order to sate her avarice. Through Despenser's own greediness, he began limiting the queen's wealth, power, and household during the war with France. This was an insult, le Baker claimed, which Isabella would not bare. With her "woman's insatiable greed frustrated of its desires," the queen "blazed up in anger not only against the Despensers but also against her husband."[142] Le Baker's Isabella was irrational and greedy, susceptible to what he considered to be the failings of her gender.[143] While Edward was depicted as a paragon of virtue: Christ-like, bearing his suffering with patience, and dying for his kingdom, Isabella's actions were deplorable, actively leading to the murder of the her husband and conveying the worst of medieval female behavior.[144]

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[141] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 15-16.
[142] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 17.
[143] He then expressed this greed again later, arguing that Isabella intentionally took what she could from the Despensers following the invasion; see Doherty, *Strange Death*, 113.
[144] Similar traits can be observed in a quintessential example of poor female behavior in medieval literature, the mythological Queen Medb [Maeve] of Connacht: "On a literal level, Medb is an evil and misguided woman. She instigates a large and bloody war over a matter of pride. …During the epic which follows, Medb is variously portrayed as headstrong, illogical, unfeeling, promiscuous, and ultimately defeated;" see Sheryl O'Sullivan, "Women In Celtic Mythology," *Phoebe: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Feminist Scholarship, Theory, and Aesthetic* 13, no. 1 (2001), 33.

Furthermore, le Baker portrayed Isabella not only as a model of poor feminine behavior, but he also showed her to be excessively cruel and violent.[145] After her invasion of England and the capture of the Despensers, the queen enacted her revenge for their limiting her expenditures. Her main rival, Hugh Despenser the younger was, without trial, "drawn, hung, beheaded and divided into four quarters. His head was dispatched to London Bridge and the four quarters distributed between the four quarters of the kingdom."[146] While the death was brutal, even by medieval standards, Despenser the younger was not popular and his own villainies well-known. Because of this, it was the death of the aged Hugh Despenser the elder on which le Baker focused upon more in order to better demonstrate the evils of the queen. After surrendering honorably to Isabella at Bristol, again without trial, he was "bound with ropes, with his arms and shins stretched out in a long line. Then, before the eyes of the living queen, his belly was cut open and his entrails cruelly pulled out and burnt, while the rest of the body was dragged by horses and hung on the common gallows for thieves."[147] Unlike his inventions regarding Edward's final moments to make the king seem holier, le Baker did not conjure these events; the barbarous deaths of the Despensers are attested to in several other contemporary chronicles such as the *Brut*, Henry Knighton's chronicle, and the *Annales Paulini*.[148] Drawing and quartering an old, powerful magnate such as Despenser the elder was excessive and hateful, and it served as a way for le Baker to highlight Isabella's cruelty.

Even more than the Despensers, however, Isabella was inhumane to the king, her husband. In order to paint Edward as martyred, le Baker needed to have someone willing to order

[145] Violence too is a trait which can be seen within depiction of Medb; see O'Sullivan, "Women In Celtic Mythology," 34.
[146] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 24.
[147] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 24.
[148] Doherty, *Strange Death*, 106.

these evils done unto the king; for this, he used Isabella. Although she never physically participated in any of the tormenting within the chronicle, le Baker was always sure to mention that any evils done were committed under the insistence of the queen. She ordered Edward's capture, ordered him moved to Berkeley where "the inhumanity of his tormentors towards him was worse than that of wild beasts," and told the bishop of Hereford to send the final message requesting the king's death.[149] All of the gruesome details which le Baker used to make a martyr of the king—being crowned with hay, mocked, fed too little food, and murdered crudely with the hot soldering iron—served a second purpose as well. Through these same details, not only was Edward sanctified, but Isabella was vilified.

Isabella's actions not only conformed with the worst tendencies of her gender and espoused vicious cruelty, but they also went against the marriage which she was supposed to protect and revere, the husband whom she was supposed to honor. Le Baker used this violation of the sacrament of marriage to further vilify the queen. After Edward did not side with her against Hugh Despenser the younger when he limited her household, Isabella and the king's marriage began to fracture.[150] Naturally, le Baker took this claim to an even greater extreme: that Isabella began to hate her husband so much with her heart "harder than an adamantine anvil" that she wanted him dead.[151] Furthermore, she wished Edward dead because she feared the church "might one day actually compel her to share again the bed of the husband she had repudiated."[152] This is a serious charge which le Baker laid at Isabella's feet: that she did not respect her husband or the Christian institution of matrimony.

[149] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 29, 30-31.
[150] Weir, *Isabella*, 151-154.
[151] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 28, 30.
[152] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 28.

Moreover, Isabella would not resume her marital duty, according to le Baker, because she had taken on other lovers. This claim was not unique to le Baker; Isabella the so-called "She-Wolf of France" has become almost synonymous with adultery, especially with her favorite Roger Mortimer.[153] Le Baker's fellow chronicler Sir Thomas Gray commented that after being captured, Edward sent a message to Isabella "thinking that she would come to him, as a wife should to her husband," but that she no longer respected the relationship and thus did not.[154] Within *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, however, the description of Isabella refusing to return to Edward is much more sensational. Le Baker compared Edward to Orpheus, his heart filled with pain as he sung his pleas for his beloved wife to return to his arms, only for Isabella to be stirred to anger over his insistence.[155] In this recounting, Edward's love was compared to Orpheus, a Greek hero who ventured into Hades in an attempt to regain his wife. Isabella, however, was not moved by this mythological extreme of affection as a cruel, unfaithful wife.

Additionally, there is no subtlety in le Baker's charges of adultery. To explain Isabella's spurning of her husband's love-struck pleas, he wrote, "Others guessed that she had found comfort in the unlawful embraces of Roger Mortimer and the other English exiles whom she found in France."[156] He implicated not just Mortimer, the most commonly referenced affair, but left the number of different lovers which the queen might have had ambiguous. While a single affair might qualify as a courtly romance, such as the classic Arthurian example of Guinevere and Lancelot, multiple lovers could not.[157] Le Baker even directly connected the plan to kill the

[153] Weir, *Isabella*, xviii-xix. Even though the epithet has become synonymous with Isabella, "She-Wolf of France" did not come to be associated with her until an eighteenth-century poem by Thomas Gray.
[154] Gray, *Scalachronica*, 95.
[155] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 27.
[156] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 20.
[157] The trope of the adulterous queen in a courtly romance with Guinevere and Lancelot appeared within the fourteenth century English *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, fairly contemporary with le Baker; see Ruth Lexton, "Reading

king with Isabella's affairs: "The queen had now spent a year plotting her revenge, and finally on the advice of her lovers she prepared to drink its cup."[158] Through this claim, le Baker tied Isabella's cruelty to her adultery. She disrespected her husband with other men, and they supposedly urged Isabella to end the reign of her husband. The unfaithfulness in her marriage was just as damaging for le Baker as her greed because, as a queen, Isabella's lack of fidelity compromised the legitimacy of royal succession.[159]

Furthermore, le Baker's Isabella was presented as a threat to Christendom. In conflating Edward's suffering with Jesus's at the hands of his pagan accusers, the chronicler portrayed the king's persecutors as pagan also. Similar to the descriptions of how the king suffered, this depiction of the queen and her followers as a non-Christian evil served to both sanctify Edward and vilify Isabella. Le Baker called the bishop of Hereford "that priest of Baal" and Isabella a "Baalite priestess" and a "Jezebel," connecting them to Ba'al, a Canaanite storm god to whom the Israelites went astray in the Old Testament and to the biblical Jezebel who worshipped him.[160] Jezebel wrought great damage upon the faithful Israelites, just as le Baker's Isabella

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the Adulterous/Treasonous Queen in Early Modern England: Malory's Guinevere and Anne Boleyn," *Exemplaria* 27, no. 3 (2015), 230.

[158] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 20. Le Baker even claimed that in her hatred of her husband, she prevented him from seeing their children: "This servant of God [Edward], even when he had sunk to the depths, complained of not misfortune except that his wife, whom he was not able not to love, did not want to see him, although he had lived a widower from her embraces for more than an year, and that she did not allow their son, the new king, or any of their children to give him the comfort of their presence" (27-28).

[159] Isabella was not the first or last English queen to be accused of adultery or promiscuity. In fact, due to the necessity of producing legitimate heirs in order to keep the realm stable, unfaithful queens caused the English anxiety; see Lexton, "The Adulterous/Treasonous Queen in England," 228. One such example of this would be the twelfth century Eleanor of Aquitaine, who like Isabella ruled through her sons at certain points in life. She too helped her sons revolted against the king but was defeated. She was associated with adultery several times in her life, most notably during her first marriage to Louis VII of France with her uncle Raymond of Antioch. Furthermore, contemporary English chronicles described her as making "light the ties of marriage." This language is very similar to what le Baker used to characterize Isabella. See Dina Portway Dobson, "Eleanor of Aquitaine," *History* 1, no. 4 (1912), 204, 207, 208.

[160] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 21, 25, 28. Le Baker is referencing 1 Kings 18:19. Furthermore, he called Jesus Edward's master, further contrasting his perceived piety with Isabella (32).

damaged England and its pious king. Le Baker not only connected the queen to Canaanite paganism but to Roman mythology as well:

> In this situation, the crowd at London, in their desire to please the queen and Roger Mortimer, on 15 October in the middle of the city ran riot and seized and beheaded Walter, the bishop of Exeter of happy memory. They so savagely put to death various other men loyal to the king, for no other reason than that they were faithful to the king's service. Indeed they brought the head of the bishop to the queen who was watching over her army at Gloucester, thinking it a sacrifice well pleasing Diana.[161]

This unrest in London, for le Baker, constituted proof of the damage caused by Isabella's rule. He compared the killing of a bishop for the queen to a pagan animal sacrifice for the Roman goddess of the hunt, Diana. Not only was she a heathen goddess, but a member of the pantheon of the people who killed Jesus.

Although le Baker greatly distorted the historical narrative within his chronicle to portray Edward as holy, he made even more changes to ensure that Isabella appeared evil. While her exact motivations for invading England are unknown, the entire scheme was not born out of the machinations of the bishop of Hereford. Furthermore, le Baker's connection between Isabella and pagan gods, such as Ba'al and Diana, are unfounded and ludicrous. These changes fall within the difference between facts and the truth for medieval chroniclers.[162] While the facts of Isabella's life may not have anything to do with paganism, le Baker's version of the truth did. If Edward were to die like Jesus, then his tormentors had to be non-Christian too. If Isabella were to be an evil queen, then she had to be connected to infidelity, an anxiety always connected the royal consort.

[161] Le Baker, *Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker*, 23.
[162] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 6-7.

Similarly, Gaveston, Despenser, and Lancaster were vilified according to le Baker or the *Anonimalle* chronicler's chosen truths. To promote the martyrdom of Edward, le Baker portrayed Despenser as an evildoer who was unconnected to the king, Lancaster as stirring the barony to revolt, and Isabella as a greedy, cruel, and unfaithful Jezebel. On the other hand, to strengthen his narrative of Lancaster's martyrdom, the *Anonimalle*, chronicler emphasized Gaveston's exiles and poor council and Despenser's piracy and greed.

Le Baker directly attacked Isabella, her behavior, and her supporters, whereas the *Anonimalle* chronicler, while still vilifying the king, took a more circuitous route. The relationship between king and vassal during the Middle Ages relied upon "sacral kingship." Because the king had been anointed and his rule blessed, he was set above all others within the realm, allowing him to command fealty from his subjects.[163] Kingship, therefore, was inherently sacred, and as a cleric, the *Anonimalle* chronicler would have needed to apologize the conflict between the holy office of kingship with his narrative of the martyred Lancaster and the miraculous support of the Ordinances. The chronicler could not provide a clear moral lesson if the holy earl died at the hands of a saintly king. Within the narrative, Edward's reign had to end due to his own political and moral failings, and Lancaster needed to be the noble magnate who attempted to advise the king to the right path, eventually losing his life to the cause. The chronicler resolved the contradiction between the holy office of the king and the failings of Edward through only implying that the king was evil. Although the chronicler was reluctant to overtly state that the king was the villain of his narrative, he showed Edward's shortcomings through exposing royal follies, holding the king accountable for the evil acts of his followers, and demonstrating the holiness of the king's enemies, especially Lancaster.

This reluctance to outwardly vilify Edward can be seen in other contemporary chronicles as well. The *Polychronicon*, for example, referred to the king taking part in "odium and ruin," leaving the reader to come to their own conclusions as to what this odium was.[164] Higden did not

[163] M. J. Strickland, "Against the Lord's Anointed: Aspects of Warfare and Baronial Rebellion in England and Normandy 1075-1265," in G. Garnett and J. Hudson (eds), *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy: Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt*, Chap 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 57.
[164] Translation of the *Polychronicon* by Ranulf Higden from Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing: 1307 to Sixteenth Century*, 1.

state that Edward and Gaveston were sexually involved, he only implied it. Similar reticence can be seen even in the *Scalachronica* written by the layman Sir Thomas Gray. He handled the rebellion hesitantly; Gray wrote that Edward was taken to Berkeley Castle "as a prisoner, so to speak."[165] The holy nature of kingship made rebellion complicated within the medieval world. Often, rebels would immediately refuse to fight if the king took to the field personally; defying the abstract authority of the king was very different from attacking his person.[166] Thus, physically holding Edward against his will within Berkeley Castle was even harder for the chronicler to justify without portraying Isabella and the rebelling barons as evil.

Gray used this abstraction to deflect the guilt of rebelling against the consecrated monarch. Instead of blaming the Isabella's invasion, the baronial opposition to the king's reign, or even Edward's own ineptitude for the end of his kingship, Gray likened the deposition to an impersonal flood. He called running water the "strongest thing that can be…because all of the particles of water take their part pushing equally in the flow" and that "it is just so with a nation that with one mind, turns its hand to maintaining the estate of its lords, who do not desire anything save the good of the community, not individually strive for any other aim."[167] Gray thus presented the deposition not as the result of human ambition toppling the man to whom they owed fealty but as the result of a force of nature, the abstract "nation." Following the civil wars, exiles, Isabella's invasion, and the death of the king in captivity, Gray chose to end his account of Edward's reign with this depersonalizing analogy. Because an anointed king being

[165] Gray, *Scalachronica*, 95.
[166] Strickland, "Against the Lord's Anointed," 62, 65. Waging war while the king was personally present was a much greater offence than just battling royal forces while the monarch was away or holding a castle against his troops. The physical presence of the king was critical.
[167] Gray, *Scalachronica*, 97.

overthrown by the lords who owed him fealty conflicted with the medieval understanding of kingship, the chronicler had to alter his history to make sense of this upheaval.

Unlike Gray's more oblique allusions, the main antagonist of the *Anonimalle* was clearly Edward himself. Even though the *Anonimalle* chronicler showed a similar reluctance to depict the king as evil, he was still able to indirectly portray the king's villainy. Opposite to his whitewashed version of Lancaster's life, the chronicler focused on the many failings of Edward's reign. For example, he blamed the brief conflict which ended in Gaveston's death in 1312 on the king failing to uphold the Ordinances. He claimed these petitions were "for the profit of the king and the whole of the kingdom" and that "the king had understood them perfectly well, and declared that he was satisfied with them, accepted and ratified them, and confirmed them with his seal."[168] By establishing the good that the Ordinances created and the king's own acceptance of them, the *Anonimalle* chronicler revealed Edward's pettiness and errors when the king later defied the rules which he had previously ratified. Moreover, Edward reneged for the sake of the vilified Gaveston, who did not remain in exile because "he [Gaveston] feared the king of France, wherefore he returned to England about the following Christmas; and the king received him joyfully despite the Ordinances made by himself and his council, and kept him with him and in his company in the face of all protests."[169] According to this passage, Edward made several mistakes in the eyes of the chronicler: he betrayed his own seal, chose to listen to a hated foreign advisor instead of his own earls, and defied the Ordinances, which had been made for the good of the whole realm. Unlike le Baker, who overtly called Isabella a Jezebel, the *Anonimalle* chronicler illustrated Edward's inability to rule by emphasizing the worst mistakes of his rule.

[168] *Anonimalle*, 85.
[169] *Anonimalle*, 85.

The chronicler treated the events leading up to Isabella's invasion in 1326 similarly to demonstrate Edward's shortcomings. Once again, Edward was presented with a choice between his universally reviled favorite and the good of the realm, only to again choose incorrectly. War had broken out with France over Edward's failure to pay homage to the new king, Charles IV, for Gascony and Ponthieu on time.[170] Because Despenser was so hated, he believed that if Edward left for France, then he would die before the king returned. On the other hand, however, Edward could not continue to claim lordship over Gascony and Ponthieu without paying homage or defeating the French in war. Faced with this dilemma, Edward made the choice which eventually led to his downfall: he sent his son Edward to France in his stead, setting up the invasion that deposed him.[171] The *Anonimalle*'s account of this debacle and the invasion which followed it placed the blame squarely on Edward for choosing the welfare of Despenser, the evil pirate, over that of his kingdom:

> The king himself was on his way to the sea to go aboard a ship which was completely ready to receive him for his crossing. And sir Hugh Despenser, the son, who was greatly hated by several great lords of the land and also by all the commonalty, was very distressed and complained piteously to the king and said that if he [the king] crossed he [Despenser] would be put to death in his absence. In the course of this complaint the king's attitude changed, and he would not in any way board the ship but stayed behind, to his great shame and dishonor, for kings and other great lords were over there awaiting his arrival. And the king with his evil counsellors sent in his place sir Edward his son, heir of the land, to pay homage to the king of France and was made duke of Guyenne. Now the queen and her dear son were overseas and could not return when they wanted to because

[170] Warner, *Edward II*, 178-179.
[171] Phillips, *Edward II*, 466, 471, 475. Edward had already sent Isabella to the court of her brother, and by uniting mother and heir to the throne, he gave the invaders the legitimacy they needed to gain the support necessary to overthrow his unpopular rule.

> of certain great obstacles which impeded them. For this reason, the king regarded them as his enemies.[172]

The chronicler did not censure Isabella or her son for invading; instead Edward was portrayed as wholly responsible for the invasion by remaining loyal to Despenser over even his own wife and child. The chronicler even attributed the violence in London while it was occupied by the queen's forces, who were purging many of Edward's supporters, to the king's mistakes.[173] None of the onus for the deposition was placed upon the rebels within the *Anonimalle*, the people who were defying the holy office of the sovereign. Instead, the chronicler circumvented the religious dilemma of revolting against an anointed king by presenting the invasion as the consequence of Edward's ill-advised actions.

It was Edward's choice to listen to his poor advisors, such as Gaveston and Despenser, and the *Anonimalle* chronicler used the actions of the king's associates to vilify the king himself. The chronicler constantly repeated the phrase "evil counsellors" throughout his chronicle, drawing attention to their "evil behavior," "evil intentions," and "evil schemes and false counsel."[174] It was Edward who put these men into positions of power where they were able to harm the country, whom he chose to listen to instead of the "good earl of Lancaster."[175] Indeed, Hugh Despenser the younger was especially hated in England, and this would have been

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[172] *Anonimalle*, 121. The chronicler also specifically called out the advisors who had led Edward to make these mistakes: "this was [done] by the advice of Hugh Despenser previously mentioned and of sir Walter Stapleton, bishop of Exeter, at that time king's treasurer, and of a certain master Robert Baldock, the king's chancellor, all of whom subsequently came to a bad end" (119).
[173] *Anonimalle*, 129. Edward was not in London at the time of this rioting and violence but in captivity, and it was enacted by Isabella's supporters as "the very leaders of Isabella's army led the plundering as well." See Fryde, *Tyranny of Edward II*, 192-193, 194.
[174] *Anonimalle*, 83, 85, 101, 103, 105, 119, 121, 123.
[175] *Anonimalle*, 103.

detrimental to Edward's popularity as a ruler.[176] Additionally, all of the instances in which the *Anonimalle* chronicler vilified Gaveston and Despenser—emphasizing their exiles and lawlessness and focusing on Despenser's piracy—reflected negatively on Edward. Edward chose to lavish favors and influence upon these lawless men; theirs were the evils he tacitly approved.

Not only did Edward continually support men who damaged the realm; within the *Anonimalle*, the chronicle's protagonists opposed the king. Through this, the chronicler demonstrated the villainy of the king by contrasting him with the goodness, or holiness, of his enemies. Edward's treatment of the bishop of Norwich within the *Anonimalle* illustrated this contrast by showing the king's cruelty towards a member of the church. The chronicler wrote, "Similarly the king severely persecuted sir William Ayremynne, bishop of Norwich, and considered him a traitor, yet he was thought to be a good man who had worked very hard for the estate of the realm."[177] Since the chronicler was a cleric, he would have considered Edward's behavior towards a prominent clergyman damning. The bishop of Norwich was, according to the chronicler, a good man, working for the betterment of England from a high position deserving of the king's respect.

The chronicler also portrayed God as siding with Edward's enemies. During Isabella's invasion, after landing at Suffolk "the wind changed in accordance with God's will and their ships which brought them to this land sailed back safe and sound to the country from which they had come."[178] Even though Edward remained God's anointed king, the proverbial wind fell on

[176] Doherty, *Strange Death*, 119. Gray wrote that Despenser's actions negatively affected the king's popularity with the lords as well: "The magnates were opposed to him [Edward] due to his cruelty and the dissolute life he led, and because of Hugh, whom at the time he loved and trusted completely." See Gray, *Scalachronica*, 91.
[177] *Anonimalle*, 119.
[178] *Anonimalle*, 123. Furthermore, the chronicler's depiction of the queen was opposite to le Baker's. Although she played a relatively minor role within the chronicle, she was depicted as dutiful to her son and to England, combatting the evils of Edward's councilors (125, 131).

the side of the queen and his heir. It was as if God had already shifted His allegiance to the next king before the old one had died. Edward's reign, per the *Anonimalle* chronicler, was no longer blessed.

God's abandonment of Edward was further reinforced by the saintly depiction of the deceased Lancaster. The earl's supposed miracles served to sanctify Lancaster as much as they condemned the king. If miracles associated with the magnate whom the king beheaded and the Ordinances, which the king defied, occurred then these intercessions were proof of God's disapproval of the monarch. Furthermore, Lancaster's miracle stories were bookended by descriptions of Edward doing something ill-advised or cruel, accentuating the villainy of the king by starkly contrasting it with the holiness of the earl. For example, the account of the two miracles pertaining to the board Lancaster dedicated at St. Paul's church was interspersed with tales of Edward behaving wrongly. First, the king "had the said mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen [of London] summoned…and there the king, without indictment or cause, ousted and removed Hamo Chigwell, the mayor, from his mayoralty….And the aldermen…followed the king's court in great fear to hear what he wished to say to them and of what he wanted to accuse them."[179] This episode of tormenting the aldermen of London without a clear cause immediately preceded the first Lancaster miracle, casting the contrast between the unpredictable and cruel king and the holy and just earl into stark relief.

Between the miracle stories, two events were recorded that demonstrated Edward's cruelty and ineptitude respectively. In the first, the chronicler showed how the king's malice inflicted harm on the common people. After the first miracle at St. Paul's, the next sentence described Edward raising taxes in both the city and countryside "to the great distress and

[179] *Anonimalle*, 113-115.

impoverishment of the people of the land."[180] Then, Edward treated with his father's enemy, the Scottish, and "made truces with the Scots on various conditions established between the parties."[181] These two anecdotes highlighted Edward failing at two of his kingly priorities: the stewardship of the realm and military success against his enemies. As the king floundered in his royal duties near the end of his reign, Lancaster performed miracles from the grave.

Finally, the second miracle at St. Paul's occurred because Edward tried to suppress the earl's saint cult. The king, within the chronicle, wanted to terminate Lancaster's posthumous veneration. Edward combatted the miracles at their source, and as a result "the said board in St Paul's church, was removed by a certain Robert Baldock, a false and evilly inclined man, on the most express instructions of the king, and subsequently the wax that was offered there in devotion of the said Thomas of Lancaster [was removed]."[182] Despite the offerings being taken away, the miracles and devotion to Lancaster continued; God had picked a side in the struggle for power between the king and the earl. Without openly stating that the king had erred, the chronicler demonstrated that Lancaster, the Ordainers, and the Ordinances were divinely sanctioned. Although the chronicler was more subtle in his vilification of Edward than Gaveston or Despenser—or le Baker's Isabella—his condemnation of the king proved no less thorough or effective.

Because the *Anonimalle* was written after Edward's death, the chronicler was able to begin his narrative of the king's evils with its ending in mind. Unlike a chronicle like the *Vita,* which was written while Edward still lived, the *Anonimalle* chronicler knew from the start that this kingship would end in an invasion by the queen and crown prince, a deposition, and finally

[180] *Anonimalle*, 115.
[181] *Anonimalle*, 115.
[182] *Anonimalle*, 115.

the monarch's death in captivity. He framed the narrative of the reign in a way that rationalized the king's shameful demise. The chronicler began his account of Edward's reign writing, "This king dishonoured the good people of his land and honoured its enemies, such as flatterers, false counsellors and wrongdoers, who gave him advice contrary to his royal estate and the common (profit) of the land, and he held them very dear as will be more fully related among his deeds hereafter."[183] This introduction to the king gave the reader all of the information he or she would have needed to understand the lesson which the chronicler wished to portray: Edward's kingship ended, he died, and God supported his enemies because he did not take care of England, choosing instead to dote upon his favorites. Specifically, Edward neglected the established, native magnates such as Lancaster, to favor foreigners like Gaveston and evil men like Despenser. Furthermore, the king did not respect justice nor the legality of the realm, defying the Ordinances. The rest of the *Anonimalle*'s record of the king's reign reaffirmed this argument through its sanctification of Lancaster, vilification of Gaveston and Despenser, and subtle censure of the king. As for the holy institution of kingship, the chronicler was able to circumvent the respect due to the king by showing that God had abandoned Edward's rule. Miracles and the divine were on the side of Lancaster and the barony, not the king.

[183] *Anonimalle*, 83.

CONCLUSION

Both *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* and the *Anonimalle* chose to construct a particular narrative of Edward as either a victim of or the cause of his deposition. The historians themselves had an incredible amount of agency, determining what events and details to include, exclude, or invent. Furthermore, the chroniclers made these crucial choices with the intent of providing the reader with a lesson about behavior and morality in the Christian Middle Ages. Their histories were not meant to be a collection of facts, but an instructional set of "universal truths" which they built their histories around.[184]

Le Baker chose to create a narrative of royal martyrdom, of the holy king deposed by his unfaithful wife, and he altered the individuals and events of the reign to fit. If Edward were to have a Christ-like death, he needed to have lived a Christ-like life, similar to Bede's portrayal of King Oswald. Le Baker included no allusions to the king being a sodomite—such as those within Higden's or Gray's chronicles—and he whitewashed Edward's personal and political failings. Le Baker's Edward did not suffer losses in Scotland due to his incompetence, but because of the grief caused by Lancaster's murder of Gaveston. Nor was he responsible for Despenser's cruelty or the various civils wars of his rule, including the Gaveston affair, Marcher rebellion, and Isabella's invasion.

Additionally, le Baker represented Edward as a victim, first to the machinations of the proud earl of Lancaster and then to his Baalite wife Isabella and her shadowy puppet master, the bishop of Hereford. The king suffered their injustices piously, remained strong unto the end, and was martyred by the queen's odious agents. Edward stood as a pillar of moral good, a Christ-like

[184] Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 1.

shepherd of England, a depiction supported by his role as an anointed king. In his death as well, Edward was the victim of a brutal and humiliating death akin to the Passion, making him a martyr for his kingship.

For le Baker's Edward to be faultless, then Lancaster, Isabella, and their supporters such as the bishop of Hereford had to be blamed for the unrest and deposition. These evils happened to Edward; they were not caused by him. The chronicler portrayed Lancaster as proud, greedy, and treasonous and as responsible for both the conflict leading to Gaveston's death and for the Marcher rebellion, and he made no mention of the Ordinances or why the barony implemented them. Following Lancaster's death, Isabella became the primary antagonist of Edward's reign. Le Baker spent more time within his chronicle vilifying Isabella and the bishop of Hereford than he did sanctifying Edward. He portrayed the queen as cruel and unfaithful. She was driven by her avarice to sentence the Despensers, especially the aged father, to gruesome deaths because they had limited her household and expenditures. Isabella also disrespected her marriage with the king taking several lovers, including Mortimer, within the chronicle. Moreover, le Baker conflated Isabella with pagan evils, Ba'al and Diana, to strengthen both Isabella's villainy and Edward's martyrdom. By presenting Edward's tormentors and killers non-Christian, le Baker deepened the parallels between the king's murder and the Passion of Christ.

Le Baker's characterizations of Edward, Isabella, and Lancaster served a purpose: to promote a narrative of divine kingship and royal martyrdom. He changed the events of the reign, and fabricated others, to promote his chosen lessons. Le Baker would have been aware that his constructed narrative differed from the common interpretation of Edward's reign, but while writing he chose to present a martyred Edward and conformed the characters and events to fit.

The *Anonimalle* chronicler, on the other hand, provided an opposing message to le Baker's holy kingship. Edward was to blame for his deposition. The chronicler was very interested in justice and the constitutional development of England, especially the Ordinances, and he sanctified the most influential of the Ordainers: Thomas earl of Lancaster. Edward, however, fought against the Ordinances and their restrictions on his power and executed Lancaster. He granted power to evil men like the thrice-exiled Gaveston and the pirate Despenser instead of Lancaster, to the detriment of common people and magnates alike.

Furthermore, the *Anonimalle* chronicler cemented his depiction of Edward's failed kingship by demonstrating that God had abandoned Edward; thus divine righteousness laid on the side of Lancaster, the Ordinances, Isabella and her invaders, and the future king, Edward III. In the tradition of hagiography, the chronicler used miracles as proof that Lancaster was holy and that God supported him. Within the *Anonimalle*, miracles were not on the side of the king but his enemies, and the chronicler used them to simultaneously promote Lancaster and the Ordinances and defame Edward.

Additionally, it would have been difficult for the *Anonimalle* chronicler to attribute divine support to the rebellious barons over the king. Kingship in medieval Europe was a divine institution, and to revolt against an anointed king was a religious as well as legal sin. To navigate around this dilemma, the chronicler had to vilify the king differently from his subjects. Unlike his blunt repudiation of Gaveston and Despenser, the *Anonimalle* purposefully implied the king's villainy.

Le Baker and the *Anonimalle* chronicler would not have been the only contemporary historians who exercised their agency in constructing the narrative of Edward's reign. Future

research could analyze other reactionary chronicles to the deposition, such as Higden's, Gray's, and Murimuth's. Furthermore, because this research was done using translations, subsequent study of the original texts could scrutinize the exact language that le Baker and the *Anonimalle* chronicler used to both sanctify and vilify. The historians almost certainly drew on more writing traditions than just chronicling and hagiography, such as how protagonists and antagonists were characterized in contemporary literature. Additionally, Edward was not the last English king to be involved in civil wars or overthrown.[185] By analyzing the reactionary histories of these later upheavals, it may be possible to ascertain if the chroniclers of Edward's reign created a precedent for reacting to deposition.

[185] Tim Harris, "Revisiting the Causes of the English Civil War," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2015), 620.

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