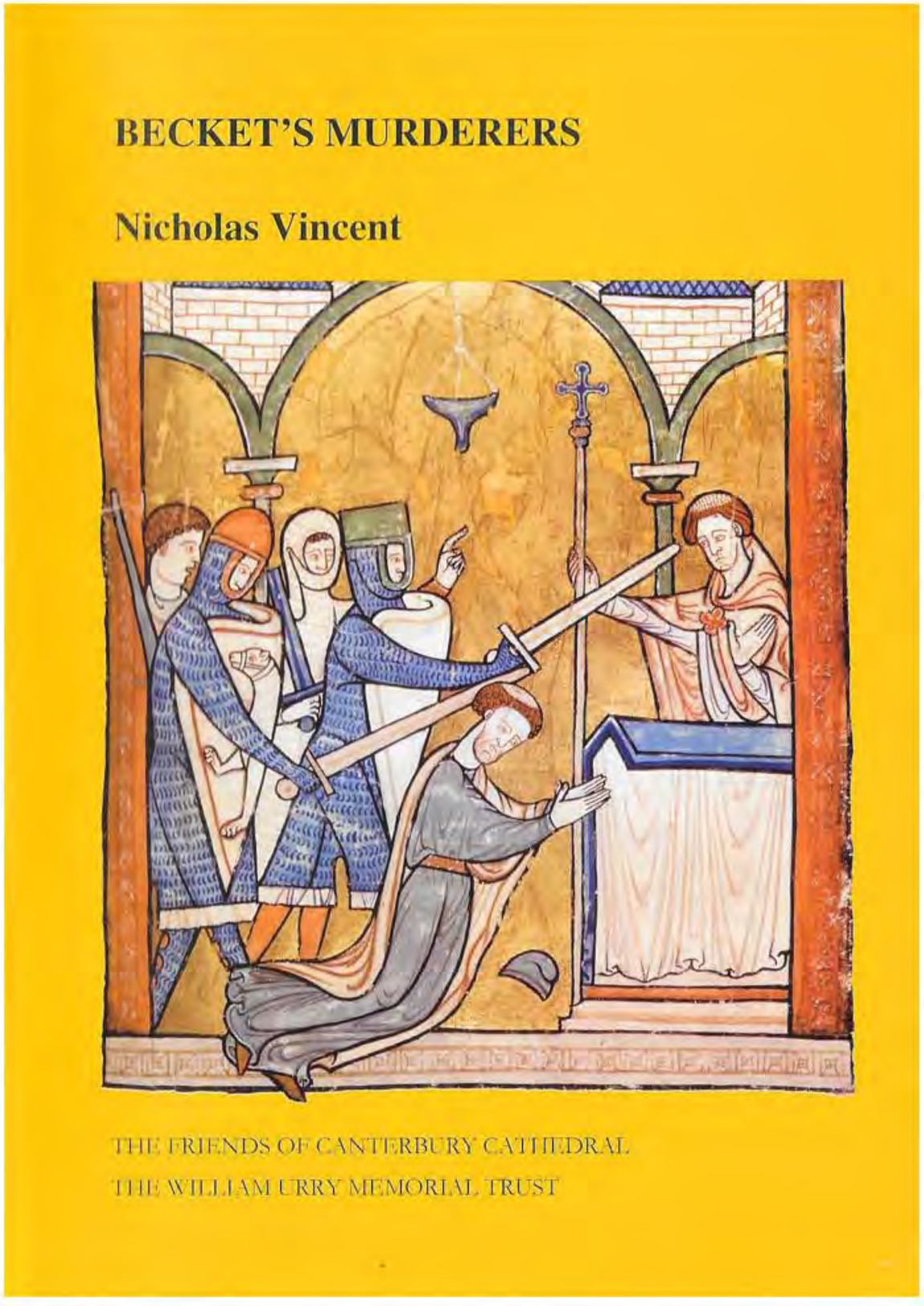

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Cover picture: The murder: a miniature from an English psalter of about 1190 to 1200 (MS Harl. 5102 f32, reproduced by permission of the British Library).

BECKET'S MURDERERS

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BECKET'S MURDERERS

As David Knowles long ago pointed out, there is no single event in the history of the Middle Ages of which we know more than the murder of Thomas Becket archbishop of Canterbury on 29 December 1170.[1] Cowering in the lengthening shadows that evening, or in one instance actually fending off the blows rained upon the archbishop's head, were at least five eyewitnesses, all of whom set down lengthy reports of what they had seen and heard.[2] The startling success of Becket's cult, the cataloguing of his miracles and the compilation of the various letter-collections which touched upon his dispute with the King, have ensured that among medieval saints Becket is matched only by Francis of Assisi – a somewhat unlikely partner – in the quantity both of contemporary and of later scholarly writing that has been devoted to his story. Yet, at the very centre of this buzzing hive of historical enterprise, a mystery remains. Through the shedding of his own blood, reported with such gruesome detail by his biographers and later so eagerly collected as a wonder-working souvenir, Becket was propelled into the very highest ranks of sainthood. This apotheosis, however, was due not so much to his own merits as to the sword-strokes of four men whose story has never properly been told. It is these men, the Becket murderers, with whom I propose to deal here.

As we shall see, even the most scholarly of modern biographers have skated over the details of the murderers' identity. Myths about the four murderers abound and continue to multiply, even in the most respectable of quarters. In what follows, I hope to provide a more rounded and a more accurate portrait of these men. In so doing, I hope also to address one of the more important questions to be raised

by the entire Becket affair: the degree to which the King, Henry II, was an accomplice in Becket's murder. This is an issue of fundamental significance. We must approach it, however, not by the broad highway of generalisation and conjecture, but by the narrow and far stonier path of biographical enquiry. In doing so, one aspect of English history, not previously considered in relation to the story of Thomas Becket, will come to play a surprisingly large part in our enquiry. Becket's nemesis, Henry II, had acceded as King in 1154 following a period of twenty years in which the throne of England had been held, or, as Henry's supporters would have it, usurped, by Henry's cousin, Stephen of Blois. From the late 1130s through to 1154, England and Normandy had been plunged into a civil war fought out between the supporters of King Stephen and those of Henry's father and mother. Henry II, the first of the so-called Angevin kings of England, son of Geoffrey Plantagenet count of Anjou, came to the throne only after a bitter struggle in which the baronage on both sides of the Channel had been forced to take sides for or against King Stephen. To this extent, there were many English barons who, after 1154, were anxious to demonstrate their adherence to the new Plantagenet regime and to set aside any memory of their previous support for Stephen. Amongst these barons, as we shall see, were at least three of the four knights responsible for Becket's murder.

The names of the four murderers are set down by most of the twelfth-century writers who reported Becket's death. Only the order in which these four names are given varies from one writer to the next. William of Canterbury, for example, in company with another Canterbury chronicler, names them as Reginald fitz Urse, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy and Richard Brito.[3] Roger of Howden, together with the prior of Grandmont, places them in order as Tracy, Morville, Brito and Fitz Urse.[4] What is perhaps most remarkable here is that there should be such diversity, suggesting, as countless later historians have discovered, that there was no clear idea, even amongst contemporaries, as to who had led and who had merely followed

amongst the four accomplices. Able to summon up a rich stream of Biblical and patristic language when describing Becket himself – the 'athlete of Christ', 'the spotless martyr', and so forth – the early writers struggled to find any common expression with which to label those responsible for his martyrdom. 'Men of Belial, the heirs of Doeg, the new Thrasos', thundered the monk, William of Canterbury: clearly a man who knew his classics.[5] For the most part, however, the chroniclers fell back upon more earthy expressions. 'Madmen', wrote Edward Grim; 'Ruffians', William fitz Stephen.[6] At least six of the early chroniclers, including Roger of Howden, brand the murderers *carnifices*, 'the butchers': a term that both summed up the violence of their act and carried with it the most pejorative of connotations.[7] In the Middle Ages the trade of butchery was regarded with particular distaste, as a low-born occupation, forbidden to those in clerical orders.[8] From the wreck of the White Ship in 1120 in which the son of King Henry I and many of his companions had been drowned, only one man had escaped alive: a drunken Rouen butcher who had been carousing with his social superiors when the ship went down. He was regarded as beneath contempt by the chroniclers, who nonetheless hung on his every word when it came to the details of the disaster: shades here, no doubt, of the modern morality of news gathering.[9]

Butchers they may have been in metaphorical terms, but in their social status, the murderers of Thomas Becket were of quite a different stamp. This too is reflected in the early Becket lives. To Becket's English biographers, all of them monks or clerks of only mediocre birth, the four knights were men who would normally have commanded deference. Gervase of Canterbury writes of them as 'four men rightly conspicuous for the nobility of their birth, pre-eminent in knighthood and familiar companions to the King'.[10] As we shall see, William fitz Stephen is perhaps the most technically correct when he writes of the four as 'the King's household barons'.[11] None of the early biographies of Becket takes much interest in the murderers'

family background. Essentially, the four knights are treated by Becket's biographers in much the same way that Thomas Carlyle treated Rousseau in relation to Robespierre. Fitz Urse, Morville, Tracy and Brito were nothing but the hand, the bloody bloody hand, of King Henry II. Of all the modern scholars to have written of Thomas Becket, it is Professor Frank Barlow who has treated of the Becket murderers in greatest detail.[12] I trust that Professor Barlow will forgive me if I proceed to employ his account of the four knights not as a model of accuracy, but as proof of the sheer quantity of myth that has seeped into modern writing on these men.

Reginald fitz Urse was the son of Richard fitz Urse of Bulwick in Northamptonshire, and perhaps the grandson, certainly a linear descendant of the Urse de Berseres who appears in the late eleventh century holding land in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire.[13] In Domesday, this same Urse is also recorded in possession of lands held from Glastonbury Abbey at Grittleton and Langley in Wiltshire.[14] The derivation of the Fitz Urse name from Urse, the ancestor of Reginald and Richard, offered Becket's biographers an opportunity for satire that was hard to resist. 'More bearlike in mind that by birth', writes Benedict; 'He who cried out with such bestial force that we rightly know him as the bear', writes Edward Grim.[15] The Fitz Urses themselves seem to have played up to their bearlike reputation. The figure of a bear appears on Reginald fitz Urse's seal, and in the earliest illustrations of Becket's murder it is this same ursine coat of arms which is the only heraldic device to be accurately reproduced.[16]

In the mid-twelfth century, Bulwick was raised to the status of a small barony, held directly from the crown for the service of three knights. By the 1130s, it was in the possession of Richard fitz Urse.[17] Richard served at the court of King Henry I, where he is to be found, in Normandy, as a witness to royal charters.[18] He married Maud, the daughter of Baldwin de Boullers by Sibyl de Falaise, herself described in much later sources as the 'niece' of King Henry I.[19] Modern writers have suggested that Sibyl was really Henry's

illegitimate daughter – one of a dozen or more bastards born to the King.[20] But had she been a royal bastard, then her marriage to Baldwin de Boullers would have been most peculiar. Bastards they might be, but those of Henry I's illegitimate daughters of whom we know were married off within the upper reaches of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, not to such relative nonentities as Baldwin de Boullers.[21]

Richard fitz Urse remained in royal service after the accession of King Stephen, witnessing numerous royal charters both in England and Normandy.[22] We last hear of him in 1141 when he was amongst those taken prisoner together with King Stephen at the battle of Lincoln.[23] He seems to have died before 1154, in which year Reginald fitz Urse, his son, was in receipt of land from the royal demesne in Essex. This award was discontinued following the accession to the throne of Henry II, suggesting that it had first been made by King Stephen and that, at least for a time, Reginald was suspect to the new regime of King Henry II as a former adherent of Stephen.[24]

Before long, however, Reginald had made his peace with the new regime, being found by the 1160s as witness to charters of Henry II, issued in England and Anjou, suggesting that by this time Reginald was in regular attendance upon the King.[25] He was certainly at court at Bur-le-Roi in December 1170 when King Henry launched his defamatory tirade against archbishop Becket. According to William of Canterbury, it had been Thomas Becket who had first provided Reginald with an introduction to the King.[26] William fitz Stephen, supported by statements in various others of the early Becket lives, claims that Reginald, William de Tracy and Hugh de Morville had all done homage to Thomas Becket 'on bended knee' during Becket's time as royal chancellor, before 1162.[27] We might suspect that these claims were made simply to add colour to the story of Becket's martyrdom, presenting Becket as even more an imitator of Christ, betrayed by his own Judas-like disciples. However, set against this, we have certain proof that Hugh de Morville was closely associated with Becket in the early 1160s.[28] Moreover, had they in some way been

bound to Becket, it would be easier to understand why at Canterbury, in December 1170, the three men chose to shout out a public diffidation of the archbishop: an act widely reported by the saint's biographers, and clearly greeted with shock, even by Becket himself.[29] Diffidation was the technical means of severing ties of homage between vassal and lord, tantamount to a challenge to war.

All of the lives agree that in the interview that preceded the murder, it was Reginald fitz Urse who served as the knights' chief spokesman. The exact terms of this interview will never be known. It was so heated an exchange that even those who had witnessed it were hard put to recall precisely who had said what to whom, and in what order. Nonetheless, Benedict of Peterborough tells us that Reginald retorted to the archbishop's speech at one point by quoting a tag from Isaiah.[30] In his ripostes to the archbishop, according to Benedict, Reginald was 'not so much emptied of courtly facetiousness as full of rage'.[31] This is clearly intended as a sideswipe at the ways of courtiers, suggesting a belief that Reginald was used to speechifying and to other courtly vanities: further evidence, perhaps, that he was very much a man of the court.

Such courtliness is not hard to prove in the case of Reginald's accomplice, Hugh de Morville. Hugh, the only one of the four knights not to strike a blow against the archbishop, being too busy holding back the press of onlookers in the cathedral, had been raised at court, albeit at the court of the kings of Scotland. Professor Geoffrey Barrow must take the credit for setting out the details of Morville's career, previously obscured by myth and by confusion between Hugh and various men of the same name. The Hugh de Morville who was at Canterbury in December 1170 was the son and namesake of an older Hugh whose family derived ultimately from Morville near Valognes in Lower Normandy.[32] Emerging from obscurity in the early twelfth century, the elder Hugh had acquired great estates from David King of Scotland. Following the death of King Henry I in 1135 and the Scots invasion of northern England, Hugh was also awarded the

entire lordship of northern Westmorland, centred upon the castle and lordship of Appleby. Of his three sons, Hugh de Morville, of Becket fame, acquired a small portion of his father's Scottish lands together with the lordship of Westmorland and Appleby. This Hugh, the object of our enquiry, can first be identified after 1157, following the Plantagenet recovery of Westmorland from the Scots, when his father may have been forced to step down, substituting Hugh as lord of Appleby in his place.[33] As early as 1139, however, he or one of his brothers is mentioned as having been delivered up to King Stephen by Hugh de Morville the elder, as a hostage in the negotiation of an Anglo-Scots peace.[34]

Professor Barlow implies that Morville may have been one of several young noblemen raised in Becket's household. This, however, appears to result from Barlow's fatal confusion between Hugh de Morville of Appleby, the Becket murderer, and Hugh de Morville of Burgh by Sands, his cousin, who did not die until 1202.[35] Hugh de Morville of Appleby, by contrast, was dead or in exile by the mid 1170s, and may have been old enough in 1157 to be regarded as an appropriate heir to his father's lordship of Appleby. Thanks to the work of Professor Barrow, we can draw a direct connection between the Morvilles and another man who was present at Becket's murder in 1170. This is the clerk Hugh, known as *malus clericus*, who, once the knights had done their work, stamped upon the dead archbishop's neck and scattered the brains from Becket's skull, shouting out 'This one won't get up again. Let's get out of here'.[36] Hugh's real name, according once again to the well-informed William fitz Stephen, was Hugh of Horsey.[37] There is evidence, painstakingly assembled by Professor Barrow, that the daughter of Richard de Morville, Hugh's brother, was married to a minor Somerset landowner named Philip of Horsey, from Horsey near Bridgwater.[38] Hugh of Horsey may well have attended Becket's death as the kinsman and clerk of Hugh de Morville.

Benedict of Peterborough, in recounting the interview that preceded the murder, tells us that Becket pursued the four knights to the door of his chamber, shouting out for them to return and directly addressing Hugh de Morville, considering that Hugh 'by virtue of his noble ancestry should take precedence over the others'.[39] The first of the anonymous lives tells us that at one point Becket addressed Hugh by name: 'Hugh', he said, 'with what a stiff neck you carry yourself'.[40] As such remarks imply, Hugh was almost certainly the most socially exalted of the four knights. Royal charters and Pipe Rolls provide certain proof that he was closely attached to the court of Henry II as it moved between Henry's castles and estates on either side of the Channel. He witnesses at least seven of Henry II's charters, issued in England, Normandy and Anjou.[41] From Michaelmas 1157, and coinciding with Henry II's recovery of Westmorland and Cumberland from the Scots, he was granted possession of land from the royal demesne at Knaresborough in Yorkshire, including custody of Knaresborough castle.[42] In the year to Michaelmas 1170 Hugh can probably be identified with a namesake who served as a royal justice in Cumberland and Northumberland, hearing pleas and imposing fines.[43] He is thus the only one of the four murderers known to have been employed in local administration, as a castellan and possibly as a judge. Like Fitz Urse, he was a baron and a familiar figure at Henry's court. Like Tracy, he was sprung from a family that originated in Lower Normandy. Above all their common service at court, and the evidence of a pact sworn between Morville, Tracy, Fitz Urse and Becket before 1162, suggest that all four men were familiar with one another, long before the events of December 1170.

The third of the murderers, Richard Brito is the most easy to identify. He was the son of Simon Brito or Le Bret (literally 'the Breton') of Sampford Brett in north Somerset, adjoining the Fitz Urse manor of Williton.[44] Given that they were immediate neighbours, it is not surprising to find Simon Brito witnessing a charter issued by Reginald fitz Urse, some years before 1170.[45] Richard Brito was a

younger son, who received a small portion of Sampford, but whose career was pursued elsewhere, in the household of King Henry II's younger brother William Longsword. It is William fitz Stephen, again revealing his inner knowledge of the court, who tells us of this connection between Brito and the King's brother.[46] His claims here are fully substantiated by the charter evidence. Richard Brito occurs in six of William's twenty-two surviving charters, named prominently amongst the witnesses.[47] There are only two charters of Henry II witnessed by a Richard Brito before 1170, both issued on the same occasion when the King was campaigning in Brittany, in 1166 or 1168. In both of these, Richard appears in the witness lists in company with William de Tracy.[48] It may well be that, following the death of William the King's brother in 1164, Richard Brito gravitated to the service of William de Tracy, and thence to the court of King Henry. Certainly Tracy owned property in north Devon, only a few miles from Sampford Brett. Of the four murderers, Richard was the only one who did not hold a barony or substantial estates. Nonetheless, his appearance as witness to royal charters during the Breton campaign of the 1160s, and his previous service to William the King's brother suggest that he was a familiar figure on the fringes of Henry II's court.

The family of William de Tracy, the fourth of the murderers, presents all manner of problems and has been the subject of numerous genealogical enquiries, virtually all of which have become entangled in an impossibly dense thicket of contradictory evidences. Here I must confine myself to the broader outlines of the problem that William and his family present.[49] Professor Barlow, who was unaware of any difficulty in the Tracy descent, writes as follows: 'William, the second son of John de Sudeley, a descendant of Ralf of Mantes, count of the French Vexin, and Godgifu, the sister of King Edward the Confessor, chose to take his name from the family of his mother, Grace, daughter and heir of William (I) de Tracy, lord of Bradninch in Devon and illegitimate son of King Henry I. He held,

besides the barony of Bradninch, lands at Toddington in Gloucestershire, and in 1165 had answered for thirty knight's fees. By 1170 he was a brave and experienced soldier, married and with a son who eventually inherited'.[50]

For his confusion between Hugh de Morville of Appleby and Hugh de Morville of Burgh by Sands, Professor Barlow might be accused of carelessness. For his equally misleading account of William de Tracy, he deserves nothing but our sympathy. The Tracy descent is a veritable mare's nest, from which few genealogists have emerged entirely unscathed. The chief source of Barlow's errors is almost certainly to be found amongst the genealogical enthusiasms of the Hanbury-Tracy family, passed down in the present generation to the 6th Lord Sudeley – a peer of ancient lineage, who lists 'ancestor worship' amongst his recreations in *Who's Who*.[51] Two of the statements reported by Lord Sudeley, and thence by Barlow, appear to be correct. Becket's murderer William de Tracy did indeed hold the Devon barony of Bradninch, and he did indeed father a son, known as Henry 'the hunchback'. The rest of the story, although enshrined in the standard English Peerage and in any number of less exalted works of reference, is moonshine.

Gracia, the supposed mother of William de Tracy, seems to be a genealogist's invention, pure and simple. William, supposedly his father and a bastard son of Henry I, did not exist, at least not in the guise supposed by earlier writers. Furthermore, William de Tracy the murderer is not the same man as William de Tracy of Toddington in Gloucestershire, so that the claims of the Hanbury-Tracys and of the present Lord Sudeley to descent from Becket's murderer is itself merely a romantic fiction. In reality, and once we have stripped away the various layers of myth with which the Tracy genealogy is encumbered, we do not know the names of either the mother or the father of William de Tracy, Becket's murderer.[52] We can prove, however, that he was descended from Turgis de Tracy, Norman seneschal of Maine in the 1070s, and that as a result he possessed a

substantial estate in Maine, on the southern frontiers of Normandy. In Normandy itself, he controlled the family estates at Tracy, near Vire in the Bocage.[53] His Norman lands, indeed may have been far more significant to him than the estates that he later came to control in England. In England, his principal holding was the Devon honour of Bradninch which appears to have come to him as a cousin of the neighbouring Tracy lords of Barnstaple, themselves promoted to their English honour during the reign of King Stephen.[54] Since the Tracy estates in Normandy were to a large extent held from the counts of Mortain, and since Stephen had ruled as count of Mortain before his accession as King of England in 1135, the Tracys, including William de Tracy of Bradninch, appear to have risen very much as Stephen's men. As a result, following Stephen's death in 1154 and the accession of King Henry II, the Tracys of both Bradninch and Barnstaple faced a swift and powerful backlash at court. Much of their English estate was reseized on behalf of the rightful claimants dispossessed during Stephen's reign, and although the Tracys did eventually ingratiate themselves with Henry II and the new order, their English lands were ever afterwards subject to the threat of permanent and complete reseizure.[55]

William de Tracy, the murderer of archbishop Becket, first appears in royal records in March 1163, when he witnessed a settlement between King Henry II and the count of Flanders.[56] He is to be found witnessing two royal charters during the Breton campaign of 1166 or 1168, in company with Richard Brito.[57] Four further royal charters show him as a witness at court, after 1165, in England, Normandy and Anjou.[58] The chief links between William de Tracy, Fitz Urse and the other murderers seem to have derived from their common landholding in the English west country, their common service at court, and, if William fitz Stephen is to be believed, their mutual involvement, before 1162, with Thomas Becket the chancellor.

Added to this, the murderers shared one other significant feature in common, a feature of considerable importance which, so far as I am

aware, has not been remarked by previous commentators. As we have seen, Reginald fitz Urse was the son of a former servant of King Stephen, and himself had suffered losses at the beginning of Henry II's reign, perhaps because of his perceived attachment to the old regime. William de Tracy and his kinsmen, the Tracys of Barnstaple, were undoubtedly Stephen's men, both in their Norman homeland near Mortain, and in their English baronies, obtained through military support for Stephen against the Angevins. Hugh de Morville was the son of a constable of the King of Scots who had been raised to rich estates following the Scots invasion of northern England after 1135, and who had been threatened with the reseizure of these lands by Henry II after 1154. All three therefore – Fitz Urse, Tracy and Morville – were men with a past. All three had been threatened after 1154 with the reseizure of land that they had acquired in England. Even after their promotion at the court of Henry II, they were left with a certain insecurity and a desire to prove themselves. Members of Henry II's military household, standing on the fringes rather than at the very centre of the court, they may have been all the more anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to the Plantagenets and thereby to erase the memory of their previous engagement with King Stephen or the Scots. In these circumstances, it becomes all the easier to understand why it should have been these three men, together with Richard Brito – a satellite either of Fitz Urse or Tracy – who went to the extreme of murdering Becket. At the Christmas festivities of 1170 at Bur-le-Roi, they had listened to the King's enraged outburst against the archbishop. According to the fateful words reported by Edward Grim, King Henry had thundered, as only an angry king could thunder: 'What miserable drones and traitors have I nourished and promoted in my realm, who fail to serve their lord treated with such shameful contempt by a low-born clerk!'[59] The story of the Becket murderers should remind us that there were still some at Henry's court, even as late as 1170, who were only too aware that it was from Stephen of Blois that they had first obtained favour. Such men were

prepared to go to extraordinary lengths, even to the extreme of murder, to prove their loyalty to the new regime.

The actual details of Becket's murder have been frequently rehearsed, from the time of Becket's first biographers, via Alfred Lord Tennyson and T.S. Eliot, through to the most recent retellings by Professor Barlow and William Urry. The knights' hurried departure from Normandy, their three-day journey to the coast and thence to Saltwood; their arrival at Canterbury on 29 December, exhausted, tense and quite possibly fortified with drink; their angry interview with Becket, their subsequent storming of the archbishop's palace, and finally the murder in the cathedral itself, are too well known to bear repetition here.[60] Certain features do, however, merit comment. We have seen that all four of the murderers, even the relatively obscure Richard Brito, were of knightly descent. Thomas Becket, by contrast, was the son of a London merchant who, for all that he might hint at knightly ancestors in Normandy, was very much the social inferior of his assailants. All of the early biographies report the knights' bursting into the cathedral, and their crying out for the archbishop. Edward Grim, who was there at the very thick of things, tells us their exact words on first entering the church: 'Where is Thomas Becket, traitor to King and to realm?': a deliberate use of Becket's low-born nickname – literally Thomas 'Big Nose' – that hints at an entire world of social disdain.[61]

Barlow has pointed out that the knights needed no introductions or letters of credence on meeting with the archbishop: a further indication that they were well known to be household followers of the King.[62] The clearest proof of this comes in their rallying cry, reported by virtually every witness: 'Reaux, reaux!', 'King's men, King's men!', both during the storming and in their subsequent flight from the cathedral.[63] Most scholars agree that the knights initially intended no more than to arrest the archbishop, and that the murder which ensued was the result of their overheated blood and Becket's own refusal to come quietly. The early biographers had to tread carefully here, since

to argue that Becket had invited his own martyrdom, as various of the biographers do indeed hint, was to challenge his credentials to be considered truly a martyr. We know enough of Becket's own rages, and enough of his words, both in his first interview with the knights and thereafter in the cathedral, to suppose that he did not deal politely with his assailants. When first seized by Reginald fitz Urse, he is said to have shouted out 'Unhand me, you pimp'.[64] Historians have been at a loss to explain this outburst, save to suggest that it showed the depth of the archbishop's outrage. We know, however, that the four knights did not act alone on 29 December, and that they had been entertained at Saltwood and conducted to Canterbury, and later gained access to the locked cathedral precincts through the offices of Ranulf de Broc and his kinsman Robert. Both men, Ranulf and Robert de Broc, are described in contemporary sources as royal marshals. Robert used this title in the inscription to his seal.[65] Theirs, however, was a somewhat peculiar marshalcy whose duties included service as keepers of the whores of the royal household.[66] Many great lords – the earls of Chester for example – maintained whore-masters, often of relatively exalted status. To have been tarred with the same brush as his accomplice, Ranulf de Broc, may nonetheless have been the final straw for Reginald fitz Urse: no mere pimp or marshal he, but a baron distantly, or perhaps not so distantly, related to the King.

Fitz Urse was the first to strike the archbishop. Tracy struck next with greater violence, followed by Richard Brito, calling out, according to William fitz Stephen, 'Take that for love of my lord, William the King's brother'. William the King's brother, it is said, had pined to death in 1164 following Becket's refusal to license his marriage to the widowed countess of Warenne: a colourful, but somewhat unlikely tale.[67] Brito's sword shattered as it passed through the archbishop's prone body and struck the paving stones below. Hugh of Horsey, the clerk whose relations with Hugh de Morville we have already considered, then delivered the *coup de grace*, scattering Becket's brain with the point of a sword. Morville merely stood by,

not raising his arm against the archbishop, but holding back the press of onlookers from the nave. The knights then fled back from the cathedral to the archbishop's palace, which they looted of gold and silver, parting Becket's belongings amongst them, as the biographers were swift to point out, in appropriate imitation of the Roman soldiers at Calvary.[68] The murderers by this stage, were in a state of post-traumatic shock. That night, William de Tracy is said to have boasted of cutting off the arm of John of Salisbury – in fact the arm of Edward Grim.[69] But boasting soon gave way to terror. As Tracy is said later to have confessed to the bishop of Exeter, his local diocesan; although the knights had entered the cathedral inflamed and enraged, they left fearing at every step that the earth might open up before them and swallow them alive.[70]

What precisely the murderers had accomplished was not, of course, to become apparent for months or even years to come. The murder of bishops, even murder in the cathedral, was, if not a daily, then at least a fairly common occurrence in the Middle Ages.[71] Amongst the Plantagenet chroniclers, keen to gloss over an embarrassing episode, Robert of Torigny makes no direct reference to Becket's murder in his annal for 1170. He reports instead the murder of the bishop of Léhon in Brittany, an event which took place in January 1172, and for which Henry II could be credited with suitably stern reprisals against the assassins, the bishop's own kinsmen.[72] The murder at Léhon likewise appears in Ralph of Diss's report of Becket's death, deliberately set alongside the murder of archbishop Hugh of Tarragona in April 1173, 'killed with a knife for offensive language against a man of middling station', and the murder some years earlier, in church, of Raymond Trenceval lord of Béziers: presumably to demonstrate that Becket was far from unique either in the nature or the place of his execution.[73] Neither Hamo of Léhon nor Hugh of Tarragona was to earn a place amongst the saints. To begin with, there were many, not just at court but in Canterbury itself, prepared to suggest that Becket himself was no true martyr, but a traitor who had got precisely what he deserved.

Henry II, in his first letter to the Pope to report on the incident, states merely that Becket had made powerful enemies in England who had, unfortunately, taken up arms and killed him.[74] The making of Becket the sainted martyr lies beyond our immediate concerns here, but it depended upon such factors as the state of Anglo-French and Franco-papal relations, the concerted efforts of Becket's clerks to present the story in one particular light, and the sudden realisation amongst the monks of Canterbury that an archbishop who in life they had regarded as at best a disastrous nuisance might, through his death, have become their chief advocate in heaven.[75]

Here, I wish to pass on to the fate of Becket's murderers, and in particular to some new evidence which helps us to assess the distinctly mixed reception that their deed met with from the King. Amongst contemporaries, few showed any particular interest in the murderers after 1170. Herbert of Bosham, Becket's former amanuensis, states that they were dead within three years. Following tense negotiations that at one point saw William de Tracy received at court, Tracy was then persuaded to undertake a penitential pilgrimage to the Holy Land in which he died, or came close to death, at Cosenza in southern Italy, the flesh literally rotting from his bones.[76] Whether or not he died at Cosenza, historians have long known of a charter issued by William de Tracy in southern Italy, witnessed by the abbot of S. Eufemia in Calabria, awarding land at Doccombe in Devon to the monks of Canterbury, clearly as a penitential gesture.[77] The so-called 'Lansdowne Anonymous' tells us that all four assassins sought penance from the Pope, who condemned them to exile to the Holy Land, set to last for fourteen years. Two of the murderers (we might hazard a guess Fitz Urse and Tracy) immediately complied with this sentence, the other two (perhaps Brito and Morville, who had played the lesser roles) only after some delay.[78] The Italian chronicler Romuald of Salerno, writing before 1182, agrees with Herbert of Bosham that all four men died before their sentence of penance was completed, according to Romuald in the Holy Land, where they had

visited Jerusalem barefoot and in hair shirts, and from where they retired to a place called the Black Mountain near Antioch, passing their time in prayer and supplication.[79] This same Black Mountain – in reality a well-known site outside Antioch, famous for its communities of hermit monks – occurs in an addition made by the for the most part pro-royal chronicler Roger of Howden to his account of the 1190s, when he reports the death of the murderers in the Holy Land, and their subsequent burial before the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem. Howden, who had himself visited the Holy Land by the time that he was writing, even reports the epitaph that was raised over their graves.[80] The fact that they merited translation from Antioch to Jerusalem implies that the murderers remained notorious even in death. Confirming that the murderers established contact with the Templars, another charter, again well known, records a grant made by Reginald fitz Urse of half of the manor of Williton to the Templars, witnessed by Hugh de Morville and Richard Brito, clearly in the murder's aftermath. Further charters, only one of them previously noticed, record gifts to the Templars, by Reginald fitz Urse of land at Sandouville in Normandy, by Hugh de Morville of land at Sowerby in Westmorland, and by Richard Brito of part of his holding in the manor of Sampford Brett.[81]

In normal circumstances, we would expect such evidence to command respect. Nonetheless, virtually every modern commentator who has written on the aftermath of Becket's death has chosen to question the murderers' true fate. Professor Barlow, for example, has suggested that, far from dying in exile, William de Tracy may have returned to England in the 1180s. Hugh de Morville, he suggests, went on to marry the widow of William of Lancaster, and did not die until 1202.[82] Barlow is led astray here by his confusion between Hugh de Morville the murderer and Hugh de Morville of Burgh. Nor do his remarks on William de Tracy stand up under scrutiny. Nonetheless, Barlow's unwillingness to trust the contemporary witnesses is indicative of a far wider scepticism, most honestly expressed, as long

ago as the 1770s, by the Gloucestershire historian Samuel Rudder. 'Becket's biographers pretend', writes Rudder, 'that all those people who had been concerned in his death died miserably in three or four years afterwards, as it should seem, by some particular interposition of providence on his behalf. But little or no credit is to be given to monkish writers in matters that affect the reputation of their favourite saints and the champions of papal authority'.[83] Rudder is writing here in defence of his entirely preposterous opinion that William de Tracy survived, returned to his native manor of Toddington, fathered a son named Oliver, and was still living as late as 1216 when he took up arms against King John – by which time he was presumably between one hundred and one hundred and twenty years old. Nonetheless, Rudder's vigorously Protestant standpoint helps to explain the determination of other, far more considerable scholars to prove, once again in Frank Barlow's words, that Henry II 'had not punished Thomas's assassins in any way'.[84] Clearly, St Thomas remains as great an outrage to Protestant historians as he has proved an inspiration to some of the soggier pietism of their Catholic counterparts.

In fact, the fate of Becket's murderers after 1170 is quite simple to reconstruct. It demonstrates that, far from taking no action against them, the King, albeit belatedly, imposed harsh terms. To begin with, the four knights are said to have retired to Morville's castle at Knaresborough, from where they put out tentative feelers to the court.[85] The omens at this stage were not particularly alarming. The King could not afford to be seen to act as the murderers' friend, but, then again, he was prepared to leave Ranulf and Robert de Broc in position as his agents in Kent. The murderers are said to have hunted in the royal forests, and to have been received by sheriffs and royal constables, even after their deed had become common knowledge.[86] Henry may have advised them to take refuge in Scotland: an appropriate hiding place given Hugh de Morville's Scots connections. The Scots, however, refused to receive them and forced them to flee south again, in fear for their lives.[87] According to Roger of Howden,

the four knights now found themselves shunned by neighbours whom they had previously regarded as friends. The very dogs of the hall refused to take scraps from their table.[88] On Maundy Thursday 1171, the Pope pronounced solemn excommunication against all who had taken part in the murder.[89] There is no reason to suppose that this had any particular effect in England. However, the Pope's demand that the bishop of Exeter impose penance on the knights did result in a meeting between bishop Bartholomew and at least one of the murderers, William de Tracy.[90]

It must have been at about this time, perhaps as early as the summer of 1171, that the knights began making generous gifts to the religious, clearly in an attempt to expiate their sins. Besides the grants made by Fitz Urse, Morville and Brito to the Templars, and apparently by Morville to the Lazarite order of Jerusalem, we have the King's confirmation of a grant made by William de Tracy to the nuns of Polsoe near Exeter.[91] This in turn might remind us that, prior to December 1170, to judge by the charter evidence, all four knights had been conventionally pious benefactors of local monasteries. These were not men who would have relished their newly acquired reputation as sons of Belial, or who, we might assume, could have long supported the burden of their guilt.

The King's refusal to take decisive action against the knights, and above all his willingness to permit them to hunt in his forests, earned a sharp rebuke from Becket's biographers. Apologists for Henry II's treatment of the knights have until now been hard put to find anything other than specious arguments in the King's defence. Some have suggested that he failed to take action against the murderers because he was bound to respect the wishes of the Pope. The Pope's insistence that the knights first accept penance from Rome effectively paralysed the King from taking action of his own.[92] This of course is nonsense. The papal reservation of penance in cases involving the murder of clerks, laid down by church councils since the 1130s, had been intended to stiffen rather than to lighten the punishment, by

preventing the criminals from obtaining negligible penance at the hands of sympathetic local bishops. It in no way excluded the secular authorities from passing judgement of their own. The prior of Grandmont, for one, wrote to Henry II, shortly after Becket's murder, demanding that the King take up his sword against the murderers: 'Let those who spill the blood of others, have their own blood spilled in turn'.[93] The King ignored this forthright advice. In the immediate aftermath of Becket's murder he did nothing. Probably he hoped that the fuss would soon die down. Perhaps too, as the chroniclers suggest, he was reluctant to act, for fear of what the knights might say of his own part in the affair. The knights themselves he left for the Church to sentence.

This, however, was not the end of story. From 1172 there are signs of a definite change in the King's approach. By this stage, the stories of Becket's sanctity and the miracles worked at his shrine were becoming widely known. At Avranches in 1172 Henry himself had accepted penance at the hands of the papal legates. By this time William de Tracy had already returned from Rome, penitent and under papal sentence to take passage for the Holy Land. His accomplices were not long in following his example. By Easter 1173, when the King ordered the seizure of Hugh de Morville's castle at Knaresborough, the murderers were under imminent threat should they chose to remain in England.[94]

Most previous commentators have stressed the point that none of the murderers was disinherited or suffered permanent territorial loss as a consequence of their crime. In fact, the inheritance pattern in the case of all four murderers was the same and suggests that their property rights were substantially affected. Hugh de Morville, for example, lost not only his custody of Knaresborough, but a large part of his inherited barony of Appleby. What was left passed to his sister, whose descendants only much later recovered other parts of the lordship of Westmorland seized from Hugh.[95] Reginald fitz Urse and Richard Brito fathered daughters but no sons. In the case of Morville,

Brito and Fitz Urse, only female heirs were left to inherit: a practice that might be justified on the grounds that the King had a duty to protect the rights of orphans and defenceless women. For what might have happened had these men left sons we need merely look to the example of William de Tracy. William undoubtedly had a son to succeed him, known in later sources as Henry 'the hunchback'. Despite this, William's tenantry claimed, quite specifically, that Bradninch and his Devon lands had passed into the King's hands after Becket's death.[96] William de Tracy's son, Henry 'the hunchback' was eventually permitted to succeed to part of his father's English estate, but not until 1199, more than twenty years after his father's death, and then only for a matter of months before the honour was decisively reseized by the crown.[97]

So much, then, for the claim that the murderers suffered no permanent loss as a consequence of their crime. Not only were they persuaded to make substantial awards to the religious, but where they did leave direct male heirs, those heirs were effectively excluded from inheriting. The sheer number of charters issued by Henry II after 1170, confirming and warranting awards made by the four murderers, both to laymen and the religious, suggests that the murderers' lands, and whatever disposition of them they cared to make, were regarded as subject to royal control.[98] Far from taking no action, Henry II in effect stepped in to claim the lordship of the estate of all four knights, allowing only daughters, sisters and cousins to succeed, and then only to a limited share of the murderers' former lands.

As for the murderers themselves, there now seem no reasonable grounds to doubt the claims of their contemporaries, that all four of them died, not long after 1173, having accepted sentence from the Pope, and having travelled to the Holy Land to carry out their penance. In all probability they were buried at Jerusalem, just as Roger of Howden claims that they were. As for their life beyond the grave, only their kinsmen and kinswomen sought to preserve their memory, and then only from a sense of inherited guilt. The grandson of

Reginald fitz Urse, William de Courtenay, founded a small Victorine priory at Woodspring in Somerset, which was dedicated in honour of St Thomas and which attracted benefactions from the female descendants of another of the murderers, Richard Brito.[99] Hugh de Morville's brother Richard is said to have founded another religious house, the abbey of Kilwinning north of Irvine in Scotland, again in Becket's memory, and again attracting bequests from the kinsmen of an accomplice in the murder, the clerk Hugh of Horsey.[100] As for myths and legends, it is worth noting that there were relatively few. Gerald of Wales had some good stories to tell, and Roger of Howden records the murderers' epitaph at Jerusalem. After that, however, all is silence. Not until the seventeenth century do we receive indications that memories of the murderers were stirring once again. In Devon and Gloucestershire, from a mixture of dynastic pride and what appears to have been an early example of the tourist trade in ghost stories, tales began to emerge of William de Tracy and his supposed haunting of places as far apart as the Devon sands, Flatholme in the Bristol channel, and Toddington in Gloucestershire. Most such stories, however, are no older than the eighteenth century.[101]

Only in art, and in the iconography of Becket's martyrdom, did the murderers live on in the later Middle Ages. Here, amongst the many thousands of images of Becket, in stained glass, painted on parchment or etched in enamel, it is that of the archbishop reeling under the blows of armed assassins that most caught the medieval imagination. Even here, of course, there was vagueness. Becket is frequently shown as being attacked by two, rather than three or four knights: sometimes by only one.[102] Visiting Canterbury in the early sixteenth century, Erasmus of Rotterdam, in company, we must suppose, with every other medieval pilgrim, was greeted on his entry into the cathedral by the images of three knights carved in stone, pointed out as 'those who with impious hands murdered the most holy man'. Erasmus goes on to explain that the names of the knights – the murderers of Thomas

Becket – were inscribed beneath their statues. The inscription, he reports, read 'Tuscus, Fuscus and Berrus'.[103]

Historians, of course, poor pedants that we are, are only too keen to point out that the 'Tuscus, Fuscus and Berrus' reported by Erasmus represent a corruption of the murderers' real names, De Tracy, Fitz Urse and Brito. Nonetheless, the very fact that these names could have become so hopelessly corrupted surely tells us something important about the Becket cult. Having emerged from obscurity to carry out their bloody work, the murderers thereafter faded rapidly from the scene, spattered with Becket's brains and blood no doubt, and loaded down with treasure that they had looted from his palace, but essentially no more than actors who had played out their parts, served as the instruments of the martyr's death and then discreetly exited from the stage. It is as walk-on parts in the Becket drama that they have been portrayed ever since. Here, I have attempted to drag them a little closer to the front of stage, to explain their past, to set out some of the motives that may have driven them to murder, and to demonstrate the inaccuracy of much that historians have written of them. In the end, however, it may be amongst the shadows that the murderers of Thomas Becket, like the murderers of so many other medieval bishops, rightfully belong. As historians we are so often reminded of the need to tease out the real beings of flesh and blood from behind the clichés of medieval writing, that we are apt to forget the equally important requirement: to look instead for the outlines of the hagiographical stereotype, imposed like a mask upon the individual features of medieval men and women. The Becket murderers merit our attention, not merely for their particular human motives and characteristics but as a model of the bishop's murderer in general. Like the many, mostly unnamed murderers deemed responsible for the deaths of a dozen or more bishops in twelfth-century France they need to be seen not merely as individuals with particular histories, but as hagiographical paradigms ranged in a long-standing tradition in the writing about bishops' murderers. As

such, from the time of the first biographies of archbishop Becket, they have come to occupy an honoured place amongst the semi-anonymous ranks of medieval 'conspirators', 'butchers' and 'sons of Belial' who with such alarming frequency took up arms against the anointed of God. Penitent and punished for their crimes, they should now, perhaps, be permitted to fade back into the hagiographical and historical shades.

NOTES

1 D. Knowles, *The Historian and Character* (Cambridge 1963), 123.

2 For a brief survey of the contemporary biographers, see F. Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London 1986), 1–9. Most of their writings are collected together in *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J.C. Robertson and J.B. Sheppard, 7 vols., Rolls Series (London 1875–85), henceforth cited as *Materials*.

3 *Materials*, i, 127; *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., Rolls Series (London 1879–80), ii, 395.

4 *Gesta regis Henrici secundi Benedicti abbatis*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., Rolls Series (London 1867), i, 11; *Materials*, vii, 452, no. 746.

5 *Materials*, i, 132. At the command of King Saul, Doeg the Edomite slew Ahimelech and more than eighty of the priests of Nob, suspected of supporting David against Saul (1 Samuel 22.9–22). Thraso is a boastful royal captain who features in Terence's *Eunuch*.

6 *Materials*, ii, 432; iii, 135, 140.

7 *Gesta regis Henrici secundi*, i, 12; *Materials*, ii, 432–5; iii, 492–3, 512, 540; iv, 385–6, 395; vii, 466–7, no. 748; *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, ed. J.S. Brewer, 8 vols., Rolls Series (London 1861–91), vii, 53.

8 J. Le Goff, 'Métiers licites et métiers illicites dans l'Occident médiéval', in Le Goff, *Pour un autre Moyen Age* (Paris 1977), 91–107, esp. p.93; R.H. Bautier, 'Clercs mécaniques et clercs marchands dans la France du XIII^{e} siècle', *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (Paris 1981), 209–242.

9 See V. Chandler, 'The Wreck of the "White Ship": A Mass Murder Revealed?', *The Final Argument: The Imprint of Violence on Society in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. D.J. Kagay and L.J.A. Villalon (Woodbridge 1998), 185.

10 *Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 224.

11 *Materials*, iii, 128.

12 Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, esp. 235–6.

[13] H. Ellis, *A General Introduction to Domesday Book*, 2 vols. (London 1833), i, 187.

[14] There is a good account of the family by H.C. Maxwell Lyte, 'Fitzurse', *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* lxviii (1922), 93–104.

[15] *Materials*, ii, 2, 433.

[16] Reginald's seal is preserved at Eton College ms. Muniments Stogursey Charter no.5, whence described in *Stogursey Charters*, ed. T.D. Tremlett and N. Blakiston, Somerset Record Society lxi (1949), 9–10, no. 8. For early illustrations of the murder, see Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, plate 30 and the dust-jacket to this publication.

[17] I.J. Sanders, *English Baronies, A Study of their Origin and Descent 1086–1327* (Oxford 1960), 22–3.

[18] *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066–1154*, ed. H.W.C. Davis, C. Johnson, H.A. Cronne, and R.H.C. Davis, 4 vols. (Oxford 1913–69), ii, nos. 1562, 1689–90.

[19] The marriage is known from pleadings of 1225, calendared in *Regesta*, ii, no. 1923. The suggestion that Sybil was the King's 'niece' recurs in an inquest of the 1240s: *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem I: Henry III* (London 1904), 42, no. 166.

[20] See, for example, Sanders, *English Baronies*, 22n.; Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 236.

[21] For the bastards of Henry I, see *The Complete Peerage*, ed. G.E. Cockayne, revised by V. Gibbs, H.E. Doubleday, Lord Howard de Walden and G.H. White, 12 vols. in 13 (London 1910–57), xi, appendix D.

[22] *Regesta*, iii, nos. 114, 179, 273, 399, 427, 493–4, 598, 749, 835.

[23] *Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon Historia Anglorum*, ed. D. Greenway (Oxford 1996), 738–9; *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis VI*, ed. M. Chibnall (Oxford 1978), 542–4.

[24] As noted by E. Amt, *The Accession of Henry II in England, Royal Government Restored 1149–1159* (Woodbridge 1993), 76–7, 157, 159.

[25] References supplied here in Vincent, 'The Murderers of Thomas Becket' in *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter*, ed. N. Fryde and D. Reitz (Göttingen 2003) 211–72, p. 220.

[26] *Materials*, i, 133.

[27] *Materials*, iii, 135, and for further indications of an existing relationship between Becket and Fitz Urse, see *Materials*, ii, 436; iv, 76. The later tradition, reported by Edward Hasted (*The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, 12 vols. (Canterbury 1797–1801), ix, 352), that Reginald held the manor of Barham in Kent from the archbishop's fee, receives no support from contemporary evidences.

[28] F.M. Powicke, 'Maurice of Rievaulx', *English Historical Review*, xxxvi (1921), 26, as noticed by Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 74–5.

[29] *Materials*, i, 130; ii, 433; iv, 73–4.

[30] *Materials*, ii, 5, echoing Isaiah 9.6, as noticed by W. Urry, *Thomas Becket: His Last Days* (Stroud 1999), 107.

[31] *Materials*, ii, 5.

[32] For what follows, see G.W.S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History* (Oxford 1980), 70–9; Vincent, 'The Murderers', 223–9.

[33] As suggested by K.J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon 1152–1219* (Edinburgh 1985), 196; Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, 31, 73.

[34] Richard of Hexham, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, 4 vols., Rolls Series (London 1885–9), iii, 178.

[35] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 44, 236, where Barlow is led astray by previous writers on the Becket conflict, most notably Dean Stanley.

[36] *Materials*, ii, 13, 438, iv, 76–7; *Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 227.

[37] *Materials*, iii, 142.

[38] Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, 76–9.

[39] *Materials*, ii, 9.

[40] *Materials*, iv, 73.

[41] References in Vincent, 'The Murderers', 227–8.

[42] *The Great Rolls of the Pipe for the Second, Third and Fourth Years of the Reign of King Henry II*, ed. J. Hunter (London 1844), 146, 148.

[43] *Pipe Roll 16 Henry II*, Pipe Roll Society 15 (1892), 33, 52.

[44] H.C. Maxwell Lyte, *Historical Notes on Some Somerset Manors formerly*

connected with the Honour of Dunster, Somerset Record Series Extra Series (1931), 143–4.

45 *Stogursey Charters*, 9–10, no. 8.

46 *Materials*, iii, 142.

47 References in Vincent, 'The Murderers', 229.

48 *Recueil des Actes de Henri II roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. L. Delisle and E. Berger, 3 vols. (Paris 1916–27), i, nos. 272–3.

49 For the detailed evidences upon which the following claims are based, see Vincent, 'The Murderers', 230–42, drastically abbreviated below.

50 Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 235–6.

51 I am deeply indebted here to the assistance and encouragement of Lord Sudeley, for whose articles see 'Becket's Murderer William de Tracy', *Family History* xiii no. 97 (n.s.73) (1983), reprinted in *The Sudeleys, Lords of Toddington* (Cambridge 1987), 73–97; 'Toddington and the Tracys', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, lxxxviii (1969), 127–72, with corrections in vol. xc (1971), 216–19.

52 For detailed evidences intended to demolish the romantic embellishments to the Tracy pedigree, see Vincent, 'The Murderers', 231–4.

53 Vincent, 'The Murderers', 234–9, citing in particular evidences from the cartularies of Le Plessis-Grimoult, St-Pierre de la Couture at Le Mans, and Troarn, some of them printed in full, 267–9, nos. 3–5.

54 For Henry de Tracy of Barnstable, see D. Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen 1135–1154* (London 2000), 102, 103n., 207, 244.

55 Vincent, 'The Murderers', 239–41.

56 *Diplomatic Documents Preserved in the Public Record Office. Volume I: 1101–1272*, ed. P. Chaplais (London 1964), 12–13, no. 4.

57 Above n.48.

58 References in Vincent, 'The Murderers', 241–42, with one further charter, not previously noticed, recently brought to light in Avranches, Bibliothèque Municipale ms. Pigeon 45.

59 *Materials*, ii, 429.

[60] See in particular, Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 235ff; Urry, *Thomas Becket: His Last Days*, 65ff.

[61] *Materials*, ii, 435.

[62] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 240.

[63] See for example, *Materials* ii, 14, 439; iii, 136, 139; *Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 227.

[64] *Materials*, ii, 436. Grim, who was standing by the archbishop at the time, was in a position to know precisely what had been said.

[65] Robert's seal is attached to Public Record Office E326/10093: round equestrian, legend: SIGILLUM ..... <D>E BROC MARESCALLI REGIS.

[66] *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi asservati*, ed. T.D. Hardy (London 1837), 160b; *Liber Feodorum. The Book of Fees commonly called Testa de Nevill*, 3 vols. (London 1920–31), ii, 1377; J.H. Round, *The King's Serjeants and Officers of State* (London 1911), 98–108, esp. 103–4.

[67] *Materials*, iii, 142.

[68] *Materials*, ii, 14–15; iii, 144.

[69] *Materials*, i, 134.

[70] *Materials*, iii, 512–13.

[71] See here various of the essays in the collection *Bischofsmord im Mittelalter*, ed. Fryde and Rietz.

[72] Torigny, 'Chronica', in *Chronicles*, ed. Howlett, iv, 249.

[73] *Radulfi de Diceto decani Lundoniensis opera historica*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols., Rolls Series (London 1876), i, 345–6.

[74] *Materials*, vii, 440 no. 739, and see the letters of Arnulf de Lisieux to the Pope, 438–9, no. 738.

[75] See, in particular, Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 264–9, and the wonderfully perceptive essay by R.W. Southern, *The Monks of Canterbury and the Murder of Archbishop Becket*, William Urry Lecture (Canterbury, 1985).

[76] *Materials*, iii, 535–8; vii, 511–12, no. 769. Contrary to what is generally reported by modern historians, Herbert does not specifically state that Tracy died in Consenza.

[77] Canterbury Cathedral Library ms. Chartae Antiquae D20, printed by Vincent, 'The Murderers', 266 no. 1.

[78] *Materials*, iv, 158–64.

[79] Romoaldi Annales', ed. W. Arndt, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, xix (Hanover 1866), 438–9.

[80] *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. W. Stubbs, 4 vols., Rolls Series (London 1868–71), ii, 17.

[81] All these charters now printed by Vincent, 'The Murderers', 270 nos 7 and 8, and 272 no. 11.

[82] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 258–9.

[83] S. Rudder, *A New History of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester 1779), 770.

[84] Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, 273.

[85] Howden, *Gesta regis Henrici secundi*, i, 13–14; William of Newburgh, 'Historia', in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, i, 163; *Radulfi de Diceto opera*, i, 346.

[86] *Materials*, iv, 160; *Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 238.

[87] *Materials*, iv, 162.

[88] Howden, *Gesta regis Henrici secundi*, i, 13–14. The story of the dogs refusing food is already to be found in *Materials*, i, 120, but there applied to Ranulf and Robert de Broc.

[89] *Materials*, vii, 477, no. 751; *Radulfi de Diceto opera,* i, 346.

[90] *Materials*, vii, 534–6, no. 780.

[91] Oxford, Queens' College ms. 152, fo. 137v (May X November 1175).

[92] An argument advanced by, amongst others, A.P. Stanley, *Historical Memorials of Canterbury*, 2nd ed. (London 1855), 80; P.A. Brown, *The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket* (Philadelphia 1930), 138; Lord Sudeley, 'Becket's Murderer William de Tracy' 16, and most surprisingly by R. Foreville, *L'Eglise et la royauté en Angleterre sous Henri II Plantagenet (1154–1189)* (Paris 1943), 424.

[93] *Materials*, vii, 457–8, no. 746.

[94] Vincent, 'The Murderers', 256–58.

[95] Barrow, *Anglo-Norman Era*, 75–6; W. Farrer, 'On the Tenure of Westmorland', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, n.s., vii (1907), 104–5.

[96] *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem II* (London 1906), no. 153, p.96.

[97] Vincent, 'The Murderers', 259–62.

[98] Vincent, 'The Murderers', 262.

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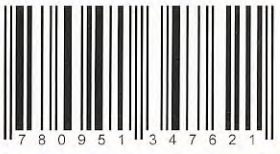

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