

# Warfare, Poetry and the Community of the Realm in Later Anglo-Saxon England

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This paper will explore the relationship between conflict and collective identity in later Anglo-Saxon England. I will primarily focus on three Old English poems from the tenth or early eleventh centuries, *The Battle of Brunanburh*, *The Capture of the Five Boroughs*, and *The Battle of Maldon*, to discuss how the representation of conflict in textual sources communicates collective identity and integrates different ‘layers’ of identity within a heterogeneous realm. These poems have sometimes been seen as straightforward ‘patriotic’ expressions of a homogeneous Anglo-Saxon identity.<sup>1</sup> However, ethnicity is much less important in the poems than social relationships between the king and his leading subjects. By centring collective identity around the military success of the royal dynasty through a distinctly non-ethnic lens, these poems contributed to the West Saxon dynasty’s rhetoric of protection and military leadership.

*Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs* are found in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, where they appear in entries under annals for 937 and 942 respectively, though there is some confusion regarding chronology for the 940-3 annals, which will be discussed below.<sup>2</sup> The poems are inserted at a point where the *Chronicle*’s record becomes notably more attenuated than in previous decades. Entries for the period between 865 and 924 are almost annual, while the forty-nine years between 926 and 975 receive only thirty-five entries across the various versions of the *Chronicle*, occasionally offering significant chronological challenges. Unlike the other poems, *Maldon* is not in the *Chronicle*; the eleventh-century manuscript containing the poem was destroyed in the Cotton fire of 1731.<sup>3</sup> All three poems are usually believed to have been composed within a few decades of the events they purport to describe. It is sometimes suggested that *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs* date to the reign of Edmund because of his prominence in the poems.<sup>4</sup>

However, Stenton's suggestion that the poems should be dated to the late 950s deserves attention, and a case will be made below that the reign of Edgar provides a plausible context for the composition of *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs*.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the dating of *Maldon* is controversial, but it was composed no later than the first quarter of the eleventh century, and it may be nearly contemporary to the battle itself.<sup>6</sup>

*The Battle of the Brunanburh* and *The Capture of the Five Boroughs* were incorporated into MSS A-D of the *Chronicle*, suggesting that they derived from a common source.<sup>7</sup> They seem to be directly related to the political project of the Cerdicing kings and specific to the political contexts of the mid-tenth century. *Maldon*, on the other hand, may not have emanated from a royal court *per se* – the king receives only a single mention, for instance – but it will be seen that the poem uses similar techniques and strategies to *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs*. This might suggest that the effect of the chronicle poems in the decades after their production and dissemination was to help foster a common cultural mode between the royal court and the aristocracy that emphasised the interpersonal relationships between the king and his subjects in martial terms, representing a link between the royal court and the provinces communicated through agents such as Ealdorman Byrhtnoth, the protagonist of *Maldon*.

Ethnicity is a cultural identity that encompasses a range of shared attributes, including language, law, religion, dress and accessories, and the belief in a common descent, homeland, or kinship. These attributes need not all align with each other, and one should be wary of being too rigid. Furthermore, an ethnicity does not require a corresponding polity. An ethnic identity can encompass other 'nested' expressions of identity, and regional variation regarding legal practice, dress and accessories, and dialect, among other things, must also be acknowledged. The point at which regional variation flows into a new ethnicity is not fixed, and there could be considerable ambiguity in this regard. Much important work in the past decades on early medieval ethnicity has emphasised that it was 'functional', and it could be deployed strategically to draw distinctions between in-groups and out-groups.<sup>8</sup> The question of identity in Anglo-Saxon England has been a matter of no small importance to historians. In particular, seminal work by Patrick Wormald and Sarah Foot has been influential in shaping the

contours of the debate, establishing a framework for understanding the development of a later Anglo-Saxon – or *Englisc*, to use the vernacular – identity ultimately derived from Pope Gregory I and Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in which a sense of cohesion was mobilised by the court of Alfred, and which expanded under Alfred’s heirs as hitherto independent groups in Britain submitted to the Cerdicing dynasty in the tenth century.<sup>9</sup>

As early as 731, Bede could write of the *gens Anglorum*. In doing so, he particularly emphasised shared language. In one of the most famous passages of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Bede describes the five languages of the *gentes* of Britain: English, British, Irish, and Pictish, with the unifying language of Latin being common to them all.<sup>10</sup> Bede also dwells on the shared homeland and common descent of the *Anglorum siue Saxonum gens*, who he claims arrived in Britain in three ships from among ‘three powerful peoples of *Germania* (*Germaniae populus*), the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes’.<sup>11</sup> The use of the vernacular was important in both literature and history writing. Various versions of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* were kept in English through the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. English also served as the language of law codes and other legal documents, and the vernacular was used prominently in sermons, biblical translations, translations of patristic writing, hagiography, and poetry, among much else.<sup>12</sup> Newcomers were encouraged to adopt English names at times. For instance, when Guthrum was baptized in 878, he adopted the baptismal name of Æthelstan, and when Emma of Normandy married Æthelred II in 1002, she took (or was given) the English name Ælfgifu.<sup>13</sup> The alleged common descent of the Anglo-Saxon dynasties was emphasised in genealogical material that stressed common descent from Woden.<sup>14</sup> Law codes suggest a common legal culture. For instance, the introduction to the laws of Alfred notes that the king collected laws that seemed good from his own West Saxon predecessors as well as from Mercia and Kent.<sup>15</sup> Shared religious custom could also signal ethnicity. This need not *always* be the case, but after the conversion, the adoption of paschal conformity, and the universal acceptance among the Anglo-Saxons of the primacy of Canterbury, it could be useful to frame an Anglo-Saxon Christian identity in contrast to, say, pagans. This oppositional relationship is articulated in textual sources when, for

example, external invasion by heathens was described as the result of widespread sin among the *gens*.<sup>16</sup> As shall be discussed below, however, such oppositional techniques of communication were situationally useful and could bely a more complex political reality.

As the West Saxon dynasty expanded in the tenth century, previously independent polities were incorporated – sometimes tenuously – into a single kingdom, and by the middle of the century, most Angles and Saxons were subjects of the descendants of Alfred of Wessex. Historians of the so-called ‘Late Anglo-Saxon State’ have often focused on the relative strength of the Cerdic king during this period, the homogeneity of administrative structures such as shires and hundreds, and an apparent sense of ‘national’ unity.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, however, the tenth- and eleventh-century kingdom could tend toward regionalism and it was ethnically diverse, encompassing populations of Anglo-Saxons, Britons, and Scandinavians.<sup>18</sup>

With this diversity in mind, Susan Reynolds argued in 1985 that the tenth-century Cerdic king were ‘*reges Anglorum*, and their subjects, correspondingly, were *Angli*,’ whatever their ethnic background, as opposed to newcomers recently arrived from Scandinavia and who were enemies of the king.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, much recent work on ethnic identities has emphasised this ambiguity. For example, both Dawn Hadley and Matthew Innes have written about the longstanding regional distinctiveness of Northumbria and the East Midlands within the English kingdom, in which a specifically ‘Danish’ identity was situational and could be articulated at need.<sup>20</sup>

Reynolds’s point is further supported by the work of Edward James and Patrick Geary on the Franks. They have focused particularly on how military activity could centre collective identity around kingship. Geary has written that ‘Essentially, the terms *Franci*, *Alamanni*, *Burgundiones*, *Gothi* and the like appeared in connection with kings and with war. The kings were kings of peoples, as were dukes, and by far the most common use of the ethnic labels was to modify the names of kings. When Gregory, Fredegar, or the author of the *Liber Historiae Francorum* speak of peoples, they normally meant the warriors, the army. The *gens Francorum* was the *exercitus Francorum*, led by its king or its *duces*.’<sup>21</sup> As Edward James wrote, Gregory of Tours is ‘best known for doing something he did not do: [writing] an ethnic history, the

*History of the Franks.*<sup>22</sup> James notes that Gregory only uses ‘Frank’ or ‘Franks’ in forty-eight passages of his lengthy history, normally in formulae such as *regnum* or *reges Francorum*. The word seems to be used to describe people who were politically active, those at the king’s court or assembled in the army. This suggests a layering of identity, in which local identities, perhaps organised around one’s *civitas*, ran alongside one’s ‘public’ or political identity, in which those within the Frankish kingdom and subject to the king of the Franks *were* Franks.<sup>23</sup> One might mostly think in terms of being an Arvernian at home, but a Frank when associated with the king or on campaign against, say, the Burgundians.

Was it the same in Anglo-Saxon society? There is evidence to suggest that this could be the case during the Anglo-Saxon period. The *gens Anglorum* was something that could be conceptualised before there was any semblance of political unity. However, the creation of a unitary English kingdom did not obliterate other layers of collective identity. The continued relevance of a Mercian political identity, for instance, manifested itself at several points.<sup>24</sup> This can be seen in other guises, as smaller groups of peoples that together comprised the *gens Anglorum* flit in and out of the textual record. For example, in the *Chronicle’s* account of the Battle of *Assandun* in 1016, the chronicler describes how Edmund Ironside gathered together his army from *ealle Engla þeode* (‘all the people of the English’). After Edmund’s defeat at the hands of Cnut, the chronicler ascribes blame to the *Magonsæte*, the people of modern Herefordshire and Shropshire who were allegedly the first to flee the field.<sup>25</sup> This suggests that these sublayers of collective identity within the broad umbrella of the *gens Anglorum* continued to be relevant in the eleventh century. In this case, the lesser-order identity was used as a scapegoat for military defeat. If the account is accurate, it suggests that such strata of collective identity could have also remained relevant for the purposes of military organisation.

As the Cerdicing dominion expanded, varied groups needed to be accommodated within a wider community of the realm. Kingship provided a means to centre political identity. Warfare, in both its conduct and memorialisation, provided a medium through which to communicate such identity around the royal dynasty. Multi-ethnic aristocratic solidarities expressed in martial terms can be seen

throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. In his 734 *Letter to Ecgberht*, Bede complains that, without available land to be granted as a reward for service, the sons of nobles and discharged soldiers will ‘go across the sea’ to take service with foreign lords ‘and abandon their country, which they ought to fight for.’<sup>26</sup> In the eighth-century *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, the hagiographer Felix wrote of how during his warlike youth, Guthlac ‘gathered together companions from diverse *gentes* and from all directions’ and amassed ‘immense plunder’.<sup>27</sup> In the 890s (probably 893), Asser wrote of Alfred’s household that ‘many Franks, Frisians, *Galli*, pagans, Britons, Irish and Bretons willingly subjected themselves to his lordship.’<sup>28</sup> This latter example does not explicitly say that being subject to Alfred’s lordship required military service, but it should not be ruled out. We see in these examples how elite cohesion was centred upon the construction of a household or retinue that was diverse and heterogeneous; the examples suggest class-based rather than ‘ethnic’ solidarities that relied upon the interpersonal connections between lords and their men.

A final example that is particularly instructive is the 1014 will of the *ætheling* Æthelstan, the eldest son of King Æthelred II. When Æthelstan died, he made the following bequest:

[To Old Minster, Winchester:] the sword and silver hilt wrought by Wulfric, and the golden belt and arm-ring which Wulfric wrought, and the drinking-horn which I had bought from the community at Old Minster... the silver-hilted sword that belonged to Ulfketel, and the byrnie which Morcar has, and the horse which Thurbrand gave me, and the white horse which Leofwine gave me, and to my brother Edmund I grant the sword which belonged to King Offa, and the sword with the pitted hilt, and a blade, and a silver-inlaid trumpet... and I grant to my brother Eadwig a silver-inlaid sword... and I grant to Bishop Ælfsige... a black stallion... and to my mass priest Ælfwine... the ornamented sword which belonged to Wihtar, and a horse with tack, and to my ‘dish-thegn’ Ælfmær a roan stallion and a damaged sword... and I grant to Sigferth a sword, and a horse, and my curved shield... and I grant to Eadric, the son of Wynflæd, the sword on which the hand is marked. And I grant to my retainer Æthelwine

the sword which he has given me. And I grant to Ælfnoth my sword-sharpener, the damaged ornamented sword...<sup>29</sup>

Many of the men named in Æthelstan's will were notable in their own right: Ulfketel – a Scandinavian name – who had given the *ætheling* a silver-hilted sword was the ealdorman of East Anglia who fought against Sweyn Forkbeard at Thetford in 1004 and at Ringmere in 1010.<sup>30</sup> Morcar, to whom Æthelstan had given a mail byrnie, was a landholder in Derbyshire and Leicestershire.<sup>31,32</sup> Thurbrand the Hold, another man with a Scandinavian name, was a prominent magnate in Northumbria,<sup>33</sup> and Leofwine was the Ealdormen of the Hwicce.<sup>34</sup> Æthelstan's brothers, Edmund and Eadwig are self-explanatory, and Ælfsige was the Bishop of Winchester. Thus, the will demonstrates the way Æthelstan maintained horizontal connections with his brothers and some of the chief lay and ecclesiastical magnates from across the realm. However, the will also demonstrates Æthelstan's vertical connections: he remembers his mass-priest, his 'dish-thegn' (steward), his sword-sharpener, and some of his retainers. The bequeathing of swords, shields and horses appears instrumental as a medium through which to create an affinity between a cross-section of society in a way that was personally meaningful. It also played on their sense of history and regional loyalty. Æthelstan gave his brother Edmund a sword belonging to King Offa of Mercia, which must have been over 200 years old if it was genuine. The will demonstrates the way interpersonal relationships were mediated through the imagery and equipment of warfare, which acted as an agent of social cohesion and helped to forge a solidarity; presumably the intent was that this would form an important backbone of support for Æthelstan had he become king. Most importantly for the purposes of this paper, the affinity described in the will cuts across apparent ethnic divisions and features beneficiaries who – at least through their names – signalled a Scandinavian identity.

Old English literature provided a means to communicate the connection between the king, warfare, and collective identity. The examples that will be discussed below navigated both the ambiguities between different Anglo-Saxon groups and between different ethnicities in the tenth- and eleventh-century kingdom. It is important not to confuse literary motif with historical reality, but it would also be unwise

to dismiss such sources out of hand.<sup>35</sup> Such literature could still reflect the pretensions or aspirations of the audience and shape perceptions of what was admirable or shameful. Even if such poems seem anachronistic or unrealistic, the depiction of the king and his men in a heroic mode could still be an important way to form an affinity. Such literary motifs had a long lifespan and persisted through the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. Edward the Confessor was provided with an encomiastic obituary in the *Chronicle*, which described the king in martial terms as the ruler of a heterogeneous realm of Angles, Saxons, Britons, and Scots: ‘That ruler of heroes lavish of riches... He governed well the Welshmen, Æthelred’s son, ruled Britons and Scots, Angles and Saxons, his mighty champions. All that the cold sea waves encompass / brave young warriors faithfully obeyed King Edward the noble... At length he came forth in splendid array, a virtuous king, pure and mild, Edward the noble guarding his homeland, land and people.’<sup>36</sup>

*The Battle of Brunanburh* describes Æthelstan’s great battle of 937.<sup>37</sup> In the poem, Æthelstan is described as a ‘lord of nobles, [and the] ring-giver to men.’ For he and his brother Edmund, ‘it was natural to men of their kindred to be often in the field against every foe, to defend their land, their treasure, and their homes.’<sup>38</sup> The poet immediately establishes the legitimacy of Æthelstan and Edmund through their lineage and their martial prowess in the defence of their homes. The poet mentions the ‘mounted companies’ (*eoredcystum*) of the West Saxons and stoutness of the Mercians (*Myrce ne wýrndon heardes handplegen...*), but the poet also writes that after the battle the brothers ‘sought their kinsmen in the land of the West Saxons (*cybbe solhton Wessexena land*).’<sup>39</sup> The final paragraph is worth quoting in full:

Never yet in this island before this, by what books tell us and our ancient sages, was a greater slaughter of a host made by the edge of the sword, since the Angles and Saxons came hither from the east, invading Britain over broad seas, the proud assailants, warriors eager for glory, overcame the Britons and won a country (*earð*).

The *Brunanburh* poet was attempting to strike a delicate balance. On the one hand, the prowess of West Saxons and the Mercians is equally



recognised, and they are mentioned distinctly, suggesting deference to the regional particularism of both kingdoms. For most of the poem, Æthelstan and Edmund are described in neutral terms, but in the aftermath of the battle they are both explicitly linked to Wessex. It may be that the poet was deliberately seeking to associate Æthelstan with Wessex, given the alleged coolness the West Saxons had toward him.<sup>40</sup> It may also be that the poet's word choice was sufficiently ambiguous to acknowledge Æthelstan's West Saxon lineage without depicting him as a specifically 'West Saxon' king at the expense of the Mercians.

This seems more likely given the final paragraph, in which the battle is put in a broader historical context. For the poet, *Brunanburh* represents the climax of a series of battles fought for hegemony over Britain. It may be that by 'books... and ancient sages', the poet refers to the early entries of the common stock of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (or its sources), in which various origin myths were stitched together.<sup>41</sup> The *Chronicle's* origin legends are largely silent regarding the Angles. Of the thirty-six entries of the *Chronicle* between s.a. 449, the year given for the arrival of 'Hengest and Horsa', and 601, the year Augustine received the pallium, six entries are devoted to the line of Hengest and Horsa;<sup>42</sup> four are given for the Jutes of the Isle of Wight and Hampshire;<sup>43</sup> three concern the line of Ælle and the South Saxons;<sup>44</sup> and eighteen are devoted to the line of Cerdic, who would become the progenitor of the West Saxons.<sup>45</sup> Only five entries concern the Northumbrian Angles: a genealogy for Ida of Bernicia s.a. 547; a genealogy for Ælle of the Deirans s.a. 560 (with an obit for Ida in MS E for the same year); an obit for Ælle and a note of Æthelric's accession s.a. 588; a note of Æthelfrith of Bernicia's accession s.a. 593; and in 601, when Paulinus is introduced, it is noted as an aside that he would convert King Edwin.<sup>46</sup> No entries mention the Mercians or any other Angles, and of those five meagre entries, none provide origin stories. Perhaps, then, the intent of the *Brunanburh* poet was to join the Angles and Saxons together by giving them a shared history, as suggested by the final lines of the poem. By depicting the alliance between the Anglian Mercians and the West Saxons in such heroic fashion, the Mercians are woven into the story and put on the path of a common future within the *imperium* of the Cerdicing kings.

If the poem treads carefully around the relationship between the West Saxons and the Mercians, the *Brunanburh* poet was also notably delicate in his treatment of Æthelstan's enemies. Indeed, much is left unsaid. Æthelstan's chief enemies at Brunanburh were Olaf Guthfrithson, (Amlaíb mac Gofraid), the Norse king of Dublin and Constantine (Causantín mac Áeda) of Alba; Owain ap Dyfnwal, king of the Britons of Strathclyde, may also have been among the allies but he is not mentioned in the *Chronicle*.<sup>47</sup> In an omission that seems conspicuous, the poet does not mention Danes at all. This is rather striking. It is plausible – even likely – that there were Danes, long since settled in eastern England, among the Mercian troops fighting with Æthelstan. On the other hand, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that there were Danes among the king's enemies. The *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, which survive in the form of a seventeenth-century English translation specifically claim that Olaf invaded 'with the help of the Danes of that [i.e. Æthelstan's] kingdom'.<sup>48</sup>

In contrast, the Scots are referred to explicitly, and on two occasions Olaf's followers are referred to as 'Northmen'.<sup>49</sup> Otherwise, Æthelstan's enemies are 'pirates', 'sailors', or generically 'northerners': the latter could equally refer to the followers of Olaf, the Scots, or the Britons of Strathclyde. There is also some evidence to suggest that there were Northumbrians among Æthelstan's enemies. These may also be among the 'northerners' referred to. Æthelstan subdued Northumbria in 927, after the death of his brother-in-law Sihtric.<sup>50</sup> While progressing north in 934 to conduct a campaign in Scotland, Æthelstan issued a charter at Nottingham granting land at Amounderness that 'he had bought with no small amount of money' to the church of York, and shortly thereafter he made a grant to the community of St Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, it may be that all was not well in the north. In the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, a certain 'Adulf McEtulfe, king of the North Saxons' has an *obit* for 934.<sup>52</sup> This is probably Æthelwulf son of Eadwulf.<sup>53</sup> It has been suggested that Æthelwulf held some sort of royal authority north of the Tyne, possibly with the support of Constantine, and his death may have provided the impetus for Æthelstan's invasion in 934.<sup>54</sup> Finally, a panegyric devoted to Æthelstan quoted at length by William of Malmesbury suggests that 'with the consent of the king of the Scots, the northern land (*borealis terra*) lends

its support [to Olaf] with no misgivings; and now they are swollen with pride, they frighten with their words the very air; the natives, the whole region yields to their presumption.<sup>55</sup> While hardly conclusive, this does lend support to the notion that at least some Northumbrians, perhaps those north of the Tyne who had been associated with Æthelwulf son of Eadwulf, found themselves with Olaf and Constantine on the eve of Brunanburh.

If this interpretation is correct, the *Brunanburh* poet was attempting to weave together the fate of Wessex and Mercia under the aegis of the Cerdicing dynasty. In doing so, however, the poet obscures the position of both the Northumbrians – whether ethnic Anglo-Saxons or Scandinavians – who had submitted to Æthelstan’s rule in 927 and who may have been in rebellion in 934, as well as the position of the Danes dwelling within the kingdom, constructing instead a triumphant narrative centred upon the royal dynasty. This elision may have served to integrate both a territorial layer of collective identity (i.e. Mercia, Northumbria) and an ethnic layer of identity (i.e. Danes subject to Æthelstan’s lordship) within the Cerdicing realm.

This receives more attention in the poem known as the *Capture of the Five Boroughs*. *Five Boroughs* is entered under the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*’s annal for 942, only the second entry after *Brunanburh*. The poem refers to Edmund’s capture of five fortified places in eastern Mercia in 942/3. The entire poem runs as follows:

Her Eadmund cyning, Engla þeoden,  
 Mæcga mundbora, Myrce geeode,  
 Dyre dædfruma, swa Dor scadeþ;  
 Hwitanwyllesgeat and Humbra ea,  
 Brada brimstream. Burga fife,  
 Ligoraceaster and Lincylene,  
 And Snotingham, swylce Stanford eac,  
 and Deoraby. Dæne wæran æror  
 under Norðmannum nyde gebegde  
 on hæþenra hæfteclommum  
 lange þrage, oþ hie alysde eft  
 for his weorþscipe wiggendra hleo,  
 afera Eadweardes, Eadmund cyning.<sup>56</sup>

Though Stenton found the poem to be ‘overloaded with clichés’, it nevertheless is instructive regarding concepts of royal protection.<sup>57</sup> In the poem, Edmund is portrayed as ‘lord of the English and protector of kinsmen’ (*Engla þeoden mæcga mundbora*) and the ‘protector of warriors’ (*wiggendra hleo*), emphasising the role of the king as a protector and military leader. Edmund’s capture of the Five Boroughs is not depicted as conquest, but as redemption or liberation (*alysde*) from heathen captivity (*hæþenra hæfteclomnum*).<sup>58</sup> As ‘lord of the English’, Edmund is cast as the protector of both the Mercians and West Saxons, and Christian Danes living in the Five Boroughs, demonstrating a heterogeneous construction of collective identity that stems from the king, their protector and lord.<sup>59</sup> This supports a multi-ethnic reading of the sources, in which Christian Danes had a place within the Mercian political community under the protection of the king.<sup>60</sup>

*Five Boroughs* presents a simplification of the chaotic politics of the 940s. Instead of a straightforward triumph leading to the ‘liberation’ of Christian Danes from the subjugation of heathen ‘Northmen’, it seems more likely that in 940 the *imperium* won by Æthelstan was deeply divided in Northumbria and eastern Mercia. Clare Downham has recently argued that the perception of a rivalry between ‘Hiberno-Norse’ (*Nordmenn*) and Danes (*Dene*) is anachronistic and that the two terms were often used interchangeably, particularly in Latin writing from the ninth and tenth centuries. Thus, rather than ‘The Danes had before been subjected by force under the Northmen, and for a long time were bound in captivity to the heathens,’ it would be viable to read that the Five Boroughs ‘were previously *Dene* [i.e. under Danish rule] – oppressed in need under the Northmen, in the fetter-chains of heathens.’<sup>61</sup> However, it is worth noting that the *Chronicle* did occasionally distinguish between Danes and ‘Northmen’ in the kingdoms of Britain. In an entry for 920, the chronicler wrote of ‘all those who live in Northumbria, both English and Danish, Northmen and others.’<sup>62</sup> It may indeed be anachronistic to think in terms of ‘Northmen’ and ‘Danes’ as distinct *ethnicities*, but this does not necessarily mean the words were always used interchangeably. It is worth recalling the argument made by Susan Reynolds cited above,

which draws a distinction between ‘recently arrived’ pagan Scandinavians hostile to the king and those Scandinavians with whom the king had dealings and who may have been Christian. In other words, the distinction need not necessarily be ethnic to remain valid; what is more important is whether these peoples were within the king’s peace and if they were Christian. *Brunanburh*, it should be noted, explicitly refers to Olaf’s followers as ‘Northmen’, and it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that in the 940s, there may have been wariness among some Scandinavians in eastern Mercia toward Olaf and his kinsmen (perhaps particularly after *Brunanburh*). A picture should be emphasised in which communities of Angles and Danes in eastern Mercia were forced to respond to the death of Æthelstan and the competing claims made by Olaf and Edmund.

Rather than drawing a straightforward ethnic binary, *Five Boroughs* emphasises unity under Edmund as a protector and war-leader and paints a celebratory picture of Edmund’s campaigns in 942/3. However, when the chronology is untangled, it becomes clear that the situation on the ground was rather complicated. After the death of Æthelstan in October of 939, Olaf Guthfrithson – having escaped to Dublin after his defeat at *Brunanburh* in 937 – quit Dublin, according to the *Annals of the Four Masters*.<sup>63</sup> According to the D manuscript of the *Chronicle*, in 941 the Northumbrians withdrew their pledges and accepted ‘Olaf of Ireland’ (*Anlaf of Yrlande*) as their king. Olaf Guthfrithson died in 941, so if the D manuscript is correct, this was probably Olaf Guthfrithson’s cousin and successor, Olaf Sihtricson (Amlaíb Cuarán).<sup>64</sup> It was probably after Olaf Guthfrithson’s death that war in Mercia was renewed. In 942, Edmund was in a position to make grants in Derbyshire to Wulfsige the Black, and in (probably) 943 Edmund stood as sponsor to Olaf Sihtricson and Ragnald Guthfrithson (Ragnall mac Gofraid), who was then ruling in Northumbria.<sup>65</sup> This truce evidently did not hold as Edmund drove Olaf and Ragnald from Northumbria in 944.

The D manuscript includes an entry for 943 claiming that Olaf invaded Mercia and captured the old Mercian royal centre of Tamworth, which had been fortified by Edmund’s aunt Æthelflæd in 913.<sup>66</sup> The entry also claims that in the same year, Olaf and his ally Archbishop Wulfstan I of York were besieged in Leicester by Edmund,

but they escaped under the cover of night.<sup>67</sup> According to the *Historia Regum*, Archbishops Odda of Canterbury and Wulfstan brokered a truce between the two kings.<sup>68</sup> At this point, the entry of the D manuscript specifically calls Edmund's enemies 'Danes', but the composition of Edmund's foes must have been heterogeneous. If Wulfstan of York was with Olaf in Leicester, there is reason to suppose that some of his men would be Northumbrian Angles, not to mention possible Anglian supporters from the Five Boroughs, in addition to Olaf's 'Northmen' and any Danes from eastern Mercia and/or Northumbria who threw in their lot with him.

The 943 entry of the D manuscript is particularly vexing. The use of the word '*Her*' ('In this year') twice, first to describe the attack on Tamworth and then to describe the siege of Leicester suggests that the chronicler had stitched together the events of two years. Downham has argued that the attack on Tamworth occurred in 942, the same year that Edmund captured the Five Boroughs, and that the siege of Leicester took place in 943, after which Olaf and Ragnald were baptized, apparently implying that there was a revolt against Edmund's rule in Leicester after the Five Boroughs campaign.<sup>69</sup> However, perhaps the chronology that makes the most sense is to suppose that the attack on Tamworth did indeed take place in 942; this was followed by the Five Boroughs campaign across 942 and 943, and that the D manuscript's account of the siege of Leicester in 943 marks the final action of that campaign.

This reconstructed narrative is not at all clear in the *Five Boroughs* poem, which elides Edmund's compromises and setbacks. The defection of the Northumbrians in 941, Olaf's successful attack on Tamworth, the siege of Leicester, and the alliance between Olaf and Wulfstan are only recorded in MS D. Taking the manuscripts together, it is clear that north-eastern Mercia was in the balance in the early 940s, and its political community was deeply divided. It is not surprising, therefore, that the poet should wish to strike a tone that emphasises collective identity tied to Edmund and his position as a leader in war and as a defender of his people, rather than a simple oppositional relationship between English and Danish ethnicities.

It seems likely that *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs* were intended to be read together to provide a narrative of Cerdicing triumph while

navigating the complex politics and questions of collective identity in the 930s and 940s. Both poems are careful in their treatment of the dynasty's enemies and expansive in their understanding of the kings' dominion and the protection bestowed upon heterogeneous subjects.

When were the poems composed? A good case can be made for the reign of Edgar. If the poems date to Edgar's reign, then reading them as a comment on royal legitimacy in relation to the partition of Wessex and Mercia between Eadwig and Edgar could be viable. When reading *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs* together, one would be reminded of the alliance of the West Saxons and the Mercians that achieved such a remarkable victory in 937, and of the legitimacy of the Cerdicing kings and their ability to protect their people. This receives further support from Bately, who argues that the common material for MSS A-D for the annals between 933-946 was in existence by the 950s, and that the poems themselves contain non-West Saxon dialect features.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the poems may be a product of Edgar's court in Mercia between 957-9. If so, then they are royal, but not necessarily West Saxon. This may explain the poems' responsiveness to regional sensitivities, and they could be seen as instruments of integration, rather than blunt tools of royal propaganda emanating from the royal court in Wessex, the poems, and their incorporation in the manuscripts of the *Chronicle*, represent a dialogue between the royal dynasty and the provinces.

The broader political ideologies of Edgar's reign also seem to suit the composition and dissemination of the poems. There is a hint that Edgar attempted to redefine the position of the Danes in the kingdom through his legislation. Edgar's fourth code (962 or 963) declares that while the Danes had hitherto been allowed to keep their own laws because of the loyalty they had always shown the king, nevertheless the king wished that his pronouncements regarding cattle theft were to be obeyed even among the Danes.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs* are ambiguous regarding potential disloyalty among Danes in Northumbria and Mercia in the 930s and 940s as part of a wider agenda of integration in the late 950s and early 960s. At the same time, more explicit foils are made of the Scots and the Uí Ímair, who were by this time a more distant threat. According to the *Annals of Ulster*, Olaf

Sihtricson faced a challenge from Cammán mac Amlaíb/Sihtric Cam, the son of Olaf Guthfrithson in 960.<sup>72</sup> The increasing security of the Cerdicing realm in the 960s, after bursts of instability in Mercia and the north between 937 and 954, provided the context for Edgar's famously robust display of self-assurance on the Dee in 973, when a meeting was held at Chester with the kings of the Irish Sea in a ceremony that may have entailed some form of submission to Edgar's authority.<sup>73</sup> It is sometimes overlooked, but the Battle of Brunanburh took place a mere thirty-six years before Edgar's procession on the Dee, and it is likely that the battle was fought quite near to Chester.<sup>74</sup> It is plausible that some men who were at the end of their political careers in 973 had just grown into political maturity in 937. Perhaps some of Edgar's senior councillors had been young men in Æthelstan's army?

Our final poem is the famous *Battle of Maldon*, which celebrates Ealdorman Byrhtnoth of Essex's heroic but doomed stand against a viking army in 991. As in *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs*, *Maldon* rarely uses ethnic terminology to describe the antagonists. Typically, they are *wicinga* (vikings), *sæmen*, *sæ-mannum*, *sæ-lida*, *brim-manna*, *flotan* (seamen, sailors, etc.), or even more vaguely as 'enemies' or 'warriors' (*beorn*, *guma*, *cempa*, *wiga*, *feða* etc.).<sup>75</sup> Twice, the enemies are 'heathens'.<sup>76</sup> There is only one occasion in the 325 surviving lines of the poem in which the word 'Dane' is used, in which Byrhtnoth encouraged his men 'to gain fame from the Danes.'<sup>77</sup> As Robinson noted, Byrhtnoth's enemies are presented 'not as heinous villains, but as a vague inimical force.'<sup>78</sup>

Historians often understand *Maldon* to represent a strong sense of national identity in the face of a common foe.<sup>79</sup> However, while the Danes are only mentioned once in the poem, the English are not mentioned *at all*. *Maldon* is not about ethnic animosity, nor is it about 'English' unity; it is about Byrhtnoth and his retainers. If the poem has any higher aspirations in regard to collective identity, they are twofold: the first objective is to draw upon a Christian identity in opposition to pagan enemies, as when Byrhtnoth looks to heaven and says a final prayer before being slain by *hæðene scealcas* ('heathen fighters').<sup>80</sup> The second is to emphasise the *regional* identities that comprise Æthelred's kingdom. Thus, Byrhtnoth and his men make up the *Eastseaxena ord*.<sup>81</sup> Later, one of Byrhtnoth's men declaims: 'I want my nobility known to



all men, that I was among the Mercians of a mighty kindred,' thereby representing the Mercians in the battle.<sup>82</sup> Then, a Northumbrian hostage takes up arms to avenge Byrhtnoth, and he is mentioned fighting bravely 'as long as he was able to wield weapons.'<sup>83</sup> The heroes of the poem also represent the vertical relationships of Anglo-Saxon society.<sup>84</sup> Most of the poem concerns the ealdorman and his noble retainers, but at one point, 'a simple ceorl' (*unorne ceorl*), exhorts the warriors to avenge their lord. What unifies these men is not ethnicity, but their social relationships with each other, with Byrhtnoth, and the king. In this way the poem recalls the will of *Æthelstan ætheling*, discussed above. Instead of referring to 'England', the poet refers to the kingdom as *Æþelredes eard* (*Æthelred's land*). Through his references to the East Saxons, Northumbrians, and Mercians, the poet suggests a realm that is an accretion of regionally distinctive territories and peoples; they were united not necessarily by their 'Englishness', but by their allegiance to *Æthelred*, and the vertical and horizontal social relationships of the nobility.

All three poems use conflict to communicate collective identity, but none of them are about ethnic solidarity in the face of a common foe; instead, they are about the interpersonal relationships predicated upon the king as a military leader and the protector of his subjects. These are social relationships, but they are also relationships of mutual military obligation: Byrhtnoth is fulfilling his military obligations to the king, Byrhtnoth's retainers fulfil their obligation to their lord, and the king has an obligation of protection to his subjects.

The *Maldon* poet included a warning about treachery and the consequences of these obligations being left unfulfilled. The battle was lost when some of Byrhtnoth's retainers fled from the fighting.<sup>85</sup> This suggests something broader about the regional and ethnically diverse tenth-century kingdom: it required the active participation of the aristocracy, who were unified through their interpersonal relationships with each other and their loyalty to the dynasty. But when the dynasty was perceived as being militarily unsuccessful, or when members of the aristocracy no longer 'bought in' to the project, the results could be disastrous. As the military situation worsened around the turn of the century, we see just this in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. What the *Maldon* poet understood to be the strength of the kingdom – the diverse

regions that were united in their loyalty to the king – is suggested to be a weakness in the *Chronicle*.

For example, in 1006 the chronicler complained about the king spending Christmas north of the Thames in Shropshire while a viking army ravaged through Berkshire and Hampshire.<sup>86</sup> In 1009, it is reported that the men of East Kent made a separate peace with Thorkell the Tall, paying a tribute of £3000 and allowing the army to overwinter in the province as they harried the surrounding shires.<sup>87</sup> In 1010, the chronicler described the battle of Ringmere, and noted that the men of East Anglia fled, abandoning the men of Cambridgeshire to their fate as they held their ground. The chronicler ended the annal for 1010 bitterly: ‘there was no leader who would raise an army, but each fled as best he could, and in the end no shire would even help the next.’<sup>88</sup>

The aristocratic solidarities of the tenth century came under great strain in the eleventh century. If we return to the will of Æthelstan *ætheling* discussed above, we see the effects of this. Of all the associates and companions remembered by the prince in 1014, most of them would be dead soon after, and many died violently: Morcar was murdered in 1015,<sup>89</sup> Ulfketel was killed in battle in 1016.<sup>90</sup> Leofwine survived, but his son, Northman, was killed by Cnut in 1017.<sup>91</sup> Eadwig was banished in 1016 or 1017, and was murdered by Cnut the following year.<sup>92</sup> Æthelstan’s other brother Edmund died suddenly in 1016 after fighting a series of battles against Cnut.<sup>93</sup> Thurbrand the Hold was killed by his rivals in the north in 1024.<sup>94</sup> However, we should not take this *too* far: Cnut’s conquest did not have the same sort of structural impact on the aristocracy that the Norman Conquest had fifty years later, but there was probably enough disruption among the military elite and enough disillusionment with the regime for Cnut to consolidate his position in England.<sup>95</sup>

Historians have often been impressed by the homogeneous administrative institutions of the English kingdom and the extent of royal authority in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Though the maximal view of the Anglo-Saxon ‘state’ may have receded slightly, the strength and durability of these institutions across two conquests in fifty years remains impressive. Institutions such as shires and hundreds provided a means by which the English kingdom was consolidated. The literary evidence discussed here provides another angle. These poems suggest

a regional, ethnically diverse, and potentially fractious kingdom that was held together in no small part due to the interpersonal relationships of the military aristocracy under the leadership of the royal dynasty. Conflict, and the memorialisation of conflict, provided a way to frame and communicate collective identity under the king in a way that could respond to political nuance and was appropriate to the heterogeneous nature of the English kingdom. None of the poems discussed here celebrate the ‘English’ at the expense of ‘the Danes’, and in most cases references to the dynasty’s enemies are left rather ambiguous. The use of these poems as instruments of a dynastic political project should be recognised. This may be particularly true of the *Brunanburh* and *Five Boroughs*, the so-called ‘chronicle poems’, which may be more profitably understood as subtle texts that were put to work in order to smooth over some of the rougher edges of recent history and help define ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ in the coalescing kingdom.

The evidence discussed here emphasises the notion of the kingdom as a network of interpersonal relationships between the king and his leading subjects that are expressed through military idioms. Poetry may have flattered the pretensions of the warriors and aristocrats who sustained and participated in the dynasty’s success. To put it another way, the poems provide a heroic veneer to the more prosaic reforms brought about by the implementation of shires and hundreds.<sup>96</sup> Were these poems archaizing celebrations of a heroic mode that never existed? Perhaps, but that may be just what the audience liked to hear. Crucially, ethnicity is less important in these texts than social relations. This is not to say that ethnicity was not important in early medieval Britain, but the poems all recognise other salient aspects of collective identity: regionalism, dynastic loyalty, class, and social obligation.

A certain amount of fragility needs to be recognised: the rhetoric of the poetry discussed in this paper was oriented around noble solidarities and the relationships held by the king. This worked while the nobility was engaged, and the king was – generally speaking – strong and successful in war. As those who were loyal to the dynasty died, were killed in battle, or became disillusioned, the communication of collective identity through military success ultimately rang hollow during the wars of the 990s and early 1000s. Poetry in the heroic mode that celebrated the military aristocracy and the royal dynasty may have been

helpful in binding together the dynasty's potentially disparate and fractious subjects, but perhaps these men would have been better served studying their gospels, where they would have recalled that those who take up the sword shall perish by it.

## Notes

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- 1 P. Wormald, 'Anglo-Saxon Society and its Literature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1-22 (15).
- 2 The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC)* is cited from S. Keynes, D. N. Dumville et al, (eds.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition* vols. 3-8 (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1983-2004), referenced by year after *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation*, ed. and trans. by D. Whitelock, D.C. Douglas and S.I. Tucker (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961) unless otherwise noted.
- 3 *The Battle of Maldon*, ed. and trans. by D.G. Scragg (Manchester, 1981). The poem was incorporated into the manuscript known as London, British Library, Cotton MS Otho A.XII. The poem survives due to a transcription made shortly before the fire. See also Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon: Fact or Fiction?', in *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact*, ed. by J. Cooper (London, Hambledon, 1993), pp. 19-31.
- 4 A. Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba, 789-1070* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 168-73, p. 169; C. Downham, 'The Chronology of the Last Scandinavian Kings of York, AD 937-954', *Northern History* 40 (2003): 27-51 (31).
- 5 F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Oxford, Clarendon, 1971), p. 689.
- 6 For the date of poem, J.D. Niles, 'Maldon and Mythopoesis', in *Old English Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. by R.M. Liuzza (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 289-305, favouring an early date. L. Neidorf, 'II Æthelred and the Politics of the *Battle of Maldon*', *JEGP* 111 (2012): 451-73 argues that the promulgation of *II Æthelred* in 994 may have presented a useful context for the composition of the poem; cf. G. Clark, 'The *Battle of Maldon*: A Heroic Poem', *Speculum* 43 (1968): 52-71.
- 7 Keynes, 'Manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. by R. Gameson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 537-52, provides an overview.
- 8 The debate surrounding early medieval ethnicity is often fraught. A sample of the main positions are: P. Heather, *The Goths* (Oxford, Blackwell,

- 1996), who argues that barbarian ethnicity was stable and coherent across a broad section of society characterised by 'warrior freemen'. The *traditionskern* model, on the other hand, argues that heterogenous groups were led by cores of aristocratic dynasties that retained traditions of genuine 'ethnic memory' from a Scandinavian homeland: R. Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes*, (Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 1961); H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988). For the 'Vienna School', which adds significant nuance to the *traditionskern* model, see e.g. W. Pohl, 'Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies', in *Debating the Middle Ages*, ed. by L. K. Little and B. H. Rosenwein (Oxford, Blackwell, 1998), pp. 13-24; Pohl, 'Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity', in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, ed. by W. Pohl and H. Reimitz (Leiden, Brill, 1998), pp. 17-70, and many of the assembled papers in H-W Goetz, J. Jarnut and W. Pohl (eds.), *Regna and Gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World* (Leiden, Brill, 2003). Opposition to the 'Vienna School', which denies the existence even of that so-called 'kernel', is demonstrated by W. Goffart, 'Two Notes on Germanic Antiquity Today', *Traditio* 50 (1995): 9-30; C. Bowlus, 'Ethnogenesis Models and the Age of Migrations: A Critique', *Austrian History Yearbook* 26 (1995): 147-64; and the papers in A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity* (Turnhout, Brepols, 2003). P. Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), takes a very situational view of ethnicity.
- 9 Wormald, 'The Venerable Bede and the Church of the English', in *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*, ed. by G. Rowell (Wantage, Ikon, 1992), pp. 13-32; Wormald, 'Bede, the Bretwaldas and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*', in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Essays Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, ed. by P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, Clarendon, 1983), pp. 99-129; Wormald, '*Engla Lond*: The Making of an Allegiance', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 7 (1994): 1-24; S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest', *TRHS* 6 (1996): 25-49. In addition, see: J. Campbell, 'The United Kingdom of England: The Anglo-Saxon Achievement', repr. in his *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, Bloomsbury, 2000), pp. 31-54.
- 10 Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentes Anglorum*, ed. by B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, Clarendon, 1969), i.1: 'quinque gentium linguis... Anglorum uidelicet Brettonum, Scottorum, Pictorum et Latinorum'.

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- 11 Bede, *HE* i.15. For more on this, see N. Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989).
  - 12 A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationalism: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), sees this as particularly important to the creation of the English kingdom.
  - 13 The evidence for Guthrum comes from the numismatic record. See: P. Grierson and M.A.S. Blackburn, *Early Medieval Coinage, with a Catalogue of the Coins of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 318. For Ælfgifu-Emma: *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. and trans. by A. Campbell with a supplementary introduction by S. Keynes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 1998), pp. xli, 55-8; P. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, Royal Historical Society, 1968), no. 902 [charters cited hereafter as 'S.'+ Sawyer number, e.g. 'S. 902'], revised and annotated at <https://esawver.lib.cam.ac.uk/about/index.html>.
  - 14 *De Rebus Gestis Ælfredi*, in *Asser's Life of King Alfred together with the Annals of St Neots erroneously ascribed to Asser*, ed. by W.H. Stevenson (Oxford, Clarendon, 1904), 1; D. Dumville, 'The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists', *ASE* 5 (1976): pp. 23-50; 'The West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List: Manuscripts and Texts', *Anglia* 104 (1986): 1-32.
  - 15 Af. Int.49.9, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1, ed. by F. Liebermann (Halle, M. Niemeyer, 1903), p. 46.
  - 16 This was assimilated into Anglo-Saxon culture through the Old Testament and the writing of Gildas, who argues in his *De Excidio Britanniae*, ed. and trans. by H. Williams (Lampeter, Llanerch Press, 1901) that the *adventus* of the Saxons was sown by the sins of the Britons. This story is repeated in Bede, *HE* i.22 and then in 1010 x 1016 in Wulfstan II of York's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, ed. D. Whitelock (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, Methuen, 1963).
  - 17 Campbell, 'United Kingdom', pp. 37-40; Hastings, *The Construction of Nationalism*, pp. 35-65, draws on Campbell considerably. But see now G. Molyneux, *The Formation of the English Kingdom in the Tenth Century* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015).
  - 18 For Britons, see e.g. C.P. Lewis, 'Welsh Territories and Welsh Identities in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by N.J. Higham (Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2007), pp. 130-43; and D.E. Thornton, 'Some Welshmen in Domesday Book and Beyond: Aspects of Anglo-Welsh Relations in the Eleventh Century', in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 144-64. More recently, see L. Brady, *Writing the Welsh Borderlands in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, Oxford

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- University Press, 2017). Britons are accorded a *wergild* in the eleventh-century legal tract *Nordleoda laga: Nordleod 7*. For Scandinavians in later Anglo-Saxon England the literature is too numerous to cite here but see for instance the papers in R. Lavelle and S. Roffey (eds.), *Danes in Wessex: The Scandinavian Presence in Southern England, c. 800-c. 1100* (Oxford, Oxbow, 2015); D.M. Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw: its Social Structure, c. 800-1100* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 2000).
- 19 S. Reynolds, 'What do we mean by "Anglo-Saxon" and "Anglo-Saxons"?', *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985): 395-414.
  - 20 Hadley, 'Viking and Native: Re-Thinking Identity in the Danelaw', *EME* 11 (2002): 45-70; M. Innes, 'Danelaw Identities: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and Political Allegiance', in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavia Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. by D.M. Hadley and J.D. Richards (Turnhout, Brepols, 2000), pp. 65-88.
  - 21 P. Geary, 'Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages', *Mitteilungen der anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 113 (1983): 15-26 (22).
  - 22 E. James, 'Gregory of Tours and the Franks', in *After Rome's Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History*, ed. by A. C. Murray (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 51-66 (52).
  - 23 James, 'Gregory of Tours', pp. 60, 65-6.
  - 24 e.g. *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, in *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine*, ed. and trans. by M. Lapidge (Oxford, Clarendon, 2009). iv.12.
  - 25 *ASC*CDE 1016.
  - 26 Letter of Bede to Ecgbeht, Archbishop of York, in *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica*, ed. by C. Plummer (Oxford, Clarendon, 1896), vol. 1, pp. 405-23: 'filii nobilium aut emeritorum militum... patriam suam pro qua militare debuerant trans mare abeuntes relinquunt.'
  - 27 Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, ed. by B. Colgrave (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1956), 17: 'conrasis undique diversarum gentium sociis immensas praedas gregasset.'
  - 28 Asser, 76: 'Franci autem multi, Frisones, Galli, pagani, Britones, et Scotti, Armorici sponte se suo dominio subdiderant.'
  - 29 *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. Whitelock (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1930), no. 20, pp. 56-63; S. 1503.
  - 30 *ASC* 1004, 1010.
  - 31 Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE) Morcar 2. Accessed at: <<https://pase.ac.uk/>>.
  - 32 C. Insley, 'Politics, Conflict and Kinship in Early Eleventh-Century Mercia', *Midland History* 25 (2000): pp. 28-42.

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- 33 J.G. Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence in England from the Tenth to the Twelfth Centuries', in *Feud, Violence and Practice: Essays in Medieval Studies in Honor of Stephen D. White*, ed. by B.S. Tuten and T.L. Billado (Farnham, Ashgate, 2010), pp. 29-53. Thurbrand is described in the *Historia Regum* as a 'Turebrando nobili et Danico viro': *Historia Regum*, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. by T. Arnold, Rolls Series 75 (London, Longman, 1882-5), p. 148.
- 34 PASE Leofwine 49.
- 35 R. Woolf, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with Their Lord in the *Germania* and in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 5 (1976): 63-81.
- 36 ASC CD 1065: 'weol[an] brytnode... / hæleða wealdend, / weold wel geþungen Walum 7 Scottum / 7 Bryttum eac, byre Æðelredes / Englum 7 Sexum oretmæcgcum [mighty champions], / swa ymbclyppað ceald brymmas, / þæt eall Eadwarde, æðelum kinge, / hyrdon holdlice hagestealde menn... / Syððan forð becom freolice in geatwum / kyningc kystum god. Clæne 7 milde, / Eadward se æðela eðel bewerode, / land 7 leode...'
- 37 S. Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of England* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 169-83; Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ivarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh, Dumedin, 2007), pp. 104-5; Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, pp. 168-73. There has been an enormous amount of literature devoted to the battle, see for instance *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by A. Campbell (London, W. Heinemann, 1938) for text and commentary; *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook*, ed. by M. Livingston (Exeter, Exeter University Press, 2011), for a collection of sources related to the battle. Recent reassessments include: K. Halloran, 'The Brunanburh Campaign: A Reappraisal', *Scottish Historical Review* 84 (2005): 133-48.
- 38 'Her Æþelstan cing, eorla drihten, / beorna beahgyfa... swa him geæþele wæs / fram cneomægum, þæt hi æt campe oft / wiþ laþra gehwæne land ealgodon, / hord 7 hamas.'
- 39 Whitelock, *ASC*, p. 70 prefers 'their own country' for *cyþbe*; while it is true that *cyþbe* can mean 'native country, homeland,' etc., as per *University of Toronto Dictionary of Old English s.v. Cyþb* 3, in this case I prefer sense 2.b, 'kindred', because it allows the poet to strike a more ambiguous line by *not* suggesting that Mercia was in any sense 'foreign' to the brothers. For the poet, such nuance may have been preferable in this instance. Admittedly, the close relationship between the two senses of the word is undeniable. See: *University of Toronto Dictionary of Old English: A to I Online*, ed. A. Cameron et al. (Toronto, 2018), consulted at <<https://doe.utoronto.ca>>.



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- 40 *Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester, British Library Stowe 944*, ed. S. Keynes (Copenhagen, Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1996), pp. 19-20.
- 41 As discussed by B. Yorke, 'The Jutes of Hampshire and Wight and the Origins of Wessex', in *The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, ed. by S. Bassett (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1989), pp. 84-96 and elsewhere.
- 42 *ASC s.a.* 449, 455, 456, 473, 488.
- 43 *ASC s.a.* 501, 514, 534, 544.
- 44 *ASC s.a.* 477, 485, 491.
- 45 *ASC s.a.* 495, 508, 514, 519, 527, 530, 534, 552, 556, 560, 568, 571, 577, 584, 591, 592, 593, 597.
- 46 However, *ASCE s.a.* 449 does include a notice that the Angles came from Angeln, 'which ever after remained a waste'.
- 47 *Historia Regum*, p. 93.
- 48 *Annals of Clonmacnoise Being the Annals of Ireland from the Earliest Period to A.D. 1408*, ed. by D. Murphy. (Dublin, Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 1896), 931 (=937), p. 151.
- 49 *Brunanburh* line 33: *Norðmanna bregu* ('prince of the Northmen'), and lines 53-6: 'Gewitan him þa Norþmen nægledcnearrum, / dreorig daraða laf, on Dinges mere / ofer deop wæter Difelin secan 7 eft Hiraland' ('Then the 'Northmen', sorrowful survivors of the spears, departed in their nailed ships on to *Dingesmere* / seeking Dublin over deep water, back to Ireland.'). and see below.
- 50 *ASCD* 927.
- 51 *ASC* 934; S. 407; *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of a Saint and a Record of His Patrimony*, ed. T. Johnson South, Anglo-Saxon Texts 3 (Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2002), pp. 26-7.
- 52 *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, 928 (=934), p. 149.
- 53 N. McGuigan, 'Ella and the Descendants of Ivar: Politics and Legend in the Viking Age', *Northern History* 52 (2015): 20-34.
- 54 Woolf, *Pictland to Alba*, pp. 164-5.
- 55 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. by R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thompson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, Clarendon, 1998), vol. 1, ii.135, p. 220; and see Foot, *Æthelstan*, p. 172.
- 56 *ASC* ABCD 942: 'In this year King Edmund, lord of the English, defender of kinsmen, the beloved doer of great deeds, went to Mercia, as bounded by Dore, the Whitwell Gate, and the River Humber, the broad flowing stream. Five boroughs, Leicester and Lincoln, Nottingham and also Stamford and Derby each. The Danes had before been subjected by force under the northmen, and for a long time were bound in captivity to the

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- heathens, until they were redeemed by the defender of warriors, the son of Edward, Edmund the king, to his glory.’
- 57 Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 358
- 58 Those derived from A. Mawer, ‘The Redemption of the Five Boroughs’, *EHR* 38 (1923): 551-7; see e.g. Stenton, ‘The Danes in England’, in *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by D. Stenton (Oxford, Clarendon, 1970), p. 162.
- 59 As noted by Foot, ‘Where English Becomes British: Rethinking Contexts for *Brunanburh*’, in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. by J. Barrow and A. Wareham (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008), pp. 127-44 (131-2).
- 60 S.J. Harris, *Race and Ethnicity in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (London, Routledge, 2003), pp. 107-29 sees a similar message discussed through an Old Testament ‘logic’ in Archbishop Wulfstan’s *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*.
- 61 Downham, ‘“Hiberno-Norwegians” and “Anglo-Danes”: Anachronistic Ethnicities in Viking-Age England’, *Medieval Scandinavia* 19 (2009): 139-69, with a translation at p. 148; see also Halloran, ‘The War for Mercia, 942-943’, *Midland History* 41 (2016): 96-106.
- 62 *ASC* A 920: ‘ealle þa þe on Norþhymrum bugeaþ, ægþer ge Engliſce, ge Deniſce, ge Norþmen, ge oþre...’
- 63 *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Times to the Year 1616*, ed. by John O’Donovan (Dublin, Hodges, Smith & Co., 1856), ii, s.a. 937 (=939), pp. 638-9.
- 64 According the *Annals of the Four Masters*, Olaf Sihtricson left for York s.a. 938 (=939).
- 65 S. 479, 484, 1606.
- 66 *ASC* MR 913.
- 67 *ASC* D s.a. 943.
- 68 *Historia Regum*, pp. 93-4.
- 69 Downham, ‘The Chronology’: 32-41.
- 70 J. Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Texts and Textual Relationships*, Reading Medieval Studies Monograph no. 3 (Reading, University of Reading, 1991), p. 10.
- 71 IV Eg.12-15.
- 72 *ASC* MS D 954; *The Annals of Ulster to AD 1131*, ed. and trans. by S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocail (Dublin, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983) 960.
- 73 J. Barrow, ‘Chester’s Earliest Regatta? Edgar’s Dee-Rowing Revisited’, *EME* 10 (2001): 81-93; D. Thorton, ‘Edgar and the Eight Kings, A.D. 973: *Textus* and *Dramatis Personae*’, *EME* 10 (2001): 49-79.

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- 74 The location of the Battle of Brunanburh is fraught, but see P. Cavill, S. Harding and J. Jesch, 'Revisiting *Dingesmere*', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 36 (2004): 25-38.
- 75 'Vikings': lines 26, 73, 97, 116, 139, 322; 'sailors, seamen, etc.': 27, 29, 38, 45, 49, 72, 134, 164, 227, 286, 295; 'heathens': 55, 181; 'enemy, foe': 82; 'loathsome guests, people': 86, 90; 'champions, warriors, etc.': 119, 131, 270, 277.
- 76 *Maldon* 55, 181
- 77 *Maldon* 127-9.
- 78 F.C. Robinson, 'Some Aspects of the *Maldon* Poet's Artistry', *JEGP*, 75 (1976): 25-40 (27).
- 79 Campbell, 'England, c. 991', repr. in his *The Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 157-78 (pp. 176-7); Clark, 'The Battle in *The Battle of Maldon*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 69 (1968): 374-9.
- 80 *Maldon* 171-80.
- 81 *Maldon* 69: 'vanguard of the East Saxons'.
- 82 *Maldon* 216-17.
- 83 *Maldon* 265-72.
- 84 A. Williams, 'The Battle of Maldon and "The Battle of Maldon": History, Poetry and Propaganda', *Medieval History*, 2 (1992): 35-44.
- 85 *Maldon* 185-201.
- 86 *ASCDE* 1006.
- 87 *ASCDE* 1009.
- 88 *ASCDE* 1010.
- 89 *ASCDE* 1015.
- 90 *ASCDE* 1016.
- 91 *ASCDE* 1017
- 92 *ASCDE* 1017.
- 93 *ASCDE* 1016; Neither the *Chronicle* nor *Encomium Emmae Reginae* ii.14 suggest that Edmund died violently, but Henry of Huntingdon claimed he was murdered in his privy, while Gaimar stated that he was murdered with a crossbow: Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. Greenway, iv.14; Gaimar, *L'Estorie des Engles*, ed. Hardy and Martin, lines 4408-20.
- 94 *De Obsessione Dunelmi*, ed. by T. Arnold, pp. 215-20; Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence', pp. 29-53.
- 95 For the debate surrounding the structural impact of Cnut's conquest on the aristocracy, see: R. Fleming, *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 21-52; K. Mack, 'Changing Thegns: Cnut's Conquest and the English Aristocracy', *Albion* 16 (1984): 375-87; Williams, "'Cockles amongst the Wheat': Danes and English in the Western Midlands in the First Half of the Eleventh Century',

- Midland History* 11 (1986): 1-22; Keynes, 'Cnut's Earls', in *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*, ed. by A. Rumble (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1994), pp. 43-88 for a judicious take.
- 96 For Anglo-Saxon military obligation, see: R. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988).