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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ANQ</i>	<i>American Notes and Queries</i>
<i>ASC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
<i>ASPR</i>	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
<i>BAR</i>	British Archaeological Reports
<i>CCSL</i>	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
<i>CSASE</i>	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
<i>CSEL</i>	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticarum Latinorum
'EEM'	'Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries'
<i>EEMF</i>	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
<i>EETS</i>	Early English Text Society
<i>EHD I</i>	D. Whitelock, transl., <i>English Historical Documents, vol. 1: c. 500–1042</i> , 2nd ed. (London, 1979)
<i>K</i>	the Konungsbók manuscript redaction of <i>Grágás</i> : Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, GKS 1157 fol (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen)
<i>Laws</i>	A. Dennis, P. Foote and R. Perkins, transl., <i>Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás</i> , 2 vols., University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies 3 and 5 (Winnipeg, 1980–2000)
<i>MÆ</i>	<i>Medium Ævum</i>
<i>MGH</i>	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
<i>NH</i>	B. Odén, <i>Nordisk historia</i> , 3 vols. (Lund, 1948)
<i>OMT</i>	Oxford Medieval Texts
<i>PL</i>	J.-P. Migne, ed., <i>Patrologiae latinae cursus completus</i> , 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
<i>RSB</i>	<i>Regular Sancti Benedicti</i>
<i>S</i>	P. H. Sawyer, <i>Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography</i> , Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks 8 (London, 1968); rev. ed. available at http://www.eswayer.org.uk
<i>SM</i>	<i>Studi Medievali</i>
<i>SRG</i>	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>

PREFACE

Since its inception in 1999, the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic has established itself as one of the foremost graduate run conferences in the field, attracting scholars from the UK and Europe to its annual multi-disciplinary programme. The edited proceedings of the colloquium, in the annual journal *Quaestio Insularis*, have similarly earned a reputation for quality of research and professionalism of production. (Back issues may be ordered through the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic's website, www.asnc.cam.ac.uk) Although the journal has been in existence for less than ten years, it has already launched a number of careers and there is every reason to think this and future issues will continue that tradition. The Department is proud to support CCASNC and *Quaestio Insularis*.

Dr Judy Quinn
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COLLOQUIUM REPORT

The eighth annual Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic took place on Saturday, 5 May 2007 at Trinity College, Cambridge. Papers on the theme of 'Knowledge and Power' were presented in four sessions:

Session I (Chair: *Rory Naismith*)

Janet Nelson, 'Knowledge and Power: an On-Off Relationship'

Session II (Chair: *Matthias Ammon*)

Sally Lamb, 'Knowledge about the Scandinavian North in Ninth-Century England and Francia'

Abigail Queen, 'Ring-Givers and the "Strife-Metal of Princes" in *Atlakviða*'

Natalia Petrovskaja, 'Edling or *Penteulu*? Ambiguities in the Status of Gwalchmei, Nephew of Arthur'

Session III (Chair: *Abigail Queen*)

Benjamin Snook, "'Checkmate" – Bishops, Kings and Pawns. "Caesaropapal" Politics in Early England and Scandinavia'

Helen Foxhall Forbes, 'The Power of Binding and Loosing: the Chains of the Afterlife in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Liturgy'

Hannah Burrows, "'In This Country What is Found in Books is to Be Law": Legal Knowledge, Literacy and the Shifting Spheres of Power in Commonwealth-Period Iceland'

Session IV (Chair: *Helen Imhoff*)

Stephanie Fishwick, 'Crossing the Thresholds: the Relationship between Knowledge, Power and Death in *Hávamál*'

Erik Niblaeus, 'The Beginnings of Lund Cathedral Chapter and Its German Connections'

Francisco Álvarez López, 'Changing Scripts: a Case Study of the Use of Different Scripts in the Bilingual Text of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 178, Part B'

The members of the colloquium committee for 2006–7 were: Paul Gazzoli, Helen Imhoff, Anna Machado-Matheson, Rory Naismith, Abigail Queen, Brittany Schorn and David Woodman.

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Quaestio Insularis 8 was edited by Rory Naismith and Brittany Schorn, with the assistance of Paul Gazzoli, Helen Imhoff, Anna Matheson, Abigail Queen, and David Woodman.

Knowledge and Power in Earlier Medieval Europe

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Knowledge and Power,
Power and Knowledge ...

... sound as if, like love and marriage, to quote a pop-song of the mid-1950s, they go together like a horse and carriage. And sometimes they do. But I want to begin by recalling some early medieval episodes in which power and knowledge resist coupling. I'll merely mention: the destruction in 391 of the library at Alexandria, that wonder of the world, as a result of the Emperor Theodosius I's (379–95) order to destroy all pagan temples; or, in 529, the Emperor Justinian's (527–65) cutting-off of funding for, hence de facto closing of, the Academy at Athens where philosophy had been taught for 900 years; or, nearer home, the probable destruction of the archive of the church of Canterbury in 798 by King Coenwulf of the Mercians (796–821) when he crushed King Eadberht (796–8), the last king of an independent Kent; or, just across the narrow sea, in 886, the burning-down, by accident, of part of the city of Beauvais to which the treasure, library and archive of the great abbey of St-Vaast, Arras, had been taken for safety, and, worse still, in a contemporary's scale of losses, *malum ... irrecuperabile*, another accidental fire in 892 which consumed St-Vaast's church with its onsite companion-churches of St-Peter and St-Mary, and 'patrocinia sanctorum ... furto nobis ablata sunt'.¹ These episodes prompt reflections on power, human, in

¹ Alexandria: P. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1971), p. 104; Athens: A. M. Cameron, 'The Last Days of the Academy at Athens', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 196 (1969), 7–29; Canterbury: N. P. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984), pp. 121, 124 and 167 (contrast York, where occupying Danes in 866 apparently did not destroy the

destructive mode, with appalling effects on knowledge accumulated over centuries. Rosamond McKitterick has warned of the recurrent dangers of book-burning when knowledge in one part of what we like to think of as western civilisation was on the receiving end of another's power.² Some kinds of knowledge were fragile. They still are: we fret about the conservation of digital data and what terrorists might destroy.

On the other hand, and this is my second point, knowledge and power, power and knowledge, just like that, could have the true ring of apposition, or complementarity rather than contradiction. They put me in mind – or maybe it was the prospect of revisiting Cambridge that reminded me – of another pair of terms: authority and power, or, to spell that out a little more fully, *auctoritas sacrata pontificum et regalis potestas*.³ That was the pairing, 'two there are', that Pope Gelasius (492–6) famously came up with in 494 when he wanted to differentiate types and spheres of government in the world and explain the complementary relationship between them. Interestingly, though he used the adjective *regalis*, 'royal', he was writing not to a king but to an emperor – the emperor. Much ink has, as they say, been spilled on Gelasius's statement. I confess I spilled a wee bit myself in the first thing I ever published – the merest of Notes – in 1967.⁴ In the ninth century, and by bishops assembled at a great council, Gelasius's formulation was altered, like this: instead of *duo quippe sunt, imperator auguste, quibus mundus hic regitur...*, 'two there

library: M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 426–32); Beauvais and St-Vaast: B. von Simson, ed., *Annales Vedastini*, MGH SRG 12 (Hannover, 1909), pp. 62 and 71. 'The relics of the saints were stolen from us'.

² R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 218–20, 234–5 and 258–9.

³ Gelasius, ep. 12, c. 2 (A. Thiel, ed., *Epistulae Romanorum Pontificum genuinae I* (Braunsberg, 1868), pp. 350–1).

⁴ J. L. Nelson, 'Gelasius I's Doctrine of Responsibility: a Note', *Journal of Theological Studies* n. s. 18 (1967), 154–62.

are, august emperor, by which this world is ruled', you find, *duae sunt imperatrices augustae...*: 'there are two august empresses by whom....' etc.⁵ Mindless miscopyings? Blind errors? Not necessarily so. For the scribes who stretched to that bit of elasticity, *auctoritas et potestas*, two feminine nouns, evoked *personae*, personifications, not abstractions, and ruling feminine persons were empresses. It makes sense doesn't it? But not the juristic sense that Gelasius has often been thought to have very precisely intended. *Duae imperatrices* conveys apposition, not opposition, a kind of parity. So those would be my third and fourth points: that early medieval Europeans (as distinct from antique ones) tended to personalise power in terms of rulers, usually, and more realistically, kings rather than empresses, and that they rated them in terms of actions as in Isidore of Seville's classic bit of etymology: *rex a recte regendo*,⁶ so that bishops – Gelasius's *pontifices* meant bishops, not popes – and kings were seen as acting in concert, with different but complementary kinds of power (Gelasius himself also wrote of *duae potestates*).⁷

Isidore, the famously encyclopaedic purveyor of knowledge to the Middle Ages, is interesting on that subject too. He clearly differentiated *scientia* from *sapientia* thus: *scientia ad agnitionem pertinet, sapientia ad contemplationem*. I translate *agnitio* as empirical grasp or engagement with, *contemplatio* as pure thought. *Scientia temporalibus bene utitur ... sapientia autem tantummodo aeterna contemplatur*. The sting is taken out of that unsettling *tantummodo* – 'only' – by the overwhelming weight of the eternal things, but the adverb *bene* applied to *scientia*'s use of temporal things is strikingly positive, optimistic even. Two more feminine *personae* in apposition.⁸

⁵ Decrees of the Council of Paris (829), c. 3 (A. Werminghoff, ed., *Concilia Aevi Karolini II*, MGH Leges III.2 (Hannover, 1908), p. 610).

⁶ Isidore, *Sententiae*, iii.48.7 (PL 83, col. 719).

⁷ Gelasius, *Tractatus*, iv (ed. Thiel, pp. 567–8).

⁸ Isidore, *Differentiarum Liber*, ii.38.147 (PL 83, col. 93).

In March 842, according to Nithard, the writer of an exceptionally well-informed *History*, the Frankish bishops declared that the Emperor Lothar (d. 855) had forfeited his claim to rule part of the *regnum*, the empire, by his evident lack of *scientia rem publicam gubernandi*. The vengeance of God had thrown him out of the *regnum*, and handed it to his brothers.⁹ Nithard's language is Roman; but these bishops' *scientia* injected a strong dose of religious legitimation into what was in effect a deposition: a collective act of power on the part of the aristocrats who had either supported Lothar's brothers before or who chose to do so now by abandoning Lothar. An even more pragmatic example of power in the Carolingian world, and one of the most astonishing attempts to apply *scientia* well, is Charlemagne's (768–814) plan to make a canal linking the two great rivers, the Rhine and Danube via two affluents whose navigable waters were less than two kilometres apart. The aim has been much debated. The bottom line surely was to make it possible to navigate from Bavaria to the Main and Rhine in the heart of Francia. Modern historical *scientia* might have been inclined to read the contemporary references to the canal project as annalistic hyperbole, or sheer invention, were it not that the canal remains inscribed in the landscape. You can find it on Google Earth if you type in Am Graben, Uttenreuth, Germany. The most detailed of those contemporary accounts is that of the *Royal Frankish Annals* in the so-called revised version, under the year 793, where the plan is credited to 'quidam qui id sibi compertum esse dicebant'.¹⁰ According to one modern estimate, 6,000 labourers and some 1,500 support- and supply-workers must have been employed on the task for ten weeks

⁹ Nithard, *Historiae*, iv.1 (P. Lauer, ed. and transl., *Nithard: Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux* (Paris, 1926), p. 118).

¹⁰ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 793 (F. Kurze, ed., *Annales regni Francorum inde ab anno 741 usque ad annum 829, qui dicuntur Annales Laurissenses maiores et Einhardi*, MGH SRG (Hannover, 1895), p. 93). 'Certain men who claimed to be experts in that subject'.

(another historian doubles the time and halves the manpower; while a third reckons 2,000 labourers for rather less than ten weeks). On the higher calculation, modern *Wissenschaft* reckons 3,750 loaves per day, plus an overall total of 50,000 gallons of beer and 3,500 pigs, must have been consumed by the work-force.¹¹ Whatever the tally, the men who toiled through that summer did their utmost to apply the experts' *scientia*. They dug and they dug – but it rained and rained: 'propter iuges pluvias, et terram quae palustris erat nimio humore naturaliter infectam, opus quid fiebat consistere non potuit'.¹² That *naturaliter* cast against self-professed expertise is something to be noted, and relished too, perhaps, as an echo of *Schadenfreude* on the part of an author who attributed the failure of human power here not to divine intervention but to lack of true knowledge. Yet the excavated cutting still to be seen is over 1,300 metres long and 30 metres wide, and involved a displacement of some 120,000 cubic metres of earth: whatever else it was, a demonstration of power made at a strategic place and a critical moment.¹³ The geological difficulties of this project defeated Napoleon's engineers.

In other cases, big projects were actually realised by Charlemagne. A wooden bridge was built across the Rhine at Mainz by designers who, with knowledge of the use of coffer-dams, re-used pier-bases of the old Roman bridge which they were able to locate in the river-bed, and erected a wooden superstructure (which burned down by

¹¹ H. Hofmann, 'Fossa Carolina. Versuch einer Zusammenschau', in *Karl der Grosse. Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, ed. W. Braunsfels, 5 vols (Düsseldorf, 1965–6) I, 437–53, at pp. 449–51; J. Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power* (London, 1991), pp. 106–9; and D. Hägermann, *Karl der Grosse. Herrscher des Abendlandes. Biographie* (Berlin, 2000), pp. 328–31.

¹² *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 793 (ed. Kurze, p. 93). 'Because of the continuous rain and because the earth which was boggy was naturally weakened with too much wet, the work that was done could not hold firm'.

¹³ P. Squatriti, 'Digging Ditches in Early Medieval Europe', *Past and Present* 176 (2002), 11–65, at pp. 11–18, 54–6 and 64–5.

accident in 813).¹⁴ Engineering *scientia* was on display not far from Mainz, at Aachen, the new *sedes regia*, in the church Charlemagne built. There, one kind of prior knowledge was Biblical: of the tabernacle described in Exodus XXVI–VII (note the importance assigned to Bezaleel, the master-worker in brass, in Exodus XXXI.36–9 – and recall that Einhard’s nickname at Charlemagne’s court was Bezaleel), of the Temple built by Solomon as described in I Kings VI, and, especially, of the new Jerusalem in Revelations XXI.16–17, with its wall of 144 cubits. Modern architectural historians have measured the north-south distance of the church-building at 144 feet; and its vertical measurements replicate a 12-based pattern: 48 feet from floor to the angle of the roof of the upper storey, 60 feet to the base of the lantern-roof, and 108 feet to the crest of the dome. A second kind of knowledge was of actual architectural models: of the churches of Ravenna (San Vitale), Rome (SS. Sergius and Bacchus) and Constantinople (Hagia Sophia). The masons who translated those blueprints into stone, brick and marble, were able to deliver the right dimensions with their symbolic load.¹⁵ The epitaph of Pope Hadrian

¹⁴ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 813 (ed. Kurze, p. 137) (an addition in MSS D and E); see also Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, cc. 17 and 32 (O. Holder-Egger, ed., *Einhardi Vita Karoli magni*, MGH SRG 25 (Hannover, 1911), pp. 20 and 36; and L. Thorpe, transl., *Einhard and Notker the Stammerer: Two Lives of Charlemagne* (London, 1969), p. 71): ‘... pons Rheni apud Mogontiacum, quem ipse per decem annos ingenti labore et opere mirabili de ligno ita construxit ut perenniter durare posse videretur, ita tribus horis fortuito incendio conflagravit, ut, praeter quod aqua tegebatur, ne una quidem astula ex eo remaneret’ (‘the wooden bridge across the Rhine near Mainz which he had built over a period of ten years, with such immense skill and labour that it seemed likely to last forever, caught fire by accident and was burnt out in three hours, to the point that not a single plank remained, except what was under the water’).

¹⁵ W. Braunsfels, *Karl der Grosse* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1972), pp. 88–117; and M. Untermann, ‘*Opere mirabilis constructa*. Die Aachener “Residenz” Karls des Grossen’, in 799. *Kunst und Kultur der Karolingierzeit*, ed. C. Stügemann and M. Wemhoff, 3 vols. (Mainz, 1999) III, 152–64.

(d. 795) written, at Charlemagne’s behest, by Alcuin was carved on black marble in letters infilled with gold. Jo Story and her interdisciplinary team have proved (seldom can an early medievalist use that word with such confidence!) that the marble, or marble-like stone, came from a quarry in the Meuse valley not far from Aachen.¹⁶ This makes it certain that this huge object (2.23 metres × 1.16 metres) was transported to Rome, where it is still to be seen in St Peter’s, a monument not only to the marriage of Philologia and Mercury, but to the alliance of Charlemagne’s power to the *scientia* of those who hauled and/or shipped the memorial-stone from the Meuse to the Tiber. If you could transport that, you could easily contemplate getting an elephant from north Africa to Portovenere in north-western Italy, and thence to Aachen – though on that last stage of his journey, he transported himself, by walking across the Alps.¹⁷

I want to explore further who delivered and transmitted knowledge itself, that is, who were the teachers, and how far they were associated with and supported by the Church. Were they themselves monks and clerics? Did monasteries and cathedral schools between them provide the institutional bases of knowledge? If we are thinking of knowledge of classical and ecclesiastical texts, of high culture therefore, then the answer must broadly be yes. These are the knowledge-fields well-documented in the extant evidence, and there are scholars, not least in Cambridge, who have written illuminatingly about them.¹⁸ That doesn’t mean, though, that we could simply translate knowledge and power into *sacerdotium* and *regnum*, Church and state. While it’s true that royal courts were major points of knowledge-reproduction and -transmission, there were significant areas where knowledge-transfer did not work like that: cases, that is,

¹⁶ J. Story *et al.*, ‘Charlemagne’s Black Marble: the Origin of the Epitaph of Pope Hadrian I’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 73 (2005), 157–90.

¹⁷ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 801 and 802 (ed. Kurze, pp. 116–17), noting the elephant’s arrival at Aachen on 20 July.

¹⁸ McKitterick, *History and Memory*; and Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, passim*.

where knowledge was produced and diffused either without connexion to courts or in an on/off relationship to them – knowledge produced and sustained at supra-court or -kingdom level, on the one hand, and autonomously, and locally, on the other. An instance of scarce knowledge of the supra-court kind might be bell-founding. Apparently the ringing of bells in church had become very widespread by the ninth century in the Latin west, yet the technology of making bells was carried in the heads of artisans who travelled about in teams from one church to another.¹⁹ Forms of knowledge more widely taught and available were those that reproduced social power with political implications at levels below the state. There were stories and very old songs in vernacular languages²⁰ and presumably knowledgeable local singers, with or without harps, who learned from senior performers, by observation. The law embodied a collective knowledge.²¹ There were no professional lawyers, unless perhaps an exception is made for Irish *brehons*. Legal *scientia* was deployed and purveyed in the practice of courts; it was widely diffused among landowners down to free and even unfree peasants, who could be expert in procedural matters. Most of this legal lore was held in memories and transmitted orally, but written codes and written legal

¹⁹ H. G. Koenigsberger, 'The Unity of the Church and the Reformation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1 (1971), 407–17, repr. in his *Politicians and Virtuosi* (London, 1986), pp. 169–78, at 172.

²⁰ M. Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West. Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (Dublin, 1994); and M. Innes, 'Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic past', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen and M. Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 227–49.

²¹ For the rest of this section, see P. Geary, 'Land, Language and Memory in Europe 700–1100', *TRHS* 6th ser. 9 (1999), 169–84; J. L. Nelson, 'England and the Continent in the Ninth Century III: Rights and Rituals', *TRHS* 6th ser. 14 (2004), 1–24; S. Esders and H. J. Mierau, *Der althochdeutsche Klerikereid. Bischöfliche Diözesangewalt, kirchliches Benefizialwesen und volkssprachliche Rechtspraxis im frühmittelalterlichen Baiern* (Hannover, 2000); and A. Rio, *The Formularies of Angers and Marculf. Two Merovingian Legal Handbooks* (Liverpool, 2008).

documents were fairly widely used. In local churches knowledge was kept fresh of legal formulae useful for providing documents for various eventualities, to suit users' needs. In the ninth century, seepage of customary legal procedures of oath-swearing and oath-helping into canon law shows the importance of such knowledge rooted in local trust and social practice, with power to sustain social relationships and to modify late antique law in line with new needs.

Charlemagne's *Capitulare de villis* shows something like such an interface between landlordship and estate-management on the one hand and peasants' agricultural know-how on the other. Surviving estate documents like lists of renders of produce, and full-scale estate surveys in the form of polyptychs, indicate the survival and modification of Roman techniques of land-management in many parts of the post-Roman world, not least the Carolingian heartlands.²² Eileen Power in *Medieval People* used polyptych evidence to generate an imaginative reconstruction of the lived lives of a farming couple typifying gendered knowledge and action, Bodo's strong hands at the plough or cart, Ermentrude's deft ones at the loom.²³ Such applied *scientia* extended beyond great churches and great magnates to their tenants: knowledgeable peasants, on whose information depended the records of land-management and woodland-management themselves. Archaeologists have in some cases been able to prove the reality of the fortifications constructed for churches and communities and recorded in ninth- and tenth-century historical writing.²⁴ I would not

²² C. Wickham, 'Problems of Comparing Rural Societies in Early Medieval Western Europe', *TRHS* 6th ser. 2 (1992), 221–46, repr. in his, *Land and Power. Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400–1200* (London, 1994), pp. 201–26; and J.-P. Devroey, *Études sur le grand domaine carolingien* (Aldershot, 1993).

²³ E. Power, *Medieval People* (Harmondsworth, 1924), ch. 1: 'The Peasant Bodo. Life on a Country Estate in the Time of Charlemagne'.

²⁴ B. Dearden, 'Charles the Bald's Fortified Bridge at Pitres (Seine): Recent Archaeological Excavations', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 11 (1989), 107–12; and F. Verhaeghe, 'Urban Developments in the Age of Charlemagne', in *Charlemagne*.

attribute these public works to their planners' assiduous reading of late antique military or architectural manuals. There was plenty of *scientia* here gained from observation or hearsay of contemporary works elsewhere of fortified bridges on both sides of the Channel, for instance; and there was knowledge passed down through generations of practical men. Not before the twelfth century does written record survive of specialists in the construction of water-mills; but there must have been such people centuries earlier, given the proliferation of mills in local charters and in estate surveys (polyptychs), and now, archaeological evidence from a number of sites.²⁵ Who had the knowledge to maintain the system of signal beacons in the Seine valley which Nithard just happens to mention operating in 841?²⁶ There may be some connection here with Charlemagne's restoration of the lighthouse at Boulogne, but a likelier one is with the monks, the *milites*, and the navigators, of rich trading abbeys near the mouth of the Seine, Jumièges and St-Wandrille, and last but not least their abbots gazing knowledgeably out from riverine landing-stages towards the open sea. When Archbishop Ebo of Rheims (d. 851), defeated in factional strife, needed to make a quick getaway to Denmark via 'the Belgic region', he found good guides in *quidam Nortmanni* who knew the route and the ports on the sea-coast and the river-estuaries: maritime *scientia*.²⁷

I want now to examine more closely four cases of on-off relationships between knowledge and power. My first example centres on an individual, Gottschalk, scion of Saxon nobles, involuntary oblate to the monastery of Fulda, would-be re-entrant

Empire and Society, ed. J. Story (Manchester, 2005), pp. 259–87 (with further references).

²⁵ A. Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 68–9.

²⁶ Nithard, *Historiae*, iii.3 (ed. and transl. Lauer, p. 94): 'more maritime signa in locis congruis atque custodias deputavit'.

²⁷ Flodoard, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, ii.20 (M. Stratmann, ed., *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, MGH Scriptorum 36 (Hannover, 1998), p. 184).

into secular life, victim of the ecclesiastical powers that were who silenced his arguments from secular law and imposed their readings of canon law. For a while Gottschalk escaped, thanks to his finding of alternative power on the coast of the Adriatic: the favour of the great magnate Marquis Eberhard of Friuli, and of a Croatian prince, Tripomir.²⁸ Gottschalk's combination of theological *sapientia* and poetic skills made him a trophy scholar in a world where new princely courts were challenging royalty's grip on high-cultural patronage. Gottschalk needed this alternative *potestas* of princes more than they needed his knowledge. Tripomir and Eberhard dropped Gottschalk, and he ended up in a monastic prison to which king and bishops held the keys.

My second story is a happier one: it is that of Ottar, or Ohthere, the Norwegian chieftain and sea-captain who combined the roles of taker of tribute (*gafol*) from the Sammi of Lapland, and trader with them and others on the coasts of the Baltic from Russia to Denmark and thence westward to Wessex. The know-how Ohthere needed to bring all this off reminds me of those early modern merchant venturers to Hudson's Bay and the St. Lawrence estuary, and to Russia, where they doubled as envoys from Elizabeth I to Ivan the Terrible. Ohthere, knowing some, at least, of the Sammi's hundred different words for different kinds of reindeer, knew the value of things. Addressing his lord, King Alfred (871–99), Ohthere described the dues he had taken from the people in the far north of Norway: 'on deora fellum 7 on fugela feðerum 7 hwales bane 7 on þæm sciprapum þe beoð of hwæles hyde geworht 7 of seoles. Æghwilt gylt be hys gebyrdum: se byrdesta sceall gyldan fiftyne mearðes fell 7 fif hranes 7 an beran fel 7 tyn ambra feðra 7 berenne kyrtel oððe yterenne 7 twegen sciprapas; ægþer sy syxtig elna lang: oþer sy of

²⁸ For further references on Gottschalk's patrons, see P. J. E. Kershaw, 'Eberhard of Friuli, a Carolingian Lay Intellectual', in *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. P. Wormald and J. L. Nelson (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 77–105.

hwæles hyde geworht, oper of sioles'.²⁹ That was just those of highest rank! Ohthere also hunted walrus; and whatever he had gathered by tribute or hunting, he took to such trading-places as Hedeby in Denmark, or – presumably – the court of Alfred, who maybe, like Charlemagne, wore a jacket of martenskin or otterskin, but no doubt would have given his eye-teeth for some 60-ell ship-ropes.³⁰ Who had the knowledge to make those ropes?³¹ I imagine the rope-makers rather as feisty Sammi women, with expertise of such huge social and commercial value as be invaluable to anyone that depended on ships with sails. Ohthere told the tale of his voyages to *his blaforde* King Alfred; and evidently the things Ohthere had to offer, or rather sell, so impressed and gratified the king that Ohthere was assured of a write-up, and immortality, in an interpolated section in the Old

²⁹ J. Bately and A. Englert, ed., *Ohthere's Voyages. A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages Along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and Its Cultural Context*, Maritime Culture of the North 1 (Roskilde, 2007), p. 46. 'The skins of beasts, the feathers of birds, whale-bone, ship-ropes made from walrus-hide and sealskin. Each pays according to his rank. Those of highest rank have to pay 15 marten skins, five reindeer skins, one bear-skin, ten measures of feathers, a jacket of bearskin or otterskin, and two ship-ropes, each 60 ells long, one made from walrus hide the other of seal' (I cite, with some very minor changes, Janet Bately's excellent translation of the Old English text – see also below n. 32).

³⁰ Charlemagne's jacket: Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, ch. 23 (ed. Holder-Egger, p. 28; and transl. Lewis, p. 77); Charlemagne's measures to control trade in those and other high-value items: *Capitularia* I, no. 52 (*Capitula cum primis constituta* (808)), c. 5 (A. Boretius, ed., *Capitularia regum Francorum I*, MGH Leges 2.1 (Hannover, 1883), p. 140).

³¹ For further references on ropes in the Scandinavian world, I am very grateful to Erik Niblaeus, who referred me to H. Stigum, 'Reip', in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon till nordisk medeltid* XIV, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1982), cols. 11–13, and translated for me the following passage from L. Holm-Olsen, ed., *Konungs skuggsjá* (Oslo, 1945), p. 29: 'the walrus's skin is thick and good for ropes, and men cut such strong cords from it that sixty men or more can pull at one rope and it still not snap'. Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555), pp. 21–29, commented on the strength and high value of walrus-skin ship-ropes.

English translation of Orosius' *Historiae*.³² There is one more snippet of evidence: Ohthere came from, or at least knew well, the Lofoten Islands in the far north of Norway; and there, at a place called Borg, archaeologists have excavated inside what they take to be a chieftain's residence, a small object (25 millimetres long) made of gold that rather resembles the head of one of King Alfred's *æstels*.³³ If that's what it is, then Ohthere received a mark of distinction from the king, signifying the lord-man relationship between them, an acknowledgement of Alfred's power, and, perhaps, that the voyager accepted Christian baptism and promised (like Alfred's own children) to make use of (Christian) books with the *æstel's* aid. Did Ohthere on his return journey bring home a vector of *sapientia*? Or did he treat his *æstel* as an exchangeable commodity? As far as we can tell, his relationship with Alfred was not just on-off, but a one-off. Ohthere may well have had other lords, and certainly other clients; and in his sailor-ish way he set off again on some new tide, and back to the Baltic.

Example three is a collective rather than an individual one: the Irish scholars of the eighth and ninth centuries who travelled to and around the Continent in search of knowledge and bringing knowledge of their own, and thereby acquired a certain social power. David Dumville gave a comprehensive account of them in his Inaugural

³² For the context of the survival of Ohthere's report, see J. Bately, 'Ohthere and Wulfstan in the Old English *Orosius*', in *Ohthere's Voyages*, ed. Bately and Englert, pp. 18–39, with comment at p. 32, on Ohthere's addressing his report to Alfred as 'his lord' (and for the Old English text and translation, see p. 44).

³³ B. Yorke, *Catalogue of the Exhibition on the Alfred Jewel, Winchester City Museum* (Winchester, 2008), pp. 15–20, esp. p. 17; and D. A. Hinton, *The Alfred Jewel* (Oxford, 2008), esp. pp. 32–3 and 36–9. I am very grateful to Barbara Yorke and David Hinton for their help on the Borg *æstel*.

Lecture at Cambridge.³⁴ It ended with the original three men in a boat, as recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* s.a. 891:

7 þrie Scottas comon to Ełfrede cyninge on anum bate butan ełcum gereþrum of Hibernia, þonon hi hi bestelon, forþon þe hi hi woldon for Godes lufan on elpiodignesse beon, hi ne rohton hwæt. Se bat wæs geworht of þridan healfre hyde þe hi on foron, 7 hi namon mid him þæt hi hæfdun to seofon nihtum mete, 7 þa comon hie ymb .vii. niht to londe on Cornwalum 7 foron þa sona to Ełfrede cyninge. Þus hie wæron genemnde, Dubslane 7 Macbethu 7 Maelinmun.³⁵

This story has been considered a wonderful example of what Irishness meant in that early medieval world: an addiction to *peregrinatio*, a pitch for unworldliness, a cheerful self-confidence, above all infectious enthusiasm – and I would add, a tendency to turn up at courts. Compare Notker the Stammerer's account, written more or less contemporaneously with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* story just cited, about two *Scotti de Hibernia* fetching up, *cum mercatoribus Britannis*, at a market-place which was nicely-situated very close to

³⁴ D. Dumville, *Three Men in a Boat: Scribe, Language and Culture in the Church of Viking-Age Europe*, Inaugural Lecture in the University of Cambridge (Cambridge, 1997).

³⁵ J. Batley, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition, vol. 3: MS A* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 54 (I quote the translation of S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, transl., *Alfred the Great. Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 113–14); see for these Irishmen and their motives, Dumville, *Three Men in a Boat*, pp. 55–62. 'And three Irishmen came to King Alfred in a boat without any oars from Ireland, whence they had stolen away because they wished to go on pilgrimage, they cared not where. The boat in which they travelled was made from two and a half hides; and they took with them only enough food for seven days. And after seven days they came to land in Cornwall, and then went immediately to King Alfred. Their names were Dubslaine, Macbethath, and Maelinmuin'.

Charlemagne's *sedes*, and offering *sapientia* at their stall.³⁶ Dumville suggested that what mostly drove his Irish *peregrini* was fear of the vikings. That push factor may be all very well. But I think there were some powerful pull factors that drew them to Alfred, to Charlemagne, to Charles the Bald (840–77), to Bishop Hartgar of Liège. What was special about their knowledge?

The Irish had books of quite exceptional usefulness to ninth-century elites: Pseudo-Cyprian, *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*, which among much else includes tiny mirrors-for-princes in reverse for *reges* and *duces*; and canon law incorporating all you needed to know from the Old Testament. Some of the Irish had Greek. They had a can-do approach to life. They could turn their hands to glossing texts and gutting texts, to writing customised poetry for all seasons. They were, as Dumville says, 'enthusiastic', yes, but they were also men who adapted their lore to utilitarian ends: they were men with *scientia*. I have mentioned the spilling of ink on the subject of Gelasius's 'two there are'; another notable instance is ink expended on filling the gaps in the careers of Irish scholars. Where was Eriugena when the royal patronage-light went out? Where was Sedulius when the bishop of Liège no longer needed his services? – or maybe it wasn't that way round – maybe the Irishman withdrew his services for a while, turned to another patron, or even turned again to wandering *pro Christo*. Those three men in a boat apparently did not plan to stay at Alfred's court. According to the tenth-century Æthelweard's version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, they meant to move on to Rome, and thence travel to Jerusalem.³⁷ Here, for whatever reason, the relationship

³⁶ Notker, *Gesta Karoli magni imperatoris*, i.1 (H. Haefele, ed., *Notker der Stammler: Taten Karls des Grossen*, MGH SRG, n. s. 12 (Berlin, 1959), p. 1).

³⁷ Æthelweard, *Chronicon* (A. Campbell, ed., *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (London, 1962), p. 48). That Æthelweard and the compiler of *ASC MS A* shared a common source, different from, and earlier than, the source used by Asser and, at several removes, by the rest of the *ASC* manuscripts, was demonstrated by

between knowledge and power seems unstable. But that may be to misunderstand our Irishmen, elusive because they resist pigeonholing as carpet-baggers. They made 'immediately' for Alfred's court not in pursuit of the permanent berth his power could provide, but precisely because they knew that king both loved wisdom and had *scientia* which included recent active contacts with both pope and patriarch. From an Irish perspective, Winchester, say, was an eminently suitable, and useful, staging-post for Jerusalem, and *elphiodignesse* meant what it said.

My last example is from the tribe of women. Now of women in general I'll say only that in their maternal capacity they were teachers of the young, and that high-born *potentes feminae* were 'especially' responsible (according to a church council in 845) for the religious education of all of the *familia*, the aristocratic household.³⁸ This was to credit *potentes feminae* with knowledge of no mean kind. One of the women-tribe we can still hear through her own words: Dhuoda, author of a moral guidebook for her son as he reached adulthood and joined the court of a king. Dhuoda wrote at home, where she lived, as she modestly put it, 'inter dignas ... indigne'.³⁹ Though she belonged, she said, to the frail sex, she was actually a *femina* of the potent kind. I can only urge you to read her book! – as she told her own son to read it. 'Habebis doctores qui te plura et ampliora utilitatis doceant documenta, sed non aequali conditione, animo ardentis in pectore, sicut ego genitrix tua'.⁴⁰ Isidore, whose *Etymologiae* were known to

Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and Textual Relationships*, Reading Medieval Studies Monograph 3 (Reading, 1991), pp. 41–5 and 59–62.

³⁸ Council of Meaux-Paris (845), c. 70 (A. Boretius and V. Krause, ed., *Capitularia regum Francorum II*, MGH Leges 2.2 (Hannover, 1897), p. 419).

³⁹ Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, prologue (M. Thiébaux, ed. and transl., *Dhuoda, Handbook for her Warrior Son. Liber Manualis* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 46–7). 'Unworthy among worthy women' (my translation).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, i.7 (ed. and transl. Thiébaux, p. 70). 'You will have men-teachers who may teach you more examples of usefulness, my son, but they will not be in a

Dhuoda, had explained *mater* as cognate with *materia*, 'matter', hence passive, whereas the *genitor* had the active role of 'bringer-forth', or 'cause'.⁴¹ In choosing to call herself *genitrix*, then, (and she did so more than once), Dhuoda claimed an active part in her son's bringing to second, spiritual, birth.⁴² Further, Dhuoda wanted to teach more people than just her own son and his little brother. At the very beginning of her book, she said that she had spent time *in palatio*; and she regretted her absence from that 'dom[us] etenim magna ... [ubi] collationes conferuntur multae', in which she now imagined her son, and imagined her book guiding him.⁴³ At her book's beginning, and again at its end, Dhuoda said she addressed not just her offspring but 'necnon etiam et illos ad quos hunc libellum ad relegendum ostenderis'.⁴⁴ Her sense of being at a distance from her son and from the place of power where he was, and in which she wished her own voice to be heard, was hardly less than her confidence in the knowledge she had to impart. Dhuoda's on-off relationship with each of her sons, and with the court itself as a place of power, was one she regretted and even resented, rather as, if the late Donald Bullough was right, Alcuin after 796 regretted and resented his absence from Aachen. For in both cases, absence was not voluntary but imposed, directly or indirectly, by a king's power to order and exclude.

position equal to mine, and with a heart burning in my breast as have I, your mother' (my translation).

⁴¹ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ix.5.3 (W. M. Lindsay, ed., *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911) I, 375). See the introduction of Thiébaux, *Dhuoda*, p. 28.

⁴² See J. L. Nelson, 'Dhuoda', in *Lay Intellectuals*, ed. Wormald and Nelson, pp. 106–20, at 113–14.

⁴³ Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, praefatio and iii.9 (ed. and transl. Thiébaux, pp. 48 and 106–8). 'A great house ... of many conversations' (my translation).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, i.1 and x.6 (ed. and transl. Thiébaux, pp. 58 and 228). 'All to whom you may show this book, and have them read it too' (my translation).

Knowledge in the end craves access to power for its realisation – or, to put that less abstractly, those who know (or think they know) want to teach, amplify and apply their knowledge by attaching themselves to those with the resources to put ideas into effect. Happy the land whose king is a philosopher! But the next best thing is a king willing to support philosophers. The earlier Middle Ages were blessed in having some rather well-documented examples of kings who combined knowledge and power (never forget what was truly extraordinary about Charlemagne and Alfred!), or applied their power to the diffusing of others' knowledge. One major prerequisite was an appreciation of media relevant to message. The song I began with, 'Love and marriage', may seem an improbable comparator for the *carmina* cultivated at the courts of Charlemagne and Alfred, yet its homespun, even platitudinous, brand of moral wisdom ('Dad was told by Mother/You can't have one without the other') was not so very far away from the wisdom of Solomon, the Biblical book of Proverbs, or for that matter the Old English *Poems of Wisdom and Learning*, or, *mutatis mutandis*, the epic *Waldbere* and its Old High German analogues, and even the Latin *Waltharius*. More important, perhaps, what all these 'songs' had in common was that they were endowed with an orality, and/or a vernacularity, that made them memorable and meaningful. *Pace* Alcuin, who apparently told Charlemagne (probably in the context of an episcopal election) not to believe those who said, *Vox populi, vox Dei*,⁴⁵ many people in the earlier Middle Ages liked songs that, precisely because they were 'popular', could be considered apt media of both knowledge and power.

⁴⁵ Alcuin, ep. 132 (E. Dümmler, ed., *Epistolae Karolini Aevi II*, MGH Epistolae IV (Berlin, 1895), p. 199). For illuminating comment on context and later applications, see E. M. Peters, 'Vox populi, vox Dei', in *Law in Medieval Life and Thought*, ed. E. B. King and S. J. Ridyard, Sewanee Medieval Studies 5 (Sewanee, TN, 1990), pp. 91–120.

Changing Scripts: a Case Study of the Use of Different Scripts in the Bilingual Text of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 178, Part B

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INTRODUCTION: ORIGIN OF CAROLINE MINUSCULE AND
ITS INTRODUCTION IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

The birth, development and ultimate success of the so-called Caroline minuscule must be asserted within the influence of the Carolingian empire and the educational and monastic revival carried out during the eighth and ninth centuries.¹ More particularly, during 'the reign[s] of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious' which 'saw a remarkable expansion in the copying of manuscripts throughout the ... empire and a steady increase in uniformity about the choice of scripts in which texts were copied'.² 'The tendency toward discipline, order and harmony ... present in the script'³ did certainly facilitate its progress as did its clarity and roundness.⁴ Originally used in the area of Corbie, it would rapidly spread throughout the Carolingian realm and beyond, reaching from Spain to Iceland in the eleventh century.

The aforementioned ecclesiastical and educational reform sprang from the necessity that the ruling elite felt to implement changes in

¹ For a discussion and a list of the earliest specimens of Caroline minuscule see D. Ganz, 'The Preconditions for Caroline Minuscule', *Viator* 18 (1987), 23–43.

² D. Ganz, 'Book Production in the Carolingian Empire and the Spread of Caroline Minuscule', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. II: c.700–c.900*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 786–808, at p. 786.

³ B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, transl. D. O'Croinin and D. Ganz (Cambridge, 1990), p. 112.

⁴ Ganz, 'Book Production', p. 797.

both education and monastic life.⁵ However this may have been, a single leading figure seems to stand out: Benedict of Aniane, who supplemented the original *Rule* composed by Benedict of Monte Cassino (which he considered to be for beginners) and promulgated the Aachen *Capitula*. By this, he intended to assure a unified observance throughout the monasteries and nunneries of the empire. The question remains as to whether this would apply, not only to the lifestyle of each community, but also to the letterforms used in their scriptoria. The new script posed little problem for new scribes as it was based on a reduced number of strokes which required 'limited calligraphic skills' and came to be easier to learn than most scripts of the time.⁶ Thus, its simplicity and quickness would ensure a scriptural unification parallel to that of the observance.

After its undisputable triumph on the Continent and at a late date, the introduction of Caroline minuscule to Anglo-Saxon England took place in different stages during the tenth century, although there is reason to believe that examples of Carolingian features regarding decoration, layout and even script must have reached England as early as the first half of the ninth century.⁷ Nevertheless, it was during the Benedictine revival around the 960s, that the Caroline form was publicly acknowledged and acquired its status as the script selected

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 801.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 798.

⁷ D. Dumville, 'English Square Minuscule Script: the Background and Earliest Phases', *ASE* 16 (1987), 147–79, at p. 154, and *English Caroline Script and Monastic History: Studies in Benedictinism, A. D. 950–1030* (Woodbridge, 1993), p. 16. The 'wide external contacts' of the reign of Æthelstan (924–939) seem to have provided a favourable context for the entrance and success of the Continental script into England. Royal support, together with the 'first manifestations of reformed monasticism' gave the new system a decisive boost. On Æthelstan, see Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 17; and S. Keynes, 'King Athelstan's Books' in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 143–201, at pp. 147–51.

for those books 'containing texts of ideological importance'.⁸ In his *English Caroline Script and Monastic History*, David Dumville points out that the reformers led by Æthelwold and Dunstan 'may have suspected that the development of the script was coeval with the Carolingian [ecclesiastical (and educational)] reforms in which they were finding inspiration'.⁹ That would explain why, although for most of the tenth century English scriptoria had only used Anglo-Saxon minuscule in their works, both in documents and books, the typically square shapes found in the vernacular texts of the time were soon to be 'in competition with Caroline minuscule, which [would eventually become] the major script for writing in Latin'.¹⁰

The strong Continental links established by the leaders of the English church in the mid-tenth century, were best symbolized by the frequent visits of Anglo-Saxon churchmen to diverse houses in northern France and Flanders as well as by the presence of some of their Continental colleagues at key reforming events, such as the Council of Winchester (c. 973), where the *Regularis Concordia* was sanctioned.¹¹ Although they were certainly more concerned with a better understanding and application of the precepts of the *Rule* itself, Dunstan, Osgar (one of Æthelwold's foremost disciples) and Oswald (among others), did surely bring back with them the conviction that the new script was the most appropriate vehicle to spread the ideals of the reform throughout Edgar's realm.

⁸ Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, pp. 16–17.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ J. Roberts, *Guide to Scripts Used in English Writings up to 1500* (London, 2005), p. 40. For the different stages of Square minuscule in the first half of the tenth century see Dumville, 'Earliest Phases', pp. 147–79, and 'English Square Minuscule Script: the Mid-Century Phases', *ASE* 23 (1994), 133–64.

¹¹ On the council and the *Regularis Concordia* see T. Symons, ed., *Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque* (London, 1953); and D. Parsons, ed., *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and 'Regularis Concordia'* (London, 1975).

PARALLEL EVOLUTION OF CAROLINE AND ANGLO-SAXON MINUSCULE
By the end of the tenth century, 'the differentiation of scripts by linguistic function' had become noticeable.¹² In the early eleventh century the use of the Caroline script for Latin and Anglo-Saxon minuscule for the vernacular seems completely established as the norm and thus we find bilingual manuscripts and documents such as a diploma of King Æthelred 'the Unready' where both languages keep the main differences between the two scripts.¹³ Besides, it is not uncommon to find a single hand writing in both languages and thus changing scripts as he/she moves from one language to the other. Such is the case in the bilingual copy of the *Rule of Chrodegang* preserved in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 191 where a single scribe from the third quarter of the eleventh century managed to produce two neat performances keeping a clear separation between the Continental and vernacular letter-forms.¹⁴

As could be expected, once the new script spread through the realm, different local features emerged. T. A. M. Bishop described the first two of these in the introduction to his memorable *English Caroline Minuscule* back in 1971. 'Style I', as he named it, has a 'monumental' and 'rotund aspect' and remains mainly free from local variations. It is found in royal diplomas (as in one of Edgar for Abingdon),¹⁵ and is normally associated with Æthelwold and the

¹² Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, pp. 18–19; and Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, pp. 9, 15 and 20.

¹³ S 898 (A.D. 1001); London, British Library, Cotton Augustus ii. 22 (s.x/xi).

¹⁴ See Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, art. 28, pl. XXIV; N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), art. 46; B. Langefeld, *The Old English Version of the Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang* (Frankfurt am Main, 2003), pp. 18 and 74–5; and P. R. Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737–1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 1988) I, 53 and pl. 24. Ker believed this is actually the work of two scribes, but did not offer any evidence: see Ker, *Catalogue*, p. 74.

¹⁵ S 690 (A.D. 961); London, British Library, Cotton Augustus ii 39 (s. x^{med}). See Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, art. 11, pl. IX.

houses he reformed or directed (mainly those in Winchester).¹⁶ His benedictional remains as a good example of this.¹⁷ Initially, his area of influence would also include Oswald's diocese. It is no surprise then that some early examples of this style come from the scriptoria at Worcester and Ramsey. The so-called 'Oswald's cartulary' is one of the best examples,¹⁸ while there remains the question whether the Latin text in Oxford, Corpus Christi College 197, the oldest extant copy of the bilingual RSB, is also a product of one of these scriptoria.¹⁹

On the other hand, Bishop's 'Style II' offers 'a great variety of forms', normally narrower than those in the previous style, and is therefore 'easier for the average English scribe'. Overall, it seems to 'represent a relatively relaxed attitude to the Continental minuscule'.²⁰ This style is normally found in specimens from the houses under the influence of Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (including St. Augustine's and Christ Church as well as Glastonbury). One relevant

¹⁶ There is no extant evidence for the use of Caroline minuscule before the middle of the eleventh century in Abingdon, the other main house under Æthelwold's influence. See Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 18, esp. n. 50.

¹⁷ London, British Library, Add. 49598. See Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, n. 12 and pl. X. For the latest complete facsimile see A. Prescott, *The Benedictional of St Æthelwold: a Masterpiece of Anglo-Saxon Art. A Facsimile* (London, 2002).

¹⁸ London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. xiii (s. xi¹–xi ex.). See Ker, *Catalogue*, art. 190 and 'Hemming's Cartulary: a Description of the Two Worcester Cartularies in Cotton Tiberius A. xiii' in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke*, ed. R.W. Hunt et al. (Oxford, 1948), pp. 49–75 and repr. in *Books, Collectors and Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. M. B. Watson (London, 1985), pp. 31–59.

¹⁹ Ker *Catalogue*, art. 353, pl. II. See also Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, pp. 19–48; and F. J. Álvarez López, 'The Palaeography of Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 197', *The Proceedings of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies Postgraduate Conference 1* (2005) at <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/mancass/epapers/> <accessed on 8 December 2007>, p. 2.

²⁰ Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 3; also Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, p. 112.

example here would be Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 708, a copy of Gregory the Great's *Liber Pastoralis* from Christ Church, Canterbury.²¹

SCRIPT EVOLUTION AT WORCESTER

The role of Worcester in the production of Caroline minuscule ('Style I') during the time of the Benedictine Reform under the guidance of Oswald has been thoroughly stated before by Bishop and Dumville,²² as were its connections with Æthelwold's houses at Winchester, formulated by Mechthild Gretsch.²³ Despite a certain lack of evidence, scholarship has been able to trace this parallel usage with reasonable success back to the original centre of the Benedictine reformation: Fleury. The aforesaid visits there of Oswald and Osgar are possibly behind the initial use of a very Continental-like script ('Style I') in the houses under their influence during the mid-tenth century.²⁴ However, the new century brought in some English developments, particularly at Canterbury and Worcester, and it is precisely in this period when the 'pure' style of Caroline minuscule begins to show some unmistakably Anglo-Saxon features.²⁵

Still one of the key scriptoria during the second generation of reformers, Worcester developed a particular style which Dumville named 'Style III'.²⁶ As he notes, in the three or four decades before

²¹ See Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, n. 10 and pl. VIII.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. xvii and xxi–xxiii; and Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, ch. 2, esp. pp. 44–68.

²³ See M. Gretsch, 'Æthelwold's Translation of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* and its Latin Exemplar', *ASE* 3 (1974), 125–51, at p. 133.

²⁴ Bishop pointed out the possibility that Dunstan had introduced the Caroline script from exile. See his *English Caroline Minuscule*, pp. xviii and xxi.

²⁵ It was in Canterbury where a new insular style of English Caroline, the so-called 'Style IV', developed after the example of Eadwig Basan. See Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, pp. 136–7; and Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, pp. xx–xxiii and 20, n. 1.

²⁶ Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, pp. 68–75.

Wulfstan became prior and later bishop (1062–95), 'cultural activity seems to have been at a low level and scriptorial standards consequently poor'.²⁷ However, the scarce witnesses from that scriptorium which seem to have survived offer an interesting picture of the state of Anglo-Caroline script in the first decade(s) of the eleventh century. Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Reg. lat. 1671 contains a significant copy of Virgil's texts showing the work of four different hands. While hands ii and iv illustrate forms of 'Style I', hands i and iii reflect a new, apparently hesitant fashion.²⁸ The angular shapes of some letters such as *c* or *e*, the long ascenders and descenders turned back (leftwards) seem to be the most significant features of a purposeful approach which translates 'hesitation into a deliberate art-form'.²⁹

CAMBRIDGE, CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, 178, PART B

Another example of this distinct style can be found in a manuscript which was bound with a copy of Ælfric's *Homilies* (Part A) probably some time during the thirteenth century.³⁰ Being 'outside the main categories of English Caroline',³¹ Part B of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 178, provides another example of the transformation that Anglo-Caroline minuscule was undergoing at Worcester. The uniform round aspect of the Continental script which had been kept to a certain extent at Winchester and Worcester at a first stage ('Style I') was now abandoned to a more relaxed format allowing plenty of

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ For a description of this manuscript see Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, 17, item 19. He also provides a plate (XIX) from fol. 90r showing hand iii. Similarly, Dumville provides two plates (VI and VII) showing hands i, ii and iv.

²⁹ Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 70.

³⁰ See Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, art. 22; M. Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. An Illustrated Catalogue* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1997), p. 548; and Ker, *Catalogue*, art. 41B.

³¹ Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, p. 20.

local features. Its markedly individual characteristics give evidence of a distinct (albeit chronologically short) fashion which must have developed under Archbishop Wulfstan (1002–1016) but which ‘may have been too mannered to prove successful at that time and place, giving way fairly quickly therefore to more rapid, less formal styles’.³²

Both the Latin and the Old English of this copy of the *Regula* were written by a single hand from p. 287 to p. 457 of the composite volume. The scribe’s performance in the first case has been described by Dumville and ascribed to ‘Style-III Anglo-Caroline Minuscule’.³³ He relies mainly on ‘some sharper angles than were customary in Style I ... , some examples of pointed non-Caroline *a*, and proportions changing towards those found in the book’s vernacular script’.³⁴ In fairness, a close comparison of both scripts brings about the following results: *a* does not tend to differ greatly from the pointed shape found in the Old English;³⁵ both *o*³⁶ and the head of *g* are quite angular while the latter’s descender is somehow similar to the vernacular though not normally closed;³⁷ wedged ascenders are almost identical in both sets of letter-forms and a similar *ductus* pervades the scribe’s entire performance.³⁸

³² Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 75.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9 and 69. As previously mentioned, Bishop describes the Latin script simply as ‘outside the main category of English Caroline’: Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, p. 20.

³⁴ Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 69.

³⁵ See, for example, on p. 383/22 *habent monachi*.

³⁶ See, for example, on p. 334/11 *lectiones de nouo testamento*.

³⁷ See also Budny, *Manuscript Art at Corpus*, p. 548.

³⁸ See pp. 27–31 below for a fuller study of the similarities between both scripts.

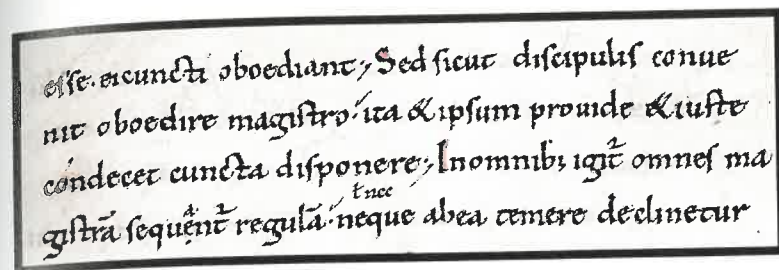


Figure 1: CCCC,178, p.302.

Described by Ker merely as ‘a pointed hand’, the vernacular copy represents a rather late stage of Anglo-Saxon minuscule and is commonly dated to the first half of the eleventh century.³⁹ Except for a few letters, the scribe did not find it necessary to use different forms in the two languages. Thus, the basic minims are identical (*m*, *n*, *u*, *i*) and so are the ascenders (perhaps the only exception being *þ*, where we usually find a rather exaggerated wedge). From a visual point of view, the Latin text looks tidier, due to the absence of glosses as well as to the fact that the only descenders are those from *g*, *p* and *q*.⁴⁰ The spacing between words and their number per line is also rather similar.

³⁹ Ker, *Catalogue*, art. 41B. See also Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule*, p. 20; Dumville, *English Caroline Script*, p. 69; Gretsche, *Æthelwold’s Translation*, p. 126; and R. Jayatilaka ‘The Old English Benedictine Rule: Writing for Women and Men’, *ASE* 32 (2003), 147–87, at p. 154.

⁴⁰ Although *s* is high, it does not reach below the line.

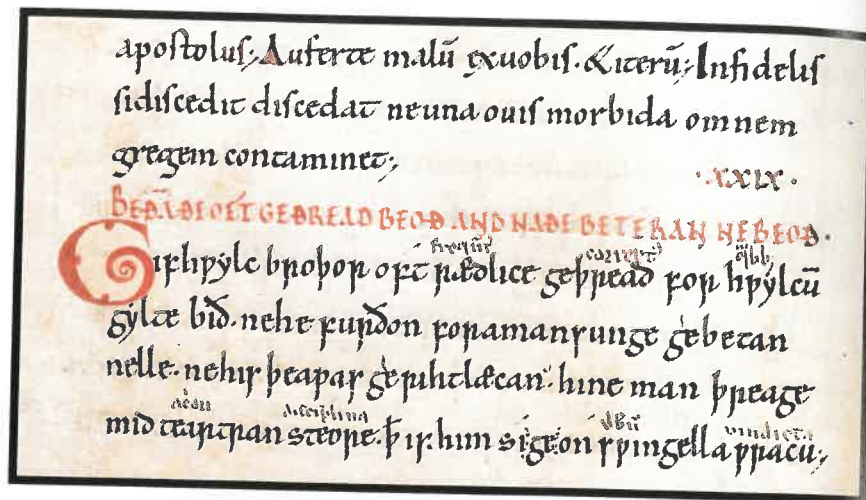


Figure 2: CCCC, 178, p. 362.

INFLUENCES

Although the scribe produced two close performances, he was certainly conscious of the key differences between the scripts and was able to maintain them throughout. Thus, he avoided the Caroline *s+t* ligature in the vernacular and used a form of *d* resembling that of *ð*. Also, he opted for spurred *e* instead of *ae* and only long *s* throughout the Latin version. Other relevant differences include the feet of *b*, and the use of low forms for both *r* and *f* in Old English. Nonetheless, the influence of the vernacular on the Caroline script is evident. From the proportions of each individual letter to a manifest lack of roundness, a simple look at any page where both languages are used is enough to perceive the similarity between both performances. The angular nature of *a*, *c*, *e*, *o* and the bows of *b*, *d*, *g* and *p* resemble those of their English counterparts. The descender of *p* in the Latin is formed in the same fashion as that of *f*, *p*, *r*, low *s* and *wynn* in the vernacular, showing a straight hook to the left on the top. Finally, the shape of *t* (when not ligatured with *s*) is also conspicuously the same used in the Old English translation.

On the other hand, although the influence of the Continental script on the vernacular may not seem significant at first sight, a closer study reveals that the shapes of two letters stand out as markedly influenced by Caroline minuscule. In the earliest part of the Old English rendering of the RSB, the scribe seemed determined to use a rather consistent vernacular script which included, firstly, a round and closed tail for letter *g*, perceptibly differentiated from that found in the Latin text. Similarly, we find a Caroline high *s* (along with a low shape and, most frequently, a round one). However, in what concerns these two letter-forms, uniformity is anything but maintained as the scribe's work progresses.

For over eighty pages *g* has the round and closed tail until on p. 373 (Figure 3) the scribe decides to give it an open descender, sometimes finished on an upward stroke, very much like that found in the Caroline script.⁴¹ From here onwards, the scribe seems to disregard the otherwise round shape but for a small number of instances where it is occasionally used, although never to achieve the same roundness again.⁴²

⁴¹ This change takes place abruptly in line 19 (Figure 3, line 10): *byth seo maste lufu godes 7 manna gestryned*. While the first *g* has the expected round and closed tail, the second shows the Caroline-like type.

⁴² Examples can be found in 375/9 *penunge*, 381/16 *geseald*, 446/2 *gesead*. On page 453, a round form seems to be used again with some degree of consistency (five times) in lines 19 and 20 just to be discarded again in the following line.

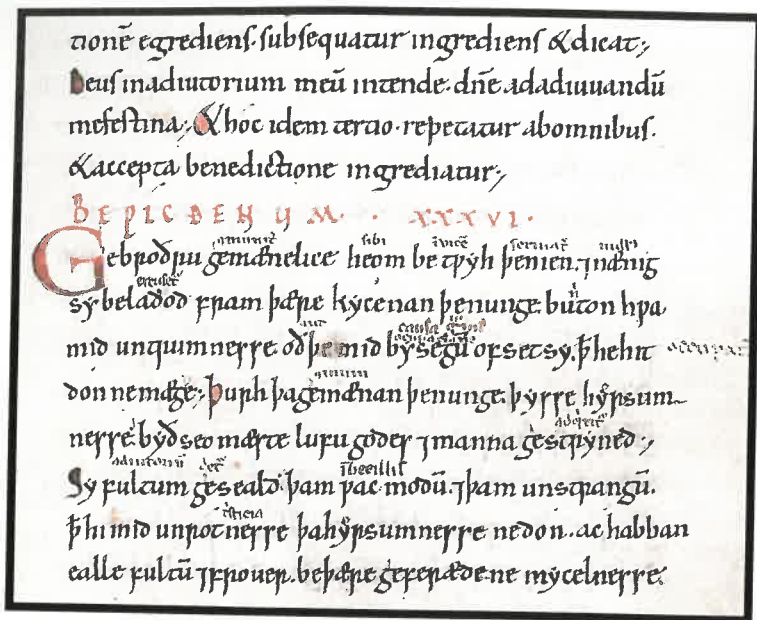


Figure 3: CCCC, 178, p. 373.

Regarding the use of Caroline *s*, it seems moderately regular at first where it can be seen in up to eleven different instances per page on pp. 299 and 300 (Figure 4).⁴³ However, from p. 310 (Figure 5, line 4) to p. 318 its usage becomes limited to one occasion per page (albeit not found in all of them), just to vanish completely from vernacular words up until p. 353 (Figure 6). Interestingly enough, this form is

⁴³ It is noteworthy that in twenty-five of the sixty-five instances where this type of *s* is used (from p. 291 to p. 318), it is found as the first element of the consonant cluster *st*. Examples can be found in 291/22, 292/7, 292/12, 292/18, 292/21, 297/8, 297/10, 298/6, 298/16, 298/22, 299/13, 299/19, 300/1, 300/2, 300/5, 300/17 (twice), 302/16, 302/21, 302/22, 303/2, 307/17, 307/22, 308/17 and 310/16.

used again in Old English in the last eighty pages. Although examples in this part of the copy are rather scarce, most of them share a peculiar feature: they are used at the end of the line.⁴⁴

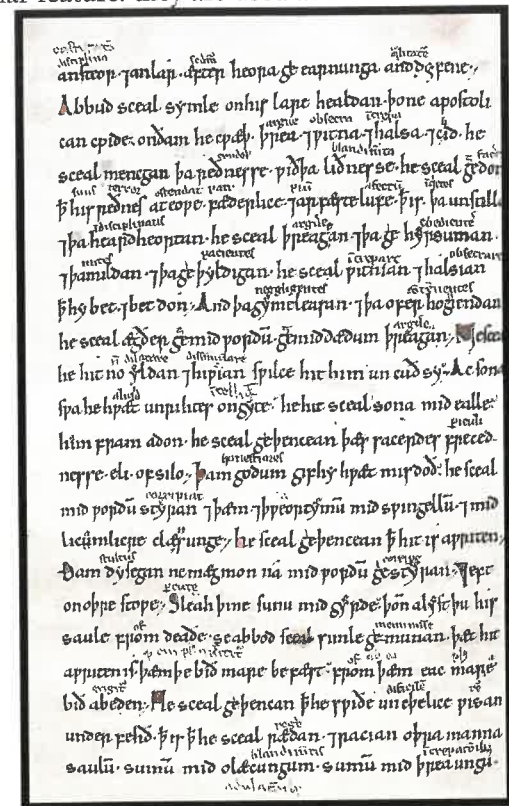


Figure 4: CCCC, 178, p. 300.

⁴⁴ Thirteen instances of high *s* are found in Old English words from p. 353 to the end. These are: 353/4 *byrdnesse*, 355/15 *resten*, 370/2 *gedyrst*, 370/9 *wylms/gan*, 371/19 *twadermes/se*, 379/10 *names*, 386/13 *muncas*, 403/18 *domes*, 409/22 *is*, 415/12 *godes*, 420/16 *dagas*, 421/6 *mondas*, 432/15 *pundennes/se*. In the underlined instances, the Caroline shape appears either at the end of the line or followed by a single letter.

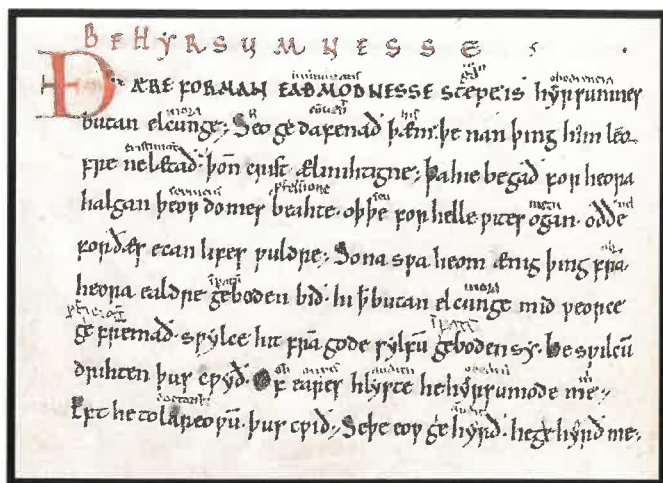


Figure 5: CCCC, 178, p. 310.

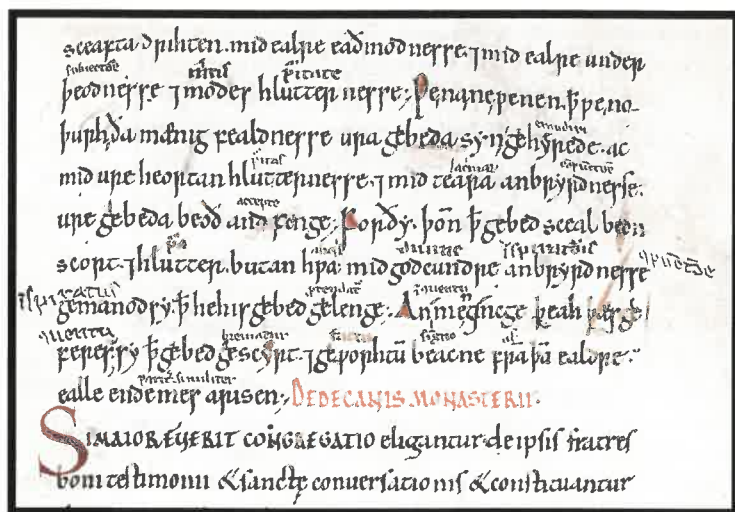


Figure 6: CCCC, 178, p. 353.

The inconsistency of the scribe's performance regarding these two letters is, to say the least, puzzling. First, he/she is unable to maintain a purely vernacular form of *g* throughout the Old English text, giving way to a form closer to that used in the Latin text. Then, he/she makes use of a Caroline shape in the first part of his copy just before discarding it and eventually rescuing and using it at line ends in the last section of the work. This lack of consistency may suggest a manifest lack of concentration on the part of the scribe; however, this possibility seems to be immediately refuted by his almost impeccable use of Caroline minuscule every time he quotes Latin words or texts within the vernacular translation.⁴⁵ Similarly, a potential claim regarding the participation of more than one hand in these instances of the text would immediately fail to stand any critical analysis due to the lack of any distinctive features. In my opinion, these changes may reflect the different stages of copying that this particular scribe went through. In the case of the round tail for the letter *g*, even after the scribe starts to use an angular shape on a regular basis (p. 373), he/she makes manifest efforts to return to the more formal style at the beginning of each of the following chapters. The unfruitfulness of those efforts is evident after just a few lines into each of these chapters.⁴⁶ The case of high *s* appears to be slightly more complicated as its use seems to undergo three different stages. The first of these seems to comprise the first two quires of Part B where this letter form is commonly used in the Old English, mainly attached to *t*. A second stage, of roughly the same extent (quires C and D), sees this only in Latin quotations. Finally, a wider portion of the text (quires E, F, G, H and I)⁴⁷ shows a return of the Caroline shape into the Old English, this time mainly used at line-ends. This structure seems to indicate, I believe, a rough parallel with the process of

⁴⁵ As found in 333/17, 340/4, 348/12 or most significantly in 422/20–2.

⁴⁶ See for example the first lines in chapters 36 (p. 376), 37 (p. 377) or 38 (p. 378).

⁴⁷ For quire structure see n. 14 above.

copying which, however, must have surely consisted of more than these three stages.⁴⁸ Thus, I suggest that the lack of consistency attested by these two letter forms is a direct consequence of both the natural, different stints that the copying of such a long text must always entail as well as a relaxation of the way in which the scribe regarded the role of the clearly defined scripts attached to each language.

CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of Caroline minuscule in Anglo-Saxon England stands as a turning point in the history of English scripts. It was not only the introduction of a new set of letter-forms bearing a 'powerful' ideological significance, but also the establishment of a bifold perspective in front of every scribe: two distinct and distinctive scripts were now available to copy texts in the two main languages of the period. This atypical situation, and the response given by the scribes, is certainly better observed in bilingual manuscripts, especially when copied by a single hand. Manuscripts such as the aforementioned CCCC, 191 or some of the bilingual copies of the RSB⁴⁹ offer relevant instances of 'scribe-response' when under the pressure of using two sets of letterforms within the same text.

As argued before, the copy of the RSB in CCCC, 178, part B shows a hesitant hand that, despite a good deal of effort, was unable to establish a clear and neat border between the forms he/she used in the Latin and those in the vernacular. Probably owing to earlier training in the native style, the scribe is unable to free the forms of

⁴⁸ On the process of copying manuscripts and the scribes' speed see M. Gullick, 'How Fast Did Scribes Write? Evidence from Romanesque Manuscripts', in *Making the Medieval Book: Techniques of Production: Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500*, ed. Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1995), pp. 39–58, esp. pp. 42–4 and 48–52.

⁴⁹ Such as Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 197 (s. x²) or BL, Cotton Titus, A. IV (s. xi^{med}). See Ker, *Catalogue*, arts. 353 and 200.

the Caroline section from an underlying Anglo-Saxon appearance. This is most noticeable in the letter-forms common to both scripts. But this influence does work the other way round too. Thus, a few letters seem to escape the concentration of the scribe at times and appear in a more Continental fashion, regardless of any sort of consistency. In consequence, this manuscript stands as an example of the rather complex panorama of scribes trying to come to grips with different scripts and certainly struggling to avoid the amalgamation of both styles.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ I am greatly thankful to the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and, in particular to Gill Cannell, Sub-Librarian of the Parker Library, for allowing and facilitating the process of reproducing the images from C, CCC, 178. Also, I would like to thank Alex Rumble, Mike Spence and Rohini Jayatilaka for their comments and suggestions to an earlier version of this piece.

'In This Country, What Is Found in Books Is to Be Law':¹ Legal Knowledge, Literacy and the Shifting Spheres of Power in Commonwealth-Period Iceland

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In *Njáls saga*, the oral-period lawspeaker Skapti Þóroddsson, on being asked to confirm whether a particular argument is lawful, claims, “ætlaða ek, at ek einn munda nú kunna þessa lagaréttning, nú er Njáll er dauða, því at hann einn vissa ek kunna”.² Though the wisdom of being the *sole* possessor of such knowledge is somewhat questionable, and this is of course a literary exaggeration, the power of the lawspeaker naturally did depend on his having expert knowledge not widely available. Later, however, in a tortuous passage determined to thrash out a hierarchy of textual authority, a written text of the law-code *Grágás* would give precedence to ‘þat [...] er stendr a scröm þeim er byscopar eigo’.³ Moreover, the *Íslendingasögur* in general often seem to convey the impression of a society overrun with have-a-go lawyers just waiting for the opportunity to bring a lawsuit against their

¹ *Grágás*, K § 117 (A. Dennis, P. Foote and R. Perkins, transl., *Laws of Early Iceland: Grágás*, 2 vols., University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies 3 and 5 (Winnipeg, 1980–2000) I, 190). For the sake of consistency in legal terminology, I have adopted throughout this paper the translations from *Grágás* of Dennis, Foote and Perkins (as *Laws*). All other translations are my own.

² *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ch. 142 (Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ed., *Brennu-Njáls saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík, 1954), pp. 389–90). “I thought that I alone could know this article of law, now that Njáll is dead, because he was the only one I was aware of who knew it”.

³ *Grágás*, K § 117 (Vilhjálmur Finsen, ed., *Grágás: Islændernes Lovbog i Fristatens Tid, udgivet efter det Kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift*, 2 parts (Ia, Ib) (Copenhagen, 1852) Ia, 213; transl. *Laws* I, 190). ‘What is found in the books which the bishops own’.

neighbours. So who *did* have legal authority in medieval Iceland, and what advantages did it bring?

The bold claim made in the quotation from the laws in the title of this paper – that ‘þat scolo lög vera alande her sem áscrám standa’⁴ – suggests that once the written word was introduced to the legal domain, poor Skapti, or his successors to the lawspeakership, would have had no chance to withhold obscure details in order to make themselves indispensable: literate knowledge seems to have become decisive in gaining power in the legal sphere. The passage giving authority to the bishops’ books further implies that the Church ultimately gained control over secular law. However, in this paper I wish to examine more closely the moment that literacy and laws were brought together in the early twelfth century, as well as the consequences over a broader timespan of the existence of a written law-code, in order to illustrate the complexity of the relationship between literate knowledge and legal power.

Amidst the notorious uncertainties encountered in trying to chart Iceland’s transition from an oral society to a literate one, the committal of the laws to writing stands out as an unusually concrete milestone. Ari Þorgilsson, in *Íslendingabók*, describes the event thus (ch. 10):

Et fyrsta sumar, es Bergþórr sagði lög upp, vas nýmæli þat gört, at lög ór skyldi skrifa á bók at Hafliða Mássonar of vetrinn eptir at sögu ok umbráði þeira Bergþórs ok annarra spakra manna [...] En þat varð at framfara, at þá vas skrifaðr Víglóði ok margt annat í lögum ok sagt upp í lögréttu af kennimönnum of sumarit eptir. En þat líkaði öllum vel, ok mælti því manngi í gegn.⁵

⁴ *Grágás*, K § 117 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, Ia, 213; transl. *Laws* I, 190). ‘In this country what is found in books is to be law’.

⁵ Jakob Benediktsson, ed., *Íslendingabók; Landnámabók*, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík, 1968), pp. 23–4. ‘The first summer that Bergþórr recited the laws,

Ari thus gives us a 'when' – Bergþórr Hrafnsson's first year as lawspeaker, namely 1117; a 'where' – the chieftain Haflíði Másson's house at Breiðabólstaðir in Vestrhóp, northern Iceland; and at least parts of a 'who' (Bergþórr and 'other wise men'), a 'how' (at their dictation and supervision, with emendations and improvements as they saw fit), and a 'what' (the manslaughter section, and 'margt annat í lögum'). Despite this relative glut of information, however, Ari's account still raises more questions than it answers – most importantly, perhaps, simply: 'why?' Why, in 1117, was it considered necessary, or at least desirable, to write down what had traditionally been preserved through the memory and recitation of the lawspeakers?

In terms of writing anything down in medieval Iceland, 1117 is early. It is particularly early for a text which is secular, and in the vernacular. Although Christianity had brought with it the technology of the written word at the turn of the millennium, it seems that very little existed in the way of written texts for a century, beyond imported religious texts (in Latin) which later began to be copied in Iceland's own religious establishments.⁶ However, the codification of the laws in the early twelfth century occurred at around the same time as the production of a small but significant group of texts which

that innovation was made, that our laws should be written down in a book at Haflíði Másson's during the next winter at the dictation and supervision of Bergþórr and of other wise men [...] And it came about from this that "Vígslóði" [the manslaughter section] was written down, and much else in the laws, and recited by clerics in the *lögretta* the next summer. And it was greatly pleasing to all, and no man spoke against it.

⁶ See e.g. Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Vellum and Literature', in his *Skarðsbók: Codex Scardensis AM 350 fol*, transl. P. Cahill and Pétur Kidson Karlsson (Reykjavík, 1981), pp. 39–40; Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: a Discourse on Method*, transl. N. Jones (Cambridge, MA, 2004), p. 55. The bishoprics, however, were not established until 1056 in Skálholt and 1106 in Hólar, while the first monastery, at Þingeyrar, was founded in 1133 – namely after the codification of the law and the production of texts such as *Íslendingabók*.

reveal an awakening interest in the creation of a native Icelandic textual culture. Ari's *Íslendingabók*, on the history of Iceland, was written during the period 1122–33, and an early version of *Landnámabók*, about the country's settlement, seems also to have been initiated at this time.⁷ The so-called *First Grammatical Treatise*, meanwhile, dated between 1125–75, both sets up the authority and feasibility of Icelandic as a written language, and provides evidence as to what already existed in writing at the time: 'bæði lög ok áttvísi eða þýðingar helgar, eða svá þau in spakligu fræði, er Ari Þorgilsson hefir á bœkr sett af skynsamligu viti'.⁸

The writing down of the country's laws fits well with this apparent impulse to record material of national interest: the laws above all else represent the social organisation, which, in the absence of a king, feudal system or other state infrastructure, made Iceland unique. Examination of the other factors in play in 1117, however, reveals that such noble and ideological aspirations were by no means the only impetus behind the Alþing's resolution to set the laws into writing, as I shall demonstrate here.

I begin with the chieftain Haflíði Másson, who appears to have been a driving force behind the project, and not merely its host – *Grágás* itself refers to 'scrö þeirre er haflíðe let gera'.⁹ Haflíði was indisputably one of the most powerful chieftains in the country at the time: during a dispute at the Alþing of 1121 he was able to muster

⁷ Jakob Benediktsson, 'Landnámabók', in *Medieval Scandinavia: an Encyclopedia*, ed. P. Pulsiano et al. (New York, 1993), pp. 373–4.

⁸ *First Grammatical Treatise* (E. Haugen, ed., *First Grammatical Treatise: the Earliest Germanic Phonology. An Edition, Translation and Commentary*, 2nd ed. (London, 1972), p. 12). 'Both laws and genealogies and sacred writings, and also that learned lore which Ari Þorgilsson has set down in books from his knowledgeable understanding'.

⁹ *Grágás*, K § 117 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen Ia, 213; transl. *Laws I*, 191). 'The book which Haflíði had made'. The passage from which this quotation is taken will be discussed in detail below.

‘tólf hundruð manna’ in support,¹⁰ and he was one of the leading figures behind the establishment of the northern bishopric at Hólar in 1106,¹¹ as well as apparently controlling the appointment of the second bishop to the see.¹² Although *Kristni saga* claims, ‘Þá váru flestir virðingamenn lærðir ok vígðir ok lærðir til presta þó at höfðingjar væri’ (ch. 17),¹³ no source associates Hafliði with clerical rank or training, and in fact *Kristni saga* itself lists him among ‘þessir mestir höfðingjar á Íslandi’ (ch. 18),¹⁴ but does *not* include him in its list of ordained chieftains. His close ties with Hólar, though, gave him access to literate culture and to the resources necessary for the venture of writing down the laws, as well as experience of a world in which the written word carried ultimate authority.¹⁵ As one of the ‘spakir menn’ dictating the laws, Hafliði possessed acknowledged legal expertise himself, and he had other legal experts in his close circle. A niece was married to Finn Hallsson, a priest who became lawspeaker

¹⁰ *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, ch. 22 (Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason and Kristján Eldjárn, ed., *Sturlunga saga*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík, 1946) I, 40). ‘Twelve hundred men’.

¹¹ See *Jóns saga*, ch. 7 (Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson and P. Foote, ed., *Biskupa sögur I*, 2 vols, Íslenzk fornrit 15 (Reykjavík, 2003) II, 193–6); and *Lárentius saga*, ch. A2 B3 (Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, ed., *Biskupa sögur III*, Íslenzk fornrit 17 (Reykjavík, 1998), p. 217).

¹² See *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, ch. 30 (ed. Jón Jóhannesson *et al.*, *Sturlunga saga*, I, p. 48).

¹³ Ed. Sigurgeir Steingrímsson *et al.*, *Biskupa sögur I* (II), 42. ‘At that time [i.e. in the days of Bishop Gizurr, d. 1118] most distinguished men were educated and consecrated and trained as priests, even if they were *höfðingjar*’.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44. ‘The greatest *höfðingjar* in Iceland’.

¹⁵ Hafliði later consolidated his ties to the Church hierarchy by marrying Rannveig Teitsdóttir, granddaughter of Ísleifr Gizurarson, Iceland’s first native bishop, and father of Bishop Gizurr, while Rannveig’s father, Teitr, and brother, Hallr, were also influential figures in Skálholt. At the time of the codification, however, Hafliði was married to Þuríðr Þórðardóttir (see *Þorgils saga ok Hafliða*, ch. 1).

in 1139, and who may have been ‘in on the first writing of the laws’.¹⁶ A cousin was married to Gunnarr *inn spaki* Þorgrímsson, lawspeaker 1063–65 and 1075, whose son, Úlfheðinn, also became lawspeaker (in 1108), and could therefore have been involved in the planning of the codification. Úlfheðinn’s own sons, Hrafn and Gunnarr, both held the office during the first half of the twelfth century; it is not impossible that they too played a part in the venture.

Hafliði was thus well placed – perhaps uniquely so – for the hosting of the project, and there was doubtless a great deal of prestige to be earned: after all, other patrons of written law were kings in Norway and England. The personal gain of one man, however, is too narrow a rationale for such an undertaking, and I wish to identify and consider here three intertwining strands also in play in 1117: the figure of the lawspeaker, the institution of the Church, and the production of written law texts after *Hafliðaskerá*.

First, then, the lawspeaker, and here I wish to borrow an image from Gísli Sigurðsson, who portrays the events of 1117 with an ominous cloud hanging over a ‘bewilder[ed]’ Bergþórr, looking on as clerics read out the law and suddenly realising he has compromised his own authority as lawspeaker by ‘giv[ing] away his knowledge to a book’.¹⁷ However, any erosion of the power of the office such as Gísli supposes could hardly have happened immediately, and it is simply not credible to imagine that Bergþórr was somehow shepherded into being involved with the project without consideration of its consequences. He, too, doubtless saw its advantages. Like Hafliði, he stood to gain a substantial amount of personal prestige: as the serving lawspeaker, it was ‘his’ version of the law which became fixed in writing.¹⁸ And while in an oral culture, people had had no choice but to accept the lawspeaker’s word as law,

¹⁶ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, p. 80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Fernando Guerrero for this point.

it is unlikely that they always did so unquestioningly. One can just as easily, therefore, envisage a harassed Bergþórr as a bewildered one, grateful to be able to call on an external, independent source backing up his decision when confronted by a disgruntled litigant.

Moreover, although it has previously been assumed that the *kennimenn* replaced Bergþórr in 1118,¹⁹ Ari's detail states that they actually read the law in the *lögrétta*, the Law Council – not at *Lögberg*, the Law Rock, where the lawspeaker's recital took place. It was one of the major functions of the *lögrétta* to ratify new laws,²⁰ and those *goðar* among its members who had not been present at the codification would naturally have wanted a chance to approve what had been recorded, while those who did participate in the venture would have wanted it validated by all; hence the official reading. I would suggest, though, that meanwhile, Bergþórr's traditional public recital at *Lögberg* continued that year as usual: the clerics read the law for the approval of the legal community, but did not supplant the lawspeaker's public recitation of the laws.

In the following years, there would not immediately have been a comprehensive text to be read out in place of the traditional recital: as Ari indicates, the whole of the law was not written down in the winter of 1117, and we know nothing of when and how the rest of the secular law was recorded. Bergþórr retained the lawspeakership after 1118, and there is no indication that the following two lawspeakers were literate either; it is not until the priest Finnur Hallsson took office in 1139, more than two decades after the initiation of the codification,

¹⁹ E.g. S. Brink, 'Verba Volant, Scripta Manent? Aspects of Early Scandinavian Oral Society', in *Literacy in Medieval and Early Modern Scandinavian Culture*, ed. P. Hermann, Viking Collection 16 (Odense, 2005), pp. 77–135, at pp. 97–8; Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic saga*, p. 57; and J. Quinn, 'From Orality to Literacy in Medieval Iceland', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. M. Clunies Ross, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 42 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 30–60, at p. 34.

²⁰ See *Grágás*, K § 117 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen Ia, 211–17; transl. *Laws I*, 189–93).

that we can be sure that the serving lawspeaker would have been able to read.²¹ Whether this was actually a factor in Finnur's appointment, however, is not certain: as has been noted, he was a relative of Hafliði Másson, and may even have been present at the codification. There is no reason to assume that his legal competence was inferior to that of his predecessors, and he may have performed his duties from memory, like them. His appointment, therefore, may well have come about for the traditional reasons of acknowledged legal expertise and advantageous connections; the fact that he could read may have been incidental. His successor, Gunnarr Úlfheðinsson (1146–55), certainly seems to have been elected for his impeccable traditional legal pedigree: he followed his grandfather, father, and brother into the role. In fact, although it cannot of course be said for certain that either Gunnarr or the apparently secular lawspeaker Styrkár Oddason (1171–80) were *not* literate, there is no definite evidence, as late as 1180, sixty years after the first movement to write down the law, that literacy had become a requirement for the role of lawspeaker.²²

²¹ The interim lawspeakers were Guðmundr Þorgeirsson (1123–34) and Hrafn Úlfheðinsson (1135–38). It could be argued that Guðmundr, at least, was appointed for political reasons: he seems to have been a kinsman of Hafliði's enemy Þorgils Oddason, and it has been suggested that his election was part of the agreement reached between them in counterbalance to Hafliði's having control over the election of Ketill to the bishopric of Hólar (Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, p. 79). Hrafn, on the other hand, was a third generation lawspeaker, and his pedigree seems to have been considered a more important qualification for the post than the ability to read.

²² Between Gunnarr and Styrkár was Snorri Húnbogason (1156–70), a priest; Styrkár was succeeded by Gizurr Hallsson, a deacon, after whom Gísli Sigurðsson states 'we can safely assume that all lawspeakers would have been literate and book trained' (*The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, p. 79). See Gísli's study for more detail on the backgrounds of the twelfth-century lawspeakers between Bergþórr and Gizurr (pp. 79–86).

The claim could be made, therefore, that not only could advantages to the codification have been easily found by the serving lawspeaker in 1117, the introduction of literacy to the legal sphere may in fact have had little impact for some decades on the nature – and power – of the office overall. Finnur's status as priest, however, has other implications than the fact that he would have been able to read. While it is possible to find reasons to discount his literacy as playing a part in his election, it must be remembered that he was a member of the Church hierarchy. I will return once again, then, to 1117, and the second of the intertwining strands behind the codification: the role of the Church.

It is true that much of Iceland's early writing was under Church patronage: Ari himself was a priest, and states in the Prologue to *Íslendingabók* that it was commissioned by Bishops Þorlákr [Runólfsson of Skálholt] and Ketill [Þorsteinsson of Hólar]. Beyond pointing out that the newly-codified laws were read out by clerics, though, there is little in his account to connect the codification with the Church. In fact, *Íslendingabók* shows that the then bishop of Skálholt, Gizurr Ísleifsson, was not even present at the Alþing of 1117, owing to illness (ch. 10). Moreover, *Hungrvaka* reveals that the Christian Law section was *not* recorded at this time: it is said to have been 'settr ok ritaðr' under the advice of Bishop Þorlákr, and therefore not before his consecration in 1122 (ch. 6).²³

Although it is possible that the tithe laws established in 1096 were written down as soon as they were introduced, and thus may have provided inspiration for the writing of the secular laws,²⁴ I disagree

²³ Ásdís Egilsdóttir, ed., *Biskupa sögur II*, Íslensk fornrit 16 (Reykjavík, 2002), p. 25. 'Established and written'.

²⁴ See e.g. P. Foote, *1117 in Iceland and England: the Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture in Northern Studies, Delivered at University College London, 14th March 2002* (London, 2002), p. 14; Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Chieftains and Power in the Icelandic Commonwealth*, transl. J. Lundskær-Nielsen, Viking Collection 12 (Odense, 1999), p. 42; and Ólafur Lárusson, 'On *Grágás* – the Oldest Icelandic Code of Law', in

with Gísli Sigurðsson's claim that 'the writing up of the law at Breiðabólstaður in the winter of 1117–8 may be viewed as the first step in a movement led by the allies of the Church to encroach upon the secular domain of the lawspeakers'.²⁵ In 1117 I am not so sure that 'Church' and 'secular' factions could be so clearly distinguished. From its outset the fledgling Icelandic Church was inseparable from secular power: many *goðar* and leading *bændr* had churches built on their land, and ordination was just another string to an otherwise secular bow.²⁶ 'Church' and 'secular' parties involved in the codification may not, therefore, have perceived themselves as such. At this time the law was another field in which Church and secular personnel coexisted – the bishops held seats in the *lögrétta*, for example,²⁷ and the Christian laws appear to have been prosecuted in the same way as any others.²⁸ And while Hafliði Másson certainly had ties with the Church infrastructure there is no indication that he was an institutional puppet; if anything he seems to have exerted more power over it than vice versa. The fact that the Christian laws were *not* recorded at this time seems to be a particularly significant indicator that the codification was not a Church-organised stratagem.

Nevertheless, whether or not a Church attempt to annex legal power was an influential factor at the 'moment' of codification, the

Proceedings of the Third Viking Congress, Reykjavík, 1956, ed. Kristján Eldjárn, *Árbók hins íslenska fornleifafélags* (Reykjavík, 1958), pp. 77–89, at p. 79.

²⁵ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga*, p. 58.

²⁶ Jónas Kristjánsson, 'Vellum', p. 39; see also Orri Vésteinsson, *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power and Social Change 1000–1300* (Oxford, 2000), p. 209. A census of priests and parish churches undertaken by Bishop Páll of Skálholt (1195–1211) counted 290 priests and 220 churches in that diocese (see *Páls saga byskups*, ch. 11 (ed. Ásdís Egilsdóttir, *Biskupa sögur II*, p. 313)).

²⁷ *Grágás*, K § 117 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen Ia, 211–17; transl. *Laws I*, 189–93).

²⁸ See in general the 'Kristinnalagaþáttur' of *Grágás*, K §§ 1–19 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen Ia, 3–37; transl. *Laws I*, 23–51); and Foote, *1117*, p. 14.

circumstances of the lawspeakers following it would seem to substantiate the view that the Church made inroads into legal authority during the course of the twelfth century. Between 1119–1200 there were (so far as we know) five secular lawspeakers and three from within the Church hierarchy, with an almost exactly even division between the two spheres in terms of time in post.²⁹ If literacy was not necessarily a requirement for the role in the twelfth century, were these lawspeaker-priests appointed because the Church was growing into an ever more distinct and coherent institution, able to force the elections of its own people?

Here, I wish to bring another factor into consideration, a piece of evidence from within *Grágás* itself: a clause known as the ‘Citation Law’, after Peter Foote:³⁰

Þat er oc at þat scolo lög vera alandþe her sem áscrám standa. EN ef scrár scilr á oc scal þat hafa er stendr a scröm þeim er byscompar eigo. Nu scilr eN þeirra scrár á. þa scal sv hafa sitt mal er lengra segir þeim orðom er male scipta með monnom. EN ef þær segia iafn langt oc þo sit hvar. þa scal su hafa sit mal er iscalahollti er. Þat scal alt hafa er fiNz a scrö þeirre er haflidþe let gera nema þocat se siþan. en þat eitt af aNara lög manna fyrir sögn er eigi mæli þvi igeen. oc hafa þat alt er hitzug leifir eða

²⁹ The secular lawspeakers are: Bergþórr Hrafnsson (1117–22); Guðmundr Þorgeirsson (1123–34); Hrafn Úlfheðinsson (1135–38); Gunnarr Úlfheðinsson (1146–55); and Styrkár Oddason (1171–80), totalling 40 years (post-1119). The Church-related lawspeakers are Finn Hallsson (1139–45); Snorri Hünbogason (1156–80); and Gizurr Hallsson (1181–1202), totalling forty-two years (to 1200).

³⁰ ‘Some Lines’. Foote does not actually dub the Icelandic legal clause ‘Citation Law’, but rather compares it to the Citation Laws of the Emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III of A.D. 426; however the term is a convenient one to adopt here.

*gløGra er. Nu þræta menn vm lögmäl. oc má þa ryðia loqrétto til. ef eigi scera scrár ór.*³¹

This short clause not only introduces the third of my strands, the production of written law, but in fact addresses and combines all three. First, it shows that while *Haflidaskrá* is still valid and respected, other written texts are also in circulation. Second, it states that law will be that which stands in books, not that which is stated by the lawspeaker: not only has the practicality of having the law fixed in writing caught on in wider circles, legal manuscripts seem to have acquired more authority than the man who, traditionally, would have had the greatest legal expertise in the country. And third, not only does it show that both bishoprics owned legal manuscripts, it gives authority to their versions over others.

Unfortunately, conclusive evidence on the date of the Citation Law is lacking, but Foote has persuasively suggested the very end of the twelfth century.³² By this time a more distinct separation of power can be drawn between Church and secular spheres; in 1191, for example, Archbishop Eiríkr Ívarsson disallowed ordained men to simultaneously control a *godorð*.³³ If we accept Foote’s dating, then,

³¹ *Grágás*, K § 117 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen Ia, 213; transl. *Laws* I, 190–1). ‘It is also prescribed that in this country what is found in books is to be law. And if books differ, then what is found in the books which the bishops own is to be accepted. If their books also differ, then that one is to prevail which says it at greater length in words that affect the case at issue. But if they say it at the same length but each in its own version, then the one which is in Skálholt is to prevail. Everything in the book which Haflidi had made is to be accepted unless it has since been modified, but only those things in the accounts given by other legal experts which do not contradict it, though anything in them which supplies what is left out there or is clearer is to be accepted. If there is argument on an article of law and the books do not decide it, the Law Council must be cleared for a meeting on it’.

³² Foote, ‘Some Lines’, pp. 201–2, n. 8.

³³ The archbishop’s letter is printed in Jón Sigurðsson, ed., *Diplomatarium Islandicum: Íslenzket fornbréfasafn, sem hefir inni að halda bréf og gjörninga, dóma og*

had the Church now become the ultimate arbiter over secular law? Is the authority vested in the bishops' manuscripts a sign that the Church had been able to take advantage of the law's entry into the literate domain, and, by the end of the century, in fact controlled it?

In my view, this is a conclusion hastily reached. Symbolically, the Church's status as guardian and interpreter of the written word was certainly augmented by the provisions of the Citation Law. Practically, however, it may not be the conclusive evidence in favour of Church legal dominance it first seems. First, to continue with the possibility that several of the twelfth-century lawspeakers were without skills in literacy, there would be no practical reason for them to own copies of the law text (though they may still have wished to do so for reasons of prestige).³⁴ There would be little reason, then, for a book to be created to be handed on with the role, and for those lawspeakers who were literate to refer to their own private copies would run the risk of inconsistencies, the very problem the Citation Law attempts to avoid. It would therefore seem logical to have an ultimate textual authority in one text with a permanent home, which could be referred to no matter who was lawspeaker, and with no obvious secular centre of administration, the episcopal library would make a convenient location.

Second, and almost conversely, I am not at all sure that the Citation Law *does* in fact give ultimate authority to the bishops' books. Its statement, 'Þat skal alt hafa er fiNz a scrö þeirre er haflide let gera nema þocat se siþan', is perhaps more significant than has been assumed. This seems to refer to the original text produced in 1117–18, or at least to later but exact copies of it. We do not know how comprehensive *Haflidaskrá* was, or whether the Citation Law includes whatever was written down after the initial winter as part of the same

máldaga, og aðrar skrár, er snerta Ísland eða íslenska menn, vol. I: 834–1264 (Copenhagen, 1857–76), pp. 289–91.

³⁴ Jón Viðar Sigurðsson points out that 'we may assume [...] that [law registers] were very much also symbols of power' (*Chieftains and Power*, p. 177).

project – if indeed this occurred. But it seems that, allowing for changes made during perhaps eighty subsequent years of legislation, the author of the clause is satisfied with the content of the original written law text. And, importantly, this is *not* synonymous with 'scrár þær er byscopar eigo'. So who owned *Haflidaskrá*? Might it have been in the possession of the lawspeaker? And is it actually the ultimate text, *over* the books which the bishops own?

Although this information cannot now be recovered, the mention of *Haflidaskrá* demonstrates that the Citation Law is not an unproblematic indicator of the superiority of the Church in matters of law, even written law. In addition, the clause does not end by establishing ultimate interpretative authority in a text, whether one in the possession of the bishops, the lawspeaker, or anyone else. Instead, it continues: 'Nu þræta menn vm lögmál. oc má þa ryðia loqrétto til. ef eigi scera scrár ór'.³⁵ The books are fallible. Judy Quinn points out that this is 'only as a last resort',³⁶ but a last resort could easily be seen as the final, definitive word, when other options have been found wanting. Decisive, in the end, is still the considered opinion of experienced legislators who have brought their common sense, reason and experience to bear on the issue and debated it between themselves. Certainly, it would be more practical to refer to a written text, rather than dragging all the members of the *lögrétta* to argue the matter out (and given the length of the clause's subsequent explanation of how the meeting was to proceed, this 'last resort' was not a particularly straightforward one). But whether or not, in practice, the authority of books was often preferred for its convenience, the ideology of the Citation Law does not give definitive authority either to the written word, or to the Church, but to the conclusions reached from oral discussion among the legal

³⁵ *Grágás*, K § 117 (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, Ia, 213; transl. *Laws I*, 191). 'If there is argument on an article of law and the books do not decide it, the Law Council must be cleared for a meeting on it'.

³⁶ Quinn, 'From Orality', p. 35.

community. And, if opinions in the *lögrétta* were divided, the final casting vote still belonged to the lawspeaker.³⁷

This is not to claim that written law did not attain an important role in Iceland over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I hope to have shown here, though, that far from being directly and immediately replaced by literate habits, traditional oral practices continued to provide lively and significant sources of knowledge. Skapti, then, need not have despaired after all: in the legal field at least, the two spheres could complement each other, rather than necessarily acting in competition; a testament, perhaps, to the value and power of knowledge itself.

³⁷ See *Grágás*, K § 117: 'EN ef þeir eru iafn margir lögrétto menn hvarirtueGio er sitt kalla lög hvarir vera. þa scolo þeir hafa sitt mal er lögsogo maðr er iliðe með' (ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, Ia, 214; transl. *Laws* I, 191).

The Power of Binding and Loosing: the Chains of Sin in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Liturgy

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I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹

Peter's recognition of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, was rewarded with this promise of the keys to heaven, and the power of binding and loosing. This was interpreted as the power to forgive sins, which Jesus is recorded as giving explicitly to all his apostles elsewhere in the Bible: 'If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven'.² In line with other authors, the eighth-century historian Bede viewed this apostolic power as continuing through the Church:

Necnon etiam nunc in episcopis ac presbyteris omni ecclesiae officium idem committitur ut uidelicet agnitis peccantium causis quoscumque humiles ac uere paenitentes aspexerit hos iam a timore perpetuae mortis miserans absoluat quos uero in peccatis quae egerint persistere cognouerit illos perennibus suppliciis obligandos insinuet.³

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¹ Matt. XVI.19. (This and all other English translations of the Bible are from The New International Version.)

² John XX.23.

³ Hom., i.20 (D. Hurst, ed., *Bedae Venerabilis Opera Homiletica*, CCSL 122 (Turnholt, 1955), ll. 171–6; L. T. Martin and D. Hurst, transl., *Homilies on the*

Bishops and priests, in their continuation of apostolic ministry and acting as God's representatives on earth, have the power to absolve sin. The importance of 'binding' and 'loosing' (Latin *ligo* and *solvo* respectively, in the Vulgate), however, is evident in that how it could transform sin from an abstract concept into a more concrete reality, binding people down. Bede continues his homily with a discussion of the authority of the Church over sin, and referring just a few sentences later to the *vincula peccatorum* ('the chains of sin').⁴ Bede's use of 'chains' here sounds metaphorical, but there are indications that the image of sin as chains was also viewed in a more literal, or even physical, manner.

A large number of saints' lives include miracle-stories which demonstrate the saint's power to absolve sins. Lantfred, the author of the *Vita* of St Swithun, records Swithun's healing of a paralysed man,⁵ explaining that the man was diseased because of his sin, and that from Swithun he received medicine for both body and soul.⁶ This connection is important, since it is by the confession of his sins that he was able to be cured, and the implication is that the health of the soul is intimately connected with the health of the body.⁷ Saintry power of absolution is hardly surprising at one level: many saints,

Gospels, Cistercian Studies Series 110–111 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1991), p. 203). 'Indeed even now the same office is committed to the whole Church in her bishops and priests, so that when she has come to know sinners' cases, she considers which are humble and truly penitent, and in compassion she may then absolve them from the fear of perpetual death. But she may suggest that those whom she recognizes to be persisting in the sins which they have committed, should be assigned to everlasting punishments'.

⁴ Hom., i.20 (ed. Hurst, ll. 185–6).

⁵ Lantfred of Winchester, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, §3 (M. Lapidge, ed. and transl., *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies 4.ii (Oxford, 2003), pp. 252–334, at pp. 274/5–286/7).

⁶ *Ibid.*, §3, ll. 122–130 (*ibid.*, pp. 282/3–284/5).

⁷ K. O'Brien O'Keefe, 'Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 27 (1998), 209–32, at p. 220.

such as Swithun, were also bishops or priests, and therefore held this power as part of their office. However, the context here is not one of regular confession and absolution, but the manifestation of sin as sickness, or demonic possession, cleared by a saint's absolution of the victim's sin. Absolution effecting cure itself has biblical precedents,⁸ but the imagery of chains which is often associated with this in medieval saints' lives does not.

Returning to St Swithun, Lantfred describes that a parricide came to Winchester, horribly bound up in chains. On praying to Swithun, these burst open, setting him free.⁹ An even stronger manifestation of Swithun's power occurred when a thief imprisoned in Francia, who has only heard of the saint's reputation from travelling merchants, called upon him without even knowing his name: the thief's chains fell off, and the doors of the prison burst open.¹⁰ In both of these cases, it is the saint's power to forgive sins which is significant, and which results in the loosing of both physical and metaphorical chains, held in place by the sins which these men had committed.

The case of the parricide is particularly interesting, since the wearing of these chains was contemporary penitential practice for certain kinds of crimes:¹¹ Swithun's 'loosing' of these chains indicates that the man's penance was complete, and that his sins had been forgiven. There are several other stories which describe Swithun's power to loose loosing chains, including the release of a slave-girl from shackles, a woman freed from manacles, and the loosing of a

⁸ E. g. Matt. IX.2–5.

⁹ Lantfred of Winchester, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, §24 (ed. and transl. Lapidge, pp. 306/7).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §34 (*ibid.*, pp. 332/3–334/5).

¹¹ O'Brien O'Keefe, 'Body and Law', pp. 220–1; and Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, p. 306 n. 227.

slave's chains.¹² Lantfred comments on this power of Swithun's explicitly at the end of this last story, stating that:

Mirum namque hoc est ualde: quod sanctus iste Dei famulus, uenerabilis ac gloriosus, non solum meritis et orationibus modetur languentium doloribus, uerum etiam compeditis, soluit multos a ualidis ligaminibus, a columbare et compeditibus, a carcere tenebroso et graui tormento.¹³

In addition to the development of this motif as a physical representation of sin, there is evidence that it was understood in the context of the afterlife and in particular, in the context of the interim between death and the universal judgement, or at the moment of death. Since earliest times, Christians have prayed for the safety of the souls of their departed loved ones, but there are also prayers where the supplicant requests divine or saintly aid either now, or for the future time of his/her own death. Naturally, St Peter was a popular choice for such requests, given his position as the gate-keeper to heaven, as the following prayer from the *Portiforium of St Wulfstan*, an eleventh-century prayer book from Worcester, illustrates:

Rogo te beate petre princeps apostolorum et clauicularis regni caelestis, qui habes potestatem a domino ihesu christo animas ligandi atque soluendi, caelumque claudendi et aperiendi suscepisti potestatem; subueni michi pius intercessor ut per te protectionis et interuentionis auxilium a peccatorum meorum uinculis absolui, et inferni tenebras euadere, et portam regni

¹² Lantfred of Winchester, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, §§6, 38 and 39 (ed. and transl. Lapidge, pp. 288/9–290/1 and 330/1–332/3).

¹³ Lantfred of Winchester, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, §39 (ed. and transl. Lapidge, pp. 332/3). 'This is highly remarkable: that this holy servant of God, who is venerable and glorious, should not only have healed the sufferings of the diseased through his merits and prayers, but that he even released many who were shackled from powerful bindings, from the head-collar and from foot shackles, from the dark prison and from severe punishments'.

caelestis te aperiante merear intrare: per summum pastorem et sanctissimum obsecro te, cui dixisti tu es christus filius dei uiui cui gloria in secula seculorum. Amen.¹⁴

This sounds rather metaphorical, but it seems possible that it was also understood rather more literally. Various biblical passages refer to chains in the otherworld, for example the second letter to Peter, where the author states that 'God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into chains of darkness to be held for judgement'.¹⁵ Anglo-Saxon illustrations of bound angels are vivid, and the chains strong and often quite large. Five illustrations in the poetic manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11, show angels chained in hell, sometimes just Satan himself, sometimes many angels.¹⁶ While Satan is bound, unable to escape, other angels holding whips beat him. Another image of Satan bound in chains occurs in Ælfwine's *Prayerbook*.¹⁷ The illustration is of the 'Quinity': God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as well as the Virgin and Child, and beneath the feet of Jesus is Satan, fettered tightly and sharing hell with Arius and Judas, who are also enchained. It is not

¹⁴ A. Hughes, ed., *The Portiforium of St Wulfstan: Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 391*, 2 vols., Henry Bradshaw Society 89–90 (Leighton Buzzard, 1958–60) II, 9. 'I ask you, blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, and key-bearer of the kingdom of heaven, who have the power from our Lord Jesus Christ of binding and loosing souls, and have received the power of closing and opening heaven; help me, pious intercessor, so that through the help of your protection and intervention, I may be worthy to be released from the chains of my sins, and to avoid the darkness of the infernal regions, and as you open them, to enter the doors of the kingdom of heaven: through the most high and holy shepherd I beseech you, who said you are Christ, the son of God, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' (my translation).

¹⁵ II Peter II.4.

¹⁶ See pp. 3, 16–17, 20 and 36.

¹⁷ London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvii, fol. 75v: B. Günzl, ed., *Ælfwine's Prayerbook (London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvii + xxviii)* (London, 1993).

just wicked angels, therefore, who are bound in chains, but also human sinners.

These pictures were stark reminders of what could befall the sinner who did not confess his sin and return to the true way. Although it is possible that similar images may have existed as wall-paintings in churches, it is not clear, though, how many people would have had access to such pictures. Ælfwine's *Prayerbook*, for example, is a personal prayerbook which belonged to Ælfwine, the dean of the New Minster, Winchester, in the early eleventh century.¹⁸ The prayerbook seems to have been made at least in part by him, for his own personal use, and he may also be the artist who drew the 'Quinity'.¹⁹ It is therefore unlikely that very many people saw this particular image, although it is clear that the belief itself was not unusual. On the other hand, this motif reappears in other contexts which lent themselves to wider circulation.

A dramatic story in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* describes the efficacy of the mass as an agent for release from sin.²⁰ A thegn, Imma, was taken captive in battle, and bound by his captor to prevent him escaping. However, Imma's chains kept loosing themselves, to the puzzlement of the captor, who asked if Imma was performing loosing spells. Imma replied that he did not know any loosing spells, but that he had a brother who was a priest, who thought he was dead. This brother, said Imma, was probably offering masses on his behalf, so that if he was in the otherworld, his soul would be released from its punishment by his intercessions. Later, when he returned to his

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹ S. Keynes, *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester: British Library Stowe 944: Together with Leaves from British Library Cotton Vespasian A. VIII and British Library Cotton Titus D. XXVII*, EEMF 26 (Copenhagen, 1996), p. 113.

²⁰ Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, iv.22 (B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, ed. and transl., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, OMT (Oxford, 1969), pp. 404/5).

brother, Imma discovered that it was at exactly the times that his brother had said mass that the chains had loosed themselves.

The idea of the efficacy of the mass for departed souls is very old, and is found frequently in the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great, where there is even a story very similar to that of Imma: a man taken captive had masses offered for him by his wife, and it was on those days that his chains fell off.²¹ The extremely wide circulation of both the *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the *Dialogi*, and the choice of both works for vernacular translation in the ninth century, suggests that the essential point would have been received by a large number of people. That the offering of mass for someone could produce an actual, physical release from chains indicates just how real and potent the chains of sin were held to be, and how valuable the mass was in forgiveness of that sin.

Bede's final comment on the story of Imma is as follows:

Multiq̄ue, haec a praefato uiro audientes, accensi sunt in fide ac deuotione pietatis ad orandum uel ad elimosynas faciendas uel ad offerendas Deo uictimas sacrae oblationis pro ereptione suorum, qui de saeculo migrauerant; intellexerunt enim, quia sacrificium salutare ad redemptionem ualeret et animae et corporis sempiternam.²²

It is particularly noteworthy that he claims that the story inspired people to have masses said for their departed relatives. Although the practice of offering masses for the dead was ancient and well-

²¹ *Dialogi*, iv.59 (A. de Vogüé, ed. and transl., *Grégoire le Grand: Dialogues*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1978-9) III, 196-200).

²² Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, iv.22 (ed. and transl. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 404/5). 'Many who heard about this from Imma were inspired to greater faith and devotion, to prayer and almsgiving and to the offering up of sacrifices to God in the holy oblation, for the deliverance of their kinsfolk who had departed from the world; for they realized that the saving sacrifice availed for the everlasting redemption of both body and soul'.

established by the time Bede was writing, it is not clear how frequently masses were said for departed members of the laity, rather than those in religious life. Several stories in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*²³ described that masses were offered for monks after their deaths, but there are very few episodes which mention masses being said for the laity. Some documents have specific regulations for when and how the dead ought to be commemorated with masses, although unsurprisingly, they do not all agree. The Old English *Scriftboc*,²⁴ for example, prescribes that a mass may be sung for a monk on the third day, or after seven days. The same is true for a layman who has completed all necessary penance prior to his death. For a man who died penitent, it was possible to sing mass for him after thirty days, or after seven if his relatives fasted on his behalf and made offerings for his soul.²⁵ Further on, it describes that for laymen, masses could be sung on the third day, the ninth, the nineteenth day, and the thirtieth; and for monks, masses could be sung every Sunday and their names read out.²⁶ The *Scriftboc* is based on relatively early sources, and it is possible that its present Old English form dates from as early as before the mid-tenth century.²⁷

Later texts, such as Ælfric's *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (itself based in large part on the *Regularis Concordia*) provide much more elaborate instructions and rules for the masses to be said on the death of a monk, including, for example, the instruction that all the priests in a monastery should each say a mass daily during the thirty days

²³ The story of the wicked monk-blacksmith in v.14, for example.

²⁴ This text is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121, fols. 87b–101a; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 190, pp. 371–82; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud. Misc. 482, pp. 30b–39a: A. J. Frantzen, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: a Cultural Database*, <<http://www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/>>, this and all subsequent references accessed December 2007.

²⁵ Canons X20.01.01 and X20.02.01 (ed. Frantzen).

²⁶ Canons X21.04.01 and X21.05.01 (ed. Frantzen).

²⁷ Ed. Frantzen, *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials*.

after the brother died.²⁸ The few tenth- and eleventh-century guild regulations which survive also focus strongly on masses and offerings for the dead: the Exeter guild statutes, for example, record that at each meeting, two masses are to be sung, one for dead members and one for living.²⁹

The increasing emphasis on offerings for the dead throughout the Anglo-Saxon period served to bring the Church and laity closer together, as the laity desired to help the souls of their dead relatives. This in turn strengthened the ties between the living and the departed, as it was perceived more and more that duty to one's kin did not stop with death. If anything, the obligation became even stronger, since the departed relative was no longer in a position to help him- or herself. The impetus was placed firmly on the surviving relatives to offer aid by way of masses, prayers and almsgiving, with the understanding that these would loose the chains of sin binding down the soul in the afterlife. The result of this kind of thinking is clear in surviving wills and charters, even from an early period.

In a charter from 749, Æthelbald, king of the Mercians (716–57), made a donation to free his soul *ab omni uinculo delictorum* ('from every chain of wickedness').³⁰ Although Æthelbald is concerned here only with his own soul, other documents record grants made variously for the souls of parents and/or grandparents of the donor, or of the king, in addition to the donor's own soul. A charter from 762 records that Dunwald gave land to the church of SS Peter and Paul, where the body of his lord Æthelbert rested, both for his soul and for Æthelbert's.³¹ Towards the end of the tenth century, the will of Wulfwaru records her grant of land to the monastery of St Peter's

²⁸ Ælfric, *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, cc. 65–9 (C. A. Jones, ed., *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 140–4).

²⁹ D. Whitelock, *Councils & Synods: with Other Documents Relating to the English Church* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 58–60.

³⁰ S 92.

³¹ S 1182.

in Bath for her soul and the souls of her ancestors, from whom she received her property.³²

It would be easy to interpret these simply in the context of the growing awareness of the purgatorial interim and the possibilities for post-mortem forgiveness of sin. In this context, the idea of chains could simply be a convenient figurative expression to convey the importance of good behaviour. But returning to the saints, there are yet again instances which suggest strongly that these chains were imagined in a much more real and physical way.

Ælfwine's *Prayerbook* contains several prayers in which the supplicant asks St Nicholas to help him at the hour of death.³³ As previously mentioned, this type of request is found quite frequently, and the same prayerbook contains prayers to saints such as Mary, Peter, and Benedict which also ask this. But what makes these prayers relatively unusual in this context is that the cult of St Nicholas was only really starting to catch on in England during the late tenth and early eleventh century, and so these prayers appear at a relatively early stage in the growth of that cult. The veneration of St Nicholas really burgeoned in England after the Norman Conquest, when his cult was encouraged by the Normans, perhaps because of their links with Sicily and South Italy: the relics of Nicholas were transferred from Myra to Bari by Italian sailors in the second half of the eleventh century.³⁴

According to legend, St Nicholas was a late third- or early fourth-century bishop of Myra. Perhaps the most famous story about St

³² S 1538.

³³ BL, Cotton Titus D.xxvi, fols. 76r–79r (ed. Günzl, *Ælfwine's Prayerbook*, pp. 195–7).

³⁴ E. M. Treharne, *The Old English Life of St Nicholas with the Old English Life of St Giles*, Leeds Texts and Monographs: New Series 15 (Leeds, 1997), p. 36; and C. W. Jones, *The Saint Nicholas Liturgy and Its Literary Relationships: Ninth to Twelfth Centuries* by C.W. Jones; with an *Essay on the Music* by G. Reaney., University of California Publications, English Studies 27 (Berkeley, CA, 1963), p. 120.

Nicholas now is his gift of three bags of gold to a poor man as dowries for his daughters, which lies behind his modern reincarnation as Santa Claus. In the middle ages, however, a more popular story was an encounter between Nicholas and three of Constantine's generals.³⁵ Nicholas met these generals on their way to subdue heathens, and they saw him free three sailors from unjust death by a malevolent local ruler. Later, once the generals had returned to Constantinople, they became the target of a plot at Constantine's court, and were imprisoned. Awaiting execution, they remembered Nicholas' role in the freeing of the sailors, and called upon him for help. Nicholas appeared to Constantine in a dream, and instructed him to free the men: after satisfying himself that the men were not guilty of witchcraft, Constantine released the three generals.

It is the act of releasing, performed by St Nicholas at least twice, which seems to have been so important here. And it should not be forgotten that in addition to the miraculous release effected by Nicholas, his status as a bishop granted him the power of binding and loosing in the more formal sense of absolution. One of the prayers in Ælfwine's prayerbook explicitly asks for the chains of sin to be loosed by the intercession of Bishop Nicholas:

Celi terreque conditor, Deus benignissime, exaudi, queso, deprecationem humilitatis mee, ut me peccatorem, quem conscientia coram maiestate tua nimis grauiter accusat, intercessio gloriosissimi pontificis tui Nicolai a peccatorum uinculis soluat, et ad eterne mansionis gaudia, te, Domine Iesu Christe, annuente perducatur.³⁶

³⁵ Treharne, *The Old English Life of St Nicholas*, pp. 48–9.

³⁶ Cotton Titus D.xxvi, fol. 77v (ed. Günzl, *Ælfwine's Prayerbook*, p. 196). 'Creator of heaven and earth, most bountiful God, hear, I beg you, the prayer of my humility, that when conscience accuses me, a sinner, most gravely, in the presence of your majesty, the intercession of your most glorious Bishop

Since the book was compiled for Ælfwine personally, and he may have had a role in its production, it is likely that these prayers represent something of Ælfwine's individual tastes. Moreover, we find not just one prayer here, but five, all appearing together, suggesting that these were collected together with some purpose in mind. Nicholas released physical chains during his lifetime, but is here invoked to release chains of sin, and it is precisely the comparison between these two which indicates that those chains of sin were held to be binding in a way rather more physical than metaphorical.

St. Swithun, who was also remembered for his power to loose chains, is invoked in exactly this context in the *Secreta* of the mass liturgy for the feast of his Translation:

Munus quod tibi offerimus, Domine, quaesumus gratanter suscipe, et suffragante beati confessoris tui atque pontificis Suuithuni intercessione, omnes nostrorum nexus peccaminum soluat ac lucrum sempiternitatis nobis adquirat.³⁷

A mass for the living and the dead from the *Leofric Missal* which mentions St Swithun begins 'Pietate tua quesumus, Domine, nostrorum omnium solue uincula delictorum ...'.³⁸ Again, the connection between Swithun's ability to loose physical chains during his life and his power of intercession for the chains of sin after death is very strong. And since the mass was one of the ways of loosing the chains of sin, the invocation here is all the more potent.

Nicholas may release me from the chains of sin, and lead me to the joy of the eternal dwelling-place, as you, Lord Jesus Christ, permit' (my translation).

³⁷ Ed. and transl. Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 78–9. 'Accept willingly, O Lord, the gift which we offer to You and, with the intercession of Your blessed confessor and bishop Swithun in attendance, may it dissolve all the chains of our sins and purchase for us the wealth of eternity'.

³⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579, fol. 20r–v (ed. and transl. Lapidge, pp. 82–3). 'We ask, O Lord, that through Your mercy You release the chains of all our sins ...'.

So far, there have been two possibilities for the time-frame in which such loosing can take place. The first is in this world, when it might take the form of removal of visible, physical chains, or in the cure of a sickness. The second, slightly vaguer, is in the next world: the story of Imma illustrates how the chains of sin in the afterlife would be broken by the power of the mass, and the importance of masses for the departed testifies to this belief. In this second time-frame, we come to the interim period, when souls await the universal judgement after their death. From about the second century, the notion of the individual judgement became important:³⁹ that is, that immediately after death, souls will be 'pre-judged', so that they can await the universal judgement in a place appropriate to their merits or status. If the souls of the dead were to receive any post-mortem aid, it had to be given during this interim period, since one's status at the universal judgement was final.

Despite this, there are several prayers in which the supplicant asks a saint or saints for aid at that final judgement. At this point, it should theoretically be too late for saintly help. A common penitential motif in Anglo-Saxon literature warns that it is better to confess sins now on earth than to have to confess them at the universal judgement, when there is no hiding and no turning back.⁴⁰ And yet the power of the apostles to bind or to loose was clearly held to be so powerful that they could provide help even in this final hour:

Sanctissimi apostoli electi dei uos elegit dominus in salutem populi sui, uobis dedit potestatem ligandi atque soluendi et remittendi peccata. Uos estis lux mundi, uos iudicabitis tribus israel cum uenerit dominus iudicare uiuos et mortuos in gloria maiestatis sue et reddere unicuique iuxta opera sua, et ego miser peccator et fragilis quid ero facturus, cum uenero ante

³⁹ B. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: a Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, (Cambridge, 1991), p. 220.

⁴⁰ M. Godden, 'An Old English Penitential Motif', *ASE* 2 (1973), 221–39.

tribunal tanti iudicis propter uitia et peccata que male comisi.
 Adiuuate me electi. O altitudo quicumque estis amici dei quos
 honorauit dominus et exultauit et considerare fecit in gloria regni
 sui. Amen.⁴¹

Apostolic aid is particularly important here since without it, and condemned to hell, the chains that bound would be for eternity, with no hope of release. The judgement, and the strict division between good and wicked that follows it, is very clear in the Bible, unlike the interim between death and judgement. It was therefore the judgement that was pre-eminent in most Christians' minds for a long time, rather than the interim. This probably explains why it is that, despite the evident importance of the mass and the connection of the living to the souls in the interim, it is the judgement which features so strongly in so many late Anglo-Saxon homilies, and not the interim.

The concern with the fate of the soul after death is tightly connected with the idea of the chains of sin, which could bind in the present, in the interim, and for eternity. These chains were both metaphorical and physical, and helped to make the terrifying and unknown prospect of the afterlife somewhat easier to understand. In addition, this motif served to reinforce the continuing link between living and dead, clarifying how the offerings of the living could ease the suffering of departed souls. Although most of the references to

⁴¹ Ed. Hughes, *Wulfstan Portiforium* II, 10. 'Most holy apostles, chosen by God, the Lord chose you for the health of his people, he gave to you the power of binding and loosing and of forgiveness of sins. You are the light of the world, you will judge the tribes of Israel when the Lord comes to judge the living and the dead in his majesty and to give back to each one according to his works, and I, wretched, a sinner, and fragile, what I will have done, when I come before the judgement seat of such a judge because of the vices and sins which I have committed wickedly. Help me, chosen ones. O loftiness, all of you who are the friends of God, whom the Lord has honoured and exalted and made to be considered in the glory of his kingdom. Amen' (my translation).

this idea come from sources with a monastic – and Winchester⁴² – bias, the few which do come from other documents suggest that the idea was reasonably widespread. The interpretation of sin as chains and the emphasis placed on the power of loosing them by masses, almsgiving, prayer and fasting shaped the way the Anglo-Saxons viewed their obligation to the dead and their conception of the interim state. Furthermore, it seems possible that it was precisely this idea which could make St Nicholas, a late addition to the ranks of saints venerated in England, a natural choice for a supplicant desiring post-mortem release from sin.

⁴² It is interesting that it was at Winchester, where Swithun was pre-eminent, that the prayers to St Nicholas surface, but this should not be overplayed, since it seems that St Nicholas was revered at Worcester too, especially by St Wulfstan in the later eleventh century: Treharne, *The Old English Life of St Nicholas*, p. 40; and Jones, *The St Nicholas Liturgy*, pp. 8–10 and 120.

Crossing Thresholds: the Relationship between Knowledge,
Power and Death in *Hávamál*

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Hávamál is a complex compilation of gnomic didactic material and cultic material, proverbs, spells and charms. It is extant in its present form only in the thirteenth-century *Codex Regius* manuscript; the *Poetic Edda*. The material of *Hávamál* appears to be a confusing, even internally contradictory, compilation of various forms of advice and instruction. The disjointed train of thought between and within many of the stanzas and the shifting and irregular metre suggest confusion or corruption in the transmission of the poem. From the scribe of the *Codex Regius* onwards, attempts have been made to clarify the poem by dividing it into sections. Gustav Lindblad suggests that *Hávamál* may have been compiled from a number of originally independent poems.¹ The *Codex Regius* scribe marked extra large initial capitals at stanzas 111 and 138 in order to indicate divisions within the poem, which from the seventeenth century onwards were given the names *Loddfáfnismál* and *Rúnatal* by Icelandic copyists.² In the nineteenth century, Müllenhoff argued that the poem could be further divided into six sections: the initial gnomic verses, Óðinn's adventure with Billing's girl, his adventure with Gunnlōð, the *Loddfáfnismál*, the *Rúnatal* and the final *Ljóðatal*.³ The date or dates of the original poems are difficult to determine and arguments may be made for the production of the poem before or after the conversion to

¹ See G. Lindblad, *Studier i Codex Regius av Äldre Eddan*, Lundastudier i nordisk sprakvetenskap 10 (Lund, 1954).

² D. Evans, ed., *Hávamál*, Viking Society for Northern Research Text Series 7 (London, 1986), p. 8.

³ K. Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, 5 vols. (Berlin, 1890–1920) V, 250–88.

Christianity. Similarly, the authorship of the poem may be disputed. Schneider,⁴ von See⁵ and Evans⁶ suggest variations of an editorial figure, shaping and ordering pre-existing material, whilst Larrington⁷ argues that the poem was composed by a succession of poets drawing upon a living body of gnomic material, yet constructed around the persona of a single narrator who guides the audience through the poem. However, whether one or many, in this paper I wish to trace not the possibility of a single poet-editor, but a single argument running through the poem.

I wish to argue that a single theme runs through *Hávamál* which details the close relationship between knowledge and personal power through an overriding focus on escaping death. This suggests a united purpose running through the poem and binding it together:

Gáttir allar
Áðr gangi fram,
Um skoðask skyli,
Um skyggnask skyli,
Því at óvíst er at vita
Hvar óvinir
Sitja á fleti fyrir.⁸

This, the opening stanza of *Hávamál* embodies a key theme, which unites the poem: the necessity of staying alive. Much of the advice imparted throughout the poem concerns the ways by which one

⁴ H. Schneider, *Eine Uredda* (Halle, 1948), pp. 77ff.

⁵ K. von See, *Die Gestalt der Hávamál: Eine Studie zur eddischen Spruchdichtung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).

⁶ Ed. Evans, *Hávamál*, pp. 36–7. See also Finnur Jónsson, *Hávamál*, Tolket af Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1924).

⁷ C. Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 17–19.

⁸ *Hávamál* 1 (ed. Evans, p. 39). 'All the doorways, before you go forward you should spy out; you should look at carefully, because you can't know for certain where enemies are sitting ahead at the hall benches'. All translations are my own.

might stay alive for as long as possible. Social advice for example is given with the aim of avoiding causing offence. Stanza 73 warns the listeners: 'tunga er höfuðs bani',⁹ whilst stanzas 42 and 43 warn against making alliances with a man one cannot trust. Stanzas 85–8 emphasise the dangers of both the natural and human social world by chaining warnings together into an impressive list:

Brestanda boga,
 Brennanda loga,
 Gínanda úlfi,
 Galandi kráku,
 Rýtanda svíni,
 Rótlausum viði,
 Vaxanda vági,
 Vellanda katli,
 Fljúganda fleini,
 Fallandi báru,
 Ísi einnættum,
 Ormi hringlegnum,
 Brúðar beðmálum
 Eða brotnu sverði,
 Bjarnar leiki
 Eða barni konungs,
 Sjúkum kálfi,
 Sjálfráða þræli,
 Völu vilmæli,
 Val nýfelldum,
 Akri ársánnum
 Trúi engi maðr¹⁰

⁹ *Hávamál* 73 l. 2 (*ibid.*, p. 53). 'The tongue is the murderer of the head'.

¹⁰ *Hávamál* 85–8 (*ibid.*, p. 56). 'A breaking bow, a burning flame, an open mouthed wolf, a screeching crow, a squealing pig, a rootless tree, a growing

This list emphasises the vulnerability of the human condition, for the elements of nature in these stanzas suggest an overwhelming force, poised to swallow and hence destroy human life, whereas the man-made elements are depicted in deceitful or treacherous terms, implicitly aiding nature's intended destruction as they fail or betray those who rely on them. For example, a breaking bow would leave the wielder helpless in the face of the open-mouthed, hungry wolf, and the comforting domestic fire could become a burning flame, threatening the safety of an enclosing building. A man could be drowned underneath the falling wave or the thin ice one night, whilst the broken sword fails the warrior, the woman betrays, the prophetess lies and the children of kings, like bears, prove deceitful in their play. *Hávamál* further reinforces this theme of the fear of death by frequent references to dangers throughout the poem. Death could come from many directions: a fight at a feast (32), an attack on the open road (38), treachery (42), death in battle (128), false accusations (118), starvation on a journey (116), illness or natural disasters (137), poison (151), or fire (152). Even a man living alone, away from the dangers of human treachery, risks death through simple lack of human companionship and support (50):

Hrørnar þöll,
 Sú er stendr þorpi á;
 Hlýrat henni þorke né barr;
 Svá er maðr,

wave, a boiling kettle, a flying spear, a falling wave, ice of one night, a snake lying in a ring, a woman's bed talk or a broken sword, the playing of a bear, or a king's child, a sick calf, a self-willed slave, a prophetess with beguiling speech, a warrior newly fallen, an early sown field, let no man trust'.

Sá er manngi ann;
Hvat skal hann lengi lifa?¹¹

Hávamál lends further weight to the fear of death by weaving in stories which suggest that even the gods could be killed. The cultic knowledge imparted by Óðinn as he recollects his adventure, disguised as Bolverkr, to the courts of the giant Suttungr on his quest to win the mead of poetry, adds greater weight to this preoccupation with the power of death, as he reports:

Ifi er mér á
At ek væra enn kominn
Jötna gǫrðum ór,
Ef ek Gunnlaðar ne nytak,
Innar góðu konu,
Þeirar er lögðumk arm yfir.

Ins hindra dags
Gengu hrímpursar
Háva hǫllu í;
At Bolverki þeir spurðu,
Ef hann væri með þöndum kominn
Eða hefði honum Suttungr of sóit.¹²

The essence of this need to ward off death for as long as possible, I would like to argue, is the close association of death with the loss of

¹¹ *Hávamál* 50 (*ibid.*, p. 49). 'The withered fir tree which stands on the mound; neither bark nor needles protect it, so it is with a man that nobody loves: why should he live for long?'

¹² *Hávamál* 108–9 (*ibid.*, p. 61). 'I am doubtful as to whether I would have come back out from the courts of the giants if I had not had the help of Gunnlǫð, the good women, and put my arm over her. The following day the frost giants went to ask for the High One's advice, in the High One's hall they asked about Bolverkr if he had come to the gods, whether he was amongst the gods, or whether he had been killed by Suttungr'.

power. 'Betra er lifðum / en sé ólifðum'¹³, says the speaker of the gnomic verses of *Hávamál*, as 'ey getr kvikr kú'.¹⁴ This is encapsulated in the blunt assertion 'nýtr manngi nás'.¹⁵ This suggests that *Hávamál* was produced within a society in which survival was a constant struggle. Although we do not know the dates at which the elements of *Hávamál* were conceived or compiled as a poem, from the tenth century onwards Iceland frequently suffered from famine,¹⁶ and its economic struggle for survival was a powerful factor in its submission to Norwegian rule in 1264. 'Even in good years the country was capable of producing only a small agricultural surplus'.¹⁷ The survival of laws which regulate land management suggest that the physical vulnerability of life was deeply ingrained into the Icelandic psyche. For example, it was a legal requirement in the Icelandic Free State law code, *Grágás*, for each farmer to ensure his land was fully worked and not left idle.¹⁸ Due to the scarcity of farming land, which was quickly occupied in the years following the settlement of Iceland,¹⁹ the struggles for power and for survival were tied together. Jesse Byock argues that 'a man who wished to increase his wealth would usually have to take all or part of another man's property'.²⁰ Life and

¹³ *Hávamál* 70 ll. 1–2 (*ibid.*, p. 53). 'It is better to live than not to be alive'.

¹⁴ *Hávamál* 70 l. 3 (*ibid.*). 'Always the living get the cow'.

¹⁵ *Hávamál* 71 l. 6 (*ibid.*). 'A corpse is no use to anyone'.

¹⁶ J. Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (London, 1982), p. 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ W. I. Miller, 'Home and Homelessness in the Middle of Nowhere', in *Home and Homelessness in the Medieval and Renaissance World*, ed. N. Howe (Notre Dame, IN, 2004), pp. 125–44, at pp. 125–6. Additionally, see ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, *Grágás: Íslendernes Lovbog: Fristatens Tid, udgivet efter det Kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift*, 5 vols. (Copenhagen, 1850–70) Ib, 92; and ed. Vilhjálmur Finsen, *Grágás efter det Arnemagnæanske Haandskrift Nr. 334, Stadsarbólsbók*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1879) II, 461–462 and 466.

¹⁹ Jón Jónsson, *Íslendinga saga: a History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth*, transl. Haraldur Bessason (Winnipeg, 1974), p. 33.

²⁰ Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga*, p. 34.

personal supremacy appear bound together, in the advice of *Hávamál* stanza 58:

Ár skal risa
 Sá er annars vill
 Fé eða fjör hafa;
 Sjaldan liggjandi úlfr
 Lær um getr
 Né sofandi maðr sigr.²¹

Men who wish to gain personal power, this stanza implies, must act aggressively, like wolves against their fellow men. The warnings against treachery in earlier stanzas foreshadow this theme of the struggle with others for survival. For example, in stanza 45 we hear the advice:

Ef þú átt annan,
 Þanns þú illa truer,
 Vildu af honum þó gott geta,
 Fagrt skaltu við þann mæla
 En flat hyggja
 Ok gjalda lausung við lygi.²²

The stanzas depicting the aggressive human struggle for survival are reinforced by repeated emphasis on the powerlessness of the dead. For example, the speaker of stanza 70 refers to a fire burning at the house of a wealthy dead man:

²¹ *Hávamál* 58 (ed. Evans, p. 50). 'Early shall rise, he who wishes to have another's wealth or life; rarely the resting wolf gets the ham, nor a sleeping man victory'.

²² *Hávamál* 45 (*ibid.*, p. 48). 'If you have another, whom you don't trust, but from whom you want to get what is good, fairly shall you speak with him, but falsely think, and repay deception with lies'.

Eld sá ek upp brenna
 Auðgum manni fyrir,
 En uti var dauðr fyr durum.²³

If we interpret this fire as a domestic fire on the hearth, as David Evans suggests,²⁴ and not a funeral pyre, as Finnur Jónsson interpreted in his 1924 edition of *Hávamál*, this passage would further reinforce the perception of the powerlessness of the dead. The extravagance of the fire is suggested by the words *upp brenna* which provides an image of leaping flames. The rich man is no longer able to benefit from the blazing fire in his hearth.²⁵ These two corpses serve as symbols of their helplessness. The rich man lies dead in the darkness outside his own homestead, whilst the fire in his hearth warms the living. The corpse dangling in a noose from a tree, referred to in stanza 157 also reflects the powerlessness of the dead, for the speaker asserts:

Svá ek ríst
 Ok í rúnum fák
 At sá gengr gumi
 Ok mælir við mik.²⁶

²³ *Hávamál* 70 (*ibid.*, p. 53). 'I saw fire burn up for the rich man, and he was dead outside the door'.

²⁴ Ed. Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 106.

²⁵ This concurs with Kock's argument that here the *auðgum manni* is able to see his fire burning but the dead man lies in the cold outside the door. Evans' counterargument that this renders *auðgum* pointless, which forms part of his case for the translation of *dauðr* as a noun, not an adjective, misses the point that a poor man would be less likely to be warmed by a blazing fire in his hearth. See E. Kock, 'Bidrag till eddatolkningen', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 37 (1921), 105–35; and ed. Evans, *Hávamál*, p. 106–7.

²⁶ *Hávamál* 157 (ed. Evans, p. 72). 'I can so carve and apply colour to the runes that the departed walks, and talks with me'.

Not only has the man been executed and left unburied but the speaker is able to compel his corpse to walk and talk. The powerlessness of death indicates to us why mortality plays a critical role in mediating between power and knowledge in *Hávamál*. The knowledge imparted throughout the poem appears to be firmly aimed at teaching a man how to avoid death for as long as possible.

However, *Hávamál* is also clearly concerned with ideas of initiation and initiatory rites. The theme of crossing thresholds recurs throughout the poem. Loren Gruber suggests that *Hávamál* is a guide to the gaining of knowledge through the crossing of thresholds. She argues: 'Odin with his gnomic words, instructs men not only in modes of conduct in life, but also about the ins and outs of being born and dying, and in particular about the acquisition of wisdom in the process'.²⁷ The threshold between life and death is thrown into sharp relief in Óðinn's ritualistic self-sacrifice in order to gain runic knowledge:

Veit ek, at ekk hekk
Vindga meiði á
Nætr allar níu,
Geiri undaðr
Ok gefinn Óðni,
Sjálfr sjálfum mér,
Á þeim meiði
Er manngi veit
Hvers hann af rótum renn.

Við hleifi mik sældu
Né við hornigi,
Nýsta ek niðr,
Nam ek upp rúnar,

²⁷ L. Gruber, 'The Rites of Passage: *Hávamál*, stanzas 1–5', *Scandinavian Studies* 49 (1977), 330–40, at p. 333.

Ƿpandi nam,
Fell ek aptr þaðan.

Fimbulljóð níu
Nam ek af inum frægja syni
Bölpórs, Bestlu fǫður,
Ok ek drykk of gat
Ins dýra mjaðar,
Ausinn Óðreri.²⁸

In *Myth and Religion of the North*, Gabriel Turville-Petre has argued that the world of the dead contains hidden knowledge, embodied by the ancient giants, particularly Vafþrúðnir, who is said to have travelled into all worlds, including the deathly region of Nifhel, as we hear in stanza 43 of the eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál*.²⁹ Bölpór, of stanza 140, is identified as a giant, by Snorri Sturluson in his prose *Edda*, and Bestla, Óðinn's mother, as a giantess. Turville-Petre argues that the knowledge acquired by Óðinn could only have come from the world of the dead, not only because of its association with giants, but also because of the value apparently placed on the dead as sources of knowledge. Commenting on Óðinn's claims to be able to enchant a corpse to walk and talk again,³⁰ he notes: 'if wisdom could be won from a dead delinquent swinging on the gallows, how much more could be gained from Óðinn after he had passed through the world

²⁸ *Hávamál* 138–40 (ed. Evans, pp. 68–9). 'I know that I hung on a windy tree for all of nine nights wounded with a spear and given to Óðinn, myself to myself on that tree of which no man knows from where its roots run. I was cheered by no bread nor with drink from a horn; downwards I peered. I took up the runes, screaming took them. I fell back from there. Nine mighty spells I learnt from the famous son of Bölpór, Bestla's father, and I got a drink of the precious mead poured from Odrerir'.

²⁹ E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: the Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (London, 1964), p. 49.

³⁰ *Hávamál* 157.

of the dead'.³¹ He further suggests that the ambiguous lines referring to the appearance and disappearance of a figure named Þundr in stanza 145 refer to the resurrection of Óðinn from the world of the dead, bearing secret knowledge, for Þundr was an Óðinnic name.

Svá Þundr um reist
Fyr þjóða røk,
Par hann upp um reis
Er hann aptr of kom.³²

However, this sacrificial death in order to gain knowledge does not accord with the surrounding material of the poem in which the fear of dying and the powerlessness of death is emphasised. The poem is formed from a compilation of gnomic and didactic material, and the apparent disjunction may be the result of this amalgamation. Alternatively, the conflict in ideas may stem, as Larrington suggests, from 'the exclusivity and inaccessibility of divine wisdom from the ordinary mortal',³³ a teasing reminder of the limitations of the human mind.³⁴ Nevertheless, the very fact that this poem was clearly compiled using material from a number of sources suggests that the inclusion of each section the material was a deliberate editorial choice, contributing to the overall structure of the poem. I would therefore like to suggest a possible solution for this problem, which would allow the theme of death to be interpreted as a coherent function throughout *Hávamál*. I believe the clue lies in the *Víkars þáttur* episode in the longer redaction of the thirteenth century *Gautreks saga*.³⁵ In

³¹ Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, p. 49.

³² *Hávamál* 145 (ed. Evans, p. 70). 'So Þundr carved before mankind's history when he rose up, when he came back'.

³³ Larrington, *Store of Common Sense*, p. 64.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ For the dating of *Gautreks saga*, see, for example, R. Simek and Hermann Pálsson, *Lexikon der altnordischen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1987); and transl. R. Nedoma, *Gautreks saga konungs. Die Saga von König Gautrek* (Göppingen, 1990).

this saga, the hero Starkaðr participates in the mock-sacrifice of King Víkarr. In order to gain a fair wind for the ships of the army, divination reveals that Óðinn demands a human sacrifice from the army, and finding that the lot of the king repeatedly comes up, the councillors of the king decide to hold a mock sacrifice, *minning blótsins*, in which the king is both hung from a tree and pierced with a reed stalk in order to imitate the required sacrifice.³⁶ Although the sacrifice goes tragically wrong through the supposed intervention of Óðinn, it is clear that the saga writer portrays the underlying belief of the royal councillors that the mock-sacrifice will bring the desired benefits. The date of the source material used within *Hávamál* may be unknown, but the poem itself survives only within the Christian context of the thirteenth-century *Codex Regius*. I wish to suggest that the sacrifice of Óðinn within the poem may therefore also be intentionally portrayed as a mock sacrifice. Although Turville-Petre has argued that Óðinn must necessarily die in order to gain runic knowledge,³⁷ three details within *Hávamál* contradict this interpretation. Firstly, in the description of the theft of poetic mead, the poet-editor portrays Óðinn as afraid to die, seducing Gunnlǫð in order to survive the adventure. Óðinn boasts of that adventure 'hætta ek hǫfði til',³⁸ and recalls:

Ifi er mér á
At ek væra enn kominn
Jǫtna gǫrðum ór,
Ef ek Gunnlaðar ne nytak,

³⁶ *Gautreks saga*, ch. vii (W. Ranisch, ed., *Die Gautreks saga in zwei Fassungen*, Palaestra 11 (Berlin, 1900), p. 15)

³⁷ Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North*, p. 49.

³⁸ *Hávamál* 106 l. 6 (ed. Evans, p. 60). 'I risked my head for it'.

Innar góðu konu,
 Þeirar er logðumk arm yfir.³⁹

In addition, the spells Óðinn claims to have learned include the ability to enchant a corpse to walk and talk with him. One myth contradicts another. What purpose would this be to one who already gained the secret knowledge of the world of the dead? Lastly, the poet simply describes Óðinn as wounded with a spear, *geiri undaðr*,⁴⁰ and not as dead. In risking death, Óðinn gains the runes of knowledge and the mead of poetry. By coming close to death, he enhances his personal power and knowledge. Pierced with a spear and hung upon a tree, he gains knowledge at the threshold of life and death, yet escapes the snares of death. Furthermore, he descends from the tree reaffirmed in his vitality and overflowing with potent life, as we see in his ability to heal (stanza 147), to save his own life in battle (stanzas 148 and 150) and the lives of his comrades (stanzas 156 and 158) and to win the love of girls and women (stanzas 161–2). By coming close to death, he gains a knowledge which leaves him brimming over with the power to remain alive and enjoy life.

Óðinn's experiences appear to share a common model with the human speakers within *Hávamál*. For example, he is in essentially the same position as that of the traveller spoken of in the opening

³⁹ *Hávamál* 108 (*ibid.*, p. 61). 'I am doubtful as to whether I would have come back out from the courts of the giants. If I had not had the help of Gunnlǫð, the good woman and put my arm over her'. This is reinforced by Óðinn's apparent fear of death demonstrated by other eddic poems, for example *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Baldur's draumar*

⁴⁰ See above, pp. 74–5. Although I simply wish to note here that the spear does not kill Óðinn, the symbolic spear wound is also a mark of divinity, whether claiming divinity or being dedicated to the gods as a sacrifice. For example, in *Ynglinga saga* the human kings Óðinn and Njörðr mark themselves with a spear at the point of death, in order to go to the world of the gods. See Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, ed., *Heimskringla*, 3 vols., Íslenzk fornrit 36–8 (Reykjavík, 1941–51) I, 22–33.

stanzas: the one who has travelled over the mountains and who must be revived at the farmhouse with food, fresh clothing and conversation, because both have come close to death in order to gain new knowledge. The hunger, cold, and threat of ambush associated with travel all suggest that the act of making a journey was fraught with danger, and risked death. However, the new experiences of travel, embodied by conversation with new acquaintances, transform the risk of death into an opportunity to increase knowledge. The model for gaining knowledge in *Hávamál* is the asking and answering of questions, a model we see in other mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda* including *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Alvissmál* and *Baldur's draumar*. As *Hávamál* expresses it:

Brandr af brandi
 Brenn, unz brunninn er,
 Funi kveykisk af funa;
 Maðr af manni
 Verðr at máli kuðr,
 En til dølskr af dul.⁴¹

Although in *Hávamál*, Óðinn, hanging upon the tree, reaches down and takes up the runes, immediately afterwards he also reveals to his audience an alternative sources of knowledge, which conforms to the pattern of asking and answering questions, for he claims to have learnt his mighty spells from the giant Bǫlþór. Additionally, the imagery of the flame leaping from brand to brand recalls Óðinn's rapid increase in knowledge in stanza 141 after he took up the mysterious runes.

Þá nam ek frævask
 Ok fróðr vera

⁴¹ *Hávamál* 57 (ed. Evans, p. 50). 'Brand burns from brand until it is burnt up flame, catches fire from flame; man through man becomes wise through speech, but foolish through reserve'.

Ok vaxa ok vel hafask;
 Orð mér af orði
 Orðs leitaði,
 Verk mér af verki
 Verks leitaði.⁴²

This passage suggests that despite the risks of travel and the potential for treachery amongst fellow men, individuals who risk such a death gain enhanced personal power through the opportunity to engage with new sources of knowledge. Such men also have the opportunity to increase their stock of friendships, not only potentially valuable as allies in local disputes or legal cases, but a joyful thing to have, for 'maðr er manns gaman'.⁴³ As with Óðinn's renewal of vitality following his period of near-death, or his adventure to gain the mead of poetry, aided by the love of the beautiful Gunnloð, so the man who risks death may gain both knowledge and a playful spirit that celebrates life.

A further advantage to this interpretation of Óðinn's ritualistic self-sacrifice is its potential for dating the compilation of *Hávamál* to a Christian context. Like *Gautreks saga*, which belongs to the genre of the as a *fornaldarsögur*, the 'sagas of ancient times', and is generally thought to have been composed in thirteenth-century Christian Iceland,⁴⁴ yet narrates a story set in a legendary age, so *Hávamál* draws on antiquarian pre-Christian images to form a poem which is extant only within the *Codex Regius*, but which was assembled in the thirteenth-century Christian context of Iceland. Unable to accept a literal truth behind the story of Óðinn's self-sacrifice and yet unwilling to forget the old stories of the past, this model of mock-

⁴² *Hávamál* 141 (*ibid.*, p. 69). 'Then I began to be productive and be wise and to grow and to thrive one word found another word for me one deed found another deed for me'.

⁴³ *Hávamál* 47 l. 6 (*ibid.*, p. 48). 'Man is the amusement of man'.

⁴⁴ See above, n. 35.

sacrifice may function as a metaphor for the repeated model of a dangerous journey in order to gain new knowledge which operates throughout *Hávamál*.⁴⁵ Interspersed are passages which lay the foundation for this mock-sacrifice, by listing the ways by which the helpless state of death could be deferred and knowledge could be gained through conversation with others. In summary, *Hávamál* creates a model of mock-sacrifice; a rite of passage in which the individual passes through the liminal state of the risk of death, before re-entering civilisation, having gained both knowledge and renewed vitality by the dangerous journey. This model encompasses both the both the traveller who after a difficult journey enters a new household, Óðinn's adventures to gain the mead of poetry, and the winning of the runes of knowledge. In the end, *Hávamál* celebrates this re-entry to society with the closing communal gathering 'in the High One's Hall' with the social purpose of knowledge affirmed in the closing blessing: 'Heilir þeir hlýddu'.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Joseph Harris ('*Homo Necans Borealis: Fatherhood and Sacrifice in Sonatorrek*' in *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, ed. S. Glöckler, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 320 (Tempe, AZ, 2007), pp. 153–73) makes a similar argument, suggesting that Egill is able to draw upon the myth of Baldr's death as a model of his grief and loss in *Sonatorrek*. More broadly, as Harris notes, Mircea Eliade analyses the use of myth as a paradigm for human acts in archaic cultures in *Cosmos and History: the Myth of the Eternal Return*, transl. W. R. Trask (New York, 1959).

⁴⁶ *Hávamál* 164 l. 8 (ed. Evans, p. 74). 'Blessed be they who listened'.

Knowledge about the Scandinavian North in
Ninth-Century England and Francia

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In the last decade of the ninth century, an anonymous Anglo-Saxon author wrote one of very few surviving contemporary descriptions of Viking-Age Scandinavia. The geographical introduction to the *Old English Orosius* is an extremely well-known text precisely because of this description of northern Europe, and in particular because of the eyewitness accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan.¹ Orosius himself had prefaced his *Historiae adversus paganos* with a geography of the world, so it seems clear enough why the Ohthere and Wulfstan interpolations were included in the work.² In the fourth century, the known world did not include Scandinavia, but in the ninth century it did, so the Old English translator took the liberty of expanding Orosius' work.

Despite the acknowledged rarity and importance of this text, it has rarely been asked why this description of the Scandinavian north is so unusual. After all, the ninth century was a period in which knowledge about Scandinavia increased greatly in many areas, particularly in Francia and the British Isles. It is equally well known that not all types of contact were violent and hostile. Ohthere's report to King Alfred is evidence of precisely this kind of economic or diplomatic exchange. Frankish missionary activity in Scandinavia must also have led to increased knowledge about the region in the major centres of Carolingian learning. Yet despite the large number of

¹ J. M. Bately, ed., *The Old English Orosius*, EETS 2nd ser. 6 (London, 1980), pp. 12–18.

² C. Zangemeister, ed., *Pauli Orosii Historiarum adversus paganos libri VII*, CSEL 5 (Vienna, 1882).

surviving texts from ninth-century Francia, knowledge about the homeland of the vikings is hardly ever reflected in our sources.

This seems all the more strange when we consider that the *Old English Orosius* is not the only example of ninth-century geographical writing. It is reasonable to assume that the authors of many other types of text were simply not very interested in geographical description. In both Anglo-Saxon and Frankish annals, for example, the annalists are generally only concerned to depict the vikings as a military threat.³ They have no particular reason to describe the viking homeland. Yet we would expect to find other descriptions of Scandinavia in geographical treatises. The fact that these do not appear to exist is extremely interesting and raises a number of questions.

In this article, I wish to examine the geographical introduction to the *Old English Orosius* as part of a wider tradition of ninth-century geography. I hope to show that a study of the place of the north in early medieval geography can contextualise the *Old English Orosius* and demonstrate that the description of Scandinavia is not as unique as it may initially appear. I will also suggest some ways in which lesser-known geographical texts functioned as expressions of increasing knowledge about northern Europe, even if they lack descriptions of the contemporary north.

Two other geographical treatises can be securely dated to the ninth-century, and it is these texts which provide the main point of comparison to the *Old English Orosius*. They are the *Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, written by the Irish scholar Dicuil in Francia around 825, and the *De situ orbis libri duo* written around 875 by an author known to modern scholars as Anonymus Leidensis, who was probably

³ This is particularly evident in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the ninth-century Frankish *Annales Bertiniani*, *Annales Vedastini* and *Annales Xantenses*.

working at Auxerre or Rheims.⁴ Both of these texts have frequently been derided as unoriginal and anachronistic, because they draw so heavily on classical authors that they describe a patchwork world from late antiquity rather than the contemporary world of the ninth century.⁵ The only passage that has attracted substantial scholarly interest has been an account of Irish monks sailing in the North Atlantic interpolated by Dicuil into his classical sources, which he claimed was partly derived from his own experiences and partly from speaking to other Irish clerics.⁶ This heavy reliance on earlier texts is a trait common to most early medieval geographies.⁷ The extant Carolingian manuscripts containing geographical material demonstrate a similar preference for classical descriptions of the world, since the overwhelming majority are copies of classical and late antique geographies, and copies of contemporary works are comparatively rare.

This preference for classical geographies indicates that geography was viewed as a particular type of knowledge, a knowledge not based on empirical observation, but on authoritative texts. This interpretation of medieval geography has been pioneered by Natalia Lozovksy, who has argued that learned geographical knowledge lay in a completely separate sphere to practical knowledge about the world.⁸ As a result of this perceived lack of relation between written

⁴ J. J. Tierney, ed., *Dicuili Liber de mensura orbis terrae*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 6 (Dublin, 1967); and R. Quadri, ed., *Anonymi Leidensis De situ orbis libri duo* (Padua, 1976).

⁵ P. Gautier Dalché, 'Tradition et renouvellement dans la représentation de l'espace géographique au IX^e siècle', *SM* 24 (1983), 121–65.

⁶ Dicuil, *Liber de mensura*, vii.6–15 (ed. Tierney, pp. 72–7).

⁷ On early medieval geography in general, see N. Lozovksy, *The Earth is Our Book: Geographical Knowledge in the Latin West ca. 400–1000* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000).

⁸ *Ibid.*; and N. Lozovksy, 'Carolingian Geographical Tradition: Was It Geography?', *Early Medieval Europe* 5 (1996), 25–43.

geography and ninth-century reality, the *Liber de mensura* and the *De situ orbis* have almost completely been ignored in relation to Viking-Age history. This interpretation leaves the description of Scandinavia in the *Old English Orosius* as a complete anomaly. It is worth reconsidering, however, whether there was any relation between learned geographies and knowledge of the contemporary world in order to establish whether the *Liber de mensura* and the *De situ orbis* might also be relevant for knowledge about Viking-Age Scandinavia. From here it should be possible to gain a better appreciation of the place of the description of northern Europe in the *Old English Orosius*. I also want to raise the question of why new geographies were written at all, if earlier texts were regarded as so authoritative.

It is immediately apparent that the *De situ orbis* must be interpreted with reference to Scandinavia. At the very beginning of his preface, the author tells us that he composed his work in response to the viking raids:

Cum olim quidem ut nunc Galliarum litora mari oceano mediterraneoque inminentia necnon earundem aliquatenus media videlicet quo variis fluviorum permeantur alveis, dira Normannorum vastarentur saevitia, studio quorundam fratrum nostrorum admonitus, immo ob utriusque maris aliquantum ignotos navigationis excursus, discipulorum mitissima deprecatione accensus, hunc de situ orbis libellum ex multorum praecedentium qui hinc tractaverunt dictis excerptum componere studui.⁹

⁹ *De situ orbis*, proemium i (ed. Quadri, p. 3). 'Since now, as for a long time, the awful ferocity of the Northmen has ravaged the Gallic shores of the Mediterranean and the Ocean and is also threatening certain central parts which are permeated by various rivers, I have composed this little book about the situation of the world out of the sayings of many earlier works which discuss it, having been admonished by certain of our brothers ignorant of these sea-raids, and kindled by the most mild entreaty of my students'.

This prologue indicates clearly that ninth-century knowledge about Scandinavia and its inhabitants is somehow reflected in this text, however obliquely.

Approaching this question from the opposite perspective, the more innovative *Old English Orosius* was still presented as part of classical tradition. As a translation of the most popular geography of the early middle ages, the additional information about Scandinavia was given the weight of Orosius' substantial authority. This is particularly true for the first half of the account of northern Europe, which expanded on a reference in the original text and was presented in much the same style as the rest of the introduction. It was only for the most far-flung regions of Scandinavia and the Baltic that descriptions acknowledged to be from the ninth century were introduced, namely the eyewitness accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan.

There is other evidence that geographical knowledge in the ninth century was not completely independent of contemporary ideas about the world. Ninth-century commentaries on well-known geographical works do sometimes update information, especially place names, as can be seen for example in the commentary on Martianus Capella by Remigius of Auxerre.¹⁰ We also know from other sources that places could have several names in use at any one time. It seems to be possible that there was a tradition of interpreting classical geography with reference to contemporary reality, which has left little trace on the written record.

There is therefore both a proven connection between the *De situ orbis* and the vikings, coupled with a more general likelihood that geographical treatises were linked to knowledge about the contemporary world. I wish now to look closely at the content and structure of both the *De situ orbis* and the *Liber de mensura*. If we allow that descriptions taken from earlier texts could express contemporary

¹⁰ C. Lutz, ed., *Remigii Autissiodorensis Commentum in Martianum Capellam* (Leiden, 1962).

ideas, then we can see both authors using their work to explore ideas about the north. Through looking at how these ideas developed, it may be possible to explain how the translator of the *Old English Orosius* came to write his unique account.

One thing that is immediately apparent in both works is a clear distinction between the centre and the periphery. Peoples and places at the edge of the known world are distinguished by fantastic descriptions. Both authors also use divisions within the structure of their works to separate a standard classicising account of Europe, Asia and Africa from their descriptions of more exotic lands. The emphasis placed on this division is much greater than that found in classical source texts. Both Dicuil and Anonymus Leidensis also linked these peripheral areas more firmly to the Ocean that was thought to encircle the known world, whereas classical and late antique authors tended to concentrate on the Steppe world to the north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus. This shift in perspective was created in both works by the careful selection and rearrangement of earlier source material, and suggests clearly that both authors wished to draw a clearer distinction than was found in classical geography between the three continents that comprised the known world on the one hand, and the lands in the surrounding ocean on the other. Scandinavia was regarded one of these Ocean islands, and a strong emphasis on the Ocean and its uncivilised and exotic peoples could well have reminded many ninth-century readers of the vikings.

Northern Europe is not the only region associated with the Ocean in ninth-century geographical writing, but it repeatedly stands out as the most distinctive. An examination of the descriptions of the north in both the *Liber de mensura* and the *De situ orbis* can show why the authors were so concerned with peripheral regions and can also indicate how attitudes towards northern Europe changed in the course of fifty years.

In 825, Dicuil was more interested in the islands to the north of Britain than in Scandinavia, but his knowledge about the north appears to have been evolving rapidly. As mentioned above, the *Liber*

de mensura is best known for its eyewitness account of Irish monks who travelled as far as Iceland. Dicuil combined this with several classical descriptions of the midnight sun in order to present the north as a place of natural wonders. He described the far north as a natural hermitage, a kind of northern equivalent to the monastic desert:

Illae insulae sunt aliae paruulae, in quibus in centum ferme annis heremitae ex nostra Scottia nauigantes habitauerunt. Sed sicut a principio mundi desertae semper fuerunt ita nunc causa latronum Normannorum uacuae anchoritis ... Numquam eas insulas in libris auctorum memoratas inuenimus.¹¹

Dicuil has very little on the inhabited regions of northern Europe, although his use of Pliny's brief description of Scandinavia as 'a second world' (*alterum orbem terrarum*) also represents it both as somewhat otherworldly and very distinct from Europe.¹²

Northern Europe is thus primarily a mysterious and unknown region for Dicuil, rather than the homeland of the vikings. The importance that he attaches to it actually seems to be part of a wider attempt to push the boundaries of the known world out beyond his homeland Ireland, often regarded as the barbaric edge of the world by classical authors. It is worth noting here that the *Old English Orosius* also provides little information about the British Isles, while at the same time dwelling on regions further removed from the mainland.¹³

¹¹ Dicuil, *Liber de mensura*, vii.16 (ed. Tierney, pp. 76–7). 'There is another set of small islands (north of Britain) ... in these for nearly a hundred years hermits from our country, Ireland, have lived. But just as they were always deserted from the beginning of the world, so now because of the pirates of the Northmen they are emptied of anchorites ... I have never found these islands mentioned in the authorities'.

¹² Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, vii.96 (H. Rackmann, ed., *Pliny the Elder's Natural History* (Cambridge, MA, 1968), pp. 192–5); Dicuil, *Liber de mensura*, vii.22 (ed. Tierney, pp. 78–9).

¹³ Ed. Bately, *Old English Orosius*, pp. 12–19.

In both instances this may represent a common strategy by which insular authors mediated classical ideas about their homeland.

Contemporary Scandinavia was therefore either unknown to Dicuil or lay outside his area of interest. It is difficult to say which. Nevertheless, increasing knowledge of the north is very evident in the *Liber de mensura*. The highly unusual use of contemporary information suggests not only that the north was of great interest to Dicuil, but that expanding knowledge about northern regions was beginning to challenge the discourse of medieval geography. It also is clear from the reference to 'the pirates of the Northmen' (*latronum Normannorum*) in certain northern islands, probably to be identified with the Faeroe Islands, that the Scandinavians were starting to play an important part in ideas about the north. This reference to viking raids is both the only introduction of historical change and the only use of a contemporary people name in the entire work.

Turning to the *De situ orbis*, several elements indicate that the north was much better known in 875 than in 825, something that is to be expected following half a century of intensive viking activity. Firstly, the links between the periphery and the centre are stressed far more here than in the *Liber de mensura*. Secondly, the anonymous author also included a long passage in which he described the inhabitants of the north in some detail, in contrast to Dicuil's depiction of the north as a primarily uninhabited region:

Item Gadarontas scribet insulas, ultraque illas autumat nullas et ibidem frigoris et stridoris multum, ubi barbarae gentes inhabitant ... De negotiis degunt. Ordeum et far tantummodo. Labores eorum sunt satis exiguae. Ferri metallis fertiles et maxima nautica arte inbuti. Habent enim industriam operandi nauticam, quam in nullis partibus mundi vel insulis maris comperire se dicit. Dein ad insulam Rifaricum stilum ponit idem sophista, ibique gentem audacem atque uelocem ualde ingenio

gnarum in subversione urbium ac ciuitatum munitarum, praecogniti arte fabrorum prumtissimo et callido ingenio.¹⁴

This chapter is possibly the most noteworthy section of the entire work. It is the only passage derived from the *Cosmographia* attributed to Aethicus Ister, a well-known yet largely fictional geography with a special interest in northern and ocean regions.¹⁵ Using this text enabled Anonymus Leidensis to depict a northern world inhabited by barbaric peoples, some of whom are noted for their brutality and their skills in attacking fortified settlements, others for their ship building techniques. This is not out of place in the *Cosmographia* itself, but is extremely distinctive within the *De situ orbis*. Like Dicuil in his passage about the islands of the North Atlantic, Anonymus Leidensis therefore claimed special knowledge about northern Europe, albeit here expressed through an unusual source text rather than an eyewitness account. Furthermore, I find it impossible to imagine that contemporaries could have read this passage without thinking of the homeland of the vikings, despite the lack of recognisable place names. This is a perfect example of how ninth-century geographers could describe their contemporary world while remaining within the traditional constraints of early medieval geography, where form could be experimented with, but content could not.

¹⁴ *De situ orbis*, i.13.17 (ed. Quadri, p. 39). 'The same philosopher describes the Gadarontine islands, beyond which he asserts there are no islands and in the same place there is much cold and chattering of teeth, and barbarian peoples live there... They live by trade. They have only barley and spelt. Their labours are little enough. They are rich in ferrous metals and are imbued with the greatest naval skill. For they have a naval industry which he says is not matched in any part of the world or islands of the sea. Then the same sophist turns his pen to the Rifaric islands, and in that place he describes a people swift and bold and very clever in the destruction of fortified cities and towns, particularly known for the art of their smiths and with the most ready and clever intellect'.

¹⁵ O. Prinz, ed. *Der Kosmographia des Aethicus*, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 14 (Munich, 1993).

By 875, the north was therefore no longer a mysterious region in which the vikings were sometimes active, but the homeland of the well-known raiders of Europe. Yet despite both better knowledge about Scandinavia and a more assured way of expressing it, the region was still regarded as highly distinct from the rest of Europe. Not only was Scandinavia situated on the very frontier of the known world, but its inhabitants were made to appear exotic when compared with other peoples. Even if the Scandinavian north was better known in 875 than in 825, it was still characterised primarily by difference.

This analysis of the descriptions of the north in the *Liber de mensura* and the *De situ orbis* suggest that the geographical introduction to the *Old English Orosius* is not as unique as it may first appear. While there are no other explicit descriptions of Viking-Age Scandinavia, this is primarily because it was strongly discouraged by literary convention. The *Liber de mensura* and the *De situ orbis* still functioned as expressions of knowledge about the Scandinavian north. Therefore by taking into account the literary conventions of written geography, we can actually expand our corpus of source texts for the Viking Age. The rarity of new geographical compositions coupled with the special knowledge about northern Europe claimed by all three authors even suggests that these treatises were written in direct response to expanding knowledge of Scandinavia, or at least of northern regions. It is clear that the classical view of the north could no longer be made to fit with contemporary reality.

It should now be easier to appreciate the Orosian description of northern Europe as a ninth-century geography. By including a lengthy descriptive account and by deviating from his usual textual authorities, the translator used the same techniques as Dicuil and the anonymous author of the *De situ orbis* to push the frontier of Europe further north. Like Dicuil, he drew on eyewitness accounts, but only as a final resort for the most unknown regions, and only after stretching the existing written sources to their limit under the authorial figure of 'Orosius'. The main difference between the *Liber de mensura* and the *Old English Orosius* is that Ohthere provides the

only source for the far north, whereas Dicuil assembled a collection of authorities. This could be because the translator of Orosius felt more confident about his information on the north, or simply because there were far fewer sources available in late Alfredian England. In both works, the introduction of historical change, references to contemporary peoples and the use of eyewitness accounts gives the far north an unstable quality in comparison to the static description of the rest of the world. The north remained an expanding frontier of knowledge throughout the ninth century.

What is particularly remarkable in the *Old English Orosius* is that its northern frontier had expanded past the homeland of the vikings. The accounts of Ohthere and Wulfstan were only one part of the description of northern Europe, and they are concerned for the most part with regions beyond the Norse-speaking area.¹⁶ It is important to remember that Denmark, Sweden and Norway were included together with the rest of Europe north of the Danube and are described in exactly the same fashion, in a manner that imitates classical texts.¹⁷ In Dicuil's work, the Norsemen were only just starting to impinge on the regions then thought of as the far north, while in the *De situ orbis*, the viking homeland was on the very edge of knowledge. For some English in the 890s, it had been incorporated into the rest of Europe.

It is worth ending with a problem. There is a major difficulty in knowing whether these changes in representations of the north during the course of the ninth century were due to increasing knowledge on the part of the authors, or to a difference in attitudes. It is certainly possible that the Anglo-Saxons viewed the Scandinavians as less strange and foreign than did the Franks. Perhaps Dicuil and Anonymus Leidensis were so determined to describe the north as a strange and foreign region that they

¹⁶ Ed. Bately, *Old English Orosius*, pp. 13–19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

completely misrepresented the state of contemporary knowledge about Scandinavia. This is certainly a possibility. I think it is more likely that the changes in geographical expressions of the Scandinavian north reflects a genuine expansion of knowledge, but this is a question I will continue to address in my future research.

The German Affiliations of the Cathedral of Lund under
Archbishop Asser (1089–1137)

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Archiepiscopus vero in maximo gaudio et honore legatos accepit habitisque apud se multa humanitate plurima de statu, de doctrina et operibus beati Ottonis percontabatur. Erat autem vir bonus et simplex, bonarum rerum cupidus auditor, non mediocris scientie ac religionis, in exterioribus tamen Slavice rusticitatis. Nam et homines terre illius tales sunt, ut in maxima ubertate atque divitiis generali quadam duritia omnes inculti videantur et agrestes. Urbes ibi et castra sine muro et turribus ligno tantum et fossatis muniuntur, ecclesie ac domus nobilium humiles et vili scemate. Studia hominum aut venacia aut piscacio est vel pecorum pastura. In his etenim omnes divicie illorum consistunt, siquidem agrorum cultus rarus ibi est. Porro in victu vel in habitu vestium parum lauti habent aut pulchritudinis. Nostri ergo mediocres in comparacione illorum gloriosi erant. Iwanus vero presbiter archiepiscopo se ipso maior esse videbatur.¹

¹ L. Weinrich, ed., *Heiligenleben zur deutsch-slavischen Geschichte: Adalbert von Prag und Otto von Bamberg*, *Augewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters* 23 (Darmstadt, 2005), pp. 470–2. ‘The archbishop received the messengers with great joy and honour indeed, and, while they were staying with him, very politely asked them many questions about the health, works and teachings of the blessed Otto. He was a good and artless man, a keen listener to good things, not bad in scholarship and religion, but in his looks of Slavic rusticity. For the men of that land are such that, despite great plenty and general riches, they look like rude peasants living in harsh circumstances. Towns and castles are without towers or walls, protected by no more than wooden fences and ditches; churches and houses of the high-born are slight and of paltry design. The men practise hunting and fishing, or raise cattle, and this indeed yields all their wealth, because the cultivation of fields is uncommon there. Furthermore their manner and appearance are of little merit or elegance: our unremarkable men looked

Thus, writing in 1159, Herbord of Michelsberg, biographer of St Otto, bishop of Bamberg 1102–1139. The archbishop in question is Asser of Lund, metropolitan not only of Denmark, but of all Scandinavia. Otto, planning missionary work among Slavic apostates on the Baltic island of Rügen, had sent an embassy to Asser to ask for permission: the islanders were under Danish metropolitan jurisdiction. The passage is of some interest as a source for early medieval Danish history, but it is problematic. The ‘Slavic rusticity’ of Asser’s exterior already gives it away: this is the language of cliché and prejudice, and one senses the stereotype of the impressively wealthy but uncouth viking behind Herbord’s dismissal of the inelegant Danes. Herbord’s account can however be complemented by a description of Asser closer to its subject in time and place, in a well-known passage from the *Chronicon Roskildense*, written not long after his death in 1137, and often thought to be connected to his nephew and successor Eskil (1138–77):

Iste primus archiepiscopus in Dania et in Swethia et in Norwegia extitit, <uir> acer et amarus, et sapiens et nullius constancie. Hic in tanta perturbatione regni se murum pro domo Israel non opponebat, sed, quocunque aura flabat, ut arundo uento agitata illuc se uertebat.²

glorious in comparison with them. Indeed, Ivan the priest seemed worthier than the archbishop himself (my translation).

² ‘Chronicon Roskildense’, in M. C. Gertz, ed., *Scriptores minores historiae Danicae medii aevi*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1917–22) I, 28. ‘He was the first archbishop of Denmark, and of Sweden and of Norway, a harsh and bitter man, wise yet of no firmness of character. Even when the kingdom was in such disorder, he never put himself up as a battlement for the house of Israel, but – wherever the wind blew – turned like a reed stirred by the breeze’ (my translation). The chronicler, in interesting contrast to Herbord, goes on to tell how King Erik Ejegod (1095–1103) in Asser’s reign fortified Lund with walls and palisades: *eo tempore Lund muro et uallo iussu Herici est circumdata* (*ibid.* I, 28).

In this characterisation, tendentiousness is even stronger, and the modern scholar interested in the psychology of Asser the man may well be disappointed at not getting any closer than Herbord and the Roskilde chronicler permit. However, both texts also provide information about the environment in which Asser operated, and the cathedral chapter whose head he was between 1089 and 1137. This paper is a preliminary essay at forming an impression of Asser's community by looking at non-narrative sources, namely the books that have survived from its early twelfth-century library. These, the principal witnesses to the beginnings of the liturgy and organisation of the Lund chapter, will be considered to see what evidence they can give of its international affiliations, of its nature and status compared to contemporary Continental centres.³

The bishopric of Lund – in the region of Skåne, now in southernmost Sweden, but part of Denmark until 1658 – was founded in 1060 by King Sven Estridsen (1047–76) in a radical reorganisation of the Danish dioceses, often thought to have been a

³ One historian dominates the literature on the early church of Skåne, the Lundensian Lauritz Weibull (see B. Odén, *Lauritz Weibull och forskarsambället*, Bibliotheca historica Lundensis 39 (Lund, 1975)), whose works on the subject were conveniently collected in the second volume of his collected articles, *NH: see in particular II, 493–603, 'Skånes kyrka från äldsta tid till Jacob Erlandsens död 1274'*, originally in *Lunds domkyrkas historia 1145–1945*, ed. E. Newman, 2 vols. (Stockholm, 1946) I, 141–356. In recent years, archaeologists and place-name scholars have made the most valuable contributions to the subject: examples include M. Anglert, *Kyrkor och herravälde: Från kristnande till sockenbildning i Skåne*, Lund Studies in Archaeology 16 (Lund, 1995); and M. Cinthio, *De första lundaborna: Medeltida gravar och människor i Lund* (Stockholm, 2002). For an introduction to the earliest books of the cathedral library, see P. Ekström, *Lunds domkyrkas äldsta liturgiska böcker* (Lund, 1985), and the convenient new electronic catalogue of medieval manuscripts at Lund University Library, with complete electronic facsimiles: <http://www1.uu.se/extern/apps/laurentius/>. E. Wrangel, *Lunds domkyrkas konsthistoria: Förbindelser och stilfränder* (Lund, 1923) is somewhat dated.

preparatory move for the establishment of a Danish metropolitan see.⁴ This is not unlikely, but it should be emphasised that there is no reason to assume that the new arrangement was instituted in disagreement with the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen, which claimed metropolitan power in Denmark and Sweden going back to the days of St Ansgar (d. 865). Indeed, it could even be interpreted as a concession to the ambitions of the powerful Archbishop Adalbert.⁵ Asser was the first bishop of Lund of Danish origin, but had been preceded by three foreign clerics: Henry (1060–c. 1065), reportedly a former bishop of the Orkneys and chaplain of Cnut the Great;⁶ Eginio (c. 1065–72), a Hamburg-Bremen appointee; and Ricwal (1072–89), also German, who reached Scandinavia in seemingly remarkable circumstances, having recently escaped, and been excommunicated, from Paderborn cathedral chapter. Ricwal, whose irregular career was actually not untypical among imported clergy in Scandinavia,⁷ appears to have had some success: a congregation of

⁴ Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, iv.8 (B. Schmeidler, ed., *Magistri Adam Bremensis Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, MGH SRG 2, 3rd ed. (Hannover and Leipzig, 1917), pp. 235–6). Gregory VII (1073–85) claimed Sven Estridsen had been negotiating a Danish archbishopric with Pope Alexander II (1061–73) at the time: Gregory VII, *Epistolae*, ii.51 (E. Caspar, ed., *Gregorii VII. Registrum*, MGH Epp. sel. 2 (Berlin, 1920–23), p. 193; and H. E. J. Cowdrey, transl., *The Registry of Pope Gregory VII, 1072–1085* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 142–3).

⁵ Adalbert, at this time, during the boyhood of King Henry IV of Germany (1056–1106), at the height of his powers, was planning to establish a northern patriarchate, under which a Scandinavian archbishop would have been subject to a papal vicariate vested in the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen: see H. Fuhrmann, 'Provincia constat duodecim episcopatus: Zum Patriarchatsplan Erzbischof Adalberts von Bremen', *Studia Gratiana* 11 (1967), 385–404.

⁶ Grossly incompetent according to Adam of Bremen: *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, iv.8–9 (ed. Schmeidler, pp. 235–7).

⁷ It is comparable to that of Herimann of Kloosterade, considered below, and a number of other rootless bishops in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

unknown organisation was installed during his episcopate and a precursor to the present cathedral constructed.⁸ He nevertheless remains obscure. His Danish career seems to have been affected neither by his excommunication, nor by any action by his nominal superior, Liemar of Hamburg-Bremen (1072–1101), urged by the bishop of Ricwal's former chapter, Imad of Paderborn (1051–76);⁹ this is probably indicative of the ever-loosening grip of the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, who was engaged with the rest of the German episcopate in controversies of greater magnitude.¹⁰

It was however almost fifteen years into the reign of Ricwal's successor that Hamburg-Bremen lost its archiepiscopal authority in Scandinavia: Asser was consecrated archbishop of Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Western Isles in 1104. Admittedly, the newfound Scandinavian ecclesiastical independence was fragile, and Hamburg-Bremen briefly regained its power in the last four years of Asser's episcopate.¹¹ Nevertheless, his period of office marked the beginning of a considerable intensification in the significance and influence of Lund. Not long into the twelfth century a new cathedral, dedicated, like its predecessor, to St Lawrence, was begun. It was only finished

⁸ Weibull, 'Skånes kyrka', in *NH* II, 440–9.

⁹ B. Schmeidler, 'Ein Brief Bischof Imads von Paderborn an Papst Gregor VII.', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 37 (1911), 804–9.

¹⁰ Liemar, like his predecessor Adalbert, was close to Henry IV of Germany, and present at most of the seminal scenes in the early stages of the Investiture Contest, including Canossa; he is famous for being one of the first of the German bishops to show overt hostility towards Pope Gregory VII, calling him *periculosus homo* in a letter of 1075 (C. Erdmann and N. Fickermann, ed., *Briefsammlungen der Zeit Heinrichs IV.*, MGH Die Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 5 (Munich, 1977), p. 34). See also G. Glaeske, *Die Erzbischöfe von Hamburg-Bremen als Reichsfürsten (937–1258)*, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte Niedersachsens 60 (Hildesheim, 1962), pp. 98–119; and I. S. Robinson, "'Periculosus homo": Pope Gregory VII and Episcopal Authority', *Viator* 9 (1978), 103–31, in particular pp. 127–30.

¹¹ Weibull, 'Skånes kyrka', in *NH* II, 450–75.

in 1145, but in 1123 the archbishop consecrated the high altar.¹² It is likely that the best known of the twelfth-century Lund manuscripts, the chapter book, was compiled and, in parts, written for this occasion.¹³ The manuscript can be divided into three principal parts: it begins with a collection of administrative documents, famously including a donation letter from of the royal saint Knud IV (1080–6), which is a reworking of a charter from 1085.¹⁴ This is followed by a section of prescriptions for chapter life. Finally, the codex includes the well-known *Necrologium Lundense*, the name by which the whole book is often misleadingly known, or *Memoriale fratrum*, consisting originally of a calendar with large spaces for all dates, where the deaths of members and patrons of the cathedral chapter were subsequently recorded for commemoration. It also incorporates a number of interesting historical notices, and lists of Danish kings, bishops of Lund, prominent members of the chapter, and of the religious communities with which St Lawrence's had entered *societas et fraternitas*, bonds forming a network of worship and commemoration of each other's dead. These communities are the houses of Dalby and All Saints in Lund, all other Danish cathedral chapters, and two German foundations: the abbey of Helmarshausen on the Weser and the house of canons at Ravengiersburg near Trier.¹⁵

¹² L. Weibull, ed., *Necrologium Lundense: Lunds domkyrkas nekrologium*, Monumenta Scaniae historica (Lund, 1923), p. 80. Erik Cinthio, however, has argued from archaeological evidence that the principal building work occurred in the reign of Eskil: *Lunds domkyrka under romansk tid*, Acta archaeologica Lundensia, Series in 8° 1 (Lund, 1957), pp. 198–204.

¹³ Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket, Mh 6; it was edited by Lauritz Weibull and has since been published both in electronic (http://www1.uu.se/externt/apps/laurentius/volumes.cfm?title=Mh_6) and printed facsimile (E. Kroman, ed., *Necrologium Lundense*, Corpus codicum Danorum medii aevi 1 (Copenhagen, 1960)).

¹⁴ L. Weibull, 'Knut den heliges gåvobrev till Lunds Domkyrka 1085', in *NH* II, 131–69.

¹⁵ Ed. Weibull, *Necrologium Lundense*, pp. 126–32.

The canons of Ravengiersburg, originally an eremitic foundation dating back to 1074, were of a new type, clerics who chose to lead a strictly regular life, at a time when numerous, more-or-less distinctive Reform orders were springing up across Europe, and distinctions between monks and canons perplexed contemporaries as much as they have modern scholars.¹⁶ At some point in the early twelfth century they were organised under the *ordo novus* of Springiersbach on the Mosel and Kloosterrade/Rolduc in Flanders, houses so close to monasticism that their leader was sometimes an abbot, sometimes a provost.¹⁷ The canons eventually complained about the impracticalities of so strict a rule and, after consulting Hildegard of Bingen, adopted the somewhat more pragmatic *consuetudines* of Marbach some point between 1139 and 1147.¹⁸ Their efforts to establish an identity in the complex world of twelfth-century reformed houses were part of a widespread move away from the *ordo novus* in the second quarter of the twelfth century (Springiersbach itself followed Marbach customs from 1139 onwards),¹⁹ and show

¹⁶ G. Constable, 'Religious Communities, 1024–1215', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, vol. IV, part 1*, ed. D. Luscombe and J. Riley-Smith (Cambridge, 2004), 354–7; and for the no longer understudied subject of German reform canonry, see S. Weinfurter, 'Reformkanoniker und Reichsepiskopat im Hochmittelalter', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 97/98 (1978), 158–93.

¹⁷ Calling the head of a house of canons regular 'abbot' was a northern French phenomenon, which spread into Lotharingia; Rupert of Deutz and others argued vigorously against it: *Super quaedam capitula regulae Benedicti*, iv.5 (PL CLXX, cols. 533–5).

¹⁸ J. Siegwart, ed., *Die Consuetudines des Augustiner-Chorherrenstiftes Marbach im Elsass (12. Jahrhundert)*, Spicilegium Friburgense 10 (Freiburg in der Schweiz, 1965), p. 66 n.

¹⁹ J. Siegwart, *Die Chorherren- und Chrofrauengemeinschaften in der deutschsprachigen Schweiz vom 6. Jahrhundert bis 1160 mit einem Überblick über die deutsche Kanonikerreform des 10. und 11. Jh.*, Studia Friburgensia N. F. 30 (Freiburg in der Schweiz, 1962), pp. 284–327.

interesting parallels with their brother-congregation at St Lawrence's in Lund, as evidenced in the second section of the chapter book.

The second section of the book consists itself of three parts: it begins with a collection of patristic texts, relevant to communal life. This is followed by twenty-four folios in an older hand, containing the Rule of Aachen of 817, which gradually came to dominate among secular canons in the Carolingian empire and its successor realms throughout the ninth- and tenth centuries.²⁰ Most likely these folios were once an independent *libellus*, or formed part of an older codex: the script is a high-grade Caroline minuscule, its most remarkable aspects a certain squareness, and a strong, flat headline, reinforced by thick triangular wedges on the minims and very short ascenders. It is typical of western Germany, and the Rhineland in particular, in the eleventh century – similar hands can be found in the manuscripts of, for example, Cologne. The dating of the hand is however made problematic by an illuminated initial on fol. 58v, which according to the latest catalogue bears a number of twelfth-century features.²¹ The initial may have been inserted at a later stage, but there are no traces of deletion of an earlier version and it seems most likely that the hand dates to the period around or soon after 1100, and is an example of scribal conservatism not uncommon in Germany in this period.²²

²⁰ A. Werminghoff, ed., *Concilia aevi Carolini*, MGH Legum sectio III: Concilia 2 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1906) I, 308–421. For its diffusion in east Francia, see R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln in Deutschland*, Bonner historische Forschungen 43 (Bonn, 1976), pp. 250–60; and also C. Dereine, 'Chanoines (des origines au xiii^e siècle)', in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique* XII, ed. A. de Meyer and E. van Cauwenberg (Paris, 1953), cols. 364–75. Recent literature on the contents and diffusion of Carolingian rules for secular clergy has been reviewed by Julia Barrow, although she has concentrated on the rule of Chrodegang of Metz, important predecessor to the Aachen rule: 'Chrodegang, his Rule, and its Successors', *Early Medieval Europe* 14 (2006), 201–12.

²¹ See http://www1.ub.lu.se/externt/apps/laurentius/pdf.cfm?title=Mh_6.

²² B. Bischoff, *Paläographie des römischen Altertums und des abendländischen Mittelalters*, Grundlagen der Germanistik 24 (Berlin, 1979), pp. 154–5; and N. Daniel,

The Rule of Aachen is followed by thirty-two folios in the same Lundensian hand as in the patristic excerpts mentioned above, containing the *Consuetudines Lundenses*. These are essentially an abbreviated and slightly reworked version of the reformist *consuetudines* of Marbach, and have been edited separately by Erik Buus; his discussion of their date and nature has been continued by Anna Minara Ciardi, who has also published a Swedish translation of the text.²³ The Marbach customs were enormously influential, but principally from 1139, when they began to be propagated from Salzburg cathedral (a veritable 'reform school' under Archbishop Conrad I (1106–47))²⁴ and Springiersbach: a Lundensian adoption as early as 1123 is therefore remarkable, particularly for a cathedral chapter.²⁵ Some scholars have consequently cast doubt on the matter. Josef Siegwart, editor of the Marbach customary, proposed a different model: the *consuetudines* found in the Lund chapter book were in fact for the house of Dalby and not the cathedral chapter. The latter would have adopted them only at some stage between 1140 and 1145, when they were introduced by Herimann of Kloosterrade. It should be noted that Siegwart, when writing this in 1965, believed the text of the Marbach *consuetudines* to date from around 1122 to 1124; Helmuth Deutz has since suggested an earlier date, perhaps as early as 1098,

Handschriften des zehnten Jahrhunderts aus der Freisinger Dombibliothek, Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 11 (Munich, 1973), p. 4.

²³ E. Buus, ed., *Consuetudines Lundenses: Statutter for kannikesamfundet i Lund c. 1123* (Copenhagen, 1978); A. M. Ciardi, transl., *Lundakanikernas levnadsregler: Aachenregeln och Consuetudines canonicae, Meddelanden från Kyrkohistoriska Arkivet i Lund*, ny följd 5 (Lund, 2003).

²⁴ S. Weinfurter, 'Die Kanonikerreform des 11. und 12. Jahrhunderts', in *900 Jahre Stift Reichersberg: Augustiner Chorherren zwischen Passau und Salzburg* (Linz, 1984), pp. 27–32, at p. 27.

²⁵ Dereine, 'Chanoines', cols. 379–81.

which Siegwart has accepted.²⁶ Furthermore, as most recently shown by Ciardi, an 1123 date for the Lund customary really is the most convincing alternative.²⁷ The manuscript is thus the earliest surviving witness to Marbach observance by some decades. Ciardi and Buus have both made the following important observation: the Lund redaction includes a reference to the Aachen rule preceding the *Consuetudines* in the chapter book, and it avoids the name of Augustine and the word *regularis*, thus making it clear that the new statutes were not intended to replace the Aachen rule, but to complement it.²⁸ St Lawrence's cathedral chapter was thus never fully regularised under Asser; it remained secular, but actively and profoundly engaged with the Reform movement, and was one of a select number of congregations which looked to Marbach for inspiration before 1139.

The necrology itself is a highly interesting document, not least its calendar, which will be discussed below. It also contains a large number of named individuals, often conveniently affirming, complementing or correcting information from narrative, annalistic and diplomatic material. It is furthermore of great palaeographical interest: Lauritz Weibull identified as many as twenty-seven hands writing in the *Memoriale fratrum*, most of them responsible for only a few, brief notices, but some are traceable over decades, giving ample

²⁶ H. Deutz, *Geistliches und geistiges Leben im Regularkanonikerstift Kloosterrath*, Bonner historische Forschungen 54 (Siegburg, 1990), pp. 32 n. and 35 n. Buus had already suggested that this could be the case (*Consuetudines Lundenses*, pp. 24–7).

²⁷ A. M. Ciardi, 'När tog lundakanikernas *Consuetudines* egentligen i bruk? Reflektioner kring textträdning och traditionsförmedling i 1120-talets Lund', *Kyrkohistorisk årskrift* 2004, pp. 11–21.

²⁸ It is generally assumed that the chapter followed only the Aachen rule before the *Consuetudines Lundenses* were compiled, but one cannot be certain; it does not seem unlikely that the monks of All Saints' outside Lund and the canons of Dalby would have assisted at St Lawrence's, and 'a certain eclecticism of observance is characteristic of the Danish chapters' in this period (L. Gjerløw, ed. *Ordo Nidrosiensis ecclesiae (orðubók)*, Libri liturgici provinciae Nidrosiensis medii aevi 2 (Oslo, 1968), p. 90).

opportunities to study the development of a single scribe, and the influence of old age on his handwriting.²⁹ Weibull's palaeographical survey of the codex remains impressive, but some of it is controversial: he himself remarked how he had often attributed very dissimilar entries to the same scribe, arguing that the differences reflect varying circumstances. A palaeographical reconsideration of the manuscript would be a difficult but valuable undertaking, especially given the developments in the discipline and the increased availability of material for comparison since Weibull's 1923 edition: the *Necrologium Lundense* stands at the centre of the beginnings of Latin handwriting in Scandinavia.

Some years into the archiepiscopate of Eskil, a new necrology replaced the *Memoriale fratrum* of 1123; the manuscript is usually known as the *Liber daticus vetustior*.³⁰ It is, unlike its predecessor, based on a martyrology – that of Ado of Vienne, but with a number of additions. Notices in the *Necrologium Lundense* up until around 1139×1146 have been transferred by a single hand to the *Liber daticus vetustior*, and it seems very likely that the book was written for the consecration of the just completed St Lawrence's cathedral by Eskil in 1145. It can therefore also be said to reflect the full secularisation of the chapter in that year, as well as the abandonment of the adapted Marbach statutes. It should be noted that the *Necrologium Lundense* continued being written after 1145, if not used in chapter meetings: entries in the *Liber daticus vetustior* went on being copied into its precursor until around 1170, and there are a number of later notices, the latest from 1316.

Painted in the broadest of strokes, the liturgical development at Lund followed the same pattern as that in the rest of Scandinavia. At

²⁹ Ed. Weibull, *Necrologium Lundense*, pp. lxxxvi–cii.

³⁰ Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket, Mh 7; it was edited by C. Weeke: *Libri memoriales capituli Lundensis: Lunde Domkapitels Gavebøger* (Copenhagen, 1884–9); see also Ekström, *Lunds domkyrkas äldsta liturgiska böcker*, pp. 40–5 and ed. Weibull, *Necrologium Lundense*, p. lxxxvi.

first, in the so-called missionary period, the situation can be described as chaotic: liturgies were imported and could have been local in the extreme, and there is often no reason to expect much congruence between practices in a given region. This was followed by a gradual consolidation of the liturgy within the diocese, involving among other things the creation of local saints' cults. This phase also included alignment with metropolitan practice, although Lund itself was of course the centre of such development. In many cases, particularly in Sweden, episcopal authority was not strong enough to create an individual diocesan character until the thirteenth century, and then often under the strong influence of mendicant liturgy. In Lund however, this phase largely took place in the twelfth century, much of it in its second half: a council in around 1188 was instrumental in stabilising the Lund liturgy and disseminating it in the other Danish dioceses,³¹ and the pontifical liturgy of the cathedral appears to have been imported from Rheims under Archbishop Eskil, probably following his exile in 1161–7.³² Nevertheless, many developments can be seen to have occurred in the early decades of the century, or even earlier, as shown by the manuscripts discussed below.³³

³¹ See J. Langebek *et al.*, ed., *Scriptores rerum Danicarum medii aevi*, 9 vols. (Copenhagen, 1772–1878) I, 282; and S. Helander, *Ordinarius Lincopensis ca 1400 och dess liturgiska förebilder*, Bibliotheca theologiae practicae 4 (Lund, 1957), pp. 69–70.

³² As shown by Bengt Strömberg, the Lund pontifical, extant only in a late medieval manuscript (Uppsala, UB, C 441), was originally based on the *Pontificale Romano-Germanicum*, but heavily influenced, if not wholly replaced, by the Rheims pontifical at some point before 1200: *Den pontifikala liturgin i Lund och Roskilde under medeltiden*, Studia theologica Lundensia 9 (Lund, 1955), particularly pp. 31–54. Eskil had close links with both the cathedral and the abbey of St Rémi in Rheims, and spent much of his exile in France with Abbot Peter of St Rémi and in Paris, although he also visited Rome and the Holy Land: Weibull, 'Skånes kyrka', in *NH* II, 237–41.

³³ Later medieval Lund practice can be found in the printed missal of 1514: see the facsimile edition with discussion by Bengt Strömberg: *Missale Lundense av år*

Much of the earliest Lund practice remains unknown: no chant- or prayer-books survive from Asser's episcopate. However, a remarkable amount of information can be found in other sources. Five books with readings for the mass survive: two epistolaries and three evangeliaries. Furthermore, the calendar of the 1123 necrology provides a convenient overview of the feasts celebrated in St Lawrence's, and the calendar attached to the so-called Colbaz annals, dating from some years into Eskil's archiepiscopate, gives good evidence of the liturgical development that took place as the cathedral building was completed.³⁴ The latter is a much richer source, based, like many early Scandinavian calendars, on a martyrology, but the feasts actually celebrated have been marked according to liturgical degree.

Many scholars have used liturgical material to find evidence for English influence on the Scandinavian church. In the case of Lund, it is however fairly clear that the calendar betrays mainly German sources. Sven Helander has described its basis as German, but with significant English inclusions.³⁵ There certainly are Insular saints' feasts present, but their significance is arguable: with the exception of St Botolph, whose cult was general and important in all of Scandinavia, the calendars show no evidence of the veneration of any

1514, Laurentii Petri sällskapetets urkundserie 4 (Malmö, 1946); for the development towards it in the fourteenth- and fifteenth centuries, see B. Strömberg, 'Gudstjänstlivet i Lunds domkyrka 1300–1536', in *Lunds domkyrkas historia 1145–1945*, ed. E. Newman, 2 vols. (Stockholm, 1946) I, 555–604.

³⁴ The calendar is found in a portion of Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Theol. 149, 2°; it was kept at the Cistercian abbey of Colbaz in Pomerania from 1170. There is no adequate printed edition of the calendar, but see the facsimile: E. Kroman, ed., *Annales*, Corpus codicum Danicorum medii aevi 5 (Copenhagen, 1965), pp. 1–68.

³⁵ Helander, *Ordinarius Lincopensis*, pp. 69–72.

particularly obscure or remarkable Insular saints' cults.³⁶ SS Alban, Cuthbert and Patrick are in the Colbaz calendar, but not marked as celebrated, and they could have come from a Continental source.³⁷ Lauritz Weibull discussed the differences between the calendars of the necrology and Colbaz manuscript. They are small, but some are worth noting. Lauritz Weibull discussed the differences between the calendars of the necrology and Colbaz manuscript. They are small, but some are worth noting. The feast of St Willehad, the founder of Bremen (an Anglo-Saxon saint, but a German cult), was elevated to the highest degree, presumably after the deposition of his relics at the high altar of St Lawrence's cathedral in 1123, the occasion for which the chapter book was compiled. This may seem a remarkable act so soon after the conflict with Hamburg-Bremen had ended, yet it only serves to show the complexity of the situation, and the fact that a centre may not always follow the lines of more readily apparent church-political conflict in questions of worship. Interestingly, the feast of St Ansgar (9 September), whose relics were also at the high altar, seems to have disappeared from Lund practice between the creation of the *Necrologium* and the production of the annals.³⁸

The evangeliary, the book used for gospel readings at mass, was typically the most noble of mass books, and the three examples that have survived from St Lawrence's are all illuminated high-grade manuscripts.³⁹ Apart from the gospel texts and prefatory matter, they

³⁶ J. Toy, 'St Botolph: an English Saint in Scandinavia', in *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300*, ed. M. Carver (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 565–70.

³⁷ They all occur in Cologne material, for example: G. Zilliken, 'Der Kölner Festkalender: Seine Entwicklung und seine Verwendung zu Urkundendatierung', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 119 (1910), 14–157.

³⁸ L. Weibull, 'Annalerna og kalendariet fra Colbaz', *Historisk tidskrift* (Copenhagen) 8:2 (1909), 170–87; repr. in *NH* II, 171–86.

³⁹ The oldest testament to liturgical practice in Skåne, and the earliest complete codex known to have been used in Scandinavia, the Dalby evangeliary

each contain a pericope list, indicating which passages were to be read for which masses. The most artistically accomplished of them is Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, C. 83. It was not produced locally – two of the three principal hands write the script of Helmarshausen abbey on the Weser, and the illuminations are in the distinctive style of the very influential Helmarshausen school.⁴⁰ The presence of St Lawrence in the dedication picture does, however, leave little doubt that the book was written for Lund, even if, liturgically, it follows Helmarshausen practice. As mentioned above, Helmarshausen is listed as one of the foundations in fraternity with St Lawrence's cathedral chapter, and in the *Necrologium Lundense*, a certain Findor, a

(Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, GKS 1325 4°), is worth mentioning in this context. A Saxon product of the first half of the eleventh century (H. Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im ottonischen und frühsalischen Reich*, MGH Schriften 30 (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 129–32), it can be firmly connected with the Hamburg-Bremen mission, and probably with its emissary Egino, bishop of the short-lived see of Dalby, 1060–c. 1065, thereafter of Lund until 1072 and founder of the Dalby house of canons. It is for some reason often referred to as of Danish origin, a palaeographically unconvincing proposal, recently presented in some detail by M. G. Andersen: 'Dalbybogen: Et evangeliarium fra det 11. århundredes sidste trediedel', *Nordisk tidsskrift for bok- og biblioteksvæsen* 83 (1996), 67–128. The book is in some ways ineptly constructed, although the script appears to be professional; but clumsiness alone is not an adequate argument for Scandinavian production. It follows monastic use, and can likely be connected to a monastic community in or near Bremen, but not Ramelsloh, a secular canonry (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 97–8). Adam of Bremen may have suggested Egino was a monk before his episcopal career: *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* iv.9 (ed. Schmeidler, p. 237).

⁴⁰ H. Hoffmann, *Bücher und Urkunden aus Helmarshausen und Corvey*, MGH Studien und Texte 4 (Hannover, 1992), pp. 41–2 and 74; see also V. C. Habicht, 'Romanische niedersächsische Miniaturen in Skandinavien', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 19 (1942), 40–95; and E. Krüger, *Die Schreib- und Malwerkstatt der Abtei Helmarshausen bis in die Zeit Heinrichs des Löwen*, Quellen und Forschungen zur hessischen Geschichte 21, 4 vols. (Darmstadt and Marburg, 1972).

priest and a monk of Helmarshausen appears, and he is said to have donated land in Skåne to Lund cathedral and was presumably a Dane.⁴¹ It is tempting to associate the manuscript with him, all the more so as the third of the principal hands, writing a rather different, less confident Caroline minuscule than the Helmarshausen scribes, shares many traits with some of the hands in the *Necrologium Lundense*.

Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 22 4° is a gospel book of uncertain origin, although most probably German. The script is rather low-grade, and not very distinctive. The book seems to have become liturgically normative for Lund, however, as its pericope is repeated in Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Thott 21 4°, a high-grade manuscript, if not quite of the same quality as the Uppsala gospel book. The main script appears to be in a Lund hand, probably from the mid-twelfth century. The illuminations, on the other hand, are very much in the Helmarshausen style. Hartmut Hoffmann has also identified a Helmarshausen hand in one of the rubrics: presumably this is by the illuminator.⁴² This manuscript shows the merging of two German traditions in Lund, from Thott 22 4° and Uppsala C 83. It also shows how Lund at this stage, when creating its own liturgical profile, was not simply importing and being influenced by books, but actively engaged and participated in book-making with perhaps the most artistically influential Saxon centre of its time.⁴³

As mentioned above, there are also two early epistolaries, books containing biblical readings for mass from outside the gospels arranged according to the calendar, surviving from St Lawrence's cathedral, both now preserved in Lund University Library. The earlier of these, from the beginning of the twelfth century, is an imported manuscript, and contains readings for the feasts of some unusual Flemish saints. One of them is Lampert of Maastricht, the patron

⁴¹ Ed. Weibull, *Necrologium Lundense*, p. 49.

⁴² Hoffmann, *Bücher und Urkunden*, pp. 26–7.

⁴³ See *ibid.*; an electronic facsimile of Thott 21 4° can be found at <http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/50/eng/>.

saint of Liège. Palaeographical observations appear to strengthen the link to Flanders, and also in this case, one can make a very tempting association with a historical character: Herimann, a canon of the highly radical and influential house of canons of Kloosterrade or Rolduc near Aachen (founded in 1108), son of two of its lay members and principal patrons. He had been expelled from this community in 1129, after a long conflict in which he attempted to become its provost, very much against its strict, virtually monastic regulations. Herimann then became an associate of Eskil, who was bishop of Roskilde at the time and was one of the principal negotiators in Rome in 1137 when Lund managed to regain its liberty from Hamburg-Bremen. He then had a short stint as bishop of Schleswig, but again made himself disagreeable to his own congregation, was expelled, and ended his days as a canon of Lund under Eskil.⁴⁴ The chapel of Kloosterrade had been consecrated on the feast of St Lampert, and it is not impossible that the epistolary could be connected with Herimann. According to art historians, the initials could perhaps be associated with the schools of Lobbes or Gembloux.⁴⁵ The other epistolary, Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket, Mh 5, is most likely a local product, and liturgically congruent with the evangeliaries Thott 21 and Thott 22. The script is typical of Lund in the mid-twelfth century.

The cathedral chapter in Lund, and its influence and network of international contacts, changed dramatically under Eskil, whose radical departure from his predecessor's policy is probably reflected in the disparaging comments of the Roskilde chronicler cited at the beginning of this paper. Eskil brought Parisian learning to the chapter – a book of psalms with commentary and a glossed Genesis;⁴⁶ he introduced new religious orders to the North: Cistercians,

⁴⁴ See Deutz, *Geistliches und geistiges Leben im Regularkanonikerstift Kloosterrath*, pp. 142–53; and Weibull, 'Skånes kyrka', *NH* II, 204–5 for Herimann.

⁴⁵ See the online catalogue: http://www1.uu.se/externt/apps/laurentius/details.cfm?title=Mh_2.

⁴⁶ Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket, Mh 4, and Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket, Mh 3.

Premonstratensians and Carthusians; and he directed the gaze of his archdiocese more intently towards the Baltic East, from the first Baltic crusade in 1148. His period also saw the foundation of Norwegian (Nidaros, 1152/3) and Swedish (Uppsala, 1164) archdioceses. Asser's archiepiscopate may suffer in comparison, although Eskil has received his fair share of ridicule, by commentators medieval and modern,⁴⁷ but as the survey above has shown, the books surviving from his cathedral show a remarkably forward-looking chapter. Its affiliations were principally with Continental centres well beyond northern Saxony and Hamburg-Bremen: recently founded houses at the forefront of the development of communal life, such as Kloosterrade and Ravengiersburg, the latter with a similar history of attempting but failing canonical life under too strict a set of regulations. Asser's Lundensian customary is the oldest surviving witness to the *consuetudines Marbacenses* by decades. The cathedral showed itself to be up-to-date artistically in its relations with Helmarshausen. Perhaps the emphasis on foreign *influence* on the Danish church in this period is misplaced: even the preliminary survey above shows a remarkably wide and, above all, active network, pursuing intellectual interchange and reworking imported practice. It also shows the danger of over-simplifying the situation: 'German' influence should be subdivided into interaction with more specific regions and ecclesio-political movements whenever possible, and

⁴⁷ The pragmatist Saxo Grammaticus mocked Eskil with heavy sarcasm; see for example the account of his resignation to become a Cistercian monk, where Saxo made him speak with ridiculously affected senile piety: Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, xiv.55 (J. Olrik and H. Ræder, ed., *Saxonis gesta Danorum*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1931) I, 512–17); Eric Christiansen has caught the tone well in his translation: *Saxo Grammaticus, Danorum regum heroumque: Books X–XVI*, BAR International Series 84 and 118 (i–ii), 3 vols. (Oxford, 1981) II, 564–70. On Eskil's reputation among twentieth-century scholars, see B. P. McGuire, 'Why Scandinavia? Bernard, Eskil and Cistercian Expansion in the North 1140–80', *Goat and Nail: Studies in Cistercian History* 10 (1985), 251–81, at p. 252.

smaller-scale initiatives from individual centres highlighted. The participation of historiographical monoliths such as Hamburg-Bremen, the emperor, or the papacy, must never be assumed. Herimann of Kloosterrade and Findor of Helmarshausen have been mentioned in relation to particular manuscripts above, but it should be emphasised that such associations should be made only with considerable caution. It is easy to presuppose limited integration into the rest of Europe in the case of a newly established centre in a newly established church, but this was far from necessarily the case: even Lauritz Weibull nodded Homerically when suggesting that Danish churchmen of the early twelfth century would have had little time to relate to political conflict *ute i världen*, 'in the world outside'.⁴⁸ Doubtless there is some truth to Herbord of Michelsberg's description of the Danish church as materially primitive in comparison with Continental centres, but much of the interest in Asser's Lund lies in the tension between its basic resources and its eagerness to follow and participate in twelfth-century modernity, in the deep cultural change in which European clergy were embroiled. This tension defined its activity and outlook.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Weibull, 'Skånes kyrka', in *NH* II, 456.

⁴⁹ I am grateful to Rory Naismith, Jinty Nelson and Ben Snook for helpful comments and corrections. Remaining errors are all mine.

Edling or *Penteulu*? Ambiguities in the Status of Gwalchmai,
Nephew of Arthur

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is in part to examine the possibility of a correspondence between the picture of the Arthurian court presented in medieval Welsh literature and the structures prescribed in the Welsh laws. More specifically, the paper is intended as a case study examining the evidence for the status of Gwalchmai, the nephew of Arthur, in the Welsh Romances: *Owein*, *Peredur*, and *Gereint*, with some reference to the Welsh *Tristan* fragment.¹ To begin with some preliminary observations, in the Romances, Gwalchmai's status appears to be above that of any other knight of Arthur's court.² He is also the only male relative constantly at Arthur's side, and often the only one mentioned.³ Based on evidence presented in the Romances, he could be identified either as an *edling* 'heir apparent', or a *penteulu* 'chief of the war-band'.

¹ The editions of the Romances used here are R. L. Thompson, ed., *Ystoria Gereint vab Erbin* (Dublin, 1997), hereafter *Gereint*; R. L. Thompson, ed., *Owein or Chwedyl Iarllles y Ffynnawn* (Dublin, 1986), hereafter *Owein*; G. Goetinck, ed., *Historia Peredur vab Efracw* (Cardiff, 1976), hereafter *Peredur*. The Welsh *Tristan* fragment is edited and translated in T. P. Cross, 'A Welsh Tristan Episode', *Studies in Philology* 17 (1920), 93–110.

² *Owein*, ll. 455–467; and transl. G. Jones and T. Jones, *The Mabinogion* (London, 1993), p. 141.

³ *Owein*, ll. 455–67 and 510–15; *Peredur*, pp. 31–4 and 42; *Gereint*, ll. 13–17, 53–8, 601 and 1151–94; and transl. Jones and Jones, pp. 141, 143, 166–8, 172, 189, 190, 201 and 218–19.

The Welsh laws appear to indicate that the positions of *edling* and *penteuulu* at court should be occupied by different people.⁴ The seating plans for the hall, for example, specify different seating arrangements for these two court officers. According to the *Llyfr Colan*, *Llyfr Blegwryd* and the Latin versions of the laws, the *edling* should sit across the fire from the king.⁵ The seat of the *penteuulu*, on the other hand, is near the entrance.⁶ Similarly, their lodgings are located in different places.⁷ Moreover, as Charles-Edwards points out, the separation of the offices makes political sense: making the *penteuulu* a king's relative, who, on assumption of the office, accepted exclusion from succession, would put control of physical power out of the reach of contenders for the throne.⁸

This paper will first address the problem of Gwalchmai's office, and then move on to an examination of the relationships between Gwalchmai and two other major characters of the Arthurian tradition: Gwenhwyfar and Cai. The purpose of this is to determine whether Gwalchmai's identification as *edling* or as *penteuulu* is more likely in the light of available evidence, and whether, in fact, the Romances present a uniform body of evidence in relation to the question of Gwalchmai's status.

⁴ See T. M. Charles-Edwards, 'Food, Drink and Clothing in the Laws of Court', in *The Welsh King and His Court*, ed. T. M. Charles-Edwards, M. E. Owen, and P. Russell (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 319–37, at pp. 324–5.

⁵ R. C. Stacey, 'King, Queen, and *Edling* in the Laws of Court', in *The Welsh King and His Court*, ed. Charles-Edwards, Owen and Russell, pp. 29–62, at p. 47. As Stacey notes (p. 48), the *edling's* position is de-emphasised in *Llyfr Iorwerth*, where no seating details are given for the higher-ranking officers.

⁶ Charles-Edwards, 'Food', p. 324.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 234–5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

EDLING OR PENTEULU

The *Llyfr Iorwerth* describes the *edling* as follows:

Gvrthdrych, .i. edlyg, yr hvn a dely guledychu guedy y brenhyn ac a dely bot yn anrydedussaf en y llys eythyr y brenhyn a'r urenhynes. Ef a dely bot yn uab neu yn ney y'r brenhyn.⁹

Sef ev aylodeu y brenhyn, y ueybyon a'y neucynt a'y keuyndyrv. Rey a dyweyt bot yn edlyg pob rey o'r rey hynny. Ereyll a dyweyt nat edlyg nep namyn y nep y rodho y brenhyn gobeyth a gvrthrych ydav. [...] Ny dely uynet un nos y vrth y brenhyn onys myn ehun.¹⁰

The last paragraph leaves two possibilities.

- (a) If we take the view that each of the king's members is an *edling*, Gwalchmai becomes an *edling* by default by virtue of being the king's nephew throughout the tradition.

⁹ A. R. William, ed., *Llyfr Iorwerth* (Cardiff, 1960), § 4, ll. 1–3; and D. Jenkins, transl., *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts of Medieval Wales* (Llandysul, 1990), p. 6. 'The heir apparent, to wit the edling, who is entitled to reign after the King, is entitled to be the most honoured in the court, except the King and Queen. It is right for him to be a son or a nephew of the King'.

¹⁰ *Iorwerth*, § 4, ll. 13–20; and transl. Jenkins, p. 7. 'These are the King's members: his sons and his nephews and his male first-cousins, Some say that each of these is an edling; others say that no-one is an edling save him to whom the King gives hope and prospect. [...] He is not entitled to leave the King for a single night unless the latter himself wills it'. Note that neither the *Blegwryd* and the *Cyfneth* versions refer to this debate. See S. J. Williams and J. E. Powell, ed., *Cyfreithiau Hywel Dda*, pp. 4–5; and A. W. Wade-Evans, ed. and transl., *Welsh Medieval Law: Being a Text of the Laws of Hywel the Good* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 3–4 and 148–9 for passages on the *edling*.

- (b) If only the king's designated relative is considered to be the *edling*, Arthur may have an *edling* other than Gwalchmai.¹¹

In regard to the second part, it is worth noting that only one son of Arthur, Amhar uab Arthur, is mentioned in the Romances, in *Gereint*.¹² Amhar is, however, identified as a *macwyf* 'page' and, according to the Welsh laws, the *macwyfaid* are the companions of an *edling*.¹³ Consequently, Gwalchmai is our only candidate for the role of the *edling*.

In the Romances, Gwalchmai is always treated with respect by all of the characters, with the exception of Cai, the *distain* 'steward', and seems to represent a standard of heroism against which every new hero is measured for the benefit of the audience. In all three Romances, as well as in the Welsh *Tristan* fragment, Gwalchmai is sent to encounter the hero when all other measures fail and, in each case, the confrontation between the hero and Gwalchmai is resolved without either of them losing. There is a certain degree of structural variation in these functionally very similar episodes. Since this variation has a direct relevance to Gwalchmai, it is worth discussing here.

The episode in *Owein* takes place when Arthur comes to a magic fountain – and adventure in quest of which his knight Owain had disappeared. Unknown to Arthur, Owain is the new defender of the fountain, and so when Arthur's knights undertake the adventure, they are pitched against the hero. The encounter runs as follows:

¹¹ Possibility (a) makes more sense in the context of the laws than possibility (b) as the *edling* appears to be a single person in the sections of the laws describing seating, accommodation, etc.; see above, p. 115.

¹² This may be significant, although it must be noted that *Gereint* seems to be generally a special case, and not merely in regard to Gwalchmai. *Gereint* is also the only of the Welsh Romances to contain precise geography.

¹³ Stacey, 'King', p. 48; and Charles-Edwards, 'Food', p. 324.

Ac o hynny allan yd aeth teulu Arthur bop eilwers y ymwan a'r marchawc hyt nat oed un heb y vwrw o'r marchawc namyn Arthur a Gwalchmei.

Ac Arthur a wisgawd ymdanaw y vynet y ymwan a'r marchawc. 'Och, arglwyd', heb y Gwalchmei, 'gat y mi vynet y ymwan a'r marchawc yn gyntaf'. A'e adu a wnaeth Arthur.¹⁴

The combat sequence can be schematised as follows:

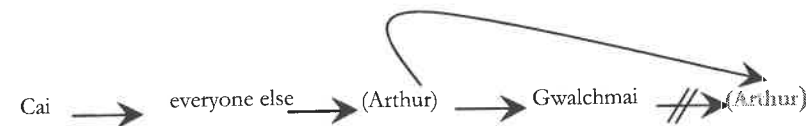


Figure 1: Combat sequence in *Owain*.

Arthur's readiness to fight before Gwalchmai seems inexplicable. It appears that either Gwalchmai was not supposed to fight at all, or he was supposed to fight last. Alternatively, it is possible that the order of combat was only set for officers of the court; and Stacey suggests that the *edling* was, like the queen, set apart from the rest of the court in some respects.¹⁵ Another possibility is that this situation was seen by the author as being similar to that prescribed in the laws, when the *edling* needed special permission from the king in order to leave the court. The idea might be reflected in *Gereint*, where, when the hero leaves Arthur for his own country, the king gives him leave to take

¹⁴ *Owein*, ll. 510–15; and transl. Jones and Jones, pp. 142–3. 'And thenceforward Arthur's retinue went each in his turn to joust with the knight, till there was none not thrown by the knight save Arthur and Gwalchmai. And Arthur arrayed him to go and joust with the knight. "Alas, lord," said Gwalchmei, "give me leave to go and joust with the knight first." And Arthur gave him leave'.

¹⁵ Stacey, 'King', p. 49.

whomsoever he chooses with him.¹⁶ Among the knights accompanying Geraint, we find Gwalchmai. It seems possible that Arthur's offer implicitly included permission for the *edling* to go as well.¹⁷

The combat sequence in *Peredur*, where Gwalchmai participates in an encounter between Arthur's household and the hero and ultimately brings the latter to Arthur, is similar to that in *Owein*.¹⁸ In this episode, Gwalchmai is, as in *Owein*, the last to approach the hero:



Figure 2: Combat sequence in *Peredur*.

Again, the conflict is resolved in this last encounter, although this time there is no fighting between the hero and Gwalchmai. Note, however, that in *Peredur* there is another encounter of a similar type: in this second encounter, the hero plays the role performed by Gwalchmai above. After his knights are overthrown a man a day for a week by an unknown knight, Arthur calls for his armour and prepares to fight. However, the armour is intercepted by Peredur, who fights and vanquishes the knight in Arthur's place.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Gereint*, ll. 589–90; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 203. 'A chymer y niuer a uynnych y gyd a thi, a mwyaf a gerych o'm fydlonyon: yn hebrygeid arnat, ac o'th garant titheu a'th gytuarchogyon' ('And take with thee the company thou desirest, and those thou lovest best of my liegemen to bring thee on thy way, and of thine own kinsmen and fellow knights').

¹⁷ As Stacey notes, 'in contemporary European diplomatic parlance, departures of this sort [i.e. without permission] constituted calculated insults and frequently marked the prelude to revolt' ('King', pp. 49–50).

¹⁸ *Peredur*, pp. 31–4; and transl. Jones and Jones, pp. 165–7.

¹⁹ *Peredur*, pp. 41–2; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 171.

Although the Welsh *Tristan* fragment does not involve combat, it contains a similar episode involving a confrontation between the hero, who has stolen the wife of king Mark, and Arthur's household, which Mark summons to recover his wife. The sequence of the encounter can be schematised as follows:

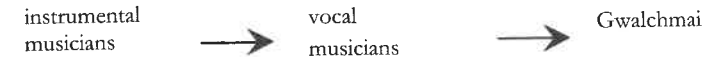


Figure 3: 'Combat' sequence in the Welsh *Tristan* fragment.

This seems to be a conscious variation on the other encounter episodes we have looked at. At the very beginning of the fragment, it is established that whoever wounds Tristan will die, as will whoever is wounded by him. Consequently, all knights refuse to fight him. Although the sequence consequently does not involve combat, it does reflect a tendency for Gwalchmai to be sent last to encounter the hero.

On the basis of the sequences examined above, it is possible to reconstruct the order in which Arthur's knights seem to have been expected to fight.



Figure 4: Standard expected combat sequence.

In *Gereint*, the combat sequence in the encounter between the hero and Arthur's court is shorter than in the other Romances, involving only Cai and Gwalchmai:

Cai → Gwalchmai

Figure 5: Combat sequence in *Gereint*.

Incidentally, whereas the evidence presented above might lead to a tentative identification of Gwalchmai as the *edling*, *Gereint* presents us with some evidence opposing this conclusion. In the beginning of *Gereint*, Gwalchmai is specifically identified as a *pentulu*: ‘Naw eglwys ereill a uydei y’r naw penteulu, ac y Walchmei yn bennaf, canys ef o arderchogrwyd clod milwryayth ac urtas boned oed bennaf ar y naw penteulu’.²⁰ This is Gwalchmai’s first appearance in *Gereint*, and the passage refers to the thirteen churches reserved for members of Arthur’s household and his guests at Whitsuntide, including nine churches reserved specifically for the chiefs of the war-bands, with Gwalchmai in the lead.²¹

The description of the *pentulu* in the laws runs as follows:

E penteulu a dely bot yn uab y’r brenhyn, neu yn ney, neu yn kywuch gvr ac y galler penteylu ohanav. [...] E werth yv trayan guerth y brenhyn. E sarhaet yv trayan sarhaet y brenhyn, eythyr eur. [...] E le yv a’y lav assv ar drvs y neuad. [...] A’r eyl seyc anrydedussaf en e llys a dely ef y chaffael, a henny en gyntaf guedy y brenhyn.²²

²⁰ *Gereint*, ll. 13–17; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 189. ‘Nine other churches would be between nine captains of the war-bands, and for Gwalchmei above all, for he by excellence and renown for feats of arms and dignity of noble birth was chief of the nine captains of the war-bands’.

²¹ Cf. Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec et Enide*, ll. 1679–80 (D. Poirion *et al.*, ed., *Chrétien de Troyes : Œuvres complètes* [Paris, 1994]).

²² *Iorwerth*, § 6, ll. 1–2, 6–9, 13–14; and transl. Jenkins, p. 9. ‘It is right for the captain of the household to be the King’s son or nephew, or a man so high that he can be made captain of the household. [...] His worth is a third of the King’s

Gwalchmai qualifies for this position as the king’s nephew, and the exalted status that accompanies this post influences his depiction in all the Romances. We might, consequently, consider the possibility that he is to be seen as a *pentulu* throughout the Romances, since he is nowhere explicitly identified as an *edling*.

One of the functions of a *pentulu* was to reconcile members of the *teulu* with the king: ‘Ot a gvr ar teylu y gan y brenhyn o achavs yrlloned ef a dely y wahaud urth y wyt a’y gymodi a’r brenhyn’.²³ We can observe Gwalchmai fulfilling this function on at least three occasions: in *Gereint*, *Peredur* and the *Tristan* fragment.²⁴ In *Gereint*, Gwalchmai contrives to arrange a meeting between Geraint and Arthur despite the reluctance of the former.²⁵ Although there is no actual ill-feeling involved, Gwalchmai still very clearly plays the role of the go-between. In the *Tristan* fragment, after a long conversation conducted entirely in *englynion*, Gwalchmai persuades Tristan to talk to Arthur, and thus avoids bloodshed.²⁶ Only in *Owein* does Gwalchmai not play this reconciliatory role, and it is perhaps significant that it is the hero of that Romance who becomes Arthur’s *pentulu* towards the end of the narrative.²⁷ Owain’s predecessor in the office is never

worth. His *sarbaed* is a third of the King’s *sarbaed*, except for gold. His protection is to take the man who does the wrong to safety. His place is with his left hand to the door of the hall. [...] He is entitled to have the second most honourable dish in the court, next after the King’.

²³ *Iorwerth*, § 6, ll. 26–8; and transl. Jenkins, p. 9. ‘If any man of the bodyguard goes away from the King by reason of anger, it is right for him [i.e. the *pentulu*] to invite him to his meal, and to reconcile him with the King’.

²⁴ *Gereint*, ll. 1160–71; transl. Jones and Jones, pp. 217–8; *Peredur*, pp. 31–5; transl. Jones and Jones, pp. 165–7; and Cross, ‘Episode’, pp. 94–110.

²⁵ *Gereint*, ll. 1160–71; and transl. Jones and Jones, pp. 217–8.

²⁶ Cross, ‘Episode’, pp. 102 and 108.

²⁷ *Owein*, ll. 817–19; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 151: ‘Ac Owein a trigywys yn llys Arthur o hynny allann yn penteulu, ac yn annwyl idaw, yny aeth ar y gyfoeth e hun’ (‘And Owein remained in Arthur’s court from that time forth, as captain of the war-band, and beloved of him, until he went to his own possessions’).

named. If it was Gwalchmai, it is unclear why he should have been replaced. Could it be that Arthur's court, while fairly steady in terms of personnel throughout the tradition, would have been so flexible in terms of offices as to enable authors to switch them around without confusing the audience?²⁸

A further characteristic of the *penteuilu* is given in the laws: 'Ef a dely bot em pob lle en eu blaen ac na wnelhoent dym namyn can e gyghor'.²⁹ This complicates matters, since throughout the Romances Gwalchmai is consistently not the first but the last to fight.³⁰ This does not seem consistent with the function of the *penteuilu*.

Ultimately, the case seems to be that there is no agreement in the Romances regarding Gwalchmai's status. In fact, there exists a very definite clash between the evidence of *Gereint* and of *Owein*, while *Peredur* seems to side with the latter. At the end of *Peredur*, Gwalchmai and Peredur send for Arthur and his war-band.³¹ Unfortunately, the manner in which this incident is told does not make clear whether Gwalchmai sends for the war-band as *penteuilu*, *edling*, or in a different capacity. Since he travels without being accompanied by the war-band, however, it seems unlikely that he could be the *penteuilu* here. Finally, the *Tristan* fragment seems to side with *Gereint* by virtue of

²⁸ Compare the *pedwar snydyauc a'r ugein* ('twenty-four officers'), whom a king is entitled to have in his company according to the laws, with Arthur's *pedwar marchog ac ugein* 'twenty-four knights' names in the Triads. See *Iorwerth*, § 3, l. 20; transl. Jenkins, p. 6; and *Pedwar Marchog ar Hugain* ('The Twenty-four Knights of Arthur's Court'): R. Bromwich, ed. and transl., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 250–3.

²⁹ *Iorwerth*, §6 ll. 33–4; transl. Jenkins, pp. 9–10. 'It is right for him to go before them everywhere, and that they should do nothing save with his counsel'.

³⁰ See above, pp. 117–20.

³¹ *Peredur*, p. 70; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 187: 'A chyghor uu gan Peredur a Gwalchmei anuon at Arthur a'e teulu, y erchi idaw dyfot am pen y gwidonot' ('And Peredur and Gwalchmei resolved to send to Arthur and his war-band, to ask him to come against the witches').

being concerned primarily with Gwalchmai's negotiations with Tristan on behalf of Arthur in the typical *penteuilu* fashion.

POWER STRUCTURES IN ARTHUR'S COURT

Gwalchmei and the Queen

Moving on to other evidence concerning Gwalchmai's status, let us first consider his relationship with the queen. Either as the *edling* or as *penteuilu*, Gwalchmai's status equals that of the king's wife in terms of *galanas* 'compensation for homicide' and *sarbaed* 'compensation for insult'.³² The law also specifies that the *edling* '... a dely bot yn anyrdedussaf en y llys eythyr y brenhyn a'r urenhynes', which puts him immediately below the queen in status.³³ This seems to be reflected in the scenes which involve Gwenhwyfar and Gwalchmai.

In the stag-hunting episode of *Gereint*, for example, Gwenhwyfar and Gwalchmai seem to be playing similar roles. First, Gwalchmai suggests that the stag's head be awarded to the killer of the stag for his lady-love.³⁴ Gwenhwyfar then moves the plot forward by suggesting that they postpone that until Geraint's return.³⁵ Not only does this show both giving Arthur advice in a similar way, but Arthur's reaction to their advice is virtually identical.³⁶ The only difference lies in the manner in which the advice is delivered – Gwalchmai phrases his counsel as a question, while Gwenhwyfar couches hers in the hard terms *llyma uyg kyngbor*.³⁷ This may reflect a

³² See *Iorwerth*, §101; and transl. Jenkins, pp. 154, 346, and 379–80.

³³ *Iorwerth*, § 4, ll. 1–3; and transl. Jenkins, p. 6. '... Is entitled to be the most honoured in the court, except the King and Queen'.

³⁴ *Gereint*, ll. 53–8; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 190. Interestingly, this is exactly what Gauvain condemns in *Erec et Enide* ll. 39–58. Note also that there Arthur ignores Gauvain's counsel (ll. 59–66).

³⁵ *Gereint*, ll. 414–18; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 199.

³⁶ *Gereint*, l. 58; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 190.

³⁷ *Gereint*, ll. 416–7; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 199. 'This is my counsel'.

difference in status, although Arthur's responses seem to indicate that he is oblivious to any difference between the position of Gwalchmai and Gwenhwyfar in relation to him. Although Gwalchmai and Gwenhwyfar are almost equals (indeed, they are equals in terms of *sarbaed* and *galanas*), Gwalchmai's status, whether as *penteulu* or as *edling*, is, unlike the queen's, entirely subject to the king's whim. Gwalchmai's wording of his counsel may reflect his unease at being seen to dictate his will to the king.

Gwalchmai's counsel to Arthur in the tent-moving episode of *Gereint* may reflect a similar attitude.³⁸ Here, Gwalchmai does not address Arthur directly, but rather sends a message through a servant. However, we still find him wording his request tactfully.

We get another brief glimpse of the relationship between Gwalchmai and Gwenhwyfar in *Peredur*. After Cai's unprovoked attack on the hero, who had sworn silence, Gwalchmai addresses the queen:

'Arglwydes', heb ef wrth Wenhwyfar, 'a wedy drycset y gyflafan a oruc Kei ar y maccwy hwnn yr na allei dywedut? Ac yr Duw ac y prof i, par y vedeginyaethu erbyn vyn dyfot trachefyn, a mi a talaf y bwyth it'.³⁹

In this case, Gwalchmai could very well have been either *edling* or *penteulu*, as he uses the word *arglwydes* 'lady', when he addresses her, which points to his awareness of her higher status. The phrase *a mi a talaf y bwyth it* seems, however, to reflect the fact that the difference in status between the king's nephew and the queen might not be all that great.

³⁸ *Gereint*, ll. 1183–8; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 218.

³⁹ *Peredur*, p. 41; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 171. "Lady", said he to Gwenhwyfar, "see how grievous an assault Cei made upon this squire for that he was unable to speak. And for God's sake, and for mine, have him made whole against my return, and I will repay it thee".

We have, consequently, a fairly clear picture of the relative status of Gwalchmai and Gwenhwyfar, despite the ambiguities surrounding Gwalchmai's social function. Gwalchmai is below the queen in status, but not by far, and in certain situations he is almost her equal.

Gwalchmai and Cai, the Distain

While the interactions between Gwalchmai and the queen do not seem to have ever attracted much attention, the tension between Gwalchmai and Cai is one of the most colourful features of the world of the Romances, carrying on even into the Continental tradition.

In *Peredur*, Cai's accusation, suggesting that Gwalchmai's chief merit as a knight is his ability to talk himself out of trouble, provokes an interesting reply.⁴⁰ Gwalchmai's words are: 'Ac nyt attaf i y perthyn itti dial dy ulwg a'th dicofeint'.⁴¹ This can be interpreted in two ways. Either Gwalchmai is pointing out that he is not to blame for Cai's bad mood, or he is reminding Cai of their difference in status.

In *Gereint*, where Gwalchmai is clearly identified as a *penteulu*, the relationship seems less strained. This may be because a *penteulu* is much closer to a *distain* in rank than an *edling* is, even though, like the *edling*, he is usually of royal blood.⁴² In *Gereint*, there is a fairly extensive dialogue between Cai and Gwalchmai:

⁴⁰ *Peredur*, p. 32; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 166: 'Clot bychan hagen, ac etmyc, yw itt oruot y marchawc lludedic gwedy blinno yn ymlad. Velly, hagen, y gorfuoost ar lawer onadunt wy ac hyt tra barhao genhyt ti dy tauawt a'th eireu tec, digawn vyd it o'r aureu peis o uliant teneu ymdanat' ('Yet small renown and honour is it for thee to overcome a tired knight, fatigued with battle. Even so, however, hast thou overcome many of them. And so long as thy tongue and thy fair words last thee, a tunic of thin bliant around thee will be armour enough for thee').

⁴¹ *Peredur*, p. 33; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 167. 'And it is not on me it befits thee to vent thy wrath and indignation'.

⁴² *Iorwerth*, § 6, ll. 1–2; and transl. Jenkins, p. 8.

'A vr', heb ef [Kei] vrth Walchmei, mi a giglef gan un o'r gweisson gwelet yn y coet uhot marchawc briwedic ac arueu amdlawt ymdanaw. Ac o gwney iawn, ti a ey y ydrych ay gwir hynny'. 'Ny'm tawr i uynet', heb Gwalchmei. 'Kymmer dy uarch nu', heb y Kei, 'a ffeth o'th arueu; mi a giglef nat diwrthgloch ef vrth y neb a del attaw'.⁴³

The manner in which Cai speaks seems to indicate that a sort of camaraderie exists between the two. Cai sends Gwalchmai to face what has proven for Cai himself a particularly dangerous opponent, but he does so with no apparent malice, advising Gwalchmai to take some armour with him. It is particularly interesting to compare this scene with that in *Peredur*, where Cai comments on Gwalchmai's ability to extract himself from trouble.⁴⁴ Perhaps this contrast indicates a slight difference in the perception of Gwalchmai in these two works. As *penteulu* in *Gereint*, he is perhaps slightly more aggressive and slightly less honey-tongued than he is in *Peredur*, where he is perhaps seen as an *edling*.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the different places assigned to the *edling* and the *penteulu* in hall seating plans, and the different ceremonial surrounding these two positions, seem to indicate that they were conceived as being occupied by different people. An additional consideration is purely practical: the *penteulu* had to be faithful to the king. Consequently, the post was usually occupied by a relative of the

⁴³ *Gereint*, ll. 1153–9; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 218. "Why man", said he to Gwalchmei, "I have heard tell from one of the servants that a wounded knight has been seen in the forest above, and mean armour upon him. And if thou dost what is right, thou wilt go and see whether that be true". "I mind not if I go", said Gwalchmei. "Then take thy horse", said Cei, "And some of thy armour; I have heard tell he is none too courteous to any who come his way".

⁴⁴ *Peredur*, p. 33; and transl. Jones and Jones, p. 166.

king's, a relative who had to be barred from succession. Otherwise, too much military power would be concentrated in the hands of one with the incentive to use it against the king. Consequently, an *edling* would be unlikely to also be a *penteulu*. By this reasoning, Gwalchmai should be one or the other, but not both. This leaves us with three possibilities. The first is that *Gereint* and *Tristan* represent a different tradition from *Owein* and *Peredur*. The second is that one of the authors was ignorant of the existing tradition and introduced an innovation unconsciously. Either possibility would lead us to the conclusion that the Romances do not, in fact, present a unified picture of the Arthurian court, to which the Welsh laws could be applied as a paradigm. The laws, however, can be applied to the Arthurian court as it is represented in the individual Romances. The third possibility is that Arthur's court, and Gwalchmai's case in particular, represent an exception to the general rule presented in the laws. Concerning this last point, we must bear in mind, however, that the laws may not so much represent the everyday reality of the Welsh court as outline an ideal; consequently, Gwalchmai's ambiguous status might be a reflection of the difference between the legal ideal and reality.

It seems most likely that it was the Arthurian tradition that was flexible. As the nephew of Arthur, Gwalchmai could be either *edling* or *penteulu*, or, indeed, both, depending on the narrative demands. In view of his function as the ideal of knighthood, it would be by definition impossible for him to commit a *coup d'état*. In addition, because the Arthurian narratives concentrated on the Arthurian reign only, the question of who succeeds Arthur would be irrelevant. In fact, Arthur tends not to feature in Welsh genealogies, which not only makes it hard for us to establish who his successor would have been, but also raises the question of whether the medieval readership would have seen the notion of succession as relevant to the Arthurian world. Hence, most references to Gwalchmai, the king's nephew, in the Romances are ambiguous. The beginning of *Gereint* is the only exception, but *Gereint* is also the only Romance to contain very

precise geographical references. In this context, it is possible that the identification of Gwalchmai as a *penteulu* is not so much a reflection of the tradition as of that particular author or redactor's meticulousness. The ambiguity regarding Gwalchmai's status in the rest of the tradition also allows the authors to vary the details of the relationships between Gwalchmai and other principal characters, such as Cai, without introducing too much discrepancy.

Ring-Givers and the 'Strife-Metal of Princes' in *Atlakviða*

Abigail Queen

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According to the Middle English poem *The Proverbs of Alfred*, that sage West Saxon king once pronounced that, 'wiðuten wisdom[e] is wele ful vnwurð'.¹ 'Wealth without wisdom is worthless' might aptly stand as the moral of the Old Norse poem *Atlakviða*,² a tale of two rival rulers, each blessed with unique shares of wealth and wisdom.

THE PUZZLE OF THE POEM

Scholarly consensus classes *Atlakviða* as one of the earliest heroic poems of *The Poetic Edda*, probably composed in ninth- or tenth-century Iceland or Norway.³ The only sustained analyses of *Atlakviða* itself have been made by Ursula Dronke and Carola Gottzmann.⁴ The vast majority of scholarship on the poem consists of brief tangents within larger works, interested either in isolated phenomena that manifest in the poem (e.g. 'the Germanic hero', the figure of

¹ W. Skeat, ed., *The Proverbs of Alfred* (Oxford, 1907), p. 15 ll. 119–20 (B text).

² All citations of *Atlakviða* and the *Poetic Edda* are from G. Neckel, ed., rev. H. Kuhn, *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius, vol. I: Text*, 4th ed. (Heidelberg, 1962). Except where otherwise indicated, translations are taken from C. Larrington, transl., *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford, 1996).

³ On the poem's date and provenance, see: T. Gunnell, 'Eddic Poetry', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. R. McTurk (London, 2005), pp. 82–100, at pp. 97–98; E. Haymes, 'The Germanic Heldenlied and the Poetic Edda: Speculations on Preliterary History', *Oral Tradition* 19.1 (2004), 43–62, at pp. 52 and 55; U. Dronke, ed., *The Poetic Edda*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969–) I, 45; and Larrington, *Edda*, p. ix.

⁴ Dronke, *Edda* I, 13–45, and her related article, '*Atlakviða*', *The Saga-Book of the Viking Society* 16 (1979), 1–16; and C. Gottzmann, *Das alte Atlilied: Untersuchung der Gestaltungsprinzipien seiner Handlungsstruktur* (Heidelberg, 1973).

Guðrún), or in *Atlakviða* as one rogue tentacle of the protean Völsung legend.⁵ Due to this kind of piece-meal treatment, enriched by very few sustained analyses as a literary work of interest in its own right, *Atlakviða* remains a plot of wasteland in the lush landscape of Old Norse literary studies today.

The poem's complex narrative usually leaves modern readers bewildered as to the motives behind its characters' actions. Perhaps the shock of its continual, monstrous and exotic violence hinders our appreciation of its incredible artistic finesse and cathartic drama: we get side-tracked, as it were. With Högni's laughter ringing in our ears as his heart is stickily scooped from his body at the request of his own brother, we perhaps may be pardoned for a disinclination to seek further detail. The modern story-telling industry has taught us to interpret such harsh patinas of blood as the tell-tale sign of vacuous poetic content (in the Aristotelian sense) for which the sanguine 'spectacle' is intended to compensate. Yet, when we put aside these reflexes as twenty-first century entertainment consumers, we will see that the same standards do not serve to measure the art of *Atlakviða*, where the poetry keeps pace spryly with the pounding rush of blood.

The poem's antipathy to sensitive analysis effected by its violent content is compounded by its pregnant language and compact, fast-paced narration. Its idiom is cryptic, laconic, allusive. Anthony Gilbert summarizes nicely that 'there is a degree of compression and density of meaning that demands greater knowledge and sophistication on the part of the audience'.⁶ Like most, Gilbert

⁵ Illustrative examples include: B. Murdoch, *The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatics in Early Medieval Poetry* (London, 2000), pp. 33–60; A. Gilbert, 'The Ambiguity of Fate and Narrative Form in some Germanic Poetry', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992), 1–16, at pp. 6–11; E. Versteegaard, 'Gift-giving, Hoarding, and Outdoings', in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. R. Samson (Glasgow, 1991), pp. 97–104, at pp. 101–3; and M. Mundt, 'Bicca greppar', *Medieval Scandinavia* 6 (1973), 68–74.

⁶ Gilbert, 'Ambiguity of Fate', p. 6.

despairs of understanding the poem on its own terms, concluding that only a familiarity with early Germanic cultural mores will allow us to fathom why the characters do what they do, and why the poem's action can be seen as anything more than a random cacophony of slaughter.⁷

It is true that the poem refuses to make sense unless read with some knowledge of its early medieval context. Rather than relying on 'a general knowledge of Germanic values',⁸ however, the following pages will rely on a familiarity with the poem's literary context. The eddic poems are 'snapshots of a living spoken tradition'.⁹ As one such snapshot, *Atlakviða* encodes its story in the language of a special poetic register, signifying via the symbolic and aesthetic conventions of the Old Norse poetic tradition. The conventions of that tradition must be understood in order to interpret the poem's meaning. Through *Atlakviða*'s enigmatic diction and tangled plotline resonate two of the most common themes manifesting multifariously across the early Germanic poetic traditions: 'the ring-giver' (a generous lord who dispenses treasure to his loyal military following)¹⁰ and 'treasure' (precious objects, movable wealth).¹¹ The following pages will trace

⁷ 'The principles on which they [the characters of the fiction] act have to be inferred from a general knowledge of Germanic values', *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Gunnell, 'Eddic Poetry', p. 95. Though Haymes rightly emphasizes, drawing examples from *Atlakviða*, the literary nature of the style and aesthetic of even the 'oldest' eddic poems: 'German Heldenlied', pp. 52–3 and 55.

¹⁰ 'Ring' acts as metonymic synecdoche for 'treasure'. Across the early Germanic poetries, these noun epithet phrases include, for example: OE *beaga brytta*, goldwine, ON *bring-drifi*, *baug-skerðir*, OSax. *medom-gibo*. In *Atlakviða* 31 l. 10 (ed. Neckel and Kuhn, p. 245; and transl. Larrington, p. 215) Gunnarr is *bring-drifi*, and at 36 l. 2 (ed. Neckel and Kuhn, p. 246; and transl. Larrington, p. 215) Atli is *sverða-deilir*, swords being treasure items.

¹¹ Other favourite themes of the Old Norse poetic tradition (e.g. gift exchange, cursed or magic treasure objects, fate, family loyalties, oaths, curses, prophecy,

the movements and metamorphoses of treasure as the two rival ring-givers struggle for supremacy.

Like language itself, treasure is a symbol. Diverse 'readings' of treasure underlie most of the crucial decision-making that drives the narrative of our poem. Though hoards of the sort referred to in *Atlakviða* have gone somewhat out of fashion, today's reader should have little difficulty accepting the close connection between wealth and power. The symbolic dimensions of early medieval treasure hoards include the representation of power already possessed and the potential to exercise further power, as well as a less tangible value as family heirloom or legacy.¹² Wolfgang Mohr explores some interpretations of the Niflung hoard in *Atlakviða*: 'the treasure of the Nibelungs is the symbol of Burgundian power. No, it is more than a symbol, it is a political reality. ... Whoever has the treasure has the quite unsymbolic power of being able to equip an army and to attract followers'.¹³ *Atlakviða's* tale of feuding ring-givers explores the dynamic distinction between treasure's 'symbolic power' (including its value as family heirloom) and the 'quite unsymbolic army' it can produce. The poem presents the distance between the two as either insurmountable or insignificant depending upon the wisdom of the treasure's owner.

A brief plot summary of the poem is necessary for the clarity of the subsequent analysis. Atli is ruler of the Huns. He is married to Guðrún, sister of Gunnarr, who is ruler of the Burgundians. Atli

the heroic hall feast, female incitation) are prominent in *Atlakviða* and intertwine richly with the threads of 'the ring-giver' and 'treasure'.

¹² On the symbolic content of early Medieval treasure hoards, see especially T. Reuter, "You can't take it with you": Testaments, Hoards and Moveable Wealth in Europe, 600–1100, in *Treasure in the Medieval West*, ed. E. Tyler (York, 2000), pp. 11–24.

¹³ W. Mohr, 'Geschichtserlebnis im altgermanischen Heldenliede', in *Zur germanisch-deutschen Heldensage*, ed. K. Hauck (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 93, as cited and translated by Murdoch, *Germanic Hero*, p. 59.

invites Gunnarr and his brother, Högni, to visit the Hunnish court.¹⁴ He offers lavish gifts should the brothers accept his invitation. Gunnarr and Högni are masters of the fabled Niflung treasure hoard (won by the hero Sigurðr from the dragon Fáfnir and shamefully appropriated by a love-blind Gunnarr).¹⁵ The brothers know that Atli's invitation is intended to trap them and steal their treasure hoard. Nevertheless, Gunnarr decides to accept the malicious invitation, but first he and Högni secretly hide the whole Niflung hoard in the river Rhine. When the brothers are seized and fettered at the Hunnish hall, Atli offers to spare them for a ransom of treasure (to no-one's great surprise). Gunnarr immediately requests Högni's excised heart. He rejoices upon receiving it, gloating that Atli will never lay his grasping paws upon the Niflung hoard now, because only the two brothers knew the secret of its location which Högni now cannot and Gunnarr will not reveal. But Atli does not give up: he puts Gunnarr in his snake-pit where Gunnarr sings heroically until he expires at last. Sister Guðrún speaks a curse upon Atli and in revenge, kills the sons she had borne to him and feeds them to him. She tells him of this, kills him, and burns down his hall.¹⁶ Fortunately, this is 'the end'. The narrative divides evenly into 'three

¹⁴ This is the historical Attila the Hun. For a discussion of historical background, see Dronke, *Edda* I, 29–34.

¹⁵ The story is told most completely in the eddic poems *Grímnismál*, *Fáfnismál*, *Sigurðurkviða in skamma*, and variously in subsequent works relating to the *Völsung* legend.

¹⁶ Interestingly, the Codex Regius scribe introduces the poem in prose with reference only to Guðrún's revenge: 'Dauði Atla. Guðrún, Giúka dóttir, hefndi bræðra sinna, svá sem frægt er orðit: hon drap fyrst sono Atla, en eftir drap hon Atla ok brendi höllina ok hirðina alla. Um þetta er síá kviða ort' ('Guðrun, daughter of Giuki, avenged her brothers, as is very well known: first she killed Atli's sons, then she killed Atli and burned down the hall and all the courtiers. This poem was composed about it') (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 234; and transl. Larrington, p. 210).

great acts',¹⁷ deliberately punctuated by three death scenes where treasure is wielded as power.

It is easy to see how the clumsy summary above – let alone the mighty little poem itself – might draw reactions of confusion and revulsion.¹⁸ Also obvious in the summary above is the most obscure, absolutely puzzling turn in the plotline: why does Gunnar accept Atli's invitation when he knows so well that it is meant maliciously? After dramatically enumerating the reasons not to trust or desire Atli's offer (stanzas 6–9) and immediately before Gunnar announces the decision, the poet injects an emphatic string of negation:

Niðjargi hvøtto Gunnar, né náungr annarr,
rýnendr né ráðendr, né þeir er ríkr vóro.¹⁹

The poet seems anxious to highlight the importance of this queer decision of Gunnar's. What little scholarship does concern itself with *Atlakviða* invariably responds to the poet's promptings and tries to explain this act Gunnar's whereon the rest of the poem hangs entirely, what Brian Murdoch calls 'the real enigma of the work':²⁰ why does Gunnar visit Atli?

Most commonly, a half-imagined Germanic heroic code or an anachronistic solicitude for personal honour is romantically set forth as Gunnar's motive: 'he feels his honour is somehow at stake and

¹⁷ Dronke, *Edda* I, 13.

¹⁸ The scribe of the Codex Regius seems to expect these reactions from his audience. His brief prose epilogue to *Atlakviða* refers his audience to the more discursive and polite poem, *Atlamál*, for clarification of the events in *Atlakviða*: 'Enn segir glöggra í Atlálof inom grænlenzkóm' ('The "Greenlandic Poem of Atli" tells this story more clearly') (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 241; and transl. Larrington, p. 216).

¹⁹ *Atlakviða* 9 ll.1–4 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 235; and transl. Larrington, p. 211). 'No kinsman urged Gunnar, nor any close relative, neither advisers nor counsellors, nor any powerful men'.

²⁰ Murdoch, *Politics and Pragmatics*, p. 50.

that he must go', for example.²¹ Brian Murdoch slides to the opposite extreme, envisioning a purely pragmatic, two-dimensional 'has vs. has not' reasoning behind Gunnar's maneuver. He argues that by accepting Atli's invitation, Gunnar 'blocks all possibilities of the acquisition by the Huns of this treasure',²² which 'is a defeat for Atli'.²³ In other words, Gunnar and Atli both seek possession of the Niflung treasure hoard and Gunnar's suicidal, fratricidal venture guarantees that his rival will not be satisfied. This is more interesting than 'he must seek an honourable death',²⁴ etc., but this two-dimensional reasoning of possession and non-possession must be stretched to accommodate a third dimension: the symbolic nature of treasure. If treasure is a symbol of power and 'wealth without wisdom is worthless', then the Niflung hoard may be worth one thing to Gunnar and another to Atli as the two rulers each interpret its value with using their respective endowments of wisdom. This third dimension – the symbolic nature of treasure – is what makes *Atlakviða* so interesting.

GUNNARR'S WEALTH AND WISDOM

Gunnar has an especially cunning view of what treasure is worth. When he arrives at Atli's hall, Guðrún meets him with her usual flurry of passion, protesting bitterly that,

²¹ H. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952), p. 290. Further examples include: 'the invitation is no longer an invitation but a challenge. Now that the danger is certain, Gunnar cannot refuse' in Dronke, *Edda* I, 14; see also Gilbert, 'Ambiguity of Fate', pp. 8–9; and Gottzmann, *Atlilied*, pp. 43–52.

²² Murdoch, *Germanic Hero*, p. 51.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁴ Gilbert, 'Ambiguity of Fate', p. 9.

Betr hefðir þú, bróðir! at þú í brynio færir,
sem hiálmom aringreyppom.²⁵

In his answer, Gunnarr replaces war-treasure (corselet and helmet) with warriors:

Seinat er nú, systir, at samna Niflungom,
langt er at leita lýða sinnis til,
of rosmofiþll Rínar, rekka óneissa!²⁶

His mind leaps from treasure to power, and power is not just a troop, but a troop of uncowardly, zealous warriors. This is just what he so conspicuously lacks in the opening scene of the poem, though we find him there surrounded by both war-treasure and warriors in his lavish hall. Gunnarr has wealth, but his wisdom tells him that it is only the germ of power.

The first five stanzas of the poem present the conflict that drives the rest of the narrative. In this crucial scene, Knéfrøðr, Atli's envoy, arrives at the Burgundian hall to find a very strange situation indeed. In a meticulously, ostentatiously conventional heroic *mise-en-scène* complete with the requisite mead-hall, war-treasure, retainers, ring-giver, high-seat, we find a frightened war-band which cowers silently before a hostile enemy emissary:²⁷

²⁵ *Atlakviða* 16 ll.1–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 237; and transl. Larrington, p. 213). 'It would have been better, brother, if you'd come in a corselet, with those helmets still grouped round the hearth'.

²⁶ *Atlakviða* 17 ll.1–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 237; and transl. Larrington, p. 213). 'Too late now, sister, to collect the Niflungs, a long time to wait for the arrival of a troop of uncowardly men from the russet mountains of the Rhine'. Only Munat interpolates a troop accompanying Atli and Hogni because the ground would not have shaken under only two riders: 'in my view this can only mean that they approached Atli's castle with a certain number of followers' ('Bicca greppar', p. 71).

²⁷ This scene has been cited by scholars as the most classic specimen of the conventional heroic mead-hall scene. See, for example: T. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild*, *Islandica* 43 (Ithaca, NY, 1980), pp. 220–1.

at gørdom kom hann Giúka ok at Gunnars hóllo,
bekkiom aringreyppom ok at bióri svásom.

Drukko þar dróttmegir –en dyliendr þogðo –
vín í valhóllo, vreiði sáz þeir Húna;
kallaði þá Knéfrøðr, kaldri røddo,
seggr inn suðræni, sat hann á bekk hámm.²⁸

Knéfrøðr speaks *kaldri røddo*. Speech described as 'cold' in this way is not just unfriendly but treacherous, sometimes mocking.²⁹ This diction belies the messenger's basically hostile orientation, corresponding to the disquietude of the Burgundian *dróttmegir*. The hostility is made more glaringly incongruous and threatening by Knéfrøðr's place of honour on a high seat. The scene is carefully marked by familiar poetic motifs as the conventional environment for expressions of vigorous camaraderie and boasts of loyal service to the ring-giver. Yet these are conspicuous in their absence: here instead the poet skillfully uses the conventions of his literary tradition to emphasize Gunnarr's decidedly un-heroic warband. These retainers surrounding their lord show no willingness to act in his service, though threats from outside are immanent and indeed present in the form of sneering Knéfrøðr and his clearly treacherous message.³⁰

²⁸ *Atlakviða* 1 ll. 5–8, and 2 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 234; and transl. Larrington, p. 213). 'He [Knéfrøðr] came to the courts of Giuki and to Gunnar's hall, the benches grouped around the hearth, and the sweet-tasting beer. The household all drank there – still they concealed their thoughts in silence – wine in the splendid hall, they anticipated the Huns' hostility; then Knefrod called out in a cold voice, the man from the south – he sat on a high bench'.

²⁹ On the connotations of *kaldri røddo*, see Dronke, *Edda* I, 47.

³⁰ Roberta Frank concisely explores the conventional theme of 'the lord-retainer bond' wherein a retainer is duty-bound to loyally serve (particularly militarily) his lord, in Old English and Old Norse literature (though the topic is common in many other studies), in her 'The Ideal of Men Dying with their Lord in *The Battle of Maldon*: Anachronism or *Nouvelle Vague*?' in *People and Places in Northern Europe*

The deficiency of the Burgundian war-band when confronted with their Hunnish rivals remains Gunnar's most pressing concern throughout the poem. This is why Gunnar must visit Atli: to convert his treasure into power, into an 'uncowardly troop'.

By the end of this melancholy opening act, brittle with icy words, hidden fears and mysterious heralds of doom, dramatic tension has been stretched nearly to breaking. Every verse has been bursting with dark diction, ominous allusions, and obviously mangled poetic conventions. Then, 'mær, í miðranni, af móði stórom',³¹ Gunnarr shatters the spell with his speech:

Rístu nú, Fiðrnir! láttu á flet vaða
greppa gullskálir með gumna höndom!³²

The physical motion of the imperatives 'rise up' and 'send around' visually enact boldness and the bond of communal solidarity. The motions initiate a great contrast to the opening section's physical stagnation, ominous fears and cautious replies. At this dramatic crux, Gunnarr's gesture with the golden goblets demonstrates his interpretation of treasure's worth – the interpretation which informs the decision he announces here and his use of treasure throughout the poem. We see him distribute it among his followers, sending the gold around the benches, empowering his drooping war-band with bright speech and shining treasure. By the end of this episode, the troop is *óneisir* ('un-cowardly, courageous') – the same word with which he replaced the hearth-encircling war-treasure in his response to Guðrún cited above. At this turning of the tides, the poet injects

500–1600: *Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. I. Wood and N. Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 95–106.

³¹ *Atlakviða* 9 ll.7–8 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 235; and transl. Larrington, p. 212). 'Splendid in his mead-hall, with great courage'.

³² *Atlakviða* 10 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 235–6; and transl. Larrington, p. 211). 'Rise up now Fiðrnir, send the golden goblets of the warriors passing around the hall from hand to hand!'

the first of three gnomic pronouncements he allows himself whenever a character commits himself to death: here he praises Gunnarr for doing 'sem konungr skyldi'.³³

In a cryptic speech sandwiched between this sharing 'round of golden goblets and his departure for Atli's hall, Gunnarr opines theatrically:

Úlfar muno ráða arfi Niflunga,
gamlir, [gránferðir], ef Gunnars missir,
birnir blakfiallir bíta þreftönnom,
gamna greystóði, ef Gunnarr ne kómrat! (my emphases).³⁴

This stanza means something, presumably, but exactly what that might be is not immediately apparent. Gunnarr is perhaps indulging in a little glamorous chest-beating, but his prophetic tone is the speech's most salient feature. Prophecy-speaking in extremis or immediately ante-mortem is another commonplace of Old Norse literature. Here Gunnarr seems to be predicting the result of the suicidal decision he has made, estimating what it will make his Niflung treasure worth. The first half of the prophecy consigns the

³³ *Atlakviða* 9 l.6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 235; and transl. Larrington, p. 211). 'As a king ought to'. On the deliberate verbal repetition in *Atlakviða*, see Haymes, 'Germanic Heldenlied', pp. 52–4 and 61–2. The other two gnomic interpolations are: 'svá frækn fiádom veriaz', ('so should a brave man defend himself against enemies'), *Atlakviða* 19 ll.5–6 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 237; and transl. Larrington, p. 213), of Högni; and 'svá skal gulli frækn hringdrifi við fira halda' ('so should a brave ring-giver guard his gold from enemies'), *Atlakviða* 31 ll.10–12 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 239; transl. Larrington, p. 215)).

³⁴ *Atlakviða* 11 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 236; and transl. Larrington, p. 212) (my emphases). 'The wolf shall have control over the Niflungs' inheritance, the old grey guardians, if Gunnar is going to be lost, full-coated bears will bite with vicious fangs, make the bitch-pack rejoice if Gunnar does not return'. I use *gránferðir*, Dronke's emendation of the MS's *gránverðir* in her *Edda*, as justified in her discussion at I, 53. This seems preferable to Neckel and Kuhn's amended *gránvardir* from *gránverðir*.

inheritance of the Niflungar to the keeping of wild wolves: the appositives *úlfr* ('wolf') and *gamlar gránferðir* which Larrington construes as 'old grey guardians', but could more skaldically indicate 'grim war-bands of ancient times'. 'Skaldic' in fact seems to be the most correct genre for this eulogistic, highly performative, quasi-posthumous funeral stanza Gunnarr composes in his own honour. According to Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, *gammall* often means 'ancient, of olden times',³⁵ *grár* can mean 'grim, dangerous',³⁶ and *ferð* frequently denotes a 'troop' or 'war-band'.³⁷ So, Gunnarr intends that the treasure remain held only by wolves – a theme resonating with military connotations in the Norse poetic tradition – and by these antique war-bands, probably the Niflung heroes of old whose ranks Gunnarr plans to join. Each of the echoing verses beginning with *ef* (emphasized above) pairs with a verse containing a reference to these metaphorical, ghostly wolf-warriors, thus linking the lycanthropic spectres with Gunnarr, who now plans to become one of them.

The second half of the prophecy predicts how Gunnarr's disposal of his treasure will benefit the surviving Burgundians: there will be fighting, encoded in his reference to tussling bears and wolves, the conventional poetic beasts of battle.³⁸ Gunnarr's army was hardly able to drink their ale previous to his decisive announcement, let alone launch into the kind of feral fighting proposed by this

³⁵ A. Faulkes, ed., *Snorri Sturluson: Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 2 vols. (London, 1998) I, 30 and II, 284.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 28 and II, 293.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 70, I, 106 and II, 272.

³⁸ This linking of Gunnarr and the warrior-wolves also praises him as a successful war-leader according to skaldic tradition. Judith Jesch remarks on this prominent skaldic convention: 'Norse poets use them [the beasts of battle] to glorify the victorious warrior who causes the slaughter', in 'Eagles, Ravens and Wolves: Beasts of Battle, Symbols of Victory and Death', in *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: an Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. J. Jesch (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 251–80, at p. 254.

prophecy. Now, however, Gunnarr envisions himself as the catalyst of Burgundian uncowardliness, as emphasised by the echoing conditional *ef* verses discussed above. His use of the *arfr* *Niflungar* will galvanize his troops exactly as he demonstrated when passing the golden ale-cups amongst the troop to replace their fear with courage. The use of the treasure-noun *arfr* ('inheritance') in this prophecy is important. Like its Old English cognate *yrfa*, its semantic range is not limited to treasure objects, but embraces other forms of wealth such as settlements or territorial holdings; it always refers to family inheritance. The use of *arfr* emphasizes that Gunnarr will bequeath a fruitful legacy drawn from the Niflung hoard, not necessarily in the form of gold itself, but in this case, as the military strength of a courageous troop – a form of power that he purchases with this treasure by so dramatically defending it from Atli. Gunnarr's wisdom will enable his wealth to work for him as power, even after he himself has passed over into death.

Power can be usefully defined, I think, as the ability to enforce one's will from a distance. What greater distance can separate an individual from the object he seeks to influence than the distance between this world and the next, between the living and the dead? Atli is the ruler of a terrifying *potestas* (indicated in the poem's numerous descriptions of his wealth and large following, in the Burgundians' fear, and by his historical reputation). Atli's expansive wealth is however undermined in *Atlakviða* by his lack of wisdom; his possessions are useless to him and serve only to magnify his deficiency as a ruler. Atli only understands how to *have* wealth, and proves incapable of *using* it as power to enforce his will from a distance. He must lure Gunnar into his limited sphere of influence in order to impose his will upon him and acquire the coveted hoard. The poet gives a sarcastic little caricature of the *Atli inn ríki* ('Atli the powerful') as his men drag his disarmed, fettered, oath-sworn brother to the snake pit:

Atli inn ríki reið Glaumi mǫnom,
sleginn rógþornom, sífungr þeira.³⁹

It is a sneeringly ironic image of *Atli inn ríki* ponderously buoyed up by all his trappings of potency, physically afflicting his defenseless nemesis yet unable to accomplish his petty purpose of possessing the Niflung hoard. The presentation contrasts sharply with the adjacent image of Gunnarr, alone and singing fiercely with his harp at the bottom of the snake pit:

Lifanda gram lagði í garð,
þann er skriðinn var, skatna mengi,
innan ormom; en einn Gunnarr,
heiptmóðr, hǫrpo hendi kníði,
glumðo strengir.⁴⁰

As with the imperative constructions commanding that the goblets be passed in Gunnarr's hall (as discussed above), here the poet again powerfully uses the symbolism of physical movement. He carefully contrasts Atli's position (elevated on his fine horse, surrounded by his own swords, supported by loyal followers) with Gunnarr's physical situation (low within the dirty snake-pit, wrapped in fetters, alone and afflicted by a group of enemies). Brian Murdoch remarks that in *Grípispá*, where the prophet Grípr tells the young warrior Sigurðr that, "as long as the world lives, your name will be a cry to battle", ... [that] ... Sigurðr's name will be one of those of the famous Germanic warriors used to inspire others to fight, a custom mentioned in

³⁹ *Atlakviða* 29 ll. 1–4 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 239; and transl. Larrington, p. 212). 'Atli the powerful rode a horse with ringing mane, surrounded by sword-armed men'.

⁴⁰ *Atlakviða* 31 ll. 1–9 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 239; and transl. Larrington, p. 215). 'The living prince they placed in the pit – a crowd of men did it – which was crawling with snakes; and Gunnar, alone, furiously struck his harp with his hand. The strings resounded; so should a brave ring-giver guard his gold from enemies.'

Tacitus and still noted as being in use at the battle of Hastings'.⁴¹ Gunnarr's peculiarly musical death seems to tag this tale of his actions as a victory song expressly calculated to inspire further heroic action. Here at his death, Gunnarr continues to address the challenge he faced in the poem's opening scene. He uses his wealth to wrest his warriors from the grip of fear and conscript them back into his service.

Prior to the snake-pit finale, Gunnar speaks a second prophecy, this time to Atli:

Svá skaltu, Atli! augom fiarri,
sem munt meniom verða!
Er und einom mér ǫll um fólgin
hodd Niflunga: lifra nú Hogni!
Ey var mér týia, meðan vit tveir lifðom,
nú er mér engi, er ek einn lifik!
Rín skal ráða rógmálmi skatna,
á svinn, áskunna *arfi Niflunga*
– í veltanda vatni lýsaz valbaugar! –
heldr en á hǫndom gull skíni Húna þornom!
(my emphases).⁴²

In this passage we note the poet's deliberate application of the two semantically distinct treasure nouns *arfr* and *hodd* (emphasized above). While *arfr* refers to inheritance, *hodd* signifies more narrowly 'precious objects, treasure'. The poet's nuanced use of this treasure diction is

⁴¹ Murdoch, *Germanic Hero*, p. 18.

⁴² *Atlakviða* 26–7 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 238; and transl. Larrington, p. 212) (my emphases). 'Atli, now you'll be as far from my eyes as my jewels are going to be. Now in me alone it is all concealed, the *hoard of the Niflungs*, now Hogni is not alive. I was always in doubt while we were both alive, now I am not, now I alone am living; The Rhine shall rule over the strife-bringing metal, the *Æsir-given inheritance of the Niflungs*, the splendid rings will gleam in the running water, rather than the foreign rings shine on the hands of the Huns.'

syntactically enhanced by the collocation of *arfr* and *áskunna* ('Æsir-given'), which alludes to the origin of the Niflung hoard as *vergeld* paid to Ottar's father by the Æsir. The emphasis is on a legacy passed between families and on the past owners of the hoard: in other words, on the treasure as *arfr*. The poet structurally continues to emphasize the thematically central conceptual opposition of *arfr* and *hodd*. He groups the two-dimensional 'has/has not' references to possession or knowledge of the physical treasure around the phrase *hodd Niflungar*. These simplistic black-and-white views are addressed directly to 'you, Atli'. Then Gunnarr seems to turn away and speak his last words out across the cosmos from the heights of his ante-mortem, pre-snake-pit, prophetic frenzy. Here he speaks of his *arfr Niflungar*, around which phrase the poet groups references to inheritance, mythological origin, and a destination on *Húna þornum* ('on the Huns' children's hands'). *Arfr* is what will remain forever guarded by the legendary, ghostly warrior-wolves. It would, if not for Gunnarr's wise heroism, have been transformed into Hunnish inheritance, shining proudly on their children's hands. *Hodd*, however, is used to denote 'the shiny stuff': it is what physically rests in the riverbed and what Atli futilely yearns to possess.

A kind of ghost prophecy is embedded in the first part of that speech. It concerns Atli's treasure. Gunnarr's prediction that Atli will be 'as far from my eyes as my jewels are going to be' obviously describes Atli as physically dead and physically lacking the Niflung treasure hoard.⁴³ Yet Gunnarr will be in exactly this position himself, in view of which his jibe at Atli loses some of its punch. A second look though shows that the prophecy does indeed fully denigrate Atli as more defeated than Gunnarr. It implies that when death has

⁴³ Larrington highlights the allusive reference to Atli's immanent death in this verse in her *Edda*, p. 290, n. 214. The implication is even more prominent in Dronke's translation: 'you shall be as far, Atli, from the eyes of men, as you shall be from the treasure that is mine' (*Atlakviða* 26 ll. 1-4: ed. and transl. Dronke I, 8).

removed Atli 'far from the eyes of men' and from treasures like the Niflung hoard, his 'horse with ringing mane', and 'sword-armed men', then 'Atli the powerful' will become utterly insignificant and cease to exist. The prediction contrasts strongly with Gunnarr's first prophecy about how he will use his own treasure as power from beyond the grave. Gunnarr predicts that without the physical presence of wealth, Atli will have no power and is entirely dead, while Gunnarr will be dead, without wealth, but not powerless. By prophesying that the power contained in Atli's wealth will die with him, Gunnarr essentially accuses Atli of un-wisdom.

ATLI'S WEALTH AND WISDOM

Gunnarr's two death scenes have reflected political success. Atli's own death scene displays a massive political failure. The king of the Huns is not vilified in *Atlakviða* because he abuses the ethics of hospitality, breaks a solemn oath, cuts out people's hearts, or is generally the sort of man who keeps a snake pit in the back yard. Rather, 'the ugly picture [of Atli] preserved in *Atlakviða*'⁴⁴ is the picture of a ring-giver whose wealth is worthless: he is a man who lacks wisdom. Likewise, Atli's error and the real ignominy of his death lie not in that he is killed by a woman (though this doesn't help matters), but in that he fails to use his many treasures, fails to transform them from their symbolic state as emblems of power into real, active force. Gunnarr enters the stage with a wilted war-band in his festive hall, but by the end of his treasure-power alchemy, it is his enemy Atli who dies among weeping, miserable warriors at his treasure-laden mead-benches.

Atli is an incompetent ring-giver because he does not understand the nature of rings. He suffers from treasure illiteracy. He and Gunnarr may look at the same piece of gold and seeing two different things, as occurs in Gunnarr's reception of Atli's initial offer of

⁴⁴ Dronke, *Edda* I, 34.

treasure with the invitation to visit. With simplistic feebleness, Atli offers wealth to the man who possesses the richest known treasure hoard. The boorishness of the offer is startlingly inappropriate to the fragile political situation. An offer of treasure between two rival warriors is always incendiary in the eddic tradition.⁴⁵ We have seen the anxious state of the Burgundian warriors in the opening scene and later, the Huns' ready defenses at home (14/12–16). As further warned by Guðrún's wolf-hair-and-ring message (which might be read, considering the wolf's prominence in the beasts of battle motif, as 'violence about treasure'), Knéfrøðr's offer might be seen as Atli's long-anticipated move on the Burgundian treasury. Gunnar is handicapped by his warriors' fear of the Huns. If they grovel before an aggressive Hunnish messenger in the security of their own hall, what hope can they have on the battlefield? Gunnar needs a less conventional way to gain ascendancy over his adversary, and Atli's clumsy invitation provides him with a golden piece of strategic intelligence. It tells him that Atli's vision of treasure is two-dimensional and limited to the realm of the symbolic: when one has treasure, what could one possibly want to do with it but get *more* treasure?

So poor Atli doggedly tries to convert his wealth from symbolic power (the treasure he possesses) to more symbolic power (possession of the Niflung hoard) while Gunnar transforms symbolic power (possession of the Niflung hoard) to real power (a courageous,

⁴⁵ Accepting a monetary settlement shows the receiver to be afraid of martial settlement, and is the cause of strife in many examples in the *Poetic Edda*. Margaret Clunies Ross develops the theory of a sub-genre of 'offering rings' which is sexually insulting and wherein the ring is meant to symbolise a bodily orifice. The vast majority of ring-offerings in the eddic poems, however, (such as this offer from Atli to Gunnar) have no such sexual connotation and do not fit her model, which draws most of its examples from saga narrative. See M. Clunies-Ross, 'Hildir's Ring: a Problem in the *Ragnarsdrápa*, Strophes 8–12', *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 6 (1973), 75–91.

effective army). Wolfgang Mohr's reflections on the Niflung hoard as a symbol of power and a 'quite unsymbolic' means to 'equip an army' are again pertinent. Gunnar's army has plenty of hearth-encircling war equipment but lacks the vital equipment of courage. In that opening scene, Gunnar immediately pinpoints Atli's weakness and capitalizes on it by encouraging the misconception. He pretends to be seduced by this marvelous offer of 'more treasure', answering the shallow-minded offer in kind by cataloguing his own extensive hoard (7) so as not to challenge the assumption that treasure is valued only in the binary terms of possession and non-possession. Thus Gunnar allows Atli to convert gold into Burgundian military capacity via the brothers' martyrdom, properly sung in heroic style by Gunnar himself in his death scenes.

Gunnar's first prophecy of a vicious Burgundian aggression proves accurate to a nauseating extent. Never suspecting that Gunnar's courageous defense of the heirloom treasure hoard would transform the quivering Burgundians into vertebrates, Atli returns happily from a day at his snake pit to be ambushed by a vicious Burgundian aggression indeed: his wife. In his gnomic interpolations, the poet has praised Gunnar and Högni as courageous and warlike.⁴⁶ Now his approbation of Guðrún as a 'brúðr í brynio',⁴⁷ among other praiseworthy things, distinguishes her as one of the Burgundians whom Gunnar's sacrifice is meant to enrage and incite to violence.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Interpolations are listed in note 33 above.

⁴⁷ *Atlakviða* 43 l.3 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 241; and transl. Larrington, p. 216). 'Bride in a byrnie'.

⁴⁸ Her warning message of the ring and wolf hair certainly serves to assure Gunnar that despite her marriage, Guðrún still holds first loyalty to her blood relatives.

To fully appreciate the failure symbolized by Atli's funeral, we must recall that before crossing Mirkwood,⁴⁹ Gunnar and Høgni had left behind them bold descendants and a valiant people:

Leiddo landrøgni lýðar óneisir,
grátendr, gunnhvata, ór garði Húna;
þá kvað þat inn æri erfivorðr Høgna:
'Heilir farið nú ok horskir, hvars ykkur hugr teygir!'⁵⁰

The brothers' deaths put courageous praise for 'brave hearts' into the mouths of their surviving heirs. In measured contrast, Atli puts his heirs (specifically including their hearts (36/2)) into his own mouth and takes them to death with him in his own death scene. He is burned among several layers of treasure all trapped in its symbolic form. Physically at the exact centre of the pyre are Atli's eaten sons, Erpr and Eitill. Next are his own body and those of his followers. Over all this, Guðrún scatters Atli's treasure with ghoulish enthusiasm:

Gulli søri in gaglbiarta,
hringom rauðom reifði hon húskarla.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Dronke notes that, 'in Norse poetic tradition, "crossing Mirkwood" comes to signify penetrating barriers not merely between one land and another, but between one world and another', in her *Edda*, 1, 47–8.

⁵⁰ *Atlakviða* 12 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 236; and transl. Larrington, p. 212). 'The valiant troop, the men, weeping, led forth the prince eager for war, from the young men's court; then said the young heir of Høgni: "Go well now and wisely, where your spirit draws you"'.
⁵¹ *Atlakviða* 39 ll. 1–4 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 240; and transl. Larrington, p. 216). 'Gold she scattered, the gosling-bright woman, red-gold rings she gave to the house-servants'. *Húskarla* may refer instead to the warriors of Atli's close retinue or 'hearth-troop' rather than to 'house-servants' as Larrington translates. John Lindow discusses the disputed date of *húskarla*'s semantic shift from 'servant' to 'courtier, retainer' (ninth- or tenth-century, and thus coeval with *Atlakviða*'s composition), in his, *Comitatus, Individual and Honor: Studies in North Germanic Institutional Vocabulary*, University of California Publications 83

Geometrically from the centre, this heap consists of the future life of the Búðli family, followed by the present life of Atli and his war-band, and finally the inanimate treasure. It is an accurate schema of how treasure operates in the world of *Atlakviða*. Wealth is only the surface of power. The core elements of treasure's value reside in the human resources that it can (based on its wielder's wisdom) be used to manipulate and in the posterity this manipulation nurtures.

Both Atli and Gunnar have coveted the Niflung hoard; or more accurately, Gunnar has coveted *arfr Niflungar* while Atli has wanted *hodd Niflungar*. Gunnar has used the treasure to empower his army and leave vigorous future generations in his father's hall. Atli fails to perceive that all-important human dimension of treasure's worth (i.e. Guðrún, in his case). He does not realize that Gunnar is *using* the treasure even as Atli is trying to *possess* it, with the result that Atli dies with wealth to bequeath but no heirs to whom he might leave it. His sons Erpr and Eitill are still young boys; like Atli's wealth they never realize their potential as active assets to Atli's *potestas*. Ancient rafters, temples, young maidens, the monuments of the Búðli clan – all cognates of *arfr* and symbols of continuity – are engulfed in the final conflagration, wasted by Atli's limited understanding of treasure as *hodd*:

forn timbr fello, fiarghús ruko,
bær Buðlunga, brunno ok skialdmeyjar
inni, aldrstamar.⁵²

(Berkeley, CA, 1975), pp. 114–20. Especially if *húskarla* are Atli's military followers, Guðrún's aggression against him is a distinctly gendered, and even sexual: she inverts her ritual role as female hostess and violently displaces Atli's male roles of *bring-drifi* (ring-giver) to his war-band and figure of authority in his own hall, on top of the emasculating gesture of feeding him his sons.

⁵² *Atlakviða* 42 ll. 5–9 (ed. Neckel and rev. Kuhn, p. 241; and transl. Larrington, p. 216). 'The ancient timbers fell, the temples went up in smoke, the home of Budli's descendants, the shield-maids inside burnt up, their lives stopped'. Hall rafters, or especially temple rafters, appear as symbols of community and

Fittingly, by the close of the poem, Gunnar has become part of his *atfr*: one of the legendary Niflung warriors who inspire the Burgundians to courageous action. Atli has become part of his smoldering heap of *bodd*: static and powerless, sterile and very dead indeed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The interdependence of wisdom, wealth and power is only one of many richly rewarding lines of inquiry to take with *Atlakviða*. I do hope the poem begins to receive more critical attention in the future, not only as a singularly sanguine piece of the Völsung puzzle or one episode in the tormented life of Guðrún, but as a brilliantly executed drama of clashing ring-givers and a sensitive treatment of wealth, wisdom, and what they are worth.

ancestral and religious continuity in saga literature. See for example Dorolf's migration to Iceland in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, transl. Hermann Pálsson and P. Edwards (London, 1972), p. 28; see also R. Page, *Chronicles of the Vikings: Records, Memorials and Myths* (London, 1995), p. 70.

Bishops and Pawns: Parallels between 'Caesaropapism' and Crusade Ideology in Tenth-Century England and Thirteenth-Century Denmark

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'I will, in this short work, try to attack with a free voice the errors of those who, not content with their own rights, do not fear, trusting in temporal power and favour, to reach out for the rights of others, divine as well as human'

William of Ockham
A Short Discourse on Tyrannical Government, preface¹

INTRODUCTION

In 494, in his famous *Duo sunt* letter to the emperor Anastasius I (491–518), Pope Gelasius I (492–6) stated that there were two kinds of authority: religious *auctoritas* and secular *potestas*.² The latter, he

¹ A. S. McGrade, ed., and J. Kilcullen, transl., *William of Ockham: Breuiloquium de principatu tyrannico*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge, 1992), p. 3.

² A vast sea of scholarship surrounds this famous document. The classic analysis of the impact which the decree had on Roman law is E. Meyer, *Römischer Staat und Staatsgedanke*, 2nd ed. (Darmstadt, 1961), esp. pp. 260–3 and 362–8. For more general (but early) overviews, see F. Dvornik, 'Pope Gelasius and Emperor Anastasius I', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (1951), 111–16; and W. Ensslin, 'Auctoritas und potestas. Zur Zweigewaltenlehre des Papstes Gelasius I', *Histonsches Jahrbuch* 74 (1955), 661–8. An excellent account of the effect which the decree had on ecclesiastical power can be found in J. L. Nelson, 'Gelasius I's Doctrine of Responsibility – a Note', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967), 154–62. For a more modern discussion (and a more comprehensive set of references), see the relevant passages of W. Ullman, *Gelasius I. (492–496): Das Papsttum an der Wende der Spätantike zum Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981).

stated unequivocally, was, in all cases, subject to the former. This sentiment, just as Gelasius had probably intended, became a foundation of western political thought for almost a millennium. However, for all the significance of Gelasius's letter, a simple question remained without a satisfactory answer throughout the mediaeval period: what, besides the headgear, actually was the difference between a king and an archbishop; between a prince and a bishop; between a clan chief and a priest? The answer ought to be obvious: one administers a secular realm attending to the material needs of his people in matters of war and economics; the other oversees the spiritual needs of the population, soothing souls and exonerating the sins of the flock. With proper secular governance and pious spiritual guidance, any mediaeval kingdom would inevitably prosper. Indeed, Alcuin, writing at the end of the eighth century, provided a perfect paradigm of just such a situation in his poem on the bishops, kings and saints of York:

Tempora tunc huius fuerant felicia gentis,
 quam rex et praesul concordi iure regebant:
 hic iura ecclesiae, rex ille negotia regni.
 Hic ab apostolico humeris fert pallia missa,
 ille levat capiti veterum diademata patrum ...
 rexit hic ecclesiam triginta et quator annis,
 ille annis tenuit ter septem sceptrum parentum.³

³ Alcuin, *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Eboricensis Ecclesiae*, ll. 1276–85 (P. Godman, ed. and transl., *Alcuin: the Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*, OMT (Oxford, 1982), p. 96). 'These were fortunate times for the people [of Northumbria], ruled over in harmony by king and bishop: the one ruling the church, the other the business of the realm. On his shoulders the one wore the *pallium* sent by the pope, on his head the other bore his ancestors' ancient crown ... for thirty-four years the one ruled the church, the other wore his ancestors' crown for twenty-one years'.

This was more than just a conveniently symmetrical literary set piece. It was not without reason that Alcuin emphasised the different roles of the two brothers nor, albeit implicitly, that he linked their success to the fact that neither interfered in the affairs of the other.

However, the divisions between the organisational and political spheres of Church and state were rarely as clear-cut as this. Thus, 'caesaropapism' here describes a situation in which the roles of spiritual and secular administration were manifested in one individual. Indeed, mediaeval European history offers numerous instances of government where bishops and princes trespassed on each other's administrative territory: in the Holy Roman Empire, for instance, provinces and cities were overseen by Electors who also could hold an ecclesiastical rank sometimes as high as archbishop, such as the archbishop of Cologne who was also the Elector Duke of Westphalia; in the Low Countries, the bishop of Utrecht governed the surrounding territory as a fiefdom until 1527; in England, the bishops of Durham had the title 'bishop palatine', ruling the see as an almost entirely independent principality (a situation which, in name at least, lasted into the mid nineteenth century).

There is a distinct difference, however, between the Latin tradition of 'caesaropapism' and that practiced in the east, where the term has been applied to a distinctly different situation. In the Latin west, 'caesaropapal' rulership was characterised by a situation where one man performed secular and religious roles simultaneously.⁴ In a Byzantine context, on the other hand, the Emperor and the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople were not the same person (although there were instances in which the Patriarch ran the

⁴ For an excellent definition, examination and case study of 'caesaropapism' in the West, see T. C. Van Cleve, *The Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, Immutator Mundi* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 162 and 537–9.

kingdom as a regent).⁵ Rather, 'caesaropapal' in this context referred to the perceived subordinate relationship of the latter to the former: a relationship in which the Patriarch could be appointed and (in some cases) deposed by the Emperor and in which the Church functioned as an arm of the state, performing duties such as tax-collection.

The term 'caesaropapism' has been applied equally to both traditions. In the latter context, it has been decisively shown that characterisation of the Byzantine administration as 'caesaropapal' is misleading.⁶ Nevertheless, in the former scenario, 'caesaropapism' may retain some currency. My purpose here, then, is to examine the careers of three infamous bishops – St Dunstan of Canterbury (959–88) and St Æthelwold of Winchester (963–84) in tenth-century England on the one hand, and Anders Sunesen of Lund (1201–28) in thirteenth-century Denmark on the other – in light of these concepts 'caesaropapism'. None ruled land as a principality or explicitly aspired to secular power. However, each of these characters involved himself in some way in the affairs of state to a remarkable extent. Here, I will seek to highlight parallels between these men as they blurred the boundaries between their supposed religious functions and the practice of secular government. I will argue that as they integrated themselves ever more closely into the mechanism of the royal administration, they were able to exert significant influence and, by virtue of their positions, initiate a series of events which would, conventionally, have been far beyond a bishop's remit. For this reason, I will argue, certain aspects of these men's careers could, on some level at least, be called 'caesaropapist'.

⁵ For a more detailed analysis and explanation of 'caesaropapism' in the East, see E. Barker's classic, though dated, work, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium from Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus* (Oxford, 1957).

⁶ See the arguments made by D. J. Geanakoplos, 'Church and State in the Byzantine Empire: a Reconsideration of the Problem of Caesaropapism', *Church History* 34 (1965), 381–403; and, more recently, by G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le 'caesaropapisme' byzantin* (Paris, 1996).

ÆTHELWOLD, DUNSTAN AND EDGAR

'Monastic revival', generalised Henry Loyn, 'came about in consequence of royal and imperial concern for the health of the church, in part too as a reaction against excessive ecclesiastical involvement in government'; nowhere, he went on, 'is this development more marked than in England'.⁷ I agree with Loyn in part. As we shall see, royal concern for the health of the Church was at heart of the tenth-century reform. However, in the English instance at least, I believe that, rather than coming about as a reaction against ecclesiastical integration into the mechanism of government, it happened because of it.

St Dunstan of Canterbury and St Æthelwold of Winchester were two of the three reformers (St Oswald, bishop of Worcester 961–92 and archbishop of York 971–92, was the third) responsible for driving the Benedictine reform which swept England in the third quarter of the tenth century. However, these men did not only assume, over the course of the 960s and 70s, positions in the engine room of the English Church; they also seem to have embedded themselves firmly in the mechanism royal administration. Evidence for this comes in two texts: *Regularis concordia* and a vernacular work which was probably intended originally to serve as the preface to the translation of the Benedictine Rule,⁸ known as 'Edgar's Establishment

⁷ H. Loyn, 'Church and State in England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia*, ed. D. Parsons (London, 1975), pp. 94–102, at p. 95.

⁸ On the text of the Rule itself see M. Gretsch, 'Æthelwold's translation of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* and its Latin exemplar', *ASE* 3 (1974), 125–51. For the political implications of this document, see M. Gretsch, 'The Benedictine Rule in Old English: a Document of Bishop Aethelwold's Reform Politics', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Korhammer, (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 131–58.

of the Monasteries' (henceforth 'EEM'). These are both theologically-charged tracts of brazen propaganda penned by Æthelwold (probably at Dunstan's behest) around 970.⁹ They cast a fascinating light on the interplay between the country's leading ecclesiastics and the king in the second half of the tenth century.

Straightaway, in *Regularis concordia*, we have a clue as to what kind of relationship to may have existed between the Church and the king in Edgar's (959–75) realm. The text states that Edgar 'abate quodam assiduo monente ac regicam catholicae fidei uiam demonstrante, coepit magnopere Deum timere, diligere ac uenerari'.¹⁰ Indeed, the fact that Edgar had received an education at the hands of the reformers¹¹ is something with which Æthelwold seems to have been rather preoccupied. In 'EEM', he goes to some lengths to emphasise how Edgar sought to honour a promise made to his tutor (probably Æthelwold himself) while he was a child:

Wæs swiþe gemundige his behates þe he on his æpelincghade
cildgeong Gode behet 7 sancta Marian þa se abbot hine
gelapode to þam munuclife. Eal swa we wipufan cwædon, þurh
þæs gehates myngunge swiþe geþoncol an anginne his rices
began þa stowe to fyrþrienne eal swa he ær behet on his
cildgeogoðe.¹²

⁹ See D. Whitelock, 'The Authorship of the Account of King Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries', in *Philological Essays in Honour of H. D. Meritt*, ed. J. L. Rosier (The Hague, 1970), pp. 125–36.

¹⁰ *Regularis concordia*, preface (T. Symons, ed. and transl., *Regularis concordia* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 1). 'Being diligently admonished by a certain abbot who explained to him the royal way of the Catholic faith, he began to greatly fear, respect and worship God'.

¹¹ Æthelwold was probably his teacher. See, however, Symons' discussion in *Regularis Concordia*, p. 1, where he mentions the possibility that Dunstan may have also had a hand in Edgar's tutelage.

¹² 'EEM' (D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke, ed., *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church: part I, 871–1066* (Oxford, 1981),

The fact that Æthelwold was so closely involved with Edgar's education (enough to mention it in similar contexts on two separate occasions in two different texts) is a curious one. On the face of it, the explanation for Æthelwold's enthusiasm may be that he wished to emphasise Edgar's special piety. Æthelwold may also have wished to emphasise his own role in Edgar's patronage of the Church in England (although, adhering to conventions of modesty, he never mentioned his own name explicitly in that connexion). However, this also provides us with a very important context in which to read the events of Edgar's reign: while we should, on the one hand, be aware that we have to rely on sources about Edgar which were penned by the reformers (which are, inevitably, saturated with their own biases), we should also realise that Æthelwold, as his tutor, had unparalleled access to the young Edgar at a formative age. As such, one might reasonably presume that a certain amount of indoctrination took place: it is inconceivable that, with so devout a follower of the aggressive theology of reforming Benedictinism as his tutor, Edgar could possibly have remained ignorant of or unaffected by the ideas espoused by Æthelwold later in his career. Furthermore, Edgar would have been under Æthelwold's tutelage during the reign of his brother, Eadwig (955–9). Eadwig's antipathy towards monastic politics and the fact that he had exiled St Dunstan were well known (and did much to ensure that the reformers carried out a comprehensive hatchet-job on his reputation following his death). This was yet another reason for Æthelwold to do all he could to ensure that his young ward would cultivate a more deferential attitude towards the Church than his elder brother. What this tells us, then, is that from his very earliest years, Edgar was probably taught to respect, venerate

pp. 147–8). '[He] was mindful of the promise which he had made as an *atheling* in his childhood, to God and St Mary, when the abbot had invited him to the monastery. As we have said above, admonished by that promise he began at the start of his reign to be very intent on advancing that place just as he had promised in his childhood'.

and, moreover, trust the Church and its leaders to, quite possibly, a greater extent than was usual. With so propagandised a head beneath the royal crown, it would have been the perfect context for the reformers to have wormed their way into positions of influence which would, in other circumstances, have been none of their business.

Other statements in these two texts confirm this suggestion. A central theme of both is the suggestion that too often, in the past, the boundaries between the secular and religious life had been blurred. Complaining, in *Regularis concordia*, of what he referred to as *saecularium prioratum* ('secular priority'),¹³ Æthelwold recalled, almost certainly with considerable poetic licence and with veiled but deliberate reference to Bede's famous letter to Egbert,¹⁴ how kings and noblemen had oppressed the monasteries in the past, using them for their own ends. He even seems to echo Pope Gelasius's sentiments. However, Æthelwold then appears to contradict himself: the remedy to secular control over monastic lands, he stated, was reliance on royal patronage.

Saecularium uero prioratum, ne ad magni ruinam detrementi uti olim acciderat miserabiliter deueniret, magna animaduersione atque anathemate, suscipi coenobiis sacris sapienter prohibentes regni tantummodo reginae dominum ad sacri loci munimen et

¹³ *Regularis concordia*, preface (ed. and transl., T. Symons, p. 7).

¹⁴ For use which Æthelwold made of this document, see S. Coates, 'Perceptions of the Anglo-Saxon Past in the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement', in *The Church Retrospective: Papers Read at the 1995 Summer Meeting and the 1996 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. R. N. Swanson (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 61–74, at p. 62; and A. Gransden, 'Traditionalism and Continuity During the Last Century of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40 (1989), 159–207, at p. 166.

ad ecclesiasticae possessionis augmentum uoto semper efflagitare optabili prudentissime iusserunt.¹⁵

This is a decidedly peculiar statement. The Church was to be free from secular meddling, but was to actively seek the involvement of the king in its affairs.¹⁶ *Regularis concordia* goes on to set out a framework within which ecclesiastical and royal power might appear to merge to some extent. It explicitly states that abbots and bishops were to be elected *cum regis consensu et consilio* ('with the consent and advice of the king').¹⁷ It goes on in this vein. If no suitable candidate for a vacant abbacy is found in the monastery in question, then one is to be nominated from a different house, again *concordia regis* ('with the agreement of the king').¹⁸ Then, it is as though Æthelwold suddenly remembered the complaint of secular meddling with which he began. The text states that monastic houses must under no circumstances acknowledge secular overlordship unless, of course, it happens to be the overlordship of the king.¹⁹ As if the message was not clear enough, Æthelwold ends by stating that he has composed the whole

¹⁵ *Regularis concordia*, preface (ed. and transl. Symons, p. 7). '[The assembly] wisely and under severe censure and anathema forbade the holy monasteries to acknowledge the overlordship of secular persons, a thing which might lead to utter loss and ruin as it did in past times. On the other hand, they commanded that the sovereign power of the king and queen – and that only – should ever be besought with confident petition, both for the safeguarding of holy places and for the increase of the goods of the Church'.

¹⁶ Of course, the office of the king was certainly bound up with ideas of religious authority and divine right in Anglo-Saxon England. Edgar was not the first English king to have involved himself in the business of the Church but, perhaps, he was the first to have been invited to do so quite so explicitly. On the concept of political theology in the Middle Ages, see E. H. Kantorowicz's classic work, *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1957).

¹⁷ *Regularis concordia*, preface (ed. and transl. Symons, p. 6).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. ix.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. x.

text *regis monitu freti* ('relying on the advice of our king').²⁰ The role of the king in the monastic establishment did not end there, though: throughout the rest of the text, as the structure of the monastic day is carefully laid out, it is repeatedly stated that prayers for the king must be said throughout the day. Indeed, over the course of *Regularis concordia*, Æthelwold explicitly stated that prayers and masses should be sung for the king on seven different occasions.

It seems, therefore, as though one of the primary aims of this text was to bring the Church and the State together to a certain degree. Certainly, Æthelwold appears to have wished any reader of *Regularis concordia* to believe that royal patronage was an essential element of the reform: the king is identified as the one secular figure who can and should exert influence over the Church and he is thanked for it with regular prayers. The monastery, in many ways, became an extension of the royal mandate.

This was a peculiar state of affairs. Traditionally, as Susan Reynolds has observed, 'the support of the Church ... constituted an important component of royal authority', not the other way around.²¹ Yet, in this instance, we see measures apparently being taken to bring about the exact reverse of that situation. We have already seen how Æthelwold sought to portray Edgar as a particularly holy individual who, presumably, would not have taken advantage of this privileged position. However, one wonders how sure Æthelwold could have been that Edgar's successor would have shared his scruples. Indeed, Æthelred II's (978–1016) relationship with the Church and the anti-monastic reaction which followed Edgar's death seem to embody exactly the kind of attitude against which Æthelwold had warned.²²

²⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. xii.

²¹ S. Reynolds, 'Secular Power and Authority in the Middle Ages', in *Power and Identity in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Rees Davies*, ed. H. Pryce and J. Watts (Oxford, 2007), pp. 11–22, at p. 13.

²² On which see D. J. V. Fisher, 'The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10 (1950–2), 247–70.

The significance of this would seem to be that Æthelwold possibly intended the preface of the *Regularis concordia* and the special privileges towards the Church which it afforded the king to apply only to Edgar (although he does not state that explicitly). A faithful interpretation, then, would be that the pious Edgar was a king whom the loyal Æthelwold trusted not to abuse his position.

A more cynical reading, however, suggests a reversal of that situation: what if the indoctrinated Edgar was a king whom Æthelwold and Dunstan believed they could control? What if the leading reformers used the good will of a sympathetic king to help themselves to more power and secular influence than they would otherwise have been welcome to? Perhaps the deception of the *Regularis concordia* and 'EEM' may have lain in convincing the king that he was the one in charge while, in reality, power lay with the bishops and the abbots. It was, in other words, a shrewd political manoeuvre designed to position the country's leading ecclesiastics at the heart of the secular administration without the secular administration minding too much or, perhaps, even realising. Indeed, it seems wholly improbable that men as powerful as Æthelwold and Dunstan would have been willing to subordinate themselves so utterly to royal power in apparent contravention of their own statements (not to mention Gelasius's) on the matter.

Hitherto, the argument for ecclesiastical involvement in the secular affairs of Edgar's government has been hypothetical, based on a converse interpretation of the reformers' statements in *Regularis concordia* and 'EEM'. However, certain events of Edgar's reign, when read in light of such an interpretation, strengthen it somewhat. The expulsion of the clerics from the Old and New minsters in Winchester, Chertsey and Milton is one important and obvious example.

This was an unprecedented (though not unique)²³ event: the act of royally sanctioned troops, acting (supposedly) on the king's personal command entering four religious foundations and forcibly expelling those whom they found therein with the consent of the Church (or, at least, with the consent of some within the Church) would, in any other circumstances, have been a source of considerable controversy. On the face of it, the sources which record this event seem to portray it as a royal, secular operation: although the A-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* takes its usual no-nonsense approach, recording 'her dræfde Eadgar cyng þa preostas on Ceastre of Ealdanmynstre, 7 of Niwanmynstre. 7 of Ceortesige. 7 of Middeltune. 7 sette hy mid munecan',²⁴ the E-text, tellingly, states that 'Æþelwold ... draf ut þa clerca of þe biscoprice'.²⁵ Clearly, there was a certain amount of confusion as to who masterminded this event.

As for the sources from the reformers themselves, they deal with the expulsion of the clerics with barely-concealed glee. Æthelwold, who stood to benefit directly from the removal of the clerics from Winchester, recorded in the preface to *Regularis concordia* that 'eictis negligentium clericorum spurictiis ... rex';²⁶ in 'EEM' he repeated

²³ A good comparison, for instance, would be Henry II of Germany's expulsion of monks from Corvey in 1013, on which see P. G. Jestice, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 178–80.

²⁴ ASC A 964 (J. M. Bateley, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition: MS A* (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 75–6). 'In this year, King Edgar drove the priests in the City [Winchester] from the Old Minster and from the New Minster, and from Chertsey and from Milton and settled monks there'.

²⁵ ASC E 963 (S. Irvine, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition: MS E* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 57). 'Æthelwold ... drove the clerics from the bishopric'.

²⁶ *Regularis concordia*, preface (ed. and transl. Symons, p. 2). 'The king drove out the negligent clerics with their abominations'.

this point, writing that Edgar 'halige stowa he geclænsode fram ealra manna fulnessum'.²⁷

The extent to which this operation was undertaken by Edgar on his own initiative can never be known for sure. Certainly, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* account seems to suggest that Æthelwold had a significant role to play. Æthelwold himself, however, preferred to give the credit to Edgar. Nevertheless, the strongly approving tone with which Æthelwold wrote about it reflects the advantage which the reformers drew from the expulsion of the clerics: Æthelwold was able to assume control in Winchester, promptly staffing the houses there with monks from his own community at Abingdon whose loyalty to him was assured. Certainly, he had something to gain from this.

Furthermore, there is a peculiar aspect to the removal of the clerics which does not quite tally with an interpretation of the event in which the king was the protagonist. Had the removal of secular clerics been a general royal policy, it is curious that Edgar did not take similar steps at any other foundations in his kingdom. Winchester, of course, was the ancient centre of West Saxon power and the significance of the royally-sponsored foundations there is not to be underestimated. Nevertheless, Worcester and Canterbury were certainly of relative importance, yet neither of these foundations had their clerics expelled. Significantly, Worcester (which was under the jurisdiction of another of the reformers, Oswald) showed no sign of having had its clerics removed throughout the entire reform. Indeed, Peter Sawyer observed that 'at no point was there any change that can reasonably be called a purge and it is hard to see what difference Oswald actually made at Worcester'.²⁸

²⁷ 'EEM' (ed., Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, p. 150). 'Cleansed the holy places from all men's foulness'.

²⁸ P. Sawyer, 'Charters of the Reform Movement: the Worcester Archive', in *Tenth-Century Studies*, ed. Parsons, pp. 84–93, at p. 93. Although Eric John opposed this point of view, his argument hinges upon the very dubious authenticity of the so-called *alitonantis* charters. Even so, some care should be

A passage in the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* might enlighten us further as to who really lay behind this move: 'ex inuidia clericorum', wrote Wulfstan, 'datum est episcopo uenenum bibere'.²⁹ The dispossessed clerics themselves seem, therefore, to have blamed Æthelwold, not Edgar for their expulsion. Of course, one must approach a work of hagiography with the usual caveats and also consider the possibility that evidence of the clerics' anger towards King Edgar does not survive. Nevertheless, this incident is informative insofar as it demonstrates that certain parties (who may also have blamed the king) connected their expulsion with Æthelwold and were so certain of his involvement in the matter that they took the considerable risk of trying to assassinate him. The act of forcibly purging Winchester of clerics, therefore, seems not only to have been an isolated incident, but it appears to have been the work of Æthelwold in no small way. It might suggest that, on this occasion, the king's ecclesiastical counsellors had the means and the influence to utilise secular resources to their own ends. I do not think it is going too far, therefore, to suggest that this action may give us a glimpse of 'caesaropapism', after a fashion.

However, the integration of high ranking ecclesiastics into the secular government was nothing new. During the final years of

taken here: as Keynes has shown in the introduction to his edition of the *Liber uitae* of the New Minster, Winchester, just because an individual was called 'priest' or 'deacon' did not necessarily mean he was not a monk. Julia Barrow's reconsideration of the subject in 'The Community of Worcester, 961–c. 1100' in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. N. Brooks and C. Cubitt (Leicester, 1996), pp. 84–99 was inconclusive. Nonetheless, I think the basis of Sawyer's argument stands firm. There is no strong evidence to suggest that Oswald's reform at Worcester was anything like as violent or drastic as Æthelwold's at Winchester.

²⁹ Wulfstan, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, ch. 19 (M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom, ed. and transl., *The Life of St Æthelwold: Wulfstan of Winchester*, OMT (Oxford, 1992), pp. 34/5). 'Because of the envy of the clerics, poison was given to the bishop to drink'.

Eadred's reign (946–55), about fifteen years before *Regularis concordia* was drawn up and a few years before Edgar came to the throne of Mercia, the king, if we are to believe chapter twenty of B's *Vita S. Dunstani*,³⁰ suffered from a debilitating illness which left him unable to govern the kingdom. Fortunately, Dunstan was on hand to step in. He is portrayed by B as Eadred's trustworthy confidante and friend to whom control of the kingdom is granted without a second thought. B's eulogising aside, there is some independent evidence that Dunstan had a hand in the administration of the kingdom: namely, although ostensibly royal land grants continued throughout Eadred's reign, the king's name, towards the end of his reign, tended not to appear on them. Rather, they are produced by a charter draftsman known as 'Dunstan B' who was, as his name suggests, in some way, intimately connected with Dunstan (if not necessarily Dunstan himself).³¹

The situation, in reality, was almost certainly more complicated than B would have us believe. Nicholas Brooks, for instance, considered that B's account 'need imply no more than that under Eadred Dunstan ... found a place at court which he had not enjoyed under Edmund'.³² Nevertheless, it does seem as though it was into the hands of leading ecclesiastics that the kingdom was placed in the absence of a capable king: in all the witness lists of those charters which do not feature the king's name, it is bishops and abbots who come at the top, the ealdormen and thanes coming, inevitably, below them. This is an especially striking fact when one considers that it was at this time when the career of Æthelstan 'Half-King' (d. after 957)

³⁰ See W. Stubbs, ed., *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, Rolls Series 63 (London, 1874).

³¹ On this unusual series of charters, see S. Keynes, 'The "Dunstan B" Charters', *ASE* 23 (1993), 165–93.

³² N. Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', in *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, ed. N. Ramsay, M. Sparks and T. Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 1–23, at p. 13.

was at its zenith.³³ Keeping such a powerful, secular figure out of government (or at least subjugating him to the extent that no record of his involvement in the administration of the kingdom survives) cannot have been easy. Indeed, fears that he may take advantage of his family's position to seize the throne may have been a factor in the choice of ecclesiastical figures to take over the government.

Nevertheless, for a few years in the 950s, it seems likely that England was ruled by a cabal of ecclesiastics. Whether or not Dunstan himself was actually in charge of that cabal is another question: I would suggest that he was not, since, at this time, he was but an abbot who was certainly outranked not only by the archbishops of Canterbury and York – Oda (941–58) and Wulfstan (931–56) respectively – but also by the many other influential bishops who were around at the time. He does, however, seem to have played an important role, at least, which may very well have given him a taste for secular power and influence.

Furthermore, the close involvement of the Church in the affairs of state and the considerable reliance which Eadred clearly seems to have had on his bishops and abbots was an arrangement which suited the Church very comfortably indeed. In Eadred's will, very substantial sums of money were left to leading churches. Christ Church, Canterbury; Winchester; Glastonbury; and Dorchester all benefited. Outwardly, of course, this was an act of piety designed to guarantee Eadred's place in heaven: it is not necessarily remarkable that a king should gift land and riches to the chief religious foundations of his realm. Nevertheless, the cynic might be forgiven for thinking that his largesse may not have been entirely unconnected to the positions of influence which leading churchmen had occupied during his reign.

³³ On the career of Æthelstan 'half-king' see C. R. Hart, 'Æthelstan "Half-King" and his Family', *ASE* 2 (1973), 115–44; repr. in his *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 569–604.

Could it have been the case, then, that having had a considerable taste of secular administration, many of those same ecclesiastics who benefited in the 950s sought, during Edgar's reign, to achieve positions of influence in the secular government again? By appearing to make monasticism an integral subdivision of royal administration, were they ensuring their positions within the court? Moreover, is this 'caesaropapism'? If we are thinking of that concept in the mode of the Continental model of bishop-princes, then the answer is no, it is not. Even the richest monastic houses could hardly be said to have been self-governing provinces answering to the Church before the king. However, if we are thinking broadly along the lines of the Byzantine model of integration of Church and state, then perhaps we may find something more recognisable. Certainly, the Church was never integrated into the mechanism of royal government in England to anything like the same extent or for the same length of time as it was in Byzantium. However, the picture of tenth-century England as a society in which leading ecclesiastics could also be important politicians to whom control of the kingdom could be entrusted is an appealing one; and it seems very much to have been the case that this state of affairs was keenly encouraged by the churchmen who benefited from it.

ANDERS SUNESEN AND THE LIVONIAN CRUSADES

Hitherto, two texts have been read alongside the theory of 'caesaropapism' and then the subsequent conclusions have been applied to different events which, if interpreted in their light, seem to support them. Now I wish to reverse this methodology. By taking various events which took place more than 200 years after the deaths of Dunstan and Æthelwold as my starting point, I will produce a 'caesaropapist' interpretation before examining how those events were considered in the different texts which recorded them.

By the thirteenth century, a new religious movement had come into being, of which Dunstan and Æthelwold may very well have approved. From the late eleventh century onwards, the aggressive

philosophy of the crusade permeated Europe as western theology became increasingly fixated with the need to liberate the holy land from the infidel. Scandinavia was not immune from the movement: in 1107, for example, King Sigurd I of Norway (1103–30), who acquired the epithet, *Jórsalafari* – ‘Jerusalem farer’ – on account of his activities, led a contingent of Norwegians in defence of the holy land, many of whom ended up in the Varangian Guard in Constantinople. Most Scandinavians, however, seem to have been more interested in ‘crusading’ closer to home. In 1147, Pope Eugenius III (1145–53) pronounced the *Divina dispensatione* bull, permitting a crusade, led by the Holy Roman Empire (where a healthy preoccupation with *Ostpolitik* found legitimacy in the papal sanction), to be waged against the pagans in the eastern Baltic. To all intents and purposes, this did little more than cast a thin veil of religious respectability over the raids and incursions which were already being conducted against the pagan Wends, Finns, Livs, Letts and other eastern Baltic peoples by the Germans, Danes and Swedes. However, it also had the effect of bringing the Scandinavian nations (and the Scandinavian Church) into ideological line with the other crusading nations of Europe: a Scandinavian, too, could have his path to heaven cleared by the absolution of all his worldly transgressions, and he never even had to set foot in *Outremer*.

It was as part of this general movement that Archbishop Absalon of Lund (1178–1201) achieved notoriety. Absalon, Andreas Sunesen’s predecessor, was a particularly bellicose cleric who was utterly dedicated to the destruction of the Wendish pirates who had terrorised the eastern Baltic. Leading the Danish army personally, Absalon oversaw various campaigns around the eastern Baltic until, in his late fifties, he retired from military life and took up a position as Valdemar I’s (1157–82) advisor, becoming a keen agitator against Denmark’s tributary status in respect to the Holy Roman Empire. His behaviour impressed many at the time and since, not least Lucien Musset, who, in his great work on mediaeval Scandinavia, described Absalon (with characteristic overstatement) as, simply, ‘la plus grande

figure du Danemark médiéval’.³⁴ In a climate where monks and abbots often took up with crusades to the holy land and accompanied armies to war, Absalon’s behaviour was, perhaps, not especially out of place. Nevertheless, he set an important precedent of the warrior-cleric, administering not just to the souls of the soldiers but also to the strategy of the campaign (and to the disposal of the prisoners) of which his successor was not to be ignorant.

Anders Sunesen himself was appointed archbishop in 1201 and, over the first twenty years of the thirteenth century, manoeuvred himself into a position in the Danish court which makes a fine comparison with the situation in which Dunstan and Æthelwold had found themselves 230 years earlier. Indeed, these figures are strikingly similar: just as Dunstan came from a family with powerful political connexions, so Anders Sunesen was Absalon’s nephew and the brother of Peter Sunesen (d. 1214), Valdemar II’s (1202–41) royal chancellor.³⁵ It is likely that he achieved much of his success by virtue of his family connexions. Nevertheless, he was a man of formidable learning. Not only did he paraphrase the hitherto vernacular Law of Skåne in Latin,³⁶ but he was the author of a complex Latin poem in hexameters, the *Hexaameron*,³⁷ and also oversaw a reform of

³⁴ L. Musset, *Les peuples scandinaves au moyen âge* (Paris, 1951), p. 154.

³⁵ For more on the considerable importance of social networks and family ties in Danish politics, see L. Hermanson, *Släkt, vänner och makt. En studie av elitens politiska kultur i 1100-talets Danmark* (Gothenburg, 2000).

³⁶ For the context of the law, see L. B. Orfield, *The Growth of Scandinavian Law* (Philadelphia, 1953), esp. ch. 1 and pp. 279–80. For a more detailed treatment of the subject, see I. Skovgaard-Petersen, ‘The Danish Kingdom: Consolidation and Disintegration’, in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, vol. I: Prehistory to 1520*, ed. K. Helle (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 353–69, at pp. 357–60.

³⁷ See A. L. Bysted, ‘Om tankerne bag Anders Sunesens Hexaameron’, in *Anders Sunesen. Danmark og Verden i 1200-tallet*, ed. K. V. Jensen (Odense, 1998), pp. 53–74.

Benedictinism throughout Denmark,³⁸ which was sanctioned by the pope. The similarities with Dunstan and Æthelwold in the spheres of reformation and learning, then, are striking.

Similarities also appear in terms of his involvement in the affairs of the Danish court and the extent to which he used his influence in order to achieve his own ends: it is this part of his career which I would seek to interpret as being broadly 'caesaropapist'. The extent to which an ecclesiastic could penetrate the secular administration, of course, depended entirely on the cordiality of the relationship between the Church and the state. In Denmark, as in much of Scandinavia, the Church had begun life in part as an extension of royal power, a centralising influence which served to strengthen the king's mandate.³⁹ As a result, the separation of Church and state in Denmark had not come about to the same degree that it had elsewhere in Europe. Even as late as the 1160s, when Archbishop Eskil of Lund (1137–77), remaining loyal to Pope Alexander III (1159–81), refused to sanction Valdemar the Great's backing of the antipope, Victor IV (1159–64), he was forced into exile by a king keen not to upset Frederick Barbarossa (1152–90), who had also supported Victor's election.⁴⁰ The Danish Church still had much to do before it could truly call itself independent.

³⁸ See P. B. McGuire, 'Anders Sunesen og klostervæsenet: kontinuitet eller brud?', in *Anders Sunesen: Stormand, teolog, administrator, digter*, ed. S. Ebbesen (Copenhagen, 1985), pp. 27–41.

³⁹ The scholarship on this subject is considerable. A fine introduction (along with a fresh interpretation) can be found in S. Brink, 'Some New Perspectives on the Christianization of Scandinavia and the Organisation of the Early Church' in *Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350, Contact, Conflict and Coexistence*, ed. K. Holman and E. Adams, Texts and Cultures in Northern Europe 4 (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 163–75.

⁴⁰ On which see C. Breengaard, *Muren om Israels hus: Regnum og sacerdotium i Danmark 1050–1170* (Vojens, 1982), pp. 122–49 and 264–8.

Accordingly, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, as Urban observed, Anders Sunesen was a man who 'understood that the welfare of his archbishopric was inextricably bound to that of the kingdom'.⁴¹ The territory covered by the archbishopric of Lund, after all, was more or less synonymous with the territory administered by the Danish king. Although he did not hold an official position in the court of Valdemar II simultaneously with his post as archbishop, before taking up his ecclesiastical position he had served in the same position as his brother, as royal chancellor. Like Dunstan before him, then, Anders Sunesen was by no means alien to the apparatus of government and, moreover, to the influence and benefits which a position of that kind could afford an individual such as himself. Of course, the integration of priests and bishops into the secular administration in such a way was by no means uncommon in mediaeval Europe. After all, it helped if your chancellor was literate and there were, in theory, few men more literate than senior figures of the Church. However, it does not seem impossible that the closeness of Anders Sunesen to Valdemar at this stage of his life paved the way for the politicking and spin which would characterise his subsequent career.

In 1206, five years into Anders Sunesen's archiepiscopacy, a Danish fleet was dispatched against the island of Ösel (Saaremaa, in Estonian) in the eastern Baltic. Some scholars have explained this event by presuming that Valdemar II wished to curtail piratical raids into Danish territory;⁴² others, Urban amongst them, have thought that the expedition came about out of Valdemar's desire to expand

⁴¹ W. Urban, *The Baltic Crusade* (Dekalb, IL, 1975), p. 42.

⁴² As suggested by T. Nyberg, 'Kreuzzug und Handel in der Ostsee zur dänischen Zeit Lübecks', in *Lübeck 1226, Reichsfreiheit und frühe Stadt*, ed. A. Grassmann (Lübeck, 1976), pp. 173–206, at p. 185.

his own political influence;⁴³ another school of thought favoured the idea that it represented Danish imperialism⁴⁴ or was even connected to an 'inferiority complex' which Sunesen felt towards his predecessor, Absalon. Whatever its motivation, the fact is that by 1206, the raid was probably not a strategic necessity: the strength of the pirates who had operated out of Ösel had been much reduced by other Christian activity in the area: shortly before the Danish expedition, for instance, they had been thoroughly chastised by an expedition of heavily armed 'pilgrims' on their way to the German bishopric at Riga. It is peculiar, then, that Valdemar II should have taken it upon himself to move with such considerable force (which, according to Henry of Livonia, it had taken three years to muster and equip),⁴⁵ leaving the Danish kingdom unattended simply for the sake of scotching a few troublesome bandits. I would argue that, rather than being an attempt to curb piratical activity, this event was, in fact, a Church-sponsored effort to expand the influence and mandate of Lund, in which the state played second fiddle. In other words, just like the expulsion of the clerics from Winchester, it had the fingerprints of a powerful and interventionist Church all over it.

A papal letter dated January 1206 survives in which Innocent III (1198–1216) instructs Anders Sunesen to install and ordain a missionary bishop in a city that the Danes had won from the

⁴³ See Urban, *The Baltic Crusade*, p. 62. Compare with F. Benninghoven's comments to the contrary in *Der Orden der Schwertbrüder: Fratres milicie Christi de Livonia* (Köln, 1965), pp. 75–6.

⁴⁴ See G. Gnegel-Waitschies, *Bischof Albert von Riga. Ein Bremer Chorherr als Kirchenfürst im Osten (1199–1229)* (Hamburg, 1958), p. 77; and E. Christansen, *The Northern Crusades* (London, 1997), pp. 93–103.

⁴⁵ Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon*, x.3 (L. Arbusow and A. Bauer, ed., *Heinrici Chronicon Livoniae: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum germanicarum in usum scholarum*, 2nd ed. (Hannover, 1955), p. 34).

pagans.⁴⁶ The letter is not specific, yet the implications are clear: Lund was to be responsible for the seizure of land and converts in an area already rife with German missionary work. Furthermore, the opening of the letter reads 'cum de christiani nominis iniuria uindicanda iuste ac pie cogitans ... contra paganos decreuerit proficisci'.⁴⁷ It seems to imply that the Pope is granting Anders Sunesen a privilege at his own suggestion. Indeed, as Torben Nielsen put it, this 'was a far-reaching privilege, which in a way conferred on the Danish archbishop a leading role in the Baltic mission'.⁴⁸ Effectively, it gave him the nod to extend Danish episcopal power in the eastern Baltic, possibly even to rival the German see at Riga. The extent to which Innocent III intended to initiate a crusade in the north is questionable. He had sanctioned crusading activity in the Baltic in 1199 and 1204, granting partial indulgences to those participating and 'certainly' likening 'the missionary and crusading efforts in the Baltic region to the "proper" crusades to the Holy Land, even if he did not equate the two'.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the letter which survives does not explicitly authorise a crusade in so many words. Anders Sunesen's actions are all the more interesting for that fact.

Accordingly, by the summer of 1206, the expedition to Ösel appears to have become more of a crusade than a border skirmish. It is highly significant that the chronicle of Henry of Livonia recorded that before the Danish expeditionary force set out, Anders Sunesen 'qui in remissionem peccatorum infinatam multitudinem signo crucis signauerat ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus et ad subiugandas

⁴⁶ A. Afzelius *et al.*, ed., *Diplomatarium Danicum*, 13 vols. (Copenhagen, 1938–93) ser. 1 IV, no. 109.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* '[He] has decided, justly and religiously, to punish injuries done against those of Christian name and go forth against the pagans'.

⁴⁸ T. K. Nielsen, 'The Missionary Man: Archbishop Anders Sunesen and the Baltic Crusade, 1206–21', in *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500*, ed. A. V. Murray (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 95–118, at p. 104.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

gentes fidei christiane'.⁵⁰ This action is a classic set piece, typical of the pre-crusade ritual undertaken by other European crusaders before setting out for the Levant.⁵¹ Presuming that there was some truth in Henry's account (and there is no pressing reason for him to have fabricated this relatively incidental detail), such an action would have emphatically transformed the nature of the conflict in the minds of the soldiers and their officers from being a border skirmish or even a state-sponsored holding operation into a full blown *bellum pro Christo*. Despite the fact that Ösel could hardly be said to have been Christ's patrimony in quite the same way as Jerusalem, the implication was clear: the expedition became a crusade in ritual and tradition if not necessarily in objective.

This Danish 'crusade' was something less than a resounding success, however. Having landed, the Danes built a wooden castle before losing their nerve in the face of the enemy and scuttling back to Denmark after hastily burning their fortifications. However, Anders Sunesen, who had accompanied the Danish army, went on to the German settlement at Riga and did not return to Denmark until 1207. Albert, the German bishop of Riga (1201–29), much to Anders' likely annoyance, was having a great deal more success in the Baltic than he was. Along with the order of the *Schwertbrüder* ('Sword Brothers'),⁵² Albert had, for some years, been presiding over the

⁵⁰ Henry of Livonia, *Chronicon*, x.13 (ed. Arbusow and Bauer, p. 43). 'Signed the sign of the cross upon an infinite multitude who were about to take their revenge on those people and subjugate their nation to the Christian faith, for the remission of their sins'.

⁵¹ Compare, for instance, with Pope Urban's actions following his harangue as reported by Guibert de Nogent in his *Gesta Dei per Francos*, i and ii (R. Levine, transl., *The Deeds of God Through the Franks* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 29 and 44–6).

⁵² For a popular but, nevertheless, detailed account of the Sword Brothers' often brutal activities, see W. Urban, *The Teutonic Knights: a Military History* (London, 2003).

conversion of large swathes of Livonia – although in many cases it seems that Albert was willing not only to convert the natives he encountered from paganism to Christianity; he was also willing to convert them from being alive to being dead. All in all, it was hardly the glorious victory for Christ that Anders surely had in mind.⁵³

However, after his return to Denmark, he performed a monumental and utterly unapologetic act of spin-doctoring which, once more, puts one very much in mind of Dunstan and Æthelwold. Anders seems to have submitted a report to the pope in which he stated that he had single-handedly subjected the whole of Livonia to Christian rule. A telling passage in the *Gesta Innocentii* reads: 'interea venit ad ipsum relatio ex parte Lundensis archiepiscopi ... tota Livonia erat ad fidem Christi conversa, nullusque in ipsa remanserat qui non recepisset sacramentum baptismatis'.⁵⁴ It is quite unambiguous in its meaning: the implication is that Livonia was wholly converted under the auspices of the archbishopric of Lund. Suddenly, a bungled raid which had amounted to little more than a summer cruise around the eastern Baltic turned into one of the most momentous acts of conversion in northern European history. It is uncertain what is more remarkable: Anders Sunesen's audacity for composing such an outrageous fiction, or Pope Innocent III's gullibility for apparently believing him. Missionary efforts in the area were certainly meeting with considerable success at this time: Henry of Livonia, for instance, considered that the whole area had been baptised by Albert in 1198 (another probable fiction). Nevertheless,

⁵³ For more analysis of the effectiveness of Albert's attempts at Christianisation, see Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades*, pp. 110–11.

⁵⁴ *Gesta Innocentii III*, ch. 127 (D. Gresse-Wright, ed., 'The Gesta Innocentii III: Text, Introduction and Commentary' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1981); transl. after Nielsen, 'The Missionary Man', p. 109). 'Meanwhile, a report came to him from part of the Archbishopric at Lund ... that all Livonia was converted to the faith of Christ; nobody remained there who had not received the sacrament of baptism'.

we may be certain that, in reality, Anders Sunesen achieved absolutely nothing of the sort in 1206.

The significance of these events, then, lies in the way in which they demonstrate the merging of purposes between the crown and the Church. The expedition of 1206 may have had a secular dimension: it seems unlikely that Valdemar would have been anything other than accommodating towards an idea which promised to expand his royal influence and mandate. Nevertheless, the king, it seems, took a back seat. It was Anders Sunesen who masterminded the raid on Ösel; it was Anders Sunesen who turned a conventional raiding operation into a divinely sponsored crusade which carried with it all the pomp and tantalising promise divine clemency usually connected to such activities; and it was Anders Sunesen, it would appear, who was the only one to have benefited from an otherwise utterly disastrous campaign.

Having infiltrated the secular government at the highest level, Anders Sunesen seems to have turned the traditional relationship between the Church and the state around so that it became one in which the state was the junior partner. He then used the forces of the secular state to the advantage of the Danish Church and the archbishopric of Lund, creating not only a crusade but also a fatuous conversion experience with which to impress the pope. Anders Sunesen had always enjoyed a good relationship with the papacy, and this affair did much to improve it. At the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Anders Sunesen was granted a broad array of powers and papal privileges which served not only to underline his importance but also to emphasise his role as the foremost prelate in the area.⁵⁵ One wonders whether the manufactured story of the successful expedition of 1206 could have fuelled Innocent's enthusiasm for his Danish

⁵⁵ For a discussion of which see A. Perron, 'Metropolitan Might and Papal Power on the Latin Christian Frontier: Transforming the Danish Church around the Time of the Fourth Lateran Council', *Catholic Historical Review* 89.2 (2003), 182–212, at pp. 192–200.

archbishop. The pope's fury at this time at the abject failure of the fourth crusade (1202–4) was no secret: it is possible that Anders Sunesen took the opportunity when he could to present this crusading pope with a 'good news story' in which he was very much the protagonist and was duly rewarded for his efforts. Rebane considered that the 1206 raid may have been 'an effective way' for Anders Sunesen, 'to increase his popularity and standing at home'.⁵⁶ However, its implications were likely to have reached far beyond Denmark.

CONCLUSIONS

I have not sought, in this paper, to suggest a conscious connexion between Dunstan, Æthelwold and Anders Sunesen. I would not propose for a moment that Anders Sunesen sought in any way to imitate his predecessors' careers deliberately, nor that he was necessarily inspired by their actions. Rather, my purpose here has been to take a theory of religious involvement in secular affairs which has been largely constructed by modern scholarship and apply it to certain aspects of the careers of these three men. In doing so, I am aware that I have, unconventionally, portrayed Edgar and Valdemar as weak rulers who were, to a significant extent, subject to the will of a powerful and manipulative Church. While I do not wish to reduce these kings to mere ecclesiastical puppets, I do believe that there is room for reinterpretation, nevertheless.

Furthermore, there can be no question that any of the characters discussed here ever acted as a 'caesaropapal' ruler in the sense that they sought to exercise supreme power over both Church and state simultaneously. However, where an ecclesiastic crosses the boundary which, as Alcuin explained, divided the Church from the secular

⁵⁶ P. P. Rebane, 'Archbishop Anders Sunesen and the Danish Conquest of Estonia', *Yearbook of the Estonian Learned Society in America* 5 (1968–75), 24–38, at p. 28.

administration, meddling in military, political and foreign affairs, I would argue that there is an unconscious 'caesaropapal' element at work. For an ecclesiastic, as Dunstan and Æthelwold seem to have done, to use military force in order to accomplish a doctrinal objective or, in the case of Anders Sunesen, to extend his ecclesiastical dominion, is a striking departure from what one might expect from a prelate. In both cases, the secular and religious realms moved together simultaneously, the resources and logistics of one complementing the ideological drive of the other. 'Caesaropapism', as we have seen, is a tricky term to define let alone to apply accurately. However, insofar as it characterises the union of Church of state in purpose, intent and action, I think it may be fairly applied to Dunstan, Æthelwold and Anders Sunesen.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ My thanks are due to Mr E. Niblaeus who, having kindly read a draft of this paper, made a number of invaluable suggestions, saving me from committing some foolish errors. I am also grateful to Dr B. Kampmark, whose endless willingness to discuss Danish politics (both contemporary and mediaeval) fuelled my interest in this topic.