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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Annals of Boyle
AClon	Annals of Clonmacnoise
AFM	Annals of the Four Masters
AI	Annals of Inisfallen
ARC	Annals of Roscrea
<i>ASC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
AT	Annals of Tigernach
AU	Annals of Ulster
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CS	Chronicum Scotorum
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EETS	Early English Text Society
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
FAI	Fragmentary Annals of Ireland
<i>MÆ</i>	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Epist.	Epistolae Aevi Carolini
NM	<i>Neuphilologische Mitteilungen</i>
OEN	<i>Old English Newsletter</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-64)
RS	Rolls Series

PREFACE

This publication is the outcome of an initiative taken in 1999 by members of the post-graduate community in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic. That they have brought their venture so successfully to fruition is testimony not only to their commitment and enthusiasm, but no less importantly to the professionalism which they have displayed at every stage of the process. The Department is proud indeed to be associated with the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, and wishes it every success in the future.

Professor Simon Keynes
 Head of the Department of ASNC
 University of Cambridge

COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The fifth annual Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic took place on Saturday, February 7th, 2004, in the Winstanley Lecture Theatre, Trinity College, Cambridge. Papers on the theme of 'Roots' were presented in four sessions:

Session I (*Chair: Flora Spiegel*)

Judith Jesch, 'Skaldic Verse and the Roots of History'

Session II (*Chair: Elizabeth White*)

Bridgitte Schaffer, 'Statements of power in the language of genealogy: St Ailbe's roots'

Andrew Rigby, 'The Roots of the Eastern Forest in the Icelandic Imagination'

Session III (*Chair: Carys Underdown*)

Jonathan Miles-Watson, 'Roots Metaphors Revealed: The problem of the lion in *Iarllles y Ffynnaun*'

Emily Lethbridge, '*Ok eru köld kvenna ráð*: Getting to the bottom of the three versions of *Gísla saga Súrssonar*'

Michael Connaughton, 'Roots of Alcuin's Computus'

Session IV (*Chair: Tim Bolton*)

Peter Stokes, 'Shoots and Vines: some models for the ascenders and descenders of English vernacular minuscule'

Flora Spiegel, 'The heroic biography of Æthelflæd of Mercia and the roots of the Old English *Judith*'

The members of the colloquium committee for 2003-4 were:

Flora Spiegel (Chairman) and Bridgitte Schaffer (Secretary).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Skaldic Verse and the Roots of History

Judith Jesch
University of Nottingham

It is generally recognized that a substantial proportion of the original prose literature of medieval Iceland is written in a historical mode: works like *Íslendingabók*, *Landnámabók*, *Kristni saga* and the sagas of kings and bishops obviously so, while the sagas of Icelanders are classified as historical fiction, if not actually history, and even the *fornaldarsögur* show a strong historical bent.¹ Explanations for this obsession with the past usually include the effects of the transplantation of social and cultural forms to a *terra nova*,² and the encounter with the learned literature of Europe which famously 'did not teach the Icelanders what to think or say, but it taught them how to say it'.³

Turville-Petre and others since have shown how Icelandic historical prose has its roots in this European learning.⁴ In this paper, however, I propose to dig rather speculatively for some native roots of the historical obsession of the medieval Icelanders. In particular, I will explore whether and to what extent the skaldic verse of the

¹ D. Whaley, 'A Useful Past: Historical Writing in Medieval Iceland', *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. M. Clunies Ross (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 161-202 (at 165-6) and T. Tulinus, 'The Matter of the North: Fiction and Uncertain Identities in Thirteenth-Century Iceland', *ibid.* pp. 242-65, at pp. 245-7.

² K. Schier, 'Iceland and the Rise of Literature in "Terra Nova"', *Gripla* 1 (1975), 168-81.

³ G. Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford, 1953), p. 142.

⁴ E.g. several of the chapters in H. Bekker-Nielsen, T. Damsgaard Olsen and O. Widding, *Norron fortællekunst* (Copenhagen, 1965).

eleventh century, that is the century before the writing of historical prose began, can be understood as ‘history’ or, more precisely, historiography.⁵ For the purposes of this discussion I will assume that the surviving written versions of skaldic stanzas found in manuscripts from the thirteenth century or later give us a reasonable approximation of the texts that were produced and consumed in an oral context in the eleventh, without rehearsing all the arguments for and against.⁶ My argument will be that this oral culture of the eleventh century had a concept resembling that of historiography, more usually associated with a literate culture, at least to a sufficient degree to make comparisons between the two illuminating.

I have two prongs to my digging implement. First, I will compare some skaldic verse with the chronicle genre, specifically the annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, to explore the nature of some similarities between them. Secondly, I will analyse one eleventh-century skaldic poem in detail to explore the ways in which it seems to reveal itself as historiography.

RECORDING EVENTS

Many skaldic poems from the late Viking Age have the primary function of recording the exploits of a particular king or chieftain, and in this they conform quite closely to the description of a chronicle given by the early twelfth-century author Gervase of Canterbury:

The historian proceeds diffusely and elegantly, whereas the chronicler proceeds simply, gradually and briefly.

⁵ For a similar attempt to find some of the roots of historical writing in twelfth-century skaldic poetry, see B. Fidjestøl, ‘Sogekvæde’, *Deutsch-nordische Begegnungen*, ed. K. Braunmüller and M. Brøndsted (Odense, 1991), pp. 57–76.

⁶ See J. Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 15–33.

The chronicler computes years *Anno Domini* and the months and kalends and briefly describes the actions of kings and princes which occurred at those times; he also commemorates events, portents and wonders.⁷

Gervase’s description of a ‘chronicle’ is probably more like what modern historians would call a set of annals than what they would call a ‘chronicle’, though the distinction can be hard to sustain. For the purposes of my comparison with skaldic poetry, I will not attempt to split hairs any further, but simply hide behind the convenient fact that we still use the name ‘Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’ for the various sets of annals that conform quite closely to Gervase’s description.

The stanzas of Sigvatr Þórðarson’s *Vikingarvísur* provide a numbered list, in chronological order, of the battles fought by St Óláfr in England and on the European continent, at some time which we deduce from other sources was between 1007 and 1013.⁸ The poem provides details of place- and personal names throughout. Thus stanza thirteen records events in a place which was probably in Spain:

Þrettánda vann Þrœnda,
þat var flóttá bøl, dróttinn
snjallr í Seljupollum
sunnarla styr kunnan.
Upp lét gramr í gamla
Gunnvalds borg of morgin,

⁷ Cited from M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1993), p. 100.

⁸ *Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, *Íslensk fornrit* 26–8 (Reykjavík, 1979) II, lxxxviii–xc.

Geirfiðr hét sá, gǫrva
gengit, jarl of fenginn.⁹

Although Sigvatr was not present at this event, the point of view is of course that of his patron, the victor, who was, and the fleeing enemy are seen from behind. Though this record of events is in verse, there is hardly anything ‘poetic’ about it; it is little more than a fairly simple statement of facts and names.

Similarly, Arnórr Þórðarson jarlaskáld’s *Þorfinnsdrápa* records the earl of Orkney’s raids on mainland Scotland in the 1020s:

Ulfs tuggu rauð eggjar,
eitt þar’s Torfnæs heitir,
ungr olli því þengill —
(þat vas mánadag) fránar.
Sungu þar, til þinga,
þunn fyr Ekkjal sunnan,
sverð, es siklingr barðisk
snarr við Skotlands harra.¹⁰

This stanza is slightly more ‘poetic’ than Sigvatr’s, making use of tropes such as ‘the wolf’s mouthful’, and using descriptive as well as

⁹ Text and translation from C. Fell, ‘*Vikingarvísur*’, *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. U. Dronke, Guðrún P. Helgadóttir, G. W. Weber and H. Bekker-Nielsen (Odense, 1981), pp. 106–22 (at 120–21). ‘The valiant lord of the Þrendir fought the thirteenth famous battle in the south at Seljupollar: that was misfortune for those who fled. The prince caused all his troops to go up into the ancient stronghold of Gunnvald in the morning and the earl to be captured. He was called Geirfiðr.’

¹⁰ Date from D. Whaley, *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld. An Edition and Study* (Turnhout, 1998), p. 335; text and translation from *ibid.* pp. 236–7. ‘Bright blades grew red on the wolf’s mouthful [carrion] at a place called Torfnæs. Young, the ruler caused that. It was a Monday. Slender swords sang there south of the Ekkjall, as the princeling, swift into conflict, fought with Scotland’s lord’.

evaluative adjectives (for example, ‘young’ rather than ‘valiant’) . But it shares the same concern for naming the significant places, and has an even more precise concern with chronology, specifying the day of the week on which the battle took place (‘Monday’).

Oddr kikinaskáld’s poem on Magnús the Good shows similar concerns in describing a battle in the mid-1040s:

Vas fyr Mikjálsmessu
malmgrimm háið rimma.
Fellu Vinðr, en vǫnðusk
vápnhljóði mjök þjóðir.
En fyr jól vas ǫnnur,
óhlítulig, lítlu.
Upp hófsk grimm með gumnum
gunnr fyr Áros sunnan.¹¹

Again we have the specific place-name (Árhus), and the precise chronology which by now uses Christian festivals to date the battles (Michaelmas and *jól*, here meaning ‘Christmas’ rather than ‘Yule’). The stanza also shows an annalistic-type succession of one event by another in the same stanza, signalled by an adverbial phrase giving a chronology. Sigvatr’s *Vikingarvísur* also has a kind of annalistic succession, with each battle in its own stanza, but there the succession is indicated entirely by the numbering of the battles, without any time adverbials.

These three stanzas can be compared with some passages from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, chosen from a similar date range in the eleventh century, and reflecting the same kind of raiding activity. As

¹¹ Date from *ibid.* pp. 332–3; text from Snorri Sturluson: *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson, III, 63–4. ‘A metal-grim battle was held before Michaelmas. Wends fell, and the peoples got very used to the sound of weapons. And a little before Christmas was another, undecided. Grim warfare began among men to the south of Árhus’.

in the skaldic stanzas, individual raids are distinguished by a dating based on religious festivals and by the naming of those captured. Of course, in the *Chronicle's* account of the raids of 1011, the point of view is that of the English victims, rather than the Viking perpetrators:

7 þa on ðissum geare betweox Natuuitas Sancte Marię 7 Sancte Michaelles mæssan hi ymbsæton Cantwareburuh, ... 7 hi þær ða genaman þone arcebisceop Ælfheah 7 Ælfweard cynges gerefan 7 Leofrune abbatissan 7 Godwine bisceop. 7 Ælfmær abbod hi leton aweg. ... 7 hi ða hæfdon a buruh ealle asmeade, wendon him þa to scypan 7 læddon þone arcebisceop mid him.¹²

Another annal (for 1016) shows a numbered sequence of battles fought by King Edmund, though only two, in contrast to the at least thirteen in Sigvatr's *Vikingarvísur*:

7 raðe æfter þam he gefeagt wið þone here æt Peonnan wið Gillingaham, 7 oþer gefeagt he gefeagt æfter middansumera æt Sceorstane, 7 þær mycel wæl feoll on ægðre healde, 7 ða heras him sylfe toeodan.¹³

¹² *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keefe, *The AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 5* (Cambridge, 2001), 95–6. 'And then, in this year, between the Nativity of St Mary and Michaelmas, they besieged Canterbury ... Then they captured there Archbishop Ælfheah, and the king's reeve Ælfweard, and Abbess Leofrun and Bishop Godwine; and they let Abbot Ælfmær escape. ... And when they had then ransacked the whole borough, they went to their ships and took the archbishop with them', *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Revised Translation*, ed. D. Whitelock, with D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker (London, 1961; rev. 1965), p. 91.

¹³ *ASC MS C*, ed. O'Brien O'Keefe, pp. 101–2. 'And soon after that he fought against the Danish army at Penselwood near Gillingham, and he fought a second battle after midsummer at Sherston; and a great number on both sides fell there, and the armies separated of their own accord', *ASC*, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, p. 95.

Porfinnr's raids in Scotland can be compared with those from the south by Earl Siward of Northumbria, in an annal (for 1054) which boastfully exaggerates their effect:

Her ferde Siward eorl mid miclum here on Scotland, ægðer ge mid scyphere 7 mid landfyrde, 7 feaht wið Scottas, 7 aflymde þone kung Macbeoðen, 7 ofsloh eall þæt þær betst wæs on þam lande, 7 lædde þonan micle herehuðe swilce nan man ær ne beagat.¹⁴

The raiding of neighbouring countries was not confined to Vikings, and in 1055 the *Chronicle* shows an English earl making trouble in order to get his earldom back:

7 þæræfter sona man utlagode Ælfgar eorl, Leofrices sunu eorles, forneh butan gylte, ac he gewende to Hirlande 7 Brytlande, 7 beagat him þær micel genge, 7 ferde swa to Hereforda, ac him com þær togenes Raulf eorl mid mycclan here, 7 mid lytlan gewinne hi on fleam gebrohte, 7 micel folc on þam fleame ofsloh, 7 gewendon þa into Herefordporte 7 forhergode þæt, 7 forbærnde þæt mære mynster þe Æpelstan bisceop getimbrode, 7 ofsloh þa preostas innan þam mynstre, 7 manege þærtocacen, 7 namon þærinne ealle þa maðmas, 7 mid heom aweg læddon. 7 þa þa hi hæfdon mæst to yfele gedon, man gerædde þone ræd þæt man Ælfgar eorl geinnlagode, 7 ageaf him his eorldom 7 ealle þæt him of genumen wæs. ðeos hergung wæs geworden on nonas kalendas Nouembris.¹⁵

¹⁴ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS D*, ed. G. P. Cubbin, *The AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 6* (Cambridge, 1996), 74. 'In this year Earl Siward proceeded with a large force to Scotland, both with a naval force and with a land force, and fought there with the Scots and routed the king Macbeth, and killed all the best in the land, and carried off a large amount of plunder such as had never been captured before', *ASC*, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, pp. 128–9.

¹⁵ *ASC MS D*, ed. Cubbin, p. 74. 'And soon after that Earl Ælfgar, Earl Leofric's son, was outlawed, having committed hardly any crime. But he went to Ireland and Wales and got himself a large force and so came to Hereford. But Earl Ralph came against him with a large force, but after a little struggle this was put to flight and many people killed in the flight. The invaders then went to

This has an even more precise dating than previous examples, and, like the skaldic verse, is written from the point of view of the victor (despite authorial disapproval of his burning of Hereford's 'glorious minster'), with a snapshot of his fleeing opponents.

Without wishing to overstate the similarities between the two genres, I suggest that it is useful to see the skaldic poems as a kind of oral equivalent to written annals (or what Gervase called a 'chronicle'): at least one of their functions is to record the basic facts about certain important events involving kings and chieftains, naming names where possible. In this recording function, they also have the rudiments of the annalistic form, with their stabs at chronology, both absolute and relative, even though the skaldic poems lack the annals' fundamental characteristic of dating events to a specific, enumerated year.

ÓTTARR THE BLACK SAVES HIS HEAD

To demonstrate further the ways in which this recording function works in one skaldic poem, I analyse the *drápa* known as *Höfuðlausn* 'Head-Ransom' composed in praise of King (later Saint) Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway.¹⁶ An anecdote recorded in several versions of the saga of this king purports to explain the circumstances in which Óttarr the Black composed the poem.¹⁷ Apparently, he needed to

Hereford town and ravaged it, and burnt the glorious minster which Bishop Athelstan had built, and killed the priests inside the minster and many others as well, and captured all the treasures and took them away. And when they had done the greatest damage, it was decided to reinstate Earl Ælfgar and give him his earldom, and all that had been taken from him. This devastation happened on 24 October', *ASC*, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, pp. 130–31.

¹⁶ A *drápa* is a long praise poem with a refrain.

¹⁷ See *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. O. A. Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo, 1941), pp. 688–89, and 'The Tale of Ottar the Black', *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, ed. Viðar Hreinsson with R. Cook, T. Gunnell, K. Kunz and B.

propitiate the king because he had in his youth composed a suggestive poem about the princess who later became Óláfr's wife. The anecdote does not actually quote the *drápa*, which is however preserved in quite different prose contexts. It has been usual to regard the poem as probably historical (in the sense that it was composed by that poet for that king), and the anecdote as probably fictional (in the sense that the poem was not composed in the circumstances described). In the anecdote, then, a fictional or fictionalized context has been provided for a poem originally composed for quite a different context, what we might call the oral skaldic culture of the eleventh century.

Although classified as a praise poem, there is relatively little direct praise in *Höfuðlausn*.¹⁸ The poet does start with a conventional introduction requesting the attention of his audience (using the formulaic *hlyð* 'listen!') and outlining his eulogistic task, which is *at dýrka gífrs glaðnistanda*.¹⁹ Following this introduction, the bulk of the poem (around twenty stanzas survive in all) consists of a narrative, an account of some of the events of the king's life, containing relatively little evaluation, let alone praise, of any sort. Such evaluation as there is comes at the end of the poem, in two stanzas which mirror the

Scudder, intr. R. Kellogg (Reykjavík, 1997) I, 340–1. For other versions, see *Den store saga*, ed. Johnsen and Jón Helgason, pp. 702–3; *Otte brudstykker af den ældste saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. G. Storm (Christiania, 1893), p. 7; and *Olafs saga hins helga. Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olaf den Heiligen*, ed. A. Heinrichs, D. Janshen, E. Radicke and H. Röhn (Heidelberg, 1982), p. 130.

¹⁸ The standard edition of the reconstructed poem is in *Den norske-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1912–15), AI, 290–6 and BI, 268–72. However, individual stanzas are cited from more recent text editions, as given in the notes, below.

¹⁹ 'to glorify the feeder of the horse of the trollwoman'. The 'horse of the trollwoman' is a wolf, and the 'feeder' of the wolf is a warrior.

opening of the poem.²⁰ In these, the poet brings the audience back to the here and now of the performance, making reference to the current extent of the king's power and comparing it favourably to that of other (unspecified) kings. In between the introduction and the conclusion, however, the praise is implicit in the narrative of events, rather than explicitly articulated. These events involve a series of successful journeys to a series of places where Óláfr was successful in war, followed by his return to Norway, where he became king.

A simple definition of 'narrative' as 'the narration of a succession of ... events' suggests that it can be fruitful to employ a narratological perspective on *Höfuðlausn*.²¹ The techniques of narratology, as first demonstrated by Genette, provide a clear and more precise understanding of narratives of all kinds.²² The term 'narrative' actually refers to three different things: (1) narrative as 'text', that is the verbal artifact itself; (2) narrative as 'story', that is the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are narrated in the text, but that can be considered in abstraction from the text; and (3) narrative as 'narration', or the act of narrating, that is the process by which the story becomes text. While more general studies of narrative often focus on the interpretation or significance of the 'text', the verbal artifact itself, narratology both brings out and is concerned with the

²⁰ The concluding stanzas are numbered 18 and 19 in the standard edition; the half-stanza traditionally numbered 20 probably belongs earlier in the poem if, indeed, it belongs to this poem at all, see B. Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (Øvre Ervik, 1982), p. 124.

²¹ The definition is adapted from S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London, 1983), p. 2. She is primarily concerned with fictional narratives, but recognises that 'some of the procedures used in the analysis of fiction may be applied to texts conventionally defined as "non-fiction"' (p. 3).

²² G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J.E. Lewin (Oxford, 1980).

relationships between all three of these aspects of narrative. Moreover, where the concern is with narrative and history, a narratological focus on 'story' and 'narration' can help to clarify issues both of the genesis of the 'text' and its historiographical status.

Although *Höfuðlausn*, along with most skaldic poetry, is not traditionally thought of as a 'narrative', it fulfils the requirements of a 'narration', that is to say it is a 'communication process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee' and 'the medium used to transmit the message' is 'verbal', while it is also true that this message concerns a 'succession of events'.²³ I suggest therefore that a narratological analysis of the poem will help to reveal the ways in which it interacts with 'history', the past events which form its 'story'.

Viking Age praise poems often relate a series of events. It can be shown that Óttarr's *Höfuðlausn* is partially dependent on the poem about Óláfr's youthful exploits already mentioned, the *Vikingarvísur* composed by Óttarr's uncle and mentor Sigvatr.²⁴ As we have seen, this comprised a numbered catalogue of battles, one per stanza, usually naming the location and characterizing the opponents. To call such poems 'praise poems', though not wrong, is misleading, for one of their functions, as important as that of praise, was to record events for a pre-literate culture. Such poems later proved to be useful evidence for medieval historians such as Snorri Sturluson precisely because they were intended as historiography from the start: they were composed with an eye on posterity as well as on the flattering moment of performance and reward. Insofar as historiography is basically narrative, therefore, all of the poems in this genre are potentially narrative, or have narrative elements or components.

²³ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 2.

²⁴ Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 214–15.

Admittedly, skaldic praise poems are highly unusual types of narrative. Narrativity does not immediately spring to mind as their main characteristic, yet closer inspection reveals that narrativity is an important part of the way these poems work.

One immediately obvious characteristic of Óttarr's *Höfuðlausn* is that it is a second-person narrative, in which the poet tells the king his own life story to date, using a large number of second-person verbs in the past tense (stanza four):

Óttuð órum skreyttum
austr í salt með flaustum.
Bôruð lind af landi,
landvörðr, á skip randir.
Neyttuð segls ok settuð
sundvarpaði stundum.
Sleit mjök róin mikla
mörg ör und þér bôru.²⁵

This device is relatively unusual even in the skaldic corpus: poets might address the king directly at certain points in the poem (unless it is a posthumous poem), but their accounts of the events in which he was involved are generally told more indirectly in the third person. This is certainly what Sigvatr does in his *Víkingarvísur*. The use of second-person narration, however, derives from the original performance context, as does the poet's use of hearsay.

Both Sigvatr and Óttarr (and many other poets, who were often brought in to do their versified propaganda after the fact) make clear that they were not actually present at the events they are recounting,

²⁵ Snorri Sturluson: *Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, II, 6. 'You set out east to sea with ships, adorned with oars. Guardian of the land, you carried spears from the land, shields onto ships. Now and again you used the sail and set it against the strait-disturber [wind]. Many a heavily-rowed oar tore the great swell beneath you'.

but that their information is based on hearsay, as Óttarr does in *Höfuðlausn* (stanza three):

Ungr hratztu á vit vengis,
vígrakkr konungr, blakki,
þú hefir dýrum þrek, dreyra
Danmarkar, þik vanðan.
Varð nýtligust norðan,
nú est ríkr af hvöt slíkri,
frák til þess, es fóruð,
fór þín, konungr, görva.²⁶

To stand up in front of a king and tell him what he has accomplished, based on hearsay, is extremely flattering. The poet is saying that the king is so renowned for his deeds that news of them has reached the poet, who now wishes to put them into words that will make them even more memorable. In this stanza the 'I have heard' formula (*frák*) is ambiguously placed between the general reference to the king's power, and the specific reference to his first youthful viking voyage, making it applicable to both.

The relatively frequent emphasis in the skaldic corpus on the secondhand nature of the poet's information arises from his awareness of his role as oral historian, with a scrupulous distinction between what he has seen and what he has only heard of. There are examples of poets who stress that they were present at the events they are describing, and it is also clear that the medieval historians

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5. 'Battle-bold king, [you were] young [when] you launched the steed of the lifeblood of the plain [lifeblood of the plain = water; steed of the water = ship] to go to Denmark; you have accustomed yourself to glorious strength. Your voyage from the north, king, was most successful; you are now powerful from such prowess; I have heard all about when you journeyed'.

who used their evidence particularly valued this type of stanza.²⁷ The skaldic use of the 'I heard' formula should therefore be distinguished from the Old English instances, which 'characteristically allude to the world of oral discourse and oral tradition', invoking 'legendary tradition and a body of "sayings" orally transmitted'.²⁸ Skaldic verse does not 'allude' to 'oral discourse and oral tradition', it is still very much a part of them. The skaldic poet is also quite unlike the Anglo-Saxon oral poet who 'cannot assume the kind of stability in discourse and in the matter of discourse which the literate poet can'.²⁹ The difference lies in the strict forms of *dróttkvætt*, which are designed precisely to ensure as much fixity in the text as possible in an oral culture, and which also ensured that the texts survived reasonably intact until they were written down, thus giving later readers an insight into that particular 'oral discourse and oral tradition'.

Thus, in Óttarr's *Höfuðlausn*, and in skaldic praise poetry more generally, the use of second-person narration and the not-so-formulaic references to hearsay and tradition may survive as indicators of the original performance context of the oral poems, despite their preservation only as dismembered written texts, presented as their sources by the medieval Icelandic historians.³⁰ As already indicated, this original performance context involved the

²⁷ For some examples, see J. Jesch, 'History in the "Political Sagas"', *MÆ* 62 (1993), 210–20, at 212–14.

²⁸ W. Parks, 'The Traditional Narrator and the "I Heard" Formula in Old English Poetry', *ASE* 16 (1987), 45–66, at 47 and 51.

²⁹ Parks, 'The Traditional Narrator', 47.

³⁰ The extent to which skaldic verse was available in written or oral form to writers of the thirteenth century is not clear and needs more research. Recent work by Gísli Sigurðsson suggests that some stanzas by eleventh-century poets were still circulating orally in the mid-thirteenth century: 'Óláfr Þórðarson hvítaskáld and Oral Poetry in the West of Iceland c. 1250', *Old Icelandic Literature*, ed. M. Clunies Ross, pp. 96–115.

direct address of the king by the poet. If a second-person narrative is unusual in skaldic praise poetry, it is at least not surprising there, given these circumstances of the composition and performance of this genre. Yet it is uncommon in narrative more generally, and not all narratologists even recognize the possibility. Where they do, they assume that the second person is a fictional character in the narrative (a 'narratee', the recipient of narration), addressed by an equally fictional narrator:

A narratee is a visible fictional character whom we witness being addressed by an even more visible second-order narrator, and behind their fake dialogue is some storyteller ... whom we take to be the agent of all their words.³¹

Much writing on narrative is of course concerned with modern fiction, and such theorists struggle to distinguish the 'real' author and 'real' reader from their counterparts in the text, the 'narrator' and the 'narratee', as does Parks in his study of Old English poetry: 'The poetic narrator is the teller within the tale, the narrative voice within the context of the work itself, as distinguished from the actual, real-world author'.³² Yet, in the non-fictional *Höfuðlausn* we have a narrative that arose when a real poet addressed a real king in the second person to tell him the story of his own deeds: author and audience are thus equivalent to narrator and narratee.

In assessing the poem as 'real' in this sense, it is significant that the possibility of second-person narration within a narrative is not taken up by the king's saga authors who cite the poems as evidence. When they quote from such poems, they choose not to describe, in their narratives, a context of performance which would make the citation of a verse with second-person narration natural, instead they

³¹ M. J. Toolan, *Narrative: a Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London, 1988), p. 80; see also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 89.

³² Parks, 'The Traditional Narrator', 46.

merely cite the stanzas as evidence for their narrative, just as they do with other stanzas that are narrated in the third person. For instance, stanza four of Óttarr's *Höfuðlausn* is introduced by Snorri with the words 'Óttarr svarti segir þat berum orðum, at hann fór þá austr ór Danmörk',³³ with the third-person pronoun (*hann* 'he') of this prose introduction contrasting awkwardly with the second-person verb form (*Óttuð*) that is the first word in the stanza.³⁴ In the original context of performance, however, the second-person address made perfect sense. This clear disjunction between the discourse mode of the quoted stanza (second-person) and that of its surrounding prose (third-person) confirms the fact that the saga-author is quoting from a pre-existing poem, and illustrates the various narrative levels at work.³⁵ First, there is the 'story', the actual events that took place in the early eleventh century. Then, there is the first, oral, 'narration', when the poet speaks directly to the king soon after those events and recounts them to him, sometimes in the second person. This poem is then transmitted, probably in both oral and, later, written form. It is subsequently used as a source for the second 'narration' by the thirteenth-century historian, who recounts the events, this time in the third person and in written prose, but also embeds in his account the actual transmitted stanzas which are his source for that account. The two narrations together form the 'text' (for example, Snorri's *Heimskringla*), the verbal artifact that has survived to the present day

³³ 'Óttarr says clearly that he then went east from Denmark'.

³⁴ See above, p. 12, n. 25.

³⁵ J. Jesch, 'Knútr in Poetry and History', *International Medieval and Scandinavian Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. M. Dallapiazza, O. Hansen, P. Meulengracht Sørensen and Y.S. Bonnetain (Trieste, 2000), pp. 243–56, at p. 53. See also J. Carroll, 'Poetic Discourse in Viking Age England. Texts and Contexts' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Nottingham Univ., 2001), ch. 3, for an especially detailed analysis of the ways in which saga-writers cite verses.

and is our only available object of study, and our only access to the 'story', the actual historical events.

While its consistent use of the second-person form is unusual (even in the skaldic corpus, though this may be a result of the transmission process), other aspects of Óttarr's poem place it more comfortably in the narrative mode, in particular its concern with a 'succession of events'. The sequence is chronological, and firmly located in the past. Although the battles are not numbered the way they are in *Vikingarvísur*, the poet makes liberal use throughout of time adverbials such as *síðan* 'afterwards', *enn* 'again', *áðan* 'previously', *forðum* 'previously', and *áðr* 'before' to indicate the relative order of events. The very first word of the narrative part of the poem (stanza three), *ungr* 'young', refers to the king at the time of the events being narrated, and suggests that the poet will cover the sweep of the king's career to date, from his most youthful battles, to the present time of the performance, as indicated by the use of *nú* 'now' in the same stanza.³⁶ Again, there is a clear distinction between the time of the 'story' and the time of the 'narration'.

The events in which the king has excelled are the usual ones: he has been successful in war and (a pre-requisite for this if he goes abroad) he has been a successful sea-captain (for example, stanza four).³⁷ A different kind of eulogy might just praise the king for his success in naval warfare in very general terms, as in Edmund Waller's classic royalist panegyric 'To the King, on his Navy', the king in question being Charles I:

Where'er thy navy spreads her canvas wings,
Homage to thee, and peace to all she brings;

³⁶ See above, p. 13, n. 26.

³⁷ See above, p. 12, n. 25.

The French and Spaniard, when thy flags appear,
Forget their hatred, and consent to fear.³⁸

But *Höfuðlausn*, though it has a eulogistic purpose, has narrative form, and is therefore quite different, for 'narrative shies away from abstraction and thrives on concreteness. It concentrates on the particular and not the general. Rather than presenting sequences which are true to any set of circumstances, it tends to present sequences which depend on a specific set'.³⁹ In the conventional world of Old Norse court poetry, all kings are generous, and all kings are successful at war and at sailing. But to actualize the praise of any individual king, it is necessary to give specific examples, and a good way of doing this is in narrative form, as a sequence of examples of his success in war and sailing, and, in some other poems, of his generosity. The praise of the king is therefore inherent in the telling of the 'story', in the 'narration' itself, rather than in the more overt and generalised praise of eulogies like Waller's.

Óttarr's poem ends with a deictic reference to the here and now of the moment of performance, the actual 'narration' of the 'story', as indicated by the adverbial *nú* 'now' and the present tenses in stanza eighteen:

Nú ræðr þú fyr þeiri,
þik remmir guð miklu,
fold, es forðum heldu
fimm bragningar, gagni.
Breið eru austr til Eiða
ættlönd und þér. Göndlar

³⁸ *The Poems of Edmund Waller*, ed. G. Thorn Drury (London, 1893) I, 15.

³⁹ G. Prince, *Narratology. The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin, 1982), p. 149.

engr sat elda þrøngvir
áðr at slíku láði.⁴⁰

In this way, the narrative culminates in an ideological statement, with references to the past basis of the king's present power, conforming to the observation that 'narrative presents more than temporal sequences of states and actions (involving some kind of conflict): it presents temporal sequences of states and actions that make sense in terms of a human project and/or a humanized universe'.⁴¹ Thus, Óttarr's narrative of Óláfr's youthful deeds culminates in his project of becoming a great king, which was proleptically referred to in stanza three.⁴² Although the 'ideological' stanzas (eighteen and nineteen) at the end of *Höfuðlausn* are not in themselves narrative, they enable the poem as a whole to have what Prince calls 'high narrativity', because 'whenever the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and different from it rather than equivalent to it, narrativity will tend to increase: narrative can show that like events may combine into like events but, more interestingly, and significantly, it can show that (un)like events may combine into larger and different events'.⁴³ Óttarr's poem, despite appearances, is more 'narrative' than, for instance, medieval chronicles which, it has been claimed, are not proper narratives because they do not have closure: 'the chronicle, like the annals but unlike the history, does not so much "conclude" as simply terminate; typically it lacks closure, that

⁴⁰ *Snorri Sturluson: Heimskringla*, ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, II, 107. 'Now you rule over that land which was previously held by five princes; God strengthens you with great victory. The ancestral lands under you are broad, east to Eiðar. No wielder of the fires of Göndull has previously reigned over such a realm'. Göndull is a valkyrie, her 'fires' are swords, their 'wielder' is a warrior.

⁴¹ Prince, *Narratology*, p. 148.

⁴² See above, p. 13, n. 26.

⁴³ Prince, *Narratology*, p. 152.

summing up of the “meaning” of the chain of events with which it deals that we normally expect from the well-made story’.⁴⁴ Stanzas eighteen and nineteen of Óttarr’s *Höfuðlausn* provide precisely this closure that sums up ‘the “meaning” of the chain of events’.

Having established that Óttarr’s poem conforms to the structures of narrative, we might well ask what the purpose is of using this mode. Why stand up before a king and tell him the story of his life, however ‘well-made’, the one story that he of all people already knows?⁴⁵ Would it not be simpler and more flattering to compose a flowery eulogy, a celebratory ode, as Edmund Waller did for Charles I? In answering this question it is important to note that the king is not the whole of the audience for Óttarr’s poem which, though addressed to the king, was performed before an audience of his followers. There were undoubtedly some in that audience who had not yet heard this particular story. Those who did know the story may have got pleasure from hearing it again, especially if they were involved in some of the events. Thus, the story allows a collective reliving of past experiences. But the poet also has his eye on posterity, and a public recital ensures that the events are fixed in the collective memory. The use of both personal and place-names helps to fix the most important facts, providing the particularity that Prince identified as a characteristic of narrative. Narrativity thus both demonstrates and is essential to the historiographical aims of the genre.

⁴⁴ H. White, ‘The Value of Narrativity in The Representation of Reality’, *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1980-81), pp. 1-23, at p. 16.

⁴⁵ The dangers of telling a king the story of his own life are alluded to in ‘Þorsteins þáttir sǫgufróða’, *Austfirðinga sǫgur*, ed. Jón Jóhannesson, Íslenzk fornrit 11 (Reykjavík, 1950), 333-6; a different version is translated as ‘The Tale of the Story-Wise Icelander’, *The Complete Sagas*, ed. Viðar Hreinsson *et al.*, I, 384-5.

CONCLUSION

Skaldic narrative had the function of telling the past in such a way that it was fixed for the future. The skaldic poet appears as an authorial presence in his text, drawing attention to his sources. Moreover, his authorial personality is also of importance outside the text, guaranteeing its authenticity and authority. Skaldic poetry is unusual among early medieval poetic genres in not being anonymous: the name of the poet is very firmly attached to the individual stanzas as they are recycled in the historical texts. For historians like Snorri, the poet is the authority for the information they take from his poems. But it is also clear to us that the poet is in some sense the creator of that information. Handsomely rewarded for his poem, he presents a flattering and definitive version of the life and works of the king or chieftain being praised, securely enmeshed in the strict and complex forms of *dróttkvætt* which would ensure its enduring testimony.

Although Viking Age praise poetry is not at first glance an obviously narrative genre, it responds well to analysis as narrative, because it had a function, and because ‘the study of narrativity can illuminate not only the functioning of a given ... narrative but also the meaning of the narrative moment’.⁴⁶ In the case of the fictional Óttarr, the character in the anecdote, the ‘meaning’ was all-important, for in the narrative moment, the moment in which he recited his poem in praise of the king, he saved his head. For the historical poet Óttarr, who composed the poem now known as *Höfuðlausn* from this story, it is much more likely that the meaning of the narrative moment lay in the recognition of his role as recorder of events for posterity. This is the more usual ‘meaning’ of such Viking Age

⁴⁶ Prince, *Narratology*, p. 161.

narrative moments: not only to flatter a powerful king, but also to 'write' history in a pre-literate age.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The ideas presented in this paper are developed more fully in two forthcoming articles, 'Skaldic Verse: A Case of Literacy *avant la lettre*?', *Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavia*, ed. P. Hermann (Odense, 2005), 169–92, and "The Meaning of the Narrative Moment": Poets and History in the Late Viking Age', in a volume on narrative edited by Ross Balzaretti and Elizabeth Tyler (Turnhout, 2006?).

Statements of Power in the Language of Genealogy:
St Ailbe's Roots

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Who was St Ailbe?

A dog, according to Kim McCone who has argued that Ailbe is 'a Christianised version of a pagan hound guardian of the Otherworld'.¹ McCone has pointed out that the name of Ailbe's father was Olchú, that is, 'big dog'.² Furthermore, in the 'Life of St Ailbe' the infant saint is fostered by a she-wolf until found by a British Christian.³ And every first-year student in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic here at the University of Cambridge who is initiated into the wonders of Old Irish knows that Ailbe is the name of the famous

¹ K. McCone, 'An Introduction to Early Irish Saints' Lives', *Maynooth Review* 11 (1984), 26–59, at 50.

² *Ibid.* See *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, ed. M. O'Brien, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1962; rev. imp., by J. V. Kelleher, 1976) I, 386–7; *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. P. Ó Riain (Dublin, 1985), p. 23 (§135), p. 68 (§486: Colcan *recté* Olchan) and p. 102 (§662.190). In *Vita S. Albei* the saint's father is named Olchnais: *Vita S. Albei*, §1: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. W. W. Heist (Brussels, 1965), pp. 118–31, at p. 118. Four Latin *Vitae* of St Ailbe exist; these descend from a common exemplar: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1910), I, xxix. In addition to the version published by Heist from *Codex Salmanticensis* (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 7672–7674), Plummer published *Vita S. Albei* from Dublin, Trinity College 175: *Vitae*, ed. Plummer, I, 46–64.

³ *Vita S. Albei*, §§1–2: *Vitae*, ed. Heist, p. 118.

dog who met a sorry end in *Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó*, or 'Tidings of Mac Dathó's Pig'.⁴

St Ailbe was a member of the Araid, according to the genealogies of that people and according to *Vita S. Albei*. (See Figure 1.) In *Vita S. Albei* the saint is stated to have been the son of Sant, a slave of the king of the Artraige, and a randy fellow named Olcnais, who, after getting Sant pregnant, flees never to be heard from again.⁵ The Artraige were one of the peoples of the Araid.⁶ The Araid are now an obscure people.⁷ They were a *fortúath*, or external people, of Munster.⁸ This status is neatly reflected in their genealogies, in which they descend from Fer Tlachtga, presented as the son (or brother) of Fergus mac Róich (Fergus mac Rossa), or the son of Celtchair mac Uithechair, both prominent figures in the so-called Ulster Cycle of Irish literature.⁹ Geographically, the Araid were far from external.

⁴ *Scéla Muicce Meic Dathó*, ed. R. Thurneysen (Dublin, 1935).

⁵ *Vita S. Albei*, §1: *Vitae*, ed. Heist, p. 118.

⁶ *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 321 (161b27) and 386 (326g55).

⁷ For an attempt to elucidate the early history of the Araid see W. Mahon, 'Glasraige, Tóecraige, and Araid: Evidence from Ogam', *Proc. of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 8 (1988), 11–30.

⁸ *Fortúatha* were external in the sense that they were not genealogically related to the overking to whom they paid tribute. On the distinction between *soerbtúatha* ('free kingdoms'), *fortúatha* and *aithechtúatha* ('unfree kingdoms'), see Mac Neill, 'Early Irish Population-Groups', *Proc. of the R. Irish Acad.* 29 (1911–12), 59–114, at 93 (§102). For references to *dá fortúatha Arad* see *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 137 (140b25) and 280 (157,50); what specifically these two *fortúatha* were is not stated. See also *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 321 (161b27) and n. h. The Araid are usually presented as divided into four population-groups: see Mahon, 'Glasraige', pp. 19–21.

⁹ Fer Tlachtga is linked with Fergus at *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 97 (128a37) — note that the heading at the top of the page should read *Dál Cairbre Arad*, not *Loichsi*: see J. V. Kelleher, 'The Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies', *Irish Hist. Stud.* 16 (1968), 138–53, at 152. Fer Tlachtga is also associated with Fergus at *Corpus*,

Their territory was located in Cliu, a district which stretched across parts of the present-day Counties Limerick and Tipperary.¹⁰

So, putting these pictures of St Ailbe together we see that one branch, at least, of the Araid were dog-men. Given that the Araid claimed decent from Fergus mac Róich, this weird genetic aberration was not unprecedented for as Ruairí Ó hUiginn has pointed out, the name Fergus mac Róich may be etymologised thus: Vigorous Man son of Great Horse.¹¹

The point of these very un-academic musings is that we know very little about the saint indeed. McCone has sought information about Ailbe by digging into the supposed mythological underpinnings of *Vita S. Albei*. A student who turns to M. A. O'Brien's *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* seeking information about St Ailbe learns what a medieval genealogist wanted to communicate about Ailbe.¹² Neither approach yields straightforward information about the saint. For instance, we can not prove that St Ailbe was actually a member of the Araid. Moreover, we can not even prove that Ailbe was a historical

ed. O'Brien I, 320–1; *Corpus*, ed. Ó Riain, p. 32 (§189) and n. f; *Corpus*, ed. Ó Riain, p. 102 (§662.190). Fer Tlachtga is associated with Celtchair at *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 137 (140b25) and *Corpus*, ed. Ó Riain, p. 23 (§135) but see n. j, and p. 68 (§486). This confusion over the parentage of Fer Tlachtga is acknowledged at *Corpus*, ed. Ó Riain, p. 65 (§436).

¹⁰ E. Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae* (Dublin, 1910), p. 34.

¹¹ R. Ó hUiginn, 'Fergus, Russ and Rudraige: a Brief Biography of Fergus Mac Róich', *Emania* 11 (1993), 31–41, at 33 and 37.

¹² The genealogical material contained in O'Brien's *Corpus* was compiled in the twelfth century; much material, and especially genealogies pertaining to Munster dynasties, is earlier. For an introduction to this work, see Kelleher, 'The Pre-Norman Irish Genealogies'; see also P. Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Cults and Ecclesiastical Families', *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 291–302, at p. 292.

figure in the way that we think of him – the bishop who founded the church of Emly (*Imlech Ibair*).¹³ Cumméne, in his letter on the controversy over the date of Easter, written in 632 or 633, mentions the successor (*successor*) of Bishop Ailbe.¹⁴ This letter was written a century after the saint's death, as recorded in Irish chronicles, by which time it was accepted that Ailbe had been a bishop and had founded a church.¹⁵ The problem is that the dates given for Ailbe's death in the chronicles are constructs.

This investigation into St Ailbe's roots is really an investigation into who wanted to claim him, why and when.¹⁶ Of course, St Ailbe

¹³ Emly is in the extreme west of what is now Co. Tipperary.

¹⁴ *Cummians's Letter De Controversia Paschali. Together with a Related Irish Computistical Tract De Ratione Computandi*, ed. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín (Toronto, 1988), pp. 6 and 90.

¹⁵ Ailbe's obit (ascribed variously to the late 620s, the 630s or early 640s) occurs in seven Irish chronicles: AB §172, AClon 522.6, AFM 541.1, AI 528.1, AT 534.2 (Kl.u.), AU 527.4, AU 534.2, AU 542.2, CS 531.2. AB: 'The Annals in Cotton MS. Titus A. XXV', ed. M. A. Freeman, *Revue Celtique* 41 (1924), 301–30. AClon: *The Annals of Clonmacnoise being Annals of Ireland from the Earliest Period to A.D. 1408 translated into English by Conell Mageoghagan*, ed. D. Murphy, facsimile reprint (Felinfach, 1993). AFM: *Annala Ríogachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1616*, ed. and trans. J. O'Donovan, 3rd ed. with new introduction by K. Nicholls, 7 vols (Dublin, 1990). AI: *The Annals of Inisfallen (MS Rawlinson B503)*, ed. S. Mac Airt (Dublin, 1951). AT: 'The Annals of Tigernach', ed. W. Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 16 (1895), 374–419; 17 (1896), 6–33, 119–263, 337–420; 18 (1897), 9–59, 150–97, 267–303 (facsimile reprint in 2 vols., Felinfach, 1993). AU: *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1983). CS: *Chronicum Scotorum. A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135 with a Supplement Containing the Events from 1141–1150*, ed. and trans. W. M. Hennessy (London, 1866).

¹⁶ For an overview of the study the genealogies of Irish saints see P. Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Genealogies', *Nomina* 7 (1983), 23–9; and for a particularly relevant study of Ailbe of Shancough, see Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Cults'.

may have existed, and he may have been of the Araid. But, barring the discovery at Emly of a human skeleton with a tail, we are left with the figure presented to us in the genealogies and hagiography, rather than with a man. An explanation for the interest of the Araid in St Ailbe is discernible, however. In 1945 Liam Ó Buachalla published an article entitled 'The Ecclesiastical families of Cloyne'.¹⁷ In this article, he argued that the Munster churches of Cloyne and Emly were intermittently ruled by members of the Araid and the Eoganachta. The latter were an amalgamation of kingdoms which controlled the overkingship of Munster from the seventh century to the mid-tenth century.¹⁸ The interest on the part of the Eoganachta in Emly is well-documented, and Donnchadh Ó Corráin has even suggested that this interest has been underestimated.¹⁹ The role of the Araid at Emly is less well acknowledged or understood. Ó Buachalla cited four families of the Araid who were active at Emly and Cloyne,²⁰ all of whom appear in the genealogies of the Araid in Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh's 'Book of Genealogies' which has recently been edited for the first time by Nollaig Ó Muraíle.²¹ One of these families, Ua

¹⁷ L. Ó Buachalla, 'The Ecclesiastical Families of Cloyne', *Jnl of the Cork Hist. and Archaeol. Soc.*, 2nd ser., 50 (1945), 83–8.

¹⁸ For a brief introduction to the Eoganachta see D. Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans* (Dublin, 1972), pp. 1–5. On their origins see D. Sproule, 'The Origins of the Éoganachta', *Ériu* 35 (1984), 31–7.

¹⁹ D. Ó Corráin, review of F. J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings, Celtica* 13 (1980), 150–68, at 164.

²⁰ Ó Buachalla, 'The Ecclesiastical Families', p. 85. The families are Ua hArrochtáin, Ua Críonáin, Ua Dubhcróin and Ua Dubuidhr.

²¹ Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh, *Leabhar Mór na nGenealacth: The Great Book of Irish Genealogies compiled (1645–66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh*, ed. and trans. N. Ó Muraíle, 5 vols. (Dublin, 2003–4). I have not had an opportunity to examine this genealogical collection, but Dr. Ó Muraíle has kindly sent me copies of his edition of the section on the Araid.

hArrochtáin, produced a lector and an abbot of Emly in the eleventh century.²² I have, as yet, been unable to discover evidence for the involvement of the other three families at Emly.

Ó Buachalla was mainly concerned with evidence for ecclesiastical dynasties at Cloyne and Emly from the tenth century onwards. However, there were members of the Araid active at Emly much earlier as well.²³ Senchán, abbot of Emly (†780/1)²⁴ and his uncle Brócán (†771).²⁵ I would also suggest, tentatively, that Conamail, abbot of Emly (†708),²⁶ be identified with Conamail *sapiens*, who appears among the genealogies of the Araid.²⁷ All three of these men belonged to Dál Cairpre Arad who also appear under the name Tóecraige.²⁸ (See Figure 1.) Ó Buachalla suggested that Dál Cairpre Arad were overlords of the Araid.²⁹ While a number of pedigrees of

²² AI 1024.4.

²³ Senchán and Brócán were identified in passing as members of the Araid by Mahon ('Glasraige', p. 20). The identification of Senchán as a member of the Araid has been accepted by Ó Riain, 'Irish Saints' Cults', 293, n. 9.

²⁴ AClon 778.2 (repeated at AClon 767.1), AFM 776.1 (repeated at AFM 769.6 and 780.2), AI 781.1, ARC §204, AU 781.3. ARC: 'The Annals of Roscrea', ed. D. Gleeson and S. Mac Airt, *Proc. of the R. Irish Acad.* 59 (1958), 137–80. No patronym is given in any of these death-notice. In the genealogies one pedigree of the Toecraige Arad ends with Senchán mac Uarchride: *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 386 (326g18). See the following note.

²⁵ AI 771.2: *Brocán macc Adhúair ó Imbliuch* ('Brócán son of Aduar from Emly'). According to the pedigree cited in the previous footnote, the father of Senchán, abbot of Emly, was Adoer mac Folachtáin meic Brócáin. It would seem, therefore, that Brócán of Emly was the nephew of Senchán, abbot of Emly. The appearance of the name Brócán in Senchán's pedigree is suggestive.

²⁶ AI 708.1, in which his father's name is given as Carthach.

²⁷ *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 96 (128a13). The name of Conamail's father is not given in the genealogies.

²⁸ *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 97 (128a36).

²⁹ Ó Buachalla, 'The Ecclesiastical Families', p. 84.

members of the Araid survive,³⁰ it is difficult to identify individuals mentioned therein for the simple reason that the Araid were a politically insignificant people and therefore rarely appear in the chronicles. Further, most of the extant pedigrees of the Araid are of branches of this people other than those which supposedly produced Ailbe, Brócán, Senchán and Conamail.

From about the year 700, one can extract from the chronicles a list of the abbots of Emly which, on account of its substantial length, must be not far from complete. However, very few of these men can be securely fitted into a pedigree in the genealogical collections. In fact, between the first appearance of an abbot of Emly in the chronicles (661) and the mid tenth century, the period on which I have concentrated most of my efforts, I have only been able to identify the three abbots mentioned above, and, very tentatively, an abbot of Emly who was of the Eoganachta and died in 720.³¹ In addition to these four fellows, another four abbots of Emly who were

³⁰ *Corpus*, ed. O'Brien, I, 95–7 (the heading at the top of these pages should read *Dál Cairpre Arad*, not *Loichst*) and 386–7.

³¹ The earliest abbot of Emly to appear in the chronicles is Conaing ua Daint, who died in 661: AB §211, AClon 657.2, AFM 660.2, AI 661.1, ARC §130, AU 661.1, AT 661.3, CS 657.3. Cellach, abbot of Emly, died in 720: AI 720.1. Muchthigern mac Cellaigh died in 785 as abbot of Inis Cathaig (Scattery Island, Co. Clare): AU 785.1. D. Ó Corráin, review of Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 164, has identified him as a member of Uí Éndae, a branch of Eoganacht Áine which produced four ninth-century abbots of Emly. This argument was accepted by F. J. Byrne, in his second edition of *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (Dublin, 2001), pp. xxiv–xxvi. It is possible that Cellach, abbot of Emly, was Muchthigern's father, although I acknowledge that this identification treads uncomfortably close to the edge of chronological impossibility. An investigation into the connections between Emly and local Munster royal dynasties up to the mid-tenth century is the subject of one chapter in my PhD dissertation, 'Royalty and the Church in Ireland and Britain to A.D. 1050' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Cambridge Univ., forthcoming).

of the Eoganachta have been identified for this period.³² The identification of eight ecclesiastics of Emly out of the total twenty-six mentioned in the chronicles between 661 and 950 does not constitute a resounding success.³³ All, some, or none of the other sixteen ecclesiastics may have been of the Araid or the Eoganachta and our picture of the dynastic make-up of Emly in the seventh through the mid-tenth centuries is probably skewed. But it is perhaps nevertheless significant that the dynasts which can be identified were of the Eoganachta, the most powerful group of dynasties in Munster at this time, and the Araid, the people who claimed Ailbe as their own.

The association of the Eoganachta and the Araid with Emly is mirrored in *Vita S. Albei*. Richard Sharpe has argued that *Vita S. Albei* is part of a group of Latin Lives of Irish saints which were drawn together to form a collection between roughly 750 and 850.³⁴ Sharpe's argument requires that the individual *Vitae* were in existence before being drawn together into a collection, pushing back the date of the composition of the individual *Vitae* into the eighth century. As yet no scholar has mounted a detailed attack on these early dates, although some have voiced their misgivings, either in print or orally.³⁵ On the other hand, Máire Herbert has attempted to anchor *Vita S. Albei* more firmly to a historical context. She has dated the Life to the reign

³² Rehtabra mac Muchthigirn (†819), Ólchobor mac Cinaeda (†851), Cenn-bhfaelad ua Muchthigirn (†872) and Eogan mac Cinn-bhfaelad (†890). On these see Byrne, *Irish Kings*, 178; Ó Corráin, review of Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 164.

³³ The identification of abbots of Emly during this period is discussed in detail in my dissertation, 'Royalty and the Church'.

³⁴ R. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives: an Introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, (Oxford, 1991), pp. 297–339, especially p. 329.

³⁵ For the former see J. Carey, review of Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints' Lives*, *Speculum* 68 (1993), 260–2.

of Cathal mac Finnguini, who was overking of Munster from 713 to 742.³⁶ The potential eighth-century date for the composition of *Vita S. Albei* draws this discussion of the dog-man saint's roots into the quicksand of the debate over the wisdom of attempting to precisely date the composition of any given Irish saint's Life. In *Vita S. Albei*, the saint only briefly comes into contact with the overking of Munster, who is of the Eoganachta, but relations between the two are cordial. With one possible exception, which I shall discuss later, St Ailbe is not presented as beholden to the overking of Munster. The carefully articulated way in which St Ailbe is brought into contact with the overking of Munster is consistent with a historical context in which Emly was allied to, but not dependent upon, the overkings of Munster who were of the Eoganachta. That is, *Vita S. Albei* may be the product of a period during which Emly was not controlled by dynasts of the Eoganachta. Because Sharpe has dated the composition of the life to roughly 750–850 and I have found evidence for the Araid having a degree of influence at Emly within this date-range, it is worth investigating the possibility that *Vita S. Albei* was written at a time when the Araid were powerful at Emly.

A brief history of the church of Emly may be useful at this point. As already mentioned, Emly was associated with a bishop named Ailbe and was a prominent church by the 630s. The first abbot of Emly to be mentioned in the chronicles, one Conaing, died in 661. Emly was apparently one of the most important churches to assent to *Cáin Adomnáin* or 'The Law of Adomnán', promulgated at Birr in 697, for the abbot of Emly, Díblaíne, appears in the list of guarantors

³⁶ M. Herbert, 'Literary Sea-voyages and Early Munster Hagiography', *Celtic Connections. Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Celtic Studies*, ed. R. Black, W. Gillies and R. Ó Maolaláigh, vol. 1 (East Linton, Scotland, 1999), pp. 182–89, at p. 182.

second only to the bishop of Armagh.³⁷ Beginning in the eighth century, a list of abbots of Emly can be extracted from the chronicles that appears to be fairly complete. It is in the annals of this century that we first find evidence of a close relationship between Emly and the Eoganachta.

As I mentioned earlier, the Araid were located in a district called Cliu, which straddled Counties Limerick and Tipperary. To their east, south, and west were powerful branches of the Eoganachta: Eoganacht Chaisil, Eoganacht Glendamnach, and Eoganacht Locha Léin. To the north was the territory of Uí Fhidgeinte — wannabes of the Eoganachta. And right on top of the Araid were two more branches of the Eoganachta. One, Eoganachta Airthir Chliach, was, as their name implies, located in the eastern part of Cliu. This branch had faded into political insignificance by the beginning of the seventh century.³⁸ Eoganacht Áine were also located in Cliu and they had control over the territory in which the Araid, and Emly, lay.³⁹

In 742, Cathal mac Finnguini died.⁴⁰ He was an unusually powerful overking of Munster who made himself troublesome to both the Leinstermen and Uí Néill. His obit in 'The Annals of

³⁷ The attestation reads: *Díbláine Elnai, abb Imlechai Ibair*, 'Díbláine of Eilne, abbot of Emly': *Cáin Adomnáin and Canones Adomnani*, ed. and trans. P. Ó Néill and D. N. Dumville, 2 vols., Basic Texts for Gaelic History 2 (Cambridge, 2003), II, 20–1. Eilne was in the kingdom of Dál nAraide, in north-eastern Ireland. M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The Guarantor List of Cáin Adomnáin, 697', *Peritia* 1 (1982), 178–215, at 186, has taken the description 'of Eilne' as the primary one, and has not commented on Díbláine's title 'abbot of Emly'.

³⁸ The last overking of Munster from Eoganacht Airthir Chliach was Fergus Scandal, who died in 583: AFM 580.1, AT 584.3 (K.u.), CS 583.1.

³⁹ This branch was centered around what is now Knockaney, in the barony of Small County, Co. Limerick.

⁴⁰ AB §232, AClon 739.1, AI 742.1, AT 742.3, AFM 737.6, AU 742.3.

Inisfallen', the one extant early chronicle that was kept in the south of Ireland, contains the following poem:

In t-Imblech
ro sáer Ailbe dia bachail,
is óen ina erdarcus
a úr dar étan Cathail.⁴¹

The poem is both tantalizing and problematic: it suggests that the author of 'The Annals of Inisfallen' had access to a local source which was interested in Emly.⁴² The purpose of the poem may be to indicate a close relationship between Cathal and Emly, or between Cathal's branch of the Eoganachta, Eoganacht Glendamnach, and Emly. That Cathal would have had dealings with Emly is certain. Emly was the principal church in Munster in the seventh and eighth centuries. In 737, Cathal attended a *dál*, or meeting, at Terryglas with the overking of Uí Néill.⁴³ The same year, *Lex Patricii* 'The Law of Patrick' was proclaimed throughout Ireland.⁴⁴ This law, on analogy with *Cáin Adomnáin* whose text survives, probably was concerned

⁴¹ 'In Emly / Which Ailbe has ennobled by his crozier, / One famous thing about it is / Its earth covering the brow of Cathal'.

⁴² I leave aside the question of whether the poem was composed on the death of Cathal in 742, or to what extent it may be used as evidence that Cathal actually was buried at Emly. Ó Cuív thought that Cathal's obit in 'The Annals of Inisfallen', as it now stands, took shape long after Cathal's death: B. Ó Cuív, 'Literary Creation and Irish Historical Tradition', *PBA* 49 (1963), 233–62, at 243–4.

⁴³ AT 737.5 and AU 737.9.

⁴⁴ AClon 734.3, AT 737.6, AU 737.10. T. M. Charles-Edwards, *The Early Mediaeval Gaelic Lawyer*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History 4 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 50–1, has posited a connection between the meeting at Terryglas and the promulgation of *Lex Patricii*; cf. Ó Cuív, 'Literary Creation', p. 244.

with the levying of fines or paying of tribute. Wealth generated by *Lex Patricii* in 737 would have been funnelled into the coffers of the church of Armagh. If Cathal was a party to the promulgation of *Lex Patricii*, Emly, a church surrounded on all sides by the Eoganachta, must have assented to this assertion of the power of the church of Armagh. It is not possible to determine whether Emly did so willingly or grudgingly. One suspects the latter, but if the former, circumstances had presumably changed by 784 when 'The Annals of Inisfallen' note the promulgation of *Cáin Ailbi* 'The Law of Ailbe' over Munster.⁴⁵ In 793 *Cáin Ailbi* was renewed.⁴⁶ Also in 793, Artrí mac Cathail was ordained (*ordinatio*) overking of Munster.⁴⁷ In 'The Annals of Ulster' these two events occur in the same annal-entry – suggesting that they were connected. In general, the promulgation of *cána* over 'provinces' seems to have been carried out through the co-operation of a prominent ecclesiastic and the provincial overking.⁴⁸ In the events of 793, then, we have evidence for the authority of the church of Emly being promoted by the overking of Munster. Given that it was Ailbe's law which was being promulgated, it seems almost certain that the ecclesiastic who ordained Artrí was the head of the church of Emly. A precedent was being set which associated Emly with the successful candidate to the overkingship of Munster.

⁴⁵ AI 784.1.

⁴⁶ AClon 790.1, AFM 788.3, AU 793.3.

⁴⁷ AClon 790.3, AU 793.3. The branch of the Eoganachta to which Artrí belonged is uncertain; he does not appear in the published genealogies. Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 293, has identified him as a son of Cathal mac Finnguini (†742). This identification is problematic as Artrí lived until 821: AI 821.1. It is worth noting that Cathal's daughter Tuathlathie died in 754: AClon 749.6, AFM 749.5, AT 754.2.

⁴⁸ See the overview of *cána* given by Charles-Edwards, *Early Medieval Gaelic Lawyer*, pp. 43–52.

There are two further dimensions to the events of 793 that need to be highlighted. First, the head of the church of Emly in 793 appears to have been Rechtabra, who, as Donnchadh Ó Corráin has shown, was of a branch of Eoganacht Áine called Uí Éndae.⁴⁹ The mutual back-scratching of 793 was a family affair. Second, 'The Law of Commán' was promulgated over Connaught by the overking of Connaught and the abbot of Roscommon in 793.⁵⁰ The proclamation by two provincial overkings of two ecclesiastical laws associated with local saints in a single year may indicate that a new, independent, stance was being taken with regard to Armagh. Power-relations had shifted between 737, when it seems Cathal was involved in the promulgation of *Lex Patricii* over all Ireland, and 793, when a man identified by some as Cathal's son promulgated 'The Law of Ailbe' over Munster.

Four ninth-century abbots of Emly, beginning with the aforementioned Rechtabra, can be securely identified as dynasts of the Eoganachta.⁵¹ Further, two of these, Ólchobor and

⁴⁹ D. Ó Corráin, review of Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 164. Rechtabra died in 819: AFM 817.1 and AI 819.2. He may have ruled Emly from the death of Cúán, abbot of Emly, in 787: AFM 782.2 and AI 787.1.

⁵⁰ AClon 790.1, AFM 788.2, AU 793.2. In AClon, the promulgation of 'The Law of Ailbe' and of 'The Law of Commán' appear in the same annal-entry.

⁵¹ Rechtabra's nephew, Cenn-bhfaelad, was abbot of Emly and overking of Munster, and died in 872: AI 872.1, AFM 870.3, FAI § 403. FAI: *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*, ed. J. N. Radner (Dublin, 1978). Other chronicles only record that he was abbot of Emly: AT 872.2, AU 872.3, CS 872.2. Eogan, a son of Cenn-bhfaelad, died in 890 after a brief reign as abbot of Emly: AFM 886.1, AI 890.1, AU 890.3. These three men were of Uí Éndae of Eoganacht Áine. Ólchobor mac Cinaeda, abbot of Emly and overking of Munster, was of a different branch of this dynasty, he died in 851: AI 851.1. Other chronicles call Ólchobor (over)king of Munster only: AFM 849.2, AU 851.1, CS 851.1. The

Cenn-bhfaelad, were also overkings of Munster. Over the course of the ninth century, Munster and Uí Néill came into increasing conflict with each other. Munster also suffered heavily from the effects of Viking activity in the ninth century. In the mid-tenth century, the Eoganachta lost control of Munster to the upstart kingdom of Dál Cais,⁵² and by the end of the tenth century, the Eoganachta had also temporarily lost control of Emly.⁵³

As I mentioned earlier, *Vita S. Albei* depicts a very particular type of relationship between the saint, the overking of Munster, and indeed St Patrick. One can extrapolate from the relationships between these figures something about the relationships between Emly, the ruling Eoganachta, and Armagh at the time that the Life was composed.

- 1) Relations between Emly and the overkings of Munster were good.
- 2) Relations between Emly and Armagh were superficially good.
- 3) Relations between the overkings of Munster and Armagh were good.
- 4) Eoganacht Glendamnach or Eoganacht Chaisil were powerful.

identification of Ólchobor as a member of Uí Éndae was made by Ó Corráin, review of Byrne, *Irish Kings*, p. 164.

⁵² For a concise overview see Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, pp. 114–17.

⁵³ In 986, Cétfaid, *dalta Riatai*, ‘fosterson of Riata’ was intruded into the abbacy of Emly: AI 986.3. He was of Dál Cais: see Ó Buachalla, ‘The Ecclesiastical Families’, p. 85; Ó Corráin, *Ireland before the Normans*, p. 127; D. Ó Corráin, ‘Dál Cais – Church and Dynasty’, *Ériu* 24 (1973), 52–63, at 53 n. 4. The year after Cétfaid’s death, Marcán, brother of the overking of Munster, Brian Bóruma, took the abbacy of Emly: AI 990.2.

A few examples from the *Vita* may serve to illustrate these relationships. In *Vita S. Albei*, the saint comes into contact with Patrick and the overking of Munster, Oengus mac Nad-fraech, only briefly. Oengus was the ancestor of both Eoganacht Glendamnach and Eoganacht Chaisil. (See Figure 2.) These two branches of the Eoganachta, together with Eoganacht Áine, produced most of the overkings of Munster in the eighth and ninth centuries. Eoganacht Áine, as mentioned earlier, produced four ninth-century abbots of Emly, two of whom were also overkings of Munster. Eoganacht Áine are said to have descended from another son of Nad-fraech, Ailill. If *Vita S. Albei* was composed at a time when Eoganacht Áine controlled both Emly and the overkingship of Munster, or perhaps Emly only, we might expect the overking of Munster to have been depicted as an ancestor of Eoganacht Áine rather than as an ancestor of Eoganacht Chaisil and Eoganacht Glendamnach. Cathal mac Finnguini, whose noble brow was covered by the dirt of Emly, was of the Eoganacht Glendamnach.

The first, and only, occasion on which SS Ailbe and Patrick interact in *Vita S. Albei* is when Ailbe travels to Cashel and meets with Patrick and the overking of Munster, Oengus.⁵⁴ In their accounts of this meeting, the two published versions of *Vita S. Albei* differ. The version in TCD 175 states that Patrick and Oengus granted that the archiepiscopal dignity (*archiepisopatus*) of Munster should always be in the principal church of Ailbe.⁵⁵ The version in *Codex Salmanticensis*, which is generally agreed to more closely follow the wording of its exemplar, states that Patrick gave jurisdiction over the Munstermen to Ailbe, and gave Oengus over into Ailbe’s hands: *Tunc Patricius obtulit Albeo omnes uiros Munnensium, ut esset eorum pater, et regem*

⁵⁴ *Vita S. Albei*, §29: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Heist, p. 125.

⁵⁵ *Vita S. Albei*, §22: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Plummer, I, 55.

Engussum in manum Ailbei.⁵⁶ This statement is extremely interesting because while Ailbe is presented as beholden to Patrick, he is not presented as beholden to the overking of Munster.⁵⁷ This indebtedness to St Patrick is, however, tempered by other events. For example, Patrick asks Ailbe to discover the paternity of a child born to a slave of Patrick's. In the version of the Life in the *Codex Salmanticensis*, the offending fornicator is a member of Patrick's retinue.⁵⁸ Further, Ailbe is brought into contact with Palladius, a useful trump card when trying to deflect the power-hungry ambitions of the Patrician church.⁵⁹ The get-together at Cashel is the sum-total of Ailbe's dealings with Patrick. Ailbe only comes into contact with Oengus twice more. On one occasion Ailbe resuscitates the king's dead horses.⁶⁰ On the other occasion, St Éndae of Arann asks Ailbe to help him obtain a grant of land from Oengus.⁶¹ Oengus wanted to see for himself the piece of land that Éndae was after, and Ailbe performed a miracle which enabled this.

These several relationships which I have highlighted are all consistent with a date for the composition of *Vita S. Ailbei*

⁵⁶ *Vita S. Ailbei*, §29: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Heist, p. 125. 'Then Patrick gave all the Munstermen to Ailbe, so that he would be their father, and [Patrick gave over] King Oengus into Ailbe's hands.'

⁵⁷ Greater dependency of St Ailbe on St Patrick is a feature of *Vita S. Ailbei*, as it appears in TCD 175: see R. Sharpe, 'Quatuor Sanctissimi Episcopi: Irish Saints before Saint Patrick', *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney*, ed. D. Ó Corráin, L. Breatnach, K. McCone (Maynooth, 1989), pp. 376-99, at 394.

⁵⁸ *Vita S. Ailbei*, §30: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Heist, p. 125. Compare *Vita S. Ailbei*, §23: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Plummer, I, 55, in which neither of the child's parents is associated with St Patrick.

⁵⁹ *Vita S. Ailbei*, §3: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Heist, pp. 118-19.

⁶⁰ *Vita S. Ailbei*, §28: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Heist, p. 124.

⁶¹ *Vita S. Ailbei*, §32: *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. Heist, p. 125.

somewhere in the second half of the eighth century. The chronicle-evidence and the genealogical information combine to place two ecclesiastics at Emly who were of the Araid during this period. As noted earlier, between 737 and 793 there was a shift in the stance of the overkings of Munster away from visible co-operation with Armagh towards visible co-operation with Emly. The appearance of Oengus mac Nad-fraech as the overking of Munster points to a time when either Eoganacht Glandamnach or Eoganacht Chaisil were powerful – and I deliberately stop short of saying 'when Eoganacht Glandamnach or Eoganacht Chaisil controlled the overkingship of Munster'. In the later eighth century, a king of Eoganacht Locha Léin, Mael-dúin mac Aeda, was overking of Munster. He died in 786.⁶² As Thomas Charles-Edwards has pointed out, a significant amount of medieval ink was spilt by certain of the Eoganachta (Eoganacht Chaisil and Eoganacht Glandamnach) to assert that other branches of the Eoganachta (in particular Eoganacht Locha Léin) were excluded from holding the overkingship of Munster.⁶³ It is especially interesting, then, that the only appearance of the Araid as a fighting force in the annals for the eighth century is in battle against Mael-dúin.⁶⁴ The appearance of the Araid in both military and ecclesiastical contexts in the second half of the eighth century, when they are otherwise largely invisible in the chronicles underscores the impression that this period was one of particular prominence for them.

The information that can be gleaned about the Araid in pre-Norman Ireland is scanty. One has to speak, not of gaps in our

⁶² AI 786.1. In AU 786.1, Mael-dúin is called king of *Irluachar*, a description synonymous with *Iarmumu*, 'west Munster'.

⁶³ T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 534-42.

⁶⁴ AI 766.2. On this battle see D. Ó Corráin, 'Onomata', *Ériu* 30 (1979), 165-80, at 175-6.

knowledge, but rather of weak areas of light in an otherwise dark void. While the neat mirroring of the chronicle-evidence relating to the second half of the eighth century and the relationships depicted in *Vita S. Ailbe* is strong enough that it should catch our attention, it is largely circumstantial. Much more work needs to be done before the evidence presented in this paper can be brought to bear on the question of the date at which *Vita S. Ailbe* was composed.

To return to the question I asked at the beginning of this paper: Who was St Ailbe? According to the surviving genealogies, St Ailbe was a member of the Araid. Ultimately, this tells us more about the Araid, or whoever composed and tinkered with their genealogies, than it does about St Ailbe. It is an assertion of the power of a people — the Araid or groups within the Araid — in relation to a church represented by St Ailbe. It is a statement of power in the language of genealogy. As the Araid were a small, obscure, largely insignificant people, this conclusion might at first seem to be a let-down. But the connexion between Ailbe and the Araid, as I have attempted to show in this paper, points us towards a better understanding of the history of Emly, one of the most important churches in the south of Ireland, and its changing relationship with the overkings of Munster.

Figure 1: Araid

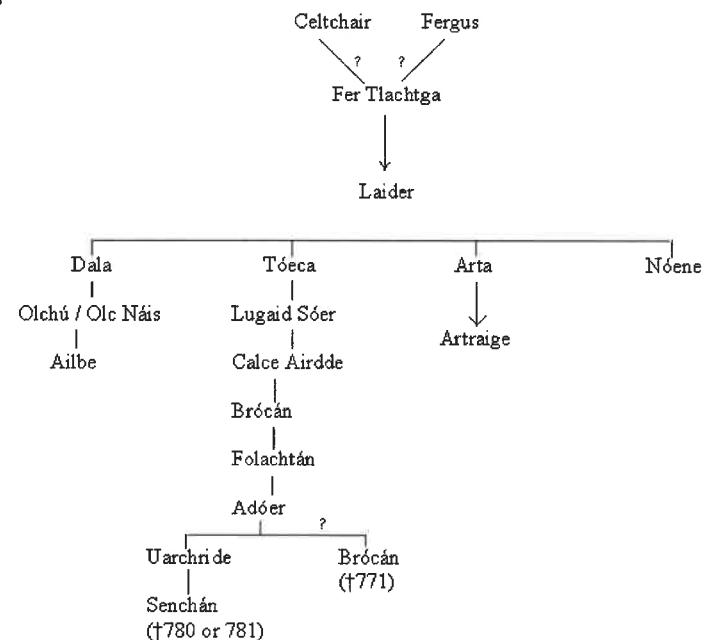
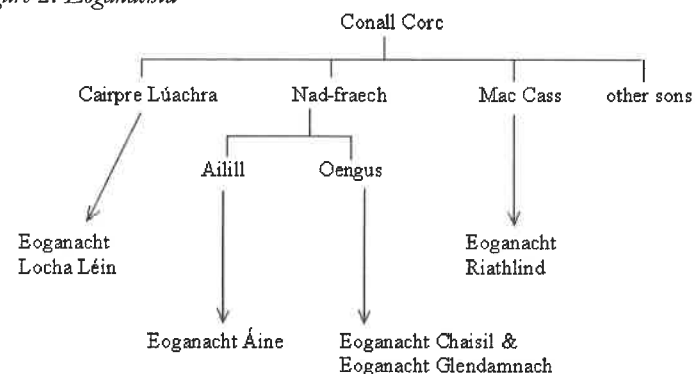


Figure 2: Eoganachta



Who Says What in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*?:
Speaker Attribution in the Three Versions of the Saga

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Gísla saga Súrssonar is one of the pre-eminent Icelandic ‘family sagas’ and tells the story of the famous tenth-century outlaw Gísli Súrsson.¹ The saga is thought to have been composed some time in the second half of the thirteenth century,² and it survives in a number of manuscripts which preserve three notably differing versions of the saga-text: a longer version, a shorter version, and a fragmentary version.³ In this paper I will outline the manuscript evidence for the

¹ For general surveys of the ‘family sagas’, or *Íslendingasögur*, with full bibliographic references, see C. J. Clover, ‘Icelandic Family Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*)’, *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. C. J. Clover and J. Lindow, *Islandica* 45 (Ithaca and London, 1985), pp. 239–315; and Vésteinn Ólason, ‘Family Sagas’, *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. R. McTurk, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Oxford, 2005), pp. 101–118.

² It is difficult to come to any definite conclusions over the composition date of most sagas in the *Íslendingasögur* genre as there is no secure basis for dating them, but general consensus places *Gísla saga* in the ‘Classical’ period of saga-writing, from around 1240–1310. See T. M. Andersson, ‘Some Ambiguities in *Gísla saga*: A Balance Sheet’, *Bibliography of Old Norse-Icelandic Stud.* (1968), 7–42, at 11; see also the appendix of dates and classifications of the *Íslendingasögur* in Vésteinn Ólason, ‘Family Sagas’, pp. 114–16.

³ I will refer to the following editions which present the longer, shorter, and fragmentary texts of the saga respectively: *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in *Membrana Regia Deperdita*, ed. A. Loth, Editiones Arnarnagænar, Series A, vol. 5 (Copenhagen, 1960), pp. 3–80 (hereafter ‘Loth’); *Gísla saga Súrssonar: udgivet efter Håndskrifterne af Det Kongelige Nordiske Oldskrift-Selskab*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen,

three versions and then focus on the representation of one scene in the saga, where the hero, Gísli, is betrayed by his sister Þórdís.

The general sequence of events in this scene is consistent between the three versions, but the versions do not agree over which character it is who utters the famous proverb *ok eru köld kvenna ráð*, ‘the counsels of women are cold’.⁴ The proverb is usually interpreted in the context of straightforward, misogynistic expressions, which attribute various negative qualities to women. However, I will argue that the issue is more subtle and complicated in the vengeance society which *Gísla saga* portrays, and that the distinctions in the articulation of the proverb in the three versions have wider implications for the audience’s interpretation of characters and events both in the scene itself, and throughout the remainder of the saga.

Scholarship on the subject of the relationship of the three versions of *Gísla saga* to each other has, until relatively recently, almost unfailingly favoured the shorter version, which was held to be the oldest and purest rendering of the saga.⁵ Accordingly, there has been heavy bias against the longer redaction of the saga which many critics dismissed as a younger, expanded—and consequently debased—version of the shorter saga-text, and against the fragment, which has not been included in the discussion until very recently

1929) (hereafter ‘Jónsson’); *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in *Håndskriftet AM 445c, I, 4to: Brudstykke af Víga-Glúms saga og Gísla saga Súrssonar*, ed. Jón Helgason, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur 66 (Copenhagen, 1956), pp. 35–70 (hereafter ‘Helgason’).

⁴ Loth, p. 41; Jónsson, p. 33; Helgason, p. 51.

⁵ Articles published in the 1979 volume of the journal *Gripla* were among the earliest critical attempts to assess the longer and shorter versions of the saga systematically. See, in particular, Guðni Kolbeinsson and Jónas Kristjánsson, ‘Gerðir Gíslasögu’, *Gripla* 3 (1979), 128–162.

indeed.⁶ The upshot of this situation is that at the expense of the longer and the fragmentary versions, the shorter version of the saga-text has been used as the basis for virtually all printed editions and translations of the saga, and until recently, almost all critical studies on the saga.

On the whole, this attitude is not one based on sound analysis and criticism of the texts of the different versions, but rather reflects an outlook that has been heavily influenced by deep-rooted perceptions about the configuration of the 'classical' saga as a consistently objective and stylistically economical narrative. In this paper I hope to demonstrate that all three versions of the saga-text preserve interesting variants which are equally worthy of analysis, and that the very existence of such variants can enrich our comprehension of the saga, because they force us to re-examine and re-align established interpretations of characters and events.⁷

The text of the shorter version of *Gísla saga* is represented principally in the parchment AM 556a quarto. General consensus has been reached over the date and origin of this manuscript: on the basis of its palaeographic and orthographic features, it is thought to have

⁶ Vésteinn Ólason and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson consider the evidence in the fragmentary version of the saga alongside the longer and shorter versions in their analysis, 'Sammenhængen mellem tolkninger og tekstversioner af *Gísla saga*', *Den fornordiska texten i filologisk och litteraturvetenskaplig behysning: studier och diskussionsinlägg*, ed. K. Johannesson, K. G. Johannsson, and L. Lönnroth (Gothenburg, 2000), pp. 96–120.

⁷ This approach is in accordance with the ideas behind the 'New Philology' movement, which took coherent shape in the early 1990s. See, for example, articles in the special volume of *Speculum* 65 (1990), especially S. G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture', 1–18. On 'New Philology' in Old Norse literature, see K. Wolf, 'Old Norse-New Philology', *Scandinavian Stud.* 65 (1993); and E. S. Firchow, 'Old Norse-New Philology: A Reply, or, The *Elucidarius* Meets Hydra and Cyclops', *Germanic Notes and Reviews* 26 (1995), 2–7.

been written around 1475 or in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, somewhere in the West Fjord region of Iceland.⁸ The text of the shorter version of *Gísla saga* is also found in a number of later paper copies which all derive directly or indirectly from AM 556a quarto; these will not be considered here.

The preservation and transmission of the longer version of *Gísla saga* is not as clear-cut. The text of this version was originally preserved in a fourteenth-century parchment that has become known as the 'Membrana Regia Deperdita', because the manuscript was subsequently lost without a trace sometime in the eighteenth century.⁹ Fortunately however, two independent paper copies were made of the manuscript before it went missing: AM 149 folio and NkS 1181 folio.¹⁰ It is clear that, by the time these eighteenth-century copies were made, the fourteenth-century parchment was already damaged: both AM 149 folio and NkS 1181 folio indicate a point in the text, towards the end of the introductory section known as the 'Norwegian Prelude', where there was a significant lacuna.

⁸ AM 556a quarto is held in the Arnarnagnæan Collection in Reykjavík. For further details, see K. Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols (Copenhagen, 1889–94), II, pp. 706–707; Jónsson, pp. iii–iv; *Harðar Saga*, ed. S. Hast, Editiones Arnarnagnæanæ, Ser. A, vol. 6, (Copenhagen, 1960), p. 86.

⁹ See Loth, pp. lxxix–lxxxviii.

¹⁰ AM 149 folio is held in the Arnarnagnæan Collection in Reykjavík. See Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, I, p. 104; Jónsson, p. iv and pp. v–vi; Loth, pp. xiii–xvii. NkS 1181 folio is held in den Nye Kongelige Samling in Copenhagen. See K. Kålund, *Katalog over de oldnorske-islandske håndskrifter i det store Kongelige Bibliotek og i universitetsbibliotek* (Copenhagen, 1900), pp. 13–31; Jónsson, pp. iv–vi; Loth, pp. xxii–xxvii.

The third version of *Gísla saga* is extant only in the early fifteenth-century fragment AM 445c quarto.¹¹ This manuscript consists of five damaged parchment leaves containing part of *Víga-Glúms saga* on the first leaf, and a fairly lengthy section of *Gísla saga* (corresponding to about sixteen chapters of the other versions) on four subsequent leaves. The text in the fragment is laid out in two columns per page but the text is often not continuous, as the leaves have been trimmed at the top and bottom, and in some places the outside column on a couple of pages has been badly damaged, rendering sections almost totally illegible. Nevertheless, several scenes are preserved relatively intact, and thus the fragment can play an important part in interpreting the saga when analysed in conjunction with the corresponding material in the two other versions.

Turning now to the content of the saga: while the substance of the introductory section of the saga—the so-called ‘Norwegian Prelude’—diverges to a significant degree in the longer and shorter versions (the corresponding text does not survive in the fragment), on the whole, the overall chronological and sequential presentation of the elements that make up the narrative of the saga is almost identical in each of the three versions. On a verbal and phrasal level, however, we find widespread variation frequently: individual words and, sometimes, whole phrases in parallel sections of text vary from version to version. Consequentially, these variations can have the effect of slightly, and sometimes profoundly, altering the presentation of a character, event, or the general tone of the narrative in a version.

¹¹ AM 445c I quarto is held in the Arnarnagnæan Collection in Reykjavík. See Kálund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, I, p. 642; Jónsson, p. vi; Helgason, pp. 3–7; J. McKinnell, ‘The Reconstruction of Pseudo-Vatnshyrna’, *Opuscula* 4, Bibliotheca Arnarnagnæana XXX (Copenhagen, 1970), pp. 304–37; Stefán Karlsson, ‘Um Vatnshyrnu’, *Opuscula* 4, pp. 279–303, at pp. 286–87.

Prior to the scene which I wish to discuss, where Gísli is betrayed by his sister Þórdís, two murders have been committed. The first murder is of Gísli’s brother-in-law and best friend, Vésteinn, to whom Gísli was additionally bound by an oath of loyalty. Vésteinn’s murder was committed at night and is set up as a mystery both to the characters in the saga and to the audience, although there is some evidence that points to Þórdís’s first husband, Þorgrímr, as the perpetrator of this deed.¹² The second murder is of Þorgrímr by Gísli: because of his oath, Gísli is under obligation to avenge Vésteinn. Gísli supposes Þorgrímr to be Vésteinn’s killer, and consequently murders him, no matter that Þorgrímr is also his sister’s husband and thus his brother-in-law. This killing also takes place at night and the identity of the murderer is again a mystery to the characters in the saga but not—in this case—to the audience.

However, at the winter ball-games, which are held beside Þorgrímr’s burial mound, Gísli gazes at the mound and speaks a cryptic verse in which he acknowledges responsibility for Þorgrímr’s death. His sister Þórdís overhears the verse and memorizes it. She later unravels it, only to discover the horrific fact that her own brother was her husband’s murderer. She keeps this to herself and only reveals her knowledge to her second husband, Börkr, who is Þorgrímr’s brother, the following spring. This is where the scene which I will examine begins.¹³

Börkr is riding south to settle at Þorsnes and Þórdís and Þorkell (another brother of Þórdís and Gísli’s, who had earlier sworn an oath

¹² The mystery of the murderer’s identity has engaged critics of the saga for many years. See, amongst others, A. Holtsmark, ‘Studies in the *Gísla Saga*’, *Studia Norvegica Ethnologica et Folkloristica*, II, 6 (1951), 3–55, and T. M. Andersson, ‘Some Ambiguities’.

¹³ The Old Norse text and a translation of the scene as it is represented in the three versions may be found in tabulated form at the end of this article.

of loyalty to Þorgrímr) accompany him some of the way. In all three versions, Börkr asks his wife to tell him why she was so unhappy the previous autumn at the local ball-games, and reminds her that she promised to tell him before he journeyed south. While they are talking, they reach Þorgrímr's burial mound. Here, Þórdís stops short and refuses to go any further. The narrator describes how Þórdís tells Börkr about the verse that she overheard Gísli speak at the ball-games, and recites the verse to her husband. Then, in powerful contrast to Þórdís's reported speech, we hear her add directly to Börkr: 'and I think that you do not need to look elsewhere about Þorgrímr's death'.¹⁴ Thus she unequivocally assigns the responsibility of her first husband's death to her brother, and then unremittingly states that Gísli 'must be rightly brought to justice'.¹⁵

The fact that Þórdís has kept this momentous knowledge to herself for several months is intriguing and worthy of brief consideration. On a structural level, Þórdís's conscious silence over her brother's guilt acts as a dramatic, suspense-building device: the situation which is played out in this scene has been set up earlier in the narrative so that it must be staged at a later point. From an emotional point of view, it is understandable that, when Þórdís looks at the burial mound, love and grief for her dead husband might induce her act of revelation, but this alone cannot explain the delay.

Vésteinn Ólason has addressed this conundrum and argues that the answer lies in Þórdís's son Snorri, who was conceived before Þorgrímr's death but born after Þórdís had married Þorgrímr's brother Börkr as her second husband. He writes, 'it seems obvious, although critics have not noted it, that Þórdís must at this time have been even more concerned about her son than her dead husband.

¹⁴ See no. 10 in the table below.

¹⁵ See no. 11 in the table below.

The possibility of raising a son with an obligation to take revenge for the killing of his father by killing her brother is too much for her, and she decides to get the matter resolved at once.¹⁶

At any rate, when Börkr learns that Gísli is responsible for his brother's death, he becomes enraged and exclaims furiously that he wants to turn back at once to kill Gísli.¹⁷ In addition to this, in the longer version and the fragmentary version we are told that Börkr resolves then not to put off this killing.¹⁸ A quick glance at the texts will demonstrate that until this point, the three versions are, on the whole, very close, with no significant divergences between the three texts.

However, following Börkr's reaction to Þórdís's statement, we hear the famous proverbial words *ok eru köld kvenna ráð*.¹⁹ This phrase is also found in chapter 116 of *Njáls saga*, where it is spoken by Flosi Þorðarson in reaction to what he considers Hildigunnr's monstrous goading of him to vengeance.²⁰ Sarah M. Anderson writes in the introduction to a recent volume of essays entitled *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, '[t]his proverb about women's counsels raises compelling questions. At stake here is not women's nature, but rather ... their 'ráð' – their advice, their readings.'²¹ In

¹⁶ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Gísli Súrsson – a flawless or flawed hero?', *Die Aktualität der Saga*, ed. S. T. Andersen, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 21 (Berlin, 1999), pp. 163–75, at p. 170.

¹⁷ See nos. 12–13 in the tables below.

¹⁸ See no. 14 in the tables below.

¹⁹ See no. 17 in the tables below.

²⁰ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. Einar Ól Sveinsson, *Íslenzk fornrit* XII (Reykjavík, 1954), at pp. 291–92.

²¹ *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. S. M. Anderson with K. Swenson (New York and London, 2002), p. xii.

Gísla saga, Þórdís's counsel in revealing her brother's guilt is based on a physical reading: a reading, that is, of Gísli's own enigmatic verse.

The phrase *ok eru köld kvenna ráð* is preserved in all three versions of *Gísla saga*, but each version attributes the words to a different character, and there are also slight differences in the exact wording between the versions.²² In the longer version the phrase is spoken by Þórdís. We learn that Börkr determines not to put off taking vengeance on Gísli, and Þórdís responds by stating she cannot consent to that course of action, that she does not know the exact truth in her reading of the verse, and that 'women's counsels are always cold'. In the shorter version it is Börkr who, evaluating Þórdís's words, speaks the proverb: after his uncompromising declaration that he wants to turn back to kill Gísli, he wavers, continuing: 'but I do not know what truth there is in this, which Þórdís says, and it seems to me less likely that it is reliable, and often women's counsels are cold'. Finally in the fragment it is Þorkell who advises Börkr not to go back after Gísli, casts doubt on the veracity of Þórdís's words and then speaks the proverb as simply 'women's counsels are cold'.

At a first, cursory reading, the differences in the three accounts over which character advises Börkr not to go back to kill Gísli, who casts doubt on the truth behind Þórdís's words, and who speaks the proverb may seem slight. However, these variations have the potential to influence our attitudes towards, and our understanding of, the characters and their motivation in this scene significantly, as I shall attempt to make evident now. From a wider, albeit indirect, perspective, our responses to these characters might be subject to subtle adjustments throughout the rest of the saga too.

²² See nos. 15–18 in the tables below.

I will start with the version of events in the longer version. It might be thought somewhat odd that Þórdís, after betraying her brother so explicitly, should then undercut her revelation by casting doubt over how much of what she has interpreted of Gísli's verse is true or not, and speak the proverb which warns of women's cold counsel. Þórdís's speech does not finish there, however: she continues by urging Börkr not to rush headlong into taking vengeance on Gísli but rather to hold back and pursue him through the law of the land, where the just circumstances of the case will result in Gísli's being made an outlaw.

Þórdís seems to be discriminating between two different types of advice here: established vengeance-discourse requires her to state the information which she has acquired regarding the murder of her first husband, despite the fact that she is thus betraying her brother in doing so. The outcome of this—the inevitable killing of her brother by her husband—will be a chilling conclusion. If, on the other hand, she can persuade Börkr to operate within the frames of the public justice system, that outcome—the outlawing of her brother—is again inevitable, but perhaps not quite as 'cold'.

While Þórdís's actions might seem shocking to a modern audience, they have been set in motion by Gísli's own incriminating recital, and her response is not necessarily a totally heartless and cold one. As Judy Quinn suggests, 'the cold counsel [that] saga women are notorious for ... is not cold in the sense of being unfeeling, but in the chill implications of its logic for men'.²³ Þórdís's response to the impossible situation she has found herself in emphasizes the clash of loyalties between a husband and a brother—married and blood-kin—

²³J. Quinn, 'Women in Old Norse Poetry and Sagas', *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. McTurk, pp. 518–35, at p. 531.

and the complicated social matrix in which a bereaved woman found herself.

The parallel between Þórdís and Guðrún Gjukiðóttir—the heroine in Old Norse heroic poetry who first betrays her brothers to her husband and then kills her husband to avenge her brothers—is drawn later by Gísli when he learns of what he considers his sister's betrayal: Guðrún is also torn between diametrically conflicting loyalties.²⁴ However, Þórdís's behaviour in the longer version, which could be interpreted as an attempt at least to put off the inevitable consequences that must follow her acknowledgement of her brother's self-incrimination, might soften our initial, harsh response to her actions to an extent.

Much later in the saga, after Gísli has finally been killed, Þórdís stabs Börkr's kinsman, Eyjólfur Þórðarson, who was finally responsible for killing Gísli, and then Þórdís divorces herself from Börkr: she is finally able to demonstrate her contempt for the way in which revenge on Gísli has been executed and, as Vésteinn Ólason comments, can 'give expression to her family loyalties and adherence to the moral code of her father and brother'.²⁵ And, we must also remember that while overtly, the weight of judgement is on Þórdís, both Gísli and Þorkell—more of whom below—are also implicated in the situation.

In the shorter version, as I mentioned above, we see Börkr first determined to turn back immediately in order to kill Gísli, but then vacillating, as he weighs up the truth or reliability in his wife's words. His use and wording of the proverb 'women's counsels are often cold' both implies his scepticism about Þórdís's ability to interpret

²⁴ Guðrún appears in a number of Eddic poems: see, for example, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*, *Atlakviða*, and *Atlamátt*; see also the legendary saga, *Völsunga saga*.

²⁵ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Gísli Súrsson – a flawless or flawed hero?', p. 170.

Gísli's verse accurately (on the basis that she is a woman), and, arguably, functions as an expression of his procrastination and reluctance to fulfil his duty: that is, to avenge his brother.

Börkr's cowardice is brought out more strongly later on in all three versions of the saga when, together with the band of men whom he enlists to hunt down Gísli, he suffers a series of humiliating setbacks. In the shorter version, however, there is a strong case for suggesting that Börkr's citation of the proverb reveals his weak disposition at an earlier point in the narrative than is found in either the longer or the fragmentary version of the saga.

Finally, in the fragment, it is Þorkell (Gísli and Þórdís's brother, who has received no mention in the other two versions) who tries to restrain Börkr from going after Gísli in the heat of the moment and casts doubt on the veracity of his sister's words. Þorkell too is a character with conflicting loyalties: having previously sworn an oath of loyalty to Þorgrímr, he has an obligation to exact vengeance for his death.

In fact, Þorkell is the only character who knows, or at least has a strong suspicion of, Gísli's guilt even before Gísli recites his incriminating verse: straight after the murder, a party from Þorgrímr's farm, including Þorkell, goes over to Gísli's farm to break the news. On a stormy night when no one has a reason to be outside, Þorkell sees that Gísli's shoes are covered in fresh snow and he kicks them under the bed, out of sight, before anyone else notices them.

Thus Þorkell is in fact implicated in Gísli's guilt before Þórdís is, yet it is Þórdís who takes action; perhaps Þórdís is under a heavier social obligation to reveal her knowledge because she has been widowed and is expecting a posthumous child. In the fragmentary version, Þorkell dissuades Börkr from pursuing Gísli himself, again protecting his brother at the expense of his oath to Þorgrímr; however, Þorkell's behaviour later in the fragment, when the

outlawed Gísli goes to him for help, is consistent with the shorter and longer versions, where his support extends only so far as it does not endanger himself.

In a recent article, Vésteinn Ólason and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson have drawn attention to the differing accounts preserved in the three versions and considered the ways in which such differences between versions arise.²⁶ Simple scribal error is one obvious way by which such discrepancies creep into texts, though another possibility is that a copyist might have had to take on a more creative role where he was faced with an unclear abbreviation of a character's name in his exemplar. His interpretation and recontextualisation of the proverb, for example, would then be dependent on his understanding of the personality and motives of the characters involved in the scene.

However these differences between the versions have come about, it cannot be denied that each version gives us an equally compelling insight into the character and motivations of Þórdís, Börkr, and Þorkell. Elevating one version's representation of this scene over the others would be a restrictive and subjective stance, as such conclusions are inevitably influenced by the personal taste of the individual reader and their perceptions of the characters and events in the saga.

As mystery plays such a large part in *Gísli saga*, perhaps it is appropriate that the exact process by which the variants in the three versions of this scene have arisen, and the motivation behind these differences remain essentially a mystery to us, too. From a wider perspective, I hope that my focus on the longer and fragmentary versions of the saga-text, as well as on the shorter version, has gone a little way towards redressing the critical imbalance that exists between the three versions, not through favouring the longer or the

²⁶ Vésteinn Ólason and Þórður Ingi Guðjónsson, 'Sammenhængen'.

fragmentary version over the shorter, but rather demonstrating that a more egalitarian approach to all three versions is a rewarding and enriching exercise.

APPENDIX

1 Text

	Longer version (Text from Agnete Loth, 1960, pp. 40–41)	Shorter version (Text based on Finnur Jónsson, 1929, pp. 32–33)	Fragmentary version (Text from Jón Helgason, 1956, pp. 50–51)
1	þa mælti Baurkr,	Þaa mælti Borkr:	oc nu mælti baurkr
2	nu vil ec Þordis at þu segir mer þat er ec hefi þic stundum eptir spurt,	‘nu vil ek, at þu segir mer,	nu uil ek .þd. at þu segir mer þat er ek hefi þik miok opt at frett
3	hvat er þat s(egir) hon,		
4	hvi þu vart sva oglaud et fyra haust er vær lukum leikum, oc þvi hefir þu mer heitit at segia mer adr ec reðumz sudr i Þorsnes,	þvi þu vart svo oglaud fyst aa hauste, þaa er vær slitum leikum, ok þu hefir þvi heitit, at segia mer, adr enn ek færa heiman.’	hui þu uart suo uglauð i fyra haust er uær slitum leikum oc þu hetz mer þui at þu mundir segia mer adr ek redumz sudr i Þorsnes
5	oc nu eru þau kominn mioc inn at haugnum Þorgrims er þau talaz þetta við,	Þau eru nu ok komin at hauginum Þorgrims, er þau ræða þetta.	oc nu eru þau komin at hauginum þorgrims
6	oc nu stingr hon fotum við oc qvez eigi ganga mundu lengra,	Þaa stingr hon vid fotum ok kvezt eigi fara leingra,	oc kuaz hun eigi munu leingra fara
7	oc segir honum nu þetta er hann spyR at,	segir hon nu ok,	oc segir honum

8	oc hversu G(íslí) hafði qveðit visuna er hann gerði at knattrenu of haustit, oc hann leit til haugsins við er hann qvat visuna,	hvath Gísli hafde kvedit, þaa er hann leit hauginn Þorgrims	at .G. hafði kuedit visuna er hann leit haugin
9	síþan kveðr hon visuna fyrir Berki,	ok kvedr fyrir honum visuna,	oc .q u. fyrir honum
10	oc ætla ec s(egir) hon at ei þurfir þu annann veg eptir leita, enn her um vig Þorgrims, þar sem G(íslí) jatti sialfr i visunne	‘ok ætla ek’, segir hon, ‘at þu þurfir eigi annann veg eptir at leita um vig Þorgrims,	oc ætla ek .s. hon at þu þurfir ei annan ueg eptir at leita um uig þorg. at þui sem hann iatti sialfr
11	oc munu rett buinn mal a hendr honum,	ok munu rett buin maalin honum aa hendr.’	oc mun honum rett buin mal aa hendr honum
12	B(orkr) varð við þetta odr,	Borkr verdr vid þetta akafliga reidr ok mælti:	Baurkr uerdr uid odr
13	oc vil ec nu s(egir) hann aptr snua oc drepa G(ísla)	‘nu vil ek þegar aptr snua ok drepa Gísli,	oc uil ek nu aptr huerfa s. hann oc drepa
14	oc er nu rað at dvelia ecki við,		oc er nu rad at duala eigi uid
15	Þordis s(egir) at hon mun eigi við þat samþyckiaz,		enn þk .s. at hann man eigi uid þat samþyckiaz
16	oc veit ec en eigi, hvert þetta er satt eðr eigi s(egir) Þordis,	enn þo veit ek eigi sagde hann hvad satt er i þessu, er Þordis segir, ok þiki mer hitt eigi olikara, at eingu gegni,	oc ueit ec en ei huort þetta er en satt er þord. s.

17	<i>oc eru jafnann kauld kvenna rað,</i>	<i>ok eru oppt kaulld kvenna rað.'</i>	<i>oc eru kollid kuenna raden</i>
18	enn þott svo illa se sem nu er rætt, þa er þat rað B(orkr) at fara landzlogum fram um þetta mal, oc gera mann sekann, þviat þu hefir mala efni sva bryn at bita mun G(isla) saukinn, þott honum væri nockoR vorkun til þessa verks a manom vær þa oc leiða hia os þetta mal sem vær megom ef þannig er atfarit, enn þer er betra at spilla eigi mala efnum þinum, oc rasa sva fyrir rað fram		
19	oc getr hon þetta niðr barit,		oc getr hann þetta af radit
20	oc riða þeir eptir þat Sanda leið...	Ok rida þeir Sanda leid...	oc rida þeir sanda leid...

2. Translation

	Longer version	Shorter version	Fragmentary version
1	Then Börkr spoke:	Then Börkr spoke:	And now Börkr spoke:
2	'Now Þórdís I want you to tell me what I have sometimes asked of you.'	'Now I want you to tell me,	'Now Þórdís I want you to tell me what I have very often asked of you,
3	'What is that?' she says.		
4	'Why you were so unhappy last autumn, when we broke up the games, and you promised to me then that you would tell me before I journeyed south to Þorsnes.'	why you were so unhappy in autumn, when we broke up the games, and you promised to tell me, before I travelled home.'	why you were so unhappy last autumn when we broke up the games and you promised me that you would tell me before I journeyed south to Þorsnes.'
5	And now they have almost arrived at Þorgrímr's burial mound as they speak with each other.	Now they have arrived at Þorgrímr's burial mound, while they spoke.	And now they have arrived at Þorgrímr's burial mound,
6	Now she stops short and says she will not go further,	Then she stops short and says she will not go further,	and she says she will not go further,
7	and tells him now what he asked,	and says now	and tells him
8	how Gísli had spoken a verse when he played at the ball-games in autumn, and he looked at the	what Gísli had spoken, when he looked at Þorgrímr's burial mound	that Gísli had spoken a verse when he looked at the burial mound,

	burial mound when he spoke the verse.		
9	After, she speaks the verse to Börkr,	and she recites the verse for him.	and she speaks the verse for him.
10	'and I think,' she says, 'that you do not need to look elsewhere about Þorgrím's death, as Gísli acknowledged it himself in the verse	'And I think,' she says, 'that you do not need to look elsewhere about Þorgrím's death,	'And I think,' she says, 'that you do not need to look elsewhere about Þorgrím's death, as he acknowledged it himself
11	and he will rightly be brought to justice.'	and he will rightly be brought to justice.'	and he will rightly be brought to justice.'
12	Börkr becomes furious at that,	Börkr becomes vehemently angry and spoke:	Börkr becomes furious at that,
13	'and I want to turn back now and kill Gísli,' he says.	'now I want to turn back at once and kill Gísli,	'and I want to turn back,' he says, 'and kill him.'
14	And he now determines not to put it off.		And he now determines not to put it off.
15	Þórdís says that she cannot consent to that.		But Þorkell says that he cannot consent to that,
16	'And I do not know, what truth there is in this,' says Þórdís,	although I do not know,' he said, 'what truth there is in this, which Þórdís says, and it seems to me less likely that it is reliable,	'and I do not know what truth there is in what Þórdís says,
17	<i>and the counsels of women are always cold.</i>	<i>and the counsels of women are often cold.'</i>	<i>and the counsels of women are cold.'</i>
18	Yet though that		

	seems bad which now is revealed, this is advisable, Börkr, that the case goes through the public law, and Gísli is made an outlaw, because you have just circumstances which will settle Gísli's case, although it might be that some people feel sorry for him over this and will try to get round us if they possibly can. But it is better for you to not to spoil your case, and rush on headlong on such advice.'		
19	And she gets her way,		and he [Börkr] takes that advice.
20	and they ride on to Sandaleið...	And they ride to Sandaleið...	And they ride to Sandaleið...

Alcuin's *Computus*: A Case for Alcuin's Authorship of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEBATE

In his *Patrologia Latina*, Jacques-Paul Migne reprinted six short computistical works attributed to Alcuin of York. They were 1) *Ratio de luna XV*, 2) *De cursu lunae*, 3) *De saltu lunae*, 4) *De bissexto*, 5) *Argumentum de bissexto* and 6) *Calculatio Albini Magistri*.¹ These six works were first assembled as a collection by Frobenius Forster in his *Beati Flacci Alcuini Opera* of 1777, which drew heavily on still an earlier collection created by André Duchesne. The PL texts are a direct reproduction of Forster's work. Migne accepted Forster's attributions on account of the resemblance of the 'style and method' of the works to Alcuin's personal correspondences on the topic of *computus*.² As Migne put it, '*Alcuinum sapiunt*', '[these works] smell like Alcuin'.³ Unfortunately, he does not articulate his intuition in any further detail.

¹ PL 101, cols. 979–1002. Some of the more recent articles on this collection divide the texts into four, namely: *Ratio de luna XV*, *De saltu lunae*, *De bissexto*, and *Calculatio Albini Magistri*. In A. Borst, 'Alcuin und die Enzyklopädie von 809', *Science in Western and Eastern Civilization in Carolingian Times*, ed. P. L. Butzer and D. Lohrmann (Berlin, 1993), pp. 53–78, and D. Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz mit Karl dem Grossen über Kalender und Astronomie', *ibid.*, pp. 79–114, *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* are referred to collectively as *Ratio de luna XV*. Cf. T. Sickel, *Alcuinstudien* 1 (Vienna, 1875), p. 510.

² Cf. Letters 126, 148 and 155 in *Epistolae Karolini aevi* II, ed. E. Dümmler MGH Epist. 4 (Berlin, 1895), pp. 185–7, 237–41 and 250–3.

³ 'scribendi stylo et calculandi methodo Alcuinum sapiunt', PL, col. 981.

In the early 1940s, Charles Jones, the renowned historian of *computus*, dismissed Migne's assessment of these texts in his article, 'The 'Lost' Sirmund Manuscript', and later in his book entitled, *Beda's Opera de Temporibus*. In those works, Jones identified significant portions of *De saltu lunae* and *De bissexto* as items 6 – 8 of the computistical compilation transmitted by the so-called 'Sirmund group of manuscripts',⁴ which he considered to be 'an accurate, uninterpolated transcript of the *computus* which Bede created in the same volume with *DTR* [*De temporum ratione*]'.⁵ That is to say, Jones identified *De saltu lunae* and *De bissexto* as preceding Bede. Jones's discovery that two of the six works in Forster's collection were inauthentic cast a shadow of doubt over the authenticity of the remaining four. As a result, the remaining four works, which include *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*, were seemingly dismissed without further review as pre-Bedan Irish material falsely attributed to Alcuin.⁶

This doubt surrounding *De saltu lunae* and *De bissexto* (and, by association, the four other works) was reinforced forty years later, in an article by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, in which he determined that 'the dating formula in the Sirmund group of manuscripts thus set the date and location [of that group's composition] as c. AD 658, in the south-east region of Ireland'⁷ nearly seventy-five years before the birth of

⁴ C. W. Jones, ed., *Beda's opera de temporibus* (Cambridge, MA, 1943), p. 106 and his 'The 'Lost' Sirmund Manuscript of Bede's 'Computus'', *EHR* 52 (1937), 204–19, at 214, nos. 6–8. Note that 'The 'Lost' Sirmund Manuscript' has also been reprinted in his *Bede, the Schools and the Computus* (Aldershot, 1994), as item X.

⁵ Jones, *Beda's Opera*, p. 106.

⁶ Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz', p. 79.

⁷ D. Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish Provenance of Bede's *Computus*', *Peritia* 2 (1983), 229–47, at 238, cf. 246.

Alcuin of York. Of course, copying verbatim large portions of other peoples' work⁸ and not citing them is a common practice of Alcuin.⁹ What modern scholars call plagiarism was, to Alcuin, the preservation of knowledge. Simply linking a portion of any of these works to an earlier source does not rule out the pieces in question from having been transmitted by Alcuin. Indeed, it would be characteristic of Alcuin to draw heavily from sources he considered authoritative, and to edit and reorganise them with 'the sane judgement of a teacher as to the abilities of a particular audience'.¹⁰ Nor does Ó Cróinín claim otherwise. He, rather, is inclined to reject even Alcuinian transmission of *De saltu lunae* and *De bissexto* because they are, in a sense, too Irish.¹¹ As Ó Cróinín states, they make 'use of sources which were Irish and rarely found outside Irish sources'.¹² Ó Cróinín believes Alcuin was unlikely to have had access to these sources (in particular Pseudo-Morinus) because 'Bede nowhere cites this work'.¹³ This entirely reasonable, though ultimately inconclusive, criticism pertains only to *De saltu lunae* and *De bissexto*. For it must be remembered that the direct association of the six short computistical works found in PL is an eighteenth century creation of Frobenius Forster. The collection as a whole does not share a common manuscript tradition.

Doubt surrounding three of the remaining four short computistical texts began to be challenged in 1993. In his article

⁸ E.g., Priscian, Boethius, Isidore of Seville, Bede and Donatus, *et al.*

⁹ L. J. Engels, 'Priscian in Alcuin's *De orthographia*', *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court*, ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen, 1998), pp. 113–42, at pp. 123–26.

¹⁰ J. Marenbon, *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 31

¹¹ Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz', p. 91, n. 25.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

'Alcuin und die Enzyklopädie von 809', Arno Borst cites the *Calculatio Albini Magistri* as an authentic composition of Alcuin of York, a conclusion later assented to as a possibility (with reservations) by Donald Bullough.¹⁴ As Borst points out 'Ein durchgerechnetes Beispiel wählte das gegenwärtige Jahr 776'.¹⁵ Of course, in the year 776, Alcuin was not only alive but was indeed already the director of the Cathedral School of York. This timing makes Alcuin a contender for the authorship of the *Calculatio*, but does little more.

Borst further notes, however, that 'Die Abhandlung verriet genaue Kenntnis von Bedas Werk *De temporum ratione*'.¹⁶ This fact is important for a claim of authenticity because the education Alcuin received in Northumbria was rooted in and dominated by the genius of Bede. Bede's works influenced Alcuin in most areas of knowledge, including computus.¹⁷ An absence of Bedan influence in such a text would be a reason to doubt Alcuin as its source. And, since Alcuin is commonly thought to be the chief conduit by which Bede was propagated on the Continent, in the late eighth century, the presence of significant Bedan influence may even promote a claim of Alcuinian authorship. This is certainly the implication of Borst's argument. Bullough's reservations concerning the text relate mostly to the lack of early manuscript attributions to Alcuin.¹⁸

¹⁴ Cf. D. A. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Boston, 2004), p. 288.

¹⁵ 'A calculated example [in the *Calculatio*] selected the present year [as] 776': Borst, 'Alcuin und die Enzyklopädie', p. 59.

¹⁶ 'the [*Calculatio*] betrayed exact knowledge of Bede's work *De temporum ratione*', *ibid.*

¹⁷ G. H. Brown, 'The Preservation and Transmission of Northumbrian Culture on the Continent: Alcuin's Debt to Bede', *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and J. T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp. 159–75, at pp. 161–64.

¹⁸ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 288, n. 110.

Alongside Borst in the same collection of papers, Dietrich Lohrmann published a partial defence of Alcuin's authorship of *Ratio de luna XV*, *De cursu lunae*¹⁹ and the *Calculatio*.²⁰ In his article, Lohrmann cross-references *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* (which he believes to be fragments of the same document, the complete text of which is now lost)²¹ with statements made by Alcuin in his undisputed computistical epistles to Charlemagne. He points out that Alcuin's letters make reference to a text that is, at least, quite similar to *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*. Lohrmann notes among other things, 'Noch wichtiger ist die direkte Bestätigung Alcuins in epist. 155, daß er einen solchen Brief an Karl tatsächlich gesandt hat oder (besser) senden will: "Die Aufteilungen der Tierkreiszeichen nach Stunden und (eine Erklärung), wie neun Mondstunden in Entsprechung stehen zu fünf Sonnentagen, halte ich im Sinne, Euch in einem anderen Brief zu senden..."'.²² 'Nine moon hours stand in correspondence to five sun days' is the thesis of *De cursu lunae*. Neither document, however, is written in epistolary format, which led Lohrmann to adopt the position that the two texts were fragments.

Ratio de luna XV and *De saltu lunae* are clearly instructions to be read by (or possibly to) an individual student. This is made evident by the repeated use of the second-person singular verb form. As such,

¹⁹ Borst also lists *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* among the authentic computistical works of Alcuin of York. Cf. Borst, 'Alcuin und die Enzyklopädie', p. 60, n. 19.

²⁰ Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz', pp. 79–114.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²² In epist. 155, there is direct confirmation that he actually sent such a letter to Charles or (rather) intends to send one: "I have in mind to send you in another letter the allocations for the sign of the zodiac in hours and (an explanation), like nine moon hours stand in correspondence to five sun days..."', Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz', p. 87.

they do resemble the style of a letter. But there is neither a salutation nor ending, nor is mention made of the person for whom they were intended. Indeed, there is no indication that they were intended to be read by any person in particular, and despite the similarities in their content, there is no indication that *Ratio de luna XV* and *De saltu lunae* are fragments of the missing letter to Charlemagne. Furthermore, the two texts were not included in any assemblages of Alcuin's letters compiled during his lifetime. They are more likely drafts or teaching notes from which the promised letter's explanation would have derived.

TWO NEW ARGUMENTS FOR ALCUINIAN AUTHORSHIP

Ratio de luna XV and *De cursu lunae* survive together on two ninth century manuscripts, in which they are paired amid nearly identical collections of the personal correspondences of Alcuin of York.²³ As stated above, neither document is written in epistolary format; nor are they related to the subject matter of the letters appearing immediately before or after the pair. The older of the two manuscripts is Troyes Bibliothèque Municipale 1165,²⁴ known as *T*. Bullough dates *T* to 'the earlier years of the abbacy of... Fridugis'²⁵ and localises its origin to the Abbey of St Martin at Tours.²⁶

The final years of Alcuin's life were spent as abbot of Tours. After his death in A.D. 804, his pupil, Fridugis, succeeded him as abbot. Fridugis, who goes by the name 'Nathaniel' in Alcuin's correspondences, had been a student of Alcuin since Alcuin was headmaster of the Cathedral School at York, and accompanied him to

²³ See below, 'Introduction to the Edition and Manuscripts', pp. 74–6.

²⁴ Cf. *Catalogue des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques Publiques des Départements* 2 (Paris, 1855), pp. 478–9.

²⁵ Fridugis (Fredegis or Fridugisus) reigned AD 804–34.

²⁶ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 57.

the Continent, where he continued his studies under Alcuin at the Palace School. The two men were close, and it does not seem unlikely that Fridugis would order the preservation of the personal correspondences of Alcuin to which he had access.

Assuming the veracity of Bullough's dating and localisation of *T*, the process of assembling its exemplar was conducted within living memory of Alcuin, quite possibly by monks who knew him personally as their abbot and teacher. The collection, a monument to Alcuin, would indubitably have been reviewed by Abbot Fridugis, who was intimately familiar with his late teacher's work. These facts and circumstances surrounding the origin of the texts provide a compelling argument for the authenticity of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*. For it is the least likely scenario that people with firsthand knowledge of Alcuin's writings would mistakenly include among them a false document.

The second new argument in favour of the Alcuin's authorship of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* is linguistic. Upon examination of the texts, one notes certain features within that are worthy of mention. The dating method employed is that of the old Roman 'Kalends', 'Nones' and 'Ides'. The names of months, however, are sometimes adjectival (as would occur Classically) and sometimes substantive.²⁷ This feature is consistent with Alcuin's undisputed works. Also, the Latin word *ex*, not *é*, is employed even when followed by consonants.²⁸ This runs contrary to the Classical preference, but is again consistent with the usage followed in Alcuin's undisputed works. These tendencies, however, are not so peculiar to Alcuin, as they are to Alcuin's time period. They do not themselves prove, nor even suggest that he is necessarily the author, for these

²⁷ These two practices are used interchangeably in the texts.

²⁸ Classical usage generally places 'ex' before vowels and 'é' before consonants.

features are common to many authors, only one of whom was Alcuin.²⁹

Examination of the computistical terminology employed by the author, however, leads one to a different conclusion. In particular, the terms *punctus*, *ostentum*, *bisse* and *trien* are used extraordinarily. As shall be discussed below, these terms, unlike the previous examples, rule out most other authors of Alcuin's time. For they necessitate an authorship derived from the Bedan school of *computus*, a school which, on the Continent in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, revolved closely around the personage of Alcuin of York.

PUNCTUS AND OSTENTUM

Punctus, in normal Latin parlance, simply means a 'point', and was used in every way the English word 'point' can be used. That is to say *punctus* can be used to mean, among other things, 'a point of logic', 'a geometric point' or 'a point in time'; the word itself is quite ordinary. In *De cursu lunae*, however, the term is given a very technical and specific computistical definition, namely, 'one-fifth of a lunar hour', a rather extraordinary definition.

Classical Latin authors never use *punctus* in this manner. Indeed, the first known author to do so was the Venerable Bede,³⁰ who employed it throughout his *De temporum ratione*.³¹ In the Bedan system, *punctus* may mean 'one-fifth of a lunar hour' or 'one-quarter of a solar

²⁹ Nor should we assume that every work bearing features of the time in which Alcuin wrote was his. Cf. E. M. E. Bohn, *Alcuin's Heirs: the Early reception of Alcuin's De rhetorica and De dialectica* (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2003), pp. 1 and 17.

³⁰ However, the unascribed 'De causis quibus nomina acceperunt duodecim signa' (ed. Jones, CCSL 123C pp. 665–667), which dates from somewhere between the sixth and eighth centuries, also uses *punctus* in this way.

³¹ Cf. Bede *De temporum ratione*, chs. 24 and 29 (ed. Jones, pp. 226, line 7 and 233, lines 14–15).

hour'. After Bede, there are only two other known scholars³² who used *punctus* in this way before the mid-ninth century.³³ They are Alcuin of York³⁴ and Rabanus Maurus,³⁵ who studied under Alcuin at Tours in A.D. 802.

Ostentum is a slightly less common word than *punctus*; it normally means a 'portent' or a 'wonder'. Whilst it is fairly clear how *punctus* might come to be used as a unit of short time, it is not so apparent why *ostentum* was chosen for computistical use to mean 'one minute', as it is employed in *De cursu lunae*. Again, as with *punctus*, Bede is the first person known to have used *ostentum* in this fashion.³⁶ After Bede, there are only two other known scholars who employed *ostentum* with this definition before the mid-ninth century. They are Alcuin of York³⁷ and Alcuin's student, Rabanus Maurus.³⁸

The transmission of this terminology seems fairly straightforward. The terms originated with Bede, whose works were widely studied at the Cathedral School of York, where Alcuin learned

³² According to the *Revised Medieval Latin Wordlist from British and Irish Sources*, ed. R. E. Latham (London, 1973), the term *punctus* is not used to mean 'one fifth of an hour' until c. 1263.

³³ Bullough dates *T* to 'the earlier years of the abbacy of... Fridugis' and localises its origin to the Abbey of St Martin at Tours (*Alcuin*, p. 57). Wilmart dates *T** to the mid-ninth century (A. Wilmart, *Codices Regenses Latini, 251–500* (Vatican City, 1945), p. 66); this is confirmed by Bischoff, who localises its origin to Rheims (Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 58, n. 134). Cf. Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz', p. 86.

³⁴ In Alcuin's Letters 126, 148 and 155 (ed. Dümmler, pp. 186–7, 238–9 and 250–1).

³⁵ In Rabanus (Hrabanus) Maurus *De computo* i. 16 (ed. W. M. Stevens, *Rabani Mogontiaccensis Episcopi de computo*, CCCM 44 (Turnhout, 1979), p. 220).

³⁶ Cf. Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 3 (ed. Jones, p. 183, line 33).

³⁷ In Alcuin's Letter 155 (ed. Dümmler, p. 251).

³⁸ In Rabanus (Hrabanus) Maurus *De computo* i. 12 (ed. Stevens, p. 219).

them. Alcuin took their use with him to the Frankish realm, where he passed his knowledge of Bede on to his students,³⁹ one of whom was Rabanus Maurus.

TRIEIN AND BISSE

The remaining two terms, *trien* and *bisse*, are outstanding in a different way. Whereas *punctus* and *ostentum* have standard forms but non-standard definitions, *trien* and *bisse* are non-standard forms with nearly standard definitions.

The Latin word *triens*, meaning 'one-third', is the obvious origin of the indeclinable computistical term *trien* found in *Ratio de luna XV*, in which text it means specifically 'one-third of an hour'. The variant first appears in Augustine of Hippo's *De consensu evangelistarum*, where it likewise is used to mean 'one-third of an hour'.⁴⁰ The form is extremely rare, however. Augustine's single passage is the only time *trien* occurs before Bede included it in his *De temporum ratione*.⁴¹ Bede knew this precise passage from Augustine very well, and it can be

³⁹ The letters of Alcuin's in which these terms appear are all addressed to his student and patron Charlemagne.

⁴⁰ 'Numquam autem isti dicerent, quinta et quadrans aut quinta et *trien*, aut quinta semis, aut aliquid huiusmodi' (ed. F. Wehrich, *De consensu evangelistarum*, CSEL 43 (Vienna, 1904), p. 325, lines 1–3).

⁴¹ Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 4 (ed. Jones, pp. 184–6). On p. 184, line 14 of his edition, Jones mistakenly lists *triens* as the proper reading. His apparatus reveals that *trien* appears in the earliest manuscript, and that the scribes of the other manuscripts 'corrected' it in various other ways, which indicates they were likely encountering an unfamiliar form. Whilst Jones indubitably based his decision on the uniformity found in the majority of the manuscripts, he should have abided, in this instance, by *lectio difficilior*. *Triens* is simply the most likely (and, thus, most frequent) scribal correction of the unfamiliar *trien*, which was being used in the text for the first time at that point. Faith Wallis erroneously records *triens* for all instances of *trien* in her translation, cf. F. Wallis, *Bede: the Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999), pp. 16–18 and 58.

stated with certainty that he is mimicking Augustine's usage here: Bede quotes Augustine's passage verbatim at the end of his fourth chapter.

The undisputed works of Alcuin provide neither an example of him employing *trien*, nor an example of him using any other term to express a 'third of an hour'. The situation simply does not arise. His student, Rabanus Maurus, does use it,⁴² however. Because it is part of the Bedan system of reckoning short time, it seems highly unlikely that Alcuin would not have employed this rare variant in a computistical context as well, as he has expressed a preference for this very obscure system of describing short-time. Nevertheless, after Bede, only the author of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* and Rabanus Maurus are known to have used *trien* before the mid-ninth century.

The Latin word *bes*, meaning 'two-thirds', has the Classical variant *besse*. *Besse* is the origin of the orthographical variant *bisse*, which can be found in the Classical period only once in Martianus Capella's *De astronomia*.⁴³ There, it is used to mean two-thirds of a day. Bede uses it repeatedly in his *De temporum ratione*. Bede, however, was also aware of the word's Classical form and employs *besse*, in his *De natura rerum*.⁴⁴ He seems to prefer *bisse* in a computistical context, and specifically to mean 'two-thirds of an hour'. One should note that Bede's *bisse*, like the Classical *bes*, is declinable⁴⁵ as seen when Bede

⁴² Rabanus (Hrabanus) Maurus, *De computo* i.8 (ed. Stevens, p. 215).

⁴³ Martianus Capella, *De astronomia* viii.865 (ed. J. Willis, *Martianus Capella* (Leipzig, 1983), p. 327, line 17). This work is dated as pre-439.

⁴⁴ Bede, *De natura rerum*, ch. 21 (ed. C. W. Jones, *Beda's Venerabilis opera didascalica*, CCSL 123 (Turnhout, 1980), p. 213).

⁴⁵ 3rd declension, masculine.

writes the accusative form as *bissem*.⁴⁶ In *Ratio de luna* and *De cursu lunae*, *bisse* has degraded into an indeclinable form.

Alcuin cites *bisse*, not *besse*, in his *De orthographia* as the proper variant of *bes*.⁴⁷ He uses *bisse* only thrice elsewhere all of which are found in his computistical Letter 155. There, it means 'two-thirds of an hour', and, just as it is found in *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*, it is indeclinable.⁴⁸ Nor was this likely due to ignorance. Rather, Alcuin probably used *bisse* indeclinably in computistical contexts to denote its special meaning of two-thirds of an hour, and thereby differentiating the technical term from its standard usage of 'two-thirds'. This would be in imitation of its compliment *trien*, which, as stated above, is also indeclinable.

Alcuin's student, Rabanus Maurus, uses *bisse* thrice in his *De computo* with the definition of 'two-thirds of an hour'.⁴⁹ But unlike his teacher, Rabanus' *bisse* is declinable, as can be seen by his use of the accusative *bissem*.⁵⁰ Hence, this terminological nuance was not necessarily passed along to Alcuin's students. Indeed, his only student to use the term at all in surviving literature adopted a more Bedan usage. This leaves Alcuin as the only known author to use an indeclinable *bisse* for computistical purposes, and otherwise.

Neither of the two texts have ever been attributed to Bede, nor otherwise directly associated with him. Furthermore, they survive only on two Continental manuscripts and bear no indication of

⁴⁶ Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 4 (ed. Jones, p. 185, line 42).

⁴⁷ Alcuin, *De orthographia* (PL 101, col. 905).

⁴⁸ In particular, this is apparent in the third instance when it is used as one of a double accusative construction, but is not rendered *bissem*, but *bisse*. Cf. Dümmler, *Epistolae Karolini*, p. 251, line 1.

⁴⁹ Rabanus (Hrabanus) Maurus, *De computo*, i.8, lines 4 and 38, and 40, line 19 (ed. Stevens, pp. 214–15 and 252).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, i.8, line 38 (ed. Stevens, p. 15).

British origin. Assuming they originated on the Continent, the likely *terminus post quem* of their composition would be c. A.D. 781, the year in which Alcuin became master of Charlemagne's Palace School, from which point the works of Bede began to find favour on the Continent.

Bullough's dating of *T* as 'not long after Alcuin's death'⁵¹ places the *terminus ante quem* for their composition before the time of the earliest writings of Rabanus Maurus. Nevertheless, even if this date could be pushed forward to A.D. 820, the year Rabanus Maurus wrote his *De computo*, it would be of little consequence. For Rabanus Maurus wrote his works at Fulda, several hundred miles east of Tours. Additionally, *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* are clearly not part of *De Computo*, which is written as a dialogue. Nor do they match Rabanus Maurus linguistically. Rabanus Maurus, like Bede, employs a declinable *bisse*, whereas the author of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* treats *bisse* as indeclinable, as Alcuin did. Therefore, by this evidence alone, the author of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* must either have been Alcuin of York himself or a close associate of his at Tours, who has left us no other computistical writings.

From the very beginning, however, the two texts have been attributed to Alcuin himself, not an associate, as is evident by their inclusion among a collection of his epistles. This attribution, furthermore, was made only several years after Alcuin's death and under the supervision of individuals who had first-hand knowledge of Alcuin's work. As stated above, the content of *De cursu lunae* presents an explanation corresponding to one which Alcuin himself claimed to employ in his undisputed epistles. And the two texts also match Alcuin's idiosyncratic version of Bede's already obscure terminological system for the reckoning of short-time. It would seem,

⁵¹ Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 60.

therefore, that the evidence directly implicates Alcuin of York as being the author of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*, beyond any reasonable doubt. The authorship of the two texts, therefore, should not be regarded as dubious. Rather, they should be numbered among the accepted works of Alcuin of York.

PREFACE TO THE CRITICAL EDITION

Introduction to the Edition and Manuscripts

This critical edition is based on the only two surviving manuscript copies of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*. The manuscripts are Troyes Bibl. mun. 1165 (*T*)⁵² and Vatican Reg. lat. 272 (*T**)⁵³. Both date from the first half of the ninth century⁵⁴ and include these computistical instructions among what are otherwise collections of Alcuin's letters.

The designations of *T* and *T** were first devised by Ernst Dümmler, who believed Troyes Bibl. mun. 1165 to have been the exemplar of Vat. Reg. lat. 272.⁵⁵ Theodor Sickel used the designations of *T* for the Troyes manuscript and *N* for the Vatican manuscript.⁵⁶ Donald Bullough, however, utilises Dümmler's nomenclature.⁵⁷ So, in the interests of continuity, the present edition follows suit.

This critical edition follows *T* in most instances where textual differences arise between the two manuscripts. The reasons for this

⁵² Cf. *Catalogue des Manuscrits*, pp. 478–9.

⁵³ Cf. Wilmart, *Codices Reginenses Latini*, pp. 66–8.

⁵⁴ Wilmart dates *T** to the mid-ninth century (*ibid.*, p. 66). This is confirmed by Bischoff, who localises its origin to Rheims (Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 58, n. 134). Cf. Lohrmann, 'Alcuins Korrespondenz', p. 86. For Bullough's analysis of *T*, see above, nn. 26 and 51.

⁵⁵ Dümmler, *Epistolae Karolini*, pp. 6–7.

⁵⁶ Sickel, 'Alcuin studien', pp. 499–511.

⁵⁷ D. A. Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Boston, 2004)

are as follows: *T* is considered to be the earlier of the two manuscripts,⁵⁸ seems to contain fewer corruptions and is more orthographically consistent than *T**.

The standard printed edition of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* is Jacques-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Latina* (PL) edition of 1851, which provides no critical apparatus and was printed without direct recourse to either of the two surviving manuscript copies. Because of the significance of Migne's version to modern scholarship, however, and the manageably short and linear history of the printed transmission of these texts, this edition also reconstructs in its critical apparatus the development of the texts in their printed forms. The printed editions, it must be noted, are not used as witnesses for the present critical edition and their variants are not considered authoritative. Rather, they are included in the interest of providing the reader with a complete and thorough history of transmission of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* down to the present standard edition in PL, and to illustrate any deficiencies found therein.

Migne's PL edition of *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* is a meticulous reprint of Frobenius Forster's 1777 edition. Indeed, the two editions are, with only two exceptions, identical. Migne has even preserved Frobenius' marginal notes, placing them in brackets within the text itself. For this reason, Migne is not noted separately from Frobenius in the critical apparatus except for those two instances.

As stated above, Ernst Dümmler believed that *T** was copied from *T*. Theodor Sickel concurred with Dümmler's general analysis of the two manuscripts,⁵⁹ regarding *T** to be a later, more complete copy of *T* (which is now missing folios), but was quick to point out

⁵⁸ This opinion that the Troyes manuscript (*T*) is of an earlier date than the Vatican manuscript (*T**) has been universally held by scholars since the rediscovery of the former.

⁵⁹ Sickel, 'Alcuinstudien', p. 500.

that *T* was not the archetypal codex.⁶⁰ Donald Bullough, however, disputes this interpretation of the manuscript tradition, believing instead that *T** was copied from a 'collateral' manuscript of *T*.⁶¹ His opinion draws from discrepancies in the headings of certain epistles and the addition in *T** of marginalia, which he believes indicates the collection to have been re-edited for 'public reading',⁶² and he frequently cites personal correspondences with Bernhard Bischoff to corroborate his views. I am inclined to agree with the theory of Bullough and Bischoff.

Introduction to Numbers and Time Reckoning

The Bedan computistical day (a twenty-four hour period) begins and ends with sunset. This means that, 'night' precedes 'day' on a given date.⁶³ 'Night' is averaged as the first twelve hours of a computistical day, and 'day' (i.e., 'daytime') the final twelve.⁶⁴ It should be noted that the Latin word '*dies*' is used in both the more narrow sense of 'day' (i.e., the twelve hours of light) and the broader sense of 'day' (i.e., the full twenty-four hour period including 'night').⁶⁵

The texts at hand reckon the date according to the ancient Roman method of 'Kalends', 'Nones' and 'Ides'. Unlike the modern calendar, which counts forwards from a fixed point in time (i.e., the beginning of each month), the Roman calendar counts down toward fixed points in the month. The Classical form taken to express a date

⁶⁰ 'T nicht der Codex archetypus einer Sammlung ist', *ibid.*

⁶¹ '*T** must be regarded as either an independent copy of the exemplar of the Troyes manuscript or, which seems more likely, as a copy of a collateral ('twin') of the latter' (Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 58).

⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 58 and 59, n. 135.

⁶³ Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 5 (ed. Jones, p. 190).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, (ed. Jones, p. 189).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, (ed. Jones, pp. 186-9).

counting toward the April Kalends (i.e., April 1), for example, was ‘*ante diem* [ordinal number agreeing with *diem*] *Kalendas Apriles*’, meaning ‘the [nth] day before the April Kalends’. Note that the names of months are adjectival, not substantive, and ‘Kalends’ is in the accusative case. In *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae*, the phrase ‘*ante diem*’ is omitted. The names of the months are sometimes substantive, and ‘Kalends’ (or whichever relevant point in the month) can be either accusative or genitive interchangeably. This is consistent with the practice of Alcuin of York (and many others). The Roman-style dates have been preserved in the translation with footnotes revealing their modern equivalents.⁶⁶

The system of counting employed by *Ratio de luna XV* and *De cursu lunae* is ‘inclusive’. That is to say, for example, the ‘Third before the Kalends’ is followed by the ‘Day before the Kalends’, which, in turn, is followed by the ‘Day of the Kalends’. There is never a ‘Second before the Kalends’ because that is the ‘Day before’, as the ‘Day of’ is included in the count of preceding days.

Hours and other units, which are counted forward from some point of origin, may be called by their ordinal or cardinal names. So, for example, the ‘seventh hour’ may also be called ‘hour six’, as it is the hour that begins after six full hours have passed and ends at the point of seven full hours. Likewise, the ‘fifteenth part’ of a zodiacal sign may also be called ‘part fourteen’.

In his *De temporum ratione*, Bede states that ‘if you want to divide [an hour] by three, you will call the third a *trien*, and the remaining

⁶⁶ E.g., ‘the fifteenth day before the April Kalends’ (unless ‘*dies*’ is present in the text) is normally rendered ‘the Fifteenth before the April Kalends’. Since the accusative and genitive are used for the three points of the month interchangeably, no difference is made in their translation.

two-thirds a *bisse*’.⁶⁷ The term *residuas* could be interpreted as implying that a *trien*, strictly speaking, is the first-third of an hour and a *bisse* the two-thirds that are left afterward. Whether or not Bede intends this, both terms clearly can be used in the looser sense to mean simply ‘one-third’ and ‘two-thirds’ of an hour, respectively. Bede defines *punctus* as ‘one-fifth of a lunar hour’,⁶⁸ as it is used in *De cursu lunae*. An *ostentum* is ‘one sixtieth of an hour’, or one minute.⁶⁹

In total, there are eight numerical corruptions in the manuscript tradition. Of these eight, seven are the result of a scribe having added ‘one’ to the actual number. All seven of the corruptions are numbers that, when written numerically, end in a series of minim strokes. It is the opinion of the present author that some sort of punctuation mark was originally placed after these seven numbers in a common manuscript ancestor of *T* and *T**. Later (by the time of the copying of *T* and the exemplar of *T**), this punctuation mark had been misinterpreted as an additional Roman numeral ‘I’.

Further support for this hypothesis is found in *T*, in which the scribe frequently ends his numbers with a final ‘I’ extending below the baseline of the text. This is the case with five of the seven relevant corruptions. Since *T* is the earliest manuscript, and originates at Tours, it probably shares this practice in common with its exemplar. If the original punctuation mark resembled something similar to a comma, it may well have been confused with the extended final ‘I’, thus, introducing our corruptions at an early stage of the manuscript tradition.

⁶⁷ ‘Porro si per tria quid dividere cupis, tertiam partem trien, duas residuas bissem nuncupabis’, Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 4 (ed. Jones, p. 185, lines 41–2).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 17 (ed. Jones, p. 215, line 5).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 3 (ed. Jones, p. 183, line 33).

Editorial Procedure in the Critical Edition

1. This critical edition observes modern punctuation and capitalisation norms.

2. *Italicised* words are expansions of manuscript abbreviations that are non-standard, or in some way ambiguous in their exact meaning or proper expansion. Italics are also used in the case of numbers (whose meanings are unambiguous), which have been expanded from Roman numerals. The aim of this is to preserve for the reader in which instances numbers and certain other words appear written out in full in the manuscripts. Abbreviations for 'Kalends', 'Nones' and 'Ides' have been expanded as Classical usage would dictate unless the manuscripts indicated that another form was intended.

3. Underlined letters are used to show abbreviation in the apparatus when it is desirable to record such abbreviation and when the original symbols of abbreviation cannot otherwise be reproduced satisfactorily herein.

4. Numbers: Ordinal numbers have been written out in their full Latin forms. Cardinal numbers are represented in their numeral form, unless written out in the original text.

5. (Parentheses) are used to set off parenthetical statements found in the text.

6. NOTE: The letter 'r' frequently occurs in the manuscripts with an abbreviation stroke above it. This is represented in the critical apparatus by the following symbol: ř

7. NOTE: When the final Roman numeral 'I' extends below the baseline of the text, it is represented by 'j' in the critical apparatus.

Editorial Procedure in the Translation

1. *Italicised* words are special Latin terms, which have been intentionally left untranslated. The only instances of this in *Ratio de*

luna XV are *bisse* and *trien*. In *De cursu lunae* there are also *punctus* and *ostentum*.

2. Numbers less than 100 have been written out. Numbers greater than 100 have been recorded in Roman numerals.

3. (Parentheses) are used to set off parenthetical statements found in the text.

4. NOTE: The days of the month have been capitalized to help differentiate them from the many other numbers that occur throughout the text.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE CRITICAL APPARATUS

Manuscripts:

T – Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale, 1165 (St Martin's, Tours, s. IX), fols. 45^v – 47^r (*Ratio de luna XV*); fol. 47^r (*De cursu lunae*)

T* – Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Codex Reginensis Latinus 272 (Rheims, s. IX^{ad med.}), fols. 40^r – 41^v (*Ratio de luna XV*); fol. 42 ([*Item ratio*] *de cursu lunae*)

Printed Editions:

F – Forster, F. (Frobenius), ed., *Beati Flacci Alcuini Opera* 2 (Regensburg, 1777), pp. 356–57 (*Ratio de luna XV*); pp. 357–58 (*De cursu lunae*)

M – Migne, J. P., ed., PL 101 (Paris, 1851), cols. 981–983 *Ratio de luna XV*; cols. 983–984 *De cursu lunae*

Q – Duchesne, A. (Quercetanus), ed., *Alcuini Opera* (Paris, 1617), cols. 1526–1528 (*Ratio de luna XV*); col. 1529 (*De cursu lunae*)

RATIO DE LUNA XV¹

Luna, uerbi gratia, *quintae decimae Kalendas Apriles* hora noctis prima intrat in arietem ^a*quinta decima*.^a *Quartum decimum Kalendas* manet in ariete et VI horis ^b*tertiu² decim^b* Kalendarum et bisse (hoc est duabus partibus) .VI. horae^c noctis eiusdem ^d*tertiu² decim^d* Kalendas.^e Egreditur de ariete et sunt horae^f .LIII. et bisse unius horae^g quod mansit in ariete, quo numero horarum semper utere per singula signa.

Deinde intrat tertia parte horae^h septimae noctis in taurum, hoc est ⁱ*tertia⁴ decimaeⁱ* Kalendas Apriles. Computa inde .LIII. horas tauro cum bisse suo. Remanent eiusdem noctis, qua intrauit in taurum, trien

^{a..a} omitted F ^{b..b} XIIIJ T | XIII T* Q | XIII F ^c hora F ^{d..d} XIIIJ T | XIII T* Q | XIII F ^e omitted F ^f horę T* ^g horę T* ^h horę T* ^{i..i} XIIIJ T | XIII T* Q | XIII F

¹ The title 'Ratio de Luna XV' does not appear in T.

² By context, this originally must have been 'XIII' before the Kalends, as it is included here, and not 'XIII' as witnessed by the surviving manuscripts. The six hours and a *bisse*, with which this date is associated, are being added in addition to the full twenty-four hours of the 'XIII' before the Kalends. Confirmation for this interpretation is found when the six hours are said to be added to forty-eight, equalling the fifty-four hours in Aries. The forty-eight hours were comprised of the twenty-four from the Fifteenth before the Kalends and the twenty-four from the Fourteenth. This is an example of a scribe having added an additional Roman numeral 'I' to the correct number. See above, 'Introduction to Numbers and Time Reckoning', pp. 76–8.

³ Here the scribal mistake is repeated. See above, n. 2.

⁴ Again, the scribe has added an 'I' to the correct numeral. The point at which the moon enters Taurus should be the beginning of the final third of the seventh hour of the 'Thirteenth' before the Kalends, not the 'Fourteenth'. The author later states that the moon leaves Taurus and enters Gemini upon the completion of the first third of the second hour of the day of the Eleventh before the Kalends. By subtracting fifty-four hours and a *bisse* from that latter point, the reader returns to the Thirteenth before the Kalends, not the Fourteenth.

et .V. horae^j et .XII. horae^k sequentis diei. Iunge his .XXIII. horas *duodecimi Kalendas Apriles*, quod sunt .XLI. Et adde his ex^l *undecimo* Kalendarum horas .XII. noctis et primam horam diei sequentis et trien aliud secundae^m horaeⁿ diei ut habeat taurus bisse suum plenum ex trien, quo intrauit luna et ex eo quo exiuit de tauro.

Et intrat^o hora secunda diei inchoante bisse illius horae in geminos. Et remanent tibi^p ^q.X. *et .II. partes⁵* horae^q diei *undecim^r*⁶ Kalendarum. Adde his .XXIII. horas de^s *decimo* Kalendarum, et sunt horae^t .XXXIII. Iunge his de nono Kalendarum .XX. horas ut possis peruenire ad .LIII. horas et perueniens^u usque ad octauam plenam ipsius diei, quando exit de geminis. Et habent haec tria signa .CLXII.^v⁷ horas et alias duas, quae^w ex bisse trium signorum adgregatae^x sunt. Et fiunt horae trium signorum .CLXIII.^y

Die nono Kalendarum, hora *uicesima prima* intrat in cancrum; et habebis ipsius diei .III. horas. Has iunge ad octauas et *septimum Kalendas*, et habebis horas .LII. His adde ex nocte *sexta Kalendarum* duas horas (ex principio noctis) et bisse *tertia* horae. Et per hos *nonos* dies

^j horę T* ^k horę T* ^l sex T* | VI Q ^m secundę T* ⁿ horę T* ^o intra T* ^p ibi F ^{q..q} XII horae T T* Q F ^r XII T T* Q | XI F ^s det T* ^t horę T* ^u peruenias F ^v CLXIIJ T | CLXIII T* Q F ^w quę T* ^x adgregate T* ^y CLXIII T* Q F

⁵ There actually remain 'ten hours and a *bisse*' at this point in the day of the Eleventh before the Kalends, not 'twelve hours' as witnessed by the surviving manuscripts. The original text must have read *decim et duae partes horae*, 'ten hours and a *bisse*'. At some point *partes* was dropped from the phrase in a common ancestor of the two manuscripts, leaving *decim et duae horae*, 'twelve hours'.

⁶ The surviving manuscripts here have 'XII', but the context indicates that these hours must belong to the Eleventh before the Kalends. Cf. above, p. 82, n. 2.

⁷ The three signs actually have CLXII hours altogether before adding the *bisse*, not CLXIII as witnessed by the surviving manuscripts. The author also states that adding two hours to this number will make CLXIII. Cf. above, p. 82, n. 2.

luna percurrit .IIII. signa, additis duabus horis et bisse *tertia*e horae ex die decimo.

Et intrat in leonem *tertia* parte *tertia*e horae noctis *sextae* Kalendarum Aprilium et habebis ipsius diei .XXI. horas.² ⁸ Adde his .XXIII. ex^a *quinto*^b Kalendarum et fiunt horae .XLV. Adde et his .VIII. horas ex *quarto*^c Kalendarum die, et fiunt horae .LIII. Adde et his trien *decimae* horae.^d

² hořa T | horam T* Q F ^a et T* ^b VI T T* Q | V F ^c III^{or} T* ^d horę T*

⁸ By the context, the word for 'hour' should be plural, not singular as it is found in T*. The statement clearly speaks of the twenty-one hours remaining on the Sixth before the Kalends and not of the 'twenty-first hour'. Furthermore, the following sentence refers back to this statement with the plural *his*. T abbreviates the word in question to 'hořa'. T* spells out the singular *horam* without abbreviation. Whether the abbreviation in T stands for *horam* or *horas*, it is abnormal. Were a nasal suspension implied, the abbreviation stroke would normally have appeared over the 'a' and not the 'r'. Yet, the generic abbreviation in this text for the various cases of *hora* is 'hoř' with an abbreviation stroke over the 'r' and no 'a' present. It should be noted, however, that this word appears in T running over the justification at the end of a line. Indeed, this word extends farther to the right than any other word on the page. The scribe may have intended to write out *horas* without abbreviation, only to realise after he had written the 'a' that he had no more room on the line. He, therefore, placed an abbreviation stroke above the 'r' lest it be confused with a nasal suspension (as it certainly would be were he to have placed the abbreviation stroke above the 'a'). The variant in T* lends itself to the position of Dümmler, who believed T to have been the exemplar of T*. For the presence of the 'a' in the abbreviation and a hairline embellishment extending over it from the abbreviation stroke could well lead a reader to think it a simple nasal suspension. Assuming that the exemplar of T in fact contained the word *horas*, it would be an odd coincidence for a collateral copy of T also to contain at this same point an ambiguity or corruption that could lead a scribe to believe falsely that the intended word was *horam*.

⁹ Though the manuscripts have 'VI', it is clear from the context that these hours belong to the fifth. Cf. above, p. 82, n. 2.

Et intrat^e in uirginem inchoante bisse horae *decimae* noctis; et remanent .XIII. horae^f de *quarto* Kalendarum. Iunge has ad *tertium* Kalendarum, qui^g simul ductae^h fiunt .XXXVIII. Adde his .XVI. ex pridie Kalendarum (id est *quarta* hora dieiⁱ plena), et habent haec .VI. signa dies ¹et .XIII.^j horas .XVI. *quarto decimo* die:^k horas uero omnes .CCCXXXVIII.

Ingreditur uero luna librae^l signum *quinta* hora diei^m ⁿ*quarti decimi*,ⁿ quod est pridie Kalendarum Aprilis, ex qua die remanent horae .VIII. Has .VIII. iunge ad horas diei Kalendarum Aprilium et erunt .XXXII.^o His adde horas .XXII. ex^p *quarto* Nonas, et fiunt horae .LIII. His adde et bisse^q horae *nicesimae tertiae* eiusdem diei, quo egreditur de libra intrans in scorpionem inchoante trien eiusdem ^r*nicesimae tertiae*^r¹⁰ horae.

Et remanet tibi^s una hora ex die *quarto* Nonarum. Adde hanc horam ad *tertium* et pridie Nonas, et erunt horae .XLVIII. Tene ex Nonarum die eiusdem noctis .V. horas (et habebis .LIII. horas in scorpione) et trien *sextae* horae noctis.

Deinde^t in sagittarium ingreditur inchoante bisse eiusdem *sextae* horae noctis; et remanent ex *Nonis Aprilis* .XVIII. horae. Has iunge ad *octauas Idus*, et erunt^u horae .XLII. Junge his ex *septimo Idus* .XII. horas et habebis .LIII. horas quibus luna uersatur in sagittarium.

Ingreditur uero prima hora diei incipiente capricornum. Et remanent^v tibi^w ipsius diei, *septimo Idus*, horae .XII. Has iunge ad

^c intrant T* Q ^f horę T* ^g quae Q F ^h ducte T | ductę T* ⁱ die Q ^j XIII et Q F ^k diei ^l libraę T* ^m die Q F ⁿ XIII T | XIII T* | decima quarta Q | quarto decimo F | decima quarta M ^o horae XXXII T ^p et T* Q ^q bysse T ^r XXIII T | XXIII T* Q F ^s ibi Q F ^t Deinde Deinde T ^u herunt T* ^v remaneat Q ^w ibi T* Q F

¹⁰ The word *eiusdem* indicates that the author is still discussing the twenty-third hour of the day, not the twenty-fourth as witnessed by the manuscripts. This is confirmed by the statement that there remains one hour in the day. Cf. above, p. 82, n. 2.

sextum Idus et habebis horas .XXXVI. His adde horas ex quinto *Idus* .XVIII (quod est eiusdem diei hora sexta). Adde et bisse horae septimae.

Quo completo, exiet de capricorno ingrediens in aquarium inchoante^x trien horae *septimae*. Et remanent .v. horae eiusdem diei. Has adde ad *quartum* et *tertium* Idus, et habebis horas .LIII. Adde his unam horam ex *pridie Idus* et trien secundae^y horae noctis. Quo exiet de aquario ingrediturque in pisces inchoante bisse horae secundae^z noctis *pridie Idus Apriles*.

Et remanent de *pridie Idus* Aprilis horae .XXII. His^a adde ad *Idus*, et erunt horae .XLVI. His adde .VIII. horas ex *duodenicesimo Kalendas Maías*, et habebis horas^b .LIII. His uero computatis inuenies á *quinto decimo Kalendas Apriles* unde crepidinem construximus huius calculationis .XXVII. dies usque in *duodenicesimo Kalendas Maías*, in cuius diei noctem .VIII. horae decurrunt. In quibus luna^c .XXVII. diebus et .VIII. horis luna .XII. signa peruolat. Habens^d horae^e .XXVII. dierum quod sunt horae .DCLVI. superadditis^f .VIII. horas.^g

Si uero uis ad *tertium decimum* signum lunaris currus^{h 11} peruenire computa á *nona* hora noctis *duodenicesimo Kalendas* in quam horam .XII. signa peruenerunt.ⁱ Computa inde .LIII. horas^j et bisse; quarum habes .XVI. ^ke *duodenicesimo*^k *Kalendas*. Adde horas sequentis diei (id est, *septimi*

^x in quo ante T^y secundę T*^z secundę T*^a Has F^b horae T^c omitted Q F^d habentur F^e hoř T | horae T* Q F^f superadditas T*^g horis Q F^h cursus Q Fⁱ peruenerunt T | pervener T* | pervener Q | pervenerunt F^j hoř T | hora T* | horas Q F^{k-k} exVIII T | exVIII T* | ex VIII Q | ex XVIII F

¹¹ It would have been plainer for the text to read *currus*, or 'course', instead of *currus*, or 'chariot', as witnessed by the surviving manuscripts. Nevertheless, *currus* makes grammatical sense and could be interpreted as an allusion to the chariot of Luna, the Roman goddess of the full moon. So, by reason of *lectio difficilior*, *currus* has been preserved in the present critical edition.

decimi Kalendas) et fiunt horae^l .XL. Et habebis dies ^má *quinto decimo*^m *Kalendas* .XXVIII. Adde his .XII. horas *tricesimae* noctis, quaeⁿ peruenit in *sexto decimo Kalendas*, et habebis horas *terti decimi* signi plenas. In qua hora^o *duodecima* noctis plena, peruenit ad coitum solis, in quo duas horas^p et,^q ut aestimatur,^r uersatur. Et uidebis quod altera incensio semper erit post *duodecimas* horas.^s

Nam prima huius supputationis regula á uespertina hora in ariete incipiebat et modo in matutinam horam diei peruenit secunda uice: ariete peracto et tauro incipiente. 'Nouem horas', ait Plinius, 'in luna pro quinque diebus computatis'. Id est, tantum itineris peragit luna in .VIII. horis quantum sol in quinque diebus. Signum habet unumquotque .XXX. partes: in unoquoque signo luna uersatur .LIII. horas^t cum bisse suo.

Partire .LIII. horas^u in nonos, et inuenies .VI. *nonies*. Item sol moratur in unoquoque signo .XXX. dies et .X. semis horis.^v Partire .XXX. per .V., et inuenies .VI.^w quinquies in .XXX. Et sextam partem signi cuiuslibet sol peragit in .V. diebus, dum luna sextam partem signi in .VIII. horis^x peragit. .VIII. uero diebus .CXX. partes peragit, item .VIII. diebus .CXX., et item .VIII. diebus .CXX., quot^y sunt .XXVII. dies per .XXIII. horas et partes .CCCLX.

Videndum est quomodo conueniant VIII horae,^z quae supersunt in luna, .V. diebus, quae^a supersunt in sole, ut peruenire possis^b ad totius anni dies. Non enim sol his .V. diebus absque zodiaco circulo

^l hoř T | horae T* Q F^{m-m} á XV T | CCXV T* Q Fⁿ que T*^o hoř T | hora T* Q F^p hoř T | horas T* Q F^q omitted Q F^r aestimatur T*^s horas T | hoř T* | hor Q F^t hoř T T* | hor. Q | horis F^u hoř T | horas T* Q F^v horae Q F^w VI T | ex T* | sex Q F^x hoř T T* | horis Q F^y quot T | quod T* Q F^z hoř T T* | horam Q F^a quae T T* | qui Q F^b possis T | possit T* Q F

currit an aliquid addendum sit in caelo^{c 12} .CCCLX. partibus, uel .V. dies diuidendi sint per singulas partes (habent enim .V. dies .CXX. horas);^d an danda sit unicuique parti *tertia* pars horae (id est, trien unum). Nec enim VIII horae^e lunaris cursus uacuae^f sint,^g dum computata est in .XXVII. diebus si unicuique diei additur *tertia* pars .XIII. partis ut possit legitimus^h numerus partium impleri (hoc est, ad .CCCLX. partes peruenire) sicut in uestra acutissima et bene exquisita supputatione inuenimus agendum esse.

^c cęlo Q | coelo F ^d hoř T T* | horas Q F sunt F ^e hoř T | horę T* | horae Q
F ^f vacue T | vacuę T* | vacuae Q F ^g sunt F ^h legitimus T*

¹² Duchesne spells *caelo* as *ęelo* in his edition as a means of freeing up space on a line that had become too cluttered. A. Duchesne, *Alcuini Opera* (Paris, 1617), col. 1528.

DE CURSU LUNAE¹³

Luna quippe uelocitate sui cursus peruolat unumquotque^a signum .II. diebus .VI. horas^b ac bisse unius horae. Unumquotque^c uero signum habet .XXX. partes. Si ergo uis scire quantum spatium luna moretur in una qualibet de .XXX. partibus, sume horas duorum dierum, quae sunt .XLVIII. Adde his .VI. horis^d cum bisse. Fiunt .LIII. hore,^e quibus luna moratur in unoquoque signo. Has .LIII. horas distribue unicuique parti per aequas partiones,^f dans uidelicet singulis partibus singulas horas. Et remanebunt tibi .XXIII. hore.^g Has multiplica per cunctos^{h 14} ea lege qua hora habeat quinqueⁱ punctos, et fiunt puncti .CXX. Hos partire per triginta, ^jquam centies.^j Da unicuique parti punctos .IIII., et remanebit bisse. Hoc partire per .XL. ostenta (quia plena hora .LX.^k habet ostenta et bisse duae partes sunt unius horae). Ideo ut dixi .XL. ostenta efficiunt bisse unius horae. Da singula ostenta singulis partibus, et remanent .X. ostenta. Haec multiplica per tria (et fiunt .XXX.), et uidebis quod luna in spatio unius horae et .IIII. punctorum et unius ostenti et tertiae partis unius ostenti tantum cursus peragit quantum sol in .XXIII. horis et .XX.^l et uno ostentis.

^a unumquodque Q F ^b hoř T* | horis Q F ^c unumquodque Q F ^d hoř T* | horas Q F ^e horae T* Q F ^f portiones Q F ^g horae T* Q F ^h punctos Q F ⁱ v T
^{j-j} quatuor inuenies F ^k L Q F ^l XXX F

¹³ No title appears in *T* and the title in *T** reads, 'Item ratio de cursu lunae'. *De cursu lunae* was chosen here because it is the standard title by which the work is known.

¹⁴ contr. of *coniunctos*.

RECKONING FROM THE FIFTEENTH MOON

The Fifteenth Moon¹ enters into Aries at the first hour of the night on, for example, the Fifteenth² before the April Kalends. It abides in Aries on the Fourteenth before the April Kalends, and for six hours of the night on the Thirteenth before the Kalends and a *bisse* (that is, 'for two-thirds') of hour six of the same Thirteenth before the Kalends. It passes beyond Aries; and so the hours during which it lingered in Aries are fifty-four plus the *bisse* of one hour. You shall always use this number of hours for each sign.

Thereupon it enters into Taurus in the final third³ of the seventh hour of the night, that is, the Thirteenth before the April Kalends. Count thereafter the fifty-four hours in Taurus with its *bisse*. Five hours and a *trien* remain of the same night, in which it entered into Taurus, and twelve hours of the following day.⁴ Join to these the twenty-four hours of the Twelfth before the April Kalends, which brings the number to forty-one. Now to these add twelve hours from the night of the Eleventh before the Kalends, plus the first hour of the following day and another *trien* from the second hour of the day so that Taurus, with the addition of that last *trien*, may have its own complete *bisse*, from the time the moon entered to the time it departed from Taurus.

¹ The term 'Fifteenth Moon' is used by the author to describe the point in time beginning with 'Moon Fourteen' and ending with 'Moon Fifteen'. Hence, the 'Fifteenth Moon' is referring to 14 Nisan, or the Paschal Full Moon.

² The April Kalends is April 1, hence the Fifteenth before is March 18, the Fourteenth before is March 19, and so on.

³ That is, at the beginning of the final third of the hour.

⁴ Note that 'night' and 'day' are each considered to be twelve hours long, and that 'night' always precedes 'day' on a given date.

It then enters into Gemini in the second hour of the day, at the beginning of the *bisse* of that hour.⁵ There now remain for you ten and two-thirds hours of the Eleventh day before the Kalends. Add to these the twenty-four hours from the Tenth before the Kalends, and there are thirty-four hours. Join to these twenty hours from the Ninth before the Kalends so that, running up to the full octave of that day,⁶ you can come up with the fifty-four hours when it departs from Gemini. And these three signs have CLXII hours plus two more, which are formed from the *bisse* of the three signs. So, the hours of the three signs equal CLXIII.

It enters into Cancer at the twenty-first hour on the Ninth day⁷ before the Kalends, and you will have four hours of that day leftover. Join these to the Octave and Seventh before the Kalends, and you will have fifty-two hours. To these, add two hours from the Sixth night before the Kalends (from the beginning of the night) plus the *bisse* of the third hour. So, the moon has passed through four signs over the course of these nine days once the two hours and a *bisse* of the third hour from the tenth day have been added.

It then enters into Leo in the third part of the third hour of the Sixth night before the April Kalends and you will have twenty-one hours of that day leftover. Add to these the twenty-four from the Fifth before the Kalends, and they make forty-five hours. Now to

⁵ Note the Bedan definition of *bisse* as the second two-thirds of an hour.

⁶ The word *ipsius*, translated as 'that', is reflexive, referring to *Kalendarum*. So, the *octavam plenam* is the octave day anticipating the April Kalends, i.e., 'that day'. The octave is described as 'full' because none of its hours has yet been relegated to the moon's stay in any zodiacal sign.

⁷ Here, 'day' is used broadly to mean the entire calendar date, including night.

these add nine hours from the Fourth day⁸ before the Kalends, and they equal fifty-four hours. Add to these the *trien* of the tenth hour.⁹

It now enters into Virgo at the beginning of the *bisse* of the tenth hour of the night; and fourteen hours remain from the Fourth before the Kalends. Join these to the Third before the Kalends, which together with the hours already tabulated¹⁰ make thirty-eight. Add to these sixteen from the Day before the Kalends (that is, the fourth hour of day has ended), and these six signs have thirteen days¹¹ plus sixteen hours of the fourteenth day: indeed all hours come to CCCXXVIII.

Now, the moon enters Libra at the fifth hour of the fourteenth day, which is the Day before the April Kalends, from which day remain eight hours. Join these eight to the hours of the Day of the April Kalends, and there are thirty-two. To these, add twenty-two hours from the Fourth before the Nones,¹² and they equal fifty-four hours. Now, to these, add a *bisse* of the twenty-third hour of the same day, at which time it passes beyond Libra entering into Scorpio at the beginning of the *trien* of that same twenty-third hour.

Now one hour remains for you from the Fourth day before the Nones. Add this hour to the Third and the Day before the Nones, and there are forty-nine hours. From the Day of the Nones, reserve

⁸ Here, 'day' is used broadly to mean the entire calendar date, including night.

⁹ The *trien* of the tenth hour of the Fourth night before the Kalends is added to the previously mentioned final third of the third hour of the Seventh night to complete the *bisse* needed for Leo.

¹⁰ 'Hours already tabulated' is a rendering of *ductae*.

¹¹ Here, 'day' is used broadly to mean the entire calendar date, including night.

¹² The Nones is April 5.

five hours of its night (and you will have the fifty-four hours in Scorpio) and the *trien* of the sixth hour of the night.¹³

Thereupon it enters into Sagittarius at the beginning of the *bisse* of the same sixth hour of the night; and eighteen hours remain from the April Nones. Join these to the Octave before the Ides,¹⁴ and there are forty-two hours. Join to these twelve hours from the Seventh¹⁵ before the Ides, and you will have the fifty-four hours in which the moon whirled about Sagittarius.

At the very start of day in the first hour, it enters upon Capricorn. Now, there remain for you twelve hours of that day, on the Seventh before the Ides. Join these to the Sixth before the Ides and you will have thirty-six hours. To these, add eighteen hours from the Fifth before the Ides (which is the sixth hour of the same day). Then add a *bisse* of the seventh hour.

That having been done, it departs from Capricorn entering into Aquarius at the beginning of the *trien* of the seventh hour. Now five hours remain of the same day. Add these to the Fourth and Third before the Ides, and you will have fifty-three hours.

Add to these one hour from the Day before the Ides plus a *trien* of the second hour of the night.¹⁶ At which time it departs from Aquarius and enters into Pisces at the beginning of the *bisse* of the second hour of the night on the Day before the April Ides.

¹³ The *trien* of the sixth hour of the April Nones is added to the previously mentioned final *trien* (the term is used loosely here) of the twenty-third hour of the Fourth before the Nones to complete the *bisse* needed for Scorpio.

¹⁴ The Ides is April 13.

¹⁵ April 7.

¹⁶ The *trien* of the second hour of the Day before the Ides is added to the previously mentioned *trien* (the term is used loosely here) of the seventh hour of the Fifth day to complete the *bisse* needed for Capricorn.

Now twenty-two hours remain from the Day before the Ides. Augment the Ides with these, and there are forty-six hours. To these, add eight hours from the Eighteenth before the May Kalends,¹⁷ and you will have fifty-four hours. Once these are counted, you shall indeed discover from where we constructed the basis of that calculation: the twenty-seven days from the Fifteenth before the April Kalends through to the Eighteenth before the May Kalends, into the night of which day¹⁸ eight hours are spent. In those twenty-seven days and eight hours, the moon flies through twelve signs. The hours of the twenty-seven days, when you throw those eight hours on the pile, come to DCLVI.

If indeed you want to reach a thirteenth sign of the lunar chariot, count from the ninth hour of the night of the Eighteenth before the Kalends, up to which hour twelve signs have come about. Count from there fifty-four hours and a *bisse*; of which you have sixteen from the Eighteenth before the Kalends. Add the hours of the following day (that is, the Seventeenth before the Kalends) and they become forty hours. And you will have, from the Fifteenth before the Kalends, twenty-nine days.

To these, add the twelve hours of the thirtieth night, which comes on the Sixteenth before the Kalends, and you will have the full hours of the thirteenth sign.¹⁹ In that twelfth full hour of the night, it reaches the junction of the sun, in which, as it is estimated, it stays two hours. And you will see that the next illumination²⁰ is always after the twelfth hour.

¹⁷ i.e. May 1.

¹⁸ Here, 'day' is used broadly to mean the entire calendar date, including night.

¹⁹ This takes you through the full lunar month (i.e., 'lunation'), which is slightly over 29 1/2 days.

²⁰ In 222, Hippolytus of Rome created an Easter table, which allowed 14 Nisan to occur as early as March 18. This date became the standard lower bound in

Now, the first measure of this computation started at the evening hour in Aries, and only reached the morning hour of the day in the next change: Aries having been completed and Taurus begun. Pliny says, 'nine hours in the moon for five days counted'.²¹ That is, the moon accomplishes as much of its journey in nine hours as the sun does in five days. Each sign has thirty parts: the moon remains in each sign fifty-four hours with its *bisse*.

Divide the fifty-four hours into ninths, and you will get six nine times. Likewise the sun delays in each sign thirty days and ten-and-a-half hours.²² Divide thirty by five, and you will get six five times in the thirty. Now the sun reaches one sixth of any sign in five days, while the moon reaches one sixth of a sign in nine hours. It goes through CXX parts,²³ however, in nine days; again, in nine days another CXX, and still another nine days another CXX, which total twenty-seven days of twenty-four hours, and CCCLX parts.²⁴

subsequent Roman computistical systems for 14 Nisan. According to the Alexandrian system, however, 14 Nisan must never occur before the vernal equinox on March 21. Should this situation arise, Easter Sunday would follow the next full moon (cf. Wallis, pp. xxxvi–lii). This latter method is the system espoused by Bede in his *De temporum ratione*, ch. 6 (ed. Jones, pp. 190–1). For this reason, *Ratio de luna XV* begins with 14 Nisan falling on March 18, and shows the reader how to compute the date of the next full moon, or 'illumination', after which Easter Sunday will fall.

²¹ Pliny never actually says this. The author has misattributed the adage, which is taken from Bede, *De natura rerum*, ch. 21 (ed. Jones, 123A p. 213, line 22).

²² According to this measurement, the sun will complete its journey through all twelve signs of zodiac after 365 1/4 days, or exactly one solar year.

²³ 120 parts = 4 signs, so, 1 part = 1/30 of a sign. This definition of 'pars' is part of the Bedan system for time reckoning, cf. Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ch. 3 (ed. Jones, p. 183, line 31).

²⁴ 360 parts = 12 signs, i.e., the complete zodiac.

It ought to be seen how the eight hours,²⁵ which are left over in the moon, come to agree along with the five days,²⁶ which are left over in the sun, so that you can continue this throughout the days of the whole year. For the sun does not travel apart from the zodiacal circle in these five days, nor must the CCCLX parts add something to the sky, but rather the five days ought to be divided among the individual zodiacal parts (for five days has CXX hours); and a third of an hour (that is, one *trien*) ought to be given to each zodiacal part.²⁷ And neither may the eight hours of the lunar course be used up, unless it²⁸ is counted in the twenty-seven days by adding a third²⁹ to each day of a zodiacal part fourteen³⁰ such that the proper number of

²⁵ The previous tally simplified the length of time the moon remains in each sign from 'fifty-four hours and a *bisse*' to 'fifty-four hours'. By this estimate, the moon would complete its journey through the twelve signs of the zodiac in twenty-seven days. This is eight hours short of the actual time required. Hence, 'eight hours... are leftover in the moon'.

²⁶ The previous tally simplified the length of time the sun remains in each sign from 'thirty days and ten-and-a-half hours' to 'thirty days'. By this estimate, the sun would complete its journey through the twelve signs of the zodiac in 360 days. This is five days short of the calendar year, which is 365 days. Hence 'five days... are leftover in the sun'.

²⁷ For the five days to be evenly redistributed over the twelve signs, the time spent by the sun at each zodiacal part (i.e., $\frac{1}{30}$ of a sign) should be lengthened by a *trien*. This means the sun actually spends twenty-four hours and a *trien* in each zodiacal part, or thirty days and ten hours in each sign. The loss of the additional 'half-hour' previously appended to the 'thirty days and ten hours' spent at each sign is corrected every four years by means of the bissextile, so it is not mentioned here.

²⁸ The 'eight hours' are recast as a singular grouping in this phrase, which describes them collectively as 'it'.

²⁹ i.e., 'third of an hour'.

³⁰ The 'part fourteen' is another name for the 'fifteenth part'. For the eight hours to be evenly redistributed over the twelve signs, a *trien* should be added at

parts can be satisfied (that is, reach CCCLX) just as what we discovered ought to be happening in your most astute and well considered computation.

CONCERNING THE COURSE OF THE MOON

The moon, because of the speed of its course, flies through each sign in two days, six hours and the *bisse* of one hour. Now, each sign has thirty zodiacal parts. If, therefore, you wish to know how large an interval the moon may linger in any one of the thirty zodiacal parts, tally up the hours of two days, which are forty-eight. To these, add six hours and a *bisse*. They become the fifty-four hours that the moon lingers in each sign. Distribute these fifty-four hours to each zodiacal part in equal shares, giving, of course, single hours to the individual parts. Now there remain for you twenty-four hours. Multiply these by their components on the premise that an hour has five *puncti*, and the *puncti* equal CXX. Divide these³¹ by thirty, which is a good many times. Give four *puncti* to each zodiacal part, and a *bisse* will remain. Divide this by forty *ostenta* (for a full hour has sixty *ostenta*, and a *bisse* is two-thirds of one hour). And so, as I said, forty *ostenta* form the *bisse* of one hour. Give each zodiacal part a single *ostentum*, and ten *ostenta* remain. Multiply these by three (and they equal thirty) and you will see that the moon completes as much of its course in an interval of one hour, four *puncti*, one *ostentum* and one-third of an *ostentum* as the sun does in twenty-four hours and twenty-one *ostenta*.

every fifteenth zodiacal part. This occurs every twenty-seven hours. A 'part fourteen', therefore, will not occur on every calendar day. Hence a 'third' should be added only 'to each day of a part fourteen'. This is in contrast with the sun, which added an additional *trien* every twenty-four hours.

³¹ i.e., the CXX *puncti*.

Shoots and Vines: Some Models for the Ascenders and Descenders of English Vernacular Minuscule

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It has long been recognised that the Square minuscule which was written by the Anglo-Saxons in the tenth century had transformed into a very different style of vernacular script by about the second quarter of the eleventh.¹ From the early tenth century to about 960 or so, both Latin and Old English texts were written in Anglo-Saxon Square minuscule, which – for the most part – was a well-established script practiced throughout the country.² However, as part of the reforms brought about by SS Dunstan and Æthelwold, Latin script came to be written in Caroline minuscule, while Square minuscule was retained for vernacular texts.³ This change was then followed by a breakdown in the vernacular script-system, resulting ultimately in the demise of Square, and the birth of English Vernacular, minuscules. We can first identify the beginnings of English Vernacular minuscule from about 990, but it was not until the second quarter of the

¹ D. N. Dumville, 'Specimina Codicum Palaeoanglicorum', *Kansai University Collection of Essays in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Institute of Oriental and Occidental Studies* (Suita, Osaka, 2001), pp. 1–24, at pp. 10–11, and compare N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), pp. xxv–xxxiii.

² D. N. Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule: The Background and Earliest Phases', *ASE* 16 (1987), 147–79; D. N. Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule: The Mid-Century Phases', *ASE* 23 (1994), 133–64.

³ D. N. Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History: Studies in Benedictinism, A.D. 950–1030* (Woodbridge, 1993).

eleventh century that a coherent new system finally emerged. The surviving scripts of the intervening period have been described by Neil Ker as 'not easy to understand', with 'no single characteristic type of writing and no obvious course of development',⁴ and it is certainly true that the striking uniformity of scripts throughout the middle of the tenth century was entirely lost during this transitional period.⁵ Nonetheless, certain patterns can be identified in these scripts from the early-eleventh century. One is a tendency among some scribes to write with a much thinner pen and with much longer ascenders and descenders than was previously allowed; in extreme cases, the letters could be compared with plants, having long shoots reaching upwards and thin vines hanging down. There are several well-known examples of this script, including the annals for the years 973–1001 in the A-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which was apparently written soon after the latter date.⁶ Another famous example is the first hand of the *Beowulf* manuscript: this hand stands in sharp contrast to the Square minuscule of the second scribe in the same book.⁷ Although I most certainly do not wish to imply anything about the origins of this latter manuscript, my research so far suggests

⁴ N. R. Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage* (London, 1985), p. 34.

⁵ For the comparative uniformity of scripts *c.* 930–960, see Dumville, 'The Background' and 'Mid-century'.

⁶ For a complete facsimile of this manuscript, see *The Parker Chronicle and Laws (CCCC 173): A Facsimile*, ed. R. Flower and H. Smith (London, 1941).

⁷ See *Beowulf: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique Manuscript British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius A.xv*, ed. J. Zupitza, 2nd ed. (London, 1954) for a complete facsimile; the script has been discussed at length by D. N. Dumville, 'Beowulf Come Lately: Some Notes on the Palaeography of the Nowell Codex', *ASNSL* 140 (1988), 49–63, and D. N. Dumville, 'The *Beowulf* Manuscript and How Not to Date it', *Med. Stud. Eng. Newsletter (Tokyo)* 39 (1998), 21–27, in response to K. Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI, 1996).

that this style of script may be associated with the monastic communities at Winchester and Worcester, and that an alternative style, which is much closer in weight and proportions to Square minuscule, may have been associated with Canterbury. Rather than elaborating on this, however, I wish instead to turn to a different question. I have been searching for some time for the model behind this new style of elongated script and have already discussed charter-bounds as one possibility since their script shares many characteristics with Vernacular minuscule.⁸ Glosses are another possibility, as these often have long ascenders and descenders as well, but I want to save these for another occasion.⁹ Instead, I shall turn to a third option which has not yet been considered in this context and which has received very little attention at all: the reduced script in the chanted sections of liturgical manuscripts. I should say at the outset that I do not in fact think this is the source which I am seeking. Nevertheless, I do think that the history of such reduced script in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts is an important subject which has not yet been investigated in sufficient depth. I therefore propose to explore the early use of this script by Anglo-Saxon scribes and finally to bring the fruits of this exploration back to the question of 'shoots and vines' in early English Vernacular minuscule.

LITURGICAL MANUSCRIPTS

Many liturgical manuscripts of the late-tenth and eleventh centuries were written in two different types of script: one for the main text, and one typically for passages which were sung.¹⁰ While the

⁸ P. A. Stokes, 'Anglo-Saxon Charter-Bounds and the English Vernacular Minuscule' (unpub. paper, Cambridge Univ., 2003).

⁹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 27 (?Winchester, s. x¹), is one example among many.

¹⁰ See Figures 1 and 2, below.

former is normally rotund, written with a thick pen, and often with short ascenders and descenders, the latter has much smaller bodies and the ascenders and descenders are often proportionally longer. The immediate explanation for this is that the letters are smaller to provide space for neumes to be written between the lines of text. However, such an explanation is not sufficient since very many such passages do not contain any musical notation at all. While such notation was no doubt intended to be added later in some such cases, it is by no means certain that this was always the case. Furthermore, if a scribe were writing smaller letters to allow space for musical notation, then why would he extend the ascenders and descenders, thereby filling up at least part of the space he had so carefully created? The scribes could have used other strategies, such as writing text and neumes on alternate lines; this was done in the early tropers, for example, but even then the scribes wrote the neumed passages in reduced script.¹¹ An alternative explanation is that the smaller script was the result of conventions of page-layout and script-styles rather than of practical necessity. Such an explanation seems promising but raises questions about liturgical script in late Anglo-Saxon England: first, whether or not there ever was such a thing, and second, if it did exist, how it is to be characterised.

Such questions have been discussed by David Dumville, who has identified two distinct currents in liturgical book production for the

¹¹ S. J. P. Van Dijk, 'An Advertisement Sheet of an Early XIVth-Century Writing Master at Oxford', *Scriptorium* 10 (1956), 47–64, provides a discussion of the various layouts of noted passages in medieval books. An example of such layout in tenth-century England is the troper from the Old Minster at Winchester, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 473; part of this manuscript has been reproduced by M. Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue*, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo, MI, 1997) II, plates 386–87.

last quarter of the tenth century.¹² The first of these seems to be associated with Winchester and Worcester and consists of a monumental, rotund Style-I Anglo-Caroline which perhaps derived ultimately from the scriptoria of ninth-century Corbie and Tours. The second was apparently practiced at Canterbury, where the script was also monumental and largely two-line, but this time was Square minuscule rather than Caroline.¹³ This distinction between Winchester/Worcester and Canterbury is a recurring theme in late tenth-century book-production, and has generally been attributed to the two currents of the Benedictine reforms in the second half of the tenth century. These two lines of development are associated on the one hand with Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury (960–988), and on the other with Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (963–984); they produced different forms of Anglo-Caroline minuscule – Styles I and II – and different forms of hymnal, and so it is no great surprise to see differences in liturgical book-hands as well.¹⁴ However, Dumville's discussion has been restricted to styles of script, and presumably to the main book-hand rather than any reduced script. The question must be asked, then, whether a similar distinction can be found in the reduced scripts as well. Interestingly, there seems to be no such connexion: liturgical manuscripts from both the Canterbury and Winchester groups show reduced scripts for sung

¹² D. N. Dumville, *Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History of Late Anglo-Saxon England: Four Studies* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 146–52.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–50; D. N. Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 2; E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores* (Oxford, 1935–71), VI, xii, xxii–xxiv, xxvii–xxix; T. A. M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule* (Oxford, 1971), p. 12 (no. 14). Examples of each style are given as Figures 1 and 2 below.

¹⁴ The styles of Anglo-Caroline were outlined by Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, the hymnals by H. Gneuss, *Hymnar und Hymnen im englischen Mittelalter* (Tübingen, 1968), pp. 69–74.

passages, and reduced scripts from both scriptoria show extended proportions, if to varying degrees. This at least allows the possibility that the convention of reduced script existed in England before the development of Anglo-Caroline minuscule, or alternatively that the convention was practiced in both of the Continental centres from which the Dunstan and Æthelwold drew their inspiration. To decide between these possibilities, we must look further into the history of this script.

Unfortunately, the early development of musical notation in England is not especially well understood. This is partly due to the paucity of early noted manuscripts: although I am not aware of any complete catalogues of English noted books, Susan Rankin wrote in 1987 that 'the earliest examples of musical notation in insular sources date from the last years of the 10th century, well after the monastic revival'.¹⁵ Indeed, the situation is even worse than this: she went on to note that 'we are confronted not only by a lack of examples of notated music [from before 980], but worse, by an almost total lack of insular service-books, so that it is difficult to tell whether such books might have been prepared for musical notation or not'.¹⁶ Finally, she has concluded that 'it is indeed possible that music was not notated in England before the Benedictine revival of the mid-10th century'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, some evidence does survive which can assist us here. Although we have no noted books from before 980, we do have three which contain chant written out in full, and therefore which could conceivably have been intended for musical notation. These books

¹⁵ S. Rankin, 'Neumatic Notations in Anglo-Saxon England', *Musicologie Médiévale: Notations et Séquences. Actes de la Table Ronde du CNRS à l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, 6–7 Septembre 1982*, ed. M. Huglo (Paris, 1987), pp. 129–44, at p. 130.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

are Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 183, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, 10575, and Durham, Cathedral Library, A. iv. 19, dated to the 930s, the mid-tenth century, and the second half of the tenth century respectively.¹⁸ Of these three, Rankin has observed that the chant texts in the books at Paris and Durham were written in reduced script even though they have no neumes. In fact, this is also true of the book at Cambridge, since the antiphons on folios 94v–95v also follow this pattern.

We have established, then, that the practice of writing chant in reduced script pre-dates Dunstan and Æthelwold, and that it was certainly in England by the 930s; this seems to be as far as the Anglo-Saxon evidence will take us. But what, then, of Continental sources? Most of the extant Anglo-Saxon neumes bear close resemblance to those written at Corbie, and it is recorded that Æthelwold sent for monks from that house while he was abbot of Abingdon so that they could instruct his own community in singing; perhaps, then, this is the source of these examples.¹⁹ The remaining neumes are in the Breton style, and it has been suggested that these may have been brought to England during the reign of Alfred the Great by people such as Grimbold, who came from the Continent and was described by Asser as ‘cantatorem optimum’.²⁰ Unfortunately, lack of evidence makes it impossible to make these any more than tentative hypotheses, and recent scholarship seems to downplay any such

¹⁸ H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ, 2001), nos. 56, 896, and 223 respectively.

¹⁹ Rankin, ‘Notations’, p. 132; S. Corbin, *Die Neumen*, *Palaeographie der Musik*, Bd. 1, Fasz. 3 (Cologne, 1977), p. 132; *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols., RS (London, 1858) I, 129.

²⁰ *Asser’s Life of King Alfred, Together with the Annals of Saint Neots, Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), p. 63 (Ch. 78).

connexions.²¹ However, such hints do suggest that we should be looking across the Channel to see what practices were on the Continent.

Fortunately, we do have more extant examples of early music from Continental houses. The writing of chant in smaller script was widespread from the eighth century, and Van Dijk observed that this practice had become so ingrained by the tenth century that ‘it remained an accepted form, even in books which had no music at all and were never intended to have any’.²² The implication, then, is that the first examples of musical notation to come to England would have been written in reduced script. Unfortunately, we quickly become caught up in a ‘chicken-and-egg’ problem. Was the script reduced in order to allow space for the neumes, and then this became convention divorced from its original purpose? Or was the script reduced first to indicate that it was sung, and then musical notation added later? The first of these options – the reduction to allow space – seems the more plausible for the earliest Continental examples, and indeed this is what Van Dijk argued.²³ However, the fact that the earliest Anglo-Saxon examples of reduced script predate the earliest examples of musical notation at least allows the possibility that the convention of reduced script crossed the Channel before that of the neumes themselves. Indeed, Rankin has questioned whether it is ever possible to tell if a given text was originally intended to receive

²¹ See, for example, Rankin, ‘Notations’, pp. 131–32.

²² Van Dijk, ‘Advertisement’, p. 60. Early examples of differentiated script include Rheims, Bibliothèque Municipale, 213 (?St Amand, c. 860–80); the book now split between Tours, Bibliothèque Municipale, 184, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 9430 (Tours, s. ix^{4/4}); and Dusseldorf D.1 (?Werden, c. 900). I wish to thank Nicholas Orchard for bringing these examples to my attention and for his subsequent discussions on this subject.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–62.

notation, agreeing with Van Dijk that 'although this [reduced script] obviously allows room for neumes to be added, the practice is by no means always associated with the presence of musical notation'.²⁴

FUNCTION

If we accept, then, that the Anglo-Saxons had conscious ideas about the layout of liturgical manuscripts in general and chanted texts in particular, then it is perhaps worth pausing for a moment to consider what the function of such layout might have been and why this particular style of script was used for chant. We have already discussed the immediate practical need for space for the neumes. The principle of using different scripts for different types of text may well apply here, since this concept was thoroughly entrenched in book production by this time, as demonstrated by the hierarchy of decorated and coloured initials, display capitals, rubrics, text, and gloss which was often used on a single page.²⁵ Furthermore, there is a practical benefit in being able to distinguish between different sections of the text, in terms of finding one's place on the page and recognising when one is required to sing. But one question remains: why the lengthened proportions? I do not wish to discuss this in depth here, but I will run quickly over some of the possibilities. One is simply that it is for the scribe's convenience because it is quicker to write.²⁶ Although this may hold true for glosses, and perhaps for Vernacular minuscule, it makes no sense in the context of a luxurious,

²⁴ Rankin, 'Notations', p. 131.

²⁵ R. McKitterick, 'Text and Image in the Carolingian World', in her *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 297–318, at p. 303; M. Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 392.

²⁶ B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. D. Ó Cróinín and D. Ganz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 52.

high-status liturgical book. Another is that proportions and pen-width correlate directly with script-grade: that thicker pens and rounder proportions indicate higher grade.²⁷ Again, this is plausible for glosses and vernacular script, but there is no obvious reason why the grade of chanted passages should be any lower than that of the main text. A more interesting possibility is that of legibility. Modern psychologists have conducted a great deal of research into the cognitive processes involved in reading, and while no conclusions have been reached, it seems that the overall shape of a word plays an important part in the reading process.²⁸ Of course, this research is all based on modern subjects, and Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe has rightly urged caution in projecting our assumptions about rapid, silent reading back onto the Anglo-Saxon world.²⁹ However, it is quantitatively true that the upper part of a word contains more information than the lower, and that words are easier to read if they have more distinctive features in the upper part.³⁰ Perhaps, then, the lengthened ascenders aided the

²⁷ See T. J. Brown, 'The Irish Element in the Insular System of Scripts to circa A.D. 850', *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. H. Löwe, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1982) I, pp. 101–19, at p. 101, for narrow pens in Insular script; and T. A. M. Bischoff and G. I. Liefink, *Nomenclature des écritures livresques du IX^e au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1954), p. 8, for longer proportions in Caroline *Glossenschrift*; compare also Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, p. 86 n. 23, and p. 211 n. 68, for the *litterae tonsae* which the Gaels themselves considered a characteristic of their own high-grade script.

²⁸ Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, p. 52.

²⁹ K. O'Brien O'Keefe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 18; but see also P. H. Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origin of Silent Reading* (Stanford, CA, 1997), pp. 98–99 for Celtic and Anglo-Saxon descriptions of silent reading and emphases on the shapes of letters and words.

³⁰ See W. F. Long, R. P. Garzia, T. Wingert and S. R. Garzia, 'The Ergonomics of Reading', in *Vision and Reading*, ed. R. P. Garzia (St Louis, 1996), pp. 71–110, at p. 91, citing M. A. Tinker, *Legibility of Print* (Ames, Iowa, 1963).

legibility of a necessarily small and cramped script and provided cues for a reader whose focus was presumably centred on the musical notation.

CONCLUSION

On that note, we can conclude this discussion of liturgical manuscripts and look back once again to the elongated style of Vernacular minuscule. As noted at the outset, I do not think that the Old English script was influenced directly by the liturgical one. Indeed, if one compares a page of even a relatively plain liturgical manuscript to a page of elongated Vernacular minuscule, the differences in status are immediately apparent. Most, if not all, of the early extant examples of elongated English Vernacular script have no decoration, little or no colour, little script-hierarchy, and seem to be far more concerned with recording words than with any pretence to luxury. Although it may be unfair to expect a contemporary copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to compete with some of the best *de luxe* liturgical books produced in Anglo-Saxon England, it seems that this high standard of production was maintained across the Latin texts written in the Æthelwoldian style of Anglo-Caroline. In particular, the very characteristics of this Caroline script include its rotundity and its markedly short ascenders and descenders, reminiscent almost of the *litterae tonsae* by which the earlier Insular scribes characterised their own script.³¹ Such a contrast between Latin and vernacular is even more striking if my suspicions are correct that this elongated minuscule was also associated with the Winchester scriptoria, the very home of the monumental Style-I Anglo-Caroline. Whether or not this is the case, the implications of this study for the status of vernacular writing and for the establishment of script-grade are significant and

³¹ Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, p. 86 n. 23, and p. 211 n. 68.

need to be considered in greater detail. Finally, while it is possible that the origins of the Vernacular minuscule, like those of the Anglo-Caroline, are to be sought on the Continent – and, indeed, the lengthened proportions of scripts like ‘Corbie’ *ab* and Luxeuil minuscule come to mind in this context³² – I suspect it will be more fruitful to keep the search in England, but direct it instead towards the humble gloss.

³² For these scripts, see *ibid.*, pp. 104–106 and plate 11, and M. P. Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600* (London, 1990), pp. 40–43 (nos. 12 and 13).

Figure 1: CCCC 473, 76v (saec. x/xi, Winchester, Old Minster)

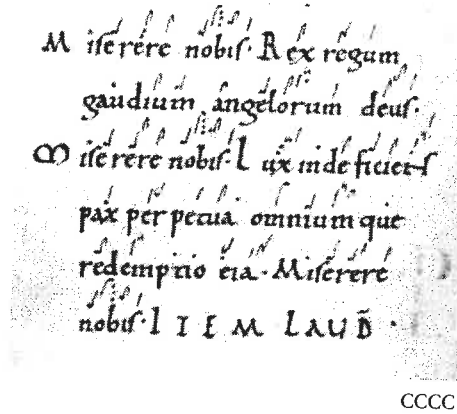
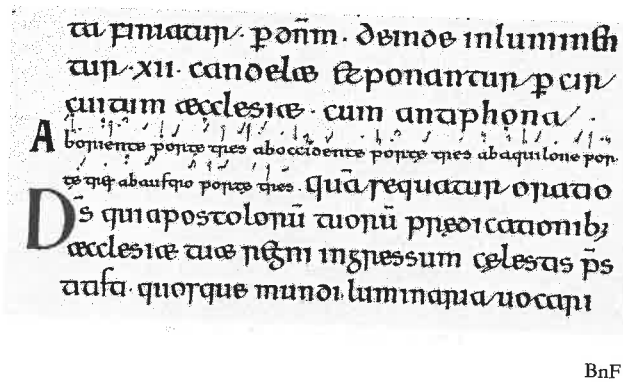


Fig. 2: Paris, BN lat. 943, 10v (saec. x2, Canterbury, Christ Church)



The Heroic Biography of Æthelflæd of Mercia
and the Old English *Judith*:
A Re-examination

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In a now-obscure 1892 monograph on the Old English *Judith*, a poetic account of the biblical book of Judith and currently the final item in London, BL Cotton Vitellius A XV (hereafter 'the Nowell Codex'), T. G. Foster suggested that the Anglo-Saxon poet had intended the poem as an oblique panegyric to Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians.¹ Æthelflæd was the eldest child of Alfred the Great and the foster mother of his grandson Æthelstan. As a young woman she married Ealdorman Æthelred of Mercia, a thegn loyal to Alfred and at least 20 years her senior, in what essentially amounted to a diplomatic

¹ T. G. Foster, *Judith: Studies in Metre, Language, and Style, with a View to Determining the Date of the Old English Fragment and the Home of its Author*, Quellen und Forschungen 71 (Strasbourg, 1892). *Judith's* present position following *Beowulf* at the end of the Nowell Codex is almost certainly not its original placement in the manuscript, if indeed it was originally part of the Nowell Codex at all. Sisam, Malone, Clubb, and Kiernan all regard *Judith* as a separate poem produced in the same scriptorium as *Beowulf*, added to the Nowell Codex at a later date, perhaps as late as the manuscript's rebinding in the late-sixteenth century by a curator who perceived the correspondence in scribal hands between *Judith* and Scribe B of *Beowulf*. Others, such as Lucas, believe that *Judith* may have originally preceded the prose life of Saint *Christopher* which begins incomplete at the beginning of the Nowell Codex. For a summary of these and other codicological issues pertaining to *Judith*, see M. Griffith, ed., *Judith* (Exeter, 1997).

posting to consolidate West-Saxon control of Mercia.² Æthelred was in poor health, suffering from chronic illness that by 904 had so incapacitated him that Æthelflæd had assumed the day-to-day duties of running Mercia in his name.³ The couple had only a daughter, Ælfwyn, and when Æthelred died in 911 without a male heir, Æthelflæd assumed direct control of Mercia until her death in 919, working in cooperation with her brother Edward in a programme of fortress-building to combat the invasions of Irish-Norwegian Vikings.⁴ She personally led the Mercian forces into at least three major victories at Tamworth, Derby and Leicester; all documented in the B-text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Æthelflæd's role as a female general is otherwise unheard of in an Anglo-Saxon context, and on the surface would appear to render her a most likely candidate to have inspired the warleader-widow heroine of the Old English *Judith*.

However, Foster never offered any specific evidence from the poem to back up this theory, which he had articulated in a particularly cloying late-Victorian prose style. As with Cook's rival theory associating *Judith* with the 856 marriage of Æthelwulf to the daughter of Charles the Bald⁵, Foster had then used this supposed

² F. T. Wainwright, 'Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians', *New Readings on Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. H. Damico (Bloomington, Indiana, 1990), pp. 44–55, at p. 45.

³ *Ibid.* p. 46.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 46–9.

⁵ A. S. Cook, ed., *Judith, an Old English Epic Fragment* (Boston, 1888), pp. xxiv–xxxiv. Cook's theory, supported most recently by Bernard Huppé, was that the Old English *Judith* had been commissioned in honour of the A.D. 856 marriage of Æthelwulf of Wessex, father of King Alfred, to the twelve-year-old Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald. Despite the correspondence of names, given the bride's youth and the fact that Æthelwulf's second marriage had been made for diplomatic reasons; the violent, duplicitous, and seductive widow of the bible would have been a spectacularly inappropriate choice of heroine to

correspondence between Æthelflæd and Judith as his main piece of evidence in dating the Old English poem to 919, and locating its composition in Mercia:

Æthelflæd, then, is Mercia's Judith, for she by no ordinary strategy, we are told, raised her Kingdom and people to their old position. She, like the Hebrew Judith, abandoned the older strategy of raid and battle, not indeed to murder the Danish chief, but to build fortresses and beleaguer her enemies. Æthelflæd, then, is a suitable and worthy heroine to have stirred a contemporary poet to his theme... This suggestion would place our poem between the years 915 and 918 or soon after, during which she obtained her greatest victories, dying in the last-mentioned year.⁶

Foster's theory has not been taken seriously since 1952, when B. J. Timmer gave it a systematic refutation in the introduction to his Methuen edition of *Judith*.⁷ It is currently standard critical practice to dismiss any possibility of a connection between Æthelflæd and *Judith* with a brief citation of Timmer, as in a recent article by Paul Szarmach, or to ignore the issue entirely, as does Mark Griffith's

commemorate in verse on this occasion, particularly in a version which omitted all mention of chastity and went out of its way to portray Judith as a warleader in the absence of any character that might conceivably represent Æthelwulf himself. Furthermore, the total absence of any early-West Saxon features in the language of *Judith* suggests that the poem was written substantially later than 856. We can safely discard this theory from further consideration, particularly as Huppé's only reason for supporting it was his agenda of interpreting Judith as an allegorical figure of virginity, in the absence of any internal evidence for such thematic interest in the Old English poem itself. See B. F. Huppé, *The Web of Words: Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems 'Vainglory', 'The Wonders of Creation', 'The Dream of the Rood', and 'Judith', with Texts and Translations* (Albany, 1970).

⁶ Foster, 'Judith', p. 90.

⁷ B. J. Timmer, *Judith* (London, 1952, rev. ed. Exeter, 1978), pp. 7 and 5.

recent edition of *Judith*.⁸ Here, however, I shall argue that certain developments in scholarship over the past fifty years give us good reasons to question Timmer's dismissal of Foster, and to re-examine the possibility (though by no means establish as a certainty) that the heroic biography of Æthelflæd of Mercia somehow stands at the root of the Old English *Judith*.

THE DATE AND GEOGRAPHICAL ORIGIN OF OLD ENGLISH JUDITH'

Timmer's chief objection to any possible implicit correspondence between Æthelflæd and *Judith*, (or *Judith* and any other Anglo-Saxon historical figure, for that matter) appears to have been Cook and Foster's inappropriate uses of such historical identifications as dating evidence for the poem; indeed, Timmer's refutation of the Æthelflæd theory was included under the heading 'Date'. Although modern dating methods for Old English poetry still constitute something of an uncertain art, they do allow us to separate the issue of dating from the question of characters' real-life historical identifications. The current consensus on the linguistic and metrical dating of *Judith* is still consistent with the poem having been written during or within a generation of the life of Æthelflæd (d. 919), though not exclusively so.⁹ Even Timmer admitted that 'the dates are not impossible' in

⁸ P. E. Szarmach, 'Æthelflæd of Mercia: *Mise en page*', *Words and Works: Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature in Honour of Fred C. Robinson*, ed. P. S. Baker and N. Howe (Toronto, Buffalo, NY and London, 1998), pp. 105–26, at p. 26; Griffith, *Judith*.

⁹ Other modern dating methods are of limited use for *Judith*. As *Judith* is in the same hand as the second half of *Beowulf*, its palaeographic dating is intrinsically tied up with that of *Beowulf* and the rest of the Nowell Codex (for which various estimates cluster roughly around the year 1000). However, palaeographic dating of the Nowell Codex gives us no indication of *Judith*'s date of composition, particularly as the substantial differences in metre, vocabulary, and spelling

establishing a connection between Æthelflæd and *Judith*, whose language he had assessed as 'mainly late West-Saxon, not too far removed from the Alfredian period', and later confined to 'the first half of the tenth century', on the basis of the poem's nearly equal proportion of *o* and *a* before nasals, and frequent use of diction reminiscent of tenth-century prose (article + adjective + noun).¹⁰ This assessment has been echoed, albeit much more cautiously, by Griffith in his recent edition of *Judith*, where he argues for a broader range of dates in the 'late ninth or tenth century' on the basis of *Judith*'s sporadic alliteration of palatal and velar *g*, absence of early-West Saxon forms or archaic spellings, and use of the word *ofdune* (290) instead of the earlier *nyðer*.¹¹ Griffith still places *Judith* significantly earlier than *Maldon*, as the alliteration of the two forms of *g* is not as consistent in *Judith* as in *Maldon*, and the preponderance of rhyme of a different variety than in *Maldon*, where it is accompanied by a breakdown in metrical regularity and general loosening of alliterative rules not found in *Judith*, which is particularly consistent in both these respects.¹² On this basis we may probably also exclude David

between *Judith* and *Beowulf* indicate different compositional and transmissional histories for both. Analysis of Old Latin versus Vulgate readings of the biblical text is also of limited use in *Judith*. While it is possible to argue for a relatively early date for *Genesis A* based upon its unusually high number of Old Latin readings, *Judith* does not follow its biblical source closely enough for the reader to confidently identify whether its author had consulted an Old Latin or Vulgate text. Griffith manages to identify two details possibly derived from Old Latin readings and one more typical of the Vulgate, and speculates that the author of *Judith* had probably consulted a mixed text of Vulgate type, which gives no help in dating the poem, as these types of bible texts were used as early as Bede and at least as late as Ælfric. On this, see Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 47–50

¹⁰ Timmer, *Judith*, p. 10.

¹¹ Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 44–7.

¹² *Ibid.* pp. 25–8.

Chamberlain's admittedly tentative suggestion that *Judith* refers to 'the crisis under Æthelred from 990 to 1010', as being slightly too late, particularly when considered in conjunction with the palaeographic dating of the Nowell Codex to c. 1000 and the multiple transmissions of *Judith* proscribed by the discontinuous section numbers retained in the poem from at least one previous manuscript incarnation.¹³

If *Judith* had originated within Æthelflæd's royal circle in Mercia, we might expect to find signs that the poem had originally been composed in a Mercian dialect. Early editors, such as Cook and Förster, had insisted that an (older) Anglian original underlay the present West-Saxon version, but more recent editors, beginning with Timmer, have regarded *Judith* as less conclusive on this point.¹⁴ In the most recent edition, Griffith identifies five words 'as possible remnants of an underlying non-WS original, all of which are consonant with that original being Mercian', but stresses that all but one of these (*scaron*) are traditional, exclusively-poetic words whose normal spellings in West-Saxon poetry may in fact be a retained Anglian form.¹⁵ This is also a relatively small number of Anglian features when compared with other Anglian poems known to have been transcribed into West-Saxon, and Griffith concludes that *Judith* is therefore either West-Saxon in origin, or that it has been particularly thoroughly West-Saxonised from a Mercian dialect. Consequently, if we are to associate *Judith* with Æthelflæd, we had

¹³ D. Chamberlain, 'Judith: A political and fragmentary poem', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays In Appreciation of John McGalliard*, ed. L. E. Nicholson and D. W. Frese (Notre Dame, IN, 1975), pp. 135–59, at p. 158. For a discussion of the section numbers, see P. J. Lucas, 'The place of *Judith* in the Beowulf-manuscript', *RES* 41 (1990), 463–78; Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 1–8.

¹⁴ Cook, *Judith*, pp. xxiv–xxxvi; Timmer, *Judith*, pp. 10–11; Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 22–3.

¹⁵ Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 21–2

best regard the poem as a West-Saxon production, either composed by a West-Saxon member of Æthelflæd's entourage, or more likely, given the sporadic alliteration of palatal and velar g that suggests a slightly later tenth-century date, one composed at the West-Saxon court after her death, perhaps commissioned by Edward in memory of his sister, or by Æthelstan in memory of his aunt and foster-mother.¹⁶ Since one distinctively late-West Saxon word in *Judith* (*hopian*, 117, instead of the earlier *hyrgan*) is otherwise only attested in Alfred's Boethius and in the *Metres of Boethius* (which also shares *Judith*'s syllabic use of *-ig* in poetic metre) this theory of *Judith* having some connection to other vernacular literary productions of the West-Saxon court is perhaps more promising.¹⁷

LITERARY PROPAGANDA AND THE HOUSE OF WESSEX

Timmer's second objection was one of genre. Lumping *Judith* with *Juliana* and *Elene* as 'the religious epic describing the deeds of a fighting saint', Timmer felt that the poem was written in a strict hagiographical genre which would not deliberately cultivate an identification with a contemporary historical figure, particularly not a non-ecclesiastical figure. He wrote: 'The person is glorified in this poetry only on account of his or her belief. This makes it very unlikely that a religious heroine like Judith would represent a secular queen, like Æthelflæd', and moreover, 'There is no evidence that in the tenth century—or in any previous century, for that matter—poems were written about religious figures which symbolized historical figures'.¹⁸ Certainly when an Anglo-Saxon author wished to

¹⁶ On the mixed witnesses for the alliteration of velar and palatal g in *Judith*, and for a refutation of widely-held theory that the presence of this feature automatically places *Judith* later than *Brunanburh*, see Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 25–6.

¹⁷ For these late and West-Saxon features, see Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 44–6.

¹⁸ Timmer, *Judith*, pp. 7–8.

glorify the piety of a secular leader in the genre of a saint's life, he did it very explicitly, as in Ælfric's version of Abbo of Fleury's *Passio S. Eadmundi*; or if he wished to celebrate the military deeds of a king in verse, he composed a secular panegyric in the fashion of *Maldon* or *Brunanburh*, with little mention of hagiographical or religious themes. For Timmer, *Judith*'s complete lack of resemblance to either of these genres, and its failure to name its supposed real-life object, made it extremely unlikely to have been composed as an oblique praise-poem for any real-life figure, least of all Æthelflæd.

However, the secular verse panegyrics in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are all late productions that significantly postdate Æthelflæd's career, the earliest being the seventy-three line *Brunanburh* commemorating Æthelstan's victory as the entry for 937. Nor were these secular alliterative verse compositions the only forms of literary propaganda used for Anglo-Saxon kings. In the Alfredian period, the house of Wessex made a habit of cultivating literary parallels with the heroes of the Old Testament. King Alfred, Æthelflæd's father, was explicitly presented as a latter-day Solomon by his biographer Asser, reflecting both a convention of Asser's native Welsh historiography, and a convention of Carolingian court propaganda exemplified by Einhard's *V. Karoli Magni* which repeatedly celebrated Charlemagne as a second 'King David':

querelaretur et assiduo gemebat suspirio, eo quod Deus Omnipotens eum expertum divinae sapientiae et liberalium artium fecisset: in hoc pium et opinatissimum atque opulentissimum Salomenem Hebraeorum regem aequiparens, qui primitus, despecta omni praesenti gloria et divitiis, sapientiam a Deo deposcit, et etiam utramque invenit, sapientiam scilicet et praesentem gloriam, sicut scriptum est, 'Quaerite

ergo primum regnum Dei et iustitiam eius, et haec omnia praestabuntur vobis.'¹⁹

A charter (S 333, c. 864) issued by Alfred's predecessor Æthelberht of Wessex also included an oblique portrayal of the king as Solomon. Alfred aligned himself with Moses on occasion in public documents, opening his law code with a vernacular version of the Decalogue and an account of its reception by Moses.²⁰ As Alfred's law code was one of the most widely-distributed documents in Anglo-Saxon England, it is likely that parallel was well known, and that the praise of Moses in the extant Old English poetic version of *Exodus* in MS Junius 11 might have been understood as an oblique panegyric to Alfred, particularly given Moses's stress upon his people's acquisition of holy wisdom through booklearning in the poem. We do, in fact, have evidence for the presence of a scribe or court official in Æthelflæd's circle early in her career employing the West-Saxon rhetorical device of aligning the leader(s) with Solomon in public documents, as a 901 charter issued jointly by Æthelred and Æthelflæd (S 201) includes the phrase 'ut sapiens Salomon ait "generatio venit generatio recedit . et quos vidi non video et quos

¹⁹ Text from W. H. Stevenson, ed., *Asser's Life of Alfred* (Oxford, 1904), pp. 60–71: '...he used to moan and sigh continually because Almighty God had created him lacking in divine learning and knowledge of the liberal arts. In this respect he resembled the holy, highly esteemed, and exceedingly wealthy Solomon, king of the Hebrews, who, once upon a time, having come to despise all renown and wealth of this world, sought wisdom from God, and thereby achieved both (namely, wisdom and renown in this world), as it is written, 'Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things will be given to you' [Matt. 6.33]'. (tr. S. D. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London, 1983), p. 92.

²⁰ All charters numbered and text cited as in P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List And Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides And Handbooks 8 (London, 1968); hereafter designated 'S'.

Te probitas fecit nomen habere viri.
 Te mutare decet, sed solam, nomina sexus,
 Tu regina potens, rexque trophaea parans.
 Jam nec Caesari tantum meruere triumpho,
 Caesare splendidior, virgo virago, vale.²⁴

None of these pre-existing (and presumably Anglo-Saxon) Latin sources are likely to have resembled *Judith*; the point, rather, is that an Old English epic in honor of Æthelflæd would not be quite the anomaly of Insular literary history that Timmer claimed. Nor would it be surprising that such an Old English epic should not make the correspondence with Æthelflæd as explicit as *Brunanburh*'s praise of Æthelstan, or that it should cultivate a parallel between an Old Testament figure and a member of Alfred's royal line.

PROBLEMS WITH THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL MODEL

Hagiography is in fact not an adequate model for *Judith* for the same reasons of genre that Timmer raised in the first place, the least of which is that Judith is not a canonized saint. She is an Old Testament heroine who, despite the poet's anachronistic device of having her pray to the Trinity (lines 83–4), cannot imitate the life of Christ because she predates his historical incarnation. On this most basic level, the Old English *Judith* violates the classic definition of hagiography set out by Hippolyte Delehaye: 'To be strictly hagiographic the document must be of a religious nature and aim at edification. The term then must be confined to writings inspired by religious devotion to the saints and intended to increase that devotion'.²⁵ No liturgy, Insular or otherwise, ever assigned a feast day to commemorate Judith of Bethulia or included her in a litany of

²⁴ Text from T. Arnold, ed., *Henrici Archidiaconi Huntendunensis Historia Anglorum*, RS 73 (London, 1879), p. 157.

²⁵ *The Legends of the Saints*, tr. V. M. Crawford, (Notre Dame, 1961), p. 3.

saints; there were no churches dedicated to her; and no reliquaries purporting to contain a lock of her hair or one of her fingerbones. An Anglo-Saxon with a very basic level of religious education could reasonably be expected to understand that the character of Judith belonged in a different category of sacred superheroes than Juliana and Elene.²⁶

Despite this, there is the possibility that *Judith* had originally been paired with the prose account of St Christopher at the start of the Nowell Codex, which suggests that at least one Anglo-Saxon compiler had regarded the poem as a hagiography, although this solution to the apparent codicological dislocation of *Judith* is not uniformly accepted by critics.²⁷ There are also stylistic traits that superficially align *Judith* with Cynewulf's verse hagiographies of *Elene* and *Juliana*, summarised most recently by Griffith, 'The ideology of [*Judith*] shows a simple opposition of the forces of good and evil, and this reflects the world of hagiography, in which the saint, the soldier of God, is threatened or assaulted by the devil and his servants, but finally triumphs over evil. The heroine is called *seo halige meowle* (56), *haligre* (98), *seo halige* (160), *ða halgan mægð* (260), and as O. E. *halig* means both 'holy' and 'saintly', her holiness may have been construed as saintliness'.²⁸ However, these (and other) 'hagiographical' features are also present in Old Testament vernacular poetry of MS Junius 11. The adjective *halig* 'holy, saintly' is applied to Abraham in *Genesis A* (2040a), to Moses in *Exodus* (307b), and collectively to the Israelites in *Exodus* as well (357b, 382a, 385a, 568a); although admittedly nowhere near as frequently as the word appears in *Judith* where it is suggested

²⁶ cf. R. Frank, 'Some uses of paronomasia in Old English scriptural verse', *Speculum* 47 (1972), 207–26, at n. 220 who speculates that the Anglo-Saxons may have regarded the biblical books of Judith and Daniel as hagiographies.

²⁷ See above, n. 1.

²⁸ Griffith, *Judith*, p. 81.

by the Vulgate's *mulier sancta* at 8.29.²⁹ While *Judith* does share other vocabulary with the verse saints' lives (such as the epithet *eadbreðig*, line 135)³⁰ and with late Anglo-Saxon prose hagiography (such as the emphasis on *riht geleafan*, line 97)³¹, *Judith* also shares an equal amount of vocabulary with the poems of Junius 11. At one juncture (229b–31a) *Judith* also echoes the phrasing and word order of *Genesis A* (1991b–3a)³², and at another (198) reproduces a full line of *Exodus* (262). Like the poetry of Junius 11, *Judith* also owes a substantial debt to secular heroic poetry, including the full formulaic apparatus of battle-accounts, and the application of secular male heroic adjectives to the heroine, including *ellenrof* (109a), *modigre* (334a), and *collenferbðe* (134b), epithets used only of men elsewhere in Old English poetry.³³ The designation of *Judith* as a hagiography is therefore much more problematic than Timmer's assessment would suggest, with the poem occupying something of a middle ground between verse hagiography and the genre of vernacular Old Testament poetry with which it more logically belongs.

If the Nowell Codex poem had been intended as a hagiography, it is also surprising that it omitted the Vulgate's mention of Judith's chastity, a typical thematic focus of female saints' lives which also provided the basis for most patristic interpretations of the Judith story. This omission is not typical of other Anglo-Saxon retellings of the Judith story in a 'hagiographical mode.' Aldhelm's prose *Carmen de*

²⁹ For the biblical citation see Griffith, *Judith*, p. 80.

³⁰ For the significance of this term, see P. A. Belanoff, 'Judith: Sacred and Secular Heroine', *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.*, ed. H. Damico and J. Leyerle (Kalamazoo, 1993), pp. 247–64, at p. 249.

³¹ Chamberlain, 'Judith', p. 158; Griffith, *Judith*, p. 81.

³² For the parallel with *Genesis A*, see Griffith, *Judith*, p. 63

³³ Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 68–9

Virginitate uses Judith as his primary example of chaste widowhood being a close second to genital intactness, including her in a list of mini-vitae of saintly virgins:

LVII. IVDITH, filia Merari, post obitum Manasse sumpto viduitatis theristro et spreto sponsali peplo blanda procorum lenocinia contempnens, nondum resultantibus apostolicae salpiscis clangoribus: *Dico innuptis et viduis: bonum est illis, si sic permanserint, quasi candens liliū pia castitate florescens atque a publicis conspectibus delitescens in cenaculi solaro pudica conversabatur.*³⁴

Ælfric's homiletic version, offered to nuns, draws a similar explicit moral lesson 200 years later from the Judith-story, and both prose his and Aldhelm's prose treatments celebrate Judith's divinely-assisted preservation of her virtue against the lecherous advances of Holofernes.³⁵ This theme is largely downplayed by the version in the Nowell Codex, where the heroine's priority is to defend her city rather than her hymen, and Holofernes' lechery is presented as only one facet of his immoderate behavior. Although *Judith* repeatedly

³⁴ Text in R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi 15 (Berlin, 1919), pp. 316–7, 'Judith, the daughter of Merari, scorned the flattering allurements of suitors after the death of Manasses, taking up the weeds of widowhood and rejecting a wedding dress — and (this at a time) when the clarion-calls of the apostolic trumpet had not yet put out the call: 'But I say to the unmarried and to the widows; it is good for them if they so continue' [I Cor. 7.8]. Flowering like a bright lily in her devout chastity and hiding from the public gaze she lived a pure life in an upstairs solar'. (tr. M. Herren and M. Lapidge, *Aldhelm, The Prose Works*, (Ipswich, 1979), pp. 126–7).

³⁵ For the text of Ælfric's homily on Judith, see B. Assmann, ed., *Angelsächsische Homilen und Heiligenleben*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3 (Kassel, 1889; repr. Darmstadt, 1964 with introduction by P. A. M. Clemoes), pp. 102–16. For a thorough analysis of the differences in narrative focus between Ælfric's homily and the Nowell Codex *Judith* in relation to their shared biblical source, see H. MacGennis, 'Contrasting narrative emphasis in the Old English *Judith* and Ælfric's paraphrase of the Book of Judith', *NM* 96 (1995), 61–66.

describes the heroine as *mægð*, this word does not necessarily connote virginity, being used not only of Mary and St. Juliana, but also of Beowulf's mother and of the 90-year-old Sarah in *Genesis A*, both of whom are decidedly not virgins.³⁶ The poem makes no attempt to present Judith as a model of chaste widowhood; nor, in fact, is there any discussion of her marital state in the surviving portion of the poem, or particularly sustained emphasis on Holofernes's predatory intentions.

For Chamberlain, *Judith's* omission of the chastity-theme was a significant reason to discount the possibility that its heroine might have been intended to resemble Æthelflæd, in light of a legend recorded by the twelfth-century Norman historian William of Malmesbury 'who says that after a very hard first childbirth [Æthelflæd] refused permanently the pleasures that led to such troubles'.³⁷ However, no contemporary historical source ever mentions Æthelflæd's chastity, or draws particular attention to her widowhood; the focus of the Mercian Register, as in *Judith's* treatment of its heroine, is on Æthelflæd's leadership and military abilities. As Szarmach has argued, this childbirth legend was probably one of William's own manufacture, designed as a 'rhetorical foil' to highlight Edward's failures as a king and as a man in contrast with Æthelflæd and Alfred.³⁸ Henry of Huntingdon's address of Æthelflæd as *O terror virgo virorum* 'O virgin, terror of men' is likely a deliberate pun on *vir*, used in the sense of 'young woman' rather than stressing Æthelflæd's virginity as such, of which Henry's verse makes no further mention. The treatment of the issue of chastity in *Judith*, therefore, is in

³⁶ Belanoff, *Judith*, p. 259.

³⁷ Chamberlain, *Judith*, p. 158.

³⁸ Szarmach, 'Æthelflæd', pp. 121–2.

complete accord with its treatment in conjunction with Æthelflæd in Anglo-Saxon sources; that is to say, wholly absent.

THE JUDITH STORY IN ÆLFRIC'S LETTER TO SIGEWEARD

Although the Judith story was typically treated as the individual biography of a saintly virgin in Anglo-Saxon and patristic interpretation, there is evidence that by the beginning of the eleventh century the Judith story had for some reason suddenly begun to be read as having contemporary significance for the English as a nation. Ælfric's *Letter to Sigeward On the Old and New Testaments* includes a summary of the Judith story which differs radically from his longer homily in omitting all mention of chastity, perhaps in deference to the thematic interests of his male patron, instead presenting Judith as an example of martial courage for English leaders to emulate in resisting Viking invasion:

Judith seo wuduwe, þe ofer-wann Holofernem þone Siriscan ealdormann, hæfð hire agene boc betwux þisum bocum be hire agenum sige; seo ys eac on Englisc on ure wisan gesett eow mannum to bysne, þæt ge eowerne eard mid wæmnum bewerian wið onwinnendne here.³⁹

Ælfric's references to contemporary events in the *Letter to Sigeward* are not numerous, which suggests that there may have already been a strong tradition of interpreting the Judith story as a commentary on the Viking harassment of England. Whether such a tradition had existed eighty years before when Æthelflæd repelled the Irish-

³⁹ Text from S. J. Crawford, *The Old English version of the Heptateuch: Ælfric's treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, EETS 160, (London, 1922 repr. 1969), p. 48, lines 772–80. 'The widow Judith, who overcame Holofernes the Syrian ealdorman, has her own book among these books concerning her own victory; it is also set in English, in our fashion, as an example for you people, that you may also defend your homeland with weapons against an invading host'.

Norwegians from Chester and Tamworth is impossible to assess. However, given that the Old Testament is replete with examples of Israel's successful defence of itself against pagan invasion, and given that most of these do not feature a female heroine whose violent and seductive behavior must be simultaneously excused in a woman and re-interpreted as an example for men, it seems likely that something other than patristic exegetical precedent had pushed the Judith story into prominence for Ælfric's purposes here.

ÆTHELFLÆD'S REPUTATION IN ENGLAND AND THE
FRAGMENTARY ANNALS OF IRELAND

Timmer's third objection to an association between Æthelflæd and Judith was that Æthelflæd was simply not famous enough in her own time to have inspired a vernacular verse-epic in the tenth century. On the basis of the relatively scanty accounts of Æthelflæd's activities preserved in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Timmer was understandably reluctant to accept an oblique identification between *Judith* and the Lady of the Mercians. He wrote: 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not go into raptures over Judith, but simply calls [Æthelflæd] *Myrcna blafdiġe*, and only gives information about her deeds. Not until the twelfth century do we find her treated like a heroine,' referring to the accounts of William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon.⁴⁰ For Timmer, Æthelflæd's fame was a construction of later historians, owing more to the literary fictions of historiography and the legendary accretions of oral tradition than to the reality of Æthelflæd's actual reputation in England during her lifetime and immediately afterward.

Paul Szarmach's recent work on the Mercian Register and the publication of collaborative edition of the B-text of the Anglo-Saxon

⁴⁰ Timmer, '*Judith*', p. 7.

Chronicle have done much to address Timmer's objection, at least on the superficial level of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's apparent lack of interest in Æthelflæd, manifest in its failure to elaborate beyond bare factual detail in reporting her deeds.⁴¹ These recent studies have verified that the portion of the B and C texts that contains accounts of Æthelflæd's deeds is actually part of an interpolated section drawn from a different chronicle, commonly known as the 'Mercian Register', which is written in a sparse, matter-of-fact style throughout.⁴² Following the interpolation of the Æthelflæd material in the 'Mercian Register' the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle resumes with *Brunanburh*, and it is understandable why Timmer should have regarded the Chronicle's entries for Æthelflæd as paltry and unenthusiastic when set beside this monumental praise-poem for Æthelstan. However, what Timmer perceived here was the stylistic difference between two different source texts, rather than a difference in the attitude of the Chronicle to the accomplishments of Æthelflæd and Æthelstan.

In the D-text of the Chronicle, Æthelflæd is conspicuous by her absence. Although the scribe of the D-text, that is, the West-Saxon version of the Chronicle, apparently did have access to a similar text of the Mercian Register, he chose to downplay Æthelflæd's activities, avoiding BC's *Myrcna blafdiġe* and describing Æthelflæd only as Edward's sister, omitting all references to her military triumphs, and recording only her death in 918.⁴³ Wainwright views this original reticence of the D-text as reflecting a West Saxon fear of Mercian separatist sentiments in the years immediately following Æthelflæd's

⁴¹ S. Taylor, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition: Vol. 4 MS B* (Cambridge, 1983)

⁴² Taylor, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 42–6; Szarmach, 'Æthelflæd', pp. 106–7; 118–9, and ff.

⁴³ Szarmach, 'Æthelflæd', pp. 119–20.

death.⁴⁴ Although Æthelflæd had been a staunch ally of Wessex, working in tandem with her brother Edward on a number of projects and military campaigns, her popularity in Mercia had the unfortunate potential to complicate the West-Saxon annexation, should the people choose to rally around her memory and insist that her daughter Ælfwyn continue the line of independent Mercian leaders. Accordingly, Wainwright believes that Edward deliberately chose to downplay Æthelflæd's prominence in public memory, whatever substantial debt he may have acknowledged to her in private. There is certainly no indication that the relationship between Æthelflæd and Edward was ever unfriendly or anything but cooperative.⁴⁵ An Old Testament epic celebrating a heroine implicitly understood as Æthelflæd, but never explicitly identified as such, would have been an ideal means for Edward to express this gratitude quietly.

As for the broader question of Æthelflæd's fame during the Anglo-Saxon period, clearly we must look for evidence outside the West-Saxon sphere. The 'conspiracy of silence' described by Wainwright with regard to Æthelflæd's activities apparently did not extend beyond the boundaries of West-Saxon control, and Æthelflæd was one of only three English leaders, along with Alfred and Æthelstan, to consistently merit mention in Irish and Welsh accounts. The Annals of Ulster describe her as *famoussima regina Saxoni* 'most famous queen of the Saxons' in recording her death in 918.⁴⁶ The *Annales Cambriae* records her death in the entry for 917 as *Ælflæd regina obiit*.⁴⁷ Another Irish source, the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*,

⁴⁴ Wainwright, 'Æthelflæd', p. 44, ff.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 46.

⁴⁶ S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, ed. and tr., *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, (Dublin, 1983)

⁴⁷ E. Phillimore, ed., 'The Annales Cambriae and Old Welsh Genealogies from Harley MS 3859', *Y Cymmrodor* 9 (1888), 141–83.

celebrates Æthelflæd's military deeds at length and describes two battle scenarios which resembles the one in *Judith* on a number of points, as we shall discuss shortly.⁴⁸ These Irish and Welsh sources suggest that Æthelflæd's fame was of a considerable magnitude to have reached so far outside of England, although Æthelflæd's activities on the Welsh border and her military campaigns against the Irish-Norwegians in conjunction with Scot and Pict allies would certainly have been activities that brought her repeatedly within the Welsh and Irish chroniclers' sphere of immediate political concern. The significance of these non-English chronicles as sources for Æthelflæd's career had not been studied in depth when Timmer wrote his introduction to *Judith* in 1952, and in the intervening fifty years, it has become less easy to dismiss Æthelflæd's contemporary reputation as a fictional construction of twelfth-century Norman historians.

The *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* encapsulate a tradition of heroic biography for Æthelflæd which has no real resemblance to the accounts of William of Malmesbury or Henry of Huntingdon, except for its explanation of Æthelred's having been incapacitated by illness for the last several years of his life, a detail which modern historians presently treat as fact. The *Fragmentary Annals* are now preserved in Brussels MS 5301-5320, which was made from a now-lost seventeenth-century transcription of a fifteenth-century manuscript. Its account of Æthelflæd is certainly nothing resembling a precise 10th-century eyewitness account, but shows signs of having been derived from earlier material and does seem to record genuine historical traditions.⁴⁹ Though its account of Æthelflæd's battles against the Irish-Norwegian Ingimund exhibit a certain amount of

⁴⁸ J. N. Radner, ed. and tr., *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* (Dublin, 1978).

⁴⁹ Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, pp. 206–7.

chronological confusion and describe a battle at Chester that is not reported in the Mercian Register, F. T. Wainwright has established that the incursion of Irish-Norwegians into the Wirral peninsula was reported in the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals Cambriae* in 902, and that the *Fragmentary Annals*' entry for '429' probably records a genuine account of Æthelflæd's having engineered a coalition of Welsh and Scot fighters to repel the invaders, albeit with a certain amount of legendary accretion in the details.⁵⁰ The *Fragmentary Annals* also record a second battle of Æthelflæd's against the earl Oittir, which may refer to the battle between a Viking group and the joint armies of Mercia and Wessex recorded by all versions of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in 911, which includes an *Obter eorl* among the slain, although the Chronicle makes no mention of Æthelflæd's presence, and the account in the *Fragmentary Annals* may represent a conflation of two battle accounts.⁵¹ Whatever basis these accounts likely have in credible historical events, their multiple layers of legendary accretion and syncretion are evidence for Æthelflæd's sustained, long-term fame, showing that Æthelflæd's deeds had the ability to generate myth as well as history, independent of the fictional constructions of Norman historians.

Whether due to common legendary accretion, or to a common origin in real historical events, the Irish Annals' accounts of Æthelflæd contain a number of similarities to the situation portrayed in the Old English *Judith*. The enemy is a coalition of pagan invaders from overseas, persecuting the native inhabitants in a city siege

⁵⁰ F. T. Wainwright, 'Ingimund's Invasion', *EHR* 247 (1948), 145–69.

⁵¹ For the text of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, see, for instance, Taylor, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 47. For the association of this incident with the Oittir account, see J. O'Donovan, *Annals of Ireland, Three Fragments* (Dublin, 1860), p. 245. For the possibility that the annal has conflated accounts of two different battles at this juncture, see Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, pp. 207–9.

scenario. The invading force is focused around a single, villainous warleader, in this case the Irish-Norwegian Ingimund, who is overwhelmingly motivated by greed, and who plans the attack in secret council (reminiscent of Holofernes's predilection for *rune* (54a) in *Judith*):

What resulted was that when [Ingimund] saw the wealthy city, and the choice lands around it, he yearned to possess them. Ingimund came then to the chieftains of the Norwegians and Danes: he was complaining bitterly before them, and said that they were not well off unless they had good lands, and that they ought to go and seize Chester and possess it with its wealth and lands. From that there resulted many great battles and wars. What he said was, "Let us entreat and implore them ourselves first, and if we do not get them[good lands] willingly like that, let us fight for them by force." All the chieftains of the Norwegians and Danes consented to that.

Ingimund returned home after that, having arranged for a hosting to follow him. Although they held that council secretly, the Queen learned of it. The Queen then gathered a large army about her from the adjoining regions, and filled the city of Chester with her troops.⁵²

A woman gathers the troops, addresses the army, and partially directs the military strategy. As in Judith's beheading of Holofernes, the Queen finally defeats the invading army by a ruse, luring its leaders into an isolated area with promises of covert cooperation and then ambushing them while they are unarmed:

It was then that the King (who was on the verge of death) and the Queen sent messengers to the Irish who were among the pagans (for the pagans had many Irish fosterlings), to say to the Irishmen, "Life and health to you from the King of the Saxons, who is ill, and from the Queen, who holds all authority over the Saxons, and they are certain that you are true and trustworthy friends to them...This was

⁵² Annal 429 (A.D. 907?) Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, p. 169. I have included only Radner's English translations here in the interest of conserving space. For the original Irish text, please consult Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, pp. 168–81.

the same as saying to them, "Since we have come from faithful friends of yours to converse with you, you should ask the Danes what gifts in land and property they would give to the people who would betray the city to them. If they will make terms for that, bring them to swear an oath in a place where it would be convenient to kill them, and when they are taking the oath on their swords and their shields, as is the custom, they will put aside all their good shooting weapons."

All was done accordingly, and they set aside their arms. And the reason why those Irish acted against the Danes was because they were less friends to them than the Norwegians. Then many of them were killed in that way, for huge rocks and beams were hurled onto their heads. Another great number were killed by spears and by arrows, and by every means of killing men.⁵³

In its account of the second battle (459), the Irish chronicle mentions that 'the Saxons won victory and spoils after massacring the pagans'. At the conclusion of *Judith*, the poem dwells extensively upon this same motif, with the Bethulians pillaging the weapons and treasure of the pagan Assyrians.

At the conclusion of the 'Oittir'-episode in the *Fragmentary Annals*, the chronicler alludes to Æthelflæd's fame and celebrates the Queen's cleverness as she strikes a strategic reciprocal military agreement with the Britons and the men of Alba:

The pagans were slaughtered by the Queen like that, so that her fame spread in all directions. Æthelflæd, through her own cleverness, made peace with the men of Alba and with the Britons, so that whenever the same race should come to attack her, they would rise to help her. If it were against them that they came, she would take arms with them.⁵⁴

'Cleverness' (FA: *ghlocas*) may be a stock component of praise for a general, but it is not a particularly prominent motif in either William of Malmesbury or Henry of Huntingdon's accounts of Æthelflæd,

⁵³ Annal 429 (A.D. 907?) Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, pp. 171–3.

⁵⁴ Radner, *Fragmentary Annals*, p. 181.

which praise her bravery and masculine leadership skills, but make no mention of her having a reputation for wisdom. It may be that wisdom was also a stock attribute of the heroine in Anglo-Saxon heroic biographies of Æthelflæd, just as Asser had made it a central component of Alfred's biography using the same device of comparison to Solomon that the proem to S 201 applied to Æthelflæd and Æthelred. In *Judith*, the theme of the heroine's wisdom is utterly at the forefront of the narrative, communicated through a large collection of synonyms for wisdom which amplify this attribute of the heroine in a quite extreme fashion, although it is also a theme dictated by patristic exegetical tradition, and alluded to by both Old Latin and Vulgate versions of Judith.⁵⁵

While these correspondences between the plot of *Judith* and the *Fragmentary Annals* are certainly far too general to support an argument for direct influence of one upon the other, they nonetheless allow us to see that a legendary biography for Æthelflæd did circulate in the British Isles during the early-medieval period, but that the details of that legendary biography differed substantially from William of Malmesbury's account. The very rough resemblance in plot motif also allows us to consider that *Judith* might conceivably be one of several literary manifestations of such an heroic biography of Æthelflæd, ultimately based upon a common oral tradition, regardless of the historical accuracy of such an oral tradition. It also allows us to speculate regarding what particular incident in Æthelflæd's career *Judith* might have intended to represent in the slaying of Holfernes, if

⁵⁵ For a full examination of the 'wisdom-theme' in *Judith*, particularly the large number of synonyms for 'wisdom' applied to the heroine, and for the patristic and Old Latin precedent for such a theme, see R. E. Kaske, 'Sapientia et fortitudo in the Old English *Judith*', *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. L. D. Benson and S. Wenzel (Kalamazoo, 1982), pp. 13–29.

it did in fact allude to Æthelflæd at all. As the FA's accounts of both the siege at Chester in 907 and the Oittir-incident (911 or 912) ascribe personal responsibility to Æthelflæd for the death of the leader of an army of pagan invaders, they are certainly likely candidates, although both probably took place before Æthelflæd's widowhood in 911. Æthelflæd also participated in a number of other battles after Æthelred's death, such as those at Derby and Leicester, for which full literary accounts have not survived; and it is most likely that if *Judith* alludes to Æthelflæd, it is more of a composite account of her career.

ÆTHELFLEAD'S ROYAL STYLE

There is an odd stylistic 'tic' in the Mercian Register's address of Æthelflæd for the entries following her husband Æthelred's death in 911. I have highlighted it in bold:

MR 913 Her **Gode forgifendum** for Aepelflæd Myrcna hlæfdige mid eallum Myrcum to Tamweorðige 7 þa burh ðær getimbrede on forweardne sumor.

MR 917 Her Aepelflæd Myrcna hlæfdige **Gode fultmigendum** foran to Hlafmæssan begeat þa burh mid eallum þam ðe þærto hyrde...

MR 918 Her heo begeat on hire geweald **mid Godes fultome** on forweardne gear gesimbsumlice þa burh æt Legraceastre, 7 se mæsta dæl þæs herges þe þærto hyrde wearð underþyded⁵⁶

This repeated, near-formulaic emphasis on divine grace or divine aid is not characteristic of the reports of other leaders' military actions in

⁵⁶ Text from S. Taylor, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 50. '[AD 913]: Here, **God granting**, Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, went to Tamworth with all the Mercians, and built a fortress there in the early part of the summer. [AD 917]: Here Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, **God helping**, before Lammas seized the fortress with all who obeyed [the fortress]... [AD 918] Here she peaceably acquired into her control, **with God's help**, the fortress at Leicester in the early part of the year, and the greater portion of the forces that obeyed [the fortress] became subjected [to Æthelflæd]'.

the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. As the text of the Mercian Register was likely produced by someone within the Mercian royal circle, this literary 'tic' may very well reflect Æthelflæd's own royal literary protocol.⁵⁷ Taken at face value, the Mercian Register's repetition of phrases such as *mid godes fultum* suggests that Æthelflæd's military leadership was regarded as somewhat miraculous by contemporary observers, or that Æthelflæd herself wished it to be perceived as such. Many critics regard the conference of masculine leadership abilities upon a woman as the chief miracle underlying the drama of the Judith story, which otherwise lacks any element of supernatural intervention of the sort stressed in hagiography and Old English biblical poetry. The Mercian Register's stress on divine assistance at this juncture is certainly reminiscent of *Judith*, especially ln. 185–98, where the heroine addresses the Israelites with a nearly identical phrase as she recounts her slaying of Holofernes and orders the troops into battle:

ic him ealdor oðþrong
þurh godes fultum. Nu ic gumena gehwæne
 þyssa burgleoda biddan wylle,
 randwiggendra, þæt ge recene eow
 fysan to gefeohte. Syððan frymða god,
 arfæst cyning, eastan sende
 leohtne leoman, berað linde forð,
 bord for breostum ond byrnhomas,
 scire helmas in sceaðena gemong,
 fyllan folctogan fagum sweordum,
 fæge frumgaras. Fynd syndon eowere
 gedemed to deaðe, ond ge dom agon,

⁵⁷ For discussion of Plummer's suggestion that the 'Elflades Boc' mentioned in a list of manuscripts from Durham represents the Mercian Register, see Szarmach, 'Æthelflæd', p. 119. For the Mercian linguistic features retained in the MR portion of the Chronicle B-text, see Taylor, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 45.

tir æt tohtan, swa eow getacnod hafað
mihtig dryhten **purh mine hand**' (emphasis mine).⁵⁸

That this emphasis on traditionally masculine leadership abilities conferred by divine grace was also an important feature of Æthelflæd's royal style is further suggested by its appearance in both surviving charters issued in Æthelflæd's name after the death of her husband. S 224, an abbreviated version of a charter granting two hides at *Stantun* to Ealhelm, probably issued in 914 despite the miscopied date of AD 800, begins with the invocation 'Aspiring by the Supernal Grace, I Æthelflæd, Queen of the Mercians, give to my faithful friend Ealhelm...'⁵⁹ A second charter surviving in more complete form, S 225, dated 915, begins the bequest following a standard proem with 'I Æthelflæd, with the help of supernal obedience and the generous mercy of Christ, reigning governor of the Mercians...'⁶⁰ Both charters take pains to justify Æthelflæd's rulership

⁵⁸ Lines 185–98; text from Griffith, *Judith*, p. 102. 'I deprived him of life, through God's help. Now I wish to ask each of the men, city-people and shield-warriors, that you immediately hasten yourselves to battle as soon as the God of Creation, gracious King, sends radiant beams of light from the east. Carry forth the shields; boards before breasts; corselets and gleaming helmets into the troop of the enemies; cut down the folk-commanders, the death-doomed spear leaders, with shining swords. Your enemies are condemned to death and you have judgement, glory in conflict, as the mighty Lord has betokened through my hand!''.

⁵⁹ + *Superna aspirante gratia ego Æþelfled domina Merciorum dabo meo fideli amico Alchelme aliquam partem terram...*

⁶⁰ *Regnante Christo mediatore nostro, filio Dei et saluatore mundi, qui sceptrā regit et alta tociusque telluris orbem post opere et umbratione conceptioneque sancti spiritus ex sacratissimo prosiliens uirginis aluo, cuius imperio cuncta obtemperant celestia, tremuntque terrestria et formidant infernalialia. Huius gloriosissime incarnationis anno .dcccclxviii., ego Æþelfled, iuuante superna pietate et largiente clementia Christi gubernacula regens Merciorum, cum*

over Mercia as an act of obedience to divine command, accomplished through divine aid. Although it is quite common in Anglo-Latin charter bequests for the giver to justify his authority ceremonially with the formula 'x, by the grace of God, king over the x', Æthelflæd's anomalous political situation as a woman lends actual relevance to these formulas which is apparent in their retention by the Mercian Register. While a charter issued jointly by Æthelflæd and her husband Æthelred includes a similar formula in the bequest⁶¹, the surviving charters issued in Æthelred's name alone do not include this formulaic justification of authority. The iconography of the Mercian coinage issued only during Æthelflæd's reign also stressed this theme of divinely-sanctioned and divinely-aided leadership, including the Carolingian 'hand-of-God' motif as one of three otherwise anomalous designs that ceased to be used in England after Æthelflæd's death.⁶²

Consequently, it is possible that both the Mercian Register and the Nowell Codex *Judith* may preserve an element of Æthelflæd's royal literary style. The 'with the help of God' formula is not, I think, distinctive enough a literary 'tag' to be treated as a diagnostic feature

consilio episcoporum optimatumque meorum, dedi licentiam Eadrice meo ministro...

⁶¹ From S 221, AD 901, grant to the community of Much Wenlock: 'Æðered Æ[ðelfled quoque] opitulante gratuita Dei gratia monarchiam . Merceorum tenentes honorificeque gubernantes et defendentes...'; 'Æthelred and Æthelflæd, with the spontaneous grace of God aiding; holding and honorably ruling and defending the monarchy of the Mercians...'

⁶² On Æthelflæd's coinage, which also includes a representation of city gates, perhaps commemorating the siege at Chester or her victory at Derby, see C. Karkov, 'Æthelflæd's exceptional coinage', *OEN* 29 (1995), 41. These coins bore the motto 'Edward Rex' on one side, just like West-Saxon coinage; and one of three distinctively Mercian designs on the other, probably symbolising Edward and Æthelflæd's joint leadership of Mercia.

of a connection between the Old English *Judith* and the literary productions of Æthelflæd's entourage.⁶³ However, it is certainly another piece of evidence consistent with such an association.

OTHER ALTERATIONS TO THE BIBLE TEXT OF 'JUDITH' IN LIGHT
OF ÆTHELFLÆD'S CAREER

There is no doubt that Æthelflæd's political position was anomalous among women in Anglo-Saxon society, particularly in West-Saxon society, which had historically held so intense an aversion to queens wielding political power that Asser felt the need to justify the tradition by recounting the story of the murderess Eadburh in his *Vita Ælfredi*. Vernacular Old Testament verse carried nearly the same weight of scriptural authority as the Latin Bible in Anglo-Saxon England, and one suspects that a work which presented overwhelming biblical precedent for Æthelflæd's activities as a female warleader and ruling queen would have been of immense help in silencing her critics, regardless of whether such a work made the real-life correspondence explicit. It is also conceivable that *Judith* might have been written for Æthelflæd's own spiritual comfort, and that she was meant to recognise herself in it, though the correspondence might have been less obvious to outsiders.

Several of the Old English poet's otherwise-unexplained alterations to the Vulgate account do appear to deliberately deepen the parallel between Æthelflæd and the biblical Judith. Although the opening of *Judith* which would have contained an explanation of the heroine's initial circumstances is missing from the manuscript, the large number of royal epithets applied to Judith in the remaining portion suggests that the Old English poem portrayed her as a royal

⁶³ See, for instance, Szarmach, 'Æthelflæd', p. 119 for the appearance of the same Old English phrases and their Latin equivalents in Vercelli Homily XX and its variant versions.

widow, rather than the surviving wife of a wealthy local merchant as in the bible. One of these epithets, *seo æðele* (176a), not only displays the same principle of ad-hoc feminized male leadership terms as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's references to Æthelflæd as *Myrcena blafðige*, but could very well be a deliberate echo of the first element of Æthelflæd's compound name. While Elene is called *þa æðelan cwen* ('the noble woman', 275b), only in *Judith* does the word *æðele* appear as a noun in the corpus of Old English, probably intended as a feminized form of *æðel* 'prince, noble man'.

Moreover, the Old English account does not stop at portraying Judith as a warleader, a Joan of Arc figure propelled by divine command toward military victory, but also as a queen fit to rule in peacetime. Where the Vulgate account has the citizens of Bethulia present Judith with Holofernes's pots and pans and household effects (Jud. 15:11), the Bethulian lieutenants in the Nowell Codex version present Judith with Holofernes's sword and armour in what essentially amounts to an Anglo-Saxon ceremony of fealty to a leader, resembling Beowulf's offer to Hroðgarof the sword seized from Grendel's mere.⁶⁴ Although Belanoff points out that Judith does not seal her role as leader of the comitatus by distributing treasure to the warriors, Judith also does not offer the war-booty to the temple as she does at the conclusion of the biblical account, a motif much-embroidered in Ælfric's homily where he presents Judith as refusing the treasure on the grounds that it had belonged to pagans and makes her an example of the shunning of worldly things.⁶⁵ Nor is the redistribution of treasure always necessary of a warleader in biblical poetry. Judith seems to be following *Exodus's* more sophisticated use

⁶⁴ This significance of Judith's reception of the war-booty was first noted by A. Rapetti, 'Three Images of Judith', *Études de Lettres* 2/3 (1987), 155–65, at 60.

⁶⁵ Belanoff, '*Judith*', p. 257.

of this stock-image, which has the Israelites themselves divide the spoils of the Egyptians *on riht* (587b) as a symbol of their new-found national cohesiveness. At a point where the bible strips Judith of any hint of a male leadership role, the Old English poem does the opposite, leaving the implication that Judith will continue to lead Bethulia long after the curtain has dropped.

CONCLUSIONS

The essential problem in using B. J. Timmer's objections to Foster as a foil in arguing for a correspondence between Æthelflæd and the Old English *Judith* is that in this case the burden of proof really rests with the claimant, rather than the defendant. Given that no contemporary source compares Æthelflæd to the biblical Judith, and that *Judith* does not unambiguously assert itself as a commentary on contemporary events, all of the correspondences I have here identified between Æthelflæd and the poem retain a certain hypothetical quality. While this study has shown that there is nothing about *Judith* (such as date, dialect, or genre) that is inconsistent with such an association, those pieces of additional evidence that I have identified as showing direct textual link between the poem and Æthelflæd- *Judith's* use of a common literary formula appearing (among other places in the Old English corpus) repeatedly in the Mercian Register's reporting of Æthelflæd, the poem's designation of Judith with the otherwise unattested form *seo athele* as she addresses her troops, and the very rough correspondence on the level of plot motif with the account of Æthelflæd's deeds in the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*- at best constitute a collection of intriguing 'maybe's. However far Wainwright's theory of a West-Saxon 'conspiracy of silence' may go toward explaining *Judith's* hypothetical failure to explicitly name Æthelflæd as its inspiration, and toward justifying the choice of an Old Testament verse account rather than more explicit *Brunanburh-*

style praise poem as a means of commemorating Æthelflæd, we can only argue so much on the basis of silence.

At the same time, Timmer's objections to the theory, by and large, are still those of modern critics, and do need to be addressed systematically. This study has hopefully demonstrated that the intervening half-century's worth of scholarship has reaffirmed the correspondence of dates between Æthelflæd's career and the composition of *Judith*, and disentangled any possible correspondence with Æthelflæd from the issue of *Judith's* date and dialect. It has reaffirmed the importance of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon literature and in the rhetoric of the Alfredian dynasty that encouraged its production. It has questioned the designation of *Judith* as a hagiography to the extent that we can no longer confidently place *Judith* in any known genre of Old English poetry, but must regard it as something of an anomaly, much like its hypothetical real-life inspiration herself. Above all, the life's work of F. T. Wainwright and recent research on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle have demonstrated that Æthelflæd's fame in her own day was more than substantial; that it had inspired Latin prose accounts and possibly also Latin verse panegyrics during the Anglo-Saxon period; that it had extended beyond the political boundaries of Mercian and West-Saxon control into Ireland and Wales, inspiring at least one 'legendary' treatment in Irish historical prose that owed little to Norman historiography.

Paul Szarmach's dismissive mention of the Æthelflæd-*Judith* connection in a relatively recent footnote suggests that the present critical resistance to this theory may be in reaction to the modern appropriation of both Æthelflæd and the Old English *Judith* as Amazonian heroines by feminist authors writing in a popular vein.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Citing J. Salmonson, *The Encyclopedia of Amazons* (New York, 1991), p. 3; and A. Nichols and M. Williams, *An Annotated Index of Medieval Women* (New York,


While it is beyond the mandate of this paper to address that issue, and beyond the capacity of any available evidence to demonstrate that the Old English *Judith* must be read only as a *roman à clef* about Æthelflæd, this study has hopefully demonstrated that many of the traditional scholarly objections to such a reading are longer valid. The question of *Judith's* relationship to Æthelflæd should therefore be evaluated as a serious possibility, rather than dismissed as a quaint joke at the expense of romantic Victorians such as Foster, or at the expense of a few equally-romantic modern feminist authors whose roles as historiographers resemble those occupied by in an earlier age by Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury.

Princeton, NY, and Oxford: 1992), pp. 11–12, Szarmach complains that these 'establish incorrect information of another kind in saying categorically: "The Anglo-Saxon poem *Judith* is modeled on [Æthelflæd]." Though in the history of the scholarship on this poem many have asserted a connection between Æthelflæd and Judith, that suggestion has never achieved the status of fact; it is a dubious proposition, moreover, that the suggestion is the current reigning opinion. See B. J. Timmer, ed., *Judith* (London, 1952), 6–8.' I absolutely do not intend to accuse Szarmach of an anti-feminist agenda; his is a succinct and accurate reflection of current scholarship, right down to his standard citation of Timmer's 1952 edition in support.

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