PORTRAITS OF ROYALTIES IN THE De NUGIS CURIALUM OF WALTER MAP. A HYPOTHESIS ABOUT CHIVALRIC ROYALTY AND POLITICAL FACTIONS AT THE PLANTAGENET COURT.¹

RETRATOS DE REALEZAS EN EL De NUGIS CURIALUM DE WALTER MAP. UNA HIPÓTESIS ACERCA DE LA REALEZA CABALLERESCA Y LAS FACCIONES POLÍTICAS EN LA CORTE PLANTAGENET

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Abstract:
During the XIIth century the court of Henry II had a leading role in the construction of the idea of courtliness and it was a propitious laboratory for the weapon of the courtiers: the word. A peculiarity of the cultural production at the Plantagenet court was the use of literature to translate, fight or explain, in literary terms, the conflicts of the ‘Angevin Empire’. A lot of texts are used as medium for other messages.

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that are hidden under the fine courtly language.

The article will analyse a particular case of study: the De nugis curialium of Walter Map. An atypical text whose author was a venomous and typical courtier. His work is a heterogeneous anthology, written in a fine Latin, which concerns all the themes of the XIIth century world of the courts. Walter Map tells us about the most incredible stories with the same facility used to describe events in which he was involved himself. Among fairy tales, knights, tournaments and venomous satires we can catch also the figures of a lot of kings and queens: images which talk about the capacity of ruling, and about personal attitudes.

The reading of those stories needs bearing in mind the double-nature of the courtly texts, the literary one and the political one, strictly connected with the aspiration of the patron and the writer. The description of royalty in the work of Walter Map asks di-
rectly to his own needs and the ones of the Angevin rulers, painting portraits of good and bad kings, real and fantastic ones. The way used by the author to describe Henry II, Luis VII and Henry the Young King, could reveal the ideas of the author, of this patron or, better, which idea of royalties and kings they wanted to propagate.

Keywords: Henry II, Walter Map, Kings, Courtly literature, Anglo-norman England.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the XIIth century the court of Henry II (1133-†1189) assumed a leading role in the construction of the idea of courtliness and was a perfect breeding ground for courtier’s ambitions and ‘professional skills’.

The Plantagenet court made a particular use of the cultural production, in order to translate, argue or explain in literary terms the conflicts of the “Angevin Empire”. Several written texts were used by means of concealing other messages hidden underneath fine courtly language.

It was at the Plantagenet court that, between the late twelfth century and early thirteenth, Walter Map (c.1140-†c.1210) wrote the De nugis curialium2. A work which melds historical events with fantasy tales in a typical courtier style, in keeping with its author. Reading those stories needs bearing in mind the double-nature

of the courtly texts: a literary and political value, strictly connected with the aspiration of patrons and authors. The description of royalty in the work of Walter Map painting portraits of good and bad kings, real and fantastic ones refers directly to the needs of the Angevin power.

I shall illustrate different examples of how descriptions of kings could be used by the author for both purposes: his own advantage and a political use. I am going to analyse some figures of kings met by the author in person, and how this can be related to Walter Map’s need to find another court in which to serve, after Henry II’s death. In addition, I am going to illustrate how the descriptions of some kings, the real as well as the imaginary ones, were made using also some literary *topoi*, which here can be read in an anti-chivalry perspective. We must bear in mind that during the dominion of the Plantagenet the chivalric ideology was strongly related to some political factions supporting the rebellions of Henry the Young, which ends with the creation of the myth around Richard the Lionheart, the perfect chivalrous king.

To proceed with this analysis it is necessary to start from the specific environment in which the Plantagenet court was flourishing, involved in the cultural and social changes that rose in the late XIIth century. The role of the Plantagenet court in the development and increase of literary production is a topic debate in historiography since the Twenty’s (Haskins, 1927); this debate in following years became the object of renewed interest, often focused on main roles and aspirations of the different patrons who favoured the flourishing of the courtly culture (Lejue-

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ne, 1958; Bezzola, 1963;). Without falling into temptation to overestimate the effective participation of the Plantagenet lords in the cultural production and give them a prominent and active role (Cingolani, 1991), it is still necessary to remark that the Anglo-Normans kings discovered that the literary production that took place in their courts was a field where was possible to make both a propaganda of their claims and an exegesis of their dynastic problems and political actions. The English Crown built ideologies through the action of the courtiers that included and challenged the cultural models coming from the continental Europe, especially from France. To make that possible the king’s court reached the attention of a great number of the finest intellectuals of its times (Türk, 1977; Gillingham, 2000; Aurell, 2003).

The ability to manage speech and language to their own advantage and the one of their patrons was one of the peculiar skills of those intellectuals, engaged in a rising number to serve at courts of several lords⁴. A prominent part of their job was to use words in sending messages without losing the composure necessary to their role. The necessary fundamentals to a correct communication between the sender and the receiver lie in the existence of a common language; meaning not just the way of speech but also the existence of a more complex code that includes the most different and shared references and experiences. That is the main obstacle, and one of the most common made in the approach to texts in a historical per-

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spective. In the specific case of courtly texts this difficulty becomes even higher, because the authors want to hide under the veil of the *courtoisie* (*facetia*) more sensitive messages. But this veil should not really cover the substance of its matters, because this kind of courtly literature is only referred to those who are part of the court’s cultural system. So this masquerade, this hiding of contents behind the fine art of eloquence, is a fiction cause referred only to those in possession of the professional skill for the right understanding of the texts of this kind.

The use of the prose as part of the courtiers’ professional identity means that in the texts produced at court there is no place for naïve intentions: every sentence has a political meaning related to both the author’s ambitions as well as the claims of some potential patrons. This double nature is what I will refer sometimes as *metatextuality*, not relating it with other specific texts but with the whole cultural and political scenario where *De nugis* was written. This approach could be essential in understanding which kind of messages were carried by those tales. Tales that, if read literally, may have other matter of interest.

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My analysis will proceed from this basis for a reading of *De nugis curialium*, which is a typical expression of the courtly language and which was often approached like a simple book of fables and gossips.

The composition of the *De nugis* began at the end of the twelfth century, it is a text with an atypical form: it stands as a rather incomplete work, not a unitary text, but continuously subjected to revisions by its author. It appears to us to be like a book pending to its definitive edition. The approach to a study of this work needs a particular attention to the biography of its author and to the style and sensibilities of the courtly literature of the XII century. Moreover, its understanding comes also from the knowledge of the times of its production. Writing *De nugis curialum* took more than twenty years of work, and that is the reason for its emergence as one of the most reliable accounts for the evolution of the production of the European courts and their links with political intents. Walter Map⁷, the author, is an archetype of the intellectual worker whose figure was at the heart of the Renaissance of the twelfth century. Their ability to be useful to some patrons was the only possibility that those men had to bid for power; receiving official positions (often ecclesiastic ones) and benefits for their services. Walter Map was largely famous at

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⁷ Walter Map (d. 1209/10), a royal clerk, sprang from a border family. Walter may have had early schooling at Gloucester Abbey; by 1154 he was a student in Paris, and was very likely there over a long period in the 1150s and 1160s — hence, doubtless, his title *magister*. Thereafter he followed a very characteristic *cursus honorum* for an aspiring, highly educated secular clerk of the age — in the service of bishop and king, with widely scattered benefices, and dignities in the chapter of Lincoln Cathedral. Meanwhile, from the early 1170s and certainly by 1173, Map is recorded in royal service: in February 1173 he was in attendance on Henry II at Limoges, and on the king's behalf entertained Pierre, archbishop of Tarentaise; in 1179 he was one of the king's representatives at the Third Lateran Council in Rome; in 1183 he was at Saumur in Henry's service when Henry the Young King died at Martel. He acted also as a royal itinerant justice. C. N. L. Brooke, ‘Map, Walter (d. 1209/10)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18015, accessed 1 Dec 2015] Walter Map wrote the *De nugis curialium* presumably during a long time, from 1180 to his dead in 1210. Thus the *De nugis* is an incomplete opera, which the Henry II’s death stopped, as it did with its author, by the necessity to find another patron. The work survives only in a single late-fourteenth-century copy (Bodl. Oxf., MS Bodley 851 (3041)), the book as we know it was composed by an anonymous compiler.
the Plantagenet court in his venomous speech and his polemic verve, and his influence is shown to us in the years following his death. His popularity was probably due to his gift in eloquence and to some others of his works that we lost; but his fame was strongly linked with some of his works that have been related to the Britain matter.

Walter Map was a clergyman who was, in his own words, part of Henry II curia regis. He remarked his role as a very close collaborator of the king who used his services an itinerant judge and ambassador. At the death of the king, Walter Map found himself suddenly without a patron and in need to find another "home" (Cantarella, 1997, p. 259-269). The representation of kings given in the de nugis cannot be separated from both, Walter Map’s personal experience in one of the courts that imposed a new concept of royalty and the troubled life of its author.

1. **Walter Map and the Kings of his Ages, Presence, Absence and Comparison.**

Walter Map writes about the figures of different real or unreal kings, that especially in the fifth Distinctio. The author also wants to show us his closeness with the different kings in power during his service at the court of Henry II: Henry II himself, Louis VII of France (1120-†1180) and Henry the Young King (1155-†1183), the first son of Henry II. Therefore, in order to outline the different aspects of royalty it can be useful to make a comparison between the different descriptions. Those aspects are indeed related to the author’s personal experience and his needs.

Henry II’s description is the most accurate of the entire De nugis. This attention is, however, hardly surprising: he was the king in whose court Walter Map made his career. In the sixth chapter of the fifth Distinctio Walter Map describes not only the king’s rising up to the throne, but also depicts the aspect of the English king. The physical description of Henry II is not very detailed; it appears reasona-
ble to say that Map in his intentions wanted to adapt the figure of the king to a codex of the characteristics that a king should have, while neglected the signs that time could have left on the king’s physique after 34 year of reign (Cantarella, 1997, p.48-52). In describing the king, however, Map shows his proximity to him. He was so close to the king that he was able to describe his physical aspect. Moreover, he reveals and confirms some of the court’s rumours as the one concerning the king’s fear of getting fat that forced all the court to follow him “constantly on the move”. Beyond the physical description of Henry II there are other signals of his majesty. He is described as a courtly king; we can strictly relate this description to the system of curia regis, that involved Walter Map himself, and the king seen as its chief; he was a literate king who was also able to speak different languages, loved reading and possessed an extraordinary memory. The clergy in XI and XII centuries holds up the necessity for a king to be a rex litteratus able to read the Holy Scriptures and compare himself to the ancient authorities and understand the wise suggestions of his counsellors. The reverse, lacking of those indispensable skills to reign, will be an asinus coronatus as said by John of Salisbury (Policraticus, IV.6). Walter Map said more; he wrote that Henry II “had skill of letters as far as was fitting or practically useful, and had knowledge of all the tongues used from French sea to Jordan” (De nugis, V.6). However Walter Map’s description of the linguistic abilities of Henry II does not end in listing all the languages that Henry II was able to speak, he adds also that the king only used French and Latin. This specification makes clear that Henry II was not the sort of king who spends time surrounded by books, he made use of his competence for political issues for which he spoke only those languages useful for the administration of his reign. In the words of Walter Map on the governance policy of his king there are two more evidences. The king’s only fault that Walter Map depicts in Henry II is in his wish to follow his mother’s Matilda (1102-†1167) advice. One of Matilda’s counsels was to “spin out all the af-
fairs of everyone, hold long in his own hand all posts that fell in, take the revenues of them, and keep the aspirants to them hanging on hope”. Henry II complied with his mother’s suggestion zealously. He retained in his own hands for long times the possessions of those incurred in his judgment. Walter Map said that the only bug in the king’s governance was delaying. Indeed, Henry II in retaining in the Crown’s hand the possessions of his feudatories who incurred in his judgement gained two results: enriching the treasury of the Exchequer and reminding to his vassals of his power.

A report to the situation of Henry II’s reign and familiar troubles is made also through a comparison to the reign of Henry I. The kingdom of Henry I was represented as a golden age, in such a way “we might call his age the reign of Satruno, ours that of Jove” (De nugis, V.5). Following this comparison Map made a mimesis between Henry II and Jupiter the father of gods. A comparison, which seems to be usual in the court of Henry II and which is adopted also by another member of court: the Gerald of Wales (Topographia Hibernica, II.54). But as Ruffinus explains (De nugis, IV.3): “Jupiter, an earthy king, […] who was reduced lowing after Europa […] him whom his excellence had raised above the heavens, a woman made even with the beasts”. Here we are at the centre of Henry II’s family troubles, he himself ruined by a terrible wife as Eleanor of Aquitaine (1124-†1204) was (Cantarella, 1997, 45-46) and surrounded by terrible sons like Jupiter was.

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8 In a following chapter Walter Map, who was blaming the court’s intrigues, using a *topos* of the courtly literature, the *cuckold* king, said: “The king in his court is like a husband who is the last to learn of the unfaithfulness of his wife. They [the courtiers] craftily urge him out of the doors to sport with hounds and hawks, that he may not see what they are doing meanwhile indoors.” (De nugis, V.7). In relation with the support Eleanor gave to her sons’ rebellions those words may be not just a literary metaphor.

Walter Map portrays the royalty of Henry II and his troubles with these above and other examples. He was a king who overtook the great aristocracy, preferring a direct contact with the people; reminding them that he was their lord. The figure of Henry II that emerges is as one of a robust king, with an idea of his royalty and power not to be shared with the aristocracy\(^\text{10}\). Henry II was a powerful king who “wants for nothing, has men, horses, gold, silk, jewels, fruits, game and everything else” (De nugis, V.5). But he was also a man moved by clemency, who forgave his rebellious son, as he did more and more with Henry the Young, and finally killed by the pain they inflicted to him with their treachery.

Louis VII, king of France until 1180, makes his apparition in the *De Nugis* following the descriptions of the past French kings. Louis VII suffers the comparison and the challenge of Henry II, his unfaithful vassal who married his ex-wife (Duby, 1982, p. 169-76): the potent duchess of Aquitaine Eleanor\(^\text{11}\). Louis VII was famous for his pious feelings but even more so, as feeble king, involved in the disastrous 10\(^\text{th}\) crusade, unable to gain the respect of his aristocracy, not strong enough to claim his own rights as king of France in front of his own vassals. Walter Map remembers that he met Louis VII leaving us a portrait of his royalty focused mainly on the brighter sides of his personality. The *De nugis* portrays the French


king as a devout man and a fair judge, inspired, but not heedless carried on, by his clemency. Walter Map knew what the reputation of that king was like and therefore tells that “he was a man of such kindliness and simple mildness, showing himself affable to any poor man, to his own or to strangers, that he might have been thought imbecile, he was the strictest of all judges, and an executor, often with tears, of justice, stiff to the proud and to meek not unfair” (De nugis, V.5).

Map shows us different proofs of his inspired royalty, but he also knows that a comparison with his outstanding rival Henry II could not be made. Therefore, he put in the mouth of the French king the following words “[in order to make a comparison with England] we in France have nothing but bread and wine and gaiety” (De nugis, V.5).

What could the point of such description be? It is consistent to believe that it could be Walter Map’s need to show to his readers his own references, his experiences during his stay in France. He wrote that the king “was talking with me of the riches of kings” as proof of his nearness to the rightful ruler. In the late XIIth century the royalty of the French kings were no more object of discussion; it was a matter of fact and strongly related with the Capetian family, which evolution Map describes in the same chapter (De Nugis, V.5) Hence Walter Map had got to focus on different characteristics of the royal figure to describe that king. These characteristics cannot be boldness and bravado. Map describes the King’s clemency, his fair judgment, and the peace of his reign where he was able to freely sleep underneath a tree and just two knights as guards. Walter Map shows a real kind of sovereignty even though it is different from Henry II’s. By doing that Map reminds the audi-

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ence that he knows how to approach a king and how enter in his graces. This is a useful skill for someone looking for another court in which live.

Henry II and Louis VII were not the only kings that Walter Map had met in his life, he also served at the court of the Henry II’s first son: Henry the Young. Walter Map probably joined the court of the future king of England for the same reason for which others like Walter de Coutance and William Marshal\(^{13}\) did; in order to make sure to have a place at the king’s court also in a future where Henry II could be dead; however Walter Map flew away when the Young King rebelled against his own father.

Henry the Young\(^{14}\), crowned by his father in 1172 as co-regent of the Kingdom of England and the duchy of Normandy, led one of the main rebellions that Henry II had to confront at the time of his reign. For two years during 1173-74, Henry the Young made war against his own father supported by the King of France, the Count of Flanders, the King of Scotland, his brothers Richard and William, his mother Eleanor and a large number of lords both, in England and Normandy. He died of dysentery, defeated but not surrounded while attending to one more conspiracy. This young rebel, whose entire life was a record of disloyalty, found an undoubted popularity amongst his contemporaries and the posterity. He is described as a tall, handsome, blond, jovial and graceful man, but between all those qualities his main distinctive feature was his chivalric way of life\(^{15}\). The au-

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The author of William Marshal’s chronicle (vv. 2640-41) says that, but for Henry the Young, chivalry would have been dead. The Young King’s reputation as a patron of young landless knights increased with his constant participation to different tournaments. We must remember that Henry II prohibited tournaments in England and the chivalric attitude of Henry the Young could be seen as a counter-attraction on his father’s policies and imaginary. The action of Henry II was strongly indeed on the new conceptualization of the royalty growing up all across Europe; a royalty whose power is to be shared less with the nobility. Hence as Hen-


The Young attracted the landless knights, Henry himself was attracted by Philip the Count of Flanders one of the main representatives of the chivalry. The point that needs to be underlined must be found in the meeting point between chivalry and political figures. The chivalric way of life was also an ideology utilized to mark those political identities that can be seen in the rebellion of the Young King, together with the Count of Flanders who had a great number of his side Anglo-Normans lords as such Robert III de Beaumont earl of Leicester, Robert II de Beaumont count of Meulan and others, all enjoyed the same ideological manifesto. During the XIth and XIIth centuries the nobility as part of its own identity indeed gradually absorbed chivalric ideas, but in Normandy\(^\text{17}\) this evolution of the concept of chivalry comes earlier and stronger (Flori, 1986; Crouch, 2005). Norman nobility was strictly related to its chivalric identity and some families as the Beaumont used that identity to remark their prominent role as a Norman family, using swords and horses on its coat of arms (Crouch, 1986; Strickland, 1996). Therefore, the families more related to a politic concept of the chivalric identity are the ones more strongly connected to their Norman identity and most of them first gave their support to the Young King and successively to Richard the Lionheart (1157-†1191)\(^\text{18}\).


\(^{18}\) As it emerges by a confrontation of the list of the rebels (Roger of Howeden, *Gesta regis Henrici Secundi*, vol.I, pp. 46.48; Norgate, K. (1887), *England under the Angevin kings*, London: Macmillan,
Walter Map in the first chapter of the *De nugis* spent the fourth *Distinctio* to describe Henry the Young. Different authors who were part of the Plantagenet cultural circle have largely described the figure of the Young King, moulding it according to their purposes. Walter Map, who claims himself to be eyewitness of the rise and fall of the Henry II’s rebel son, profiles the Young King with ambiguous words: a description where wicked actions and virtues melts in a vicious circle.

[…] Uir noue adinuencionis in armis, qui miliciam fere sopitam excitauit et ad summum usque perduxit. Eis possuum vurtutes, qui eum uidimus ipsius amici et familiares, et gracies describere. Speciosus erat pre ceteris statuta et facie, beatissimus eloquencia et affabilitate, hominum amore gratia et fauore felicissimus, persuasion in tantum efficax ut fere omnes patris sui fidelis in ipsum insurgere fellerit. […]Qui quod diues, quod generous, quod amabilis, quod facundus, quod pulcher, quod strenuous, quod amnimondis graciosus, quod Paulo minor angelis, totum conuerit in sinistrum, et peruersa felicitate fortissimus tam inerutus factus est animo parricida […] totum feduit prodicionibus orbem, prodigialis proditur ipse prodigusque malorum, fons scelerum serenissimus, appetibilis nequicie fomes, pulcherrima peccati regia, cuius erat regnum amenissimum. (De nugis, IV.1)

[…] A man fruitful of new devices in war, who roused chivalry from something like slumber, and raised it to the height. We who saw him as his friends and intimates are in position to tell of his grace and mainly gifts. He was fairer than the children of men in stature and face, richly endowed with eloquence and charm of address, blest with the love and favour of his fellow men, so powerful to persuade that he beguiled almost all of his father’s liegemen to turn against him […] Rich, noble, lovable, eloquent, handsome, gallant, every way attractive, a little lower than the angels-all’ these gifts he turned to the wrong side, and that mighty man, corrupting his blessings, became a parricide […] he befouled the whole world with his treason, a prodigy of unfaith and prodigal of ill, a limpid spring of wickedness, the tender of villainy, a lovely palace of sin […] (De nugis, IV.1)


In that description we can see all his qualities as well his defects. In comparing the portrait of the Young King with the ones of Henry II and Louis VII that we showed earlier one can truly see that Henry the Young was not forged as a king. Out of all his vices and virtues, the missing one was the *virtus regis* which either the king of England and the king of France were able to claim, despite all their faults. He has not the leadership, the governance that Henry II demonstrates or rather better the moral strength of Louis VII and his quality of fairness and grace. Henry the Young was not educated in letters and did not show mercy, not even on the point of his own death. Walter Map said that “he left his brother Richard (with hate of whom his heart was withered) as heir, and departed in wrath”. That passage of the *De nugis* describing how Henry the Young with all the characteristics of the chivalry but lacking of any trace of royalty, could be a greater strike against the ideology of the knight-king, later impersonated by Richard the Lionheart\(^\text{20}\), and generally against all of who identified their claims with the chivalric ideology of power. Walter Map condemns Henry the Young to be literally a forever *jean* because he has not the qualities to become a *senior*\(^\text{21}\), and condemn with him his fellows\(^\text{22}\).


\(^{22}\) A quite different point of view in: Barbero, A. (1984). *Nobiltà e cavalleria nel 12. secolo: Walter Map e il “De nugis curialium*. in *Studi Medievali*, XXV, Spoletto: Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo. 721-743. About the description of knighthood and its relation with the *De nugis*’ me-
Walter Map in agreement with other authors, as Jordan Fantosme (Chronica; vv. 36-42; 80), does not hesitate to blame the members of the Young King’s household for the plot he made against his own father. The theme of the evil counsellors is both as literary topos as a punctual accusation. De Nugis uses a biblical comparison to explain the role of the Henry the Young’s fellows in his treason:

Absalon eum, si non maior hic uero fuit, comparare possis: ille unum habuit Architophel, hic multus, et nullum Chusi [...] Absalon suus totam excitauerat Aquitanniam, Burgundiam, et ex Francis multos in patrem suum dominum nostrum, et omnes Mansellos et Britones, et quibus nobiscum militabant maxima pars uacillabat ad ipsum. (De nugis, IV. 1)

You might liken him to Absalom, if indeed he was not superior to Absalom. He had but one Ahitophel; Henry had many, and no Hushai; [...] His Absalom had stirred up all Aquitaine and Burgundy, and many of the French, against our lord his father, and all them of Maine and Anjou and the Bretons; and of those who were fighting on our side the more part fell away to him.(De nugis, IV.1)

The story of Absalom, which Ahitophel instigated to fight his own father David the king of Israel, was a prize example of familiar betrayal during the Middle Ages. As for Walter Map’s suggestion for the case of Henry the Young, the list of the Ahitophels is long. Ahitophels that turn sons against their father, a father who for analogy is beloved by God like king David was (Cantarella; 1997, p. 235-8). We can see how most of them were related to the nobility who was in its turn related to the chivalric ideology: amongst the other there were the already mentioned Robert III and Robert II de Beaumont, as well as Bertrand de Born, the famous troubadour23. As Bertand de Born did, the Beaumonts and other Henry the

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23 That was a well-knew story, and became a classical association. Bertrand de Born call himself Ahithophel when Dante Alighieri describes him down in the hell “ Affinché tu possa portare ai vivi notizia di me, sappi che io sono Beltram dal Bornio. Io diedi malvagi consigli a re Enrico il giovane, io inimicai il padre e il figlio l’uno contro l’altro: nemmeno Achitofel fece peggio di me con Davide e Assalonne”, (Divina Commedia, Inferno, Canto XXVIII). See also G. Gouiran, Bertran de Born: Un
Young’s fellows turned after their king’s death in supporters of the next knight-king of England: Richard I the Lionheart. Hence, it is consistent to suppose that there was a strong faction which identified itself with the chivalric ideology and supported the claims and the rebellion of Henry II’ sons. In following John Gillingham (2000, p. 141) it is possible to identify in De Nugis concealed meanings under “words like ‘Norman’ and ‘French’ ” that were “as much political as national”. Gillingham says that “they could be used of cross-Channel magnates likes the Beaumonts and their followers, leaders of a court faction […] in opposition to a rival faction which was English” with respect to their interests that could be predominantly either in England or on the continent. Therefore we can assume as one hypothesis that Walter Map was sending a clear charge to “many of the French” (De nugis, IV.1, p. 281) who rebelled against Henry II, and with the description of the Young King he was making no secret of his affiliation to the English faction at court.

Hence we may find a connection between this interpretation and the need for Walter Map to find another court in which his skills could have been employed. The author of the De nugis describes the contemporary kings who he had met during his life, Henry II, Louis VII and Henry the Young and shows himself as very


25 A similar struggle for power could have taken place at the norman court of the Sicilian kingdom, a court with a strong presence of English, Norman and French. It’s possible to suppose that different factions were hidden under the ‘national’ identity. The hypothesis is more plausible remembering that ‘French’ in the XIIth century was an unclear definition. Cfr. Cantarella, G.M. (2011), Nel regno del Sole. Falcando tra Inglesi e Normanni, in Pio, B. (Ed.). (2011), Scritti di storia medievale offerti a Maria Consiglia de Matteis, Spoleto: Fondazione CISAM, 91-120.
close to those kings. However as well as these presences we are obliged to notice also the absences that can be found in the work.

The absence of Richard I as king leaps out, the king was mentioned just once in Henry Young’s description, and once in the one of Philip August who was also mentioned just once, in relation to some crusade’s troubles. Therefore, it is reasonable to deduce that Walter Map couldn’t find the necessary support by the two kings that were ruling while he was composing his work, and that he wants to stay at safety distance from them. The fellows of Richard I were the same who followed his brother, and with him there was also his mother Eleanor, while Walter Map spent his life on the opposite faction and wrote venomous accusation to the duchess of Aquitaine. The hostile words pronounced by Walter Map in front of the chivalry are not in line with the ideas of Richard I. Philip August (1165-†1223) was remembered just as one of the crusade’s chiefs, a little thing to claim the support of the king of France.

2. DEMONS AND KINGS: A NOTE.

De nugis curialum is famous also for the use in its prose of matters of imaginary and mythological inspiration. It is impossible to analyse now the amount of fantastic stories involving the presence of kings and queens. Passing over the famous example of King Herla\textsuperscript{26} surrounded by dead knights in his perpetual demoniac ride through the skies (De nugis, I.11) I would like to illustrate just one

more example related to the *chivalric royalty* which is the recount of the episode of William II’s death.

William II (1056-†1100), also known as William Rufus, was the third son of William the Conqueror and king of England. In the hands of the Anglo-Norman writers he became a deplorable figure, in which remarkable was the absence of natural dignity or social graces; he has been drawn as a rambunctious, blasphemous soldier with no piety or morality and who did not show any passions but only degeneration in all his forms (Callahan, 1981; Barlow, 1983; Mason, 1991). William Rufus was famous as a great knight too. During the XIIth century by means of the pen of ecclesiastic men he became the bad example of how the Church could suffer exploitation by evil knights strayed from their duties of defenders of the poor and the Christian community. Walter Map, as well as Ordericus Vitalis27 and John of Salisbury28, agreed to that tendency in these words:

Willelmus secundus rex Anglie, regum pessimus, Anselmo pulso a sede Cancie, iusto Dei iudicio a sagittal uolante pulsus, quia demonio meridian deditus, cuius ad nutum uixerat, onere pessimino leauauit orbem. (De nugis, V.6)

William II, king of England, the worst of kings, who drove Anselm from the see of Kent, when smitten by the just judgment of God by the arrow that flieth, because he had given himself to the demon that walketh by noonday [demonio meridiano], at whose beck he had lived, lightened the world of an evil load. (De nugis, V.6)

Gundulf, bishop of Rochester, who had accused the king William II of plundering the churches and starving his own people in order to feed his knights, prophesied the infamous death of the king.

Foresta est regnum Anglie; fere sunt innocents quos tibi Dominus dedit custodiendos [...] Cappella quid aliud est quam ecclesia, quam tu truculenter irruptis, predia sua distrahens

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27 Ordericus Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Lib. VIII, Cap. 8.: “Guglielmus Rufus Albionis rex iuvenis erat proteruus et lascivius”.

28 John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, Lib. VI, Cap. 17 : “Rex Anglorum qui Rufus cognominatus est, armis quidem strenuus sed parum religiosus et qui persecutione sanctorum et praecipue sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis spiculum inuidiae quo suffocatus est in se uisus est prouocasse, is, inquam, Cenomannum ex-pugnuit, comitem cepit nec tamen dignatus est eum carcerali custodiae mancipare ; tantoque operi attestabirur lo in perpetuum mons Barbatus aut, si alio nomine censere malueris, dicatur mons Barbarus aut Barbarorum”.

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in stipendia certe sed et dispendia militum? [...] Conuertere uel sero, quia tibi mors in ianuis est. (De nugis, V.6)

The forest [of his dream] is the realm of England: the beasts are those innocents whom the Lord hath delivered to thee to keep [...] The chapel, what is but the church which thou dost savagely invade and disperse her estates for the wages, yea rather the waste, of thy knights? [...] Turn thou, even thought to be late, for death is at thy doors. (De nugis, V.6)

As it was custom of the Plantagenet court, Walter Map uses, the intervention of manifestation of supernatural powers and the interference of demons to explain and analyse the main events of the kingdom’s history. However, in addition to this trend in recounting the episode of William Rufus’ death Walter Map inserts the presence of the meridian demon. That feminine demon was already in the De nugis curialium, present in a different tale in which she made a pact with Pope Sylvester II. This story is described in Chapter 11 of the IV Distictio. Pope Sylvester II, whose secular name was Gerbert d’Aurillac, was yet one more example of degeneration and evilness of the Middle Ages, and his legend walks through the next centuries (Oldoni; 2008). Gerbert d’Aurillac sold his soul for ambition and became pope. Both, king and pope were related to the same demon that promised them incredible richness, fame, power and all the pleasures that the mortal flesh could receive, but their fate was to meet the just judgment of God.

Walter Map was able to centre two arguments with one arrow. We can read in the death of William II both, the polemic move by the ecclesiastic against the chivalry and the accusation contra the idea of the chivalric-king, moved by personal ambition as was the Henry II’s young son.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can consider how in the De nugis curialium the portraits of some kings hold hidden meanings that can only be understood in comparison to the author’s background and his public audience which goes beyond their pure
literary value. That is what I called metatextuality. I showed the portraits of Henry II and Louis VII, the righteous kings, and how Walter Map depicted the kind of qualities that highlighted the attributes of royalty: the stability of their role and power, clemency, justice. On the other side, there was a rejection, a shared one, of a different kind of royalty; the one imposing the chivalric idea that was supported by a considerable number of nobles and which found representation in the figure of Henry the Young. Describing both, the royalty of the two kings of whose royalty cannot be put in discussion, and the characteristics of the chivalric kings like Henry the Young and William II Rufus, the second one appears as a regretful choice. Framing those ideas with Walter Map’s necessity to find a new patron we can demonstrate on which road he couldn’t walk: not the Plantagenet court of Richard I, not the nobles who supported Henry the Young; not even Philip August, who does not appear, and at last even the description of Louis VII do not make me think to a “French” opportunity. Walter Map is talking to an audience of people who shared with him attachment to the faction that supported Henry II that could be in need of a man of experience and used to be in contact with the most disparate rulers. What is still unknown is the identity of those people.
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