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Recent German Research on Good and Bad Deaths in Medieval Narrative Sources

Abstract: This research report presents recent German scholarship on good and bad deaths in medieval narrative sources to an English-speaking audience. Current publications are thus concisely illustrated in their design and with their results.

„What is a Good Death and What is a Bad Death?“

In the „Dialogus Miraculorum“, written by Caesarius of Heisterbach between 1219 and 1223, a novice poses this question to a monk. The inquiry is preceded by some examples at the beginning of the eleventh *distinctio* of the work, which is called „About the Dying“ (*De morientibus*). The monk responds by telling several allegories, whereupon the novice remarks, „I confess that I am satisfied with your expositions; now I am asking you to add (more) *exempla*.“¹

In 1980, the historian Arno Borst also demanded more examples of death and dying in the Middle Ages. He criticized Philippe Ariès for not considering any of the numerous medieval accounts of the deaths of specific individuals in his book „L’homme devant la mort“. ² Since (and before) Borst’s criticism, a lot of case studies on such accounts have been published, more and more highlighting that the respective authors attributed circumstances of death to an individual that they deemed appropriate, using nar-

1 Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*. 2 Vols., ed. Johannes Strange, Köln-Bonn-Brussels 1851, vol. 2, dist. 11, cap. 1, pp. 266 f.: „Quae est mors bona, et quae est mors mala? ... Satisfactum mihi fateor per sententias; nunc precor ut exempla subiungas.“ On this, see Manuel Kamenzin, *Die Tode der römisch-deutschen Könige und Kaiser (1150–1349)*, Ostfildern 2020 (*Mittelalter-Forschungen* 64), p. 40. The book is available open access: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.62605>. A systematic study of the portrayal of good and bad deaths in medieval *exempla* is a desideratum.

2 Arno Borst, *Zwei mittelalterliche Sterbefälle*, in: *Merkur* 34 (1980), pp. 1081–1098, esp. p. 1082: „Of the numerous death reports of the Middle Ages, Ariès still does not analyse a single one in the impressive magnum opus.“ („Von den zahlreichen Sterbeberichten des Mittelalters wertet Ariès noch in dem krönenden Hauptwerk keinen einzigen aus.“) Borst’s criticism is directed towards the German translation Philippe Ariès, *Geschichte des Todes*, transl. Hans-Horst Henschen/Una Pfau, München 1980 (*Hanser Anthropologie* [20]) (first French edition: Paris 1977). An English equivalent of this title would be „History of Death“. The German edition is the only one with such a misleading title. For Borst’s criticism see (with references to other critics) Kamenzin, *Tode* (see note 1), pp. 23 f.

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rative strategies and topoi.³ As Augustine put it, „one cannot die badly if he has lived well“ („non potest male mori, qui bene vixerit“).⁴ Accounts describing death in medieval narrative sources thus do not describe what actually happened but present a moral assessment of the deceased by the text's author – a good person's death was good, a bad person's death was bad.⁵ Therefore, in most cases it is impossible to identify the actual cause of death based on these sources. A so-called retrospective diagnosis is not something that can be deduced from the material available today.⁶

3 A comprehensive overview cannot be given here. Among others, German scholarship was influenced by Paul Egon Hübinger, *Die letzten Worte Gregors VII.*, Opladen 1973 (Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Vorträge G 185), Ernst Tresp, *Die letzten Worte des frommen Kaisers Ludwig. Vom Sinn und Unsinn heutiger Texteditionen*, in: *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 48 (1992), pp. 7–36, Horst Fuhrmann, *Die Fabel von Papst Leo und Bischof Hilarius. Vom Ursprung und der Erscheinungsform einer historischen Legende*, in: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 43 (1961), pp. 125–162, or *id.*, *Bilder für einen guten Tod*, München 1997 (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 1997,3). Klaus van Eickels' paper „Der schlechte Tod des schlechten Herrschers“ („The Bad Death of the Bad Ruler“) which he presented on several occasions – but which was never published – was also quite influential (see Kamenzin, Tode [see note 1], p. 26). See also Bernd Schneidmüller, *Canossa und der harte Tod der Helden*, in: Nicola Karthaus/Jörg Jarnut/Matthias Wemhoff (Eds.), *Vom Umbruch zur Erneuerung? Das 11. und beginnende 12. Jahrhundert. Positionen der Forschung. Historischer Begleitband zur Ausstellung Canossa 1077, Erschütterung der Welt. Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur am Aufgang der Romantik*, München 2006 (MittelalterStudien 13), pp. 103–131. The development of German research is also outlined by Kamenzin, Tode (see note 1), pp. 17–28. See also the titles listed in note 5.

4 Augustinus, *Sermo de disciplina christiana*, ed. Ernest Evans, in: *Aurelii Augustini Opera* 13,2, Turnhout 1969 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 46), pp. 203–224, p. 221. In the „Enchiridion“, Augustine further refined the classification with regard to the dead and their fate in the afterlife. He provides four categories: The very good („valde boni“), the not so good („non valde boni“), the not very bad („non valde mali“) and the very bad („valde mali“), see Augustinus, *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate*, ed. Ernest Evans, in: *Aurelii Augustini Opera* 13,2, pp. 21–114, p. 108.

5 Essential for understanding the concepts of good and evil in historiographical sources is Joachim Ehlers, *Gut und Böse in der mittelalterlichen Historiographie*, in: Albert Zimmermann (Ed.), *Die Mächte des Guten und Bösen. Vorstellungen im XII. und XIII. Jahrhundert über ihr Wirken in der Heilsgeschichte*, Berlin-New York 1977 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia 11), pp. 27–71. Without explicit reference to this study, but basically following the same approach: Eva Schlotheuber, *Persönlichkeitsdarstellung und mittelalterliche Morallehre. Das Leben Erzbischof Adalberts in der Beschreibung Adams von Bremen*, in: *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 59 (2003), pp. 495–548; *e a d.*, *Der Mensch am Scheideweg. Personenkonzeptionen des Mittelalters*, in: *Querelles* 10 (2005), pp. 71–96.

6 Nonetheless, there are still a lot of cases in which scholars have tried to provide retrospective diagnoses. For criticism on this approach see: Karl-Heinz Leven, *Von Ratten und Menschen. Pest, Geschichte und das Problem der retrospektiven Diagnose*, in: Mischa Meier (Ed.), *Pest. Die Geschichte eines Menschheitstraumas*, Stuttgart 2005, pp. 11–34; *id.*, *Krankheiten – historische Deutung versus retrospektive Diagnose*, in: Norbert Paul/Thomas Schlich (Eds.), *Medizingeschichte. Aufgaben, Perspektiven, Diagnosen*, Frankfurt a. M.-New York 1998, pp. 153–185, p. 180; Wolfgang Uwe Eckart/Robert Jütte, *Medizingeschichte. Eine Einführung*, Köln 2014 (UTB 2903), p. 367; Michael Stolberg/Tillman Walter, *Martin Luthers viele Krankheiten. Ein unbekanntes Konsil von Matthäus Ratzenberger und die Problematik der retrospektiven Diagnose*, in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 109 (2018), pp. 126–151; Mi-

As Borst, and several centuries before him the novice, had demanded, more examples were discussed, but the fundamental issue – what constituted a good death, what constituted a bad death – was not systematically tackled. In the last few years, however, German scholars have published a number of studies on the use of narrative strategies in medieval historiography and hagiography that ascribed a good or bad death to individuals. This research report provides an overview of these recent developments.⁷

In order to mark a death as good or bad, medieval chroniclers had a wide range of indicators at their disposal. These can be divided into different categories. Regarding time, for example, a sudden death was considered to be bad, while reporting prophecies or signs beforehand presented an individual's demise as part of the divine plan of salvation. Concerning the depiction of dying itself, negative connotations, such as diarrhoea, could denote a bad death, whereas the evoking of saintly role models indicated a good death. Providing further information on the dead body and its burial constitutes yet another category – the aftermath.⁸

In 2014, Romedio Schmitz-Esser published a groundbreaking monograph on the cultural construction of the corpse in the Middle Ages. An English translation was released

chael Stolberg, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer retrospektiven Diagnostik, in: Waltraud Pulz (Ed.), Zwischen Himmel und Erde. Körperliche Zeichen der Heiligkeit, Stuttgart 2012 (Beiträge zur Hagiographie 11), pp. 209–227; id., Epilogue: Did Mona Lisa Suffer from Hypothyroidism? Visual Representations of Sickness and the Vagaries of Retrospective Diagnosis, in: John Henderson/Fredrika Jacobs/Jonathan K. Nelson (Eds.), Representing Infirmary. Diseased Bodies in Renaissance Italy, London 2020 (The Body and the City), pp. 233–247. In research published in English the question of the viability and meaning of retrospective diagnosis is discussed under the term „Cunningham Debate“, referring to a critical article by Andrew Cunningham, Identifying Disease in the Past. Cutting the Gordian Knot, in: *Asclepio* 54 (2002), pp. 13–43. For more on this see Manuel Kamenzin, Von Herrschertoden, Buchgrenzen und Erkenntnismöglichkeiten. Die Tode der ottonischen Könige und Kaiser bei Thietmar von Merseburg, in: Dirk Jäckel/Lisa Klocke/Matthias Weber (Eds.), Thietmar von Merseburg. Historiographie der Grenzzeiten, Frankfurt a. M. 2021 (Studien zur Vormoderne 4), pp. 257–302 (pp. 298 f. note 135) and id., Tode (see note 1), pp. 29 f.; 244.

7 There is a lot of important research conducted in other languages that this paper cannot focus on. See for example Fermín Miranda García/María Teresa López de Guereño Sanz (Eds.), *La muerte de los príncipes en la Edad Media. Balance y perspectivas historiográficas*, Madrid 2020 (Collection de la casa de Velázquez 182). For another recent report with a different focus see Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Leben mit dem Tod in interdisziplinärer Perspektive. Aktuelle Forschungsfelder, neue Fragen*, in: Thomas Kühtreiber (Ed.), *Leben mit dem Tod. Der Umgang mit Sterblichkeit in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Wien 2020 (Beiträge zur Mittelalterarchäologie in Österreich 35), pp. 13–25.

8 The categories presented are based on the results in: Kamenzin, Tode (see note 1) (see esp. pp. 61–75 with further references). Klaus Oschema, Vom Mord zum Ritual. Der Tod Edwards II. von England im Bild, in: Claus Ambos et al. (Eds.), *Bild und Ritual. Visuelle Kulturen in historischer Perspektive*, Darmstadt 2010, pp. 161–171, p. 160, suggests a connection between some of these ideas and the development of the late medieval instructions for the dying known as *Ars moriendi*. Rainer Rudolf, *Ars moriendi. Von der Kunst des heilsamen Lebens und Sterbens*, Köln 1957 (Forschungen zur Volkskunde 39), pp. 56–61 did not know the concepts of good and bad deaths and therefore did not name them among the forerunners of the *Ars moriendi*.

in 2020.⁹ The wide array of sources Schmitz-Esser assessed is impressive. Among many other results, he shows that corpses were classified into groups ranging from *valde boni*, *non valde boni* and *non valde mali* to *valde mali*. The group to which a corpse belonged could be deduced from characteristics such as fragrance or foul odour. The respective classification provided information about the fate of the deceased in the afterlife.¹⁰ These characteristics are also indicators of good or bad deaths when mentioned in narrative sources.

9 The book is based on Schmitz-Esser's *Habilitattonsschrift* that he submitted at the University of Munich: Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter. Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die kulturelle Konstruktion des toten Körpers*, Ostfildern 2014 (Mittelalter-Forschungen 48); open access: <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.44633>. English Translation: id., *The Corpse in the Middle Ages. Embalming, Cremating, and the Cultural Construction of the Dead Body*, transl. Albrecht Classen/Caroline Radtke, London-Turnhout 2020. Schmitz-Esser has published numerous articles on the topic, listing all of them here – even those written since the publication of the original book in 2014 – is impossible. The following is only a selection of his publications since 2020: id., *Leben* (see note 7); id., *Aufbahnen, Verwesen, Auferstehen. Zeitkonzepte beim Umgang mit dem Leichnam im Mittelalter*, in: Julia Weitbrecht/Andreas Bihrer/Timo Felber (Eds.), *Die Zeit der letzten Dinge. Deutungsmuster und Erzählformen des Umgangs mit Vergänglichkeit in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2020 (Encomia Deutsch 6), pp. 61–79; id., *Weiße Knochen, unverbrennbare Ketzer. Beobachtungen zur Unterscheidung von Schuld und Strafe im Mittelalter*, in: Christian Bachhiesl/Sonja Maria Bachhiesl/Stefan Köchel (Eds.), *Schuld. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf ein Konstitutivum des Menschseins*, Weilerswist 2020, pp. 253–270; id., *O quam horrificum? Der Diskurs um die Bestattung und das Interdikt vor Innozenz III.*, in: Tobias Daniels/Christian Jaser/Thomas Woelki (Eds.), *Das Interdikt in der europäischen Vormoderne*, Berlin 2021 (Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung. Beiheft 57), pp. 133–156; id., *Ein Bildwerk ohne, möglicherweise gegen die Tradition? Das Grabmal Rudolfs von Rheinfelden im Dom zu Merseburg*, in: Wolfgang Augustyn/Ulrich Söding (Eds.), *Bildnis – Memoria – Repräsentation. Beiträge zur Erinnerungskultur im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Passau 2021 (Veröffentlichungen des Zentralinstituts für Kunstgeschichte in München 56), pp. 75–97; id., *„Den Bauch mit Asche und Sand gefüllt“. Bestattungen einer dynamischen Familie*, in: Alexander Schubert/Simone Heimann (Eds.), *Die Habsburger im Mittelalter. Aufstieg einer Dynastie*, Darmstadt 2022, pp. 27–33; id., *Bestattung, Einbalsamierung und totes Kapital. Die Inwertsetzung des Leichnams im Mittelalter*, in: *Historische Anthropologie* 30,3 (2022), pp. 310–328; id., *Sterben und Tod im Spital im Spiegel der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters*, in: Artur Dirmeyer/Daniel Drascek/Harriet Rudolph (Eds.), *Spitalobjekte. Materielle Kulturen des Spitals in der Vormoderne*, Regensburg 2023 (Studien zur Geschichte des Spital-, Wohlfahrts- und Gesundheitswesens 16), pp. 263–280. For a complete list of publication see Schmitz-Esser's homepage at Heidelberg University: https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zegk/histsem/mitglieder/LS_Prof_Schmitz_Esser/Publikationen.html; 27.4.2023.

10 Schmitz-Esser, *Leichnam* (see note 9), pp. 137–164; id., *Corpse* (see note 9), pp. 129–175. The categorization goes back to Augustine, see note 4. Also see Arnold Angenendt, *Das Offertorium. In liturgischer Praxis und symbolischer Kommunikation*, in: Gerd Althoff (Ed.), *Zeichen – Rituale – Werte. Internationales Kolloquium des Sonderforschungsbereichs 496 an der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster*, Münster 2004 (Symbolische Kommunikation und gesellschaftliche Wertesysteme 3), pp. 71–150, p. 119.

In 2020, I published my own book,¹¹ in which I examined the accounts and notes¹² on the deaths of the Holy Roman Kings and Emperors from Henry (VI) († 1150) to Günther of Schwarzburg († 1349) in contemporary narrative and other sources. In addition, I also analysed funerals as well as burial sites, and scientific examinations of mortal remains.¹³ It is the first book to focus on narrative strategies of good and bad deaths in medieval narrative sources.¹⁴

Fortunately, it is no longer the only one. In 2021 and 2023, two monographs were published by Mike Janßen and Matthias Weber which also focus on the topic.¹⁵ While Janßen studies royal deaths, Weber deals with the deaths of bishops. Both books focus on the Holy Roman Empire and examine sources from the 6th to the 12th centuries, but do so in a different way: Janßen confines his work to a selection of sources, whereas

11 Kamenzin, *Tode* (see note 1).

12 *Ibid.*, p. 31 f. I addressed the different kinds of descriptions in narrative sources by introducing a distinction between ‚notes‘ („Notizen“) and ‚accounts‘ („Schilderungen“). ‚Notes‘, on the one hand, merely record the information important for the *memoria*, often in the form of „*rex/imperator obiit* + year“. An ‚account‘, on the other hand, is understood as a coherent narrative of the last hours and death, often enriched with details.

13 Kamenzin, *Tode* (see note 1), pp. 409–477. I have employed this approach in *id.*, *Wie es einem König gebührt? Die Beisetzung Rudolfs von Habsburg in Speyer in der Tradition königlicher Grablegen des 13./14. Jahrhunderts*, in: Bernd Schneidmüller (Ed.), *König Rudolf I. und der Aufstieg des Hauses Habsburg im Mittelalter*, Darmstadt 2019, pp. 269–293 and *id.*, *Alte Knochen, alte Schriften. Was uns die sterblichen Überreste König Philipps ‚von Schwaben‘ (nicht) über seinen Tod sagen können*, in: Romedio Schmitz-Esser/Katharina Zeppezauer-Wachauer (Eds.), *Death Matters – Dead Matter. Materialität und Immaterialität des Todes im Mittelalter*, Lausanne etc. 2023 (Beihefte zur Mediävistik 28), pp. 73–92.

14 Since the publication of my book, I have pursued the topic in several articles: Kamenzin, *Erkenntnismöglichkeiten* (see note 6); *id.*, *Königsmorde, Pferde und eine Hypothese. Zur Datierung der Bremer Bilderhandschrift der Sächsischen Weltchronik*, in: *Bremisches Jahrbuch* 100 (2021), pp. 40–51; *id.*, *Verfehlungen und Strafen. Der Tod Papst Innocenz’ IV. bei Salimbene de Adam und Matthaeus Parisiensis*, in: *QFIAB* 102 (2022), pp. 190–220 (<https://doi.org/10.1515/qfiab-2022-0012>; 23.4.2023).

15 Mike Janßen, *Wie das Leben so der Tod. Sterbedarstellungen von Kaisern und Königen in der Historiographie des früheren Mittelalters*, Göttingen 2021 (Studien zu Macht und Herrschaft 4). See also: *id.*, *Für den König beten – Eine frühmittelalterliche Legitimationsstrategie*, in: Matthias Becher/Hendrik Hess (Eds.), *Machterhalt und Herrschaftssicherung. Namen als Legitimationsinstrument in transkultureller Perspektive*, Göttingen 2019 (Macht und Herrschaft 8), pp. 39–73. Matthias Weber, *Der Bischof stirbt. Zu Form, Funktion und Vorstellung bischöflicher Sterbeberichte (6.–12. Jahrhundert)*, Göttingen 2023 (*Orbis Medievis* 20). Further contributions: *id.*, *Death and Dying of Bishops in Merovingian times – Gregory of Tours and his Decem Libri Historiarum*, in: *Brathair* 17,1 (2017), pp. 104–115; *id.*, *Form und Funktion von Todesschilderungen in Historiographie und Hagiographie im ausgehenden 11. Jahrhundert*, in: Rolf Große/Gerhard Lubich (Eds.), *Diocèses en intérim. Le temps de la vacance épiscopale (France et Allemagne, X^e–XIII^e siècle). Bistümer im Übergang: vom Ende einer Bischofsherrschaft zur Nachfolge (Frankreich und Deutschland, 10.–13. Jahrhundert). Actes du colloque de Paris, organisé les 5 et 6 décembre 2016 par l’Institut historique allemand de Paris et la Ruhr-Universität Bochum*, Brussels 2019 (*Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 97,2), pp. 225–252; *id.*, *Thietmar von Merseburg und die Grenzen der eigenen Memoria*, in: Jäckel/Klocke/Weber (Eds.), *Thietmar von Merseburg* (see note 6), pp. 237–254.

Weber takes a wide range of documents into consideration.¹⁶ Unfortunately, given the close publishing dates of the two books, the two authors could not correlate their individual findings.¹⁷ While it is not possible to fully make up for this here, it is important to highlight one observation: Even a cursory reading of the two monographs shows that the medieval authors analysed paid less attention to the deaths of bishops than to those of secular rulers.¹⁸

Both monographs employ a third category besides good and bad deaths. Janßen uses the term ‚Silent Death‘ („Der ‚stille‘ Tod“) to refer to royal demises that are rarely mentioned in the sources.¹⁹ Weber characterises the same phenomenon as ‚neutral death‘ („Der neutrale Tod“), drawing the term from his work on Gregory of Tours’ „Decem libri historiarum“. ²⁰ Both concepts address cases in which medieval contemporaries simply recorded an individual’s death without classifying it as either good or bad.

A peculiarity of Janßen’s study that is in large parts due to the centuries he focuses on, is the relatively high number of rulers who died through violent means.²¹ It has been observed that during the high and late Middle Ages the narrative strategies employed to describe deaths caused by murder or in a military context differ significantly from those used with regard to other causes.²² While Janßen understands deaths caused by violence as a separate category, he does not build on earlier studies that made this distinction before him.²³

In their conclusions, Janßen and Weber both emphasize the importance of an apocryphal account of the death of the Virgin Mary (*Transitus Mariae*) and the account Sulpicius Severus provides for the death of Martin of Tours in the respective sources they

16 Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15), p. 39; Weber, *Bischof* (see note 15), pp. 21–23. Janßen devotes individual chapters to the *Decem Libri historiarum* by Gregory of Tours, the *Chronicon* of Regino of Prüm and the *Chronicle* of Thietmar of Merseburg. Listing the number of sources considered by Weber in the same manner would go beyond the scope of this article. Both books do however not systematically investigate burials and do not include palaeopathological results.

17 Weber, *Bischof* (see note 15), p. 25, note 52 states that Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15) could not be considered for time reasons, as it was published shortly before. Despite the prominent position Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15), pp. 28 f. ascribes to Kamenzin, *Tode* (see note 1), he hardly ever cites the book.

18 Weber, *Bischof* (see note 15), p. 22 refers to my differentiation of narrative sources into accounts and notes (see note 12) and describes the sources he worked with as largely being ‚notes‘. Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15) does not use this model.

19 Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15), pp. 349–352.

20 Weber, *Bischof* (see note 15), pp. 194–200.

21 This has been highlighted by Joachim Ehlers, *The Birth of the Monarchy out of Violent Death. Transformations in Kingship from Late Antiquity to the Tenth Century*, in: *German Historical Institute London Bulletin* 26 (2004), pp. 5–34. Unfortunately, this important article has not received the scholarly attention it deserves.

22 Kamenzin, *Tode* (see note 1), pp. 249–354 shows that with regard to deaths due to external causes the focus of moral interpretation in narrative sources shifts from the deceased to those that were supposedly responsible for the death.

23 Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15) does not take note of the positions quoted in note 21 or in note 22.

examined.²⁴ Of particular relevance for future research are Weber's observations on the significance of the so-called Investiture Controversy. He points out that from the 8th to the 10th centuries the death of bishops was hardly ever mentioned in chronicles,²⁵ with the topic being „rediscovered“ in the 11th century.²⁶ This rediscovery came with a re-orientation: It was not until the late 11th century that attributions of bad deaths to bishops can be found in significant numbers.²⁷ There is potential to explore this topic further. A certain limitation becomes evident when contrasting these reports of bad deaths with those attributed to secular leaders: bad deaths caused by diarrhoea or by worms consuming the afflicted from the inside as divine punishment, both ascribed several times to secular rulers,²⁸ are hardly mentioned when members of the clergy are concerned. This observation has already been confirmed in a case study on the death of Pope Innocent IV.²⁹ Future research will show whether this assumption is generally true and what the potential reasons for this could be.

In addition to these extensive book-length studies, good and bad deaths in medieval narrative sources have also recently received attention as part of research with a wider scope: In his book „God rewards, God punishes“ („Gott belohnt, Gott straft“), published in 2022, Gerd Althoff studies the role of divine influence in early and high medieval historiography.³⁰ Besides military victories and defeats, rescue from distress and pleas for divine help he also examines cases of sudden or premature deaths and thus demonstrates in which category of reported events medieval deaths fall.³¹

The monographs and papers presented in this research report represent a selection of the most extensive recent studies in German on the concepts of good and bad death in medieval narrative sources. Some of these works are available online, and one of

²⁴ Janßen, *Leben* (see note 15), p. 396. Weber, *Bischof* (see note 15), pp. 535 f.

²⁵ Weber, *Bischof* (see note 15), pp. 237–311.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 313–397.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 537. The particular role of this period in the development of medieval narrative accounts regarding the death of specific individuals has been highlighted by Klaus van Eickels, *Zeitenwende oder Mitte des Mittelalters? Lebensordnungen und Ordnungsvorstellungen im Umbruch des 11. Jahrhunderts*, in: Achim Hubel/Bernd Schneidmüller (Eds.), *Aufbruch ins zweite Jahrtausend. Innovation und Kontinuität in der Mitte des Mittelalters*, Ostfildern 2004 (*Mittelalter-Forschungen* 16), pp. 15–30, pp. 26 f. For a similar approach see Schneidmüller, *Canossa* (see note 3), pp. 114 f.

²⁸ A prominent case in point would be Frederick II: both diarrhoea and worms are reported regarding his death (others, however, also claimed a good death). See Kamenzin, *Tode* (see note 1), pp. 67–71 (indicators of a bad death); pp. 132–142 (on Frederick II); pp. 219–238 (case study on the idea of being eaten alive by worms, sometimes referred to as *Phthiasis* or *Skolekosis*).

²⁹ Kamenzin, *Verfehlungen* (see note 14).

³⁰ Gerd Althoff, *Gott belohnt, Gott straft. Religiöse Kategorien der Geschichtsdeutung im Frühen und Hohen Mittelalter*, Darmstadt 2022.

³¹ See *ibid.*, p. 40. He discusses a number of accounts on prominent deaths: Otto III (*ibid.*, pp. 39; 135 f.), Charlemagne (*ibid.*, p. 68), Charles, the Bald' (*ibid.*, p. 87), Otto II (*ibid.*, p. 135), bishop William I of Utrecht (*ibid.*, p. 159), pope Gregor VII (*ibid.*, pp. 162; 175), Rudolf of Rheinfelden (*ibid.*, pp. 170–173; 180 f.), Hermann of Salm (*ibid.*, p. 248), Frederick II (*ibid.*, p. 264).

them has even been translated into English. In a recent review, it was suggested that the approaches used to examine the medieval Holy Roman Empire could also be used to examine sources from other regions (in this case Poland).³² Considering the abundance of sources and of existing research on England,³³ to give another example, it would certainly be desirable to apply this perspective to other regions. However, this is just one of the numerous potential starting points for further studies.³⁴ Other research which did not focus on good and bad deaths but examined the deaths and burials of certain princely families, demonstrate that secular princes could also be analysed systematically in the way this has been done for kings and bishops.³⁵ The same holds true for the deaths of popes.³⁶ Furthermore, it is necessary to ask about the deaths of outstanding women and gender-specific differences in representation. No matter what the focus of future research will be, the more studies are published, the more precise a picture will emerge and the closer we will come to a comprehensive answer to the question of the novice in the „Dialogus Miraculorum“ cited at the beginning of this text.

³² Tomasz Jurek, Review of Kamenzin, Tode (see note 1), in: *Roczniki Historyczne* 88 (2022), pp. 239–242, pp. 241 f. Online: http://rh-ihpan.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=29&lang=en; 27.4.2023.

³³ For example, Michael Evans, *The Death of Kings. Royal Deaths in Medieval England*, London-New York 2003 or Nicole Marafioti, *The King's Body. Burial and Succession in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, Toronto 2014 (Toronto Anglo-Saxon Series 16).

³⁴ For further possibilities see the topics discussed in note 1 and 8. Of course, the scope of existing studies could be extended further as suggested by Weber, Bischof (see note 15), p. 540. Observations beyond the temporal scope of the book itself are listed in the notes of Kamenzin, Tode (see note 1), pp. 391–407.

³⁵ On the Dukes of Bavaria: Helga Czerny, *Der Tod der bayerischen Herzöge im Spätmittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit 1347–1579. Vorbereitungen – Sterben – Trauerfeierlichkeiten – Grablegen – Memoria*, München 2005 (Schriftenreihe zur bayerischen Landesgeschichte 146). On the Wettins, the Landgraves of Hesse, the Counts/Dukes of Württemberg and the Counts of Henneberg-Schleusingen: Cornell Babendererde, *Sterben, Tod, Begräbnis und liturgisches Gedächtnis bei weltlichen Reichsfürsten des Spätmittelalters*, Ostfildern 2006 (Residenzenforschung 19). On the Counts Palatine of the Rhine in the Late Middle Ages: Thorsten Huthwelker, *Tod und Grablege der Pfalzgrafen bei Rhein im Spätmittelalter (1327–1508)*, Heidelberg 2009 (Heidelberger Veröffentlichungen zur Landesgeschichte und Landeskunde 14).

³⁶ See for example Hübinger, *Worte* (see note 3), Fuhrmann, *Fabel* (see note 3), Kamenzin, *Verfehlungen* (see note 14) and of course Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Il Corpo del Papa*, Torino 1994 (Biblioteca di cultura storica 204) on the dead body and funeral rites.