Papers of the British School at Rome **86** (2018), pp. 153–81 © British School at Rome
doi:10.1017/S0068246217000435

SMILING, LAUGHING AND JOKING IN PAPAL ROME: THOMAS OF MARLBOROUGH AND GERALD OF WALES AT THE COURT OF INNOCENT III (1198–1216)

by Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt and William Kynan-Wilson

This article examines textual descriptions of smiling, laughing and joking with the pope in thirteenth-century Rome. It focuses on two Anglo-Norman accounts of conducting litigation at the papal curia: Thomas of Marlborough's (d.1236) Chronicon abbatiae de Evesham *and Gerald of Wales's (c. 1146–1220×23)* De jure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae. *Both authors include several careful and prominent references to smiling, laughing and joking, and specifically in relation to Pope Innocent III. These passages have previously been read as straightforward examples of wit and friendship, but this study shows that the authors use these physiological expressions to convey complex and subtly different pictures of the papal curia. Above all, this article demonstrates how Thomas and Gerald's descriptions of humorous interactions with the pope play crucial narrative and mnemonic roles within their work.*

Il presente articolo esamina le descrizioni testuali del sorridere, del ridere e dello scherzare con il Papa nella Roma del XIII secolo. Si focalizza in particolare su due resoconti anglo-normanni di controversie nella curia papale: il Chronicon abbatiae de Evesham *di Thomas of Marlborough (data di morte 1236) e il* De jure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae *di Gerald of Wales (c. 1146–1220×23). In entrambi i testi sono presenti molti riferimenti attenti agli atti di sorridere, di ridere e di scherzare, in particolar modo in relazione a Papa Innocenzo III. Questi passaggi sono stati in precedenza interpretati come inequivocabili esempi di umorismo e amicizia, ma questo studio dimostra come gli autori usino queste 'espressioni fisiologiche' per descrivere immagini leggermente differenti della curia papale. Soprattutto questo articolo mostra come le descrizioni di interazione umoristica con il papa di Thomas of Marlborough e di Gerald of Wales giochino ruoli narrativi e mnemonici cruciali all'interno dei loro lavori.*

> Frequently we called on our lord the pope about our business, both opportunely and importunely, both publicly and privately, and always with groans and tears …[1]

With these words a group of Canterbury monks wrote to their colleagues of the travails of conducting litigation at the papal curia in 1187. It was a testing place financially and legally, but also physically and emotionally. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw increasing numbers of visitors who came to the papal court to seek judgments, privileges and protection; it was dizzyingly busy

[1] 'Multoties namque dominum papam super negotio nostro opportune, importune, tum in publico, tum in occulto convenimus in gemitu et lacrymis …': *Memorials*, 2:122; Parks, 1954: 238 (trans.). William of Andres similarly describes himself as petitioning members of the curia 'opportunely and inopportunely' (*opportune et importune*). William of Andres, *Chronica Andrensis*, *MGH SS* 24:738; Bolton, 2011: 315.

with visitors, advocates and locals touting for business and vying for attention. The monks evoke the diverse challenges involved in gaining an audience with the pope, a feat that not all visitors achieved. Intriguingly, even unexpectedly, some of the fortunate few record that alongside tears the curia was also a place of smiling, laughing and joking — but why and to what effect?

This article examines depictions of smiling, laughing and joking in two early thirteenth-century textual descriptions of the court of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216), namely Thomas of Marlborough's (d.1236) *Chronicon abbatiae de Evesham* (hereafter referred to as Thomas's *Chronicle*) and Gerald of Wales's (*c.* 1146–1220×23) *De jure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae* (hereafter *De jure*). These two Anglo-Norman petitioners produced some of the most detailed and vivid extant accounts of Innocent's curia and they share much in common: both were educated in monastic schools in southwest England before pursuing further studies in Paris. They travelled to Rome in approximately the same years — Gerald between 1199 and 1204 and Thomas between 1204 and 1206 — and achieved mixed success at the curia.[2] Furthermore, both writers insert significant and repeated references to smiling, laughing and joking in relation to Innocent. Nonetheless, they present quite different visions of the papacy: for Gerald, it is ultimately a place of disillusionment and deception, while Thomas conveys the court's idiosyncratic and potentially disorientating character.

Smiling and laughing are physiological expressions that can operate as paralinguistic modes of communication (Halliwell, 2008: 4). Both expressions hold a multiplicity of meanings and can reflect a range of emotions and thoughts including amorous inclination, amusement, deceit, friendship or mockery, among others (Burrow, 2002: 73–81; Hawkins, 2006).[3] Smiling and laughing are commonly and closely associated with amusement, although not exclusively so; indeed, one useful definition terms humour as a message (transmitted in action, speech, writing, images or music) intended to produce a smile or a laugh (Bremmer and Roodenburg, 1997: 1).[4] Humour is therefore an important facet of this study, but it is not our focus in and of itself.[5] This paper does not attempt to ascertain whether the pope and his visitors genuinely shared jokes. Nor does it contend that popes suddenly learnt to laugh in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century or that Innocent III was wittier than his predecessors.[6] Such claims are unverifiable and unhelpful.

[2] The two authors have rarely been examined together; among the few exceptions are Parks, 1954: 239; and Spaethen, 1906.

[3] See also Crouzet-Pavan and Verger, 2007: 7–10; Halliwell, 2008: esp. 1–50 and appendix I. Whether a laugh and a smile can mean the same thing in all cultures and every historical period remains much debated; see Halliwell, 2008: 1.

[4] For the distinction between laughter and smiles, see Halliwell, 2008: 520–9.

[5] For jesting in medieval literature see Curtius, 2013: 417–39. On the difficulties of identifying and interpreting medieval humour see Halsall, 2002: 1–21.

[6] Broadly speaking, Innocent has been viewed as a witty pontiff, but much of this rests upon Gerald's pen portraits. Examples of Innocent's humour in his own writings are largely wordplay: see Kuttner, 1981: 133–5; Sayers, 1994: 2–3; Jones, forthcoming b.

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Rather, this essay works at the intersection of a series of wide and ever-burgeoning theoretical fields that skirt studies in emotions, body language, psychology and humour.[7] Drawing on insights and methods from historical and literary studies, this paper examines why these two Anglo-Norman writers *chose* to depict the pontiff as a figure that smiled, laughed and joked. What are the specific messages and narrative ploys that Gerald and Thomas attempt to communicate? And what do they tell us about these petitioners' perceptions of the pope and his curia?

In exploring these issues, a number of precise observations regarding the authors under discussion are made, but above all we present two principal contentions in this paper. First, scenes with smiling and laughing are crucial *narrative* devices that convey the duplicitous and bewildering culture of the papal curia. They are not simply entertaining episodes or digressional flourishes, but central scenes of great importance (Borenius, 1937; Cheney, 1976: 6–7, 137; Moore, 2003: 80, 92). The context, content and structure of these accounts will therefore be discussed in detail below. Our approach, in this respect, differs from many previous studies in medieval humour that often decontextualize passages and present them as episodes, rather than crucial narrative cogs. Second, in both accounts, humour performs a *mnemonic* role by rendering central passages in otherwise dry legal texts more vivid and engaging. The humorous sections reinforce the same arguments that have been made in extensive — and ultimately monotonous — legal detail. Both observations hold wider implications for how humour and descriptions of related physiological expressions can be interpreted and should be integrated into broader studies on medieval historical writing.

VISITING THE CURIA *c.* 1200

By the early thirteenth century, the curia received a steady stream of petitioners and proctors who appealed to the pope for privileges (such as exemptions or provisions to ecclesiastical benefices), decisions or judicial advice (Zutshi, 2007: 265). Yet it was a difficult and costly business to argue a matter at the curia: after a strenuous and often dangerous journey, the petitioner or litigant had to navigate the specific procedures of the curia, and many visitors consequently employed advocates or proctors to represent them. Gifts, official and unofficial, had to be offered to various parties at specific junctures in the case and in return for services and help (Zutshi, 2013: 222).

Most visitors hoped for an audience with the pope himself, but direct access was strongly guarded and much coveted.[8] It could take place in public

[7] Important works include Bremmer and Roodenburg, 1997; Rosenwein, 1998, 2006; and Seeber, 2010.

[8] See William of Andres, *Chronica Andrensis*, *MGH SS* 24:737–8; Thomas of Marlborough, *Chronicle*: 312–13; Sayers, 2013: 121; and see also the Canterbury monks' comments (above,

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consistory, which was typically held in the large hall of whichever palace the pope resided in. When the pope was in Rome it was celebrated in the so-called *triclinium* of Leo III at the Lateran Palace.[9] A large crowd of public onlookers would be in attendance. Meetings with a more limited circle of participants often took place in the pope's chambers (including his bedchamber, *cubiculum*), which also hosted informal meetings in the evenings attended by favoured and high-status guests (Zutshi, 2013: 217; see also Walter, 1970: 162–3; Radke, 1996: 65–8, 85).

Meetings between visitors and the pope were replete with ritual.[10] When approaching the pope, the visitor would kneel to kiss the pope's foot; in return the pope could offer a kiss of peace. It was then customary for the visitor, particularly if this was his first encounter with the pope, to offer a gift.[11] Conducting a case before the papal curia was typically a lengthy and drawn-out process, and many petitioners and litigants spent several months in Rome, as was the case with both Thomas and Gerald.

THE ACCOUNT BY THOMAS OF MARLBOROUGH

Thomas presumably originated from Wiltshire in southwest England, before studying at Paris (probably in the 1180s) and then Oxford, where he read canon law (Sayers, 2013: 110). His life was thereafter bound to a single institution: in around 1199/1200 he was professed at the Benedictine abbey of Evesham. This community enjoyed exemption from the local bishop of Worcester and answered only to the pope, although it also claimed a special relationship with the archbishop of Canterbury. Thomas's legal training proved invaluable during a sensitive period in the abbey's history. In 1202, the bishop of Worcester, Mauger (d.1212), was refused entry to Evesham. The abbey was subsequently excommunicated and the monks sought to prove their exemption from the diocese of Worcester and their jurisdiction over a local area called the Vale. This case took Thomas to Rome in order to defend his abbey's rights.

On 7 November 1204 Thomas arrived in Rome. His account of the lawsuit — in his *Chronicle* — remains one of the most vibrant descriptions of Innocent's

n. 1). For similar issues regarding access to King Henry II, see Peter of Blois, *Opera Omnia* 1:51–2; Vincent, 2007: 310.

[9] The pope himself heard most cases during the twelfth century, but by Innocent's pontificate this was increasingly delegated: minor cases were referred to cardinals, while the pope only heard important cases. Zutshi, 2013: 218, 220.

[10] For the much-debated issue of defining ritual and the potential pitfalls in interpreting textual representations of ritual, useful starting points in the vast literature include Buc, 2002, along with Koziol, 2002; and Pössel, 2009: 111–25.

[11] On rituals concerning petitioners and supplicants in the secular sphere, see Koziol, 1992, and the essays in Mostert and Barnwell, 2011.

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court.[12] Thomas's experiences were mixed: he was successful in maintaining the first element of his case (episcopal jurisdiction), but the second issue (the jurisdiction of the Vale) was unsuccessful. Thomas may have made notes as the case developed, but he appears to have written the *Chronicle* during his years as prior (1218–29) — more than a decade after the events described (Sayers and Watkiss, 2013: xxi). Following the conclusion of the case in Rome, Thomas held several important roles in the abbey's administration. He returned to Rome for the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), and was later elected abbot (1229), an office he held until his death (1236).

Before discussing the purpose and intended audience of Thomas's *Chronicle*, it will prove instructive to outline the composition of its three books. The opening two books describe the life and miracles of Saint Ecgwine (d.717), the founder of Evesham; they are based on a text composed by Dominic, an early twelfth-century prior of Evesham. Thomas adapts and abbreviates Dominic's work in Book I, but he repeats it more faithfully in Book II. The third book consists of five parts and is (up to chapter 509) Thomas's own account of events from the 1190s until 1213. The final sections of part V (chapters 510–46) are by a later author; they describe the deeds of Abbot Randulf and his successor, Thomas (Sayers and Watkiss, 2013: xvi–xvii, xxix–xxxii). The *Chronicle* survives in a single manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A 287), and it is framed by the lives and deeds of holy men: the *Life of Saint Odulf*, the *Acts of Worthy Men*, and the *Life of Saint Wigstan* (edited by Thomas) (Sayers and Watkiss, 2013: xvi, lxiv).

As Jane Sayers and Leslie Watkiss argue, the overall purpose of Thomas's text is to support and enhance the status of Evesham abbey, and to show the importance of defending its hard-won privileges.[13] Thomas continually stresses the significance of the abbey's exemption and its privileges with regard to the election, confirmation and blessing of its future abbots. His final section (chapter 509) in the *Chronicle* focused on this very issue and concluded with a stern appeal to his fellow brethren not to lose their privileges: 'If you do so, God forbid, you will be reduced to slavery, and be for ever wretched' (*Chronicle*: xvii and 478–9).

There was another, related purpose of Thomas's text: to stress that in order to protect these privileges it was necessary to maintain a special relationship with the papacy. Thomas continually emphasizes the benefits of a close association with the pope, despite the costs and hardships of visiting the curia; it is a leitmotif of his work regarding his own visit and that of previous figures associated with Evesham.[14] This is clearly shown in Thomas's editing of Dominic's *Life and*

[12] Sayers and Watkiss, 2013: xxi. For summaries of the lawsuit see Knowles, 1963: 331–45; Sayers, 2013.

[13] On the 'very carefully constructed' compilation of the manuscript, see Sayers and Watkiss, 2013: xvi, xvii.

[14] Thomas's expenses in Rome are a recurring theme: *Chronicle*: 284–7, 428–31; see also Sayers, 2013: 109–29.

Miracles of Saint Ecgwine (Book I of his *Chronicle*) which develops the passages describing Ecgwine's favourable papal visits (*Chronicle*: xxix–xxxi, 10–15, 18–25). Book III continues this theme; here, Thomas presents two papal legates (John of Ferentino, and Nicholas, cardinal-bishop of Tusculum) in positive terms and casts them as defenders of the abbey's rights against dishonest men, such as Roger Norreis, abbot of Evesham (1189–1213).[15] In the prologue to Book III, Thomas posits the history and future of Evesham abbey as a battle against 'the evil deeds of men' wishing to harm and plunder the abbey; according to Thomas, the papacy is the essential bulwark in defending the abbey (*Chronicle*: 126–7).

Thomas's direct appeals to his fellow brethren, the text's institutional focus and the exceptional survival of the manuscript indicate that he was writing primarily for his community at Evesham. It was they who must understand the importance of the abbey's privileges and strive to defend them with papal support. Thomas's *Chronicle* sought to prepare future Evesham monks for this work by passing on his knowledge of the papal curia and its complicated practices.[16] To this end he highlights his knowledge of curial customs and preferences, whilst concurrently identifying his opponent's ignorance of papal protocol; for instance, his opponent produces a tedious speech that stupefies the curia which ordinarily 'rejoiced in brevity' (*breuiloquio gaudebat*), while Thomas modifies his speech to be brief, he learns the pope's manner of writing and he frequently remarks upon curial conduct (*Chronicle*: 286–7, and see also 282–3 and 314–15). At the same time, the text also serves as an apologia for Thomas's partial success in Rome; the author emphasizes the effort, expense and hardship that he endured (cf. Sayers and Watkiss, 2013: lxii).

THE ACCOUNTS BY GERALD OF WALES

Unlike Thomas, Gerald provides his readers with a rich biography. He was born *c*. 1146 in Pembrokeshire to a family of Anglo-Norman extraction. Much of his career was spent at the court of King Henry II (r.1154–89) and in the employment of the archbishop of Canterbury, but it was the bishopric of Saint David's that dominated his life and late writings. Gerald was twice elected to the episcopal see only to be barred from the position, first by King John I (r.1199–1216) and then by Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury (1193–1205) (Cheney, 1976: 134–41). Gerald consequently undertook three separate journeys to Rome in 1199–1200, 1201 and 1202–3 respectively in order to

[15] Regarding John of Ferentino and Cardinal Nicholas see Maleczek, 1984: 146–7 and 147–50 respectively. *Chronicle*: lii–liii, 428–9 (for Thomas's relief at the papal legate's arrival), 468–9, 470–1 and appendix II.

[16] Thomas's didactic manner is apparent in the case concerning the Vale. Similarly, Thomas states that he wrote Book III, part V 'so that our successors may learn how to withstand adversities in the future, just as we withstood them in the past'. *Chronicle*: 420–1, 428–9.

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fight two related causes: first, to uphold his election, and second, to elevate Saint David's to an archbishopric.[17] On both counts he was ultimately unsuccessful. After years of dispute Innocent cancelled the original election: the case bankrupted Gerald, and the monks at Saint David's shifted their allegiance. Gerald subsequently retreated from public affairs and settled in Lincoln. His final years were consumed with writings on ecclesiastical reform and autobiography — the two frequently intertwined as Gerald perceived his stymied ecclesiastical career emanating from corruption within the Church. Gerald's work from this period enjoyed limited circulation in contrast to his earlier topographical works on Ireland and Wales.

Gerald details his Roman litigation in three texts: *De invectionibus* (1200–16), *De rebus a se gestis* (after 1208–16)[18] and *De jure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae* (*c.* 1218); they were produced over a long period and were to be read in unison, as is indicated by frequent cross-references. *De jure* remains the fullest account and it will be the focus of this study. Gerald's case is the story of an immense failure and an attempt to craft that failure into a noble tale.[19] In exacting detail it reveals his bitter disillusionment with the curia.[20] Gerald consequently depicts the papacy in a poor light as he freely admits in his prologue (dated 1215–18) to *De jure* (101–16), which was dedicated to Archbishop Stephen Langton (1207–28).

The disenchanted nature of these works appears an unlikely context for smiling, laughing and joking, but all three play important roles in his Roman narratives. Indeed, there have been few treatments of the role played by humour within Gerald's writings more generally. Some of his jokes have been misread and overlooked, particularly due to nineteenth-century editing (Evans, 1998). Moreover, Robert Bartlett (2006: 172), the foremost Giraldian scholar, states:

> His vanity, in particular, has been singled out, and there is no doubt that he was boastful and almost hysterically sensitive to slights or rejection. He was prone to pomposity and, like most vain people, humourless. He took himself very seriously, and had no sense of proportion when others did not.

Bartlett correctly identifies Gerald's pomposity and self-importance: he surely did not appreciate jokes made at his expense, but this does not necessarily qualify Gerald as a humourless character. His writings are peppered with

[17] Gerald undertook a fourth visit to Rome as a pilgrim in 1206. *De rebus*: 137; Parks, 1954: 124.

[18] *De rebus* survives in an incomplete state in a single copy (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. XIII); the section detailing the case in Rome is probably lost, although it may never have been completed; see Brewer, 1861: lxxxviii–lxxxix. Nonetheless, the original chapter titles survive, and they follow the same emphases of the more complete *De jure*.

[19] *De rebus* opens with Gerald styling himself as an antique hero. *De rebus*: 19; Butler, 2005: 33–4.

[20] Gerald's shifting attitude towards Innocent is apparent in an earlier poem praising the pontiff. See the *Versus Giraldi in laudem Papae Innocentii III cum primo Romam advenit emissi*. Gerald of Wales, *Symbolum electorum*: 368; Haye, 2009: 187–9.

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wordplay and puns, entertaining anecdotes, jokes and comic scenes, inserted to underline Gerald's intelligence, skill, and 'friendships' with important figures.[21] There are undoubtedly further references to and instances of humour in Gerald's writings that have eluded modern readers. It is hoped that this facet of Gerald's writing will receive further attention.

Gerald's interactions with Innocent take centre stage in his Roman narratives. In a rare surviving portion of *De rebus*, Gerald gives a vivid account of their first meeting:

> And so crossing the Alps and passing hastily through Italy and Tuscany, he [Gerald] came to Rome about the Feast of Saint Andrew [30 November 1199] and, approaching the feet of Pope Innocent III, who was then in the second year of his papacy, he presented him with six books, which he had composed with much study, saying among other things, 'Others give you pounds (*libras*), but I give you books (*libros*).' Now the Pope, who was most learned and loved literature, kept all these books together by his bedside for about a month and used to display their elegant and pithy phrases to the Cardinals who visited him, and finally gave all save one to different Cardinals who asked for them. But the *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, which he loved beyond the rest, he would not suffer to be parted from him.[22]

This scene frames Gerald's relationship with Innocent and introduces three central themes which, as we will show, reoccur in *De jure*. First, Gerald constructs the impression that his learning and wit is greatly appreciated by Innocent and his cardinals. This is one of the principal means via which his conception of courtliness, as honed at the English royal court, is projected upon the papal court.

Second, Gerald creates the impression that the curia recognized his high status: he was granted privileged access to the pope's private chambers (here symbolized by his books). The sense of respect accorded to Gerald in the papal palace is thus constructed and presented through his repeated references to physical space; the importance of this would have been clear to contemporary audiences. Moreover, Gerald frequently notes the timing of his meetings with the pope. He underlines that his access to the pope was outside of the curia's official 'public hours'. Indeed, Gerald presents his access to these exclusive spaces as almost instantaneous. Proffering a selective and self-important account of how, when and where he accessed the pope, there is no mention of the long weeks waiting to gain an audience.

[21] Bate, 1972 has persuasively deconstructed Gerald's supposed friendship with Walter Map, arguing that it was a one-sided affair on Gerald's part.

[22] 'Alpes itaque transcendens, et Italiam ac Tuscaniam transcurrens, circa festum Sancti Andreae Romam pervenit; et accedens ad pedes papae, scilicet, Innocentii III, qui tunc praesidebat, et papatus ejus anno secundo, VI libros suos, quos ipse studio magno compegerat, ei presentavit; dicens etiam inter caetera: "Praesentant vobis alii libras, sed nos libros." Libros autem illos papa, quia copiose literatus erat et literaturam dilexit, circa lectum suum indivisos per mensem fere secum tenuit, et elegantia ac sententiosa verba cardinalibus advenientibus ostentabat; deinde vero singulis cardinalibus singulos precario concessit. *Gemmam* autem *sacerdotalem* prae caeteris dilectam a se separari non permisit.' *De rebus*: 119; Butler, 2005: 164–5 (trans.).

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Third, Gerald refers to the curia's avarice. His pun upon 'pounds' (*libras*) and 'books' (*libros*) intimated the widely perceived corruption of the curia,[23] where money, rather than justice or learning, swayed results. At the kernel of this pun is a crucial point: Gerald identifies curial venality as the crux of his failed litigation.[24] It echoes other contemporary critiques of the papacy — pronounced Anglo-Norman examples include William of Malmesbury, John of Salisbury, Walter Map and Roger of Wendover (Yunck, 1963; 1964: 72–8; Benzinger, 1968; Thomson, 1978)[25] — and Gerald's rhetoric thus taps into established tropes.

In *De jure*, Gerald recounts his three stays in Rome. His first visit is presented as positive yet ultimately indecisive. He carefully sets out the central arguments of the case, and includes two examples of the smiling pope. The second visit (1201) is recounted briefly and contains no examples of smiling, laughing or joking. Rather, it is preoccupied with legal details. Eventually Innocent makes a decision in Gerald's favour: his opponents are ordered to cover his costs and it is decided that the case can only be heard in Rome. Gerald's third visit (1202–3) is described in expansive terms, and it contains the most pronounced examples of smiling and laughing with the pope.

Gerald's account of his third visit — as recounted in *De jure* — possesses a distinct narrative arc that requires elaboration. Upon arriving in Rome, Gerald again stresses his honourable reception in the pope's private chambers. He then charts his rising fortune. This is made clear when a monk named Golwen accuses Gerald of theft. The accusations prove false, and Gerald writes triumphantly that the curia viewed this as a positive omen in his favour (Butler, 2005: 279). He identifies two moments as representing the apex of his success in Rome: (i) a visit to the Maidens' Fountain, in which he and Innocent joke at length in private; and (ii) the following scene in the consistory where he skilfully argues his case in public. According to Gerald, his imminent victory spurs his opponents to bribe the curia with ever-larger sums; even the pope is described as accepting 'rich gifts'. At this point Gerald's fortunes swiftly turn. Ugolino, cardinal deacon of Saint Eustace (a confidant to Innocent, according

[23] This was a popular pun aimed at the papacy. It is found in the twelfth-century *Apocalypsis Goliae*: 'thirsting for pounds, he pawns his books' (*libras siciens libros inpignorat*), and in Alexander Neckham's eulogy to Rome (*c.* 1215): 'I love books but pounds I loathe: so Rome, farewell' (*libros / Diligo, sed libras respuo; Roma, vale*; ll. 335–6). Alexander Neckham, *De laudibus divinæ sapientiæ*: 448; Parks 1954: 237, 243 (trans.); Mann, 1981: 35.

[24] Gerald's scorn of papal corruption is evident elsewhere: see Gerald of Wales, *Symbolum electorum*: 374; and *Speculum ecclesiae*: 291–2. In *De rebus*, Gerald stated his intention was to expose 'how easily two Churches, to wit, the Italian and the Welsh, were corrupted by the power of money'. Butler, 2005: 33 (trans.).

[25] Specific examples include William of Malmesbury's comments on Rome in his *Gesta regum Anglorum* 1:612–23; John of Salisbury's criticisms of the Romans in his *Historia pontificalis*: 79–80, and *Policraticus* (Webb): 2:67–71; Walter Map's acrostic: 'Radix Omnium Malorum Avaritia' in his *De nugis curialium*: 168–9; and Roger of Wendover's anecdote about the English parliament laughing about Roman avarice in his *Flores historiarum* 2:304.

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to Gerald, and the future Pope Gregory IX, 1227–41), plays a key role here.[26] Ugolino's duplicity is implied in Gerald's depiction of his first visit,[27] and by the time of his third visit Ugolino has become the clear villain of the piece. Gerald implies that the dishonest cardinal is persuaded by gifts to mislead Innocent, who subsequently requests that Gerald should not speak against certain witnesses. Gerald accepts Innocent's advice, albeit against his better judgment. Thus, when Innocent rules against Gerald, the archdeacon feels a sharp sense of betrayal. This narrative arc is essential to appreciating the nuanced roles played by smiling, laughing and joking in Gerald's account.

SMILING, LAUGHING AND JOKING AT SECULAR COURTS

Associating rulers with wit and laughter has precedent, and it helps us understand why smiling, laughing and joking were associated with the courtly context of the papacy. For some ancient Roman writers humour was an accepted and positive attribute for a good ruler, who should make benevolent jests and graciously receive jokes. For instance, Cassius Dio (AD 155–235) wrote approvingly that Emperor Vespasian (AD 69–79) 'indulged in jests like a man of the people and enjoyed jokes at his own expense' (Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 65.11.1; Laurence and Paterson, 1999; Beard, 2014: 129–35).

The association between wit, courtly life and rulers continued into the Middle Ages and flourished during the twelfth century.[28] The concept of courtliness was deeply entwined with notions of wit and good humour; indeed, the word *facetus* meant 'witty' as well as 'courtly' and 'refined'.[29] Numerous vignettes from contemporary histories reinforce these associations. The Benedictine monk and historian William of Malmesbury, for instance, notes that Henry II (r.1014–24), emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, was 'full of humour' (*joci plenus*) and that King William II of England (r.1087–1100) was a witty individual who could also laugh at himself (William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum* 1:340–3, 554–7).

In particular, humorous anecdotes abound in relation to Henry II of England and his court, with which many noted humorists were associated, including Gerald, Walter Map and Daniel Beccles. Regardless of Henry's actual character, several writers sought to connect him with the allied notions of courtliness and

[26] For Ugolino's career before becoming Pope Gregory IX, see Maleczek, 1984: 126–33.

[27] Gerald comments that the cardinal was 'thought to be his friend' and promised to 'act as his friend'. *De jure*: 181; Butler, 2005: 194. The motif of distrustful cardinals also pervades Walter of Châtillon's poem *Propter Sion non tacebo*. Walter of Châtillon, *Poems:* 262–75; Yunck, 1964: 75.

[28] For the translation of ancient Roman humour to the English royal court see Martin, 1990: 144–66.

[29] The nuances of *facetus* merit more attention than this paper allows. See *DMLBS*, fascicule IV: 890; Jaeger, 1985: 161–8.

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wit.[30] For instance, in his book of manners, *Urbanus Magnus* (*c.* 1180s), Daniel Beccles wrote: 'Old King Henry first taught people lacking style / These courtly lessons set forth in this book.'[31] Several comments and stories bolster this connotation, while also reflecting the nuances of *facetus* — as is apparent in Gerald's much-quoted characterization of Henry as *vir affabilis, vir flexibilis et facetus*.[32]

Nonetheless, there was a fine line between appropriate and inappropriate humour, as well as clear ideas about proper responses to humour; much depended on the context and the actors. An instructive example features in Adam of Eynsham's *The Life of Saint Hugh of Lincoln* (*c.* 1212) where Hugh teases King Henry II about the humble and illegitimate origins of his great-grandfather, William the Conqueror. Henry took the jibe well and reputedly 'dissolved in helpless laughter' (*soluitur in cacchinum*).[33] In one sense, Adam depicts Henry as a good ruler blessed with humour. However, the language that frames this scene also implies critique: Hugh is termed a 'mocker' or 'satirist' (*derisor*), and this episode is described as a 'taunt' (*improperium*) and a novel courteous mockery (*urbane inuectionis nouitate*) rather than a straightforward joke (Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, 1: 117–18). Moreover, there is a suspicion that the ruler's uncontrollable laughter was excessive and inappropriate. The word *cacchinus* denotes 'guffawing' and excessively loud laughter, and the king is described as rolling about on the ground with abandon (*DMLBS*, fascicule II: 234). Reading between the lines, the monastic author suggests this response is unbecoming: the act of excessive laughing implies loss of control. Conversely, a smile can indicate a careful mode of self-control (Binski, 1997: 354; Burrow, 2002: esp. 79 n. 23). Both Gerald and Thomas explore and exploit the smile as a means of masking inner thoughts and feelings.

In contrast to Adam of Eynsham's scene, Gerald recorded a more straightforward instance of papal wit in his *Gemma ecclesiastica* (*c.* 1199): 'Pope Alexander III uttered this witty phrase [*facetum hoc*], as it has been said: "The Lord takes away [*Dominus abstulit*] sons from the bishops, but the Devil gives [*diabolus dedit*] them nephews."'[34] This is a playful manipulation of a passage from the Book of Job (1.21): 'The Lord gives, the Lord takes away'

[30] For a survey of the court see Stubbs, 1900: esp. 165–6; and Vincent, 2007. Cf. Gillingham, 2006.

[31] 'Rex uetus Henricus primo dedit hec documenta / Illepidis, libro quo subscribuntur in isto.' Rigg, 1992: 126–7 (trans.).

[32] Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*: 303; also consider Walter Map's intriguing scene in which the same king, termed 'that treasure-house of all politeness' (*ut omnis facecie thesaurus*), deigns to ignore a hapless monk who has publicly exposed himself. Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*: 102–3; Jaeger, 1985: 162–8; Le Goff, 1989: 4–5; 1997: 44. Cf. Dicke, 2008: 327–8.

[33] Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis* 1:117–18, and 63–4 (for further praise of Henry's humour). See Beyer, 2014, and for further examples see Vincent, 2007: 319.

[34] 'Unde papa Alexander III facetum hoc, ut fertur, verbum emisit: "Filios episcopis Dominus abstulit, nepotes autem diabolus dedit."' Gerald of Wales, *Gemma ecclesiastica*: 304.

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(*Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit*). This brand of humour echoes the type of wit commonly displayed at the English royal court and to which Gerald was well attuned. Furthermore, this joke is remarkably simple in tone and context: it is attributed to the pope himself and is clearly identified as a witty remark; as will be seen, in both respects it differs from the humorous interactions between Gerald and Innocent.

Gerald's clearest statement upon different modes of humour is found in a discussion on appropriate and inappropriate forms of humour in his *Speculum Duorum* (1208–16). Here, Gerald wrote of 'polite witticisms [*curialia uerba et faceta*] which educated men usually respect, admire, and love greatly.'[35] Note how Gerald conjoins 'curial language' with the idea of wit (*facetia*), and also the respect that it brings in elite circles. For Gerald, wit was an appropriate and expected mode of conducting oneself in a courtly setting; this certainly holds true in his record of curial Rome.

Nonetheless, 'courtliness' did not necessarily hold positive connotations for all sections of society, and one of the nuanced differences between Gerald's and Thomas's accounts is their divergent perceptions of courtly conduct. Thomas had scant experience of secular courts: he was certainly no courtier like Gerald (Jaeger, 1985: 162–3). Indeed, Thomas expresses reservations about courtly life when criticizing Abbot Norreis for his gluttony, drunkenness and lechery, adding: 'He was also too much the man of court' (*Chronicle*: 192–3; and Jaeger, 1985: 158). Here, courtliness holds negative associations. Therefore, when Thomas defines Innocent III as 'the most courtly' (*curialissimus*) one must question to what extent this is a compliment.[36]

Without overstating worn stereotypes on humourless monks, the writings of Thomas exhibit a more moderate brand of humour and wit that finds a parallel with other ecclesiastical writers of the period. In his *Historia pontificalis*, John of Salisbury distinguishes between 'courtly jests' (*nugis curialibus*) and genuine 'wit' (*facetia*), and Bernard of Clairvaux disapproves of the frivolous nature of courtly humour (John of Salisbury, *Historia pontificalis*: 55–6; Jaeger, 1985: 163). Monastic and ecclesiastical circles were not against humour, but commentators from these backgrounds often held clear notions that wit denotes eloquence and truth, while courtly humour is frivolous and indecorous (Jones, 2014: 13–28).

Thus, the image of the witty ruler was an established mode of depicting secular courts in medieval England. Thomas and (most particularly) Gerald transpose the norms and behaviour of secular courts to the papal curia, which was a unique compound of secular and spiritual rulership; this projection of one court onto another reflects how humour can be used to negotiate social structures (Halsall,

[35] '… curialia verba et faceta, que viri eruditi venerari, admirari, et magnopere amplecti solent': Gerald of Wales, *Speculum Duorum*: 32–3; Jones, forthcoming a.

[36] Jaeger details the (largely pejorative) connotations of this word, although here he reads Thomas's words as complimentary. Nonetheless, there is an inescapable ambiguity to them when considered in context. *Chronicle*: 374–5; Jaeger, 1985: 155–61, esp. 157.

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2002: 20). Despite their common interest in smiling, laughing and joking at the papal curia, these two authors also exemplify the delicate fissures between the humorous habits of different sections of Anglo-Norman society.

In contrast, contemporary curial biographies of the popes portray the pontiff through a series of conventional platitudes as a dignified and devout head of the Church; humour does not feature. Boso's biography of Pope Alexander III (1159–81) describes his subject with a familiar set of characteristics, including eloquence, learning, patience, mercy and chastity.[37] A similar depiction is found in the *Gesta Innocentii* written around 1208 by an anonymous author. Innocent's character is almost lost in a thicket of clichés: 'He was strong and firm, magnanimous and wise, a defender of the faith, a foe of heresy, strict in justice, but compassionate in mercy, humble in good times and patient in bad, somewhat impatient by nature but easily forgiving.'[38] These depictions indicate how the curia wanted to present the ideal pope: as the benevolent father, the good judge and the devout defender of the Church; there is no role for humour (Paravicini Bagliani, 1976, 1995).

THOMAS'S SMILING AND JOKING POPE

Thomas's *Chronicle* (265–7, 287, 297 and 312) contains a number of references to emotions and physiological expressions, and particularly in relation to his time in Rome. However, it is only at the papal curia that Thomas remarks upon smiling, and he does so always in relation to Pope Innocent.[39]

Thomas includes three scenes with a smiling and joking pope. The figure of the jesting Innocent initially appears in his account of his second appearance before Innocent. Thomas describes the impeccable credentials of the lawyers that he hires, noting the complaints of his opponent (Master Robert) at the dearth of remaining advocates in Rome, to which Innocent 'replied with a smile: "No one has ever lacked a supply of advocates in the Roman curia!"'[40] Thomas hints at the ills of the curia through the medium of humour. He here presents Innocent as acutely aware of the litigious culture of papal Rome — a common stereotype of the curia — and this is thus reminiscent of the ideal ruler who could laugh

[37] 'Erat enim vir eloquentissimus, in divinis atque humanis scripturis sufficienter instructus et in eorum sensibus subtilissima exercitatione probatus; vir quoque scholasticus et eloquentia polita facundus; vir siquidem prudens, benignus, patiens, misericors, mitis, sobrius, castus, et in eleemosynarum largitione assiduus, atque aliis operibus Deo placitis semper intentius': *Liber pontificalis*, 2:397; Boso, *Life of Alexander III*: 43.

[38] 'Severus contra rebelles et contumaces, sed benignus erga humiles et devotos, fortis et stabilis, magnanimus et astutus, fidei defensor et heresis expugnator. In justitia rigidus sed in misericordia pius, humilis in prosperis et patiens in adversis, nature tamen aliquantulum indignantis sed facile ignoscentis': Gress-Wright, 1981: 1; *Gesta Innocentii*: 3 (trans.).

[39] The only exception is a passing reference to a laugh in a miracle story. *Chronicle*: 81.

[40] '… respondit dominus papa subridendo, "Nunquam defuit alicui copia aduocatorum in curia Romana" …': *Chronicle*: 282–7, at 286–7.

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at himself.[41] This moment of humour is signposted for the reader via the smile, and it strengthens the author's position: it alerts the audience to Thomas's wise choice of lawyers, and the pope's joke rebuts the claims of Thomas's opponent.

Immediately following Innocent's jest, Thomas presents his legal case. In a lengthy passage Thomas recounts how he argues before the pope that archival documents (of disputable veracity) prove the abbey falls under papal (rather than episcopal) jurisdiction, before describing the process of appointing abbots at Evesham. The monastic community alone has the power to appoint its abbot who is then blessed by a bishop of its choosing (*Chronicle*: 296–7). He concludes that Evesham was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and that it was fully protected against all episcopal rights over it; should there, however, be other episcopal rights against which the abbey was not protected, he hoped that Innocent would extend papal jurisdiction. If that proved impossible then the abbey would meet the bishop's demands. Upon finishing: 'the pope turned to his cardinals with a smile and in his native language said: "This fellow takes everything away from the bishop and then says *Let the bishop have the leftovers!*"'[42]

With this scene, Thomas displays Innocent's sympathy towards his argument and again he gives Innocent's humour a cynical edge; here, the joke mocks Master Robert's employer, the bishop. Through his representation of the pope's actions, language and body language, Thomas creates a sense of the curia versus visitors, of insiders versus outsiders: the pope offers the joke solely for the amusement of the cardinals, is physically turned towards the cardinals and addresses them in a different language.[43] Indeed, throughout his account of his curial visit Thomas draws attention to his outsider status: for example, he admits to paying the doorkeeper so he can access the hall, and he never enters the pope's private quarters (*Chronicle*: 312–13; Sayers, 2013: 121).[44] He also notes the curia's slow pace and the long periods of waiting for an audience. In contrast, Gerald purposefully stresses his immediate and seamless access to members of the curia. At the same time, this scene highlights Thomas's pride in understanding the insider's joke; his ability to skilfully manoeuvre the curia is clear.

Several scenes in Thomas's *Chronicle* portray Innocent as an impatient man with a quick temper, thus coincidentally supporting the depiction of Innocent in the *Gesta Innocentii*, where only the penultimate characteristic — Innocent's impatience — breaks the clichéd eulogy and lends authenticity to the characterization.[45] This temper is clearly visible in the third scene in Thomas's

[41] Similarly, Pope Adrian IV is depicted as smiling in response to strong criticism aimed at him and his curia. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* (Nederman): 135.

[42] 'Et dominus papa conuersus ad cardinales, subridendo, uulgariter loquens, dixit: "Iste omnia aufert episcopo, et postea dicit, habeat episcopus residuum"': *Chronicle*: 296–7.

[43] Most cardinals at this time were Italian. Maleczek, 1984: 67–203.

[44] On the motif of the grasping doorkeeper see Yunck, 1964: 74.

[45] Thomas states that Master Robert's speech 'went on and on' to the extent that Innocent 'became bored stiff, and finally, glaring' at Robert, ordered him to hurry up: 'Et cum in longum

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Chronicle containing a papal joke. Here Thomas's opponent makes a point which Innocent dislikes, prompting the comment: 'Without doubt you and your masters had drunk deep of your English ale when you learnt that!'[46] Innocent does not smile here. As with all of the jests that Thomas attributes to Innocent, this is a biting joke, but the lack of smiling makes it especially cutting; it is again made at Master Robert's expense and it shows papal frustration with Thomas's opponent. Once more the passage serves to highlight Thomas's knowledge, as he goes on to correct an erroneous point made by Robert.

The scenes with the smiling or joking pope serve an important function in the narrative: Thomas uses expressions of smiling or joking to highlight the wider themes of the *Chronicle*, namely the distinct customs of the curia, his own outsider status, and the difficulties of conducting litigation in Rome. These issues litter the passages preceding Thomas's public presentations before the pope. He describes the giving of gifts, the long periods of waiting, the constant dispatch of messages, the meetings with important figures, and the securing of financial loans. In short, the dangers and travails of papal Rome that Thomas forewarns his readers about are clearly outlined in his *Chronicle* (201). This reflects one of Thomas's central purposes in writing his account: closeness with the pope is difficult but necessary.

The moments of humour, which are signposted via smiling or laughing, also frame long legal sections of exacting detail. For instance, the first example of the smiling pope features just before a lengthy and detailed account of Thomas's arguments on behalf of his community at Evesham (*Chronicle*: 287–97). Following his dry exposition to the pope, Thomas immediately inserts his second example of the smiling pope (*Chronicle*: 297). Thus the substantive legal arguments of the case are enclosed with pithy references to smiling and joking that signal a shift in style and render crucial passages more memorable to the reader. It is in this context that Thomas punctuates the legal discourse of his narrative with smiling, laughing and joking. With their stinging punchlines (signposted as humorous by the pope's smile) Thomas intended these scenes to be easily remembered, not just because they showed off his ability to navigate the papal curia, but also because they were instructive for future Evesham monks appealing to the curia.

protraheret sermonem, dominus papa tedio affectus aliquantum toruo oculo illum respitiens …': *Chronicle*: 282–3, see also 266–7, 356–7.

[46] 'Et dominus papa, "Certe et tu et magistri tui multum bibistis de ceruisia Anglicana quando hec didicistis"': *Chronicle*: 354–5. Sayers and Watkiss, 2013, note that this was a typical Bolognese joke of the period. Bologna was the great centre for training in jurisprudence. Innocent trained there and Thomas visited Bologna for six months. Nonetheless, jests on drinking habits are far from original: for example, John of Salisbury jokes about hardened English drinking habits in a letter to his friend Peter of Celle. See John of Salisbury, *The Letters*, 1:57–8.

GERALD'S LAUGHING POPE

The most prominent example of laughing and joking at the curia is a string of jests included in Gerald's third Roman visit, as recorded in *De jure*. Gerald reports how Golwen is paid to besmirch his reputation by accusing him of stealing a horse. It is, however, ascertained that the horse in Gerald's possession is a gelding, whereas the stolen horse was not castrated: Gerald writes that Golwen undertook 'a careful examination [*perscrutans et perlustrans*] [of the horse] both with eyes and hands' but a papal servant reported that Golwen found nothing 'except a useless rod and an empty bag' [*praeter virgam inutilem et peram vacuam*] (Butler, 2005: 279 (trans.)). The servant's report is replete with a double entendre that the audience clearly appreciated; according to Gerald: 'This jest was hailed with universal laughter.'[47] The insinuating language indicates that even the servants at the papal curia are on Gerald's side and that Golwen's humiliation is complete.

The pope was later told of the events and 'dissolved in laughter' (*resolutus in risum*). Consequently, the horse is returned to Gerald, Golwen is discredited and the whole court aroused to 'huge joy and exultation' (Butler, 2005: 279 (trans.)). But this humorous passage plays a serious role in the narrative: it evinces the flaws in the opposition's argument and the depths to which they stooped; and in Gerald's words, it was viewed as an omen for his eventual victory. Gerald then repeats a few lines of anonymous verse lamenting papal corruption in which truth is described as an 'empty bag' (or purse) at the papal curia.[48] The author once more hints at papal dishonesty and thus forewarns his audience of this tale's conclusion.

According to Gerald, the story of the gelding so amused Innocent that he asked Gerald to repeat the tale in person. The following passage, taken from *De jure*, represents the apex of Gerald's relationship with the pope. Gerald explicitly states that this was one of the two most significant moments in his entire case in Rome. It is worth repeating in full:

> Now it happened that at this time the Pope went to the Maidens' Fountain, whither he delighted oft to walk, when occasion offered. … And when the bell of the Palace heralded his [Innocent's] going forth … the Archdeacon [Gerald] with the Elect of Bangor and his comrades followed the Pope; and when he had come to the fountain and had sat down with his comrades at a little distance in the field which was there, the Pope who was sitting by the bubbling waters of the fountain, a little apart from the rest with the more intimate of his household, as it were in a room beside a narrow path and shut in on all sides by waves and waters, ordered the Archdeacon [Gerald] to be called to him and to come alone and unaccompanied. And being thus made one of those who sat together there, when the Pope asked him how matters had gone in the suit between himself and the monk [Golwen] concerning the possession of a horse, he repeated briefly and frankly what the Pope had already heard from the Chamberlain, and told how he had outwitted

[47] 'Cum itaque verbum hoc jocosum risus secutus esset universorum …' *De jure*: 252; Butler, 2005: 279 (trans.).

[48] 'Si curia severa, / Si justitia mera, / Si falsitas sera, / Si fides sincera, / Si aequa statera, / Ubi vacua pera.' *De jure*: 252; Butler, 2005: 279 (trans.); Sargent, 2011: 193–4.

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> guile with guile, and how by the sharpness of his cunning the bladder of all those falsehoods had been pricked, as by a little needle, and had burst with a report.[49]

Sitting apart from everyone else, Gerald jokes about Golwen and his dubious friends who have acted as witnesses, which allows him to pun upon the double meaning of *testes*: witness or testicles.[50] Gerald places the word *testes* at the beginning of each sentence for emphasis. His intended joke is clear:

> *Testes* have always given you much trouble, Golwen. *Testes* got you shamefully thrown out of your house and fraternal order. *Testes* deprived you of religion and the comfort of honesty. Now *testes* have lost you that horse and all honour here.[51]

Innocent laughs emphatically (*resolutus in risum*, again). The pope is unambiguously entertained, but what might Gerald be conveying through his description of Innocent's style of laughter? Is it an appropriate response or one that may also hold negative associations? There are imperfect but instructive parallels with Adam of Eynsham's description of Henry II, in which the king 'dissolved into helpless laughter' (*soluitur in cacchinum*). As noted above, the *type* of laughter holds pejorative connotations, as does the king's loss of control. Gerald's terminology is more opaque: he obviously wants to portray the pope as greatly entertained by his joke, but *resolutus* also denotes a similar loss of control (*DMLBS*, fascicule XIV: 2796–7). In contrast, Thomas includes wit and humour in a more restrained manner in his *Chronicle*.[52]

Innocent partakes in Gerald's joke by asking: 'Are these the sort of *testes* they produce against you?'[53] The papal response denotes sympathy towards the author, although Gerald crucially remains the central comic voice. He was

[49] 'Contigit autem his diebus papam ad Fontem Virginum, quo spatiandi causa loco et tempore competenti libenter atque frequenter ire consuevit, profectum esse. [...] Sane cum papam exiisse, tam campana palatii motionis ei nuncia, quam fama testante compertum fuerat, paratis ad equitandum palefridis, cum electo Bangoriensi et sociis suis papam archidiaconus e vestigio secutus est. Qui cum ad fontem venisset, et paulo remotius in campo cum suis e regione consederit, papa, qui juxta fontis scaturiginem aliquantulum remotus ab aliis, quasi in conclavi quodam praeter semitam arctam aquis et undis undique concluso cum paucis de familia sua secretiore sedebat, archidiaconum ad se vocari jussit, et solum sine socio venire praecepit. Factus itaque consedentium unus, papa quaerente qualiter in causa inter ipsum et monachum super equo petendo processum fuisset, paucis admodum verbis et apertis quod ipse a camerario prius audierat ei replicavit; et qualiter artem illorum arte delusit, et quomodo per subtilitatem acutam quasi per acum modicam facile totius falsitatis illius explosa vesica concrepuit.' *De jure*: 252–4; Butler, 2005: 279–80 (trans.).

[50] *De jure*: 251–5; Butler, 2005: 276–81 (trans.); Tillmann, 1980: 291–3; Mann, 1981: 36–7.

[51] 'Multa tibi mala, Golwene, testes fecerunt. Testes a domo tua et fratrum consortio te turpiter ejecerunt. Testes tibi religionis et honestatis commodum ademerunt. Testes tibi nunc equum istum et omnem hic honorem abstulerunt.' *De jure*: 253; Sargent, 2011: 193 (trans.).

[52] For example, see Thomas's criticism of Roger Norreis. *Chronicle*: 192–3.

[53] 'Ad haec autem papa resolutus in risum, ait archidiacono: "Suntne tales testes, quos contra te producunt?"' *De jure*: 253. Gerald probably found this pun entirely appropriate; as Shanzer states: 'Sexually explicit or obscene material was an integral part of [medieval] high culture'. Shanzer, 2006: 179; and see also Adams, 1982: 214.

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fond — and proud — of witty wordplay, and it is a common feature of his writings.[54] However, here, as elsewhere, his humour was far from original: this pun on *testes* can be found in several plays by Plautus and also in a twelfth-century Goliardic text.[55] As noted earlier, such a form of exchange was familiar to courtiers, like Gerald, at the English royal court.

The merriment continues with the pope asking Gerald to repeat amusing stories about the archbishop of Canterbury's poor Latin and equally poor theology. In this context, Gerald's dexterous display of Latinity (via his pun on *testes*) concurrently elevates himself while denigrating his opponent:

> And so after the Pope had for a long space indulged now in serious talk and now in merry (*nunc seriis, nunc jocosis et ludicris*), while all wondered and the rivals and the adversaries of the Archdeacon grew sick with envy because the Pope held so long a conversation with him, they all returned to Rome.[56]

This intimate and informal exchange at the fountain needs to be read in conjunction with the following scene in which Gerald counters and confounds his opponents during a public hearing before the pope (Gerald of Wales, *De jure*: 255; Butler, 2005: 284). He clearly states that because of the events at the fountain and then at the hearing 'his adversaries were filled with confusion and despair, … all believed that the archdeacon's suit was like to be victorious' (Gerald of Wales, *De jure*: 256; Butler, 2005: 286 (trans.)). These two scenes serve to show Gerald's exceptional access to the pope and the pope's appreciation of his wit; together they are pivotal in *De jure* and mark the climax of the narrative arc in his account of his third visit to Innocent. In their own ways both moments aid Gerald's cause: the public and private, the opportune and inopportune meetings of the Canterbury monks echo in Gerald's record.

The exchange at the Maidens' Fountain has caught the attention of several scholars. J.S. Brewer (1861: lxix–lxx) declared that this scene portrayed Innocent as 'courteous, affable, witty'. In essence, this interpretation has remained the dominant view of Innocent. A century later, Christopher Cheney (1976: 137) stated: 'Innocent III, according to Gerald's account, had a good

[54] He praised it as a characteristic of the Welsh. Gerald of Wales, *Descriptio Kambriae*: 190–2.

[55] Plautus' plays: for example, *Curculio* (ll. 30–1). Gerald's knowledge of this ancient playwright appears to have been limited: he quotes the same passage (*ex insensibili ne credas sensibile nasci*) on three occasions (see *De Invectionibus*: 83; *De jure*: 261; and *Speculum ecclesiae*: 3) and erroneously attributes it to Plautus when it is actually Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 2.888). See Butler, 2005: 31, 290. This pun is also found in a late twelfth-century Goliardic poem (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vat. lat. 4389). On the transmission of Plautus' work see Reynolds and Wilson, 1983: 302–7. The majority of Gerald's jokes are commonplace, which reinforces Bate's assessment (Bate, 1972).

[56] 'Cum itaque nunc seriis, nunc jocosis et ludicris, ibidem papa diutius indulsisset; cunctis admirantibus, sed adversariis et æmulis livore tabescentibus, quod tam longum cum archidiacono colloquium papa tenuisset, soluto consessu, Romam reversi sunt.' *De jure*: 255; Butler, 2005: 281 (trans.).

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deal of sympathy with the archdeacon and a personal liking for him.'[57] Yet when contextualized within the whole account this is not the case: the passage is an extended example of Gerald's wit, the pope's appreciation of his humour, and it may also be a comment on Innocent's excessive and unbecoming style of laughing.

Other scholars have viewed this passage as an entertaining digression rather than a crucial moment in a wider narrative. Of the fountain scene, Tancred Borenius (1937: 16), overlooking the puns on testicles, ventured: 'was there ever a more enchanting vignette of Medieval Rome than that of the formidable Innocent III, in an unwonted aspect of relaxation'; Butler (2005: 280) refused to translate this passage, while most recently John Moore (2003: 92) termed this scene to be a mere 'side show'.[58] However, the fountain scene is, according to Gerald himself, an integral passage: it was intended to represent the apogee of his case and the nadir of his adversaries, to be the finest illustration of his privileged access to Innocent and of the pope's appreciation of his learning and wit. Gerald uses joking and laughing as the social glue that fosters an implicit sense of complicity between the two figures, and the humour of this passage succeeded in making it a memorable moment for Gerald's readers as well as later scholars.[59]

GERALD'S SMILING POPE

The laughing pope is undoubtedly a positive image (for Gerald) in *De jure*. In contrast, the motif of the smiling pope is more ambiguous and needs careful interpretation. Regardless of its precise meaning, a smile is an intimate gesture: in this case, one must be close enough to the pope to discern his smile — and Gerald's physical proximity to the pontiff is a recurring feature of his narrative. Gerald also plays upon another common feature of a smile, namely that it outwardly and initially suggests intimacy and friendship. Thus, the uncertain tone and shifting texture of the papal curia is deftly evoked through the inherent ambiguity of the smile. In other words, what is seemingly positive at first may later prove otherwise.

Their initial meeting during Gerald's first visit, recorded in *De jure*, contains the first example of the smiling pope. Gerald again hints at his privileged status: he boasts that he was allowed to see Innocent in his own chamber in the evening

[57] Moore, 2003: 80, concurs with Cheney, remarking: 'Innocent seems to have felt a genuine affection for the archdeacon [Gerald].'

[58] Butler refused to translate this passage, writing: 'He [Gerald] then proceeded to make and also to repeat sundry ribald jests about the monk. The puns cannot be adequately reproduced here and are somewhat broad; but they amused the Pope.'

[59] Gerald states that his privileged access invoked envy. See also Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, 1:115–18; Vincent, 2007: 328.

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and not merely in public consistory.[60] Gerald raises his case for the first time proper and Innocent sends for a papal register that details the metropolitan churches listed by kingdom (*De jure*: 165; Butler, 2005: 182). The entry for England is read:

> 'The Metropolitan Church of Canterbury has subject to it the following Churches: Rochester, London', and so on in order, and when the Suffragan Churches of England had been enumerated, after a rubric 'Concerning Wales', the text proceeded, 'In Wales there are the Churches of Mynyw, Llandaff, Bangor, and Saint Asaph'. And on hearing this, the Pope said with a mocking smile (*quasi insultando et subridendo*), 'See here is the Church of Mynyw enumerated with the rest'. But Gerald made answer, 'Nay, neither it nor the other Churches of Wales are enumerated with the rest in the same way, to wit, in the accusative, as were the Suffragan Churches of England. If they had been in the accusative, then in truth they might be held to be subject to Canterbury'. And the Pope replied, 'You did well to note that.' (*De jure*: 165–6; Butler, 2005: 183 (trans.))

This is a seemingly positive scene: Gerald is accorded privileged and exceptional access to the pope, and Innocent directs a smile at Gerald. However, the author injects ambiguity into the passage by writing that Innocent answered *quasi insultando et subridendo*. Gerald never fully explains the smile at this moment in the story, but when read in the wider context of *De jure* this is a prophetic smile hinting at Innocent's duplicitous nature. The pope's countenance is further complicated through his reply that Gerald is mistaken in his case. Gerald remains undaunted and perceptively notes a problem with the register, thereby demonstrating his curial knowledge.

Gerald includes smiles, laughs and jokes aimed *at* him for specific reasons; there is always narrative purpose to these examples.[61] Here, Gerald appears to suggest that Innocent thought he had outwitted him, hence the mocking papal smile, but Gerald ultimately impresses Innocent with his analytical and linguistic skills. Soon after, again during his first visit, Gerald records another instance of the smiling pontiff:

> . . . since Gerald's cause seemed to find no less favour in the eyes of the Pope and his whole Court than he himself had done, on a certain evening, when he visited the Pope in his chamber, as is the custom, the Pope called him to his side, saying: 'Come forward, Elect of Mynyw, come forward.' And when he heard this he fell upon his knees and kissed the Pope's foot and said: 'My Lord, such a word falling from your lips, seems to have the force of a confirmation.' And he with a smile [*quasi subridens*] made answer: 'I called you *Elect* because others call you so. The Pope calls no man *Elect* in all seriousness before he had been confirmed in his office.' (*De jure*: 176; Butler, 2005: 188)[62]

[60] The *Gesta Innocentii* records that Innocent held consistory three times a week. Gress-Wright, 1981: 61.

[61] Gerald only records mockery of himself when highlighting injustices he has suffered: for example, when King Henry states that had Gerald not been Welsh then he would have attained a higher position; and when imprisoned in France, Gerald regales his captors with a joke on his bushy eyebrows. Here, his ability to laugh in the face of danger casts himself in a heroic light. *De rebus*: 60; and *De jure*: 293; Butler, 2005: 314–15.

[62] A similar scene is included in Gerald's first visit in *De jure*, when Ugolino informs Gerald that he was called 'Archbishop'. *De jure*: 181; Butler, 2005: 194 (trans.); Moore, 2003: 82.

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This is another superficially positive moment for Gerald: he is shown favour by the pope and court as is underlined by his privileged access to the papal chambers in the evening. Innocent implies that Gerald will shortly be elected, but again he toys with the ambiguity of the smile: the pope is described 'as if smiling' (*quasi subridens*).[63] Again Gerald modifies the verb (*subridere*) by adding *quasi* (Thomas uses the same verb but without modification). Gerald leaves the smile carefully unexplained. He never portrays the pope as smiling straightforwardly at him; every smile is pervaded with an uncertainty that later manifests itself as duplicity.

This is apparent in the following passage, when Buongiovanni, an agent of the archbishop of Canterbury, arrives in Rome. Gerald states that he is 'bringing — it is believed [*ut creditur*] — rich gifts [*xeniis pulchris*], as is the custom, from the Archbishop to the Pope' (*De jure*: 176; Butler, 2005: 188 (trans.)). Gerald's language is judicious. He does not state outright that Innocent had received such gifts, but his meaning is clear. Gerald indicates that this will affect his prospects in Rome, punning: 'So Gerald, seeing the shifts [*vices*], not to say the shiftiness [*vitia*], of the curia …'[64] Once more, his humour thinly veils a crucial narrative passage.

The smiling pope motif is absent in Gerald's second visit, but it reappears at the end of his third visit in a scene following the pivotal events at the fountain and in the consistory, when Gerald's victory appeared assured. However, Gerald's case unravels due to the rich gifts offered to members of the papal curia by his opponents. Innocent summons him and the archbishop's principal representative, John of Tynemouth, to the pontiff's chamber. Innocent cancels Gerald's election and that of Walter, Abbot of Saint Dogmael's, who was the archbishop's candidate and had been elected to the see by the monks at a later date. As the monks of Saint David have since disowned Gerald, this ends his candidacy. Gerald has continually hinted at his ultimate deception, but it is now laid out clearly before the reader.

A few days later, Gerald makes a final plea: if the witnesses brought against him were to be believed then seven archbishops more strongly established than the present archbishop of Canterbury should rightly be deposed. Gerald writes: 'The pope, when he heard him [Gerald], shook his head and smiled, with a glance at Cardinal Ugolino who was sitting at his side.'[65] Innocent's body language indicates his disbelief at Gerald's naivety while the telling glance to Ugolino alludes to the cardinal's influence and corrupting force.[66] Smiling again

[63] This passage has previously been read in a positive context: Moore, 2003: 80, notes the smile without questioning its deeper meaning.

[64] 'Uidens itaque Giraldus uices curiae, ne uitia dicamus …': *De jure*: 179; Butler, 2005: 192 (trans.); Mann, 1981: 35.

[65] 'Papa vero hoc audiens, Hugolinum qui ei assidebat respiciendo, cum capitis concussione subrisit': *De jure*: 267; Butler, 2005: 297 (trans.).

[66] Moore, 2003: 95, misleadingly translates *concussione* as 'nodding'. On the medieval associations of head shaking see Burrow, 2002: 43, 60–1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246217000435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

underlines corruption and deception, and it evokes the uncertain atmosphere of the curia as perceived by Gerald; it is a space of superficial friendship and acceptance that masks a deep-seated corruption.

CONCLUSION

Examples of smiling, laughing and joking feature prominently and frequently in both Thomas and Gerald's accounts of papal Rome. In approaching this inherently complex topic, this paper has stressed the importance of contextualization. It opened by contextualizing these physiological expressions within Anglo-Norman court culture; it was shown that humour and wit, smiling and laughing were integral elements of this culture and a successful courtier's persona. This material indicates how and why smiling, laughing and joking feature in Thomas and Gerald's papal experiences. Furthermore, we have contextualized the narratives and language that frame each example under discussion. Too often these passages have been decontextualized and analysed as detached episodes, and in so doing their narrative value is lost. Previous interpretations have read these moments as straightforward signs of friendship or evidence of the pontiff's genuine wit. This paper has shown that such readings require revision. Laughing, smiling and joking are three closely related modes of communication, and they often feature together in some combination, but in these passages they hold complex and subtly different meanings for the two Anglo-Norman authors.

Both Thomas and Gerald deploy scenes of smiling, laughing and joking as narrative devices with which to expose certain negative facets of Innocent's court. Thomas uses the smiling and joking pope to convey the distinct and bewildering nature of the papal curia. He places each and every joke in Innocent's mouth, and never casts himself as a comic actor. The pope's jokes do not present a warm wit and charm though; Innocent's humour (as related by Thomas) is tinged with cynicism and edge, and, importantly, it is always at the expense of his visitors and is delivered purely for the enjoyment of the cardinals. Innocent's jokes do not invite dialogue: they are not intended to create a bond between the visitor and the pope but to reaffirm existing ties between the pope and his court. Papal jokes thereby expose the shared culture and understanding amongst the members of the curia and they underline the divide between curial insiders and petitioning visitors. In Thomas's account, moments of humour (as signposted through smiling and laughing) thus convey his status as an outsider. The scenes also construct Thomas as a figure that skilfully navigates the idiosyncrasies of the curia with competence, skill and effort. He shows his monastic audience the importance of learning and traversing papal conduct, language and psychology.

In *De jure*, Gerald uses the same physiological expressions to alternate effect. He draws an important distinction between laughing and smiling: the former

conveys Gerald's courtier wit and high status, whereas smiling evokes the deceitful texture of the curia. In Gerald's account, joking and laughing fostered a bond between the pope and a petitioner — well, certainly Gerald — and they took the form of a dialogue, albeit one in which Gerald played the leading role: Gerald firmly casts himself as the source of all jokes in his text. Innocent partakes in the jesting, and thereby shows his approval, but he is resolutely in the thrall of Gerald's wit. The scene in which the pope 'dissolves in laughter' demonstrates his ability to interact with, and impress, the leading members of the papal court, whereas Gerald's carefully crafted image of the smiling pope is more nuanced and ambiguous. He always modifies the pope's smile: it is either prefixed with the word *quasi* or a shake of the head and a sideways glance. Thus, a superficially positive sign actually conveys a more ambivalent set of interactions, often involving condescension and deceit.

The mnemonic role of these scenes in both authors' work is another important facet of these texts. Both writers render otherwise dry legal passages more memorable through short injections of wit. The humour always repeats the authors' central messages; it is never superfluous. Crucial passages in Thomas's *Chronicle* highlighting his skilful conduct during the case were made memorable by punchy pontifical one-liners and they frame dry yet essential legal details. Similarly, Gerald always makes serious points with his jokes, and his jokes always reinforce his serious legal statements: wordplay, lyric verse, innuendo and jesting sting his opponents and illustrate the sympathy that his suit received. The reader may be bewildered with the intricate legalese of Gerald's writings, but his witty snipes cast him in an unambiguously positive and just light. The mnemonic power of humour represents an under-explored area within the ever-burgeoning field of memory studies, especially in the medieval period.[67]

The writings of Thomas and Gerald reflect how authors with first-hand knowledge of the papal curia chose to portray the ways in which a pope communicated with visitors. The two authors evoke the varied and challenging communicative modes of the medieval papacy: the public and private fora of the curia; the role of sound legal arguments as well as cutting wit; the commonalities as well as the ambiguities of courtly language and manners in a foreign land; the different communicative styles (linguistic, physical and rhetorical) with which popes communicated with members of their curia and with visitors; and, above all, the heightened emotions of bringing a case before the pope.

But what do these depictions of smiling, laughing and joking at the papal court tell us about the two authors' perception of the papal office and how they represented it to their audiences? As already noted, Thomas stresses the divide between curial insiders and outsiders, and how papal preferences and curial procedures created difficulties for litigants or petitioners. Gerald emphasizes the

[67] For instance, there is no discussion of the relationship between memory, laughter, smiling or joking in Carruthers's (2008) seminal work on this topic.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0068246217000435 Published online by Cambridge University Press

fickle, corruptible and shifting nature of the papal court that marred his case in Rome. Furthermore, Gerald and Thomas both emphasize the pope's idiosyncratic, human characteristics: his humour, impressionability and short temper. This is in distinct contrast to the papal biographies produced in Rome in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, which have no room for humour, but instead stress the pontiff's extraordinary spiritual character.

Thomas and Gerald enjoyed limited success at the papal court. Both authors express frustration at the conduct of the curia and stress the human and fallible nature of the pope, but they ultimately accept the authority of the papal see.[68] The pope thus remained an authority and a legitimizing force. Gerald's curial experiences ended in a particularly crushing failure; his bitter critique of Innocent — coated with smiles and laughs — was his final resort, but ultimately it must have been a hollow last laugh.

Address for correspondence:
Prof. (MSO) Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt and Dr William Kynan-Wilson
Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University, 9220 Aalborg East, Denmark
imfs@cgs.aau.dk and wkw@cgs.aau.dk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
It is a pleasure to thank the editors and the two anonymous reviewers of this journal, as well as Johan Lund Heinsen, Carsten Hjort Lange and Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen for their comments and advice in the preparation of this paper. In particular, Pete Jones was generous in sharing comments and unpublished material. We also wish to acknowledge the award of a Research Fellowship to William Kynan-Wilson by the Danish Academy in Rome which provided such a rich and productive period of research. Above all, this research has been made possible thanks to the support of the Danish Council for Independent Research and the award of a DFF-YDUN grant which has supported a wider project on papal communication in the Middle Ages based at Aalborg University, Denmark.

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De jure Gerald of Wales, *De jure et statu Menevensis ecclesiae*: Brewer, J.S. (1863) (ed.) *Giraldi Cambrensis opera: De invectionibus, Lib. IV, De Menevensi ecclesia dialogus, Vita S. David*. London, Longman.

[68] See *Chronicle*: 307. Equally, William of Newburgh's criticism of the papacy gives way to acceptance of the pontiff's authority. Partner, 1977: 79.

De rebus Gerald of Wales, *De rebus a se gestis*: Brewer, J.S. (1861) (ed.) *Giraldi Cambrensis opera: De rebus a se gestis, libri III. Invectionum libellus. Symbolum electorum*. London, Longman.
DMLBS *Dictionary of Medieval Latin in British Sources* (1997–2014). 17 fascicules. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
MGH *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (Hanover); *SS* = *Scriptores*.

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