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JACOB HOBSON

ABSTRACT

This article takes literary representations of Cnut, the Danish conqueror of England, as a case study of the construction of English identity in the eleventh century. It traces representations of Cnut in four literary texts composed over the course of the century: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Knútsdrápur*, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, and Osbern of Canterbury's *Translatio Sancti Ælfegi*. Each of these texts constructs a politically useful national–ethnic identity through the figure of Cnut, using the mechanisms of kingship, piety and devotion, language, place and literary tradition to work through the particular exigencies faced by the audiences that they seek to address.

The problems of nationhood and identity are among the most pressing in contemporary Anglo-Saxon studies, and no figure offers a better case study of the issues involved than Cnut, the Danish king who acceded to the English throne in December of 1016. Depicted alternately – and simultaneously – in eleventh-century texts as an outstanding English king and as a marauding Viking, Cnut eludes easy characterization. As a Viking king of England, Cnut had to navigate a complicated and rapidly changing political situation, and later writers used Cnut over the course of the century to navigate their own complicated and rapidly changing political situations. This article argues that the changes in and manipulations of Cnut's image in such texts demonstrate more than his 'posturing.'¹ Rather, they represent larger political shifts in eleventh-century England from an Anglo-Danish rule to an Anglo-Norman one. This article will examine how a group of texts reconciles the dual Viking and English elements of Cnut's kingship within the unifying context of English identity. Cnut had no Asser or Snorri to write a detailed biography, but he is represented more or less prominently throughout the eleventh century in

¹ E. Treharne, *Living Through Conquest: the Politics of Early English, 1020–1220* (Oxford, 2012), p. 17.

the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,² the *Knútsdrápur*,³ the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*⁴ and Osbern of Canterbury's *Translatio Sancti Ælfegi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et martiris*.⁵ These texts represent Cnut at three different, politically charged moments in time and in vastly different political circumstances. Unlike other kinds of literary evidence such as charters, laws, or homilies, these texts are all very much concerned with the narration of Cnut's reign. At the same time, their variety allows us to think across a number of modern scholarly disciplines that – whether because of linguistic limitations or respect for traditional boundaries of historical periodization – communicate all too infrequently despite their shared focus in eleventh-century England. Collectively, these texts comprise a series of flashpoints illuminating late Anglo-Saxon identity, shedding light on its development in a way that a single text or a single tradition simply cannot. What emerges from them is an attempt to deal with the tempestuous political currents of eleventh-century England through literary means, an attempt that constantly redefines what it means to be English in order to navigate these currents.

NATIONS AND NATIONHOOD IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

To discuss the land Cnut conquered as a 'nation' or the people he conquered as having an 'identity' requires first clarifying as fully as possible what these terms could mean for the eleventh century. Some scholars, usually modernists themselves, have declared the nation to be a solely modern phenomenon,⁶ but it is clear that there existed varying degrees of national formation and ethnic self-

² *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS C*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *The AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 5* (Cambridge, 2001).

³ Collected in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1: from Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. D. Whaley, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 2012). I follow scholarly convention in using this term to refer collectively to the skaldic poetry produced about Cnut. I am grateful to Matthew Townend for his generosity in sharing his editions of these poems with me before their publication.

⁴ *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. A. Campbell, introduction by S. Keynes (Cambridge, 1998), hereafter referred to as *EER*.

⁵ 'Translatio Sancti Ælfegi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et martiris (*BHL* 2519): Osbern's Account of the Translation of St Ælfheah's Relics From London to Canterbury, 8–11 June 1023', *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark, Norway*, ed. A. R. Rumble (London, 1994), pp. 283–315.

⁶ See, e.g., J. Breuilly, 'Changes in the Political Uses of the Nation: Continuity or Discontinuity?' *Power and the Nation in European History*, ed. L. Scales and O. Zimmer (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 67–101; and A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986). Some modernists argue that the nation is dependent on citizenship, near-universal literacy or both. This claim is most famously made in B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York, 1990). Moreover, E. Gellner informs us of the changes wrought by modernity that '[i]n the industrial age all this [i.e., the role of culture] changes . . . virtually everyone becomes literate, and communicates in an elaborate code, in explicit, fairly "grammatical" (regularized) sentences, not in context-bound grunts and nods', in his *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY, 1983), pp. 50–1.

understanding in the Middle Ages.⁷ Ethnogenesis (or *Traditionskern*) theory has been particularly influential in making this claim.⁸ Although ethnogenesis theory in general and the Vienna school in particular have been sharply criticized,⁹ the approach nevertheless usefully emphasizes medieval ethnic and political identities as categories that were continually constructed, and underscores some mechanisms of this construction, such as memory, language, place and, especially, tradition. In a study that both surveys the discussion about medieval nationhood and builds upon ethnogenesis theory, Walter Pohl sets forth productive criteria for the definition of a medieval nation. These include durability beyond the life of a given king, stability, a *gens* or ethnic identity, a central power structure and a king who is active in all these other categories.¹⁰ It follows that the king's wide-reaching agency links ideas of kingship with ideas of nationality. Such an approach to ethnicity and the nation in the Middle Ages allows us to discuss these terms in a way that is both historically specific and broadly applicable, while skirting problems raised by teleological narratives of nationalism and modernity.¹¹

Such an approach also proves useful for Anglo-Saxon England. Much recent work on the questions of Anglo-Saxon identity and nationhood has

⁷ See, e.g., K. Davis, 'National Writing in the Ninth Century: a Reminder for Postcolonial Thinking About the Nation', *Jnl. of Med. and Early Modern Stud.* 28.3 (1998), 611–37; S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest' *TRHS* 6th ser. 6 (1996), 25–49; S. Reynolds, 'The Idea of the Nation as a Political Community', *Power and the Nation in European History*, pp. 54–67; J. R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern Nation* (Princeton, NJ, 1970); and Sverrir Jakobsson, 'Defining a Nation: Popular and Public Identity in the Middle Ages', *Scandinavian Jnl. of Hist.* 24.1 (1999), 91–101.

⁸ The foundational work of this approach is R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne, 1961). Ethnogenesis theory has since been enthusiastically promoted by the Vienna School, spearheaded by H. Wolfram and W. Pohl. See, among their many other publications, Wolfram, *Die Goten von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts: Entwurf einer historischen Ethnographie*, 3rd ed. (Munich, 1990); 'Einleitung oder Überlegungen zur origo gentis', *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, ed. H. Wolfram and W. Pohl, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1990) I, 19–33; and Pohl, 'Ethnic Names and Identities in the British Isles: a Comparative Perspective', *The Anglo-Saxons From the Migration to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. J. Hines (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 7–40; and 'Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies', *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. L. K. Little and B. H. Rosenwein, (Malden, MA, 1998), pp. 15–24. See additionally P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 13–42; P. Geary, 'Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages', *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983), 15–26; and S. Reynolds, 'Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm', *History* 68 (1983), 375–90.

⁹ See *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. A. Gillett (Turnhout, 2002).

¹⁰ W. Pohl, 'Staat und Herrschaft im Frühmittelalter: Überlegungen zum Forschungsstand', *Staat im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. S. Airlie, W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (Vienna, 2006), pp. 9–38, at 36–38.

¹¹ This model is of course not universally applicable in the Middle Ages. One obvious example of a different national formation is the kingless Icelandic state prior to 1262–4.

been influenced, directly or not, by ethnogenesis theory.¹² This work ranges from descriptions of Anglo-Saxon territorial awareness¹³ to direct arguments for Anglo-Saxon nationhood; in fact, Patrick Wormald and James Campbell argue that Anglo-Saxon England was a nation in a sense little removed from the modern one.¹⁴ This position is taken as a ‘certainty’ by Campbell: ‘Late Anglo-Saxon England was a nation state. It was an entity with an effective central authority, uniformly organised institutions, a national language, a national church, defined frontiers . . . and, above all, a strong sense of national identity.’¹⁵

I do not wish to discount the idea of eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon England as a nation, but a quick sketch of the dimensions of the late Anglo-Saxon nation reveals the distinctions between it and a post-industrial, twenty-first century nation. England’s boundaries were not always clearly defined, especially in the north.¹⁶ England did have a national Church and a national governing structure, but it would be a mistake to argue that this structure was homogeneous in nature or uniform in function throughout the kingdom. Cnut himself exercised a strong central authority over the kingdom, but the way in which he used his authority to maintain control over England varied locally and could sometimes be rather *ad hoc*.¹⁷ Cnut appointed and replaced government officials as he saw necessary in different regions of the country.¹⁸ The introduction of the office of ‘staller’ in London (and hardly anywhere else) is one of the most arresting examples of this *ad hoc* approach. A staller’s exact job description is unclear, but he was a Scandinavian official who served as a royal servant and could earn as

¹² Concerning Anglo-Saxon identity, see K. Davis, ‘National Writing in the Ninth Century’; S. Foot, ‘Making of *Anglecynn*’; S. J. Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (New York, 2003); S. Reynolds, ‘What Do We Mean By “Anglo-Saxon” and “Anglo-Saxons”?’ *Jnl. of Brit. Stud.* 24.4 (1985), 395–414; P. Stafford, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Identity and the Making of England’, *Haskins Soc. Jnl.* 19 (2007), 28–50; and J. Thormann, ‘The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Poems and the Making of the English Nation’, *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*, ed. A. J. Frantzen and J. D. Niles (Gainesville, FL, 1997), pp. 60–85.

¹³ J. Stodnick, ‘Writing Home: Place and Narrative in Anglo-Saxon England’ (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Notre Dame, 2002). See also N. Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven, 2008).

¹⁴ See P. Wormald, ‘Germanic Power Structures: the Early English Experience’, *Power and the Nation in European History*, pp. 105–24 and J. Campbell, ‘The Late Anglo-Saxon State: a Maximum View’, *PBA* 87 (1994), 39–65.

¹⁵ Campbell, ‘Late Anglo-Saxon State’, p. 47.

¹⁶ As Campbell himself points out, *ibid.*

¹⁷ This point is demonstrated thoroughly and convincingly by T. Bolton, *The Empire of Cnut the Great: Conquest and the Consolidation of Power in Northern Europe in the Early Eleventh Century* (Leiden, 2009).

¹⁸ Concerning Cnut’s nobles, see K. Mack, ‘Changing Thegns: Cnut’s Conquest and the English Aristocracy’, *Albion* 16.4 (1984), 375–87; and especially S. Keynes, ‘Cnut’s Earls’, *The Reign of Cnut*, ed. Rumble, pp. 43–88.

much money as a minor *eorl*. The main function of stallers, however, seems to have been to increase Cnut's local presence by proxy, helping to bring London further under his personal political control.¹⁹ This kind of idiosyncratic local action not only argues for a close tie between kingship and medieval nationality but also points toward a difference in kind between the paradigmatic modern nation-state and late Anglo-Saxon England.

To discuss English identity as it is figured by Cnut, it may be most helpful to focus on the textual production of a national-ethnic identity rather than on nationhood or ethnicity *per se*. I will discuss this identity through the terms set forth above: language, place, tradition, and kingship.²⁰ These terms shift our focus from questions of whether Anglo-Saxon England is a 'nation' or not and allow us instead to investigate Anglo-Saxon identity as it is shaped and reshaped by different textual communities. Some of these criteria tend to function implicitly; for instance, the use of a vernacular language is a tacit but powerful way to claim identity in the culture to which that language belongs. Writers also sometimes explicitly identify themselves with a particular group or overtly call upon a particular national-ethnic tradition. Each text uses literary conventions traditional to a particular national-ethnic identity in order to appeal to its audience, and each text manipulates these conventions in order to produce an audience suited to contemporary political exigencies. A text's uses of and changes to convention do not simply produce identity anew; this process adapts a pre-existing identity for contemporary purposes. The textual production of Anglo-Saxon identity is not ultimately a stable phenomenon. Rather, it continually uses and reworks literary tradition to negotiate specific historical conditions and political tensions, a series of negotiations that is visible in eleventh-century literary representations of Cnut through two conquests and two subsequent periods of peace.

¹⁹ For information about stallers, I rely on Bolton, *Empire of Cnut*, pp. 61–3 and 75–6.

²⁰ J. Stodnick has convincingly argued that the *Chronicle* discursively maps the Anglo-Saxon kingdom in 'What (and Where) Is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle About? Spatial History', *Bull. of the John Rylands Univ. Lib. of Manchester* 86.2 (2004), 87–104. Stodnick has also shown that the word *angelcynn*, by which the *Chronicle* characteristically denotes the English people, etymologically links the Anglo-Saxon people to the Anglo-Saxon land, creating a strong sense of ethnicity, if not nationality, by constructing England as a space and place of and for the English people; see her 'The Interests of Compounding: *Angelcynn* to *Engla land* in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. H. Magennis and J. Wilcox (Morgantown, WV, 2006), pp. 337–67, esp. 341. S. J. Harris has shown the dangers of talking about the English people as a unitary entity throughout Anglo-Saxon history, demanding that we be careful to contextualize and qualify their identity within a specific historical moment; see his *Race and Ethnicity*, pp. 1–43.

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE

The *Chronicle* provides one of the most important narrative sources for Cnut's accession and reign, but the circumstances of its production are somewhat enigmatic. Simon Keynes has argued that the annals concerning Æthelred's reign originated in London some time during the years 1016–23.²¹ More recently, Nicholas Brooks has suggested that the text of all the different *Chronicle* manuscripts originated at or were at least influenced by the Anglo-Saxon royal court.²² This argument accounts well for the *Chronicle*'s general focus on kings and its quick acceptance of new kings after conquests, including Cnut and William. Brooks argues specifically that the annals from 983–1022 were disseminated to various churches from Cnut's court in a 'deliberate attempt to rewrite history' that undermined Æthelred and supported Cnut.²³ Regardless of whether these annals were royally sponsored, they were probably written early in Cnut's reign and reflect one view from this period. In this sense, the *Chronicle*'s construction of current and past events is a product of Cnut's English reign.

The *Chronicle*'s short account of Archbishop Ælfheah of Canterbury's death in 1012 is a crucial point in its rhetorical construction of Cnut and, through him, of a specific English identity. The *Chronicle* records that Ælfheah was abducted by Vikings in this year and was subsequently martyred when he refused to be ransomed back to the English. The importance the annalist places on his death is suggested by the heightened register of the account:

Ac þonne hi mæst to yfele gedon hæfdon, þonne nam mon frið 7 grið wið hi, 7 næpelæs for callum þissum griðe 7 gafole hi ferdon æghweder flocmælum 7 heregodon ure earme folc, 7 hi rypton ond slogon. 7 þa on ðissum geare betweox Natiuitas Sancte Marię 7 Sancte Michaelis mæssan hi ymbsæton Cantwareburuh, 7 hi into comon þuruh syruwrencas forðan Ælmær hi becyrde, þe se arcebisceop Ælfheah ær generede æt his life, 7 hi þær ða genaman þone arcebisceop Ælfheah . . . Wæs ða ræpling se ðe ær wæs heafod Angelkynnes 7 Cristendomes. Þær man mihte ða geseon yrmðe þær man oft ær geseah blisse on þære earman byrig þanon com ærest Cristendom 7 blis for Gode 7 for worulde. 7 hi hæfdon þone arcebisceop mid him swa lange oð þæne þe hi hine gemartiredon.²⁴

²¹ S. Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready', *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. David A. E. Pelteret (New York, 2000), pp. 157–90, at 158–68.

²² N. Brooks, 'Why is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* About Kings?' *ASE* 39 (2010), 43–70, esp. 61–2.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 50–2; quotation at p. 52.

²⁴ *ASC* 1011 C, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, pp. 95–6. 'But when they had done the greatest evil, then peace and a truce were made with them. And nevertheless, for all this truce and tax, they went everywhere in troops and ravaged our poor people, and they plundered and slew. And then in this year between the Nativity of St Mary and Michaelmas they besieged Canterbury, and they entered through treachery because Ælfmar, whom the Archbishop Ælfheah had previously saved during his life, betrayed them. And there they took the Archbishop Ælfheah

Charles Plummer printed part of this passage as verse, referring to it as a 'quasi-poem' in a footnote.²⁵ More recent commentators have noted this passage's 'shift into rhythmical and alliterative prose . . . echoing the forms and rhythms of the poetic half-line'²⁶ and have argued that it is poetic, even if it is not 'classical' Old English poetry.²⁷ However, such readings only partially highlight the textual work this passage does in writing the narrative of the period before Cnut's reign. The annal is less semi-poetic than homiletic in tone. Its poeticisms are well in keeping with homiletic form;²⁸ particularly, the doublets are suggestive of the work of the annalist's contemporaries Ælfric and Wulfstan.²⁹ Its single pure-rhyming doublet, 'frið 7 grið', appears only in the *Chronicle* and in specifically Wulfstanian material.³⁰ There are additionally a homoioteleuton ('rypton 7 slogon') and multiple instances of the doublets characteristic of late homiletic form. The narration of a martyrdom is moreover standard hagiographic and homiletic matter, commonly seen in the works of Ælfric.³¹

Upon acceding to the kingship, Cnut assumes a position of both secular and

then . . . Then he was a hostage whose was previously the head of the English people and of Christendom. There one could see misery where one previously saw happiness in that poor city from which first came Christianity as well as happiness with respect to God and to the world. And they had the archbishop with them until that time when they martyred him.' All translations are my own.

²⁵ Plummer, whose edition is based on MS E, lineates 'Wæs ða ræpling . . . for Gode. 7 for worulde' as verse. *ASC 1011: Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1892–9) I, 142.

²⁶ H. O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford, 2005), p. 23.

²⁷ T. A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 89–91. For a different approach but similar conclusion, see T. A. Bredehoft, 'The Boundaries Between Verse and Prose in Old English Literature', *Old English Literature in its Manuscript Context*, ed. J. T. Lionarons (Morgantown, WV, 2004), pp. 139–72, at 163–4.

²⁸ This is pointed out in D. R. Letson, 'The Poetic Content of the Revival Homily', *The Old English Homily and Its Backgrounds*, ed. P. E. Szarmach and B. F. Huppé (Albany, NY, 1978), pp. 139–56; A. Orchard, 'Artful Alliteration in Anglo-Saxon Song and Story', *Anglia* 113 (1995), 429–62, at 458–62; and T. Beechy, *The Poetics of Old English* (Burlington, VT, 2010), esp. pp. 39–72. See also S. Zacher's statement that the compiler of the Vercelli book 'saw no great disparity between the genres of poetry and prose', *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies* (Toronto, 2009), pp. 51–5, at 51.

²⁹ Note, for example, the distinctively Wulfstanian 'for gode and for worulde'.

³⁰ *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, ed. A. diP. Healey (Toronto, 2011), <<http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/>>. See Homily 19 in D. Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 252–3. The verbal transform of this collocation, 'friðian and griðian', occurs in other Wulfstan homilies and in *I Cnut*. See Homilies 30, 37 and 59 in A. Napier, *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit* (Berlin, 1883), pp. 143, 179, 308. For *I Cnut*, see Laws 2 and 4 in F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols. (Halle, 1898–1912) I, 280, 284.

³¹ For a general discussion, see D. R. Letson, 'The Form of the Old English Homily', *The Amer. Benedictine Rev.* 30 (1979), 399–431, esp. 419–21.

religious authority. The implications of this accession for the English kingship and the *angelcynn* are played out in both the form and the content of this episode. Alice Sheppard argues convincingly that ‘the Æthelred–Cnut annalist does not lament the loss of the archbishop as an archbishop’ but that ‘Ælfheah represents a model of leadership that Æthelred cannot match’ because he had not fought to defend his kingdom.³² ‘So strong is the connection between resistance and Anglo-Saxon identity’, Sheppard suggests, that ‘the Æthelred–Cnut annalist transfers legitimate leadership of the country from the king who will not fight to the archbishop who, figuratively at least, will’.³³ As *heafod angelcynnes*, Ælfheah has become a symbolic leader of the defence against the Vikings. He follows here the model of Sigeric and Ælfric, the previous archbishops of Canterbury who promoted the cult of King Edward and translated his relics in 1001 to protect them from Viking invaders.³⁴ The relationship between archbishop and king involves the English kingship more deeply in religious discourse than it already is by its very nature, and the homiletic styling of the passage underscores this point further. By elevating Ælfheah and the kingship in this way, the annalist implicitly vilifies the murdering Danes as enemies not only of the English but also of God.

Cnut’s accession as the legitimate king of the English and of English Christendom is likewise communicated by the annalist’s use of *fon to*,³⁵ the traditional formula for accession to a kingship or bishopric: ‘feng Cnut kyning to eallon Angelcynnes ryce’.³⁶ This is the same formula used with, for example, Alfred the Great, one of whose foremost accomplishments was defending England against the invading Danes. However, where Alfred accedes ‘to Wessexena rice’,³⁷ Cnut does so to the entire (*eallon*) kingdom of the English. More proximately, this formula is used for Æthelred’s accession in 978: ‘Her on þysum geare wearð Eadweard cyning gemartyrad, 7 Æpelred æpeling his broðor feng to þam rice, 7 he was on þam ylcan gear to cinge gehalgod’.³⁸ When he *fehþ* to the kingdom, the secular leader Æthelred is also *gehalgod* as

³² A. Sheppard, *Families of the King: Writing Identity in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2004), p. 79.

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 79–80.

³⁴ See S. Keynes, ‘The Cult of King Edward the Martyr During the Reign of King of King Æthelred the Unready’, *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in honour of Pauline Stafford*, ed. Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds and Susan M. Johns (London, 2012), pp. 115–25, at 120–1.

³⁵ ‘Take charge of, take control of, succeed to’, ‘fon’, *Dictionary of Old English*.

³⁶ *ASC* 1017 C, ed. O’Brien O’Keeffe, p. 103. ‘King Cnut acceded to the entire kingdom of the English people.’

³⁷ *ASC* 872 C, ed. O’Brien O’Keeffe, p. 59, ‘the kingdom of the West Saxons’.

³⁸ *ASC* 978 C, ed. O’Brien O’Keeffe, p. 84. ‘In this year King Edward was martyred, and his brother Prince Æthelred received the kingdom, and in that same year he was consecrated as king.’

king, again binding England's secular leadership to its religious leadership. Moreover, this formula is also used for the accession of church leaders, including Ælfheah himself in 1006: 'Her forðferde Ælfric arcebisceop, 7 Ælfheah bisceop feng æfter him to ðam arcestole.'³⁹ As Jacqueline Stodnick observes of the *Chronicle's* use of such formulas, the annalists could have chosen not to use the same phrasings when recording events so politically different and historically distant as these, and the fact that they do so incorporates these differences into a single, smooth historical narrative.⁴⁰ The double use of the *fon to* formula for both secular and ecclesiastical leaders thus grafts the foreign Cnut even more deeply onto an existing structure of Christian, English leadership than the narrative alone does.

The *Chronicle's* alignment of secular and religious leadership after Ælfheah's death means that it represents Cnut as filling both a temporal power vacuum and a spiritual one. Nor does Cnut fail to please; on the contrary, he could hardly do more to satisfy the demands of his new station. The *Chronicle* records that he translates the relics of his figurative predecessor Ælfheah from London to Canterbury in 1023⁴¹ and that he makes a pilgrimage to Rome in 1031.⁴² He maintains the unity of the kingdom, first dividing it into manageable administrative units after his accession⁴³ and then outlawing the insurgent ealdorman Æthelweard and Eadwig, *ceorla cyngc*, in 1020.⁴⁴ Cnut likewise protects England against invading forces; the *Chronicle* records no foreign attempts on England's integrity during Cnut's reign, which is presumably an effect of Cnut's international influence and the fact that, as a Viking himself, his rule mostly obviates the possibility of further Viking incursions. Cnut is in all these ways shown to be the paragon of a successful English king according to the standards that the *Chronicle* has implicitly set forth earlier.

The image of Cnut as an English king in the *Chronicle* nevertheless remains disturbed. The *Chronicle's* king-making rhetoric squares nicely with that Cnut who is sufficiently pious to translate Ælfheah's relics to Canterbury and sufficiently well disposed to govern England for a basically peaceful eighteen-year reign. However, it has to work a little harder to accommodate that Cnut who leaves a band of mutilated Englishmen at Sandwich and who, in his usual

³⁹ ASC 1006 C, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 91. 'Here Archbishop Ælfric died, and Bishop Ælfheah received the archiepiscopal see after him.'

⁴⁰ J. Stodnick, 'Sentence to Story: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as Formulary', *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. A. Jorgensen (Turnhout, 2010), 91–112.

⁴¹ ASC 1023 C, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 104.

⁴² ASC 1031 E: *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS E*, ed. S. Irvine, *The AS Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition 7* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 76.

⁴³ ASC 1017 C, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 103.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 104, 'king of the peasants'.

fashion before his accession to the kingship of the English, ‘com mid his here 7 Eadric ealdorman mid him ofer Temese into Myrcum æt Cregelade, 7 wendon þa to Wærincwicscire innan ðære Middanwintres tide 7 heregodon 7 bærndon 7 slogon eal þæt hi to comon’.⁴⁵ The *Chronicle* both positions Cnut as the idealized king of the English people and does not erase or minimize his previous actions. In so doing, it uncomfortably represents Cnut as both an English king and a Viking who pillages and plunders as much as the next Viking. The most uncomfortable aspect of this representation, however, is that after more than two hundred years of recording brutal Viking, and so *denisc*, incursions and defining the identity of the English against these Danish invaders, the *Chronicle* acts to preserve its narrative of English national continuity by recording an invading Dane as the English king. Beneath Cnut the English king, there remains a substrate of Cnut the Viking, a fact that the *Chronicle* does not comment on or attempt to reconcile.

The somewhat startling result of the *Chronicle*’s narrative is that its Cnut is both a Viking leader and a Christian, English king. England had already been conquered by Danes once in the years immediately before Cnut came to power. The *Chronicle* records brutalities on both sides, and Cnut’s government in England was, perhaps in an effort to help quell any ongoing conflict, an Anglo-Danish conglomeration. However, the *Chronicle*’s move to Anglicize Cnut does more than simply represent England’s disjointed political situation; it also inserts Cnut into this political situation in a productive way. Although the West Saxon kingship of England had been on shaky ground for years before Cnut caused it to disintegrate altogether, he is immediately linked to the traditional legitimacy and authority of that kingship.

SKALDIC VERSE

If Cnut’s Viking past rests a little uneasily alongside his Christian kingship in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, his skalds show hardly any such concern at the range of his activities. Skaldic verse is a difficult source for Anglo-Saxon history,⁴⁶ but medieval Scandinavian historians often use skaldic stanzas in more or less the same way modern scholars use footnotes: for the verification of the informa-

⁴⁵ ASC 1016 C, ed. O’Brien O’Keeffe, p. 100, ‘came with his army, and the noble Eadric with him, over the Thames into Mercia at Cricklade and then turned to Warwickshire by midwinter and ravaged and burned and slew all that they came to’.

⁴⁶ See A. Campbell, *Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1971); R. Poole, ‘Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History: Some Aspects of the Period 1009–1016’, *Speculum* 62.2 (1987), 265–98. For a magisterial discussion of the problems associated with the manuscript transmission and editing of skaldic praise poetry, see B. Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (Øvre Ervik, 1982).

tion being presented.⁴⁷ The greatest value of skaldic poetry to modern scholars, however, may lie in the skald as a vehicle of the king's propaganda who spins historical events in whatever way should prove necessary to construct the king's desired public image. A sizable body of extant poems forms the *Knútsdrápur*, spanning the range of Cnut's career from his invasion of England until after his conquest of Norway. The relative diversity of these poems and their production at Cnut's court, presumably at Cnut's own commission and intended mainly for an audience of his Scandinavian retainers,⁴⁸ makes it possible to follow Cnut's developing self-presentation among his Scandinavian subjects as his kingdom grows to encompass all of Scandinavia and the British Isles.

Cnut was well aware of the utility of skaldic poetry for image-making, and leveraged it fully. According to *Skáldatal*, he had the unusually large number of eight skalds in his service.⁴⁹ Indeed, his court became a 'focal point for skaldic composition and patronage'.⁵⁰ Cnut's clout as a patron was in large measure due to his financial generosity,⁵¹ and it was no doubt abetted by his political power, which was without Scandinavian (or English) precedent. Cnut's use of skaldic poetry was moreover not limited to his own image-making; it was also part of his program for the promotion of Óláfr Haraldsson's cult in Norway, which began when Swein, Cnut's son and regent in Norway, translated Óláfr's relics in 1031.⁵² Of the eight poets known to have been in Cnut's service, only

⁴⁷ The relationship of skaldic verses to the sagas in which they are transmitted is a complex one. J. Harris calls the use of skaldic verses as in-text footnotes 'evidential' in his 'The Prosimetrum of Icelandic Saga and Some Relatives', *Prosimetrum: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. J. Harris and K. Reichl (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 131–64, at 142. In so doing, Harris is codifying the observations made by B. Einarsson, 'On the Rôle of Verse in Saga Literature', *MSand* 7 (1974), 118–25. A. Wolf also gives an important discussion of the veracity of skaldic verse as it relates to genre in his 'Zur Rolle der vísur in der altnordischen Prosa', *Festschrift Leonhard C. Franz zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. O. Menghin and H. M. Ölberg (Innsbruck, 1966), pp. 459–84.

⁴⁸ The complexity of skaldic poetry makes it unlikely that even native Norse speakers would have been able to understand it without prior training, although some of the *Knútsdrápur* are markedly more difficult and some markedly less so. For a discussion of the difficulty, intelligibility, and possible social function of *dróttkvætt* poetry, see J. Lindow, 'Riddles, Kennings, and the Complexity of Skaldic Poetry', *Scandinavian Stud.* 47.3 (1975), 311–27, esp. 320–4. Concerning the audience of the *Knútsdrápur*, see M. Townend, 'Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*: Skaldic Praise-Poetry at the Court of Cnut', *ASE* 30 (2001), 145–79, esp. 174–5.

⁴⁹ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen, 1848–87) III, 258.

⁵⁰ Townend, 'Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*', p. 146. See also H. Kuhn, *Das Dróttkvætt* (Heidelberg, 1983), p. 267.

⁵¹ See B. Fidjestøl, "'Har du høyrte eit dyrare kvæde?'" Litt om økonomien bak den eldste fyrstediktninga', *Festskrift til Ludvig Holm-Olsen på hans 70-årsdag den 9. juni 1984* (Øvre Ervik, 1984), pp. 61–73, at 62.

⁵² M. Townend, 'Knútr and the Cult of St Óláfr: Poetry and Patronage in Eleventh-Century Norway and England', *Viking and Med. Scandinavia* 1 (2005), 251–79.

five have extant poems about Cnut; to these should be added the anonymous poem *Liðsmannaflokker*.⁵³ The majority of these poems are from 1027–35, after the Holy River battle and mostly after Norway came under the Danish crown.⁵⁴ They attest not only to Cnut's imperial ambitions but also to the culture of his court.

The Cnut we see in *Liðsmannaflokker* is not to be taken lightly, but he is at the same time a fairly generic Viking leader. This poem, one of the earliest of the *Knútsdrápur*, is set during the initial conquest of England.⁵⁵ It was probably composed in 1016–17, when Cnut and the Danes made their re-conquest of England, and it is narrated from the point of view of a soldier in the Danish army. The speaker of *Liðsmannaflokker* addresses himself to a mysterious woman and, unusually, his poem does not appear to have been commissioned by a Danish leader.⁵⁶ After a description of the landing in England, the poem moves on to praise Thorkell and Cnut as the leaders of the expeditionary force. The two must share face time here, with stanzas devoted to each of them. These stanzas are moreover not particularly stamped with admiration for the characteristics of either man, tending instead toward generalized description of their prowess in battle:

Knútr réð ok bað bíða,
(baugstalls) Dani alla;
(lundr gekk rōskr und randir,
ríkr) vá herr við díki.⁵⁷

The emphasis of the poem is not on the conqueror but on the process of the conquest itself. While it is clear from the first word of this helming that Cnut is its subject, he is represented less as an outstanding hero than as a leader of the army. This is particularly evident in the form of the last line. The first word,

⁵³ *Legendary Saga* fascinatingly names Óláfr Haraldsson as the author of these stanzas, but scholars have tended to discount this attribution. See *Óláfs saga hins belga: Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olaf den Heiligen*, ed. A. Heinrichs et al. (Heidelberg, 1982), pp. 48–52. See also Poole, 'Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History', 286, '*Liðsmannaflokker* is what it purports to be, an expression of rank-and-file jubilation at Knútr's conquest, composed almost contemporaneously with the events it describes.'

⁵⁴ I accept and rely on the chronology Townend establishes in 'Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*'.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the editorial problems associated with *Liðsmannaflokker* and for a reading of the poem's form, see R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems on War and Peace: a Study in Skaldic Narrative* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 86–115.

⁵⁶ For the view that this mysterious woman is Emma, see Poole, 'Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History', 290–2; and A. Orchard, 'The Literary Background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *JML* 11 (2001), 156–83, at 176–80.

⁵⁷ 'Cnut decided and ordered all the Danes to wait, the powerful tree [=warrior] went bravely among the shields, the army fought along the dike', *Liðsmannaflokker*, ed. R. Poole, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas* 1, II, 1024.

riker, is a description of Cnut's might in battle. Cnut is known as *Knútr inn ríki* in the sagas, and it is possible that the subject of this line works with the first word of the stanza to play on Cnut's title.⁵⁸ However, the final five syllables of the six-syllable line are devoted to the actions of the army rather than of Cnut himself. After more standard descriptions of battle, *Liðsmannaflokkur* concludes with a helming expressing the poet's wish to settle in the recently conquered London, a move one would not expect in more focused praise poetry.

The mode of representation changes dramatically in the poems commissioned by Cnut himself. There is now an impulse toward empire, with repeated allusions to Cnut's conquest of England and Norway. Using the *fornyrðislag* metre, which would have been more comprehensible than *dróttkvætt* to the ears of an untrained audience, Sigvatr Þórðarson claims:

Ok senn sonu
sló, hvern ok þó,
Aðalráðs eða
út flæmði Knútr.⁵⁹

So also Óttarr svarti, in *dróttkvætt*:

Herskjöld bart ok helduð,
Hilmir, ríkr af slíku;
hykkat, þengill, þekkðusk
þik kyrrsetu mikla.
Ætt drap Jóta dróttinn
Játgeirs í for þeiri;
þveit rakt – þrár est heitinn –
þeim, stillis konr, illan.⁶⁰

Both of these poets foreground the destruction of the West Saxon dynasty *qua* dynasty,⁶¹ and they both attribute this destruction to Cnut personally. Conversely, Óttarr also foregrounds Cnut's status as king of the Danes, mentioning conquered peoples only by reference to the act of conquest itself. Óttarr particularly stresses this point through his variation on the traditional

⁵⁸ However, the sagas are later than this poem by a matter of centuries, and it is unclear exactly when *inn ríki* became a standard cognomen for Cnut.

⁵⁹ 'And at the same time Cnut killed or drove away Æthelred's sons, every one', *Knútsdrápa*, ed. M. Townend, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas* 1, II, 652.

⁶⁰ 'You carried a war-shield and prevailed by it, powerful prince; I do not think that it pleased you much to sit quiet. You slew the descendants of Edgar in that journey, lord of the Jutes [Danes]; you struck them a bad blow, ruler's son,' *Knútsdrápa*, ed. M. Townend, *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas* 1, II, 771.

⁶¹ Sigvatr is nevertheless given to using English loans in his poetry, and Anglicisms found their way into the work of most of Cnut's skalds. See D. Hofmann, *Nordisch-Englische Lehnbeziehungen der Wikingerzeit* (Copenhagen, 1955), pp. 59–104.

diction for a prince: ‘hilmir’, ‘þengill’, ‘dróttin’ and ‘stillis konr’. Like the poet of *Liðsmannaflókkar*, Óttarr may be playing on Cnut’s title *Knútr inn ríki*. Both poets present Cnut as an active, battle-ready king rather than one who contributes to domestic prosperity and tranquility or even one who spends much time at home at all. Óttarr also gives a personalized description of Cnut; according to him, Cnut is known to be stubborn. The model of kingship subscribed to here is almost fundamentally opposed to that of the *Chronicle*, and Cnut’s national-ethnic identity here is unhesitatingly presented as Danish.

Cnut does, however, display religious feeling in some of the poetry devoted to him after he becomes the king of the English. In the refrain of his *Knútsdrápur*, Sigvatr tells us:

Höfuðfremstr jöfurr.
Knútr vas und himnum.⁶²

In the sole extant lines of his *Höfuðlausn*, Þórarinn loftunga says:

Knútr verr grund sem gætir
Gríklands himinríki.⁶³

Each of these statements is like the earlier ones in that it asserts Cnut’s pre-eminence among worldly kings, but now the world is defined in relation to the Christian heaven rather than a conventionally pagan Norse cosmology. Þórarinn even creates a kenning for God in order to draw an analogy between his divine rule and Cnut’s temporal one. More suggestively, Hallvarðr háreks-blei says of Cnut:

Esat und jarðar höslu
– orðbrjótr Dönum forðar
Moldreks – munka valdi
mæringr an þú nærri.⁶⁴

The message of this helming displays some of the same tension as the *Chronicle* in its description of Cnut’s kingship and his national-ethnic identity. Cnut is nearer to the ruler of monks than anyone else, a fitting station for both a Christian king and the king of England with its strong monastic tradition. He also protects the Danes, a fitting task for the king of Denmark. More striking than this tension, however, is the way in which Hallvarðr conveys it.

⁶² ‘Cnut is the foremost ruler under the heavens’, *Knútsdrápur*, ed. M. Townend, *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1*, II, 657–8.

⁶³ ‘Cnut defends the land as the keeper of Byzantium [=God] does heaven’, *Höfuðlausn*, ed. M. Townend, *Poetry from the Kings’ Sagas 1*, II, 850.

⁶⁴ ‘There is not under the world-tree [=Yggdrasill] an illustrious man nearer to the ruler of monks than you; the breaker [=sharer] of the king of the mould’s [=giant’s] words [=gold] protects the Danes’, *Knútsdrápa*, ed. M. Townend (forthcoming).

To be more precise about Cnut's earthly station, he is nearer to the ruler of monks than anyone else beneath Yggdrasill, the pagan Norse world-tree. The cosmology Hallvarðr envisions is jarring, but it is also broadly appropriate as an engagement of the conflicting ideologies at work in Cnut's Anglo-Danish court and in the nation(s) he rules. Were the juxtaposition of these kennings for Yggdrasill and God in the space of four lines not striking enough, Cnut's generosity is described by a kenning that has him sharing the gold of the 'king of the mould', who is a giant and who is linked to the monks by alliteration. This stanza – as well as the rest of the poem in which it occurs – both promulgates and relies upon a late-career Cnut who exhibits contradictory features of English and Danish identity as well as Christianity and paganism.

The *Knútsdrápur* portray Cnut as a Danish king *par excellence*, but, like the *Chronicle*, these skaldic poems also go some way toward dispensing with dichotomous notions of English and Danish identity. That they do so is again like the *Chronicle* in being representative of the Anglo-Danish political reality. The *Knútsdrápur* were probably performed in England, perhaps at Cnut's court in Winchester.⁶⁵ It has been argued that these poems attest to Cnut's memory of his Danish heritage even as he took important measures to support the English Church,⁶⁶ and that skaldic poetry performed in England was only 'culturally pagan', invoking the Scandinavian pagan tradition without implying actual pagan belief or subversion of Christian hegemony.⁶⁷ Such readings usefully highlight the potentially tenuous position of a verse form so thoroughly predicated on mythological kennings in a culture that had, in the case of mainland Scandinavia, been converted only decades before and, in the case of the Danelaw, may well have already been Christian for a century or longer.⁶⁸ However, the *Knútsdrápur* also performed important political work for Cnut. The skaldic form was traditionally associated with Norse rulers, and Cnut's patronage of skalds connected him with an accepted and legitimate model

⁶⁵ Townend, 'Contextualizing the *Knútsdrápur*', pp. 164–72.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 174–5; Frank, 'Cnut in the Verse of His Skalds', p. 124.

⁶⁷ J. Jesch, 'Scandinavians and "Cultural Paganism" in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England: Approaches to Current Scholarship and Teaching*, ed. P. Cavill (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 55–68, esp. 58–63.

⁶⁸ See D. Whitelock's seminal 'The Conversion of the Eastern Danelaw', *SB* 12 (1937–45), 159–76. For a more recent study of Norse settlement, see D. M. Hadley, '"And They Proceeded to Plough and to Support Themselves": the Scandinavian Settlement of England', *ANS* 19 (1996), 69–96; for more recent studies of the problem of the Norse conversion to Christianity, see L. Abrams, 'Conversion and Assimilation', *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 135–54, and L. Abrams, 'The Conversion of the Danelaw', *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers From the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21–30 August 1997*, ed. J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. N. Parsons (Oxford, 2001), pp. 31–44.

of Scandinavian kingship despite the fact that he spent most of his reign in England.⁶⁹ The use of the Norse vernacular parallels the use of English vernacular in the *Chronicle* as a way to subscribe to a legitimate and ethnically particular kingship. The Christianized, Anglicized leanings of Cnut's skalds signpost the shifting identity of Cnut's kingship. By incorporating English features of Cnut's court into their verse, they also build them into the narrative of Cnut's Danish rule. In this way, the *Knútsdrápur* negotiate the political and national-ethnic tensions within Cnut's Anglo-Scandinavian kingdom even as they work to construct it.

THE ENCOMIUM EMMAE REGINAE

The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* was commissioned by Cnut's widow Emma⁷⁰ in the years 1041–2 and written by an anonymous Flemish author, probably a monk from the abbey of St Bertin in St Omer.⁷¹ Emma and Harthacnut, her son by Cnut, were in the midst of serious succession troubles at this point. Harthacnut had been Cnut's regent in Denmark and was the king of England after Cnut's death, but in 1037 he lost this position to Harold Harefoot, Cnut's son by his first wife Ælfgifu of Northampton. Harthacnut resumed his reign of England after Harold's death in 1040 in what seems to have been as much a reconquest as a re-accession to the throne.⁷² The *Encomium* is a dynastic history recording the events from the initial Danish conquest of England by Swein Forkbeard to Harthacnut's reign, although it infamously omits some delicate details of this history, including Emma's prior marriage to Cnut's predecessor Æthelred.⁷³ The Encomiast claims that his sole purpose is to contribute to Emma's personal glory, but the *Encomium* is especially interesting for its political positioning and was, as Simon Keynes argues, 'a work which might help

⁶⁹ M. Townend discusses the skalds' presence in England and their distinctive historical traditions in 'Cnut's Poets: an Old Norse Literary Community in Eleventh-Century England', *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England, c. 800–c. 1250*, ed. E. M. Tyler (Turnhout, 2011), pp. 197–215.

⁷⁰ For biographical information about Emma, see M. W. Campbell, 'Queen Emma and Ælfgifu of Northampton: Canute the Great's Women', *MScand* 4 (1971), 66–79; E. Searle, 'Emma the Conqueror', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 281–8; P. Stafford, 'The King's Wife in Wessex 800–1066', *Past and Present* 91 (1981), 3–27; P. Stafford, 'Emma: the Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century', *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London, April 1995*, ed. A. Duggan (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 3–26; P. Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997).

⁷¹ The evidence for the author's identity is internal. See *EER*, p. 36. For a discussion of the Encomiast, see Campbell's 'Introduction', *EER*, pp. ci–cii.

⁷² See *ASC* 1040–2 C, ed. O'Brien O'Keeffe, pp. 107–8.

⁷³ The *Encomium*'s poetic licence is discussed in E. M. Tyler, 'Fictions of Family: the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and Virgil's *Aeneid*', *Viator* 36 (2005), 149–79.

to restore political faith in the Anglo-Danish regime established in the first instance by Cnut and which would represent her [Emma's] case, and her view of events, to those in positions of power and influence."⁷⁴

The Encomiast, 'thoroughly unreliable and tendentious' in matters of historical fact though he may be, is sophisticated and effective in matters of rhetoric.⁷⁵ He explicitly theorizes the link between form and content in his two prefatory letters, arguing in the prologue that 'res enim ueritati, ueritas quoque fidem facit rei' and that only a loquacious (*loquax*) style can adequately convey historical truth.⁷⁶ The Encomiast's style is not actually notably difficult or prolix in the body of his text, but he nevertheless maintains a complicated relationship with form and with historical truth.⁷⁷ He explains in the *argumentum*, the second of his prefaces, that, while his narration rarely deals directly with Emma, it is nevertheless entirely devoted to her praise:

Aeneida conscriptam a Uirgilio quis poterit infitiari ubique laudibus respondere Octouiani, cum pene nihil aut plane parum eius mentio uideatur nominatim interseri . . . Nosti, quoniam, ubicumque giraueris circulum, primo omnium procul dubio principium facies esse punctum, sicque rotato continuatim orbe reducetur circulus, quo reductu ad suum principium eius figurae continuetur ambitus.⁷⁸

The *Encomium* is, at least putatively, devoted to Emma in structure if not in narrative. It is like the *Aeneid*, legitimating the claims of a contemporary ruler by recounting the foundation of her dynasty, and it is like a circle in that the

⁷⁴ S. Keynes, 'Introduction to the 1998 Reprint: Queen Emma and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*', *EER*, p. lxx. J. Steenstrup argued that the panegyric *EER* could and should be used as a historical source in his *Normandiets historie under de syv første hertuger 911–1066* (Copenhagen, 1925), pp. 21–4. S. Körner was the first critic to argue that the *EER* also had political implication in his *The Battle of Hastings, England, and Europe 1035–1066* (Lund, 1964), pp. 47–74. This argument was hardened into orthodoxy by a series of subsequent articles. See O. Lindqvist, 'Encomium Emmae', *Scandia* 33 (1967), 175–81; M. W. Campbell, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: Personal Panegyric or Political Propaganda?' *Annuaire Mediaevale* 19 (1979), 27–45; E. John, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: A Riddle and a Solution', *Bull. of the John Rylands Univ. Lib. of Manchester* 63.1 (1980), 58–94; and F. Lifshitz, 'The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*: A "Political Pamphlet" of the Eleventh Century?' *Haskins Soc. Jnl.* 1 (1989), 39–50.

⁷⁵ S. Keynes, *EER*, p. lxxi. Concerning the Encomiast's considerable Latin learning, see Campbell, *EER*, pp. xxiii–xl.

⁷⁶ 'The matter lends credence to the truth, and the truth lends credence to the matter', *ibid.* p. 4.

⁷⁷ The Encomiast's style is in fact far simpler than the hermeneutic Anglo-Latin that we find in vogue just a few decades earlier; see M. Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature', *ASE* 4 (1975), 67–111.

⁷⁸ *EER*, p. 6. 'Who can deny that the *Aeneid* written by Virgil answers everywhere to the praises of Octavian, even though almost no, or clearly very little, mention of him by name is seen to be added . . . You know that wherever you draw a circle, first you make a point to be the beginning, and so the circle is led back by continuously revolving its orb, and by this return to its own beginning the circumference of the circle is made to join itself.'

praise of Emma is everywhere present even when the narration bends away from her. The process whereby the Encomiast thinks through his own text suggests that its nuances and allusions are intentional, a point that will become important when considering the *Encomium's* allusions to vernacular traditions. The mere fact of the *Encomium's* being written in Latin is itself an important rhetorical move in that it allows the text to talk across the several vernaculars of Harthacnut's court in a linguistically neutral way and to allude directly to the large body of Latin literature that it joins.⁷⁹ Like the Encomiast's elaborate attention to rhetoric and form, his Latinity becomes an important way to mediate among the vernacular traditions and national-ethnic boundaries present in the text; given that the Encomiast was probably Flemish, his Latinity also provides a perspective that is neither English nor Danish.

The rhetoric of the passage narrating Cnut's conquest may well reflect genuine relief at the cessation of the Anglo-Danish violence that it recounts, and it thinks through the conditions of the ensuing peace in detail. God fully supports Cnut's conquest – to such a degree that he removes Æthelred from life 'ut eo defuncto liber Cnutoni ingressus pateret', allowing the English and Danes both to recover from their war wounds after peace is concluded.⁸⁰ The English, however, are not fully appreciative of the divine plan and continue to fight against Cnut until God intervenes once more:

Uerumtamen Deus memor suae antiquae doctrinae, scilicet omne regnum in se ipsum diuisum diu permanere non posse, non longo post tempore Aedmundum eduxit e corpore Anglorum misertus imperii, ne forte si uterque superuieret neuter regnaret secure, et regnum diatim adnihilaretur renouate contentione . . . Cuius rei gratia eum Deus iusserit obire, mox deinde patuit, quia uniuersa regio ilico Cnutonem sibi regem elegit, et cui ante omni conamine restitit, tunc sponte sua se illi et omnia sua subdidit.⁸¹

The reason given for God's plan here subtly realigns the national-ethnic categories one might otherwise assume. Implicit in the claim that God allows Cnut to conquer England because a 'kingdom that is divided against itself cannot long stand' is the idea that Cnut's forces are dividing England against itself, an idea that makes sense only if Cnut's invasion force is identified with the domestic Danes who had already been living in England for generations.

⁷⁹ See E. M. Tyler, 'Talking About History in Eleventh-Century England: the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* and the Court of Harthacnut', *EME* 13.4 (2005), 359–83.

⁸⁰ *EER*, p. 22, 'so that, after his death, a free entry would be open to Cnut'.

⁸¹ *EER*, p. 30. 'But yet God, mindful of his own ancient teaching that a kingdom divided against itself cannot long stand, led Edmund from the body not long afterward, pitying the kingdom of the English, lest if by chance either survived, neither should rule securely, and the kingdom would be ruined daily by renewed conflict . . . It was soon revealed why God commanded him to die, because the entire country immediately chose Cnut as their king and voluntarily submitted itself and its own to him whom it had resisted completely before.'

In this passage, the English are consistently represented as acting in concert against the Danes, but the description of their war as being a kingdom *in se ipsum diuisum* unites these opposing forces in a single national-ethnic category. The removal of Edmund in order to promulgate internal peace further makes it seem as though he and Cnut are involved in a succession struggle, not an invasion. We just learned that England was conquered in battle, but the language used to describe Cnut's accession is that of an election. According to the *Encomiast*, the kingdom chooses Cnut as king after Edmund's death as though there actually were a choice in the matter. The logic of this passage gives divine sanction not only to Cnut's rule but to Anglo-Danish England as an unproblematically unified territorial (*regio*), political (*regnum*) and national-ethnic (by implication) entity, and the larger Virgilian dynastic structure of the *Encomium* extends this sanction to Harthacnut and his court.

Cnut is in an outstanding English king, and he lays a fitting groundwork for his heir Harthacnut. He is very wise despite his youth,⁸² he loves those who are faithful even if they previously fought against him and he punishes the deceitful even if their deceit was formerly to his own advantage.⁸³ He continues to earn God's favour throughout his reign by his piety and support of the English church.⁸⁴ In fact, Cnut is so pious that he seems like a bishop to bishops and a monk to monks, and he looks out for widows and orphans too.⁸⁵ The *Encomiast* himself is an eye-witness to Cnut's devotion to the saints, before whose relics Cnut weeps and mortifies his flesh.⁸⁶ His only failing is that he lacks a noble wife, but he overcomes this obstacle by marrying Emma, who is brought from France, where, the *Encomiast* does not mention, she had been exiled since the death of her husband Æthelred. Emma is wealthy, beautiful and wise. She is, in short, a perfect match for Cnut, and their marriage causes rejoicing in both France and England.⁸⁷ Like the later Cnut of the *Chronicle*, the *Encomiast's* Cnut is virtuous and more English than the English. Like Aeneas for Iulus and ultimately for the Romans, Cnut's actions here also give Harthacnut's dynasty an origin that befits the English crown.

⁸² *Ibid.* Cnut is 'indicibili prudentia pollens', 'rich with unspeakable wisdom'.

⁸³ *EER*, pp. 30–2.

⁸⁴ Cnut did, of course, actually give generously to the English Church during his reign, whether for political reasons or out of personal piety. See M. K. Lawson, *Cnut: the Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London, 1993), pp. 117–60. For a reading that is sympathetic to Cnut's religious sincerity, see J. Gerchow, 'Prayers for King Cnut: the Liturgical Commemoration of a Conqueror', *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. C. Hicks (Stamford, 1992), pp. 199–217.

⁸⁵ *EER*, pp. 34–6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 36.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 32.

Cnut does not, however, operate solely within the norms of the English and Virgilian literary traditions. He is not only the king of England but also of Denmark, Wales, Scotland and Norway,⁸⁸ and, perhaps more importantly, he is Danish by birth. The *Encomium* contains allusions that occur in a ‘vernacular register’, as Elizabeth M. Tyler has shown, and it must be read against Germanic literary tradition, especially as this tradition is manifested in Old English and Old Norse.⁸⁹ These vernacular allusions occur in the Encomiast’s descriptions of the raven banner carried by Cnut’s forces, the Danish fleets, the taking of plunder and, almost paradoxically, Swein and Cnut’s treasure-giving. Tyler has argued convincingly that the parallel descriptions of Swein and Cnut’s fleets are related to the Scandinavian tradition linking kingship to such fleets.⁹⁰ The two fleets of the *Encomium* thus not only foreground Swein and Cnut’s military prowess and dynastic relation but also their Danish background. As Tyler puts it, ‘[t]he ships are pushed to the centre of the text’s meaning and glorify the Danish origins of England’s ruling dynasty’, and their Scandinavian styling ‘underscores the Anglo-Danish horizon of interpretation for this text’.⁹¹ She also demonstrates that Cnut’s ecclesiastical generosity is a Christianized version of Swein’s secular gift-giving, a tradition best known from the heroic traditions of vernacular English and Norse. Andy Orchard has moreover catalogued several analogues to Cnut’s raven banner. The banner in question is made of silk, and during battle a raven miraculously appears on it, flapping its wings and opening its beak if its owners are winning but slumping its body dejectedly if they lose.⁹² Orchard notes analogues in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Orkneyinga saga*, *Brennu-Njáls saga* and *Haralds saga harðráða*, among others, arguing that ‘[a]ll such parallels suggest an ultimate Norse or Anglo-Scandinavian provenance for the motif in the *Encomium*’.⁹³ Such moments of allusion to vernacular Scandinavian traditions could hardly have gone unnoticed in Harthacnut’s court, and their presence is indicative of the broader audience to which the Encomiast appeals.

The varied literary traditions at play in the *Encomium* appeal to and harmonize with Norman tradition as well, a fact that is unsurprising in light of

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 34.

⁸⁹ E. M. Tyler, ‘“The Eyes of the Beholders Were Dazzled”: Treasure and Artifice in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*’, *EME* 8.2 (1999), 247–70, at 253–4. See also E. R. Anderson, ‘The Battle of Maldon: a Reappraisal of Possible Sources, Date, and Theme’, *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in honour of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. P. R. Brown, G. R. Crampton and F. C. Robinson (Toronto, 1986), pp. 247–72; and A. Orchard, ‘Literary Background to the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*’.

⁹⁰ For Swein’s fleet, see *EER*, p. 12; for Cnut’s, see *EER*, pp. 18–20.

⁹¹ Tyler, ‘Eyes of the Beholders’, pp. 265 and 249.

⁹² *EER*, p. 24.

⁹³ Orchard, ‘Literary Background’, pp. 168–9.

Emma's own background.⁹⁴ Numerous allusions to both Scandinavian and Virgilian traditions appear in Dudo of St Quentin's *Gesta Normannorum*, the late tenth-century history commissioned by the Norman Duke Richard II that would establish the contours of Norman identity for centuries afterward.⁹⁵ Although the Encomiast does not draw specific Scandinavian motifs from Dudo,⁹⁶ it is clear that the Normans' Scandinavian heritage was important to their representations of their own national-ethnic identity.⁹⁷ The more hagiographic elements of the Encomiast's presentation of Cnut also mesh with the tradition established by Dudo, whose Norman dukes are rapidly Christianized after their conversion. The Encomiast may or may not have known Dudo directly, but he is working within the accepted paradigms of Norman historiography when he presents Cnut as a Christian Viking.⁹⁸ Such a move allows the Encomiast to speak not only to continental members of Harthacnut's court but also directly to the continent, where Emma could reasonably have wished to make an impression.

The Encomiast continued to engage issues of dynastic legitimacy and national-ethnic identity even after Harthacnut's death. In the recently discovered Edwardian recension of the *Encomium*, possibly composed shortly after Edward's 1042 accession, he rewrote the ending to his own text.⁹⁹ In this new ending, he returns to the image of the circle with which he earlier explained the structure of the narrative: 'Memini quid dixisse me in faciendo circulo ad unum idem punctum fieri reductionem quatinus circulus rotunditatis accipiat

⁹⁴ E. M. Tyler both summarizes and argues for the political role available to a multilingual queen in her 'Crossing Conquests: Polyglot Royal Women and Literary Culture in Eleventh-Century England', *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in Medieval England*, pp. 171–96, esp. 176–80.

⁹⁵ *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. J. Lair (Caen, 1865). For a modern translation with extensive notes, see *Dudo of St Quentin: History of the Normans*, trans. E. Christiansen (Woodbridge, 1998).

⁹⁶ Concerning Scandinavian motifs in Dudo, see E. van Houts, 'Scandinavian Influence in Norman Literature of the Eleventh Century', *ANS* 6 (1983): 107–21, at 109–10. For a more skeptical view, see E. Christiansen, *Dudo of St Quentin*, pp. xvii–xviii.

⁹⁷ The standard work on Norman identity remains R. H. C. Davis, *The Normans and their Myth* (London, 1976), esp. pp. 49–69. For a more recent reading of Norman identity in Dudo, see E. Albu, *The Normans in their Histories: Propaganda, Myth and Subversion* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 7–46.

⁹⁸ Regardless of whether the Encomiast was personally familiar with Dudo, Dudo was certainly circulated in early eleventh-century England, a fact that suggests the currency of Norman tradition in England at the time. See G. C. Huisman, 'Notes on the Manuscript Tradition of Dudo of St Quentin's *Gesta Normannorum*', *ANS* 6 (1983), 122–35, at 124–5.

⁹⁹ Concerning this new manuscript, see T. Bolton, 'A Newly Emergent Mediaeval Manuscript Containing *Encomium Emmae Reginae* with the Only Known Complete Text of the Recension Prepared for King Edward the Confessor', *MS* 19 (2009), 205–21. See also S. Keynes and R. Love, 'Earl Godwine's Ship', *ASE* 38 (2009), 185–223.

orbem. Sic quoque factum est in anglici regni administrando regimine.¹⁰⁰ The circle now returns to Edward, and his accession thereby brings the logic of the text to completion. In the first recension, the praise of Emma ultimately redounds upon Harthacnut. With the new ending, Harthacnut is merely a few degrees on the circle of the Encomiast's narrative, which now ends with Edward. Harthacnut's reign becomes an interlude, a regency during Edward's 'tenera etas'.¹⁰¹ When Harthacnut dies, sorrow at the loss overcomes Edward and all the nobles of the land,¹⁰² presumably including the audience of the first recension of the *Encomium*. Having mourned his brother, Edward receives the throne that is his 'hereditario iure'.¹⁰³ Without vitiating the force of the national-ethnic traditions already present in the *Encomium*, this new ending brings all these traditions back to a single point: Edward's English kingship.

The *Encomium* shows Cnut to operate in a fully mixed Anglo-Danish mode while simultaneously engaging continental models of kingship through the text's Latinity and its openness to Norman national-ethnic paradigms. This Anglo-Danish mode is most apparent in the moments, such as Cnut's succession, when the Encomiast denies or suppresses the national-ethnic difference between the English and the Danish. By so doing, the Encomiast goes further than simply to conflate the terms of an Anglo-Danish dichotomy and seeks rather to write the inhabitants and rulers of England as one people. At the same time that the *Encomium* overlooks the difference between English and Dane, its representation of Cnut works to establish a legitimating narrative for Emma and Harthacnut in multiple linguistic and literary registers, each suited to the expectations a different group of his audience would have had. Within the English tradition, Cnut is described in almost saintly terms. As in *Chronicle*, the model of kingship being subscribed to in the *Encomium* relies on Christian piety and the construction of social ties between a king and his people. As in Scandinavian tradition, Cnut is implicitly placed in the tradition of a militarily powerful king whose prowess allows him to dispense treasure to his retainers, here including the members of the English church. This model of kingship is reminiscent of the *Knútsdrápur* both in terms of the expected

¹⁰⁰ I use Rosalind Love's edition in S. Keynes and R. Love, 'Earl Godwine's Ship', pp. 195–7, at 196. 'I remember that I said that, in making a circle, a return is made to the same single point so that the circle may receive the orbit of its roundness. So also it was done in arranging the direction of the English kingdom.'

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 'tender age'.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 195.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 'hereditary right'. The Encomiast affirms elsewhere that Edward is the 'heres . . . legitimus', 'legitimate heir', *ibid.* p. 196.

kingly behaviour and the images of royal power used.¹⁰⁴ As in Latin tradition, the Virgilian structure of the narrative figures Harthacnut as Iulus and Emma as Lavinia. The use of both Virgilian narrative structures and Scandinavian imagery moreover situates Cnut's kingship comfortably within the nascent Norman tradition.

The *Encomium*'s simultaneous subscription to several conflicting ideologies is appropriate to Harthacnut's Anglo-Danish court and, remarkably, to Edward's court after Harthacnut's death. By employing all these national-ethnic discourses and traditions at once, the *Encomium* uses Cnut's kingship to legitimate Harthacnut to all its imagined audiences, whether they are engaged from an English perspective, a Danish one, a Norman one, or, like the Encomiast himself, a more broadly continental and Latinate one. Unlike the strategies of the earlier texts I have discussed, the negotiations taking place in the *Encomium* chart not so much cultural and political change as the complex endpoint of earlier changes: the Encomiast takes for granted the existence of an international court and of a deeply multicultural England. Where the *Chronicle* and the *Knútsdrápur* construct a newly emergent English identity, the Encomiast takes this identity as a starting point in his construction of Cnut and of England, melding it with yet others in his construction of Harthacnut's kingdom and, later, of Edward's kingdom.

TRANSLATIO SANCTI ÆLFEGI

Cnut is again refracted through the figure of Ælfheah in the post-Conquest *Translatio Sancti Ælfegi*. This text, as well as a *uita* of Dunstan, was composed by Osbern of Canterbury on his own initiative in the early 1080s, while Lanfranc was archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁰⁵ Lanfranc, born in Lombardy and formerly prior of Bec, was consecrated as archbishop in 1070, replacing the Englishman Stigand. Lanfranc's relationship with both his new English identity and English monasticism was challenging at times. In a 1071 letter to Pope Alexander II, Lanfranc says that 'ego tamen nouus Anglus rerumque Anglicarum, nisi

¹⁰⁴ Frank notes, for instance, the skalds' emphasis on Cnut's naval prowess. See Frank, 'Cnut in the Verse of his Skalds', pp. 113–15.

¹⁰⁵ Concerning Osbern, see J. Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury', *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest: Churches, Saints and Scholars 1066–1109*, ed. R. Eales and R. Sharpe (London, 1995), pp. 27–40. There is a large amount of biographical work on Lanfranc. See principally F. Barlow, 'A View of Archbishop Lanfranc', *JEH* 16 (1965), 163–77; H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Lanfranc: Scholar, Monk, and Archbishop* (Oxford, 2003); M. Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford, 1978); A. J. MacDonald, *Lanfranc: a Study of his Life, Work and Writing* (London, 1926). See additionally M. Ruud, 'Episcopal Reluctance: Lanfranc's Resignation Reconsidered', *Albion* 19.2 (1987), 163–75; and S. N. Vaughn, 'Lanfranc at Bec: a Reinterpretation', *Albion* 17.2 (1985), 135–48.

quantum ab aliis accipio, adhuc pene inscius;¹⁰⁶ in a 1073 letter to Alexander, he notes that he was appointed archbishop despite 'excusatio incognitae linguae gentiumque barbarum'.¹⁰⁷ His description of himself here as a new Englishman is paralleled in a well-known story in Eadmer's *Vita Sancti Anselmi* in which we find Lanfranc described as 'quasi rudis Anglus'.¹⁰⁸ In this episode, Lanfranc expresses doubt about Ælfheah's sanctity until Anselm presents a clever defence that convinces him of it.¹⁰⁹ According to both his own account and sources as close to him as Eadmer, then, Lanfranc had difficulty adapting to not just his new English environs but also his recently assumed English identity, and he seems to have been slow to learn English customs and the English language.

It is, on the other hand, uncertain how easily the English adapted to the customs and ideas of their new archbishop from Normandy, who was part of a trend in which Norman transplants replaced the English as church leaders, and who brought with him significant reforming tendencies.¹¹⁰ These tendencies likely created some degree of conflict between Lanfranc and his new English charges. Abbot Gasquet and Edmund Bishop argued in an early work on the subject that Lanfranc systematically removed English saints from the calendar because, as an outsider, he was unable to understand English traditions.¹¹¹ Dom David Knowles similarly considered the decades after the Norman Conquest to have been difficult ones for the English Church, characterized by conflict between the English monks and their new Norman overlords, who were especially offensive in their lack of regard for native saints.¹¹² More recently, however, scholars have questioned the simple national-ethnic oppositions of these historical narratives, pointing out that respect for English saints would have been beneficial for both the English and Norman members of the Church.¹¹³ They have also questioned whether Lanfranc ever really 'purged' the calendar of its English saints, demonstrating that while changes occurred

¹⁰⁶ *The Letters of Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. H. Clover and M. Gibson (Oxford, 1979) II, 36–8. 'I am a new Englishman, still mostly ignorant of English matters, except what I learn from others.'

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 30, 'the excuse of an unknown language and of barbarous peoples'.

¹⁰⁸ R. W. Southern, *The Life of St Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury by Eadmer* (Oxford, 1972), p. 50, 'a somewhat undeveloped Englishman'.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 50–4.

¹¹⁰ See, for instance, F. Barlow, *The English Church 1066–1154* (London, 1979), pp. 58–9.

¹¹¹ A. Gasquet and E. Bishop, *The Bosworth Psalter* (London, 1908), pp. 27–34.

¹¹² D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge, 1950), pp. 100–27.

¹¹³ S. J. Ridyard, 'Condigna veneratio: Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons', *ANS* 9 (1986), 179–206. The chief exception to this trend of scholarship has been P. A. Hayward, 'Translation-Narratives in Post-Conquest Hagiography and English Resistance to the Norman Conquest', *ANS* 21 (1998), 67–93.

to the calendar, they were caused less by national antagonism than by broader reforming currents.¹¹⁴ The general trend in scholarship has been toward an understanding of sometimes uneasy cooperation and the protection of mutual interests rather than a clear-cut antagonism between the English and Norman monks.

Perhaps the most productive way to read post-Conquest hagiographic texts like the *Translatio Sancti Ælfegi* within this historical context is that put forward by David Townsend, who suggests that this hagiography is intended for a 'multivalent reception' and situates itself in a way acceptable to both the English and the Normans.¹¹⁵ While it seems clear that there was some degree of national-ethnic tension between Lanfranc and his English monks, the *Translatio* – no less than the earlier texts I have discussed – presents a multifaceted negotiation of this tension rather than a straightforward record of it. The *Translatio* is a record of royal devotion to a saint in the wake of an earlier conquest, allowing Osbern to comment on the ideal relationship between conquerors and the conquered. As Townsend writes, the *Translatio* 'provided the English reader with analogies, from what by the 1070's was the solidly English past, for the present experience of cultural conflict'.¹¹⁶ No less importantly, however, the *Translatio* also provided the Norman reader with analogies for the present experience of cultural conflict. Osbern realizes the potential to write both Norman and English perspectives into his account, using Cnut and Ælfheah as symbolic figures for his own political circumstances.

Ælfheah chooses national-ethnic sides through a number of miracles that establish his sanctity at the beginning of the *Translatio*. These include the standard hagiographic miracles of healing invalids, the blind, and the deaf. Less mundanely, Ælfheah visits the 'terribili[s] uindicta . . . Dei ira' upon those who wrong him, whether they are Danes or priests.¹¹⁷ The leaders of the Danes receive special punishment. Hákon is impaled on his own sword, and Thorkell 'ferisque & auibus est miserabiliter proiectus'¹¹⁸ by his own men. The Danes are also punished as a group:

¹¹⁴ R. W. Pfaff, 'Lanfranc's Supposed Purge of the Anglo-Saxon Calendar', *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. T. Reuter (London, 1992), pp. 95–108. For post-Conquest changes to the Canterbury calendar in general, see T. A. Heslop, 'The Canterbury Calendars and the Norman Conquest', *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest*, pp. 53–85.

¹¹⁵ D. Townsend, 'Anglo-Latin Hagiography and the Norman Transition', *Exemplaria* 3.2 (1991), 385–433, at 403.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 412.

¹¹⁷ '*Translatio Sancti Ælfegi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et martiris* (BHL 2519): Osbern's Account of the Translation of St Ælfheah's Relics From London to Canterbury, 8–11 June 1023', ed. A. Rumble, *The Reign of Cnut*, pp. 283–315, at 296, 'the terrible avenging wrath of God'.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 296–8, 'was wretchedly thrown to the beasts and the birds'.

Ex quibus rebus tam uehemens cunctos Danorum principes formido inuasit. ut uix eos terra teneret. sed marinis se tempestatibus dantes. existimabant in pelago martyris iram effugere posse. quos ab eius ira tellus tueri non posset. Sed mox ut in altum spumantibus remis eductum fuisset. centum sexaginta naues aduersis uentorum flatibus actę. in profundo maris summersę sunt. quadraginta uero itemque uiginti quinque ad exterar atque ignotas regiones appulse. & quasi quę insidiarum gratia venissent ab eisdem miserabiliter interemptę.¹¹⁹

Ælfheah additionally punishes two priests who steal his pectoral cross and his sandals. The upshot of these events is clear enough. Ecclesiastics who desecrate Ælfheah's relics are punished, as are the conquering forces responsible for his death.

Cnut is distressed by the misfortunes of the Danes and takes steps to remedy them. He convenes some of the wiser Englishmen to ask their advice about these troubles, and they inform him that he must translate Ælfheah's relics to Canterbury. Cnut summons Æthelnoth, the new archbishop, for the task. Æthelnoth arrives in London on the eve of Pentecost while Cnut is bathing. Cnut is not put off by Æthelnoth's timing. He immediately rises from his bath, quotes a psalm and rejoices for the impending translation only to find that Ælfheah's tomb is blocked by a stone too large for oxen to move. Unimpressed by this obstacle, Cnut declares that 'semper enim difficultas miraculum gignere consuevit'.¹²⁰ He is proven correct when the stone is easily pushed aside after the monks begin to pray. Cnut's men occupy the route of the translation to keep it clear of any English who might interfere with the procession, and Ælfheah's relics are subsequently removed from the tomb and transported by ship to Canterbury.

The Cnut we see in this passage is presented doubly. He is, on the one hand, a pious conqueror with close ties to the English monks, and he has a high respect for the English saint at the centre of the narrative. Much like the Cnut of the *Encomium*, he is a better abbot than the English abbots themselves. He is the driving force behind the translation, and he is so joyfully pious that he will delay even a good bath in order to get the translation underway. It is just as well for Cnut that he is so pious, since his disrespectful Danish comrades were all summarily killed. On the other hand, Osbern reminds us pointedly of Cnut's

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 296–8. 'Immediately after these events, such a violent terror seized all the leaders of the Danes that the earth could scarcely hold them, but, giving themselves to the storms of the sea, they thought that they could escape the anger of the martyr on the open sea; the land could not protect them from his wrath. But as soon as their foam-covered oars had been led out on the deep, one hundred and sixty ships, driven by adverse winds, were sunk in the depths of the sea. Sixty-five were driven to far countries and unknown regions and were wretchedly killed by whoever came in ambush.'

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 304. 'Difficulty has always given birth to a miracle.'

foreignness. Even though it is inessential to the narrative, he mentions of Cnut's soldiers that 'quos lingua Danorum huscarles uocant'.¹²¹ When Ælfheah is loaded onto Cnut's ship, Osbern tells us that it is 'regia nauis aureis rostrata draconibus. Armigeris repleta militibus'.¹²² Like the *Encomium's* descriptions of the Danish ships and their battle standard, this is an allusion made in a vernacular register. These descriptions recall Cnut's potentially precarious position as a foreigner in England as they remind the reader that the impressive piety he displays during the translation is that of an invader. The implication of both the narrative strategy and the moments of vernacular allusion is that Cnut's conquest and his continued power in England are predicated on his pious respect for Ælfheah; at the same time, Cnut's pious respect ensures his continued power.

The Cnut of Osbern's narrative figures the expected (and hoped for) treatment of local saints by foreign authorities, giving an *exemplum* of model behaviour toward such a saint and hinting at the dangers of disrespecting him. One is indeed hard-pressed not to read the Norman leadership into this narrative. A self-described newcomer with a relatively poor grasp of local custom, Lanfranc 'de-emphasized the saints, edited the Canterbury calendar, and oversaw the investigation of many saints whose sanctity seemed uncertain', including Ælfheah.¹²³ Even if, as Jay Rubenstein argues, Lanfranc 'did not perceive his reform as an attempt to downplay his community's local heroes', the reforms are nevertheless witness of his casual attitude to local tradition as well as his initial inability to understand the importance of Canterbury saints to the church there.¹²⁴ Eadmer makes it clear that Lanfranc did eventually accept Ælfheah's sanctity, but the nature of both Lanfranc's doubts and Anselm's argument for Ælfheah has more to do with continental philosophy than an acknowledgment of Ælfheah's previously established importance to Christ Church, Canterbury.

Lanfranc presumably went some way toward rectifying his attitude when he accepted the validity of the Canterbury saints, but Osbern nevertheless takes full advantage of the opportunity to promote Ælfheah. He tells us that the monks of Christ Church were happier than anyone to receive Ælfheah's relics and describes their celebration in detail. Osbern ends the *Translatio* with an admonition:¹²⁵

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p. 302. 'They call them "housecarls" in the Danish language.'

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 308, 'a royal ship with a curved prow of golden dragons, full of armed soldiers'.

¹²³ J. Rubenstein, 'Liturgy Against History: the Competing Visions of Lanfranc and Eadmer of Canterbury', *Speculum* 74.2 (1999), 279–309, at 298.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 294.

¹²⁵ *Translatio Sancti Ælfegi*, p. 312. 'Super omnes homines maiorem monachi Ecclesie Christi letitiam gerebant,' 'The monks of Christ Church rejoiced more than all men.'

Hęc sunt gaudia festiuitatis hodiernę. ista solennitas diei. Quę iccirco statuta est singulis annis in ecclesia Cantie sexto Idus Iunij celebrari. ut nulla ualeat obliuione deleri. quemadmodum beatus martyr Ælphagus de alieno ad sua dignatus fuerit transferri. Et quamuis diem passionis illius com omnibus in commune celebramus. diem tamen translationis illius soli pre omnibus celebrare debemus.¹²⁶

Osbern makes it clear that Ælfheah's feast day is to be regarded with veneration, and he links this feast day with Canterbury and Christ Church specifically. He accomplishes this partly through his claim that the monks of Christ Church were especially happy to receive Ælfheah's relics. By prioritizing the day of Ælfheah's translation over the day of his passion, Osbern accords particular significance to Ælfheah's relationship with Canterbury. Moreover, by making this connection and allegorically figuring the appropriate attitude toward Canterbury's saints, Osbern suggests further that the continued celebration of Ælfheah's feast day will be mutually beneficial for the English monks of Canterbury and the Norman archbishop of Canterbury, a message presumably directed at Lanfranc and his continental fellows.

The Cnut of the *Translatio Sancti Ælfeigi* is for the first time solely Danish, although he is a very pious Dane who collaborates fully with his new English subjects. The *Translatio* also marks the first time Cnut is a historical abstraction rather than an actual person known to or by the authors and audiences of the texts about him. Unlike his historiographic predecessors, Osbern is no longer negotiating the immediate consequences of Cnut's conquest, and this historical distance allows him to appropriate Cnut in order to comment on the most recent conquest of England. Osbern places Cnut in the national-ethnic position of Normans like Lanfranc by reminding us more than once that Cnut is foreign or, at the least, a very *nouns Anglus*. Cnut here cuts an overtly and unambiguously pious figure, and his piety is specifically directed toward the English saint Ælfheah. The irony of Cnut's piety for a saint recently martyred by his own countrymen is hardly lost upon Osbern, who puts Cnut squarely in Lanfranc's place *vis-à-vis* Ælfheah. Having created a model for the ideal treatment of local saints, Osbern ties this model directly into the affairs of Christ Church, Canterbury. In so doing, he describes in allegorical terms the ideal relationship between the Norman church leaders, especially Lanfranc, and his own monastery. The *Translatio* does not negotiate large-scale national-ethnic shifts or tensions but rather very specific local tensions that existed between

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 312–14. 'These are the joys of this feast day, the solemnity of the day. Therefore it has been established that it ought to be celebrated every year in the church of Kent [in the Canterbury diocese] on the eighth of June so that it should not be destroyed by forgetfulness how the blessed martyr Ælfheah was worthily transferred from an alien place to his own people. And however we celebrate together the day of his passion, we ought to celebrate the day of his translation alone above all others.'

the monks and archbishop at Canterbury about Canterbury saints and, more broadly, divergent national–ethnic expectations concerning monastic norms and monastic identity.

CONCLUSION

Each of these texts constructs a politically useful national–ethnic identity through the figure of Cnut, using the mechanisms of kingship, piety and devotion, language, place and literary tradition to work through the particular exigencies faced by the audiences that they seek to address. For the *Chronicle*, Cnut is both one of the Vikings who afflict the English and the solution to the Viking problem. For his skalds, Cnut is the epitome of a traditional Norse king, but he also becomes an international, and especially an English, ruler in the later years of his reign. The *Encomiast*, faced with a complicated and swiftly changing struggle for succession, draws upon as wide a range of national–ethnic traditions as possible, constructing a Cnut so malleable that he can legitimate the Norman Emma, the Anglo-Danish Harthacnut and, when the situation comes to require it, the English Edward. Half a century after Cnut's death, Osbern uses his conquest as an allegory for Lanfranc's appointment as archbishop of Canterbury. Considering the diversity of these representations, it is perhaps unsurprising that, near the end of the century, Cnut has become remembered both for his devotion to a martyred English saint and as a Danish, if no longer quite a Viking, conqueror.¹²⁷

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