A Close Reading of Orderic Vitalis's Rhetorical Swan Song ('Lapsus ducis') for William the Conqueror

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Abstract

How do we re-politicise today in its correct, original, and medieval spirit Orderic Vitalis's thousand-year-old investigation of the Conqueror's crimes? The text where this exists in its most succinct, yet elusive form – the final pages of book VII in Orderic's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (the 'lapsus ducis' episode) – displays rhetorical elements of discourse organisation only partly detectable today. Challenging for modern readers seeking to reveal Orderic's hidden meanings is the reading of his Latin text in accordance with the laws that governed its writing. The present thesis looks at his Latin lexicon and textual organisation exploring any aspects rooted in ancient oratory. It examines Orderic's engagement with qualifying William's moral guilt and the textual strategies employed to suggest his unworthiness of divine pardon. The rhetorical techniques at play here evoke historical endeavours to unburden William of moral guilt, but they also reveal Orderic's effort at exposing the fissures inherent in that process.

Keywords: Orderic Vitalis; William the Conqueror deathbed speech; ordinatio regni; rhetoric; Ascelin; Quintilian

To modern *studiosis lectoribus*

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Accessus

On the day the Conqueror was laid to rest in the abbey church of St. Étienne in Caen, a combination of unexpected and bizarre events involving William's person and corpse evoked terror in the hearts of holy men. While a pious crowd was taking the dead body in funerary procession to the church, a raging fire broke out in one of the city's houses. It robbed the Conqueror at once of a much needed mourning congregation when laymen and clerics alike abandoned his body to the care of chanting monks and rushed to contain the fire.[1] Later on inside St. Étienne, when in his eulogy of William the bishop of Évreux eloquently invited the congregation to look benignly upon the great duke's sinful life, forgive his slips, and petition God in his behalf, robbery was charged out loud and the Conqueror denounced publicly as a *raptor*.[2] Finally, midway through the burial procedure when the corpse was being forced into its much too small sarcophagus, William's swollen abdomen burst open releasing a *teterrimum putorem* that made the priests rush home in panic.[3]

Orderic Vitalis, who rationalised those strange occurrences fifty years later in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, saw in their fateful triunion no less than the *dispositio Dei*, God's judgement. But while the text insists repeatedly on the dying Conqueror's spiritual anxieties over God's imminent judgement of his evils (*mala*),[4] crimes (*scelera*),[5] and serious sins (*grauia peccata*)[6] of which the Norman conquest of England holds pride of place, when it comes to stating what Orderic understood to be the divine judgement of those wrongful deeds, the same text becomes elusive. For all firmly stated conclusions,

[1] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1973), book VII, vol. 4, p. 104.

[2] Op. cit., p. 106.

[3] Op. cit., p. 106.

[4] Op. cit., p. 80: *Nullatenus enumerare possum mala quae feci [...]*

[5] Op. cit., p. 78: *scelerumque penitens*

[6] Op. cit., p. 80: *'Multis', inquit, 'O amici grauibusque peccatis onustus contremisco [...]'*

the author sermonises against the transient glory of the flesh and against secular power. It would appear at first sight, therefore, that we might have to imagine what Orderic thought of the Conqueror's *grauia peccata*. But there are certain clues in the text that prove that for its originally intended audience the author spoke rather eloquently of his opinions, and that it is our reading that needs recalibration. The end is where all darkness comes to light.

As his intervention on William's passing is drawing to an end, Orderic makes a curious statement: he announces that in his text he has subtly investigated (*ecce subtiliter inuestigaui*) and correctly explained (*ueraciter enucleaui*) the things that God's justice mercifully, but also rightfully revealed (*pie ostendit*) through the duke's demise (*in lapsu ducis*).[7] We would be wrong, it follows, to consider Orderic's account of William's final days and of God's judgement of his *grauia peccata* as a simple narrative page of Anglo-Norman history. As he himself claims, the author has used the text to conduct an inquest, one performed with finesse and precision, *subtiliter*. Not only this – he also declares his intention to communicate certain findings to a precisely identified audience, that of the learned readers. The *lapsus ducis* episode is, thus, both a channel for communicating procedural findings and the forensic procedure employed to evince them. Aside from signalling the amalgamation in historical writing of raw evidence with some type of auctorial forensic analysis, it cautions readers both contemporary and modern to go back and reassess historical primary material, including the present one, in terms of structure and internal organisation. But there is yet more to consider here for Orderic's Latin text suggests a forensic situation with unexpected outcomes.

The author has performed an investigation into William's death and funeral, he has emphasised the facts that transpired in the manner of God's justice of him, and is now presenting to knowledgeable readers truthfully and confidentially (*ueraciter intimo*) the *uarios euentus*,[8] the differing results or outcomes. Orderic shows how the quality of their being different is in regard to those aspects of William's life he surveyed in the *lapsus ducis*. In that sense, the *euentus* are of opposite sign to their antecedent, reminding one of the wheel of fortune motif or the law of the contrapasso.[9] But they are *uarios* in that they also contradict the antecedent as hypothesis. In this sense, they defy

[7] Op. cit., p. 106.

[8] Op. cit., p. 106.

[9] An explanation of the principle of the contrapasso can be found at page 90.

expectation, they are different from what was anticipated, both by Orderic and by his readers and other contemporaries. In the first sense, the quality of being different is established as part of God's investigative process of William's actions in the world and occurs upon William's death. In the second sense, the quality of difference is established by Orderic's own examination of the way God evaluated William's actions. Both are forensic processes, both yield results that are termed 'different', but there is a fundamental difference even here in that only Orderic could not anticipate his forensic results, while God evidently did since he knew the manner of his justice all along.[10] Orderic's purpose behind this page of Anglo-Norman history is, thus, not just to narrate, but to convey this twofold and all important (to him) element of surprise: at how the Conqueror, a most controversial political figure of his time, fared in his afterlife given the premises and claims of his life, and at how God works in his just judgement of men.

By explicitly identifying his addressees as *studiosi lectores*, Orderic adds a further raison d'être, perhaps the most important one, to a text already endowed with so many other functions (accurate primary evidence, precise forensic investigation, and forensic report): the text is meant, and functions in and by itself, as an object of further study. Purposefully articulated for the perceptive skills of men themselves keen on investigation, versed in the relevant investigative techniques, and cast, what is more, in many parallel guises, the *lapsus ducis* episode is not a simple text generated by a simple story ending in a simple outcome. Instead, it is built and thrives on complication. It is a cipher not for the sake of entertainment - and Orderic disavows all intention to entertain - but because explicitness and truth in political matters as in the divine are dangerous to convey at any time. Form, structure, organisation - everything about the text is meant from the start simultaneously to reveal meaning and shield it from indiscretion in the course of communication. The episode has an intrinsic key lying in its forensic nature, and Orderic's medieval *studiosi lectores* would have known how to unlock it by performing a reading in accordance with the laws that governed its writing. In their hands, the Conqueror's *scelera* on English soil from raw narrative moments in the pages of recent history would have aptly become qualified, critiqued, politicised. Yet time has

[10] The main idea in Orderic's paragraph is reflected by the combined concepts of *fortuna labilis* and the law of the contrapasso. The paragraph hinges on the idea of outcomes that differ completely from their initial premises. I have, thus, opted to understand *uarios euentus* as unexpected, differing outcomes rather than as 'events of different kinds' as in Chibnall's translation. See op. cit., p 107. For Orderic's original Latin, see op. cit., p. 106.

moved on, and to modernity's disfavour. Can Orderic's thousand-year-old investigation of William's crimes be re-politicised today in its correct, original, and medieval spirit? What dangerous truth could our monk not openly declare? It will help modern *studiosi lectores* to remember that whatever it was, he gleaned it in the *lapsus ducis*, the manner of the duke's downfall. The time has come to begin our own investigation, and pursue meaning construction in a witness who discusses as a contemporary the Conqueror's death and as a near-contemporary his *grauia peccata*.

William attacked Mantes, rebelling as a vassal against the French king in July 1087 while the crops were still standing in the fields. His knights trampled down the corn and tore up grape vines while inside the city walls they burnt down houses and churches causing the death of many people.[11] There and then, *tunc ibi*, William fell ill *ex nimio estu* – because of the excessive heat (we do not know if that means from the summer, the murderous fire, or the great excitement of the destruction) – and also because of exertion, *labore*. The latter is perhaps a reference to the campaign's toll on the duke's *pinguissimus* body,[12] but it may be also a subversive one to his keenness to cause destruction.[13] William died six weeks later at Rouen, never having returned home after Mantes. Orderic starts his inquest of the Conqueror's fall with this particular event, but if perhaps Mantes is indicated as a moral cause of the great ruler's death, it is what happens after Mantes that interests the analyst.

Bedridden for six weeks, William went from worry to tormented panic (*grauiter anxiatus est*),[14] increasingly so as the illness progressed and as he realised that death was near (*sibi mortem uidet ineuitabiliter imminere*).[15] He groaned and sighed repeatedly

[11] Op. cit., p. 78.

[12] *Tunc ibi ex nimio estu et labore pinguissimus rex Guillelmus infirmatus est [...]* (p. 78).

[13] William of Malmesbury writes that when massive destruction had been already caused in Mantes by the fire, the Conqueror went out of his way to goad his knights to feed on the fire in order to cause even more destruction – see William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England from the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen* (AMS Press 1968 / Henry G. Bohn 1847), p. 310. Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* was completed and already circulating by the time Orderic was still working on this part of the *Historia*. Orderic may have had that image of the industrious Conqueror in mind.

[14] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 78.

[15] Op. cit., p. 80.

(*crebro cum suspiriis ingemiscebat*)[16] over the frightful uncertainty of what would come his way in death, a thought now haunting him (*pro futuris quæ non uidebat, sed intimo corde reuoluendo pertimescebat*).[17] It is under the spell of this pervasive mood of spiritual anxiety that William delivers his last speech at the point of death, weeping occasionally as he does so (*admixtis interdum lacrimis*).[18] Only his is not the *ordinatio regni* one would expect, despite administrative talk being very much a part of it. Taking up roughly nine pages in Chibnall's edition out of the total sixteen dedicated to the *lapsus ducis*, the speech is a first-person account of William's busy military life, or at least so it seems at the start. Political conflicts and their management are present at every turn, but it is William's terror over the things to come that truly punctuates the speech.

The very first words we hear from the *moriturus princeps*[19] address two of his sons and certain friends about his current moral state: *'Multis' inquit 'O amici grauibusque peccatis onustus contremisco*.'[20] When he dies many words later, it is the same trembling fear, only much exacerbated this time, that ushers him into the afterlife. At sunrise after a night spent *sine gemitu et clamore*,[21] a terrified Conqueror (*excitus rex*)[22] hears the *sonum maioris signi*, the sound of the great bell in the nearby church of St. Mary in Rouen. The bell is striking prime, but against the background of William's repeatedly emphasised and ever-increasing fear of God's coming judgement, this is mimetically an apocalyptic sound. It evokes the intensely loud and terrifying environment of John's *Apocalypse* where *tonitrua* and the sound of the angels' *tubæ* announce woe. Orderic's embedded parallels do not end there, however, for William steps into death uttering last words that not only reaffirm, but also complete the presentation of his deepest concerns started as a mere outline at the beginning of the speech.

[16] Op. cit., p. 80.

[17] Op. cit., p. 80.

[18] Op. cit., p. 80.

[19] Op. cit., p. 78.

[20] Op. cit., p. 80.

[21] Op. cit., p. 100.

[22] Op. cit., p. 100.

Orderic uses the Conqueror's first words in the entire *lapsus ducis* episode to beckon the inquiring readers as though to a confessional. He has William indicate fear in terms of spiritual anxiety (*contremisco*), the cause of his fear as moral burden (*multis [...] grauibusque peccatis onustus*), and the object of his fear as the uncertain outcome of God's imminent justice for his crimes (*mox ad tremendum Dei examen rapturus quid faciam ignoro*).[23] Only as he is dying upon hearing the great bell at St. Mary's church does William complete this initial train of thought that has started to build up since he first started to speak. With his last breath he is placing himself under the patronage of the Virgin (*Dominæ meæ sanctæ Dei genitrici Mariæ me commendo*)[24] in a symbolic gesture of raised hands (*sursum manibus extensit*)[25] evocative of the public ceremonial of entering a vassalage contract. He will need her protection on account of the spiritual currency of the highest degree that she enjoys with her son, God, the ultimate judge of the Conqueror's sins. To save himself from what he seems to perceive as an imminent and terrible retribution for his *grauia peccata*, William needs the best advocate and the best defence in the entire Christian universe – *ut ipsa suis sanctis precibus me reconciliet carissimo filio suo domino nostro Ihesu Christo*.[26] He dies hoping for a miracle.

It would be a mistake to think that without its apotheosis at the end of the speech, the beginning is intrinsically without subtle meaning. As it outlines that first picture of William's spiritual anxiety by explicit references to the moral burden inherent in his serious crimes, the fear of the imminence of retribution, and his uncertainty about justice's outcomes, it signals at once the matter that William will focus on and that the *lectores* will need to pay close attention to as the *ordinatio regni* unfolds. Its function is, thus, organisational, much like a forensic speech uses *divisio* in rhetoric. Still in terms of the latter, it also works as an *exordium*. When William takes his cue from the element he first introduced, *multis [...] grauibusque peccatis onustus*, and elaborates on that point almost until the end of the speech, rhetorically speaking he is engaging in *narratio*, providing a statement of facts. If we thought William was merely going to confess to sins

[23] Op. cit., p. 80.

[24] Op. cit., p. 100.

[25] Op. cit., p. 100.

[26] Op. cit., p. 100.

as a penitent at the hour of his death, we are in for a surprise, for William is a man of a different temper. He embarks on self-defence, pleading his own case. Under the pious guise of a penitential confession, under the solemn cover of the obligated *ordinatio regni*, Orderic gives William a chance before he dies to defend as aptly as he can those *mala quæ feci per sexaginta quatuor annos* and, as the great ruler puts it, *pro quibus absque mora rationem rendere nunc cogor equissimo iudici*.[27] We cannot hear without astonishment both what the *pacificus patronus*[28] confesses to and how he does it.

Confiscation of inheritances, lands, and castles, investiture of relatives with abusively vacated ecclesiastical office or extorted property, imprisonment and captivity of enemies real or potential, destruction of property, bloodshed - William has done it all, and named it all in the course of his *narratio*. He starts his speech with dangerously incriminating concessions. The evils he has done since birth are impossible to count (*nullatenus enumerare possum mala quæ feci*)[29] and since the duchy was bequeathed to him as a child he has always 'borne the burden of arms'[30] (*semper subii pondus armorum*)[31] ruling Normandy under the menace of wars, *in discrimine bellorum*.[32] There is an emotional undertone, however, in the way William admits to guilt. He was a *tenellus*[33] *[...] puer utpote octo annorum* when his father packed for exile and put him in charge of the duchy. His own subjects often plotted against him causing him *damna* and bringing him *graues iniurias*. They murdered his tutor, his stewart, his guardian. All his life, his lot as the duke of Normandy has been to contend with the Normans who tear to pieces and devour each other (*vicissim dilaniant atque consumunt*), desire rebellions (*rebelliones [...] cupiunt*), and hunger for sedition (*seditiones appetunt*).[34] Orderic uses here language that emphasises instinctual, bestial voracity (*dilaniant*, *consumunt,* and

[27] Op. cit., pp. 80-2.

[28] Op. cit., p. 100.

[29] Op. cit., p. 80.

[30] Op. cit., p. 83.

[31] Op. cit., p. 82.

[32] Op. cit., p. 82.

[33] Compare Orderic's phrasing, *Tenellus eram [puer utpote octo annourum]* with the beginning of Psalm 151, *Pusillus eram* (David and Goliath).

[34] Op. cit., p. 82.

their even stronger combination with *vicissim*; also *cupiunt*, *appetunt*). He applies the lexicon of greed and bestiality to secular power and juxtaposes it to the Normans as an ethnic group, indiscriminately. In doing this, he gives licence to William to start a subtle process of gradually shifting the blame away from himself and laying it upon others. There is a cleverness in the way this is done, however, as bestial greed for secular power is a topic that Orderic will return to and elaborate upon at the end of the text, only this time uniquely in relation to William, and only after the Conqueror has received his just deserts from God. William *is* a Norman and Orderic will not allow his *lectores* to forget that initial remark that the duke made, no matter how convolutedly our historian-monk may be going about bringing it back into perspective.

In the course of his speech, William mentions at least six notable political conflicts he was involved in and that resulted in military aggression and bloodshed: Val-ès-Dunes (1047), Arques (1053), Mortemer (1054), Hastings (1066), the Harrying of the North (1069-70), and the Revolt of the Earls (1075). Of these, the first three concern William's military and political dealings in Normandy, while the last three represent some of the most significant moments of English opposition to William's attempt to subdue England. What is of particular interest to observe here, however, is the manner in which Orderic facilitates the narrative process for his subject. William will not move to discuss any of the battles until he has, first, admitted to personal guilt, second, elicited compassion toward himself, and third, painted the Normans, including his kinsmen, as naturally rebellious, greedy for power, and ready *ad omne nefas*.[35] Because William needs to make all these points before actually allowing himself to be portrayed in the midst of action, it is important to recognise that, as discourse, we are not entirely within the realm of pure historicity. Genre-wise, we are not within the realm of Christian confession, either, while we are definitely outside that of the *ordinatio regni*. What is this text? What is its purpose? What Orderic accomplishes at the beginning of the speech is in effect a preamble, signalling an intention to engage, at least at some level, in a judicial discourse, no matter how well-camouflaged that may be as a confession or as the *ordinatio regni*. Since it is safe to assume, however, that we are not in the presence of an authentic forensic speech historically delivered by William since no such speech could have been called for or performed on his deathbed, we may legitimately ask ourselves to what extent we should consider the existence of an authentic judicial case

[35] Op. cit., p. 82.

as the cause for Orderic's reconstructed speech. Similarly, with historical authenticity not even remotely a possibility here, who, if any, would be the intended 'judges'? We must look at what William has to say about his misdeeds.

Chapter 2.

Deprecatio

Under a first line of defence, William claims provocation by others as the real cause for his violent life, and others' resentment of his power, wealth, or status as the underlying motive. He does this directly or indirectly for every single conflict that comes under his purview. His paternal uncles Mauger, the archbishop of Rouen, and William, count of Talou, as well as his paternal cousin Guy of Burgundy rebelled against his authority; they maligned him (*diffamauit*) and accused him of being a bastard (*nothum*), low-born (*degenerem*), and undeserving of his position as the duke of Normandy (*principatu indignum*).[36] Historically, all these men had stronger claims to the ducal throne than William the Bastard. The battle of Val-ès-Dunes and the siege of Arques were the ensuing result. But William's enemies went beyond his relatives. His suzerain, the king of France, repeatedly harassed him. William mentions the king's desire to impose on him *indebita iura*,[37] an indication probably of the duke's overreaching ambitions within his territory. The Battle of Mortemer was the result. Normandy's neighbours, too, the counts of Anjou, Brittany, and Flanders, *michi multis machinationibus insidiati sunt*,[38] again out of envy and hope for gain. In England, numerous enemies tried *me regno Angliæ spoliare* giving him reason to contend with the Scots, Welsh, Norwegians, Danes, and the men of Exeter, Chester, and Northumbria. All of these conflicts resulted in brutality, all were incited by William's enemies. But there are nuances, too, in the way that William lays the blame on others: his various claims to provocation by enemies are not all equal. He goes from vocal in the beginning when he denounces his paternal kin only to end up with the faintest *periuro Heraldo regi abstuli*[39] when at long last he discusses his English crown. There is little else he has to say in terms of external provocation to justify either Invasion or Conquest – England will be his undoing and Orderic is making sure of it. Just as he is making sure that the more William

[36] Op. cit., p. 82.

[37] Op. cit., p. 86.

[38] Op. cit., pp. 88-90.

[39] Op. cit., p. 94.

blames his violence on other people's resentment of his power, the more his bastardy, his ambition for secular power, his lack of right to England are emphasised. *Nothus*, in particular, gets an emphatic double mention[40] right at the start as the underlying reason for Val-ès-Dunes and the Siege of Arques. In a narrator's aside, midway through the episode, Orderic will pick up that thread again pointing out that William was the son of a concubine.[41] It almost looks as if our monk wished to make a point of the Conqueror's illegitimacy.

On its own, however, William's line of defence may appear weak, sometimes barely noticeable as in the case of Hastings. It could be entirely ignored, upon a quick reading, were it not for its double, a second and much stronger line of defence that attempts to exonerate William in irrefutable terms from all moral responsibility for his crimes. This second line of defence claims some type of divine intervention in, or approval of William's bloody victories or the overall outcome of his military/political conflicts. It runs in parallel with the claim of provocation by others and, like it, is a common stance in propagandistic texts issued in the century with the purpose of boosting the image of the Conqueror or that of his descendants.[42] With Orderic's William, the claim for God's approval of his military successes or any outcomes of his politics is reiterated separately each time an event is discussed. Where this is absent in relation to a particular outcome, the force of the claim reaches out from one of the nearby reiterations with the result that everything seems to be enveloped by that claim.

At the battle of Val-ès-Dunes where the bone of contention was his bastardy and right to rule Normandy, William defeated and dispossessed his enemies *auxiliante Deo qui iustus iudex est*; by the *nutu Dei* he regained full control of his inheritance, and banished his cousin Guy from Normandy taking all his Norman castles away.[43] At the siege of Arques whose cause once again was William's bastardy and his paternal relatives' resentment of his power, Count Enguerrand of Ponthieu was slain and Count

[40] Op. cit., pp. 82, 84.

[41] Op. cit., p. 98.

[42] The following propagandistic texts written in William's time openly attempted to legitimise his conquest of England: *Gesta Normannorum ducum* of William of Jumièges, Gesta *Willelmi ducis Normannorum et regis Anglorum* of William of Poitier. Guy of Amiens' *Carmen de Hastingæ prœlio* and Baudri de Bourgueil's poem "Adelæ comitissæ" echo some of the adulatory stance contained therein.

[43] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 84.

William of Talou, the Conqueror's uncle, dispossessed and forced into exile; William deposed his uncle Mauger from the archbishopric of Rouen *per decretum papae* and appointed in his place one Maurilius of Florence *quem michi Deus de Florentia ciuitate Italiæ transmiserat*,[44] an otherwise politically uninvested candidate, all the more amenable to ducal influence and thus in much need of justification. At the battle of Mortemer initiated by the French king in order to bring his vassal William under tighter political control, a *terribile prelium* was fought and from each side, Norman and French, *multum sanguinis effusum est*. But *iuuante Deo* the Normans won; and Guy of Ponthieu was taken into captivity where he remained for two years.[45]

With William as the speaker and Orderic as the writer, however, we need to look further than this dual line of defence to understand the value that each of them attaches to William's martial crimes. For where the speech attempts to unburden William of responsibility, it also communicates to the reader an attempt at discourse manipulation, whether William's or Orderic's. Discourse organisational patterns such as these lines of defence help readers resist the pull of mere language and instead search deeper into the fabric of the text for further evidence of the author's communicative intent. But the reader's ability to identify the patterns at work remains crucial. No communication can ever be successful where the sender and receiver of a message fail to operate according to the same set of rules. To that effect, as we look at the battles in William's speech searching for a deeper way into the text still, we need to ask ourselves an essential question: what further markers or patterns of discourse organisation would have been familiar to both producers and consumers of historical writing in the Latin language in western Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries? An answer may come from the battles' progressive presentation as orchestrated by Orderic in the speech.

As he embarks on what is advertised as an address worthy of eternal remembrance eloquently delivered[46] and for the purpose of discussing the *ordinatio regni*, William's first order of business is, remarkably, a thorough treatment of his criminal record. A sum of inter-related notions culturally emblematic for Orderic's time come into play: at the hour of his death, William is tormented at the thought of God's imminent

[44] Op. cit., p. 86.

[45] Op. cit., p. 86.

[46] Op. cit., p. 80.

judgement of his long, blood-stained military career. Moving first to provide emotional explanations for the causes of his sinful life – the burden of inheriting a duchy as a child, the greed and disloyalty of his male relatives or subjects – William quickly arrives at a suite of several separate narratives seemingly in order to account for some of his military exploits. Val-ès-Dunes, Arques, and Mortemer represent the bulk of these, while Hastings and the Conquest battles are left for last. The first three battle stories are of particular interest for a number of reasons. Firstly, structurally they are nearly identical: as narratives, they move in the same number of steps, they are all relatively brief, and each contains an appeal to pity. Secondly, they are all located at the beginning of the speech, immediately after William's preamble on the Normans' bestial greed. They are arranged, furthermore, to follow one another in uninterrupted succession. Lastly, while they seem to attempt to justify William's engagement in military aggression, all are concerned only minimally, if at all, with the brutality of war; instead, their focus seems largely to be upon William's image as an honest man favoured by God. It will help, however, to look closer at how the entire paradigm plays out in the text, otherwise its actual purpose within the larger context of the speech may be misconstrued.

In each of the narratives, William first explains how he was provoked to military aggression by a particular individual close to him either through blood ties or a vassalage contract. All the while, he takes care to emphasise - often in emotional terms - his own position as the wronged man. Thus, when he initiated the Val-ès-Dunes conflict over his challenge to William's right to rule Normandy on grounds of bastardy, Guy, the son of the duke of Burgundy *ex Adeliza amita mea*, rendered William evil for good (*malum michi pro bono reddidit*), for William had welcomed his cousin into Normandy favourably (*benigniter*), honoured him as if he had been his only brother (*ut unicum fratrem honoraueram*), and lavished him with extensive gifts of land (*Vernonum et Brionnam partemque Normanniæ non modicam donaueram*).[47] A few years later when the conflict at Arques was started, again to contest William's right to the ducal throne, the prime instigators were his paternal uncles Mauger and William to whom he had also given generously (*cui Archas et comitatum Talogii gratis dederam*).[48] Finally, emboldened by the lack of respect shown William by his enemies, the French king, too, took to harassing him: he attempted to crush him when he was defenceless (*sepe nisus*

[47] Op. cit., p. 82.

[48] Op. cit., p. 84.

est me uelut inermem conculcare), variously maltreated him (*multisque modis proterere*), invaded his land with a large army (*cum ingenti armatorum manu terram meam ingressus est*), and attempted to impose customs on him that were unjust (*indebita michi iura imponere*).[49]

This preambulatory display of *pathos* is then followed by a summary description of the ensuing armed conflict. The detail is minimal, just enough to suggest the atmosphere. William's tone here is calm, in places almost affable. He then ends each narrative in the same way by naming the unpleasant fate his enemies suffered at his hands, with God's approval, and as a consequence of their own disloyalty. Most strikingly, however, the battles themselves fail to emerge as the real issue in these little stories, even in the case of Mortmer, which William describes as a *terribile prelium* where *multum sanguinis effusum est*.[50] What matters in them is that William should be heard to justify in convincing terms a series of territorial-administrative decisions involving family members and other prominent aristocrats whose lands and benefices he confiscated or whose power he limited in the course of military campaigns, one such administrative decision at a time. Such is the dispossession and exile of his cousin Guy of Burgundy in the narrative of Val-ès-Dunes, such the dispossession and perpetual exile in that of Arques of his powerful uncles William and Mauger, one stripped of his ducal title, the other of his archiepiscopal seat. Such also is the systematic reduction of the house of Ponthieu to a position of subservience to the ducal house of Normandy as explained in the Arques and Mortemer battle narratives, and such is the discouraging of the French king, following his losses at Mortemer, from further incursions into Norman land. While each of these acts may have been perceived in any number of ways in Orderic's time, from unmerited cruelty to downright tyranny to excessive greed, what interests us in this particular instance is their apparent treatment as charges to be defended individually in separate, successive narratives.

As an argumentative technique in ancient oratory, dividing the charges – as opposed to massing them, which profits the prosecution – is particularly helpful to the defence.[51] The speaker in charge of the latter is to provide several narratives to

[49] Op. cit., p. 86.

[50] Op. cit., p. 86.

[51] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 7.1.31 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3.

correspond with the number of charges. He must further ensure that they are in keeping with credibility and, in order to achieve this, he must give motives and reasons before the events and set up characters 'appropriate to the actions' which he wishes 'to be believed.' Equally important, places and times must be specified[52] and the narratives kept brief.[53] One needs only to skim through the first portion of William's speech to realise that the battle narratives up to and including Mortemer are effectively written by the book. William, it follows, is not only a *reus*, a defendant with an exceptionally bad record – as he himself claims – of martial violence, he is also the pleader for the defence who goes to great lengths to justify that frightful record. Crimes, however, are not all made equal. Reserved for discussion in the *narratio rerum*, that part of the speech where the judges are the most attentive yet also the most suspicious, the *crimina* defended in the separate narratives are typically charges against the accused's past life that only tangentially bear on the actual focus of an inquest. They are to be cleared up first, nonetheless, to ensure that the judge is 'in a sympathetic frame of mind when he begins to hear the facts on which he is to decide.'[54] Most interestingly for us, while there is no set order in which to arrange them, when 'the lesser charges are obviously false, and the defence of the gravest one more difficult, [...] we attack the last point only after discrediting the prosecution, when the judges have come to believe that all the allegations are unfounded.'[55]

In our speech, the first charge to be dealt with is Val-ès-Dunes. Here William shows without difficulty that when he confiscated Guy's Norman lands and banished him from Normandy, it was his ancestral and legal right to do so against his enemy. With the second charge, Arques, William proves the same only as applied to his uncles: they were disloyal and ambitious, while he merely defended his ancestral right. A similar situation appears with the third charge, Mortemer, where William shows that disloyalty and ambition also touched his subjects and his overlord, the king of France. Like his paternal relatives, these men too wanted a piece of Normandy, but as with Val-ès-Dunes or Arques, right was on William's side: he merely defended the fatherland. A fourth and

[52] Op. cit., 4.2.52.

[53] Op. cit., 4.2.43.

[54] Cf. *[...] id de quo laturus est sententiam iudex audire propitius incipiat - I.O.* 7.1.12.

[55] Op. cit., 7.1.11.

last conflict, the Invasion/Conquest of England, is mentioned before the *ordinatio*, but William's legal right here does not appear as obvious as with the previous charge, and much less so when compared to the first. In fact, he himself states that *diuina solummodo gratia* was at work at Hastings and no particular law-enforceable right (*non ius [...] hereditarium).* The charge, too, is argued in completely different terms than the first two. Indeed as William admits to fear now pricking him while pondering the temerity that caused the cruelty unleashed during the Conquest,[56] it almost seems that the charge has either not been fully cleared, or that it cannot be properly cleared. The Invasion/Conquest conflict, of which the relevance will appear more clearly only later in the speech, is, moreover, significantly disjointed from the first three battles, as it does not maintain the pattern of the uninterrupted succession of narratives. All this, and the fact that, when the readers approach Hastings they have been conditioned by the previous three justifications to see William as a victim rather than as a *reus*, as a righteous man rather than an ambitious prince, makes a compelling case for considering Hastings and the Conquest as the gravest of the charges and the most difficult one for William to defend. But even if we choose to disregard the exact arrangement of the charges/narratives with respect to one another, what the presence of such narratives in a defence speech can still tell us is where to find the actual concern of the speaker or point of controversy, that without which there would be no case. Since all personal actions treated by William as defendable crimes are dealt with in the battle narratives from Val-ès-Dunes to Hastings, and since all the battle narratives precede the *ordinatio regni*, which in fact closes the speech, it is reasonable to believe that it is in the *ordinatio* that one must look for the point of controversy, that which William has been preparing all along to justify. With rhetoric a considerable component of the education of historians in Orderic's time, however, the question naturally arises: who *is* justifying William's *mala* - William, or the author? There may indeed be a way to tell their voices apart.

In the style of the most adroit orators who prefer to scatter preparatory remarks rather than inform directly, Orderic forewarns the reader about William's exceptional speaking abilities. As the 'peaceful ruler' lies gravely ill following his brutal attack on Mantes, Orderic notes how even in his illness William has kept his reason sound and *loquelam* (speech, utterance) lively, *uiuacem*.[57] When, not long after, he is ready to allow

[56] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

[57] Op. cit., p. 78.

William to express himself directly, Orderic again points the reader's attention to the duke's oratorical powers. Focusing this time exclusively on the deathbed speech, he hails it as an *allocutionem perenni memoria dignam.*[58] But before William effectively has a chance to speak, the author wants the readers to know precisely how the *sapiens heros*[59] delivered and performed (*edidit*) that last speech: eloquently, *eloquenter*, with tears occasionally mixed in, *admixtis interdum lacrimis*. Inconsequential in appearance, these last two details may have been enough to warn Orderic's readers of a speaker no stranger to the force of oratory, therefore one all but disingenuous.

Eloquenter calls to mind the desirable speaking mode of the accomplished orator, someone capable of distracting the judges' mind from the truth and putting them in whatever frame of mind he wished. Quintilian taught that the 'major force of eloquence' lay in 'its power to arouse emotion,'[60] for 'a judge who is overcome by his emotions gives up any idea of inquiring into truth.'[61] Emotions, therefore, are what the orator must focus on.[62] Of these, tears hold pride of place, for 'when successfully aroused', they are the most effective emotion of all.[63] But where *lacrimas* must be stirred up, such as in William's appeals to pity in the battle narratives, there is no room for an *infirmus actor*, a weak performer, or the reward will not be tears but laughter.[64] In Orderic's formulation, *admixtis [...] lacrimis* indeed plays on the idea of the tormented sinner lamenting his crimes as he awaits God's terrible judgement, but only outwardly, and only to create a first level of meaning. As the expression associates with *eloquenter*, it begs to be considered at a secondary level, as well – in this case, rhetorically. A subsequent reference immediately emerges: to *enargeia*, that illustration of an emotion not so much through talking about it as through exhibiting it.[65] After all, the secret behind

[58] Op. cit., p. 80.

[59] Op. cit., p. 80.

[60] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 4.5.6. (Harvard 2001), vol. 2.

[61] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 6.2.6. (Harvard 2001), vol. 3.

[62] Op. cit., 6.2.7, vol. 3.

[63] Op. cit., 6.1.44, vol. 3.

[64] Op. cit., 6.1.45.

[65] Cf. op. cit., 6.2.32.

arousing emotions is, as Quintilian put it, 'being moved by them oneself'[66] – there is indeed no other way the *actor* can arouse emotion in others. As Orderic advertises through his *eloquenter [...] admixtis [...] lacrimis [...] edidit*, William talks about his past suffering and at the same time is himself moved by that emotion, the proof is his tears. Yet 'nothing dries as easily as tears.'[67] Oratorical technique recommends that successful speakers keep their appeals to pity short, as lingering over such images makes the listeners sober up, tired of crying.[68] *Interdum*, which describes William's tears as he speaks, hence his moments of *enargeia* brought about by repeated appeals to pity, subtly renders, along with an inherent notion of intermittence and intervals, this other, deeper idea of the need to calculate one's effort and, therefore, of intentionality. It speaks to the combined presence of emotion/*pathos* and a design to manipulate the audience through oratorical craft. But the manipulative voice in the speech, the one that seeks William's exoneration from guilt by recourse to the orator's tricks – multiple lines of defence, appeals to pity, strategic division of charges – cannot be but William's. For Orderic would not caution his readers about a deliberately deceitful move against their perception of truth, such as the employment of any rhetorical twists can be, and openly take credit for it at the same time. Rather, it is safe to assume that, in matters of defence, it is William's voice and his alone that we ought to try to hear in the speech. But we must also take stock of Orderic's other suggestion put to the reader at this point in the text, that of considering the speech in terms of some special merits. Can we take this as a proof that Orderic is, after all, in perfect agreement with his hero?

As with the previous example of *admixtis interdum lacrimis eloquenter sic edidit*, Orderic may have attached more than one layer of meaning to his praise of the speech as an *allocutionem perenni memoria dignam*. In one sense, there may be in his words a reference to the oratorical skill demonstrated by the speech, of which, although the ethos of the historical Conqueror was the real inspiration, Orderic, not William, was the consummate architect. In yet another sense, a parallel reference may have been intended to the inherent historical value of the speech. Thus, under its first meaning,

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[66] Op. cit., 6.2.26.

[67] Op. cit., 6.1.27.

[68] Cf. op. cit., 6.1.28.

allocutionem perenni memoria dignam could be referencing the oratorical feat that is William's defence of his crimes, complete with its deceitful, yet rhetorically masterful aspects. Under its second meaning, it would indicate the context as valuable, that is, the *ordinatio regni* in which the speech culminates, as well as the ideas contained therein. And nowhere are these two separate meanings more inseparable and more charged with significance to the writer as an Anglo-Norman[69] than when William justifies his crimes in England and gives deathbed dispositions for England's future in the *ordinatio*. For not only did the Conqueror's life and death seal in ways never before imagined the fate of Normandy and England (both key pieces of the author's personal identity), but Orderic was able to give masterly proof of literary skill in both capturing and exposing the essence of that process. Above all, he was able to do this with a lack of reticence not often seen in contemporary primary sources dealing with his topic. One can almost imagine the quiet admiration that the *lapsus ducis* episode may have summoned in Orderic's monastic circles, and how in the scriptorium the excerpt may have been shown to generations of developing writers – perhaps starting already in Orderic's time with the *studiosi lectores* – as an exemplum of contemporary history writing in and by itself *perenni memoria dignum*. And yet there is more to the warning with which our author prefaces William's last words. If on the one hand he indicates them as a deliberate exercise in distorting historical truth through the strategic use of *pathos* (*admixtis interdum lacrimis…*), on the other he encourages us to consider the speech on equal footing with others whose fame can transcend the barriers of historic time. As speeches go, the only other ones worthy of such commendation in Orderic's time were the same as any educated reader would have been familiar with through their study of rhetoric: speeches delivered in actual legal trials occasioned by one or another ancient cause célèbre. A distinguishing feature of the genre, however, and especially of the narrow group of texts here considered, is the extraordinary ability of the orator to blend all modes of persuasion in his defence of extremely controversial crimes. The case is argued against either motive, when the crimes are unacceptable, or the crime itself if opportunity allows. It is easy, therefore, to see how Orderic gives his readers a double warning as William is about to start his speech: they should expect to be swayed from their pursuit of the truth not just through an effusion of *pathos*, but through a complex

[69] Orderic was a Norman by 'adoption': he was of mixed Anglo-Saxon and Norman or possibly French ancestry (his father studied in Orléans and may or may not have had roots there), but spent most of his life in Normandy.

mode of reasoning where either the motives of crimes or the actual guilt may be downplayed. Only, in this regard, William indeed exceeds expectations, more than earning the induction of his speech into the realm of those eternally remembered. For not only does he persuade through his tears, he also transfers both motives and guilt at the same time. He argues his case with subtlety as only someone steeped in legal notions could. The historic Conqueror may never have been thus trained, but those in charge of his propaganda were. Thus, with William's speech Orderic may be attempting exactly this: to present as if it were in the Conqueror's own voice the propagandistic arguments that he and his supporters had notoriously employed in defence of much contested Norman politics. To expose the fissures and inconsistencies in Norman political thought, Orderic has William argue his case with all the sophistry worthy of an expert orator – a speech worthy of perpetual remembrance indeed.

William's – and Orderic's – understanding of crime as a potentially defendable charge is far more granular than it first appears in the dual line of defence. For where at first William only seems to be shifting the blame for his participation in military aggression to various culprits spurned by greed for his land and power – an attempt to justify crime by invoking motive – he also works on gradually reallocating the responsibility for the outcomes of his military exploits, primarily bloodshed and land appropriation. In reality, however, as he reaches the end of the battle narratives, and as he is about to reveal his deathbed dispositions regarding the succession to the thrones of Normandy and England, William has also realised a complete transference of his crimes: from the poor boy left in charge of a duchy still battling into adulthood the treacherous cruelty of the Normans, to none other than God, the ultimate will. Yet none of this would be possible without the long, calculated excursus into William's various military conflicts. For where motive can be transferred even with one narrative by giving credible details about times, places, and characters, the same is not easily achievable when one seeks to incriminate the divine and appear credible – and plausible – at the same time.

William's *narratio* proceeds from childhood to adulthood presenting his involvement in crimes of war and brutality in a linear fashion that takes the true historical chronology of events as a narrative guideline. All the while, Orderic's William also walks the reader systematically through three broad categories of strife that the historical William partook in more or less in Orderic's given order: internecine strife over his inheritance rights in Normandy, strife against the duchy's neighbours, and finally strife

over the English crown. With an exposition thus organised, it is easy to create the illusion that William may be merely engaged in *récit* and that his categories, the same as the readers likely ought to consider, consist only of chronology and political adversity. In reality, coincidental with chronological linearity and with the examination of one category of strife after the other, William's crimes are presented in what appears as a crescendo of their gravity. This is not obvious until right after Mortemer when William abruptly introduces a hiatus in the succession of the battles and then complicates his two lines of defence with increasing departures from the original scheme.

The battle of Mortemer is not just the third in a suite of six major political conflicts to be referenced in some detail in our episode: it marks the third time since he started to speak that William has portrayed himself as acting as a victim of provocation, and also the third time that he has indicated God as an all-powerful ally. Val-ès-Dunes, Arques, Mortemer – all are very similar conflictual situations that exemplify and cement with the minimum detail necessary the same recurring role for William – a man provoked to violence by others, a ruler buttressed by the right hand of God. Yet God's role is restated differently with every episode and conceived fluidly from the start: from Val-ès-Dunes to Mortemer, God intervenes in William's life in ever-changing guises. In the conflict against William's cousin Guy of Burgundy, when William prevails over his enemies with God's help (*auxiliante Deo [...] hostes uici*),[70] God's role is that of a supporter, whether as an ally or as an overlord. But William here also acknowledges that such help is accorded him because God is a just judge (*auxiliante Deo qui iustus iudex est [...] hostes uici)*,[71] thus casting God almost at the same time into two different roles: supporter (ally or overlord), and law. When at the end of Val-ès-Dunes he presents regaining possession of his undermined hereditary right as an outcome of the conflict with Guy, William's consideration of God is again in relation to the notion of law, but in connection with the idea of the will that enforces the law (*nutu Dei subrutis patrium ius libere possedi*).[72] This casts God in the role of William's overlord, the letter of the law that dictates how legal right should be observed, and at the same time the will that brings about that observation. At Arques, both outcomes of his aggression (the deposition of Archbishop

[70] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 84.

[71] Op. cit., p. 84.

[72] Op. cit., p. 84.

Mauger from the seat of Rouen, and his replacement with a perfect non-entity) that William justifies through God's involvement (*presulem [...] per decretum papæ deposui* and *cenobitam quem michi Deus [...] transmiserat [...] subrogaui*)[73] reinforce God as William's overlord, enforcer of the laws that should be followed, and the will that brings about that outcome. Finally, while Mortemer again showcases God as a supporter, ally, or overlord (*iuuante Deo uicere Normanni*),[74] this consideration only touches William in so far as it proves that God and the Normans are responsible for the outcomes of that confrontation, but not him.

It does not surprise the reader, therefore, once Mortemer is dealt with, to see William bent on summing up the narratives. His conclusion plays upon two core ideas pressed forward by the narratives: that of the countless burdens by which he had been hindered since childhood (*sic a pueritia mea innumeris pressuris undique impeditus sum*) and that of God's help of his cause (*per gratiam Dei de omnibus honorifice ereptus sum*).[75] By all appearances an innocent restatement of his two original lines of defence now proffered in abstraction of details, William's conclusion in effect functions as a *recapitulatio rerum*. Meant to refresh the judge's memory in preparation for the proofs, with William the recapitulation is, nonetheless, a twist. He does not aim to refresh the listeners' memory at all for there of all places, following three successive narratives of questionable politics and war, he dwells as a perpetrator exonerated only liminally. To acquit himself completely, he needs to obliterate that memory by imperceptibly planting in the listeners' mind a favourable version of facts, one that would seem to have always been there and never in dispute. A recapitulation offers precisely that opportunity.

To aid him in rewriting memory, and one could almost go as far as to say 'historical memory', William harnesses the unique unburdening virtue of verbs in the passive voice (*impeditus sum* and *ereptus sum*) in order to claim, jointly and for the first time, an absolute lack of personal agency over either originating martial aggression or the aggressive subduing of his rivals. With previous descriptions of battles up to and including Mortemer, despite an intention to minimise his accountability with respect to both the causes and brutal outcomes of his violence, only as pertains to causation does

[73] Op. cit., p. 86.

[74] Op. cit., p. 86.

[75] Op. cit., p. 88.

William ever attempt to portray himself as entirely free of responsibility. Each of the de facto causes we have seen him invoke attempts to convey this idea. With the outcomes of his aggression, however, protected as he is by the claim of God's intervention in his victories, William can still be seen as an actor on the stage of his own crimes. But just as with claiming provocation by others, here too there are nuances and degrees of conceded visibility. At Val-ès-Dunes, William defeats enemies (*hostes uici*) and takes control of his contested inheritance (*subrutis patrium ius libere possedi*). With Arques, he deposes an archbishop (*presulem […] deposui*) and makes a calculated appointment in his place (*Maurilium […] subrogaui*). Yet at Mortemer where the products of his violence are a *terribile prelium* and a great effusion of blood, despite casting God in the reassuring role of accessory to his violence, the Normans are the actors: *uicere Normanni*. William, it would appear, is starting to hide behind the curtains. In the prose of the speech, *uici*, *possedi*, *deposui*, *subrogaui*, *uicere* are each part of a unique phrase that claims divine intervention in a specific violent context in William's life. These verbs sit right next to and combine meaning with expressions such as *auxiliante Deo*, *nutu Dei*, *per decretum papæ*, *Deus transmiserat*, and *iuuante Deo*. In their progression from Val-ès-Dunes to Mortemer, the verbs constantly reposition William in relation to owning responsibility for questionable actions, but also in relation to God. In doing so, however, they also gradually move him from the centre-stage of action to its periphery until, with the summary phrase after Mortemer – 'thus I had been ensnared from all sides since childhood by many oppressions, but through God's grace I was honourably saved from all'[76] – William is no longer cast as an actor, but rather as the sufferer of action, both that of his enemies (*innumeris pressuris undique impeditus sum*) and that of God (*per gratiam Dei de omnibus honorifice ereptus sum*).[77] At a moment dangerously close to his admitting to crimes in England, within the plot of his own confession William has conveniently turned himself into a narrative subject endowed – because grammatically passivised – with almost no individual agency over his criminal actions.

But the *recapitulatio* fulfills yet another function in the presentation of William's military exploits. Although it is cast as a mere conclusion to the first three narratives, William uses the recapitulation as a rootstock to which the more important arguments of his plea will soon be grafted. Rescued honourably, as he has pointed out, through God's

[76] Op. cit., p. 88, my translation.

[77] Op. cit., p. 88.

grace from all the burdens that had beset him from all sides since childhood, William moves quickly to announce that 'therefore' he became an object of his neighbours' envy and hatred (*inuidiosus igitur omnibus uicinis meis factus sum*); but because God in whom he had always placed his trust helped him (*auxiliante Deo in quo semper spem meam posui*), he was not overcome by anyone (*a nullo superatus sum*).[78] New passive voice verbs ([*inuidiosus*] *factus sum*, and [*a nullo*] *superatus sum*) continue to promote William's suspension in a limbo of absent personal agency over either aspect of his violence – cause or outcomes. All the while, God's instrumentality in the violent outcomes of William's exploits continues as before (*auxiliante Deo a nullo superatus sum*). But one thing about the pattern that the battles have established does break: the implied cause of his enemies' hatred of William. If with Val-ès-Dunes, Arques, and Mortemer it was resentment over his inheritance, his position, his power, and the enemies were largely paternal uncles and cousins, now and without warning the enemies are *uicinis meis* and *igitur*, performing unsuspected its inferential duty, links their envious hatred in a relationship of consecution to that unremitting divine enhancing of William's military successes that we have seen with every battle. What is more, that same unfailing divine help will come to pass yet again as a result of this very hatred (*sed auxiliante Deo in quo semper spem meam posui a nullo superatus sum*). This much Orderic's *lectores* would have had to concede: within the chain of determinacy in the Conqueror's life, God was truly the prime mover, the beginning and the end, implied cause of personal suffering and saviour all in one. But they would have also had to recognise that it was not without discourse manipulation that William negotiated that role.

Unique to the recapitulation is the density of logical arguments employed, particularly as we find ourselves in a transitional, thus brief, segment of the speech. William's arguments are all concerned with establishing either causes or consequences. One argument in particular – the syllogism hinging on *igitur* – has important implications both for the construction and meaning of Orderic's text. That syllogism is unique among William's other logical arguments because it produces a ripple of conclusions, not just one, and yet only one is stated, that which is more obvious and safer: as a consequence of his repeated military successes through God's help within Normandy, William has attracted the hatred of the duchy's neighbours, too. But the conclusions that remain merely implied are considerably more telling. Firstly, there is the fact that his condition as

[78] Op. cit., p. 88.

God's protégé promotes a perpetual state of political-military conflict in William's life. Secondly, it would seem that indicated as responsible for William's participation in military aggression against the duchy's neighbours is ultimately God. Not only that, but that God both brings violent conflict into William's life and also resolves it almost as if were in an unbroken chain of divine intervention. Because of these subsidiary logical implications inherent in the '*igitur*' syllogism, it is significant that, where rhetorically considered at this point in the speech, William is no longer sensed to be pursuing motive, but guilt. Motive, as Quintilian explains, is invoked when defending actions that are in themselves unacceptable. This, he notes, is a common occurrence in the law courts since it is harder to produce a credible scapegoat for one's crime than to defend one's motive. The pleading in such cases requires the defence advocate to know 'a thousand twists and tricks' (*mille flexus et artes desiderantur*)[79] to help him work on the judge's mind and move him to a favourable decision. Yet he will achieve even greater success if he sows the seeds of the proofs imperceptibly in the *narratio*. As he is increasingly deemphasising his active role in the political conflicts with his enemies (e.g., whenever he employs verbs in the passive voice in connection with his person) while on the other hand overemphasising God's unique ability to militarily resolve and then perpetuate further conflict, William no longer needs to dwell on his motives since he no longer performs any actions. The power of his personal agency has been completely subdued. By employing *logos* in the *recapitulatio* William turns the dispute from the forensic question initially pursued, 'why did he do it?', to the only one apt to clear his name in full, 'did he do it?' Even more importantly, the fact that this change of focus occurs right before he moves to considering his invasion and conquest of England suggests that William may already be resolved not to take full responsibility for those actions – they are, as he has endeavoured to show, not entirely his own.

There are grave problems that England poses for William in the speech, but by the time he gets there to face them properly he has armed himself with all-powerful – even divine – credentials. The quick syllogistic intervention in the *recapitulatio* (God's past favour of his person seen as the cause of his neighbours' future hatred of him) has enabled William to perfect a self-image cultivated with care since the first battle narratives. That image has shifted from that of a ruler initially depicted merely as God's client assisted by the divine in the administration of his duchy or on the battlefield, to one

[79] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 5.13.2 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 2.

distinctly made of a superior Christian virtue: suffering through and for one's faith. Indeed, William comes across as God's man ever so persuasively. God saves him from the snares of his enemies at home (*per gratiam Dei de omnibus honorifice ereptus sum*)[80] only to hand him over to newer enemies abroad (*inuidiosus igitur omnibus uicinis meis factus* sum).[81] William reacts as a faithful subject responding with renewed faith in the salvific powers of his lord (*Deo in quo semper spem meam posui*),[82] while in his turn God in his endless mercy saves William anew (*auxiliante Deo […] a nullo superatus sum*).[83] This last reference is to the battles that saw Normandy engaged in William's time against a number of her neighbours, not least of all England. Interestingly, however, William's word choices here avoid any direct depiction of him as a perpetrator of violence. Rather what his enemies experience is the fact of his invincibility as enhanced by God (*sed auxiliante Deo […] a nullo superatus sum*), no matter that his and God's joint martial aggression is what is truly at stake here. To suffer that aggression even as it remains unnamed have been political powers from all around Normandy's borders: the Bretons and the men of Anjou who experienced it often (*hoc sepe senserunt Britones et Andegauenses*), the Franks and the Flemings who can swear by it (*hoc astipulantur Franci atque Flandrenses*), and the Angles and the men of Maine who have experienced it violently (*hoc grauiter experti sunt Angli et Cenomannenses*).[84] Yet England interests us the most in this context and for two good reasons: her inhabitants, who are said to have suffered violently at William and God's hands, are William's subjects, not just a neighbouring people; even more importantly, England is the locus – geographical as well as textual – where William portrays himself as the ultimate sufferer and God's man. Confronted with God's grace, with God's will, or with God's mercy, William is invariably seen in England in a state of suffering.

There are two things strictly speaking that interest William as he discusses England outside of the *ordinatio* proper. The first is the violent manner in which he acquired the royal crown, the second – his present state of suffering on that account. But we must not be mistaken – William is nowhere inclined to blame anything upon himself. As he refers to acquiring a royal crown in England (*diadema regale adeptus sum*), he

[80] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 88.

[81] Op. cit., p. 88.

[82] Op. cit., p. 88.

[83] Op. cit., p. 88.

[84] Op. cit., p. 88.

points out that he did so through God's grace alone (*diuina solummodo gratia*).[85] Oddly, however, William insists not once, but twice that he had no hereditary right to the throne (*diadema regale quod nullus antecessorum meorum gessit* and *[diadema regale] non ius contulit hereditarium*).[86] That William would be interested to deny, and that with a single short sentence, what the historic Conqueror strived vociferously to uphold for most of his life – an all-essential Norman blood connection to the English throne – is strange to say the least, but there is much to glean from our character's lexical choices that may explain his stance.

By employing the verb 'adipiscor' to refer to his obtaining of the crown (*adeptus sum*), William implies a form of suffering, that which comes from facing adversity. More importantly, the excursus on the crown flows directly out of 'igitur'. Structurally, it is cast as an example, a proof to support William's claim to divinely enhanced invincibility against his neighbours' hatred of him. As the logical arguments around the syllogism indicate, the envious hatred William invokes is a behaviour, not a feeling (*inuidiosus […] omnibus uicinis meis factus sum, sed […] a nullo superatus sum*), and has been engendered by God's relentless treatment of William as a protégé (*per gratiam Dei de omnibus* [innumeris pressuris] *honorifice adeptus sum. Inuidiosus igitur […] factus sum*).[87] Thus, William attaches his discussion of England, and implicitly the mention of his absent hereditary right to that throne, to a notion introduced previously (and syllogistically demonstrated), that of experiencing the consequences of divine protection almost as a guarantee of future suffering – God's salvific grace toward him in his fight against internecine enemies only attracts William newer enemies and newer conflicts away from home. The problems that surround the English crown – and more will follow in the *ordinatio* – are to be seen, therefore, as the outcome of just one specific conflict out of the larger pool of troubles generated in William's life by God's initial grace toward him. His conflicts with his other enemies have also received a mention in the text, but only a generic and cursory one: the count of Anjou, the duke of Brittany, and the count of Flanders *michi multis machinationibus insidiati sunt* and *plures insidias perstruxissent*.[88] Yet within the economy of the text, that is enough to make the transition to the conflict with England seamless and, above all, logically justified. We are, as William intended,

[85] Op. cit., p. 90.

[86] Op. cit., p. 90.

[87] Op. cit., p. 88.

[88] Op. cit., p. 88-90.

following his logical train of thought from an initial presentation of the causes to the subsequent enumeration of the consequences. And William is all about justifying himself on logical grounds since not a shadow of doubt must be cast, now that he is fast approaching the *ordinatio*, upon the honesty of his past dealings on English ground. The brutal facts of the Norman Invasion and Conquest of England cannot be denied, they are still fresh in living memory and likewise unacceptable, so they must be justified either by invoking motive or by denying responsibility. As we have seen, William is attempting both. For motive, he is safe under the protection of the syllogism: God was the prime promoter of the conflict, the neighbours hated him in word but mostly in deed, and for his part, *per gratiam Dei*[89] he could not be vanquished – there could be no safer reasons, legally speaking in William's day, for attempting an invasion or carrying out a brutal conquest. Anything less than a divine sanction of political programs would be much too human and vain to be ever safe from reproach or prejudice. For Orderic's William, therefore, there can be no hereditary right involved when it comes to defending his legitimacy on the English throne; there can only be God's grace that ordained the crown for him (*diuina solummodo gratia non ius contulit hereditarium*)[90] and his personal suffering through the entire process.

With England, and more precisely with the appearance of the royal crown in the text, *pathos* returns once more to William's speech. It is a sign of the perceived moral gravity that the speaker attaches to the actions described.[91] After all, the crown did not come peacefully to William, no matter how involved God may have been in the whole Conquest affair. Faced with two possibilities – the image of a victorious military leader and that of a man of arms bearing the perils of war – William chooses to assume the latter. He *did* defeat his enemies – the men of Exeter, Chester, and Northumbria, the Scots, the Welsh, the Danes, and the Norwegians – but it is easier for William to admit to that if he may possibly adjust the grammar. Thus, in the conflicts against the men who strove to wrest the English crown from him, William did not achieve victory, the lots of victory came to him (*prouenit michi sors uictoriæ*).[92] As in the recapitulation after Mortemer, here too he is but an indirect subject, a recipient, a sufferer of another's

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[89] Op. cit., p. 88.

[90] Op. cit., p. 90.

[91] Cf. Quintilian: 'emotion is most involved where there is personal danger' - *in periculis maxime versatur adfectus* in Quintilian *The Orator's Education* 6.1.36 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3, pp. 34-5.

[92] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

action, yet with the added bonus that the reader now expects and does not question that attitude. That English political affairs are indeed to be understood as a continuous source of suffering for William can once more be gleaned from his lexical choices. The repeated episodes of Anglo-Saxon resistance against Norman occupation from 1066 to 1075,[93] for instance, become in the speech hardships – *labores*, toils, suffering – and dangerous conflicts, *periculosos conflictus*.[94] But William does not just face these, he endures them, and the verb employed here, *pertulerim*, renders in stark Christian terms his implied notion of suffering: as a penalty. This is again not very far from the ideas put forward in the syllogism, that is, that God first saves then destroys, a fitting echo of the psalmist's words: 'thou hast lifted me up and cast me down' (Psalm 102:10).[95] Emerging here as even more important, therefore, is a personal quality of which William wishes to convince the reader: his perfect obedience to God's will. Whatever God sends him – the monk Maurilius from Florence as a replacement for William's deposed uncle the archbishop of Rouen, enemies all around his duchy, a royal crown to which he has no hereditary right, or, even worse, the ensuing toils of defending that crown – William accepts and suffers all. He is God's man, his most humble servant. And yet, the more that aspect of William's character is emphasised, the more his speech seeks to elicit pity and emotion. A mood of weakness and personal defeat insinuates itself now into the prose, one of those recurring moments of *admixtis […] lacrimis*, no doubt, that Orderic wanted us to beware of. From his life's battles William has always emerged a victor, that much he has established; but the conflicts endured for the sake of his royal crown have been indeed without match: across the sea, equally against England's indigenous population and her foreign political allies, perilous, but above all numerous beyond description. *Quantos ultra mare labores et periculosos conflictus pertulerium*, William laments, *[…] difficile est enarrare*.[96] The passage mirrors perfectly the beginning of the

[93] Events of the Conquest referenced in the speech: "Exonios": siege of Gytha's castle in Exeter in 1068 and the uprising of 1069; "Cestrenses": resistance formed in 1066 around Harold's widow in Chester in Morcar and Eadwine's ancestral lands, and William's crushing of the resistance in 1070; "Nordanhimbros": resistance in support of Edgar Aetheling's claim, in Morcar's former land; "Scotos": King Malcolm welcomes in his lands Edgar and his supporters among whom Morcar and Eadwine; "Gualos": Morcar's rebellion of 1069 in York in support of Edgar's claim when both English and Welsh supported his cause; "Dacos": repeated support of the English rebels of the North, both by Swein and by his brother Cnut in 1069, 1070, and 1075.

[94] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

[95] *The New Chain-Reference Bible* (B. B. Kirkbride Bible 1964), p. 586.

[96] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

speech. There, presenting himself as a dying ruler trembling with penitential fear under the burden of his martial sins (*multis […] grauibusque peccatis onustus contremisco*),[97] William expressed a similar concern: it regarded the unusual amount of violence he had partaken in since childhood. *Nullatenus enumerare possum*, William was confessing, *mala quæ feci* – he could not count all the crimes he had committed over the course of his life.[98] His state of mind there seemed to be entirely dominated by spiritual anxiety at the thought of God's imminent judgement of his violent past. Interestingly, here too as he discusses the Conquest William plunges, indeed for the very first time since that opening moment, into renewed fear for his soul. But to bring that spiritual anxiety on now is something more specific and contoured than could be safely revealed at the beginning of the speech, in the absence of any preparatory remarks: the countless battles of the Conquest.

Nothing about William's military exploits in England quite resembles his maneuvers on continental ground, the tenor of Norman aggression least of all. In England, God does not merely support anymore, he effects political change (*diadema regale […] diuina solummodo gratia […] contulit*).[99] Adversaries are no longer ungrateful disloyal subjects or cunning overlords – they are ethnic groups in pursuit of the crown just like William and his Normans (*Exonios, Cestrenses et Nordanhimbros, […] Scotos et Gualos, Nordwigenas et Dacos, et […] cæteros aduersarios qui conabantur me regno Angliæ spoliare*).[100] Even more remarkably, the references to martial violence, from largely matter-of-factual, now turn into a portrayal of the outrageous that is increasingly more vivid. Thus, we find out that savage temerity raged in all of William's English conflicts (*in omnibus his grassata est seua temeritas*),[101] while his victories were in effect triumphs (*huiuscemodi triumphis*),[102] a distinction to be reserved, according to Isidore of Seville,[103] to complete victories, those attained, that is, by slaughtering rather than simply routing the enemy. While in practice all this is highly compromising for William,

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[97] Op. cit., p. 80.

[98] Op. cit., p. 80.

[99] Op. cit., p. 90.

[100] Op. cit., p. 90.

[101] Op. cit., p. 90.

[102] Op. cit., p. 90.

[103] For Isidore on triumphs, see "De bello et ludis: De triumphis" *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), XVIII.ii.1-3 and 7, p. 360.

only the slightest shadow of self-incrimination touches him. Just as Quintilian would have the accomplished orator proceed in an actual forensic speech, William handles outrageous (*atroces*) and pitiable (*miserabiles*) events with emotion.[104] Key points in the Conquest narrative amply reflect this tendency: William's victories, which he did not attain, but rather came to him (*prouenit michi sors uictoriæ*), were the result of penitential suffering (*quantos ultra mare labores et periculosos conflictus pertulerim*) and as ordained by God (*diadema regale […] diuina solummodo gratia […] contulit*).[105] Yet the fact of their being essentially the infamous stage of protracted Norman brutality against the English, his royal subjects, does make those victories decidedly problematic for William. At least in appearance, he is full of contrition. In terms similar to those opening the speech, his mind bends inwardly to consider (*dum perpendo*) on a personal level the atrocity of Norman martial violence in England. Worry over the horror of his English triumphs (*formidinis anxietas*) pricks and gnaws at his heart (*me tamen intrinsecus pungit et mordet*)[106] as he weighs retrospectively his countless military successes. But he has undoubtedly touched a much sorer spot than we may think, for this effusion of remorse will engender William's first penitential thoughts since the inaugural moments of the speech.

With the very schematic but deeply emotional excursus on his English triumphs, William turns fully penitent. He begs the prominent clerical figures in his courtly entourage to intercede with God for his salvation (*uos O sacerdotes et ministri Christi suppliciter obsecro ut […] me commendetis omnipotenti Deo*).[107] Through their potent prayers invested with a high degree of spirituality, he hopes a God of mercy may remit (*ut ipse remittat*) the sins that burden him so heavily (*peccata quibus admodum premor*).[108] The crux of William's appeal for mercy, however, is an image that he proposes of himself as *fidei defensor*. Curiously, he uses that image not so much to convince his audience of his inner worth as to remind them of their indebtedness to him. Details abound, sonorous names back up the story. The creation of new monastic foundations, the rich endowment of old ones, rights and protection confirmed both in Normandy and in England, his own eagerness to heed the counsel of prominent

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[104] Cf. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 6.1. (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3.

[105] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

[106] Op. cit., p. 90.

[107] Op. cit., p. 90.

[108] Op. cit., p. 90.

ecclesiastical officials, honour Mother Church, and protect her holy establishments – these are in essence the proofs of his piety that William chooses to promote in the speech above all others. The reputation for orthodoxy of his ecclesiastical appointees Lanfranc, Anselm of Bec, the abbots of St. Wandrille and Troarn furthermore speak to his abhorrence of venality and his love of merit and sound doctrine. And yet, weightiest among the words William employs to bring memories of his life-long service to the church back to the fore remain those that bear witness to the materiality of his piety. It matters in the speech that William states the number of older Norman monastic foundations endowed by him with ample riches (*nouem abbatiæ monachorum et una sanctimonialium*);[109] it matters that he emphasises the number of monasteries further founded during his dukedom (*decem et septem monachorum atque sanctimonialium sex cenobia*).[110] That he conceded charitably, both in Normandy and in England, donations of lands and revenues made by his barons toward their own monastic foundations matters greatly just as well (*omnes quoque res quas in terris uel aliis redditibus proceres mei […] dederunt […] benigniter concessi*), as it matters, too, that those donations William preserved against rivals and disturbers through ducal or royal charters confirmed freely (*carta largitionum gratis confirmaui*).[111] In William's words, Norman monasteries are fortresses where mortals learn to fight against devils and the temptations of the flesh. They are places where *magnum seruitium et plures eleemosynæ*[112] happen every day, that powerful, salvific merger of penitential endeavours that benefit all sinful men. Indeed, William's monasteries are what Normandy itself is protected by. His magnates would not be able to deny – William spared no effort during his life to ensure the spiritual salvation of all those who mattered in his lands (*pro salute spirituali*).[113] But if this shows him as a generous sponsor, it also reveals him as a resourceful ruler who cultivates a strategic if indirect relationship with the holy. For all practical purposes, for those living under his rule, William *is* their material gateway to the divine. Words that he uses to refer to his role within the church – *conditor*, *fundatorum feruidus adiutor*, *beniuolus incentor* – indicate that he is so in the case of his barons as in that of his ecclesiastical

[109] Op. cit., p. 90.

[110] Op. cit., p. 92.

[111] Op. cit., p. 92.

[112] Op. cit., p. 92.

[113] Op. cit., p. 92.

appointees.[114] This is not inconsistent with notions of medieval Christian piety that we know characterise Orderic's time. What is not consistent with them, however, is the unusual force behind William's plea for intercession. The latter's opening phrase simultaneously suggests the possibility of rejection and William's attempt to counteract it: about to inaugurate what will be his *ordinatio regni* proper, William enjoins the prelates present at his final council to recall their sovereign's instrumentality in their own continued material prosperity (*debetis enim recolere quam dulciter uos amaui, et quam fortiter contra omnes emulos defensaui*).[115] But may his leverage at the negotiation table be truly occupying William's mind? How else are we to read the emphasis placed on his ecclesiastical sponsorship program and other aspects of his piety overall?

More than anywhere up to this point in the text, a concern with the negative aspects of the royal treasure of the House of Normandy seems to emerge as central to the narrative. To put the Conqueror well on the path of spiritual anxiety with its attending penitential behaviour is a double consideration on his English military victories. For not only does William qualify the victories of the Conquest as triumphs, thus savage killings, but quite surprisingly further links triumphs to material greed, a demonised notion in the century whenever applied to the military noble class (*sed quamuis super huiuscemodi triumphis humana gaudeat auiditas*).[116] To be true, William only uses that consideration in adversative and concessive terms (*sed quamuis*) and, therefore, one gets the impression that he may be disavowing the possibility of any underlying personal rapacity in connection with his manner of securing the royal crown. Similarly, he appears to deplore that *humana auiditas* may be the basis of triumphs at large. Not even as he gives voice to remorse over the Norman attempts at annihilating the indigenous Anglo-Saxon population (*me tamen intrinsecus pungit et mordet formidinis anxietas*)[117] do we suspect that greed as combined with martial violence may resonate with William on a personal level. It is only with the penitential measures that he enjoins upon himself that the tables finally turn in the reader's favour. For the amends that William decides to make to save his soul address both Norman aggression in England *and* greed – that one pernicious wrong that the battle narratives endeavoured to convince us that William was never guilty of.

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[114] Op. cit., p. 92.

[115] Op. cit., p. 90.

[116] Op. cit., p. 90.

[117] Op. cit., p. 90.

William's penance is a two-part process comprised of intercessory prayers and a form of restitution. In the case of the former, the plea for mercy addressed to his high prelates (*Vnde uos O sacerdotes […] suppliciter obsecro*) is cued in the text by the Norman barbarity unleashed in the battles of the Conquest (*in omnibus his grassata est seua temeritas. [Vnde uos O sacerdotes…]*).[118] This is the same barbarity that makes William link the idea of the Conquest to greed. In the case of the present restitution (throughout the episode, several will be made and of various kinds), William follows a recognisable form of penance typical of western Christian medieval kings: according to royal tradition, considerable royal treasure upon a ruler's death is diverted as alms into the hands of the church and the poor. Because William's restitution here conforms to that model (*thesauros quoque meos iubeo dari æcclesiis et pauperibus*),[119] it can easily help masquerade as generic and received one definite incrimination that most likely Orderic intended specifically for him. For the dying Conqueror wishes to have scattered, *dispergantur* – indeed destroyed, undone – through the charitable uses of the church (*dispergantur in sanctis sanctorum usibus*) not just enormous wealth, but one that has been accumulated through [his] wickedness and crimes (*quæ congesta sunt ex facinoribus*).[120] Curious parallels underlying William's politic universe emerge with his plea for mercy: between his abusive domination of England and his excessive wealth, between his brutality in war and his munificence toward the church, as well as between his martial violence and the spiritual prosperity of Norman monasteries and clergy. United in a symbiotic triangle, unlawful riches, violence, and a desperate need to tap into the resources of spirituality plague William's peace as he approaches death. And so, for the first time in the speech marred – following his confession about the royal crown – by the sully of excessive bloodshed and the dark shadow of immoderate greed, William embraces penance as the natural course of things. This, at least, is one way of looking at the Conquest narrative and probably the way Orderic intended the episode to be accessed at a first, superficial, exterior level. Because of its strategic composition, however, that suggests rhetorical underpinnings, William's plea for mercy also invites a parallel reading that may in the end shift our understanding of his guilty state. Let us look at William's plea as a genuine *deprecatio* in the wider context of a defence speech.

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[118] Op. cit., p. 90.

[119] Op. cit., p. 90.

[120] Op. cit., p. 90.

Beginning more recognisably with his direct appeal for spiritual intercession (*Vnde uos […] suppliciter obsecro*) and continuing with the tangible proofs of his piety, William's plea contains two of the 'three most effective points relating to the accused himself' that, according to Quintilian, can be found in pleas for mercy. The first of these is the accused's previous life, 'if he is innocent and has done good service' (*vita praecedens, si bene meritus*); the other is the idea of retribution, if the accused 'seems to have paid heavily enough already in other setbacks, in his present jeopardy, or by his repentance' (*praeterea, si vel aliis incommodis vel praesenti periculo vel paenitentia videatur satis poenarum dedisse*).[121] The purpose of every point in a *deprecatio*, however, is to convince the judges that the accused may be worthy of pardon, yet not necessarily that he is innocent of the crime. Since William checks off most of Quintilian's points successfully, we must remember that he is in that instance projecting himself as someone guilty beyond doubt. If his plea seems forceful (*Debetis enim recolere quam dulciter uos amaui, et quam fortiter contra omnes emulos defensaui*),[122] it is because of the nature of his request: he is essentially proposing to have the righteousness of his character evaluated and assessed. The basis for that assessment is to be his piety, the sum total of his past services to the church (*Ælcclesiam Dei matrem […] nunquam uiolaui […]* through to *[…] gratis confirmaui*).[123] Much of what surrounds this request, primarily the presence of *pathos* in and around the Conquest narrative, responds to that other obligated point in the articulation of the *deprecatio*, the idea of retribution, or punishment already incurred. The suffering and perils evoked in the England narrative by reference to both the Conquest battles (*Quantos ultra mare labores et periculosos conflictus [pertulerim…] difficile est enarrare*) and his status as God's faithful servant (*adeptus sum*, *pertulerim*) aim to show that William has already paid part of his debt.[124] He is also paying in his present jeopardy, for not only is he dying, he is dying unreconciled to God. As he emphasised in the opening of the speech (*Multis, inquit o amici grauibusque peccatis onustus contremisco*)[125] and through the comeback of his spiritual anxiety brought on by memories of his English triumphs (*me tamen intrinsecus pungit et mordet*

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[121] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 7.4.18. (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3., p. 246.

[122] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

[123] Op. cit., pp. 90, 92.

[124] Op. cit., p. 90.

[125] Op. cit., pp. 80, 82.

formidinis anxietas […] peccata quibus admodum premor),[126] William is in mortal danger, dying with the burden of his sins as yet not lifted. Furthermore, contrition over the Norman brutality against the Anglo-Saxons spoused with supplication for spiritual intercession and the donation of treasure to the church and the poor further paint the picture of William's repentant state. Whether or not these points can bring him absolution, they at least remain proof that William has cause to seek one and, just as important, that he does so in a rhetorically conscious way.

More can be gleaned, however, from William's use of the *deprecatio*. Quintilian notes that pleas for mercy occur only in special courts – in front of the senate, the people, or the emperor.[127] They are, therefore, not a common feature of regular defence speeches, but rather of trials where there is scope for considerable relevance to the public around both the crime committed and the sentence passed on the perpetrator. The Conqueror's military exploits fit the profile for increased public relevance, while the fact that William uses a *deprecatio* may in fact suggest that he – or simply Orderic – is aware of the significant ramifications of the *peccata* that so greatly burden him. And yet, perhaps the most important feature of the plea for mercy remains for us the fact that it cannot occur unless the charges have already been clearly outlined and defended. This suggests that no matter how we have read William's battle narratives up to this point, whether with an eye to rhetoric or matter-of-factually, whether in ways perceptive of William's style of indirectness or dismissive of any inherent linguistic subterfuge, there is on Orderic's part a determination to refer us again and again to the same obsessive notion of William and unpardonable crime. With William's *deprecatio*, Orderic is telling us that charges have been laid and that they are all contained within the narratives. What remains for us to contend with is the obstacle that was raised in the way of their clear formulation, part of which derives from the rhetorical manipulation of the presentation and William's linguistic expression. While this feature may have been adopted either as a masquerading strategy on William's part or as a personal safety net on Orderic's, the effect is always the same: the impact of any incrimination is in the text reduced to a minimum. But for the presence of a *deprecatio* to make any sense, there should be distinct echoes of incrimination prior to it. From a technical point of view, a re-evaluation of William as a *homo probus* – as any *deprecatio* calls for – could only be justified in two

[126] Op. cit., p. 90.

[127] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 7.4 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3.

cases: if William were the subject of an actual trial and was seeking pardon, or if the probity of his character were of consequence to some ulterior design. Despite a feeling hard to suppress that William may be the subject of a forensic investigation, there is no actual trial occurring in our speech. Instead, we have William's *ordinatio regni* as its declared purpose and his plea for mercy structurally preceding it. Because with the *ordinatio* William will have to discharge a supreme advisory role on domestic politics, the need for a positive re-evaluation of his character becomes plausible only in the case of pre-existing moral prejudice against him. If this were the case, to be an acceptable advisor William would first need to explain credibly any of his controversial political moves *and* emerge as honourable prior to giving advice. The battle narratives that precede the plea for mercy, therefore, could be considered tactical responses to historic prejudice against William. These responses, where we have seen William's attempted transference of either motive or crime, reveal some aspect of wrongdoing but fail to explore even summarily any significant moral implications for William as a ruler. The only instance where some ethical concern is discussed in relation to a crime decidedly William's is with the English crown: there we see for the first time that William's martial aggression may rightly belong to a special category of wrongdoing, excessive brutality fed by greed. And so, the question begs: are there other instances of prejudice that William may be attempting to clear in anticipation of the *ordinatio*?

We are never quite certain what we ought to concentrate on as William elaborates upon his battles. In the preamble to the speech, he invites his circle of close friends to consider the misdeeds of his life first and foremost spiritually. Although his crimes (*mala*) are martial in nature and the shedding of much blood heavily stains his soul (*multi sanguinis effusione admodum pollutus sum*), to William these remain ultimately sins (*multis […] grauibusque peccatis*), crimes principally against God, not any human law.[128] William's only apparent concern at the beginning of the speech and before moving to the narratives is the imminence of God's terrible judgement of his misdeeds.[129] Yet as he builds case after case to explain his participation in martial conflicts of seeming contemporary notoriety, from decidedly spiritual William's preoccupations turn almost exclusively political. From the first conflict under scrutiny – Val-ès-Dunes – to the last – the events of the Conquest – William's defence reveals

[128] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 80.

[129] Op. cit., pp. 80, 82.

concerns more validly addressable in an earthly court of law than a divine court of justice. More importantly, what principally guides the *narratio* is personal responsibility for the causes and outcomes of Norman martial aggression rather than responsibility for the gravity of Norman brutality. When the motive for engaging in martial aggression and the responsibility for its outcomes have been duly allocated for Val-ès-Dunes, for example, bloodshed as a punishable sin no longer interests William. Instead, what concerns him in that narrative, beside making a clear point of Guy's greed for political power as opposed to his own ancestral right to the ducal throne of Normandy, is the fact that he had to pick up arms against Guy, a close blood relative who was also a powerful vassal *and* a stronger claimant of the ducal title than him (*in illum coactus sum arma leuare et […] contra consobrinum hominemque meum dimicare*).[130] To make things worse, he also has to admit to having dispossessed and exiled his cousin. Rather than an attempt to clear William's name of engagement in warfare, therefore, the Val-ès-Dunes narrative might read as a response to a different type of prejudice: brutality against kin fed by greed for power, a close approximation of the typical behaviour of tyrants. Arques forces William to admit to the similar treatment of two paternal uncles and, in addition, the deposition of his uncle Mauger – an abusive interference in ecclesiastical affairs that again spells tyranny and excessive greed for power. With Mortemer, Orderic puts into words one of the major concerns of his text – rage and violence unleashed *pro cupidine adquirendi*.[131] It is William, surprisingly, who uses that expression to accuse the French for invading Normandy in 1054 and to extol the Normans who in that conflict fought solely to defend their freedom and homes. But Mortemer is also a story of imprisonment and long captivity of a male relative, Guy, count of Ponthieu, yet another testimony of William's despotic tendencies. There appears, therefore, to be a tacit accusation of tyranny in every battle narrative and more than anywhere as we delve into William's exploits in England. The story of how he got the English crown, stripped of the exculpatory evidence afforded him by God, is, in its bare bones, a story of usurpation and of civil war. But the building of the image of the tyrant starts early on with the battle against Guy in the plain of Val-ès-Dunes. It is engrossed with the deposition of Mauger and the banishment of William's male relatives after Arques, it becomes more vivid in the description of the English crown, but it comes

[130] Op. cit., p. 84.

[131] Op. cit., p. 86.

more properly to an apogee in the *ordinatio*. There, however, amongst considerations of the highest political import, the story no longer simply hints at tyranny – it describes in the words of a perpetrator, and with deliberate transparency, the massacre he brought upon a subject people. This can but make us wonder: in what unsuspected ways might William's exercise in disingenuous honesty bear upon the advisory role that he is laboring under? For bear it must; with Orderic, the devil is always in the detail.

Chapter 3.

Ordinatio regni

Much of the Conqueror's as yet unrevealed temper comes together with the confession in the *ordinatio*: he is immoderately rash, uncontrolled in the outburst of his savage violence, an oppressor of high and low. William sees to it that few of the horrendous details are omitted, all invariably centered on the native inhabitants of England: how he treated them with greater hatred than was reasonable, harassing both the nobles and the common people; how he unjustly disinherited many or killed numberless by starvation or by war. In Yorkshire in particular, he ordered people's houses, corn, and farming equipment to be burnt, their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep slaughtered. Thousands of the English of the north were thus punished with the sharp edge of horrible hunger.[132] These details, however, are not fortuitous and Orderic's choice of event anything but random. With Yorkshire, William is referencing a particular episode in the history of the Conquest, the Harrying of the North, the most brutal and contested of all his military endeavours in England. This was the Norman response in the winter 1069-1070 to a year marked by recurrent stubborn insubordination in Northumbria. 1069 had seen the newly installed Norman earl of Northumbria slayed by the locals together with others of William's nobles and worthy knights; it had seen Northumbria's former Anglo-Saxon earl, Morcar, lending military support to a nearer heir to the English crown, Edgar Ætheling. Together with Danish forces, the English defeated the garrison at York – Morcar's former seat – which William had just installed following the slaying of his Norman earl. The episode is emblematic of the northern English resistance against the Conquest and in that, of England's continued determination, long after Hastings, not to be ruled by the Normans. But more importantly, the Harrying of the North brings before Orderic's readership a historic event that presents as a witness to the open, popular rejection of William's ambitions to subjugate the English. In this, Orderic's William portrays himself unequivocally as an undesired prince. The excerpt is craftily articulated, however, because it introduces us at once to a subsidiary idea, that of William's undesirability. For he is not just an unwanted king, as

[132] Op. cit., p. 94.

the Yorkshire episode clearly implies; more than anything, he displays as an utterly undesirable one.

There are signs of William's objectionableness scattered everywhere in this part of the *ordinatio*. When he crushes the Anglo-Scandinavian insurrection in Yorkshire rushing against the English of the north, William is as frenzied as a lion, *ut uesanus leo*, a stamp of his immoderate anger (*immoderato furore commotus*). He issues an order to burn people's means of survival – houses, food provisions, and all the implements of husbandry – that is to be carried out at once, *confestim*, a mark of rashness. Worse still and foreboding greater evil is the scale of William's punitive destruction. In Northumbria, people's herds of cattle and flocks of sheep are slaughtered *passim*, everywhere, not just in the rebellious area of York. Starvation acquires, thus, a pandemic character in the North of England, striking both men and women, *utriusque sexus*, and both young and old, *senum iuuenumque*.[133] All the while, feral rage and indiscriminate violence become quintessential elements of this new image of William as a Norman king of the Angles. The lexicon employed to refer to his generalised destruction, human and otherwise, in Yorkshire enhances the notion of his outrageous conduct toward the English, while suggestive verbal phrases in the first-person (*fame seu ferro mortificaui*, *ut uesanus leo properaui*, *iussi […] confestim incendi*, *[iussi] passim mactari*, *dirae famis mucrone mulctaui*, *funestus trucidaui*)[134] deepen the reader's sense of William's offensiveness as king. To enhance the notion of his undesirability on the royal throne of England, however, is the fact that, unlike previously with the *narratio* of his crimes, in the *ordinatio regni* proper the divine no longer intervenes on William's behalf. As his dispositions for the English succession unfold, a restatement of the manner in which he acquired the kingship does not invoke even minimally God's will as the force legitimating royal rule. Instead, a stark emphasis is placed on the absence of William's hereditary right (*non […] hereditario iure possedi*)[135] and on his violent way of acquiring the crown. *Abstuli*, the verb employed to render the latter, locks within itself the very notion of taking something by force, but also robbing, stealing, confiscating. That and *multa effusione humani cruoris*, the terrible bloodshed expended to lay the royal crown on William's head, become the new parameters of Norman legitimacy in England.[136] They define the

[133] Op. cit., p. 94.

[134] Op. cit., p. 94.

[135] Op. cit., p. 94.

[136] Op. cit., p. 94.

foundations upon which William's further efforts at preserving the crown occur and are to be assessed, the Harrying of the North the coronation of these, the slaying of the innocent with the guilty the utmost proof of his kingly undesirability. Even Harold's alleged perjury, that loudest of justificatory tropes of 11th-century Norman propaganda of the Conquest, is here rendered mute as a valid excuse for the horrors of William's mass destruction in Yorkshire. Rather, in Orderic's inverted eloquence, *periuro regi Heraldo* solidifies the same parameters of Norman illegitimacy in England that *multa effusione humani cruoris* and *diro conflictu* establish together with *abstuli*. For just wars, as Isidore instructs, are those 'waged for the sake of recovering property seized or driving off the enemy'[137] – all other wars are unjust, all other causes unlawful. To allude to Harold's perjury coupled with William's lack of hereditary right in England is to declare openly the unjust aspect of the Norman Invasion of England. For, not having the right to inherit England, how could William attempt to repossess that land as if rightfully his own? Similarly, fighting against his would-be subjects *and* in a remote land, how could he claim that he was driving off the enemy? To dwell, furthermore, on the atrocities and destruction brought about by the Conquest, especially in Yorkshire, and to preface all with *abstuli* and a faint notion of Harold as a perjured king is to declare the Conquest a military enterprise based on a sham pretext and William but a robber of lands. Ascelin's intervention before William's interment inside St. Étienne[138] confirms that Orderic did certainly consider this notion of William more than just in passing.

As it exposes the historic Conqueror as a murderer of thousands of innocent people in Northumbria, William's flaunted undesirability as king of the English expresses Orderic's own sentiment on Anglo-Norman politics. But the chronicler is interested in the past chiefly as it reflects upon the present and the future. Even before Yorkshire is firmly affixed before the reader's eye, William has reached a much-awaited part of the *ordinatio*: the designation of his successors. Orderic turns this into an opportunity for debate, for William does not simply nominate the next generation of rulers in Normandy and England, he must also explain his rationale. As he does so, he shifts the focus of the speech from his misdeeds and blood-stained reign to a discussion of his own sons' suitability for government. The speech, too, changes gears: it turns deliberative and

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[137] "De bello et ludis: De bellis" in *The Etymologies of Isidore of* Seville (Cambridge, 2006), XVIII.i.2, p. 359.

[138] Cf. Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 106.

political, while William assumes the guise of a bona fide statesman delivering critical advice.

While all three of William's sons get to rule eventually over one or another of their father's lands, in theory none ought to – that, at least, is part of Orderic's message. Robert, the eldest, is a proud (*superbus*) and foolish good-for-nothing (*insipiens nebulo*);[139] any province subjected to his rule would suffer utter misery. William, the middle brother, although loyal and his father's choice for the crown of England, is not to be directly nominated to the throne, but rather entrusted to God's will: remorse over his English crimes is gnawing at his father's heart, prompting him to restitution. Lastly, Henry, the third and youngest son, is to inherit no land at all. If this remains the Conqueror's best judgement, administrative wisdom forces him to go against it: Robert will inherit Normandy because of a prior arrangement with the leading barons of the duchy, Henry will eventually inherit all his father's lands after his brothers, while William is to be crowned king of England without delay. What puts young William on the throne, however, is a different set of political considerations than those elevating Robert to the duchy. To signify the importance we ought to attach to this aspect of William's legacy, Orderic dramatises the episode into what becomes the first dialogue to be grafted onto the Conqueror's speech. Yet the exchange is not between young William and his father, but between a dying Conqueror and his youngest, landless son. Excluded from the succession in both Normandy and England and endowed, instead, with 5000 pounds in silver from the royal treasury, Henry can only bemoan his generous pecuniary inheritance if that is to mean a landless royal status. *Quid faciam de thesauro, si locum habitationis non habuero?*, Henry observes in tears, *cum lacrimis*.[140] The underpinnings of that lament are all in William's reaction: a letter to Archbishop Lanfranc is written immediately requesting the elevation of the next king in England. Young William is to bear both the epistle and the royal crown.[141] But truly what places the latter on William's head is neither the *epistola de constituendo rege*,[142] nor Lanfranc, nor even the Conqueror – it is his brother Henry's excessive ambition for a chunk of their father's lands. With Robert already sworn as the duke of Normandy, Henry's greed for a landed royal title now poses a danger primarily to England and to young William, the indicated

[139] Op. cit., p. 92.

[140] Op. cit., p. 94.

[141] Op. cit., p. 96.

[142] Op. cit., p. 96.

favourite for the English succession. To William the adroit statesman, that very keen interest in a *locum habitationis* over a substantial monetary settlement spells the worst type of political danger that may as yet beset his large dominion overseas: succession wars and endless strife among his sons. The only way to prevent it is to go against his original resolution and appoint the more deserving son as his successor.

Historical accuracy may not be Orderic's strongest suit in this excerpt, but his rendition of William's *ordinatio* certainly captures a historic mood. It is a mood of distrust in the capacity for peaceful government of William's descendants. In his lifetime, Orderic witnessed Robert plunge Normandy into chaos for the twenty years following his father's death, while Henry schemed and fought endlessly until both England and Normandy eventually came under his rule. While both rulers are indicated as undesirable, Robert's objectionableness is by far easier to articulate than his brother's: the political failures of his life and, above all, his lack of direct descendance in Orderic's time may account for the directness noticeable in Orderic's portrayal of his character. Henry's undesirability, on the other hand, calls for circumspection if it is to be at all emphasised: he is Empress Matilda's father, the would-be queen of England in the years Orderic is writing this part of the *Historia* as well as wife of Geoffrey of Anjou, the de facto ruler of Normandy during the same time. Orderic's strategy, therefore, is to entrust his criticism of both undesirable rulers to the best-suited figure, their even less desirable father. Whatever significance Orderic may have attached to William's self-incrimination in the *ordinatio*, that unexpected stance appears to also serve a contextual purpose in the speech: cleared of prejudice after much rhetorical subterfuge, the rehabilitated advisor must self-deprecate as he gives advice if he is to counsel credibly against his sons and house, hence against himself. For kingly undesirability, as William's story of the Yorkshire massacre reveals and the portrayal of Robert and Henry's characters confirms, is a common trait that father and sons share. Yet the differences matter as much as, if not more than, the similarities among them. Especially important is the way Orderic viewed the brothers. Robert, because bluntly called *superbus* and *insipiens nebulo*, attracts from the start the reader's first and strongest flush of antipathy, yet only in appearance is he the most scandalous of William's sons. That distinction – not surprisingly for a pen as sensitive to the interplay of contrasts as Orderic's is (see his insistence on the law of the contrapasso at the end of the episode) – is reserved for Henry, the son who approaches the father *merens cum lacrimis*. For if Robert's flaws are ignorance of state affairs and foolish pride, Henry's flaw is greed for secular pomp and material possessions. Orderic

seems especially keen to emphasise this aspect of Henry's moral character. He follows both father and sons until the latter leave the scene of the council. Thereupon, while William bids his eldest son to depart with haste, *properanter*, for England, there to claim the royal crown while he is still unchallenged, Henry can be seen making haste (*festinauit*) to secure the pecuniary inheritance promised him (*denominatam sibi pecuniam recipere*).[143] Unlike William Rufus who pursues the crown at his father's behest rather than at his own initiative, Henry is marked out as self-initiated in the pursuit of treasure. Touched by his alacrity are actions meant to denote his exacerbated concern with materiality: weighing the coin carefully to ensure nothing is missing (*diligenter ne quid sibi deesset ponderare*), summoning the necessary companions that could be entrusted with handling his treasure (*necessariosque sodales in quibus confideret aduocare*), procuring a treasury box (*munitumque gazofilacium sibi procurare*).[144] Yet damnable as it may seem, Henry's approach to material treasure is not the only one of its kind in our text. Orderic showed us at the beginning of the episode how an increasingly ill Conqueror desperate for spiritual salvation was making penance with his riches. Divying up all his accumulated treasure for the benefit of the poor and the Church, William could be seen skillfully computing (*callide taxauit*) the exact amounts to be distributed to each beneficiary and ordering the sums to be written down in his presence by his notaries (*coram se describi a notariis imperauit*).[145] Innocent on the outside, for Orderic the Benedictine monk, William and Henry's preoccupation with treasure under any of its aspects – accumulation, expansion, but also inventory and distribution – must have appeared a sure sign of underlying evil, a symptom of the ungodly. The presence of these two rather similar scenes within the same episode, the first in conjunction with a dying king, the second with a future but clearly unwanted one, further suggests that in Orderic's text, kingly undesirability lies at a crossroads between posterity's judgement of William's rule and the quasi-contemporary critique of his sons' reigns. Yet this is not the only type of centrality it enjoys.

The idea of the objectionable ruler and the moral traits that dominate and define him is stated most compellingly in what has been for any reader up to this point the most awaited part of the speech, the *ordinatio regni*. Orderic creates expectations around the

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[143] Ibid.

[144] Op. cit., p. 96.

[145] Op. cit., p. 80.

ordinatio by announcing it early on as the very purpose of William's elocution. Amid blending political and moral considerations, however, the *ordinatio* proves to be a discussion as much about ducal and royal succession as about inheritances and legacy. Centrality, as we have seen, marks all the key aspects of William's speech here: not only is kingly undesirability poised between the newer generation of rulers and the one preceding it, it is also centrally located to a fault within the *lapsus ducis* episode. In both the *Patrologia Latina* and Chibnall's edition of the *Historia*, the terms of the *ordinatio* that outline the Conqueror's sons' inheritance occur midway between the start of William's illness at Mantes and Orderic's final sermon on the *gloria carnis* and false princes; these moments correspond to the beginning and end, respectively, of the *lapsus ducis* episode. Not only this, but the very book containing that episode – book seven of the *Historia* – lies exactly halfway between the beginning and end of Orderic's entire work. Comprised of a total of thirteen books whose writing spanned roughly twenty years, the *Historia* and its outline are not the result of accident but of design: after completing what only afterwards became books three to thirteen of his work, Orderic added two new ones to the front of his opus (essentially a history of Christianity and a chronology of the popes), thus bringing the current book seven to a centremost position among all the books. Was this a way of directing increased attention to its content because in some way defining his view of Anglo-Norman politics? Almost in its entirety, book seven is dedicated to William. So is the book's enigmatic end, our *lapsus ducis* episode. At the core of the latter, both literally and figuratively, lie openly the notion of the undesirable ruler and, sketched in their elemental essence, the personalities of powerful men who in Orderic's time embodied it. It is an interestingly compounded presence that cannot be easily dismissed, for in its immediate proximity, unsuspectedly endowed with a further level of centrality, dwells an overemphatic reference to the Conqueror's legacy to his sons.

Capping the inventory of William's pious deeds after the *deprecatio* is a hortatory address to his sons: William enjoins them to be pious rulers amenable to the guidance of great ecclesiastical figures as well as unwavering supporters of the Church's principles and causes. The detailing of his impressive record of piety – his pursuits, as he calls them, *hæc studia* – offers the perfect opportunity for the father to propose himself as an example to be followed by his sons. Expressions that evoke the notion of legacy abound here: William bequeaths, *relinquo*, his pursuits to his heirs, *heredibus meis*, to be cherished perpetually, *tenenda omni tempore*; his sons are to follow his example, *me*

[…] sequimini, ceaselessly, *iugiter*. Heritage transmission – perhaps also heredity – is thrice emphasised in this interpellation of William's sons as he calls them in quick succession *heredibus meis*, *filii mei*, *uos uiscera mea*. The quality of endurance and perpetuity commonly associated with the notion of legacy receives a multiple iteration too: William's *studia* are to be cherished by his sons perpetually, *tenenda omni tempore*, while they on their part are to follow his example ceaselessly, *iugiter*.

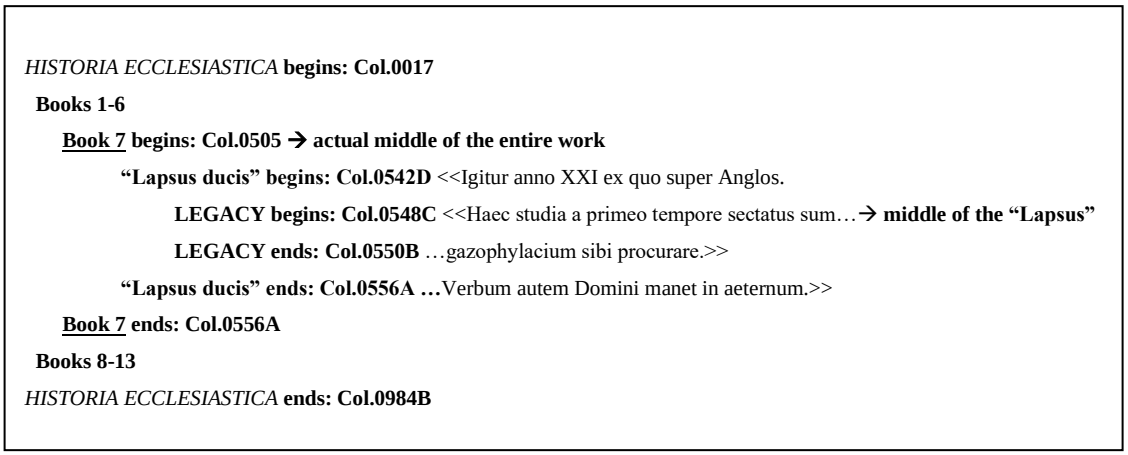

Figure 3.1 Diagram showing the central location within Orderic's Historia of the various sections in book seven that are dedicated to William and his legacy. Based on J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina vol. 188.

As William presents them, nonetheless, the Conqueror's pursuits and emphatically asserted concept of legacy pose a serious problem: they contradict in full the lessons gleaned so far from the speech. For Orderic has shown all too well how from fear of God's wrath to the stain of sins of war to vested piety and penance, William's oratorical journey to the *ordinatio regni* has stumbled over more evidence of crime and death than of true piety. And if he has intimated at every step the true nature of William's pursuits, he has never yet ascribed it to his sons. What for the first time appears to do just that is the *egressus* after the plea for mercy. But hiding still prevails over revealing. The *egressus*, that short and emphatic segment of text that hangs suspended between the *ordinatio* and all that came before it, splits the speech into two parts in more than one way. On the one hand, it marks the confluence, but also complementarity, of two different rhetorical endeavours – forensic before, and deliberative within the *ordinatio*. On the other hand, it establishes a hiatus and, at the same time, a new beginning within the speech. Quintilian talks about the orators' use of *egressus* as a sort of second

proemium with the intent of working on the judges' feelings.[146] To a certain extent, the *egressus* in Orderic's text could indeed be read as a gathering of emollients: much is said here[147] about the character of the ideal Christian ruler in a way reminiscent of the *specula principum*, particularly Sedulius's *De rectoribus christianis*. The *egressus* certainly rehearses the aspirations, rarely fulfilled, of the medieval Church to keep in check secular rulers' worldly and bellicose nature. Coming from William whose physical and spiritual salvation is very much in the hands of his ecclesiastical officials, the *egressus* in the context of an *ordinatio* that itself initiates may sound like a pledge of future good conduct given in front of a jury interested to hear just that. But it is elsewhere that its primary virtue lies. The *egressus* has introduced into the discourse the idea of William's legacy of pursuits and, having marked it out through an unusual concentration of emphases, it has made the reader attentive and receptive to what sits around it.

Hæc studia sectatus sum, the phrase opening William's *egressus*, illustrates how the polysemic universe of medieval thought and ideas informs a type of reading that does not rely on linearity – in fact, it eschews it. *Hæc studia* logically first looks back at its antecedent, the plea for mercy with the proofs of William's piety – the latter are the first understood object of William's pursuits. But unlike his phrase *hæc studia*, William looks back to precedent, not antecedent, to history, not to syntax. For he links the newly introduced notion of his pursuits to a time at the beginning of his life, *a primeuo tempore* – since then has he chased *hæc studia*, these pursuits. In connecting these to his childhood, however, he at once summons the reader's own recollections of William's narrated distant past. *Nullatenus enumerare possum*, William was lamenting at the beginning of the speech, *mala quae feci per sexaginta quatuor annos quibus in hac erumnosa uita uixi* – William's first given testimony of a life engulfed in sin and crime.[148] When his father went into exile and he was a *tenellus puer utpote octo annorum*, arms and the business of war became the constant in his life: *ex quo tempore usque nunc semper subii pondus armorum*. He ruled the duchy through the peril of war for the next fifty-six years: *ducatum fere quinquaginta sex annis gessi in discrimine bellorum* – a discrete but definitive acknowledgement of the climate of internecine violence that William's possession of secular power perpetuated in his lands.[149] Finally, *sic a pueritia*

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[146] Cf. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 4.2.104, vol. 2.

[147] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 92.

[148] Op. cit., p. 80.

[149] Op. cit., p. 82.

mea,[150] that other memorable expression used by William that transposed us to his past, effectively summons memories of all the battle narratives that the *igitur* syllogism attempted to sift – this was a rhetorical attempt to minimise William's notorious implication in martial violence and greed. If *hæc studia* is to refer to anything, therefore, it must be to violence and only additionally to piety. But the Conqueror's legacy seems to capture both notions equally. William's declaration of will is poised intentionally between the plea for mercy with the inventory of the Conqueror's outstanding acts of piety and the *divisio regni* with the Conqueror's's own princely undesirability and Henry's greed as the focal points. A true two-faced Janus, *haec studia* considers violence and piety symbiotically: since sin engenders piety, the greater one's violence the greater one's need for penance, hence one's piety. In bequeathing the pursuit of piety to his sons, William is bequeathing a need for penance, hence also its underlying cause, a violent life. William's, therefore, is not a legacy of well-balanced human life lived virtuously *coram Deo*[151] as the plea for mercy and the *egressus* would have us believe. Rather, it is as the Yorkshire narrative suggests in the *ordinatio*: aggression and tyranny in a world of slipping crowns and tipping thrones.

But if pursuits are at the centre of William's declaration of will, traits of character form the basis of his bequeathed inheritance. It is not an accident that in the *ordinatio* William describes himself, as he descended upon the English in Yorkshire, as 'a raging lion,' *uesanus leo*.[152] This is no ordinary simile, it barely has any poetic function. Rather, for those connected to Orderic's milieu, the expression was a distinct echo of monastic resentment and criticism, steeped in the authority of the Bible, against the abuses of militarised secular power. Sedulius, who drew heavily on the Bible in articulating his *specula principum*, had used strikingly similar words to describe *impii reges*, ungodly kings. Those he had called 'great robbers of the earth, ferocious as lions,' *majores terrarum latrones, feroces ut leones*,[153] using the authority of the Old Testament (*Leo rugiens, et ursus usuriens, princeps impius super populum pauperem*, Proverbs 28:15)

[150] Op. cit., p. 88.

[151] Op. cit., p. 92.

[152] Op. cit., p. 92.

[153] Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus christianis* (Boydell, 2010), pp. 94-5.

to support his main accusation against them, tyrannical violence.[154] In its turn, Sedulius's view runs close to Isidore's in the *Etymologies*. There, defined as *pessimos et improbos reges*, greedy and the worst of kings, are the tyrants. Their distinguishing mark is their excessive desire for luxurious domination and the most cruel lordship that they exercise upon their people (*luxuriosae dominationis cupiditatem, et crudelissimam dominationem in populis exercentes*).[155] But Sedulius must engage his reader at a deeper level than the purely linguistic. He sees tyrants allegorically with the psalmist as the cedars of Lebanon that are suddenly elevated but just as quickly cast down into the depths of Tartarus, the 'fodder of eternal Gehenna'.[156] He holds a mirror of infernal stock up to his prince that has character reformation as its ultimate goal. His book conveys the notion that having good princes is not only desirable, but also to some extent possible. Whether familiar with Isidore or Sedulius or rather not, Orderic presents his reader with an image of William as a *uesanus leo* that is unequivocally suggestive of historic criticism against tyrannical and violent rulers. In William's case, definition, critique, and character reformation are all appropriate endeavours. And yet Orderic's prose seeks constant returns to that dark horizon beyond the Lebanon cedars, the bottom of Tartarus. There William looks intently fearful of seeing himself. There too Sedulius had looked and found Theoderic *crudelissimus rex*. He made Theoderic's *exitum infelicem* from this world the subject of his main exemplum on the topic of *impii reges*.[157] The torturer and murderer of a captive pope as well as the slayer of a Christian patrician, Theoderic in Sedulius's account was brought before his victims in the guise of a prisoner, then cast into the crater of a volcano, seemingly sent into the fire by those he had judged unjustly. The moral Sedulius advances is that those who unjustly bring death upon God's faithful will be justly punished by the Lord. In an allegorical outburst, he has Theoderic the mighty king first presented to his dead victims *discinctus*, *discalciatus*, and *vinctis manibus*, then stripped of life both passing and eternal since in his turn he had stripped others of their present one – *qui alios praesenti vita spoliaverat, ipse tam momentanea quam aeterna*

[154] Cf. *Quid sunt autem impii reges nisi majores terrarum latrones, feroces ut leones, rabidi ut ursi? – sicut scriptum est de illo: Leo rugiens, et ursus usuriens, princeps impius super populum pauperem.* (Prov. 28:15) in Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus christianis*, p. 94.

[155] *Sancti Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum libri XX*, Liber nonus, Caput III.20, vol. 82, col. 0344B.

[156] Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus christianis*, pp. 94-5.

[157] Op. cit., pp. 98-101.

vita spoliatus fuit.[158] We see at work in Sedulius the same principle of the contrapasso that underlies part of Orderic's first commentary to William's death: a most powerful leader of great armies and one dreaded by many peoples, William upon his death is abandoned on the bare ground of a house not his own, dishonourably despoiled by his own men (*a suis turpiter in domo non sua spoliatus est*).[159] Although Orderic does not translate this into a definite moral in Sedulius's style of unabashed directness, we can attempt to understand the point he omits – what exactly William is paying for in death – by applying the principle behind the rule of the contrapasso. Each detail in the *lapsus ducis* episode in a way participates in this endeavour, but there is a higher concentration of clues toward the end where death and funeral rites precipitate otherworldly mechanics and God's imminent judgement. To open more widely the window into Orderic's thought are William's lesser servants, his *inferiores clientuli*,[160] at whose hands the once powerful king receives death's first treatment. Each of these men, Orderic remarks, carries off like a raptor (*ut miluus rapuit*) whatever he can of the royal trappings, *apparatu regio*. What they seize in that first frenzy and quickly take away is *preda*, booty, the spoils of war: arms, vessels, vestments, linens, and all the royal paraphernalia (*arma uasa uestes et linteamina omnemque regiam suppellectilem*).[161] Both *preda*, that which is removed from William's person by his servants, and *spoliatus*, the state in which they leave him on the bare floor of St. Gervase, carry obvious martial connotations. Isidore groups *præda* under forms of pillage that can be taken from the enemy. He discusses the various lexical distinctions that the Latin makes here in the same part of the *Etymologies* in which he treats of triumphs. Of the terms he lists – *præda* whose name comes from *prædando*, plundering, *manubiæ* which denotes booty removed by hand, *exuviæ* which comes from stripping off because they are stripped from bodies, *partes*, booty-shares, which reflect the fair division of spoils according to the pillagers' rank and effort, and *spolia* which is as if saying *ex pallia*, out of one's robes, because these are stripped from the vanquished[162] – Orderic chooses the first, *præda*. Of such lexical

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[158] Op. cit., p. 98.

[159] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 102.

[160] Op. cit., p. 100.

[161] Op. cit., p. 102.

[162] Cf. 'Spolia hostium: præda, manubiæ, exuviæ, partes. Præda a prædando vocata. Manubiæ, eo quod manibus detrahuntur. Hæ et exuviæ ab exuendo dictæ, quia exuuntur. Hæ et partes a pari divisione pro personarum qualitate, et laborum justa divisione. Spolia autem a palliis, quasi ex pallia, victis enim detrahuntur.' in Isidorus Hispalensis, *Sancti Isidori Hispalensis episcopi*

choices as the Latin made available to the chronicler even in the 12th century, *præda*, through its derivation from *prædor*, has the virtue that it renders best the idea of plundering, of robbing and getting gain both as a practice and as the goal of war. Up until his illness, *præda* had been William's privilege, notably in England. As his fortunes drastically change at St. Gervase, death brings William spoliation in a classical touch of apocalyptic retribution. Just as he had done unto his subjects the Anglo-Saxons, so his own servants do unto him; just as he had plundered and robbed in a country not his own,[163] so is he now *turpiter […] spoliatus*, shamelessly despoiled – disarmed, unclothed, robbed of arms, plundered, impoverished[164] – *in domo non sua*, a house not his own. It is the ultimate treatment of the vanquished also by analogy with *spolia* which looks at arms and clothes as spoils of war, objects acquired from the enemy exclusively on the battlefield: these are obtainable only as they can be stripped from dead bodies. Yet this treatment is inflicted on William symbolically, for in the divine order of things his end must reflect his own condition in life, that of the vanquisher, the ultimate conqueror. In an allegorical sense, the servants' gesture, *rapuerunt*, the object of their depredation, *regis cadauere*, as well as the subject, *apparatu regio*, are meant to be vindicative against William's own predaceous approach to regality – a faithful reflection of the way he himself acquired his royal crown. Subtext, oratorical technique or subterfuge, intertextuality – everything in Orderic's text seems to conspire to bring home one fundamental point. The nature of William's sins is political – he has ruled extralegally in the manner of a usurper and a tyrant – and to blame for that is his innate, bestial greed. That, ultimately, will be his legacy.

etymologiarum libri XX: Liber decimus octavus (De bello et ludis): Caput II (De triumphis) in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* vol. 82, cols. 0642B-0642C.

[163] Evidence of Orderic's criticism of William's wealth and English spoils as well as of his right to the English crown can be found in Guitmund's oration in Orderic's *Historia* book IV, vol. 2, pp. 272-8.

[164] For Orderic's disapproval of William's wealth and daily revenue from England, see his *Historia ecclesiastica* book IV, vol. 2, p. 266.

Chapter 4.

Dei iudicium: the reflective power of otherworldly mechanics

It is still possible to see today in Caen the place where William the Conqueror was laid to rest at the end of summer 1087. His remains sleep in the Église Saint-Étienne, *in presbiterio*, as Orderic Vitalis has it, *inter chorum et altare*,[165] a church's holiest ground. This personal choice of burial site was not irrelevant to powerful medieval rulers. We should attempt to imagine the rationale behind it. From his vantage point in the centre of the chancel, a few steps distant from the altar, the physically dead yet spiritually alive, and possibly purgatorially tormented William would have found himself in the material presence of the transubstantiated Christ at every consecration and celebration of the Eucharist, an office performed several times a day, each day of the year. If prayers were sung for the salvation of his soul around that time, Christ would be there, he would hear and maybe listen. At other times, the abbey's holy relics would step in. Displayed on the sanctuary's high altar for veneration by the faithful, the saints would perform their miracles, if suitably propitiated, all around the duke's body. Yet none of this could happen if William himself were not there as a memento. The Conqueror lies straight in the path of the holy, *in conspectu Domini*, to remind the monastic community founded by him that they owe him eternal duty. They are to summon up to heaven, for all eternity, their most fervent prayers in his behalf. In William's day, these powerful orations coming from chastely living monks would indeed have bathed the entire chancel, if not the entire St. Étienne, in a most potent spirituality, the type that on its own could cleanse, if given time, a sinful soul. For through these men and through their prayers William desperately hoped to reach his Christ.

For the spiritually inclined chronicler writing at the turn of the 12th century, few things could expose more reliably the presence of hidden guilt than the sort of penance done in anticipation of one's afterlife. Crystalised around irrepressible fears of the just retribution that God meted out to everyone for their sins, penitential behaviour performed at death's door could be more revealing still. But the ultimate proof of guilt, that which warranted publicising any inquiry into sin in the first place, had to come from above.

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[165] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 104.

Recognising the signs of God's justice within the physical world started with an ability to identify and gather the right kind of information. Best conducted in the relevant places at the relevant times, inquires into otherworldly mechanics found some of their richest material in the events surrounding mortal death. Dreams and visions too revealed how the departed soul fared in its afterlife, but for the examiner who relied on the empirical, the unfolding of funerary rites in particular could afford an equally fruitful ground: the more engaged the divine, the more awe-inspiring the events observed. Reduced to its bare bones, Orderic's *lapsus ducis* episode may certainly look like such an investigation. The author appears to be probing the depths of the Conqueror's guilt by first emphasising historical facts centered on William and considered controversial, then submitting evidence appropriately collected for the purpose. Cataloguing William's piety, detailing his penitential deeds, providing select particulars of his funeral or of intercessory efforts made on his behalf, all suggests a preoccupation with the assessment and valuation of sin. But just as the *lapsus ducis* acts as a bridge between two books, one dedicated to the father, the other to the sons, so does William's death link the Conqueror's reign to those of his descendants, and in the events that accompany it Orderic sees not only into the dead king's guilt, but also into that of his children and their children. As the end of the episode reveals, Orderic's investigation was never a single-track endeavour and, quite aptly in the case of someone finishing a book with an eye to starting a segue, his interest was always split – between the father and the sons, between the first generation of conquerors and all the ones that followed. Ultimately, it is an interest split between young Orderic's own past – the boyhood he abandoned in England under William's rule – and his future – the rest of that boy's life lived away from his motherland, under the rule of William's children and then grandchildren. It is, however, William's death that ushers in otherworldly mechanics and Orderic's opportunity along with them to seal under God's aegis these two most sensitive topics in his *Historia*, the Norman conquest of England and the continued Norman presence on the English throne down to the chronicler's own day. Throughout our episode, Orderic's prose pauses repeatedly, intent on aspects that together contour William's moral character as well as his spiritual mood at the time of his death. The dénouement Orderic provides – the funeral with its terrifying events and the author's sermon on the *gloria carnis* – is a direct response to that carefully laid-out scaffolding. Without the life he lived, William could not have had the death or the afterlife he received. And so, it will help to accompany him one last time, this once on his journey to

the feet of the altar in St. Étienne in Caen, to unveil together with Orderic God's version of William's *peccata*.

What is satisfactory penance for the conqueror of England?

In one of his interpolations to the *Gesta Normannorum ducum* of William of Jumièges, Orderic records how sometime after they got married, although well before the Invasion, Duke William of Normandy and Matilda of Flanders had to observe a penance laid on them by the pope: they were to found a monastery each in atonement for their marriage within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity.[166] Two new Benedictine foundations were soon born in Caen, long before the couple's death: the *abbatia in honore sancte Trinitatis*, known as the Abbaye aux Dames, and the abbey dedicated *in honore sancti Stephani prothomartyris* – the Abbaye aux Hommes, or St. Étienne. No other contemporary source mentions the fact of William and Matilda's canonically irregular marriage and therefore of any penance they had to make together.[167] But Orderic offers it as historical truth and explains how the penance was supposed to help the spouses: in the two *cenobia* founded by them, assiduous prayers, *sedule preces*, would be offered to God on their behalf, *pro ipsis […] Deo offerentur*, by religious persons of either sex.[168] If the remedy was going to work, however, the prayers had to be said constantly. Matilda, one of the couple's daughters, served as St. Trinité's first abbess; Orderic notes how 'a choir of nuns daily praised the Lord in their hymns' during the five decades of her tenure.[169] He mentions another daughter, Cecilia, who was also a nun there and, according to him, was consecrated as a virgin. She was in fact given as an oblate,[170] a child offering, indicating that perhaps a sense of guilt did exist at some level on the couple's part but especially Matilda's – hers would have probably been perceived as the greater sin. The financial and perhaps emotional, in this case, aspects apart, William and Matilda's penance for their 'incestuous' marriage would have been one of the least demanding on their personal freedoms. The praying community

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[166] *Gesta Normannorum ducum* (Oxford 1995) vol. 2, pp. 146-9.

[167] Apud Elisabeth Van Houts in op. cit., p. 148, n. 1.

[168] Op. cit., pp. 146-9.

[169] Op. cit., p. 149.

[170] Apud Van Houts in op. cit., p. 149, n. 3.

did have to be sponsored in order to perform its duty, but no other obvious type of renunciation was involved.

Entrusted with a similar task as those attached to St. Trinité and St. Étienne in Caen was the monastic community of *Bellum*, Battle Abbey in Sussex. The *Gesta*, in its parts originally written by William of Jumièges of proven Norman loyalty, makes no mention of this monastery, but an interpolation later by Orderic does. After he treats of William's London coronation in 1066, Jumièges goes on to say that William returned to Normandy where he ordered the dedication with great honour of the church of St. Mary in Jumiège later performed during an impressive ceremony. Orderic splits that grouping right after the coronation and before William's return to Normandy. There he interpolates, thus ensuring his notation is read right ahead of Jumièges's about St. Mary, that the place where the battle had been in England (*locus uero ubi […] pugnatum est*) remained known as *Bellum* and that there William afterwards built a monastery in honour of the Holy Trinity (*cenobium in honore Sancte Trinitatis construxit*).[171] Decidedly hijacking Jumièges's prose in order to deflect attention from its candid portrayal of the Conqueror as a spiritual patron set on increasing the honour of his name in his native Normandy, Orderic directs all eyes back to the real achievement of William's trip to England that year – the Invasion – and the macabre side of his spiritual patronage, William's need to make amends for the lives he sacrificed at *Bellum*. The interpolation does not mention penance as such, but Orderic's phrasing invites some interpretative speculation. After indicating that in the monastery he built at Battle William established monks brought from Marmoutier, the prestigious foundation of Saint Martin of Tours, Orderic notes that William *necessariis opibus pro interfectis utriusque partis affatim ditauit*. [172] Van Houts's translation renders the general idea behind the sentence, that is, that William endowed the monastery 'with the necessary wealth to enable them [the monks] to pray for the dead of both sides.'[173] Orderic's exact phrasing, however, has a distinct quantitative feel to it: William enriches the monastery *affatim* (sufficiently) with the *necessariis opibus* (requisite wealth) *pro* (in proportion to, conformably with) those who died *utriusque partis* (on both sides) of the battle. While not exactly computational, the sentence clearly puts the focus on amounts. The ultimate of these, that which dictates and makes necessary

[171] Op. cit., p. 172.

[172] Op. cit., p. 172

[173] Op. cit., p. 173.

all the others, is that of the *interfectis*, those who died during the Invasion. Battle Abbey and its riches are *for* the dead and *in proportion to* the dead. They are William's financial burden because his is the moral burden for the deaths at Battle. And he covers the cost of life lost *affatim*, completely, satisfactorily, not unlike some forms of penance.

This same preoccupation with qualifying and quantifying William's penitential efforts can be seen in the *lapsus ducis* too. We have encountered it in its most emphatic form in William's speech where concrete figures were provided for monasteries either endowed by him or built during his dukedom: *nouem abbatiæ monachorum et una sanctimonialium* in the first case, *decem et septem monachorum atque sanctimonialium sex cenobia* in the second.[174] But other forms of penance are present in the episode as well and, unlike in the *Gesta* where any stress on self-initiative is absent, here William's penitential vein matters – indeed it accounts for everything.

William's explicit penitent behaviour is brought on by the fear of divine punishment for his *mala*, *scelera*, and *grauia peccata*. It goes from conventional demonstrations of remorse to various forms of reparation. Through all of them William humbly endeavours to appease God (*Deum sibi placare humiliter studuit*) after the Christian fashion (*secundum morem Christianitatis*).[175] As Orderic's prose progresses through the episode, however, so does the moral weight inherent in William's penitential gesture. Of this arduous journey to God's forgiveness, confession is the first step. Weak from his illness, still inside the city of Rouen, William repents of his crimes (*scelerum penitens*) by confessing his sins to the priests of God (*peccata sua sacerdotibus Dei reuelauit*).[176] Once he is transferred to St. Gervase[177] as is his wish,[178] but increasingly

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[174] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 90.

[175] Op. cit., p. 78.

[176] Op. cit., p. 78.

[177] Op. cit., p. 80.

[178] In *William the Conqueror: the Norman Impact upon England* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1964), David C. Douglas notes that William's transfer to the priory of St. Gervase, although in the company of Gilbert Maminot and Gontard of Jumièges, two skilled physicians, meant that William was dying ('He was obviously dying' - op. cit., p. 358). He probably extrapolates from the practice of renouncing the world (becoming a monk or a nun) when in extremis. This gesture ensured entering death in a state of spiritual cleanliness otherwise impossible for kings to reach or even maintain while living in the world dealing with worldly affairs. As Orderic explains, St. Gervase was situated on a hill outside Rouen, away from the tumult of the city. It is also possible, however, that at St. Gervase, a family foundation dating back to Duke Richard's time, William would have found staff with a deeper sense of duty toward him and his spiritual or medical needs.

frightened at the uncertainty of his afterlife,[179] William's penitential bent assumes a more distinctly material orientation. Renunciation of material wealth together with compensation figure next on his penitential roster. Although before the speech Orderic presents William's renunciation of treasure in favour of churches, the poor, and the servants of God (*omnesque thesauros suos æcclesiis et pauperibus Deique ministris distribui precepit*)[180] as simply an attempt to do some last-minute good by himself and others (*sibi multisque commoda facere*),[181] its true penitential parameters can be gauged only later in the *ordinatio*. There we see that it was the association of his triumphs in the Conquest battles with the idea of greed as fed by crimes (*quæ congesta sunt ex facinoribus*) that first prompted William to renounce his treasure (*thesauros […] meos iubeo dari […] ut quæ congesta sunt ex facinoribus dispergantur […]*).[182] This is important as a tool in understanding not so much William's historic sense of his own crimes, which may never be restored, but rather Orderic's estimation of the Conqueror's moral guilt.

More properly compensatory and reparatory in a material sense are the *ingentia dona* given to the clergy of Mantes for the restoration of the churches William burnt there.[183] These exorbitant gifts he gives as a supplicant, *supplex*, as someone asking for forgiveness, a detail Orderic probably intended as an intensifier of the connection he saw between William's indiscriminate military violence and his demise. Reparatory yet in a more spiritual and largely allegorical way is William's gesture of opening his prisons and setting his captives – his main political adversaries – free. This is one of his last penitential deeds in the episode and as he rationalises it in his speech – not so much for the benefit of his magnates as for that of the reader – Orderic is signalling it as particularly important. William confesses that the spirit in which he releases his captives is one of intended reciprocity with God: just as he at the point of death wishes to be saved (*sicut opto saluari*) and absolved of his sins through God's mercy (*per misericordiam Dei a reatibus meis absolui*), so does he open all his prisons (*omnes mox iubeo carceres aperiri*) and releases all his captives (*omnesque uinctos […] relaxari, liberosque […] dimitti*) so that God himself may take pity on him in his turn (*ut ipse michi*

[179] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 80.

[180] Op. cit., p. 80.

[181] Op. cit. p. 80.

[182] Op. cit., p. 90.

[183] Op. cit., p. 80.

misereatur).[184] The rationale behind this penitential deed highlights its biblical derivation (*Qui in captivitatem duxerit, in captivitatem vadet* (Rev. 13:10)[185]).[186] At the same time, Odo of Bayeux's deliberate exclusion from the number of the *uinctos* who are to be released *pro amore Dei* is revelatory already of Orderic's assessment of William's own guilt – his guilt is not that different from Odo's. After this, William performs only one other penitential gesture meant to reveal the extent of his contrition and it will be a type of penance not yet sampled previously: restitution. This is made to one Baldric son of Nicholas from whom as a punishment for disobedience in service William had taken away all his land – *totam terram pro castigatione abstuli*. This he now restores, *illi reddo*, in the name of the same catalytic force we have seen stimulate so many of his life's deeds before – *pro amore Dei*.[187]

These idiosyncrasies of medieval Christian spirituality are not meant to function in isolation in Orderic's text. As in a real-life context under the incidence of canon law, they are part of the more complex process of attempted sin remittance that also includes and heavily relies on intercession. For Orderic's investigative purposes, the interesting aspect of intercession is that it comprises the purposeful prayers and continued penance of a group of dedicated supporters who acknowledge that their protégé has died unabsolved of grave sins. Half the credit, however, for William's penitential program even before his death must go, as Orderic describes it, to this dedicated group. They are the wise men whose counsel William has followed all his life (*semper in omni uita sua sapientium consilio usus fuerat*),[188] the same who in Rouen at his bedside offer him saving counsel of eternal life (*salubre consilium perennis uitæ largiebantur*)[189] and at St. Gervase keep watch over the unremitting prince (*sedulo excubabant*), ceaselessly in charge of his *spirituali cum corporali salute*.[190] They are men with the highest spiritual currency in his lands of whom some are present at the *ordinatio regni*, some only see

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[184] Op. cit., p. 96.

[185] *Biblia sacra vulgatæ editionis* (Regensburg & Rome, 1914), p. 1201.

[186] But see also Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 6.1.22 (Harvard, 2001), p. 28, in support of the claim that there may be a rhetorical forensic dimension to Orderic's construction of William's speech: *iustius enim petere ea quisque videtur a iudice quae aliis ipse praestiterit* (the justice of a claim seems greater if a man is asking the judge for what he has himself granted to others).

[187] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 100.

[188] Op. cit., p. 78.

[189] Op. cit., p. 78.

[190] Op. cit., p. 80.

him off at his funeral. Some are personalities of their day whom Orderic names *ad notitiam posteriorum*, 'for the information of later generations,'[191] and of whom at least a few are as versed in iniquity as their noble patron. To these men at times collectively, at times individually falls the task after William's death of furthering his efforts at securing God's grace. Uniquely theirs in the *lapsus ducis* is the kind of intercession whose implementation Orderic wants the reader to witness. One only is never explicitly revealed, nor can it be – the Virgin's.

Intercession, a matter of quality and quantity

No good and noble death in William and Orderic's century comes to pass without a certain amount of dutiful intercession. William asks for it specifically when confessing the excessive violence of the Conquest. He beseeches the priests and other servants of Christ present at his last council to commend him to God through their prayers. Through them he is seeking forgiveness for his grave sins (*ut peccata quibus admodum premor […] remittat*) and a place among God's chosen (*inter suos me saluus faciat*). All the while, his hopes are in God's infinite mercy (*infatigabilem clementiam*).[192] Only one other time in the episode does William actively seek intercession. This occurs as he breathes his last and is an ultimate gesture of penitential supplication. His would-be intercessor is *domina mea sancta Dei genitrix Maria* whose holy prayers William trusts may effect that all-essential reconciliation between her son Christ and him (*ut ipsa suis sanctis precibus me reconciliet carissimo filio suo*).[193] All intercessory efforts dispensed on William's behalf in the *lapsus ducis* ought, therefore, to some extent to be measured against such hopes for salvation as William himself voices. In the same way, the quantity and quality of his penitential deeds ought to be measured against the battle narratives and decisions in the *ordinatio regni*. All these elements combined make up the parameters within which Orderic assesses – and wants the reader to assess as well – the degree of redemption William is likely to acquire at the *tremendum Dei examen*.[194] To the extent of their presence in the text, therefore, penance and intercession are not narrative appendages. They are spiritual quantifiers intended to measure moral guilt. Any details associated

[191] Op. cit., pp. 104-5.

[192] Op. cit., p. 90.

[193] Op. cit., p. 100.

[194] Op. cit., p. 80.

with them will consequently be particularly relevant. Orderic's mission is to present such details in a way that is cautious (anyone chronicling their own time must do that), but also detectable. The technique he employs here mixes elements of praise and blame and relies on the effect of negative accumulation to signal points of concern. But what exactly about the intercession performed on William's behalf may not deserve praise?

William's process of redemption begun through penance continues, after a fashion, into his death. His soul is commended to God by religious men – priests and monks – while his body is conveyed to Caen for burial inside his foundation at St. Étienne. At Caen, the bier is met by Abbot Gilbert, his monks, and a great multitude of clergy and laity who weep and pray. Monks who are chanting psalms lead the body to the abbey church while there, assembled for the funeral, are all of Normandy's bishops and abbots, men just like the kind William needs to intercede for him. Even before the burial, these men are actively performing their intercessory duty, the bishop of Évreux especially. He begs the congregation not only to further intercede with God on William's behalf, thus attempting to generate even more intercessors and intercessions for him, but also to forgive him any past wrongs, thus obtaining as close to many individual absolutions for William as his sins. These high prelates settle scores peacefully and seal the deal in a most significant intercessory gesture by burying William's body in the sanctuary between the choir and the altar. And yet, these last rites are not a bit as they should be.

Loyalty is wavering, reverence is skin deep. The religious men, *clerici et monachi*, who first need to commend to God William's soul *secundum morem sanctæ Christianitatis* are late in arriving at the scene and only do so once they have contended with their own all too human fears (*tandem […] collectis uiribus et intimis sensibus*). Even then, the weight of their reverence is all in the crosses and censers that they carry in procession from Rouen to St. Gervase (*honeste induti cum crucibus et thuribulis […] processerunt*).[195] There, at the priory founded by the Norman dukes and chosen by William as a safe home in which to die, the royal corpse, despoiled and almost naked, has been abandoned by retainers on the floor of the house (*relicto […] pene nudo in area domus*) and that at a time of day characteristically marked by Christian piety and devotion – *a prima usque ad terciam supra nudam humum derelictus est*.[196] And

[195] Op. cit., p. 102.

[196] Op. cit., p. 102.

although the archbishop of Rouen orders the body to be buried at St. Étienne where devotion toward the Conqueror's spiritual welfare has been ensured by his status as the abbey's founder, no one of the royal dependents is present to give the *exequia* to the body. A charitable knight takes charge of the funeral preparations, but what he procures in the end for William is *pollinctores* and *uispilliones*, washers of dead bodies and undertakers who bury paupers.[197] And where piety is indeed present, it is hijacked and short-lived. At Caen, the bier may be reverently (*ueneranter*) met by a procession made of monks and a multitude of weeping and praying laymen and clergymen (*flens et orans multitudo clericorum et laicorum*), but when a terrible fire suddenly envelops great part of the city, the clergymen and laymen flee. They run to extinguish the fire, thus abandoning their pious work by William's body.[198] Later, the bishop of Évreux's attempts to elicit forgiveness and prayers for William end up in a similar disaster: Ascelin son of Arthur, a Norman with deep ties to the land, interrupts the bishop's plea by denouncing William as a robber.[199] And despite the solemnity afforded to the event by the prominent heads of the church in attendance (*ad sepeliendum maximum ducem […] congregati sunt omnes episcopi et abbates Normanniæ*),[200] the funeral is a catastrophe: William's swollen bowels burst with a stench so potent (*intolerabilis fœtor*; *teterrimum putorem*) that not even the thick smoke of frankincense and spices in the censers can cover it.[201] And so the question is, what is amiss about the Conqueror?

God's just judgement

In the preface to book three of his *Gesta regum Anglorum*, William of Malmesbury notes how those who have written about King William have done so incited by different motives: Norman authors have praised him excessively, while the English 'inspired by national enmities' have heaped unreasonable blame upon him. As someone of mixed Norman and Anglo-Saxon heritage, Malmesbury proposes to steer a middle course consistent with moderation and the promotion of truth without bias. Without exaggerating the praise, he will proclaim openly William's decidedly good actions, while,

[197] Op. cit., p. 104.

[198] Op. cit., p. 102.

[199] Op. cit., p. 106.

[200] Op. cit., p. 104.

[201] Op. cit., p. 106.

in an effort to extenuate evil, he will only lightly and sparingly touch upon his bad conduct.[202] It is probably in keeping with this determination that later in the book Malmesbury asserts that the only thing for which William may be rightly blamed is his love of money *(sola est de quo merito culpetur pecuniæ cupiditas*) and even for that Malmesbury has a prompt excuse – it was fear of his enemies that made William accumulate riches.[203] Anglo-Saxon and Frankish by birth, Norman by geographic and cultural adoption, Orderic too criticises William's eagerness for riches: a good chunk of book three of his *Historia* is dedicated to the pursuit of that topic. And yet, nowhere does he appear more decidedly accusatory than when he describes William's 1069-70 campaign against the Danes and people of Northumbria.

Nowhere else had William used such great cruelty (*tanta crudelitate*), Orderic remarks, and it is easy to see the argument he is advancing because, in the paragraph where that occurs, all supporting evidence is stated twice, sometimes three times, with minimal variation in the phrasing. That winter, in relentless pursuit of English rebels and their Danish help, William ordered countryfolk's every means of sustenance (*omni genere alimentorum*; *omnem alimoniam*) to be burnt to ashes (*concremat*; *penitus […] comburi*) at the same time (*simul comburi*; *pariter deuastari*) everywhere across the Humber. Punishment for repeated insurrections in the north that year was just in part William's motivation: his efforts largely concentrated on discouraging further Danish incursions by laying waste the land. Even so, the next season scarcity ensued everywhere and famine (*tam grauis […] seuit penuria*; *tanta famis inuoluit miseria*; *lancea tabidæ famis*) which, in his disapproval, Orderic equates to slaughter and massacre and, by metonymy, to gore (*tantæ cedis*, *tam feralis occisio*). As Orderic indicates, the essence of moral guilt in that carnage was lack of moderation, but the premise was William's wrath. There in Northumbria, Orderic tells, William shamefully succumbed to his vice (*hic turpiter uitio succubuit*) when he disdained to govern his anger (*iram suam regere contempsit*; *ira stimulante*), thus killing the guilty with the innocent. This aspect of indiscrimination in connection with William's punitive act seems to upset Orderic the most: in describing the victims of the carnage as well as the inequitable way they were condemned to sorrow, he scores the highest number of variant formulations in the entire paragraph. Among those destroyed indiscriminately

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[202] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum* (Oxford 1998), Preface-1, p. 425.

[203] Op. cit., III.280.1-2, p. 509.

(*pari animaduersione peremit*; *æque transfixit*) by William's uncontrolled wrath are both the guilty and the blameless (*reos innocuosque*), the righteous and the disloyal (*iustum et impium*), Christians of both sexes and of every age (*utriusque sexus et omnis ætatis*), helpless children, youth, and old men (*innocuous infantes iuuenesque uernantes et floridos canicie senes*) – in all, *homines plus quam centum milia* most of whom are from the ranks of the defenceless and humble people, the *inermem ac simplicem populum*.[204]

What sets this criticism of the Harrying of the North apart from other instances of reproach also present in Orderic's prose – the *lapsus ducis* is one such instance – is the trenchant assessment of the gravity of William's guilt. God the *omnipotens iudex* observes all mankind and, as the most just avenger (*iustissimus uindex*), he will examine and punish everyone's deeds justly. Interestingly, Orderic's God as *iudex* and *iustissimus* examines and punishes 'justly' not in a manner as appropriate to right, *ius*, thus not *iuste*, but *æque*, 'justly' in a way that conceives of justice as being based on a principle of equivalence, the perfect matching and balancing between deed and retribution. To frame his assessment of William's guilt properly, therefore, Orderic first emphasises the extent of his destruction. He does that through the repeated use of words such as 'omnis', 'tam', and 'tantus' in association with words that render the idea of destruction (*domos cum rebus omnibus concremat, omni genere alimentorum repleri*, *omnia comburi*, *omnem alimoniam […] deuastari*, *omnis ætatis homines perirent*, *tam grauis seuit penuria*, *tam feralis occisio*, *tanta crudelitate*, *tanta famis miseria*, *tantæ cedis*). Different catastrophic aspects inherent in laying the land to waste are rendered by 'simul' and 'pariter' (exterminatory quality: *penitus omnia simul comburi*, *omnem alimoniam pariter deuastari*) and 'totam' and 'late' (extensiveness: *totam regionem transhumbranam deuastari*, *in Anglia late seuit penuria*). Similarly crafty here is Orderic's use of *occisio* and *cedes* with their gore-like, martial connotation to refer to death by starvation: these words control the perception of William's crime as one essentially of shedding blood, hence one more reprehensible from a moral point of view.

But as Orderic invokes God's *perpetua lex* as the ultimate reference in matters of justice and finds William a guilty man (*tantæ cedis reo*), convinced as he is (*indubitanter assero*) that such mournful massacre (*tam feralis occisio*) cannot be pardoned without punishment, *impune non remittetur*, his notion of William's guilt is still only partly

[204] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, pp. 230-2.

revealed.[205] It is the monk Guitmund of La-Croix-St-Leufroi, the future bishop of Aversa, who exposes the depth of the problem surrounding William's reign. In a dramatic speech of Orderic's invention[206] not unlike the *lapsus ducis*, Guitmund addresses William accusing him directly for killing by sword, driving into exile, and unjustly imprisoning or enslaving the English.[207] He notes that William got his crown, *regale stemma*, not by *hereditario iure*, but freely out of God's generosity, *gratuita largitione omnipotentis Dei*, in preferment to all other claimants to the English throne. Yet despite that, Guitmund continues, William will still need to render account at God's judgement: for the stewardship entrusted to him (*ad reddendam rationem commissæ uillicationis*).[208] The problem as Orderic apparently sees it, therefore, is not laid out in terms of William's violence considered *in abstracto*. The bloody battle at Hastings that itself first led to William's crown is not an obvious issue with Guitmund. Rather, violence as reprehensible behaviour is being relegated to a specific context: William's approach to kingship, the stewardship entrusted to him. Only in that context will the tenor of William's violence truly matter at God's judgement.

Throughout the *Historia* and the *lapsus ducis*, it is evident how Orderic attempts to rationalise from a Christian monastic perspective God's tolerance of the new Norman rule in England. At times, Orderic appears to accept the Invasion as an act of divine will that can only be explained as a response to piety. Even so, given William's controversial figure, the piety in question is not always his. Matilda's zeal for religion and her daily alms, for example, brought William more help in battle than Orderic wishes at one point to describe in book three (*Elemosina cui cotidie feruenter hæc era insistebat, marito agonizanti in procinctu bellico plus quam fari norim succurebat*).[209] What is impossible to rationalise in the same way, however, is the Conquest. Under its lengthy and plainly materialistic aspect as well as due to its focus on annihilating the native Anglo-Saxon population, the Conquest, for someone like Orderic, contradicts fundamentally the Christian God's unacceptance of excessive and gratuitous brutality. Like Sedulius who,

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Cf. Marjorie Chibnall on Guitmund's speech: 'Although this speech has been included amongst Guitmund's works in Migne (*PL* cxlix, 1509-12) as *Ortatio ad Guillelmum I Anglorum regem* it is plainly the work of Orderic, whose normal practice was to present a point of view in the form of a dramatic speech.' - Op. cit., p. 272, n. 1.

[207] Op. cit., p. 273.

[208] Op. cit., pp. 276-8.

[209] Op. cit., pp. 224-5.

upon considering the avoidance of pride after the enemies have been subdued, finds that 'it is indeed good to conquer but odious to conquer to excess' (*vincere quidem bonus est, supervincere nimis invidiosum*),[210] Orderic finds William guilty because he considers the Conquest in terms of its excesses.

Interestingly, the excessive aspect of the Conquest is already a matter of personal interpretation in Orderic's century. William of Malmesbury finds the excesses of the Conquest best reflected in his own time two generations after the Normans took control of England. The causes he suggests here are entirely different from those Orderic identifies. *Nullus hodie Anglus uel dux uel pontifex uel abbas* – 'no Englishman today is an earl, a bishop, or an abbot,' Malmesbury notes. 'England has become the home and dominion of foreigners who gnaw her riches and vitals to pieces.'[211] While he cannot see any hope for redress, Malmesbury acknowledges that those who bear the blame for this state of things are the English themselves. In Edward's time, they governed themselves with iniquity.[212] After Harold's death, the politically divided local chiefs and bishops failed to give concerted support to the claim to kingship of the best local candidate, Edward's nephew Edgar. Hence, they allowed a foreigner, instead, to gain access to governance.[213] When Orderic, however, analyses the Conquest and the abuses that marked it, it is secular rulers' militarised gesture that carries the most weight. He describes the famine that William's indiscriminate rage caused in Northumbria by employing the lexicon of war – *cedis*, *occisio, lancea*, *transfixit* – where blood and gore are the typical course.[214] This affords him an opportunity to assess William as a guilty military leader in the context of an internecine political crisis. He does so in a way that is reminiscent of Isidore's notions of political theory as allegedly derived from Sallust. For Isidore, the victory attained at huge cost is not happy, and he explains that it was for this reason that Sallust praised generals who had won victory with an unbloodied army.[215] As he concludes his excursus on the Harrying of the North in book four, Orderic too considers praise for victory but only to say that he will not give it. He has praised William

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[210] Sedulius Scottus, *De rectoribus christianis* (Boydell 2010), pp. 170-1.

[211] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum* (Oxford, 1998), ii.227, pp. 415-7.

[212] Ibid.

[213] William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (New York, 1968 / Henry G. Bohn, 1847), p. 281.

[214] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, p. 232.

[215] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), XVIII.ii.1, p. 360.

in his book for many things, but he does not dare do it now (*laudare non audeo*) for an action through which with the same lance of wasting hunger William pierced equally the righteous and the disloyal (*una tabidæ famis lancea æque transfixit*). To the historian's mind, the attempt at praising through empty flattery a man thus guilty would lack validity (*meroribus et anxietatibus magis condoleo, quam tantæ cedis reo friuolis adulationibus fauere inutiliter studio*).[216] Guitmund, a disguised voice for Orderic's point of view, continues this engagement with the topic of William's guilt adding a justiciary dimension to it. He warns William in book four about the dangers attendant upon those subduing other peoples. History's conquerors have all been in their turn subdued by wretched death, for present prosperity is followed by unbearable pain (*intolerabilis dolor*), enormous lamentation (*ingens luctus*), and gnashing of teeth (*stridor dentium*).[217] All former victors now groan irredeemably (*irremediabiliter*) in the sewers of Hell (*in cloacis Erebi*): there, they are being tormented by a grief equal to that of their victims (*parique cum uictis contritione torti*).[218]

Nowhere does Orderic come closer to witnessing the otherworldly punishment that in book four both Guitmund and he reserve for William than at the end of book seven in the *lapsus ducis*. An air of acknowledgment of princes' accountability to God for their actions opens the episode (*multis […] grauibusque peccatis onustus contremisco, et mox ad tremendum Dei examen rapturus quid faciam ignoro*,[219] and then, *mala quæ feci […] pro quibus absque mora rationem reddere nunc cogor equissimo iudici*[220]). That air pervades the episode until the last. Guitmund's warning that *Dei iudicium* threatens William (*tibi imminet*) to render one day account (*ad reddendam rationem*) for his stewardship of the English crown (*commissæ uillicationis*)[221] suddenly gains momentum. And the *lapsus ducis* delivers. Even before the dead body reaches Caen with its apocalyptic *enorme incendium* that vomits large balls of flame as it spreads *damnose* through the town (destructively, yet also, because of *damnum*, as a punishment), the signs of God's equitable judgement have been made manifest.[222] *Dei iudicium*, however,

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[216] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, p. 232.

[217] Op. cit., p. 278.

[218] Op. cit., p. 276.

[219] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 80

[220] Op. cit., p. 82.

[221] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, pp. 276-8.

[222] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 104.

is *quanto occultius tanto terribilius*, the more terrible the more it is concealed, as Guitmund cautions William in book four.[223] As Orderic considers the spoliation of William's dead body at St. Gervase, that awareness of the arcane nature of God's judgement resurfaces. Detecting a sure sign of the terrible *Dei iudicium* in William's barbarous treatment at the hands of his once trusted attendants, Orderic proposes to gloss that scene for the reader's benefit. He treats that significant moment at St. Gervase as two separate events: despoiling of the body, and abandonment of the body. To these, he juxtaposes two aspects marking William's former glory: the loyalty of the many troops that used to follow him and the fear of the many ethnic groups intimidated by him. At the centre of the scene, anchoring these events into potential pairs of opposites is the king's dead body symbolically despoiled of its royal trappings. The human element on whose existence William's greatness hinged while at its zenith – his eager men-at-arms (*plus quam centum milia militum auide seruiebant*), the foreign peoples that feared him (*multæ gentes cum tremore metuebant*), and his royal followers (*inferiores clientuli*) – is the element on which now God's punishment hinges, too.[224] *Auide*, the eagerness with which his soldiers followed him to battle, and *cum tremore*, the dread with which other nations feared him, are both demolished by (*a suis*) *turpiter*, the shameless audacity with which William's followers disrespect the dead body. The soldiers' *seruiebant*, the other peoples' *metuebant* are opposed in God's divine program of vengeful reciprocity by the royal attendants' *derelictus est* and *spoliatus est*.[225] Orderic never elaborates on how these contrasting elements exactly pair up, but their combinatory scheme is easy to spot. At the most immediate level, a contrast is established between *nuper* and *nunc*. At a deeper level, the impressive military loyalty that William attracted while alive, *plus quam centum milia militum auide seruiebant*, is now overpowered by the lack of true allegiance characterizing his royal attendants (*derelictus est*). Deeper still, there is William's former ability to intimidate groups of people weaker militarily than him (*multæ gentes cum tremore metuebant*), now contrasted with his attendants' audacity to plunder him. Behind the euphemistic veil, however, hides true historical fact: William's military aggression against the Anglo-Saxons (*Exonios, Cestrenses et Nordanhimbros*) with their eventual submission to his

[223] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, p. 276.

[224] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 102.

[225] Ibid.

rule. As he cruelly despoiled these groups of people at the height of his glory, so does now *Dei iuditium* reserve spoliation for William upon his death.

While Orderic suggests earthly loyalty (*mundana fides*) and worldly pomp (*secularis pompa*) as two concepts worth considering in conjunction with William's spoliation at St. Gervase, he goes on to show that the overarching goal of the *Dei iuditium* is to invert all the attributes of William's royal power, not just these. We understand this only as we read on, following the body's journey from Rouen to its burial place in Caen. Yet our interpretation of the events that are still to unfold is already conditioned here, at this time, as Orderic glosses the spoliation scene at St. Gervase. With his gloss, Orderic guides the reader to the same understanding of the events that he has. As with all glosses, this creates uniformity in thought and approach. That William may somehow control the *lapsus ducis* narrative is a mere illusion created by the fact that we are reading an account of his life largely written in the first person. It is Orderic who controls the narrative, not least of all because of his repeated intromissions into the text. By glossing the events surrounding William's death, however, Orderic also effects a seeming control of the reading process on the part of his *studiosi lectores*. In showing the reader how to interpret God's mysterious ways, he has given him a key in which to read what follows. This makes the reader eager to identify further contrasts and pairs of opposites in all subsequent events – everything, in other words, from the funeral rites that suddenly William cannot afford, to the funerary procession hijacked by the *enorme incendium* in the streets of Caen, down to the eulogy invalidated by Ascelin and the *pinguissimus uenter* that bursts upon entering holy ground. There is a reason, however, this key is so effective: in its simplicity, it rehearses a feature of human societies that not only has been variously exploited by man since times immemorial, but it also has enjoyed its share of support in the Christian world thanks to the Bible. The law of the contrapasso, that tit-for-tat concept that Sedulius instantly recognised in Theoderic's death, that Guitmund presaged for William or that Dante so imaginatively – and successfully – employed a century and a half later in his *Commedia*, that concept of equivalent retribution dwells, among several places in the Bible, in the one holy book of the Christians uniquely concerned with notions of justice, vengeance, and divine forms of punishment – Revelation. *Qui in captivitatem duxerit, in captivitatem vadet*, rings the familiar sound of apocalyptic jurisprudence. *Qui in gladio occiderit, oportet eum gladio*

occidi. Hic est patientia, et fides Sanctorum. (Rev. 13:10)[226] But Orderic, too, it seems, puts his hopes and faith in that comforting knowledge.

Lamenting in book four the abuses of the Normans during and after the Conquest, Orderic bursts into resentment, quoting from Luke: *Eadem mensura qua mensi fueritis, remetietur uobis*, 'With the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.'[227] (Luke 6:38) It is still John's words, nonetheless, that hit close to home when it comes to William's demise in the *lapsus ducis*. For not only do those words give hope of redress to a plainly discontented Orderic, through their reference to captors and murderers by the sword they accurately reflect William's profile as a sinner: William *is* a notorious *captor* and a slayer of countless men. That this referentiality also occurs in the context of God's most terrible justiciary campaign in spiritual history, that of the Apocalypse, may only have increased its significance for Orderic. Even so, the considerable space he allocates in the *ordinatio regni* to a discussion of William's political captives and of him as a captor – the worth of two full pages in Chibnall's edition[228] – is enough on its own to signal a more than passing interest in the topic. For one thing, the engagement of William the captor with his captives makes John's warning particularly evocative, for William's penance also includes the release of his prisoners. The way he articulates his motivation, however, indicates that this is not just a customary, obligated administrative procedure typical of dying kings, but one that he confidently regards as a potential ticket out of hell. By opening his prisons and letting his political enemies go free, William wishes, in his own words, to be saved (*opto saluari*), to be absolved of his wrongs (*a reatibus meis absolui*), in short, to have God take pity on him (*ut ipse michi misereatur*).[229] At the same time, however, none of the prisoners he is willing to trade with God in exchange for spiritual salvation is an obscure figure in the history books. And had it not been for his death, none would have left royal captivity alive since William had sworn to that (*in uinculis artaui, et quod in uita mea non egrederetur iuraui*).[230] It is important to consider this aspect, as William's penance is a political sacrifice as much as it is a spiritual one. As such, not only does it give the measure of the spiritual gain that may accrue him in the other world, but it also reveals

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[226] *Biblia sacra vulgatæ editionis* (Regensburg & Rome, 1914), p. 1201.

[227] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, pp. 268-9.

[228] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, pp. 96-100.

[229] Op. cit., p. 96.

[230] Ibid.

the criminal calibre of men retained as unpardonable. Interestingly, while the standards according to which William judges that calibre are political in the case of most prisoners, in the case of one captive alone they are also moral. That captive, the only one portrayed as unworthy of pardon no matter what the circumstances, is *fratrem meum Baiocensem episcopum*,[231] Odo of Conteville, bishop of Bayeux, William's half-brother. Although in the end Odo is granted royal pardon, in the *lapsus ducis* William vehemently opposes his release till the end. As always, Orderic's lexical choices are key, for they paint a picture of personal and perhaps even contemporary mood. Thus, William denounces Odo as *contemptor religionis*, a contemner of the holy faith, *argutus incentor letiferæ seditionis*, a cunning instigator of deadly disturbance, *pessimus oppressor populorum*, the worst oppressor of the people, and *monachilium destructor cenobiorum*, a destroyer of monastic communities.[232] To William, Odo's propensity for evil is ingrained in his nature: he is frivolous and ambitious, *leuis et ambitiosus*, devoted to carnal desires and to great acts of cruelty, *carnis inherens desideriis et immensis crudelitatibus*.[233] William opposes his brother's release because Odo, a seditious man by nature, *seditiosus*, is incapable of abandoning the enticements and crimes of falsehood (*nunquam mutabitur a lenociniis et noxiis uanitatibus*).[234] The result of his freedom, William is convinced, will be invariably death and grievous harm to many (*multis per eum mors seu graue impedimentum incutietur*).[235]

If in the *lapsus ducis* William paints a selective picture of Odo that reflects only schematically the problematic figure of the historic bishop of Bayeux, it is because by this time Orderic has already introduced Odo to the reader. In book three, Odo is a witness to William's ducal charters and royal grants.[236] In book four, he is the earl of Kent and William's viceregent in England, *regis uicarius*, a man second in power only to the king. There, Odo allows petty lords in charge of Norman castles to oppress the native population with *iniustis exactionibus multisque contumeliis*, unjust taxes and many humiliations. In his capacity as the king's justice, he disdains to give hearing to the justified *clamores Anglorum*, the pleas of the English. And together with William

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[231] Ibid.

[232] Op. cit., p. 98.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid.

[235] Op. cit., p. 100.

[236] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, pp. 38, 120.

fitzOsbern, his co-viceregent, he protects through force, *ui tuebantur*, Norman men-at-arms who give themselves to unrestrained plundering and raping (*immodicas prædas et incestos raptus facientes*).[237] Odo's portrait is rounded off, however, only in book seven, in Chibnall's edition a mere eighteen pages before the opening of the *lapsus ducis*. He had hoped he could become the next pope after Gregory VII's death and diligently set out to prepare for that honour. To procure the wealth that would buy him the support of the Roman aristocracy, he despoiled (*exspoliauit*; *nudauit*) many English churches of the rich gifts of lands, revenues, and ornaments that previous kings of England had granted them. Not only that, but he turned Norman knights from their duty of keeping the peace in England in the name of his kingly brother, to an allegiance to him and his own hopes of glory beyond the Alps. In everything, Odo harassed William's entire kingdom through rapine, oppression, and sedition. Orderic's conclusion is key here: a *præsulatus* (the bishopric of Bayeux), a *comitatus […] ingentibus gazis abundans* (the rich earldom of Kent), and *regia potestas cum fratre communis* (royal power shared with his brother) were not enough for one clergyman, *uni clerico non sufficiebant*. Instead, he became eager to be set over all the earth (*uniuerso mundo preferri satagebat*).[238]

Weighing negatively in Orderic's characterisation of Odo is the fact that none of the motives capable of legitimising the pursuit of pontifical office – *diuina assumptio* (divine choice) or *canonica electio* (canonical election) – applies to him. Instead, insatiable greed (*insatiabilis cupiditatis*) combined with a propensity for excessive arrogance (*immoderata presumpcio*) motivates his abuses.[239] It is important to notice that, for Orderic, with respect to greed and pride – notions that primarily concern him in the *lapsus ducis* – Odo's character and William's character are perfectly aligned. Both men are greedy, both have risen in life much above their station: one, now a duke and a king, was the son of a concubine; the other, a viceregent of England and would-be pope, started out as the uterine brother of a usurper. Sons of the same mother, both have enabled cruelty and oppression on a large scale. Interestingly, both now need deliverance from the fetters gripping them. That strikingly similar, in fact, are the brothers' moral profiles that even in the pages of near-contemporary chroniclers their respective ambitions cause one and the same reaction: outrage. Orderic, we have seen,

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[237] Op. cit., p. 202.

[238] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, pp. 44-5.

[239] Idem.

is scandalised by Odo's brazen ambition to rule over the entire Christian world. Malmesbury, writing about William, is similarly scandalised: by his ambition to invade and conquer England. He records William's soldiers' grumble at the port of St. Valery prior to the Invasion as propitious winds for crossing over to England do not blow for several weeks: 'A man must be mad, they said, who wants us to take over land rightfully belonging to others; God is against us, for He denies us a wind; his father had the same idea, and was prevented in the same way; there is a curse on this family – it always conceives more than it can perform and finds God in opposition to it.'[240]

In the *Historia*, Orderic not only acknowledges the similarities between the two brothers, but in the *lapsus ducis* he exploits them most remarkably. By all appearances not connected with each other, there exist in the text two dramatic dialogues, each concerned with a separate plea for mercy. One dialogue occurs in the context of Odo's captivity in William's prisons, the other in that of William's death and funeral. In the first case, a man is in the fetters of temporal law, in the second, a man is in those of the law eternal. In the first dialogue, we have Odo's supporters at William's council pleading with him for the release of his captive brother.[241] In the second, we have Gilbert, the bishop of Évreux, delivering William's eulogy in St. Étienne, entreating the congregation to forgive William his trespasses freely.[242] Both Odo and William need pardon. The plea for Odo's release meets with William's opposition; the plea for William's absolution meets with that of Ascelin, *Arturi filius*. Both opposing parties show outrage at the suggestion for deliverance. William builds a case around Odo's cruelty, ambition, and greed; Ascelin denounces William for robbing land with impunity (*hæc terra […] abstulit, omnique denegata rectitudine*).[243] When all these similarities of context have been considered, those of diction, when they occur, become particularly gripping. As William thunders against Odo and Ascelin against William, the phrasing each uses to indicate the miscreant proposed to him for deliverance has minimal variation from one to the other. *Miror quod prudenter non indagatis quis uel qualis est uir pro quo supplicatis* ('I am amazed that you do not appreciate what kind of man this is for whom you plead'), William admonishes Odo's supporters.[244] Four pages on and with respect to William,

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[240] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum* Anglorum (Oxford, 1998) iii.238.8-9, p. 449.

[241] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, pp. 96-100.

[242] Op. cit., pp. 104-6.

[243] Op. cit., p. 106.

[244] Op. cit., p. 98.

Ascelin responds with matching force and almost as if by way of an answer: *hæc terra ubi consistitis area domus patris mei fuit, quam uir iste pro quo rogatis […] patri meo uiolenter abstulit* ('this ground where you stand was the site of my father's house, which this man for whom you intercede […] violently took away from my father').[245]

Replete with parallels from structure to plot to diction, the two episodes have been designed with more than just theatricality in mind. Occurring in the larger context of criminal investigation and punitive justice, the verdict that seals each of these interventions is symptomatic of the outcome that Orderic's own investigation of the Conqueror's guilt is about to reach. For the historian, Odo's crimes are metonymic of William's – the brothers' natures are prone to and embrace the same vices. Odo's refused release from captivity on grounds of irredeemable criminality, even if later reconsidered, is a metonym for William's own unworthiness of intercession and forgiveness. And yet, as far as metonymic value goes – and certainly also rhetorical function – the histrionic character of Ascelin's scene is bound to rank particularly high. Ascelin is defined by his voice. As Gilbert of Évreux encourages forgiveness of William's crimes, not only is Ascelin charged with providing a voice analogous to William's in the scene of Odo's denied pardon, in denouncing William as a robber of lands, he is also the messenger of a voice more powerful than William's own.

Vox Dei

Do we care to debate who Ascelin was, how large a compensation he received for his father's stolen land, whether William's bishops paid the money or rather William's son Henry?[246] Ascelin's presence at the end of the *lapsus ducis* is meaningful in a different way. Ascelin's is a performance. He rises from the crowd (*de turba surrexit*) and in a loud voice (*uoce magna*) addresses all those who are there to hear (*cunctis*

[245] Op. cit., p. 106.

[246] Contemporary accounts of William's death give different versions of Ascelin and his claim. Of the works examined here, the tract *De obitu Willelmi* included in the *Gesta Normannorum ducum* (Oxford, 1995 - p. 188) does not mention Ascelin at all, while Malmesbury does, but does not name him – *Gesta Regum Anglorum […]* (Oxford, 1998), iii.282.1, p. 512. According to Malmesbury, *miles quidam*, a certain knight, received a hundred pounds of silver (*centum libræ argenti*) as settlement from William's son Henry (ibid). According to Orderic, it was William's *episcopi et proceres* who paid Ascelin, while the settlement was *pro loculo solius sepolturæ*, for the place of burial alone and in the amount of twice sixty shillings (*lx solidos*) – Orderic, *The Ecclesiastical History* (Oxford, 1973), vol. 4, p. 106.

audientibus edidit).[247] His complaint (*querimonia*) that William stole land from his father is a serious one, yet Orderic's penchant for unexpected turns (*exitus inopinatos*)[248] renders the scene quite entertaining: Ascelin accuses William of robbery just as Gilbert has praised the Conqueror for his efficient chastisement of robbers and thieves (*fures et predones uirga rectitudinis utiliter castigauerit*).[249] Still, this is not a dramatic performance, nor is the sacred floor of St. Étienne a stage for one. As he points out at the end of the *lapsus ducis – non fictilem tragediam uenundo, non loquaci comedia cachinnantibus parasitis faueo* ('I neither compose a frivolous tragedy for the sake of gain, nor entertain cackling parasites with a wordy comedy')[250] – in his writing, Orderic has engaged with the dramatic style, but not in order to entertain. This is a disavowal, however, that only puts such terms as *tragedia* and *comedia* under an even brighter spotlight. For if he has not used the stylistic aspects of tragedy and comedy for entertainment purposes, how else has he used them? By denying an involvement with tragedy and comedy as literary genres – he has not written a frivolous tragedy or a wordy comedy – Orderic encourages the reader to consider an associated function of the tragic and comic styles. That function may promote performances attuned to the demands of the stage, but those do not aim to entertain the crowds. One is bound to remember Quintilian here, for he too uses the terms 'tragedy' and 'comedy' in a parallel – with *pathos* and *ēthos*. It is a frequent parallel in the *Institutio oratoria* which has its rationale in the similarity between *ēthos* and comedy and *pathos* and tragedy.[251] Could Orderic's use of the terms *tragedia* and *comedia* be a reference, too, to the two speaking styles used in oratory? There, speakers extoll emotion not in order to please a varied crowd, but to carry with them one man, the judge. Speaking characters in the *lapsus ducis* from William to Gilbert to Ascelin all do that. But Ascelin's case is special. For where William and Gilbert are voices for the defence, Ascelin, belonging to the prosecution, also speaks for the judge.

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[247] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 106.

[248] Cf. Cicero's recommendation as reported by Quintilian regarding the necessary ingredients of a Narrative, all of which are also contained in the *lapsus ducis* (*suavitatem, admirationes, expectationes, exitus inopinatos, conloquia personarum, omnes* adfectus / 'passages that charm, surprise, and arouse expectations, as well as unexpected turns, conversations between person, and all kinds of emotions') - Quintilian, *The Education of the Orator* 4.2.107 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 272-3.

[249] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 104.

[250] Op. cit., pp. 106-7.

[251] Cf. Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 6.2.20 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3, p. 54.

When Ascelin speaks up, he takes his cue from Gilbert of Évreux. His message to the congregation in St. Étienne, his *querimonia* against William, is just as important as Gilbert's eulogy of William, his *prolixam locutionem de magnificentia defuncti principis*.[252] Each man interacts with their audience and with each other in a different way. Gilbert climbs into the pulpit, *in pulpitum ascendit*, dominating the crowd. Ascelin *de turba surrexit* – he rises from the crowd as a reaction to and in defiance of Gilbert's praise of William. Gilbert engages his audience with a *prolixam locutionem*, a long (yet also favorable) speech about William's greatness. Like William, who also delivered a long (and favorable) speech and did it *eloquenter*, Gilbert delivers his speech *eloquenter*, too: eloquently, but also, implicitly, as befits the manipulation rules of oratory. The parallels with William's speech do not end here. Both men's addresses are concerned with largely the same issues: William's program of national expansion, the rise of the Norman people to unprecedented honour, William's defence of justice and peace as well as the church and the people, and last, but not least, a redeeming of William from any suspicion of indulging in robbery. Just as William's intervention in the *lapsus ducis* ends with his invocation of Mary and a plea for her intercession with Christ on his behalf, so does Gilbert's speech end with a plea to the congregated multitude to intercede for William with God and forgive him his crimes freely (*benigniter dimittere*).[253] With Gilbert's speech, the defence of William's political, but also moral persona reaches its epilogue. As part of that endeavour, the bishop's eloquence has led the *plebem* to emotion, as proved by their weeping (*flentibus […] attestantibus*), thus effectively making his speech not just a *peroratio ex enumeratione probationum*, but also one *ex lacrimis*, the two varieties of peroration identified by Quintilian (the peroration by the enumeration of proofs and that of the tearful kind).[254]

It is important to remember here Quintilian's recommendations for the peroration, for Orderic's text seems to betray an awareness of them, regardless of whether they were inherited directly or otherwise. Quintilian notes that both the prosecution and the defence take advantage of almost the same emotions (*adfectibus […] isdem fere*), but that their purpose is different: one aims to encourage the judges to action (*concitare iudices*), the other to soften them (*flectere*).[255] Both Gilbert and Ascelin appear to be

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[252] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 104.

[253] Op. cit., p. 106.

[254] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education* 6.1.36 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3, pp. 36-7.

[255] Op. cit., 6.1.9, vol. 3, p. 20.

guided by this principle with Ascelin's intervention being the opposite of Gilbert's in every way. Ascelin's tone is not just exalted and unsettling, in stark contrast with the bishop's calm (*placidum*) and polite (*humanum*) speaking style (*dicendi genus*),[256] it also attempts to stir up the audience as a reaction to Gilbert's effort to make them sympathetic. Ascelin adheres so closely to Quintilian's prescriptions that, when it comes to ways of arousing emotion, he adopts the orator's chief recommendation for the prosecution: making the charge seem as outrageous as possible.[257] Because of Gilbert's endeavour to convince the audience of William's moral probity by emphasising his disdain for robbery and robbers, Ascelin's complaint that William had stolen his father's land appears all the more discomfiting. This makes the scene appear as rehearsed. Rhetorically, however, Ascelin presents himself as a *testis*, a witness whose testimony is not only accurate, but also voluntary, utterly damaging of the case built by the defence. To this initial role of Ascelin of plunging the reader tempestuously into the world of the law courts (which, for all we know, the author may have borrowed unchanged from historical evidence), Orderic adds a further one that just as tempestuously elevates the reader to the divine court of justice. This latter aspect of Ascelin's function in the text is more contrived, as a comparison with the same episode in a parallel account, Malmesbury's, will illustrate.

The *Gesta regum Anglorum* keeps Ascelin's episode to a minimum. In fact, Ascelin here does not even have a name. The scene is narrated briefly, with no lines of dialogue. The same complaint appears in both authors, but here the unnamed knight *sepulturam inhibuit*, he prevented William's interment,[258] whereas in Orderic, Ascelin forbids it, *prohibeo*.[259] In Malmesbury, the anonymous knight brings a *calumnia* (accusation that may be false) against William; in Orderic, Ascelin has a *querimonia* (grievance). Both texts explain the opposition to William's internment in terms of an apparent effrontery. Malmesbury's knight objects on grounds that have to do with violent seizure and the impropriety of resting in a place thus obtained (*nec illum in loco quem uiolenter inuaserat pausare debere*, nor ought he to rest in a place that he had seized by

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[256] For Quintilian's discussion of the characteristics of ***ēthos*** [cf. *placidum* (calm), *mite* (gentle), *blandum* (attractive), *humanum* (polite), and *audientibus amabile atque iucundum* (pleasing and delightful to the listeners)], see *The Orator's Education* 6.2.13,19 (Harvard, 2001), vol. 3, pp. 50-1, 54-5.

[257] Op. cit., 6.1.15, vol. 3, p. 25.

[258] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum […]* (Oxford, 1998), iii.282.1, p. 512.

[259] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 106.

violence).[260] Ascelin focuses on the idea of inheritable yet stolen land and the impropriety of interring its robber's body in it (*ne […] operiatur cespite meo*, *nec in hereditate mea sepeliatur*, that it may not be covered with my earth or buried in my inheritance).[261] Distinct (and additional) in Orderic is Ascelin's aim to draw attention to William's physical body. Indeed, *corpus raptoris* appears to be the main concern of his protest. Yet Ascelin does not object in his own name to William's interment in the holy ground of St. Étienne, as his *querimonia* would legally entitle – and limit – him to. Rather, that objection is issued in God's name (*sepelitura ex parte Dei prohibeo*).[262] As he forbids William's burial, therefore, Ascelin formulates his opposition not in relation to his legal right, but in relation to divine authority (*ex parte Dei*), thus effectively presenting the *corpus raptoris* as rejected not by him, but by God whose voice and message he conveys.

For those bent, like Orderic, on probing William's moral guilt by scrutinising otherworldly mechanics, Ascelin makes certainty attainable. Only now as we have had truthful testimonial evidence of William's falsity, and heard, as it were, God's voice thundering against his rapacity, do we have a confirmation that in the spoliation of William at St. Gervase Orderic truly gleaned God's just punishment. There, pondering the shameful way in which the dead body had been abandoned by the royal attendants, despoiled of riches and clothes, on the bare floor of the house, Orderic first tried to hide the event behind the safe (for him) and face-saving (for William) cloak of *mundana fides*, earthly loyalty, a derivative of the *contemptus mundi* trope. In that spirit, he lamented the spoliation by decrying *impietas* (irreverence, disregard for obligation) that not only had broken loose, he pointed out, upon the high judge's death (*iusticiario labente*), it had also made William its first victim.[263] But if the trope Orderic is invoking implies gratuitous retribution, his lexicon proves that he believed otherwise. For here he calls William *ultorem rapinæ*, the avenger of rapine,[264] barely two pages before Gilbert in his pulpit repeats that claim loud and clear only to have Ascelin advance from the crowd and prove him false for all to hear (*cunctis audientibus*).[265] In noting that rapacity (*rapacitatem*) had

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[260] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum […]* (Oxford, 1998), iii.282.1, p. 512.

[261] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 106.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Op. cit., p. 102.

[264] Ibid.

[265] Op. cit., p. 106.

been inflicted on William, while calling him, at the same time, *ultorem rapinæ*, Orderic cannot be lamenting malicious retribution. Rather, he reasserts the justice of God's judgement and the law of the contrapasso. By the same token, when he likens, in the same place, the *inferiores clientuli* who plunder William's dead body to a kite (*unusquisque […] ut miluus rapuit*), he does not merely intend a stylistic device.[266] The *miluus*[267] in Orderic's metaphor is a direct reference to William, for *he* plundered the *apparatu regio* first.

To understand just how obviously retributive the despoiling of William at St. Gervase must have appeared to Orderic, we need only recall his description of William's splendid garments and royal train as he arrives a king into Normandy the spring after the Invasion. There, in book four, as he celebrates Easter at the abbey of the Holy Trinity in Fécamp, William is surrounded by French aristocrats who admire *regis […] indumenta intexta atque crustata auro*, the king's garments interwoven and encrusted with gold. They praise his gold and silver vessels (*uasa uero aurea uel argentea*) and the *bubalina cornua fuluo metallo circa extremitates utrasque decorata*, the horns of wild oxen decorated with gold at both ends.[268] Orderic notes how such magnificent objects had not been known to the French before who, upon returning home, start spreading accounts of them – a subtle way of implying that William's exotic opulence was not indigenous, but rather had come from across the sea. To convey how implicitly wrongful the possession of those rich objects was, leading up to that moment Orderic had shown the irreligiousness accompanying William's arrival to Normandy. Everything about the new king as soon as arrives from England revolves around gift-giving and opulence. As he travels through the land visiting monastery after monastery and church after church, William's generosity is so lavish (and tempting) that religious communities end up breaking Lent – a time for fast and penitence – and start celebrating Easter. The gifts that William gives are *pallia*, altar cloths, *libras auri*, weights of gold, and others that are

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[266] Op. cit., p. 102.

[267] Cf. Rabanus Maurus and Hugh of Fouilloy on the kite:

Rabanus: *milvus significat utpote (ut puto) rapacem et elatum hominem* - Rabanus Maurus, *De universo* VIII.6 in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* vol. 111, Col.0252D.

Hugh: 'the kite further signifies those whom the weakness of desire tempts' / *milvus significat quos mollities voluptatis temptat* - *The Medieval Book of Birds: Hugh of Fouilloy's Aviarium* (NY, 1992), Ch. XLV "De milvo", pp. 206-7.

[268] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, p. 198.

just as great, all meant for altars and those serving around them.[269] Where he cannot go in person, he sends donations that have everywhere the same effect – joy that, however, masquerades, as Orderic appears to imply, a corruption of the observance of Christian ritual through the riches of plunder. Orderic's concern with William's English wealth will take him so far as to even record the daily income the king received from the ordinary revenue of England: *mille et LX libræ sterilensis monetæ, solidique XXX et tres oboli*, a thousand and sixty-one pounds ten shillings and three halfpence, in sterling money.[270] The figure may be an exaggeration,[271] but through its deliberate focus on detail it portrays William not just as dedicated to the accumulation of wealth, but also unnaturally so. Book four of the *Historia* follows William's new wealth so intently, in fact, that Orderic's interest cannot be pure and simple record keeping. In the stubbornness with which he follows the increase – and especially the decrease – of that wealth, there transpires a plan to expose William as an ungodly king whose power has been rooted in plunder, unjust exactions, and corruption. It is no surprise, therefore, that in the *lapsus ducis* with St. Gervase, Orderic's attention turns almost exclusively to William's sudden and utter poverty in death. In it he reads the signs of equitable punishment for excessive greed, from the spoliation with its focus on the *apparatu regio*, to the only type of undertakers available for William, the *uispilliones*, those who bury paupers, to the bier that first Orderic calls *feretro*[272] and later becomes *sandapila*,[273] a bier for the poor, and finally to the *libero solo [caruit]*, land unincumbered with debt, that William lacked for his burial (*caruit ad sepulturam*).[274] Of all the manifestations of God's just punishment that in some way rehearse the idea of William's deserved poverty in death, it is the latter – Ascelin's claim to St. Étienne's land – that brings back into focus Orderic's main concern in the *Historia*, the problem of England as a (formerly stolen) Norman land.

For once Ascelin's intervention is over, quite despite the compensation he receives, it is his irrefutable accusation that remains: contrary to Gilbert's statement or his own claims during his life, William *is* a robber of lands some of which, at least, as Ascelin's case proves, he omitted either to pay compensation for, or restore as part of

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[269] Op. cit., p. 196.

[270] Op. cit., pp. 266-7.

[271] Marjorie Chibnall notes that this figure is too large – see op. cit., p. 267, n. 5.

[272] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 104.

[273] Op. cit., p. 108.

[274] Ibid.

his penance. Ascelin's role, therefore, is to point the congregation (and the *lectores*) in the right direction. The issue at hand *is* land robbery and its restitution, but Ascelin's land as well as Baudry's – two examples, in the text, of land abusively confiscated by William – have only a metonymic function. There is another land in the *Historia* avidly discussed in connection both with the idea of robbery and of restitution – England – yet that land is never restored. It is significant, therefore, that in the *lapsus ducis* William intends to make restitution. As this is on account of moral burden, the issue appears to be serious: *neminem Anglici regni heredem constituo sed æterno conditori […] illud commendo*, 'I name no man as my heir to the kingdom of England; instead, I entrust it to the eternal Creator.'[275] He is about to leave England with no designated successor, but only a favourite, his son William whom he hopes might prevail with God's help. But as his other son, Henry, gives proof of greedy ambition and a desire for his father's lands, William changes his mind even as he speaks. Instead of returning England to God, thus maybe to her rightful heirs, he rushes to bequeath it to his other son, yet another Norman, thus ensuring with that simple gesture the continuity of Norman rule in England. Orderic, it would appear, holds William to account for that decision. We are beginning to understand this with William's restitution of lands to Baudry. His are a scene and a character entirely disconnected from the rest of the *lapsus* episode,[276] yet to William, desperate for his spiritual salvation, they command sudden attention. For in restoring his paternal inheritance to Baudry, William acknowledges to the reader that land abusively appropriated – just like men abusively held in captivity – may count toward spiritual damnation. *Pro amore Dei*, however, William concentrated on the lands of Baudry son of Nicholas, instead of on the real deal, England. *Pro amore Dei*, he should have done proper penance; instead, he chose the easy part at the cost of plunging England into further political disaster.

Intolerabilis fœtor: William's descendants

How deep into William's death did Orderic care to look in order to find the signs of God's terrible judgement? Conversely, at what point does the prose of the *lapsus* cease to rely on strategies of meaning construction that require interpretation and decoding? Of

[275] Orderic, book VII, vol. 4, p. 92-5.

[276] For the scene containing Baudry's case, see op. cit., p. 100.

all the tribulations that his body endures from the moment he dies until he is laid to rest in St. Étienne inter *chorum et altare*, the ignominy of William's bowels bursting so close to reaching holy ground may look like the only one that is not in need of interpretation. The opposite of the sweet fragrance of saints' bodies, the *intolerabilis fœtor* emanating from William's open abdomen appears to spell damnation. And yet, is there another way to engage with the *lapsus* that may allow us to get beyond this very tempting, and possibly limiting, association? Once again, Orderic's Latin text may provide some answers.

As he has finished describing the awe-inspiring moment of the burial, Orderic lapses again into the catch-all trope of *contemptus mundi*. He retells the terrible event of the bursting bowels in slightly different words, giving himself an opportunity to sermonise on the topics of *gloria carnis* and *continentia*. These two brief commentaries to the *lapsus* appear unjustified in a text exclusively concerned with politics and moral decisions. And yet, as we look closer at the second narrative of the burial scene, we understand that something in it does make a sermon on continence potentially applicable: a description of William's swollen belly. If in the actual scene of the burial Orderic informed us matter-of-factually that William's *pinguissimus uenter crepuit* (the very fat belly burst asunder), in the retelling of the scene, his formulation becomes more descriptive: *aruina uentris eius tot delectamentis enutrita cum dedecore patuit*.[277] The new image he is asking the reader to contemplate is not one of a fat belly bursting open, but of a belly whose size is now being explained in terms of both growth and pleasure and whose exposure is associated with shame. To indicate growing, Orderic uses *enutrio*, a verb that calls to mind the idea of nourishing and rearing. The *delectamenta* that nourish the belly's fat (*aruina uentris*) are delights, pleasures, amusements rather than delicacies (as Chibnall's translation reads). He no longer uses *crepuit*, but replaces it with *patuit*, a lexical choice that no longer renders the idea of bursting open, but of lying open, of being exposed to view and vulnerable. Whatever image Orderic may be trying to conjure in the minds of his readers, that image, in that primarily made out of words, is not without an echo in other parts of the text. We need to be aware of the power of suggestion that language has that is especially impactful during a normal reading process. For Orderic's reader would have arrived at the burial scene performing a sequential reading of the *lapsus* and not in sections as here. He would first hear

[277] Op. cit., p. 108.

uiscera being applied to William's sons;[278] then, not long after, he would be confronted with an image of William's belly described in terms of pleasure, rearing offspring, and now revealing itself open. Would he not have made the connection that the locus of the *uiscera* is the *uenter* (a metonym for offspring inside the womb) and that, therefore, the two notions were meant to speak to each other in the text? Is it possible, furthermore, that in the *intolerabilis fœtor* coming out of William's *uenter* Orderic encouraged the reader to see a herald of William's sons' reigns? Both men whom William paternally calls *uiscera* in the *ordinatio* – William Rufus and Henry – were kings of England in Orderic's time. As he endeavours to show in the *lapsus*, it was William's changed decision that brought them to the throne, even if indirectly much of the blame in the *lapsus* goes to Henry. Directly responsible, however, for the continued Norman presence on the English throne, from the time of the Conquest down to Orderic's own day, appear to be William and the *aruina uentris eius*. If anything, Orderic's sermon on the need for *continentia* and on the *gloria carnis* seems to be telling us this: that as English politics go, William and his descendance have been a real problem. But of concern here are not just the two kings indicated as *uiscera*: too many greedy men and women have issued from William. The *tot* in *tot delectamentis enutrita* may be an allusion to the whole of his progeny that includes another important player in Norman politics who is not mentioned in the text, but who furthered William's line providing yet another Norman to the English throne – this was Adela of Blois with her son Stephen. It was during her son's reign that the *lapsus* was probably written, a reign Stephen spent fighting over the throne of England against another of William's descendants, Henry's daughter Matilda. Orderic lived through part of the Anarchy which, after two of William's sons on the throne, saw more ruin added to England's lot as William's grandchildren vied for power. If Norman greed is indeed what lies behind the *intolerabilis fœtor* that no amount of holiness can cover, it becomes apparent why Orderic insists on the reaction of the *astantes* whose first impulse is always to hide their wealth. Sombre thoughts, in fact, have been assailing the crowds in the *lapsus ducis* since the beginning. Even as far back as the inception of William's illness at Mantes, Orderic has prefaced everything by considering rapine, robbery, and the hopes of some to see William gone in order to give themselves up to depredation.

[278] Op. cit., p. 92.

Since the beginning, Norman robbery and greed have been running like a power-charged cable among the threads of Orderic's narrative.

Benigniter dimittere: the role of eloquence in the *lapsus ducis*

As we reach the end of the *lapsus ducis* – an encrypted world of Norman politics where even the trope of *contempus mundi* is politically motivated – the lessons in Guitmund's oration become increasingly relevant. There are frequent revolutions in earthly kingdoms, Guitmund admonishes William in book four (*mutationes regnorum frequenter factæ sunt in orbe terrarum*).[279] Examples abound in the Bible and other holy books: one people conquers another, then itself within centuries is conquered by another. This has been the fate of the Babylonians who were conquered by the Medes and the Persians. In their turn, the Persians were later conquered by the Macedonians who were conquered by the Romans who then were conquered by the Franks who finally were conquered by the Normans. 'The Normans under their Duke Rollo wrested Normandy from Charles the Simple, and have now held it for a hundred and ninety years against the attacks of the Gauls.'[280] As Guitmund reminds William that the time has come for the end of the Norman rule in England and he should prepare for God's terrible judgement, so Orderic with the *lapsus ducis* reminds the newer generation of readers that pardon for the evils of the Normans is not possible. *Benigniter dimittere* may be a desired outcome in his text while eloquence has been generously lent to every pleader, but as Orderic shows in the end, no one in the *lapsus* is able to forgive: William Odo, Ascelin William, God William, but especially Orderic William. Under Orderic's pen, eloquence becomes individual, emulating the contours of each new personality, giving the impression of authenticity and of many possible outcomes. Ultimately, however, all eloquence in the *lapsus ducis* is the stuff of history writing, which, like God, does not forgive. For all its richness, its splendor, and its color, Orderic's remains the eloquence of the unforgiving.

[279] Orderic, book IV, vol. 2, p. 274.

[280] Op. cit., p. 277.

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