

# Narratives of Death and Emotional Affect in Late Medieval Chronicles

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*Despite their ostensibly unemotive tone, medieval chronicle narratives communicate an intricate range of emotions, particularly fear and hope, associated with death and the posthumous fate of human beings, both as individuals and in relation to the broader narrative of Christian salvation. The numerous records of deaths of individuals narrated in chronicles are intrinsically emotive events, and privileged loci both for the depiction of emotion and for the manipulation of readers' emotional responses to the narrative. The supposedly relentless sequential ordering of chronicles is often varied on these occasions for emotive effect. Following Roland Barthes's suggestive essay 'Tacitus and the Funerary Baroque', and taking the example of the execution of the Archbishop of York, Richard Scrope, in 1405, I argue that the reiteration of death is itself central to the chronicle texts' significance.*

[Sir Robert Goushill] was not slain in battle, but by the treachery of his own household servant when, exhausted and wounded, he had dragged himself from the battlefield. . . . In this field he pierced his master's naked, palpitating breast, and attacked him as he struggled to breathe, burying his knife in his chest as long as it took to confirm that he was truly dead.<sup>1</sup>

Johan Huizinga has observed that 'no other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death. An everlasting call of *memento mori* resounds through life'. Certainly, in late medieval chronicles death is announced with great regularity: the deaths of named and unnamed individuals and collective groupings (for instance, 'eight thousand Scots died') are recorded in connection to various events, such as wars, plagues, and rebellions, even murders on the battlefield, such as Sir Robert Goushill's fatal stabbing on the sidelines of the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403. Often a death is announced as an event in itself, rather than as one element in a larger sequence of events. The English chronicler Thomas Walsingham (d. 1422), for instance, records sequentially in his narrative of the year 1400:

That year Master Ralph Erghum, bishop of Bath, died, and Master Henry Bowet was elected, by assent of the king, to take his place.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Walsingham, *The St Albans Chronicle: The 'Chronica maiora' of Thomas Walsingham, Volume II: 1394–1422*, eds John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), p. 375. This edition presents the original Latin text with facing English translation. Page references are to the translations.

That year William, abbot of Waltham, was taken ill with the plague and died. He had been a young man fit for many more years in office.<sup>2</sup>

While in death these two individuals were singled out, in life it was only the Abbot of Waltham who had previously appeared in Walsingham's chronicle: he is listed among those who attended the burial of the deposed King Richard II.<sup>3</sup> For the Bishop of Bath, this is the first and only time that his name is recorded in this chronicle. These two death entries, listed one after the other in the chronicle narrative, read like a catalogue of death or a collection of epitaphs. Such entries are a means of commemorating the demise of important people, but are also moments of life set within a genre that was characterised by its grand narratives of nation and humanity, its chronological emphasis on documenting the history of the world from creation to the contemporary era, and its description of the world as a place infused with spirituality, a reflection of God, and a place of salvific significance.

While chronicles are full of records of death, they are not so full of the emotional terms associated with death and mourning: terms such as sadness, fear, grief, and relief did not commonly appear. It is possible to read a faint touch of regret in Walsingham's recognition of the Abbot of Waltham's untimely death, however, this emotion is not overtly expressed. Short announcements of deaths of the sort narrated by Walsingham for the Bishop of Bath and the Abbot of Waltham occur repeatedly throughout chronicles of the fifteenth century. Adam Usk, for instance, in addition to the numerous accounts of death as the outcomes of particular events, has four short death announcements that occupy their own paragraph entry for the year 1400.<sup>4</sup> John Capgrave too, writing in the 1460s, has numerous examples. He records in his narrative for the year 1403 that:

This 3ere deyed William Wikam, bischop of Wynchestir, þat foundid to nobil collegis, on at Wynchestir, anoþir at Oxenforth.

And in þe first day of Octobir deyed Pope Boniface þe IX, and in his stede was chosen þe bischop of Bononie, cleped Innocent þe VII.<sup>5</sup>

Although death is acknowledged and even, through the act of recording, remembered, the individuals and their deaths are presented in the chronicle

<sup>2</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, pp. 305, 307.

<sup>3</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 301.

<sup>4</sup> Adam Usk, *The Chronicle of Adam of Usk 1377–1421*, ed. and trans. Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) (hereafter *Chronicle of Adam of Usk*). For King Richard II, p. 89; John ap Gruffydd, the Abbot of Llantarnam, p. 95; the Abbot of Chertsey, p. 99; the Countess of Arundel, p. 115.

<sup>5</sup> John Capgrave, *John Capgrave's Abbreviation of Chronicles*, ed. Peter J. Lucas, EETS, o.s. 285 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 227.

narrative in terms that are neither individual nor emotive. In death, these individuals have been stripped down to the barest of details, and are devoid of any immediate emotional and personal contexts. These death narratives lack the rituals and emotional elements attached to dying: preparations for death, the bereavement of loved ones, and methods of commemoration, both public and private. In short, while there are many announcements of death in late medieval chronicle narratives, there is, comparatively, not a great deal of representation of dying, its rituals, and processes. Nor is there any real sense of individuals other than their roles, such as in the descriptions of the deaths of the Bishop of Bath and the Abbot of Waltham. The short death entries are principally framed in terms of the dead men's position and rank, and the process of replacing their positions of office. In his analysis of the murders in Tacitus's *Annals*, Roland Barthes noted that 'Tacitean death always discloses a civil status; the victim holds office, he is a unit, one, enclosing his history, his character, his function, his name'.<sup>6</sup> These men's deaths have been selected for record in a chronicle history because of their function and rank in society, and, ironically, the men are stripped of their individuality because of this ranking.

Chroniclers could and did utilise a range of more subtle narrative strategies to create emotional affect, such as imagery that incorporated visual and aural components. In a longer sequence on the murder of Sir Robert Goushill on the sidelines of the Battle of Shrewsbury, Walsingham uses the opportunity to develop emotive imagery: in a quiet space away from the main scene of battle, Goushill's last moments focus on a range of sounds; the plunging knife entering his body, his struggles to draw breath, and his palpitating heart, which when silent, alert the murderer to a successful kill. In this article, however, I would like to focus primarily on another narrative strategy employed by the chroniclers: the reconfiguration of chronological sequencing in the chronicles to create meaningful and affective death narratives. Central to my analysis are questions relating to time, death, and emotion as they pertain to the structuring of the chronicle narrative. I consider, among other things, the relationship between the narrativity of the chronicles and emotional affect. I take as an example the death narratives of Richard Scrope, the Archbishop of York (d. 1405) in several fifteenth-century chronicles produced in England. Scrope's death is remarkable. Executed for acts of rebellion against the English King Henry IV (r. 1399–1413), Scrope's influence moves beyond his physical demise and into the supernatural through a series of *post mortem* miracles.

<sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Tacitus and the Funerary Baroque', in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontage (London: Vintage, 1993), pp. 162–66 (p. 163).

### I. Death and Time in Medieval Chronicles

Chronicles are a form of historical writing with several striking characteristics, including a narrating voice that is impersonal and unemotional in style; however, key to the organisation of the chronicle narrative is time.<sup>7</sup> The arrangement of events according to the order in which they occurred has long been recognised as the fundamental generic marker of chronicles.<sup>8</sup> Gervase of Canterbury (d. c. 1210) reflected that,

A chronicle reckons the years from the Incarnation of our Lord, and counts the months of the years and the Kalends, and it teaches also the deeds of kings and princes which happened in those very years, and it records the events, portents, or miracles.<sup>9</sup>

Historical events were arranged in the narrative sequentially in order of their occurrence, and into discrete paragraph entries. Such an arrangement was thought to be an accurate and objective way of recording what happened. Moreover, chroniclers employed several narrative strategies to reckon time: frequently each new year is signalled in the narrative by the phrase ‘Anno Domini 14...’, and then events of the year are narrated chronologically. In most cases, new events are introduced via a temporal expression, such as ‘meanwhile’, ‘at the same time’, or ‘this year’.

Adherence to a narrative in which events are documented one after the other, connected by their proximity in time, has significant implications for the narrativity of chronicles. John Capgrave’s *Abbreviacion of Cronicles*, written in the early 1460s, presents a structure that is temporally overt, in which the marking of time is a dominant narrative feature. For example, a section of narrative for the year 1401 reads:

In þis 3ere Qween Ysabell was sent hom onto hir fader into Frauns, not fully xii 3ere of age.

In þis same 3ere Howeyn Glendor ded mech harm upon þe borderes of Ynglond.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the term ‘chronicle’ is taken from the Greek ‘χρόνος’ (*khronos*) meaning time.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the term ‘chronicle’, its meaning, and reasons for distinctions between chronicles, annals, and other forms of chronicle histories, see Alicia Marchant, *The Revolt of Owain Glyndŵr in Medieval English Chronicles* (Suffolk: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 11–12; David Dumville, ‘What is a Chronicle?’, in *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle Diebergen/Utrecht 16–21 July 1999*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 1–27; see also Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 2004), pp. 113–27.

<sup>9</sup> *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols (London: Longman & Co, 1879–80), I, 87: ‘Chronicus autem annos Incarnationis Domini annorumque menses computat et kalendas, actus etiam regum et principum quae in ipsis eveniunt breviter edocet, eventus etiam, portenta vel miracula commemorat.’ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Latin are the author’s own.

And in þe same tyme was layd in þe kyngis bed a hirus with iii braunchis,  
mad so scharp þat, where-euyr þe kyng had turned hum, it schuld sle him,  
but as God wold, it was aspired, and so he skaped þat perel.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear from this example that chronicles which overtly calculate time place limitations on the narratives they contain. The short and staccato entries, dominated by overt temporal anchors, make for a narrative that is piecemeal and fragmentary.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, there is a tendency not to return to a narrated event to provide a clear ending. The middle entry concerning the raiding parties of Owain Glyndŵr on the Anglo-Welsh border is a good example of a piecemeal narrative. The revolt of Owain Glyndŵr in Wales occurred over a long period, with many separate entries found that refer to it in Capgrave's narrative from 1400 to 1407. In Capgrave's chronicle, the Welsh revolt events are narrated separately, disjointed from each other, and continually interrupted by both the need to reckon time and by other seemingly unrelated events, such as the above example of Queen Isabella's return to France after the deposition and death of her husband Richard II, and Henry IV's near-death experience with a pronged iron instrument in his bed. Significantly, Capgrave does not provide a narrative ending to the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr, but abruptly ends his narrative with an account of the siege of Aberystwyth Castle in 1407.<sup>12</sup> For the short announcements of death there are sometimes no previous narrative with which to make connections, as in the case of the singularly appearing Bishop of Bath in Walsingham's chronicle. In such instances, the decided lack of emotionality is further generated by the abruptness with which they appear; narrative surroundings provide no context; the deaths of the Bishop of Bath and Abbot of Waltham are immediately preceded by a detailed account of the start of the revolt of Owain Glyndŵr in Wales in 1400, and the English retaliation (which resulted in the killing of whosoever was 'unlucky enough at that time to come up against their drawn swords'.<sup>13</sup>) Immediately following the two entries is an account of the Emperor of Constantinople's visit to England.<sup>14</sup> The dislocation of these two death narratives emphasises the matter-of-factness with which they are presented.

<sup>10</sup> Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion*, p. 218.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 88–108 (p. 90).

<sup>12</sup> Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion*, p. 232.

<sup>13</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 305.

<sup>14</sup> Bryan Bevan, *Henry IV* (London: Rubicon, 1994), p. 77. Emperor Manuel II spent Christmas with Henry IV in 1400 at the Palace of Eltham.

The seeming inability of many chronicles to narrate fully an event in its logical sequence, from its beginning, through to a middle, and finally to an end has been the source of some discomfort for many modern scholars of narrative.<sup>15</sup> As Hayden White points out,

The chronicle usually is marked by a failure to achieve narrative *closure*. It does not so much conclude as simply terminate. It starts out to tell a story but breaks off *in medias res* [sic], in the chronicler's own present; it leaves things unresolved or, rather, leaves them unresolved in a story-like way.<sup>16</sup>

While White does not altogether dismiss chronicles as narrative entities, he does argue that chronicles fall short of achieving narrativity because of this deficiency in their story-telling capability. This lack of a narrative ending and thus of a coherent story, coupled with the view of the chronicle as a multitude of seemingly unrelated events arranged one after the other, has contributed to the notion of the chronicles as 'random assemblages of data' and not full and complete narratives.<sup>17</sup> However, I argue that it is mistaken to assume that the chroniclers' primary goal was to achieve chronological accuracy, narrative cohesion, and narrative closure. Instead the chroniclers' primary goal appears to have been to construct a narrative that was capable of sustaining significance and was meaningful for their readers.

What many modern critics of overtly chronological narrative have not taken into consideration is that the structure and its temporal anchors were not random but rather were purposeful, meaningful, and culturally significant. The overarching story being told in the chronicles is that of humanity, and particularly humanity's progress towards divine salvation in light of the fall of humankind in the Garden of Eden. The Christian view of time, as is reflected via the chronological arrangement of the chronicle narrative, is teleological: it is progressively moving towards the ultimate conclusion of judgement, redemption, and divine salvation that will be provided by an omnipotent God upon death. The chronological sequencing of the historical materials and reference to yearly dates *Anno Domini* within the chronicle narratives provide a measurement of the distance between the narrated historical event and 'the Incarnation of our Lord'. Indeed, the type of chronicle form under discussion

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Arthur C. Danto, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 117–19, 356.

<sup>16</sup> Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 7.1 (1980), 5–27 (p. 9).

<sup>17</sup> For a full discussion of these issues, see Foot, 'Finding the Meaning of Form', p. 90; Dumville, 'What is a Chronicle?', pp. 18–19; and S. Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory*, 22 (1983), 278–310 (pp. 284–85).

here has its roots as a specifically Christian form.<sup>18</sup> The life of Christ was central to salvation history, and the application of a chronological sequence, coupled with temporal markers, provided a clear link between events of the Bible and individuals of the contemporary era.

Death, then, is at the core of chronicle structure, and chronicle structure was a reflection of humanity's trajectory towards the afterlife. Chroniclers, both medieval and humanist, viewed their position as at the end of a long history, but also saw themselves as the custodians of future events, none greater than the second coming of Christ, and Judgement Day. The chronicle was, then, a historical record of events and people deemed important to this progress. Events of national and universal importance, as well as natural and supernatural phenomena such as the sightings of comets and devils were considered, as Gervase of Canterbury notes, key to understanding the world and humanity's place within it. For instance, Henry 'Hotspur' Percy's death at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403 is commonly foreshadowed in chronicles by the appearance of a comet in 1402 or 1403, as well as other omens, allowing for an accumulation of symbol and significance around his death. Such portents were considered to be signs from God that (when interpreted) served as warnings of future events, or justifications of past events.<sup>19</sup> Comets were particularly linked to impending death through war, famine, and plague. Unsurprisingly, comets were frequently framed as fearful in chronicle narrative. Adam Usk refers to the comet of 1403 as 'a fearsome comet, which moved ahead of the sun, spreading terror throughout the world'.<sup>20</sup> The anonymous *Continuatio Eulogii* refers to a 'comet-star, horrible to look upon ... whose great flame rose on high'.<sup>21</sup> Comets and other phenomena

<sup>18</sup> T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 106–25. The first specifically world history was that of the Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339). It was subsequently translated into Latin and adapted by Jerome, laying the foundation for subsequent western chronicle writing.

<sup>19</sup> Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, pp. 22–33; Philippa Maddern, 'Weather, War and Witches: Sign and Cause in Fifteenth-Century English Vernacular Chronicles', in *A World Explored: Essays in Honour of Laurie Gardiner*, ed. Anne Gilmour-Bryson (Melbourne: History Department, University of Melbourne, 1993), pp. 77–98.

<sup>20</sup> *Chronicle of Adam of Usk*, p. 155: '[S]olem precedentem cometam terribilem ... mundi terrorem.' It should be noted that Adam was travelling towards Italy at the time of the comet and so assigns the significance of the comet to the death of the Duke of Milan, not to the Battle of Shrewsbury.

<sup>21</sup> *Continuatio Eulogii*, in *Eulogium (historiarum sive temporis): Chronicon ab orbe condito usque ad Annum Domini M.CCC.LXVI*, ed. Frank Scott Haydon (London: Rolls Series, 1858), p. 389: 'Hoc insuper anno post Natale Domini apparuit quaedam stella comata aspectu terribilis in Occidente, ejus flamma magna sursum ascendebat.' The full translation is: 'Moreover in this year, after Christmas, appeared a certain comet-star, horrible to look upon, in the west, whose great flame rose on high.' The *Continuatio Eulogii* is a continuation of the *Eulogium historiarum*.

were, like narratives of death, reminders of the presence of a benevolent, but (mostly) invisible, omnipotent God.

Although the subject matter of chronicles is affecting and significant, the material is presented through modes of narration that are inherently unemotional. The materials are presented in an objective, unemotive, and distant manner; death entries, such as Walsingham's records of the deaths of the Bishop of Bath and the Abbot of Waltham, are presented through an unobtrusive and covert narrative voice, expressed through a combination of third-person narration and past tenses: there is a constructed distance between the narrative voice and the material recorded. There are exceptions to the rule. For instance, the chronicler Adam Usk, writing in the early fifteenth century, breaches the more usual modes of narration, instead providing a narrative increasingly dominated by his use of the first person, and the collapse of objectivity through his narration of events that occurred to him personally.<sup>22</sup> Adam's breach means that in several instances, there are emotional responses to various deaths expressed in his narrative. He dreams, for example, about the death of his patron the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel: 'whereupon, awakening, I realised that we had been parted from one another, and with sadness, I said a mass for his soul. I was later informed of his death.'<sup>23</sup> Adam Usk records his own feelings and emotions, his affection for his patron, and feelings of grief at his loss. Adam's methods of narration are, however, unique, and certainly not typical of chronicle narrative in the fifteenth century.

Following Barthes's suggestive essay 'Tacitus and the Funerary Baroque', one can see the reiteration of death, like time, as itself central to the chronicle texts' significance. In his analysis of death in Tacitus's *Annals*, Barthes states,

Counted, the murders in the *Annals* are few enough (some fifty for three principates) but read, their effect is apocalyptic: from element to mass, a new quality appears, the world is transformed.<sup>24</sup>

As Barthes points out, the function of the recorded deaths are multiplicative, rather than additive. It is not just about the death of individuals, but rather the totality of the deaths: what they mean as a whole. Within this vein, it becomes apparent that the short, factual announcements of death, as well as the longer reflections on death discussed below, are as much about recording an incident

<sup>22</sup> See Alicia Marchant, "Adam, you are in a Labyrinth": Textual Interpolation as the Nexus of Body and Spirit in the Chronicle of Adam Usk', in *Conjunctions: Body and Mind from Plato to Descartes*, ed. Danijela Kambaskovic (London: Springer, 2014), pp. 47–68.

<sup>23</sup> *Chronicle of Adam of Usk*, p. 248: '[E]t sic euigilans intellexi quod diuisi eramus de cetero, et pro anima sua quam dolenter missam celebraui; et postea de morte sua certioratus fui.'

<sup>24</sup> Barthes, 'Tacitus and the Funerary Baroque', p. 162.



of death as they are about narrating a larger process. Death narratives are rare examples of closure in chronicle narrative, and keep death and salvation ever present in the mind of the reader of chronicle histories. They are reminders of the grand narrative that chronicles sought to convey, with all of its emotive, soteriological force.

Paradoxically, while the material in chronicles is presented through a mode of narration that is unemotive, the teleological view of time reflected in the structure of chronicle narrative is inherently emotional. Judgement and salvation were perceived through a variety of emotional lenses in the Middle Ages. As Margaret Aston points out, descriptions and images of hell and judgement were both viewed and listened to in churches all over Europe.<sup>25</sup> Death and dying were associated with a complex emotional framework of fear and hope: fear of God and fear of pain and suffering, and the hope that one had done enough in life to prevent such a fate in death. The teleological movement of the chronicle transfigures even mundane and sparsely narrated events into moments of a cosmic process.

## **II. Time and Emotion in the Death Narratives of Archbishop Scrope of York**

Narratives detailing the deaths of rebels, either by execution or on the field of battle, are some of the longer sequences on death in chronicles, perhaps due to the didactic and performative elements of execution and execution narratives in the Middle Ages. These narratives sought to serve as a warning of the consequences of crimes, and particularly of rebellion. The remarkable death narrative of the execution of Richard Scrope, the Archbishop of York, in 1405, offers insight into how emotion functions in the chronicle narrative as an inherent quality of the teleological structure, and also demonstrates some of the ways in which chroniclers reconfigure chronological structure to create more emotive narratives for their imagined readers.

In 1405 Richard Scrope, the Archbishop of York, was executed for high treason for his part in a rebellion against Henry IV. Scrope's death is problematic in many respects, a fact reflected in the complex narratives compiled by the chroniclers. Henry IV's decision to pass down capital punishment on Scrope was legally fraught; although there had been precedents, no prelate had ever

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Aston, 'Death', in *Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 202–28; Piero Camporesi, *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990).

been executed by the sentence of the lay court.<sup>26</sup> The chroniclers record that many people in England and Europe were outraged at Scrope's death, and soon afterwards Pope Innocent VII excommunicated Henry.<sup>27</sup> While Scrope is referred to as 'Saint Richard' by many of the chroniclers, he was never formally canonised despite various attempts, such as that made in March 1462 by the York Convocation. Scrope's popularity, however, remained high throughout the fifteenth century with a noted cult following: the place of his burial in York Minster was a popular site for pilgrimage and was associated with miracles.<sup>28</sup>

Chroniclers utilise multiple narrative devices in order to communicate a meaningful narrative of the death of Scrope. The unknown author of the *Continuatio Eulogii*, written sometime before 1428, records the moment of Scrope's death in the following manner:

And the Archbishop who was to be beheaded said: "Lo, I die for the law and the good rule of the kingdom of England." And then he said to the others who were to be beheaded with him "let us endure this punishment patiently, and tonight we will be in Paradise." And at once, the king began to appear as if leprous.<sup>29</sup>

Constructions of time and duration are used to formulate implicit connections between Scrope's death and the illness of Henry IV: these two events occur at the exact moment in time, and are recorded in the chronicle paratactically, leaving the reader to draw conclusions about how the two events (execution and leprosy) are connected. Like the *Continuatio Eulogii*, several chroniclers do not connect the two events explicitly; rather, the connection is to be made through a sequential reading of the narrative. This is the strategy employed by John Capgrave and John Rous,<sup>30</sup> as well as the unknown author of *An English Chronicle*, who states that after the Archbishop's head had been 'smyte off':

<sup>26</sup> R. G. Davies, 'After the Execution of Archbishop Scrope: Henry IV, the Papacy, and the English Episcopate, 1405–8', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 59 (1976–77), 40–74 (p. 44).

<sup>27</sup> See Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 471. The excommunication was lifted in April 1408, and the execution deemed lawful.

<sup>28</sup> J. W. McKenna, 'Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: the Cult of Archbishop Scrope', *Speculum*, 45 (1970), 608–23.

<sup>29</sup> *Continuatio Eulogii*, p. 408: 'Et archiepiscopus decollandus dixit: "En morior pro legibus et bono regimine regni Angliae." Et aliis dixit secum decollandis: "Hanc poenam patienter sustineamus et hac nocte in Paradiso erimus." Et Rex <incunctanter> quasi leprosus apparere cepit; qui statum bona civium civitatis Eborum confiscavit, deinde transivit ad Aquilonem contra eos qui castra sua ibidem tenebant.' I have replaced the certainly erroneous 'incontinenti' ('incontinent one') with incunctanter. There is no need for an incontinent person here, especially in the dative.

<sup>30</sup> Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion*, p. 229; John Rous, *Rossi Warwicensis Historia Regum Angliae*, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1716), p. 207.

And anon after, as yt wasse seid, the kynge wasse smytte with an horrible leper. For þa whiche archbisshoppes, Almyghty Godde wrogh myracles as yt appereth in þe place where he ys buried.<sup>31</sup>

Significantly, the chronicler uses the same term 'smytte' to refer to both the beheading and Henry being struck down suddenly with a terrible affliction. While the term 'smite' was certainly used in relation to illnesses in the mid-fifteenth century, when *An English Chronicle* was composed, the repetition and proximity of use suggest that this was another more subtle means of connecting the two events.<sup>32</sup>

*Continuatio Eulogii* is unique in that it first provides an introductory overview of Scrope's death and its effect, before immediately turning to the start of Scrope's rebellion again to provide a more detailed, chronological account of the events leading up to Scrope's execution (cited above). This introductory overview reads:

The year of our Lord 1405, and the fifth year of the King, the lord Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, and Lord Mowbray, who was the Earl Marshal, were beheaded near York. Almighty God works miracles through this archbishop through to this very day. And, as some say, the King at the hour of the death of the said church dignitary, had been struck with leprosy, which no one of the doctors was able to cure, and from that same affliction he afterwards died.<sup>33</sup>

This is an unusual passage in which four events (Scrope's death, Scrope's miracles, Henry IV's leprosy, and Henry IV's death) are identified and grouped together in a single narrative entry. This short paragraph contains much information that is chronologically out of place. Appearing in the chronicle narrative for the year 1405, it is a conflation of events that occurred over an eight-year period from Scrope's death in 1405 to Henry IV's death in 1413. Indeed, the chronicler makes reference to his own period in time with 'to this very day', which could take the narrative up to around 1428, when the *Continuatio Eulogii* was believed to have been compiled. Significantly,

<sup>31</sup> *An English Chronicle, 1377–1461: Edited from Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 21068 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Lyell 34*, ed. William Marx (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2003), p. 37.

<sup>32</sup> 'smite, v.', 8.a.: 'Of diseases, distempers, etc.: To attack, affect suddenly or grievously', *Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition, 2014) <<http://www.oed.com>> [accessed 17 December 2014].

<sup>33</sup> *Continuatio Eulogii*, p. 405: 'Anno Domini 1405, et Regis anno quinto, dominus Ricardus Scrop', archiepiscopus Eborum, et dominus de Mowbray, qui etiam Comes Marescallus vocabatur, apud Eborum decollantur. Deus enim omnipotens per ipsum archiepiscopum usque hodie mirabiliter operatur. Et, ut quidam dicunt, Rex in hora mortis dicti praesulis lepra percussus erat, quam nemo medicorum curare potuit, sed ex eadem postea mortuus est infirmitate.'

the passage contains a prolepsis (a ‘flash-forward’), providing an overview of events from a later time, which will be narrated again later on in the chronicle, in their correct chronological order: Scrope’s execution, for instance, is narrated again five paragraphs later.

Deviations in chronology play a central role in the communication of emotions regarding Scrope’s execution. The collapsing and telescoping of time, in order to form varying connections between different events and hence produce a different story, have emotional significance.<sup>34</sup> In this instance, the need to produce an emotional affect concerning the controversial death of Scrope means that the conclusion to this story (Henry IV’s leprosy and eventual death) is moved forward in order to produce an affective narrative. Emotion could, in this way, be conveyed through small-scale shifts in chronology. There are numerous examples of this occurring in the death narratives of Scrope and Hotspur. In *An English Chronicle*, for instance, the chronicler misplaces the Battle of Shrewsbury, placing it in 1401–02, when it should be in 1403.<sup>35</sup> It is entirely possible that the chronicler intentionally moved the Battle of Shrewsbury to be closer to the appearance of the comet that predicted the battle. If this is the case, then rather than reshuffling the chronological position of the omen, the chronicler has moved what is predicted. While chronological sequencing of the narrative was, in theory, supposed to be adhered to according to the generic conventions of the chronicle form, in practice chronicle narratives are not always strictly chronological; rather, it would appear that chronological accuracy was only a secondary concern to the chronicler’s impulse to tell smaller, secondary narratives within the grand, framing teleological narrative. Incidents of death in the chronicles are also, however, moments of interaction between the smaller, secondary narrative and the grander, framing narrative. They are metanarratives that remind the readers of their own mortality and eventual judgement, and also of the purpose in chronicling the history of humanity: as a tool for understanding the world.

Scrope’s death resonates through the chronicle narrative. His bodily demise does not end his influence in the material world but continues *post mortem*, sparking a chain of reported phenomena that occur immediately upon his death and for a considerable length of time thereafter. There are numerous miracles recorded in association with Scrope (a point to which I will return in a moment), but, as noted, the most immediate effect is on

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of this notion with regard to modern literature, see Patrick Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> *An English Chronicle*, p. 33.

Henry IV, whose dying starts at the moment of Scrope's death. Henry's body instantly begins to fail and crumble. As Capgrave narrates immediately after the death of Scrope:

The kyng aftir þat tyme lost þe beuté of his face, for, as þe comoun opinion went, for þat tyme onto his deth he was a lepir, and euyr fowler and fowler; for in his deth, as þei recorded þat sey him, he was so contracte þat his body was scarce a cubite of length.<sup>36</sup>

Henry becomes deformed and ugly, and although he still lives, his body is physically rotting, putrefying, and shrunken: he exists in a state of living death.<sup>37</sup> Time is telescoped in Capgrave's description to include Henry's death, and he uses emotionally loaded language, in particular his repetition of the word 'fowler' and his singling out of the face (as the most visible body part and site of emotional expression) as the affected part, all of which contribute to an image that is meant to repulse and disgust. The natural state of decay and corruption has been transferred from the dead body of Scrope to the living body of Henry IV.<sup>38</sup>

Henry IV's body becomes the medium through which the gravity of this dire situation is enacted and performed. The repulsive effect of the disease on Henry's body is seemingly justified and deserved, with many chroniclers interpreting it as an outward and visual sign of wrongdoing, and divine vengeance for the execution of Archbishop Scrope. Henry received much criticism before and after the execution, ignoring advice such as that from the Archbishop of Canterbury to 'kepe your hondes vndefouled off his bloode'.<sup>39</sup> This striking imagery of blood on Henry's hands is a sign of both his guilty part in ordering the execution and a forewarning of the effect of such a death on the body. The chronicler Robert Fabyan goes further and states that Henry's leprosy was the direct result of the 'hande of God', taking the phrase with a terrible literalness as a physical contact. Fabyan records that Henry IV felt a strike upon his neck at the exact moment that Scrope was executed, as

<sup>36</sup> Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion*, p. 229.

<sup>37</sup> As well as its physical effects, leprosy was a social death too: lepers were ostracised and isolated from society. Christopher Daniell (*Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066–1550* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 204) cites two quite extreme examples of leprosy sufferers stripped of their living status and declared dead in rituals that included being made to stand above an open grave.

<sup>38</sup> Manuele Gragnolati, 'From Decay to Splendor: Body and Pain in Bonvesin de la Riva's *Book of the Three Scriptures*', in *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 83–97.

<sup>39</sup> *An English Chronicle*, p. 37.

though ‘some persone there beyng with hym present, had stryken hym’.<sup>40</sup> He continues, saying that

forthwith he [the king] was stryken with y<sup>e</sup> plage of lepyr, so that then he knewe it was the hande of God, & repended hym of that hasty iugement, withouth auctoryte of the Churche. And soon after God shewyd many myracles for the sayde byssshop, whiche called the kynge vnto the more repentaunce.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike the author of the *Continuatio Eulogii*, who uses an essentially paratactic narration as a means to connect Scrope’s death to Henry’s leprosy, Fabyan leaves no room for doubt. Leprosy was an illness with an attached moral stigma, associated with uncleanness, contaminated blood, sin and immorality,<sup>42</sup> in particular, the breaking of oaths and making of false allegations, as well as sexual sins.<sup>43</sup> Henry is punished for his transgression(s) by a powerful God. It is a moment in which the nexus between emotions and the teleological structure is evident: the account of the leprosy produces and reinforces fear in the reader, associated with the powerful, omnipotent God, whose universal plan provides a framework for the text, and the genre as a whole.

Henry’s leprosy and death also highlight the perceived connection between the temporal body and the spiritual soul, and the notion of living a good life and dying a good death. Despite dying by execution, Scrope dies well: he is not fearful or anxious of death, but is relaxed, in control, and aware of the process. Scrope calmly addresses those present, which is commonly recorded in direct speech (as in the *Continuatio Eulogii*’s account cited previously). Scrope does not convey, either by speech or gestures, any negative emotion associated with his own death: there is no fear, anger, or resentment. While one could never say that this was an overtly happy narrative, there is certainly a sense of confidence and pride in his sacrifice. Walsingham provides a lengthy account of Scrope comforting the 19-year-old Thomas Mowbray, the Earl Marshal, who had rebelled with Scrope, and who was ‘beginning to dread death’. Scrope

promised him, on peril of his own soul, that once the burden of his flesh was released, his spirit would fly to the realms of joy. So it was that the

<sup>40</sup> Robert Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: Rivington, 1811), p. 572.

<sup>41</sup> Fabyan, *New Chronicles*, p. 572.

<sup>42</sup> For an examination of the complex connection between blood and leprosy, see Susan Zimmerman, ‘Leprosy in the Medieval Imaginary’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38 (2008), 559–87 (esp. p. 568).

<sup>43</sup> Daniell, *Death and Burial*, pp. 204–05; Peter L. Allen, *The Wages of Sin: Sex and Disease, Past and Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 25–40.

young man faced his death more joyfully and more calmly as he was beheaded by the executioner.<sup>44</sup>

The Archbishop expects that both he and those executed along with him will be rewarded in the afterlife. This is a point made by several of the chronicles, such as the *Continuatio Eulogii*, which records Scrope telling Mowbray not to worry because ‘tonight we will be in Paradise’, an allusion to Jesus’s words to the ‘good thief’ in Luke 23. 43.<sup>45</sup> Walsingham, however, goes further to describe what this paradise would be like: a place of unmitigated joy and happiness. As a result of Scrope’s actions, Mowbray’s mood alters. Indeed, Walsingham later records that Scrope’s ‘severed head was seen to smile serenely’.<sup>46</sup> This smile is important as both a reflection of his hopeful approach to his death, and confirmation that the afterlife was as Scrope had expected.

Scrope is presented as a sacrificial figure in many of his death narratives, with several parallels drawn between Scrope’s death and Christ’s. The aforementioned blood on Henry IV’s hands evokes images of Pontius Pilate’s washing his hands before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. In an echo of Jesus’s entry (shortly before his death) into Jerusalem on a donkey, Walsingham describes the transportation of the men to the place of execution ‘upon scraggy animals without saddlecloths’.<sup>47</sup> Significantly, Robert Fabyan and *An English Chronicle* record, through the use of direct speech, that Scrope asked the executioner for five strokes, “[f]or his loue þat suffred v wondes for all mankynde, geve me v strokes, and I forgeue the my dethe”. And soo he died, and thus they died.<sup>48</sup> By asking for a manner of death that reflects the five wounds suffered by Christ at his crucifixion, Scrope asks to experience the sort of pain and suffering that Jesus endured during the Passion. Christ’s death is a central temporal reference point within the teleological structure of the chronicle: it was through Christ’s crucifixion that eternal salvation was possible. Scrope’s imitation of the Passion at his own death evokes associations of the resurrection and salvation, recalling a re-foundational moment in the temporal structure of chronicles. Moreover, Scrope’s request for what is essentially torture frames his execution narratives with a sense of empowerment of the executed. He has in effect taken charge of his own execution, transforming what was meant to be a grisly and theatrical warning

<sup>44</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 453.

<sup>45</sup> *Continuatio Eulogii*, p. 408.

<sup>46</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 455.

<sup>47</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 453. The use of ‘iumentis’ for ‘animal’ could refer to various beasts of burden, including, for instance, a draught-horse, donkey, or bullock.

<sup>48</sup> *An English Chronicle*, p. 37; Fabyan, *New Chronicles*, p. 572.

to other potential rebels into his own final statement of Christian hope and the sanctity of the Church.

For Scrope, death does nothing to quell his influence. Rather, his continued power is felt among the living. Chroniclers narrate a series of miracles associated with Scrope, centred on the place of his execution and at his place of burial at York. While many chroniclers state in general terms that there were miracles associated with Scrope – such as John Capgrave’s statement that ‘[i]n þe place where þe biscop deid were many myracles and mech pilgrimage’<sup>49</sup> – there are some specific accounts of miracles detailed. The author of the *Continuatio Eulogii* narrates that there was a fire in a belltower at York, but the building was saved through the intervention of ‘Saint Richard Scrope’.<sup>50</sup> John Rous (d. c.1492), an antiquarian who wrote for the Tudor king, Henry VII, counts Henry’s leprosy, suffered also by his son Henry V, among Scrope’s miracles; he records the illness to be ‘white leprosy’.<sup>51</sup> The addition of Henry V into the narrative of Scrope’s death points to the revision of this episode by later Tudor propagandists.<sup>52</sup> Henry V was widely believed to have died as a result of dysentery. However, such telescoping of time through a prolepsis provides Scrope’s death with a longer affective history, one which had serious implications for the Lancastrian dynasty.

The most detailed description of a miracle associated with Scrope’s execution is provided by Walsingham, and involves an account of Scrope’s interaction with the unnamed freeholder of the barley field located outside of York’s city wall on which Scrope was about to be executed. The owner was concerned that he would lose his livelihood because his field was being trampled by ‘countless horsemen and foot-soldiers’. The man was ‘in tears, and complained that it was his [Scrope’s] fault that he had lost hope for the whole of his livelihood for the coming year’.<sup>53</sup> Scrope, reacting to the upset and despairing man, was ‘filled with compassion, comforted the poor fellow’,

<sup>49</sup> Capgrave, *Abbreuiacion*, p. 291.

<sup>50</sup> *Continuatio Eulogii*, p. 421.

<sup>51</sup> Rous, *Historia Regum Angliae*, p. 207: ‘Iste etiam rex Sanctum Ricardum cognominatum Scrope, de nobile sanguine ortum, Eboracensem archiepiscopum, cum aliis dominis juxta Eboracum decapitari jusit, & nunquam postea bene convaluit, ut dicebatur, alba lepra percusus est. Similiter & filius & heres suus futurus eadem, ut dicitur, infirmitate involutus est, miraculorumque varia multitudo declarabat dicti archiepiscopi gloriosa merita.’ The full translation is: ‘This king ordered the beheading of St Richard, named Scrope, who was born of noble blood, the Archbishop of York, with him other lords, near York and afterwards was never in good health, as it is said, but he was stricken with white leprosy. Similarly, his son and future heir was, so it is said, overcome by the same infirmity, and a varied multitude of miracles declared the glorious merits of the said archbishop.’

<sup>52</sup> Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, Vol. II, c.1007 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 313–27.

<sup>53</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 453.



and after failing to have the place of execution moved, then prayed ‘for this sorrowful man’, and blessed the field. The following year,

the field, which appeared to have been completely trodden down, produced a crop that year larger than any it had produced in many a year, so that the owner saw seven ears grow from one stalk, full-sized and shapely, and this was the testimony given by many people.<sup>54</sup>

The miracle of the crop is an inherently emotive one. Scrope’s overwhelming feeling of compassion for the farmer and the crop is key to Walsingham’s narrative. Despite facing his own death at any moment, Scrope is utterly absorbed by the man’s plight and sympathises with him. Though neither the farmer nor Scrope expresses grief or sadness for the death of Scrope, both are upset at the loss of the crop. This parallel expression of sadness by Scrope and the farmer for the crop forges an emotional connection between these two men. The crop is presented by Walsingham as a central means of providing a happy and contented life for the farmer, and as such, the crop represents life; but the miracle is fulfilled only through and after Scrope’s death. Walsingham uses the crop to denote duration in Scrope’s death narrative, stating that the barley field was ‘freshly sown’ at the time of Scrope’s execution, before continuing on to describe the miracle of its productivity. Significantly, however, Walsingham rearranges chronology, with the miracle of the crop narrated before Scrope is even dead: the sequence of events moves from the encounter of Scrope and the farmer, to a description of the miracle crop, and only then the execution of Scrope.<sup>55</sup> This rearrangement allows Walsingham to provide an immediate conclusion to the episode, ending on a symbol of Scrope’s continued power and of hope in resurrection. The result is a narrative in which Scrope emerges triumphant. While he was powerless to prevent his own death, or even move the location of his death, the productivity of the field is what provides this narrative with an affective conclusion. Scrope’s death is, it would seem, one element in the process of this miracle.

### III. Conclusions

Narrative accounts of a death, such as that of Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, reveal the complex nature of the interrelationship between emotion, time, and death in medieval chronicles. Death was located within a complex, overarching narrative frame, one that paradoxically organised the materials in an unemotive way, while also invoking emotions associated with death

<sup>54</sup> Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle*, p. 455.

<sup>55</sup> One might also detect an allusion to Christ’s words at John 12. 24–25: ‘Amen, amen I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’

and the posthumous fate of human beings, particularly fear and hope. As the example of Scrope's death narratives illustrates, this arrangement could be, and frequently was, manipulated in order to produce an emotional response: rearrangements in chronology allowed chroniclers to form symbolic links with proximate events. There are no expressions of grief and sadness associated with Scrope's death, rather there is joy at his expected entry into heaven and disgust at the person who ordered his execution. While – to quote Barthes once more – death is always a dying,<sup>56</sup> the death narratives in chronicles have emotional consequences that are far greater than a simple reaction to the mortality of an individual. They are connected, rather, to the notion of salvation and judgement, to eschatological hopes and fears that had consequences for all of humanity.

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<sup>56</sup> Barthes, 'Tacitus and the Funerary Baroque', p. 163.