

2016

“Pe Inglis in seruage”: Textual Englishness, 1175 – 1330

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“ÞE INGLIS IN SERUAGE”: TEXTUAL ENGLISHNESS, 1175 – 1330

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State Univeristy and
Agricultural and Mechanical
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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May 2016

This study is dedicated to the memory of Lisi Oliver: advisor, mentor, and friend.

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Abstract

For some time, scholars who study English identity formation in the literature produced between the Norman Conquest and the Hundred Years War have addressed the manifold ways English writers imagined and reconstructed the Anglo-Saxon past as a golden era free of the taint of foreign domination. I find the cultural memory of pre-Conquest England to be only a fraction of what constituted literary Englishness, and my research calls for a more nuanced description of English literary identity during the period in question. The hybrid critical approach I employ is a blend of historicist and structural linguistic methodologies that takes both diachronic and synchronic perspectives on the question of how Englishness was represented in literature. I argue that before the middle of the thirteenth century literary Englishness was formed through an inclusive process that included drawing on a native oral narrative tradition, a limited but identifiable engagement with the Old English textual tradition, and the translation non-English wisdom and sententia. The *Proverbs of Alfred* (mid 12th C.) and the *Owl and the Nightingale* (turn of the 13th C.) are prime examples. After the middle of the thirteenth century, for a number of sociopolitical reasons - most prominently the continued loss of continental landholding by the English crown - literary English identity begins to be drawn in contrast to a Francophone identity. This can be seen in the Matter of England (English language romances with pre-Conquest settings and heroes) as well as in other genres such as chronicle writing. To illustrate this shift, I provide close readings of *Bevis of Hampton* and Robert Mannyng's chronicle of English history, both of which were penned by writers who sought to correct their Anglo-Norman sources. Altogether, instead of describing literary Englishness as primarily reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon era without any real connection to the narratives of that time, I argue that the use of the

English language and gestures towards to the Anglo-Saxon era were the only true constants in an English identity that, into the fourteenth century, underwent continual revision.

Introduction

At the beginning of the early fourteenth-century romance, *Bevis of Hampton* (Auchinleck MS), readers encounter a scene of admirable deception patterned on the story of Israel's son Joseph's sale to an officer of the Pharaoh in the book of *Genesis*.¹ As the English romance unfolds, Bevis's noble, elderly father is caught and killed in a usurpatious plot devised by his deceptive young wife and her lover, the Emperor of Germany. In order to remove the rightful heir to Southampton and complete the overthrow, young Bevis's mother quickly commands her son's own tutor, Saber, to kill him after she and the Emperor secure the throne. Instead of killing his beloved mentee, however, Saber sprinkles blood on the boy's fine clothes and carefully tears them to make it look as if the child has been stabbed, just as Joseph's brothers soak his coat in the blood of a goat in the Biblical exemplar.² In the English tale it is then inferred that these clothes are presented as confirmation that the commanded deed has been completed. As the other part of his counterplot, Saber dresses Bevis in shabby clothing and tells him that he will be a shepherd for a fortnight. The obvious hope of Saber, now unambiguously part of the old guard, is that in moving the prince far out of his recognized setting he will escape notice until he can be taken to an unnamed "riche erl" who will teach him "of corteisie" and in whose care he will reside until he matures and can retake his patrimony (ll. 364-365).³ Diverging from the Old Testament tale, the plan works – to an extent. The breakdown occurs when the young hero, once atop a remote hill, cannot accept this position even as a temporary guise to ensure his safety.

Beves was herde upon the doun
He lokede homward to the toun,

¹ *Genesis*, chapter 37. This same motif is familiar for modern readers through later folk and fairy tales such as Snow White.
² 37:31-33.

³ *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*. Ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury. TEAMS Middle English Texts ed. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999.

That scholde ben his;
He beheld toward the tour,
Trompes he herde and tabour
And meche blis.
"Lord," a seide, "on me thow mone!
Ne was ich ones an erles sone
And now am herde?
Mighte ich with that emperur speke,
Wel ich wolde me fader awreke
For al is ferde!" (ll. 379-390)

(Bevis was a herd upon the hill
He looked homeward to the town,
That should have been his;
He beheld the tower,
Trumpets he heard and tabor
And great merriment.
"Lord," he said, "remember me!
Was I not once an earl's son
And am now a shepherd?
If I could with the emperor speak,
I would avenge my father
Despite all his army!)

After this declaration, Bevis grabs a club and forces his way into the court, killing a porter in the process. However, he is, as Saber had pointed out earlier, not yet of age, and his intrusion neither avenges his father's death nor restores his patrimony. Her trust in Saber lost, Bevis's mother sells her son to Saracen traders who return with him to Ermonie which will become his adopted homeland for much of the romance. In Joseph's story, he too is sold into servitude in a foreign land, becoming the personal servant of Potiphar the captain of the Pharaoh's guard.

This is a brief episode in Bevis's story, and in terms of narrative structuring serves mainly to move the hero from his English homeland to the unfamiliar eastern kingdom(s) where he will, against great odds, become a knight capable of righting this egregious offense. In another sense, this passage, modeled so closely on a Biblical story of loss and recovery, sets the tone for the rest of the hero's story. Concerning the romance's original audience this episode conditioned

their expectations for what was to come. Joseph, despite his unpropitious beginning, rises to prominence as the vizier of Egypt, reconciles with his brothers, reunites with his father, and becomes an inheritor of the house of Israel along with his sons. By evoking Joseph's story, the poet of English romance signaled that he too was telling a story of loss and recovery. For modern critics and readers interested in manifestations of English identity in the literature produced between the late twelfth and mid-fourteenth centuries this passage presents an opportunity to investigate how the poet modeled English identity for his audience.

The most foundational observation to make concerning the Englishness of the romance is that it is set during the reign of King Edgar. This makes Bevis, like his father before him, an Anglo-Saxon noble. The earliest known English version of the tale, however, was penned over three hundred years after the Anglo-Saxon era came to a close. The *Bevis*-poet, writing at a greater remove from the setting of his tale than I would be if I chose to write about the American Revolution, takes his audience back to a point in history before the conquests of the eleventh century. Given these circumstances, Bevis's Anglo-Saxon identity prompts some fairly specific questions. If *Bevis* is an English story about loss and recovery, how was the poem's original audience to understand more recent English history in which the foreign usurpers of the crown had stayed to rule as lords and kings of the land? To what degree would the Norman Conquest have been viewed as coloring the daily lives of the poet and his audience? By the early fourteenth century was there any validity to the binary division of Norman and Saxon that some English texts claim? What purpose was served in telling the tale of an Anglo-Saxon noble who loses his patrimony and must leave England entirely to escape death at the hands of foreigners?⁴

⁴ Bevis's mother is from Scotland and his stepfather from Germany.

Why is the young hero unable to carry out the clever deception devised by his tutor and guardian? No indication is given that the Emperor or Bevis's mother is aware he is not dead until he bursts into court and strikes his stepfather with his shepherd's club. Bevis would have been wise to retreat and mature before confronting the usurpers, but his precociousness makes his predicament all the more dire.

Finally, whose story is this? Like Joseph, Bevis is able to find success in the face of adversity, but both stories are those of individuals. When the English romance was written it had been over two hundred and fifty years since an Anglo-Saxon king had been on the throne of England. Was the original audience of the romance supposed to see, or be reminded, that the Norman, Angevin, and Plantagenet kings were not the legitimate rulers of the land? Both stories insinuate God will restore those who have been aggrieved. If this was the case, was it not problematic for the *Bevis*-poet that the source material of his story about an English hero came from a French writer? How is the English version of the romance different from the Anglo-Norman text which preceded it? Is Bevis inherently more English than Boeve in the Anglo-Norman romance?

Though this particular episode has not been extensively examined, critics who wrestle with questions of English identity during this period would no doubt look to several key aspects of it to highlight the *Bevis*-poet's concern with English identity. First, at its core, this is a story about the loss of patrimony to foreigners. Though Bevis's story appears several centuries after the Norman Conquest and maintains the opposition of Christian knight and Saracen warrior found in the *Chanson de Geste* tradition, it is impossible to ignore the similarities it has to the Conquest and to the cultural reverberations which followed and continued to gain force over

time, affecting political and social concepts in England though at least the Hundred Years War. Chroniclers like Robert of Gloucester (late 13th C.) and Robert Mannyng (early 14th C.) certainly had no trouble making the claim that the nobility of their day held the masses in check just as their forbearers, who could be traced back to William and his Normans, did. Even though his disguise as a shepherd is supposed to be temporary, Bevis, who is only seven years old at the time of the episode in question, speaks directly to what he sees as the injustice and impropriety of the situation: “Ne was ich ones an erles sone / And now am herde?” (“Was I not once an earl’s son, now a herd”). (ll. 386-7) This is the situation in which more than a few Anglo-Saxon nobles found themselves after the Conquest. Instead of slowly fading from memory after the Conquest, statements like Mannyng’s claim that William put the yoke of servitude on the English shows that, at least in some circles, sentiments of injustice festered among those who counted themselves as descendants of the true English whose kingdom was unjustly stolen by the Normans.⁵

The loss of land and social position is foundational to both the scene above and English romance as a whole, but more remains to be said about the specifics of Bevis’s longing on the hill. Dominique Battle and perhaps Seth Lerer would point out the juxtaposition between Bevis’s lonely encampment and the distant castle where his mother and stepfather feast in merriment.⁶ The Normans brought large-scale castle building to England and these foreign structures were essential to maintaining restraint over the native populace symbolically and militarily. Writers as

⁵ Concerning William’s conquest of England, Mannyng says: “Sipen he & his haf had þe lond in heritage, / þat þe Inglis haf so lad, þat þei lyue in seruage / He sette þe Inglis to be þralle, þat or was so fre.” See: “Peter Langtoft’s Chronicle, as illustrated and improv’d by Robert of Brunne”. *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. University of Michigan.

⁶ See: 1) Battles, Dominique. “Sir Orfeo and English Identity.” *Studies in Philology* 107.2 2010. 179-211. 2) Lerer, Seth. “The Afterlife of Old English.” *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1999.

early as Oderic de Vitalis (1075-1142) recognized the use of castles by the Normans to maintain a strategic advantage over the Anglo-Saxons.

Rex igitur secessus regni providentius perlustravit, et opportune loca contra excursiones hostium communit. Munitiones enim (quas castella Galli nuncupant) Anglicis provinciis paucissimæ fuerant; et ob hoc Angli, licet bellicosi fuerint et audaces, ad resi sendum tamen inimicis extiterant debiliores.

In consequence of these [rebellions by the English and the Welsh], the king carefully surveyed the most inaccessible points in the country, and, selecting suitable spots, fortified them against the enemy's excursions. In the English districts there were very few fortresses, which the Normans call castles; so that, though the English were warlike and brave, they were little able to make a determined resistance.⁷

Anglo-Saxon kings and lords had ruled from open halls constructed primarily of timber. Thus, castles, through at least the early fourteenth century, stood as lasting symbols of foreign control imposed upon the land. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that Bevis himself once occupied the castle mentioned before going into hiding, but throughout both the English chronicles and romances of the era, English heroes are not associated with castles as their antagonists are.

The positioning of Bevis's loneliness against the festivities of the usurping couple in the castle also invites a comparison to the *ubi sunt* theme found in a number of Old English poems such as *The Seafarer*, *The Wanderer*, and *Deor*. Bevis's exile is not self-imposed, as the exiled narrators of earlier poems are, but his loss corresponds well. Gone are his father, his lord, the comforts of the life he knew, and any companionship he enjoyed. Saber, his strongest ally, is behind the plot to help the young hero escape, but even if the plan had succeeded, he could not

⁷ Latin Text: Vitalis, Orderic. *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Vol. II. Ed. Augustus Le Prevost and Julius Renouard. Tourmon: Gallicæ Historiæ Societatis Bibliopolas, 1840. 184. Translation: Vitalis, Orderic. "Historia Ecclesiastica." Vol. II. *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*. Ed. Thomas Forester. London: Bohn's Antiquarian Library, 1854. 19.

have accompanied his mentee into exile. Bevis is very alone, and though his place of exile will soon become considerably less familiar, even in this moment he is bereft of the comforts he once enjoyed such as fine clothes, stately surroundings, and future entitlement. The narrator's words are telling of the loss that confronts him: "He lokede homward to the toun, / That scholde ben his". ("He looked homeward toward the town that should have been his.") (ll. 380-1). He has lost not just the land and title that should be his, but all the intangible comforts and security that home imply.

For critics of the English narratives that have come down from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, scenes like the one above and romances like Bevis's display not a clumsy, ham-handed rewriting of Anglo-Norman, continental, or classical sources, but a conscious effect to formulate English identity for English audiences. Through strong statements about having to suffer the injustice imposed by foreign overlords on the part of chroniclers and reformulated romances about English heroes robbed of land and title from the pens of poets, it has become clear that many English writers in this period turned to the past as solace for their current woes. For these writers and their audiences the Anglo-Saxon period became a golden age in which the values and identities they sought in their own day reigned supreme. In the romances, trouble is never far from the English heroes of the past, but they always prevail and right the wrongs done them. From a modern perspective, it might come as a surprise that English poets writing in the thirteenth and into the fourteenth century found it appealing to recreate the Anglo-Saxon past in order to define their identity at a time so far removed from the Conquest, but this was the case. The kingdom of England in the late Middle Ages is not to be equated with British Empire. This incongruity has undoubtedly contributed to the fact that for many years the study of how

Englishness was created in the literature of this period did not receive the scholarly attention other areas of medieval study did. It has only been within the last thirty years or so that Anglo-Saxonism, the “field of research that accommodates [the] study of later representations of Anglo-Saxon England”, has been considered a literary construct which can be used to decode the formation of identity in later eras.⁸

Critical Understanding of English Identity

Romances such as *Bevis of Hampton*, *King Horn*, and *Havelok the Dane* did not fall through the cracks of medieval scholarship for much of the mid twentieth century, but the critical attention paid to them paled in comparison to that enjoyed by the hallmarks of Old and Middle English poetry. Some of the reason for this is understandable. English waned dramatically as a written language after the end of the eleventh century when French became the vernacular language of literary prestige across the kingdom, especially in urban centers like London. The return of English to prominence took place slowly over the several centuries, and the first one hundred and fifty years after the Conquest saw the lowest ebb in the production of written literature since it became a written language. During the same time, the language underwent dramatic changes in its syntax, lexicon, and sound. Whether or not writers from this period could even effectively work with Old English is still a matter of debate. Assessments by critics of English poetry from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the 1950s and 1960s as experimental, halting, or simplistic in its versification is not completely unfounded. The poetry written during this time retained some elements of Old English poetic structuring such as alliteration, but almost as rule took on end-rhyme poetic formulations of continental derivation. Perhaps it was this sort

⁸ Rouse, Robert A. *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005. 3.

of experimentation that, for a time, led critics to a somewhat dismissive assessments of English romance. In the 1950s Fernand Mossé characterized *King Horn* (mid 13th C.) as having “a poverty of diction, a lack of any attempt at elegance and lack of description of any kind” and *Havelok the Dane* (late 13th C.) as “an unpretentious romance aimed at an audience not concerned with courtly refinement”.⁹ In retrospect, it seems clear that the comparatively humble poetics of the period also affected critics’ evaluations of these narratives’ contents. Also writing in the 1950s, Dorothy Everett, comparing *King Horn* with the much later *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th C.), finds the former presents, “a cruder conception of knightly duty”.¹⁰ Roughly a decade later in her “General Introduction” to *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English: 1050-1500*, Helaine Newstead clearly expresses her opinion that English romances are inferior to their earlier French and Anglo-Norman counterparts saying that, “English romances are less sophisticated and less polished than the French ... possibly because their authors were writers of modest literary abilities”.¹¹ As late as the early 1980s W. R. J. Barron harshly criticized the English versions of *Bevis of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick* (early 14th C.) as “competent but somewhat vulgarized, given to the reduplication of striking effects, paying lip-service to the hero’s values”.¹² Compared to the English poetry of the late fourteenth century or continental romance, early English romance might be declared inferior in terms of poetic dexterity and refinement, but any artistic form must become familiar before it can be mastered. To equate the relative simplicity of poetic formulation of these narratives with the sophistication of their content is a mistake.

⁹ Mossé, Fernand. *A Handbook of Middle English*. Trans. James A. Walker. 10th ed. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. 170, 189.

¹⁰ Everett, Dorothy. *Essays on Middle English Literature*. Ed. Patricia Kean. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955. 5.

¹¹ Newstead, Helaine. "General Introduction." *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*. Ed. J. Burke Severs. New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967. 12.

¹² Barron, W. R. J. *English Medieval Romance*. London: Longman, 1987. 233.

The change in the perception of early Middle English romance has its roots in the renewed interest in the study of Anglo-Saxonism in the early 1980s. Carl T. Berkhout and Milton McC. Gatch's *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries* (1982) provides an expansive assessment of Anglo-Saxon scholarship from the seventeenth century through the nineteenth. For the most part, the contributions to the volume are held together by their discussions of "scholarly" antiquarian and political interests in Anglo-Saxon England across the centuries and their cross-pollination. A representative example is the promotion of the Teutonic origins of the English by scholars and politicians alike prior to the rise of nationalism which precipitated World War I.¹³ Yet, in the long run, the first and second World Wars had a positive effect on Anglo-Saxon scholarship, because when scholars began to look self-critically at the field in the 1980s, past desires to uncover pan-Germanic social and ethnic roots were brought to the fore and addressed directly. A case in point is Hugh A. MacDougall's *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (1982): an explicit investigation of racial formation and positioning in English literature. MacDougall's discussion of the competition in English literature between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon origins gained a lot of traction due to the attention it gave to what was a real concern for numerous medieval English writers, from Mannyng to the *Pearl*-poet, who were forced to synthesize the two origin myths.

In 1987, Lee Patterson's *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* directly addressed many of the issues that prompted Anglo-Saxonists to reevaluate the

¹³ Concerning the dramatic fluctuations in the fortunes of Anglo-Saxon studies in the twentieth century, the obvious thing to point out is that even academics had to grapple with the devastation of two World Wars in which the British and Americans fought against the Germans.

conventional critical approaches to the field in the early 1980s. Patterson's study concerns the relationship between critic and subject and the way the two are affected by social, historical, and cultural process which condition a critic's understanding. Taking examples as disparate as the Kane-Donaldson edition of *Pier's Plowman* (1975), a fifteenth-century reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Patterson draws a sharp distinction between using a text to support a given theory, itself a product of certain critical context, and illuminating various features of it for better understanding. For Patterson, establishing a critical "norm of correctness" is impossible.¹⁴ His primary criticism of the Kane-Donaldson B-text of *Pier's Plowman* is that it is a blend of a number of texts that themselves have been subject to various editorial decisions. The composite obscures the local aspects of a given text. The challenge Patterson issues for critics of medieval literature is to look for the political, cultural, and ideological conflicts in a given text and how they condition critical assessment.

Anglo-Saxonism itself stepped out onto even firmer footing in the 1990s due in no small part to the work of Allen Frantzen and John D. Niles. In *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition* (1990) Frantzen adamantly argues that the study of Old English has always been about a desire for origins with the implication that some modern-day scholars in the discipline have been just as guilty of mythmaking as their medieval and early modern forbearers.¹⁵ For Frantzen the now-obvious promotion of Germanic mythologies, like Jefferson's championing of Hengist and Horsa as early democratic pioneers in the early nineteenth century, was also at the heart of present-day attempts for scholarly consensus over

¹⁴ See: Patterson, Lee. *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. 71.

¹⁵ Frantzen, Allen. *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and Teaching the Tradition*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990.

concerns like precise dating and authorship.¹⁶ Frantzen, this time with John D. Niles, was again at the fore of Anglo-Saxonist studies with the publication of *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* (1997). This study strives to place Anglo-Saxon studies within the more expansive discipline of medievalism, or understandings of the Middle Ages by those in the post-Medieval world. Together, the pair define Anglo-Saxonism as, “the process through which a self-conscious national and racial identity first came into being among the early peoples of the region that we now call England and how, over time, through both scholarly and popular promptings, that identity was transformed into an originary myth available to a wide variety of political and social interests”.¹⁷ Building on Frantzen’s preceding studies, the book argues that Anglo-Saxon England is primarily a literary and cultural topos developed first by the Anglo-Saxons themselves and then perpetuated over the centuries by those whom the identification favored. In retrospect, what studies like Frantzen and Niles’s allowed scholars to do is reexamine texts like the romances which make up the Matter of England and identify intentions and purposes within them which are far greater than simple attempts to imitate French language sources. No small part of Bevis’s identity stems from the fact that he was an Anglo-Saxon who was wronged by self-interested foreigners and through tremendous odds able to regain his patrimony, see to the conversion and then marry the most beautiful woman in the East, and engender sons who would become kings themselves.¹⁸ I have purposefully simplified the equation of Bevis’s appeal here, but for the original English audience of the romance, he sets a precedent rich in credibility and emotional appeal. And for this to happen he necessarily had to be an Anglo-Saxon noble and not a contemporary.

¹⁶ Adams, John. Letter to Abigail Adams. 14 Aug. 1776. *Adams Family Correspondence*. Cambridge: Belknap, 1963.

¹⁷ Frantzen, Allen, and John D. Niles. *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity*. Gainesville: University of Florida UP, 1997. 1.

¹⁸ His son Miles marries King Edgar’s daughter and becomes King of England and his son Guy becomes King of Ermonie (Armenia).

Though not concerned with Anglo-Saxonism in the same manner as Frantzen and Niles, no discussion of scholarship concerning English identity during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries would be complete without considering the contributions of Thorlac Turville-Petre. Foremost among his work is his 1996 book, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340*. As a whole, Turville-Petre's study aims to show that "it is the similarities between medieval and modern expressions of national identity that are fundamental, and the differences that are peripheral".¹⁹ To confirm this assessment, Turville-Petre examines how regional differences emerge and are depicted within contemporary texts and how these varied conceptions alternately compete with and support the hegemony of England as a united kingdom. Necessarily, much of the study discusses the fundamental ways writers around the turn of the fourteenth century drew on the Anglo-Saxon past they claimed as their own. Given the decline of English as a written language after the Conquest, Turville-Petre declares that "the very act of writing in English [was] a statement about belonging".²⁰ Much later in the study, this statement gets some qualification when Turville-Petre says that it was nationalist polemics which established the paradigm in which Latin was the language of the Church, French the language of the oppressing government, and English the language of the common and oppressed, and that the three languages actually had a "symbiotic" relationship.²¹ Nevertheless, the observation that writing in English was a statement about belonging to a certain community holds.

¹⁹ Turville-Petre, Thorlac. *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. v.

²⁰ Turville-Petre, 11.

²¹ Turville-Petre, 181.

Turville-Petre's study most directly overlaps the work of Frantzen and Niles in his discussion of how the English chroniclers Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng tell the story of English history. Though he finds Gloucester to be more a more professional historian in the modern sense (Gloucester goes directly to Latin sources while Mannyng relies on Anglo-Norman texts), he observes that both writers had to necessarily "juxtapose and knead their material so as to present [their particular] vision" of history.²² The reason for this, as MacDougall observed a decade and a half earlier, is that English historians after the Conquest had to create synthesis between the Trojan / Briton and Anglo-Saxon origin myths in circulation since at least Geoffrey of Monmouth's writing. Concerning the successive conquests in the history of the British Isles, Turville-Petre shows how both chroniclers presented the defeated peoples of the past as preparing the way for the next wave of rulers. In short, the Trojans civilized the wilds of Albion creating Britain, but, in time, weak leadership damaged their relationship with God clearing the way for Saxon invasion.²³ So too, the Anglo-Saxons (now the English) fell victim to poor leadership before losing control of the land to the Normans. This theme of cyclical overthrow to bring the people of the Isles back into a right relationship with the Almighty has an obvious biblical model in the Hebrews, but, as Turville-Petre points out, further work had to be done to smooth out the sins of the conquered peoples in order to justify current racial identifications. For example, Mannyng adds the bizarre story of a Briton named Engle who returned to the land of his ancestors to avenge their mistreatment at the hands of the Angles. Overwhelmed by Engle's giant companion Scardyng, the Angles make Engle their king. Strange

²² Turville-Petre, 82.

²³ Indicative of the discord that characterized the end of British rule, brothers Belinus and Brennius sack Rome in Book II of the HRB but Cassivellaunus is eventually forced to pay tribute to Julius Caesar in Book IV. When the Romans withdraw from the British Isles the end is at hand. Vortigern invites the Saxons Hengist and Horsa to defend the British against the Picts, Scots, and Danes as mercenaries, but they turn against him and the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon rise to power in the Isles is underway (Books V and VI).

as the story is, it allows Mannyng to create separation between the barbarous Angles and Saxons and the English with whom he and his audience identified. Whatever the truth, in the modern sense, was about Germanic migration, it is clear that Mannyng had an interest in shaping an English identity in his own day that drew heavily on a particular configuration of Anglo-Saxon history.

In addition to his reading of the work done by Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng to create their English histories of England, Turville-Petre also dedicates a chapter to the ways in which the Auchinleck MS as a whole sets about the business of depicting a vision of Englishness. The MS is of extreme value and importance because it preserves the earliest extant versions of numerous English romances such as *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Sir Orfeo*, and *Horn Childe & Maiden Rinnild*. Despite the wide (some might say disparate) variety of narrative genres included in the MS, Turville-Petre declares that the common thread among the texts is their “shared concept of England, the state of its present and the contributions of its past”.²⁴ Together the romances, hagiographies, classical tales, and even a short chronicle (*Liber Regum Anglie*) tell a composite history of England. The evidence of this is spread throughout the texts. At the beginning of *Horn Childe & Maiden Rinnild*, for instance, the narrator declares his intention to tell stories of “our elders þat were / Whilom in þis lond” (ll. 5-6).²⁵ Likewise in the poem, *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, the mythical king’s Britishness is neatly rolled into the wider, albeit revisionary, Englishness the MS presents with the simple declaration that “þe Bretouns . . . beþ Inglisse nov” (l. 119).²⁶ Though emendations like this are completely out of keeping with

²⁴ Turville-Petre, 112

²⁵ As transcribed by Turville-Petre, 14.

²⁶ As transcribed by Turville-Petre, 126.

modern notions of historical accuracy, they are, for scholars and critics, prime examples of how Englishness in literature was being created during this period.

Along with the critical work of Frantzen, Niles, and Turville-Petre, new editions of several English romances, some of which had not appeared in updated editions for over thirty years, were published in the late 1990s. *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, and Athelston* (1999), published by The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages and edited by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, presented updated glosses, expanded MS abbreviations, regularized the orthography of the texts, and affixed annotations with the intention of making these romances available for classroom use.²⁷ The arrival of new editions of these romances (followed by the *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* in 2004) at the same time as the renewed critical interest in Anglo-Saxonism generally is no coincidence.²⁸ Though the intention of the editors is not primarily critical, each romance is paired with an introduction which, along with discussions of date and provenance, explore how the romances exist in relationship with each other and source material that is generally from the Anglo-Norman tradition.

Armed with the critical understanding of Anglo-Saxonism as a literary construct, a new wave of critics in the 2000s added fresh contributions to the ways in which Anglo-Saxon England is depicted and deployed in texts written before the full reemergence of English and the Hundred Years War. Robert Allen Rouse's *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English*

²⁷ *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*. Ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999. TEAMS.

²⁸ Wiggins, Alison, ed. *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004. TEAMS.

Romance (2005) consists of the author's own critical take on established markers of English identity: the connection between literal and textual landscapes, the purity of Anglo-Saxon law, and the complexity of Englishness in the Matter of England. In these areas Rouse makes important contributions, most notably his questioning of Turville-Petre's notion that medieval concepts of nationhood are not fundamentally different from those that exist today, but his most unique contribution is the expansion of the scope of investigation of Englishness to the twelfth century. With only a trickle of English literary production (only a fraction of which was original), the twelfth century, even after the renewed interest in medieval Anglo-Saxonism, was still a relative blank spot on the critical map with the exception of the *Owl and the Nightingale* and *Lazaman's Brut*.²⁹ Rouse, however, dedicates a whole chapter to the ways King Alfred (849-899), one of the most famous Anglo-Saxon kings before the Conquest, was remembered in the twelfth century. Alfred appears in a number of twelfth-century texts, each time as a wise, good, just king.³⁰ Of these depictions, the *Proverbs of Alfred* develops the most thorough portrait of the ruler himself. Appearing in four MSS dating from the thirteenth century, it is generally believed that the common core of these texts dates to the middle of the century. In the *Proverbs*, the king doles out wisdom to an assemblage of clerics, knights, and other retainers at Seaford in Sussex. Though, like most critics and historians, Rouse believes there to be virtually no connection between the *Proverbs* and the actual writing of Alfred and his advisors, he does make a number of observations about the collection as a cultural artifact.

Taking the text as a "useful example of how the pre-conquest period was remembered in English during the twelfth century", Rouse finds "[t]he society that is represented in the

²⁹ Conjectures about its date of composition range from the last quarter of the twelfth century to the first quarter of the thirteenth.

³⁰ See Chapter II, p. 4.

Proverbs is that of a lost golden age”.³¹ For the author or community that produced and received this collection in the twelfth century, Alfred and the kingdom he ruled stood as a “trope for contrasting current societal woes with the virtues of the past”.³² Consequently, Alfred is both a king and a clerk: royal and intellectual. He instructs the assembled bishops, earls, and knights how to live and rule justly. The proverbs themselves and the reputation of the king enjoy a symbiotic relationship in which each contributes to the credibility of the other. Though the number of proverbs varies by MS, the common core advocates finding truth in Christ and his supremacy as eternal Lord; avoiding the advice of the foolish, those who talk too much, and the advice of women; and recognizing the temporary nature of worldly wealth. It might be an oversimplification to say that the *Proverbs* represent what its original author(s) and audience of the text found missing in their society, but, without a doubt, these are the values with which they wished to be associated. The sententiae comes from a number of different sources and can be traced to the Distichs of Cato, the Bible, and perhaps some writing from the king’s court known to twelfth-century ecclesiastics. Yet even if the king’s own writing contributed little or nothing to the text, as most critics claim, the choice of Alfred as the mouthpiece for these aphorisms indicates his importance to twelfth-century conceptions of English identity. Together with the poet’s choice to compose in English, having King Alfred voice these proverbs is clear evidence that the community behind this text saw themselves as the English descendants of Alfred’s England.

While Rouse expands the scope of English identity investigation, the current health of Anglo-Saxonism has also led to a proliferation of research regarding long-studied English

³¹ Rouse, 12, 18.

³² Rouse, 18.

romances. In 2008 Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević edited a volume of essays dedicated solely to *Bevis of Hampton*, covering everything from the earliest known version of story, *Boeve de Haumtone*, to its legacy as one of the most widely circulated medieval narratives across Europe.³³ In their introduction, Fellows and Djordjević describe the circuitous history of the story itself which mirrors the discipline of Anglo-Saxonism in miniature. In the nineteenth century, the editors report, it was proposed that Bevis's story was alternatively "of German origin", "to be found in a tenth-century Viking saga", "of Celtic origin", an Anglo-Saxon story representing an "expanded and romanticized version of the tale of Horn", and of "Persian-Armenian origin ... confirmed by its onomastics".³⁴ This obsessive search for origins is the same difficulty that Frantzen found with traditional Anglo-Saxon studies. Yet, as Fellows and Djordjević point out, it should not go without notice that despite his Anglo-Norman origins Bevis "did not acquire the status of a national hero until he was translated into English".³⁵ Thus, just as the actual life and reign of King Alfred had only a tangential bearing on the *Proverbs*, the origin of Bevis's story was less important for English poets and audiences than what he stood for by way of his actions. The same thing could be said about Havelok the Dane or King Horn; their literary origin was of far less importance to English writers than how they could be fashioned into English heroes for contemporary audiences.

In her own contribution to the volume, Ivana Djordjević discusses the work of translation that turned *Boeve de Haumtone* into *Bevis of Hampton*. For critics and researchers interested in identifying how this English hero of the Anglo-Saxon era fits into the greater Englishness present

³³ *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*. Ed. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008.

³⁴ Fellows and Djordjević, 2.

³⁵ Fellows and Djordjević, 3.

in the romances of the time, distinguishing between Boeve and Bevis is of crucial importance. Unfortunately, Djordjević decides to “leave aside substantial omissions, lengthy interpolations and bold rewritings” in favor of focusing on a few “closely rendered passages” which reveal the *Bevis*-poet’s translational procedure at the level of poetic construction. Determining a given translator’s “behaviour” has obvious linguistic value, but so do the more dramatic changes “obviously motivated by conscious agendas”.³⁶ Making determinations about the conscious agenda of the poet is precisely what critics concerned with the construct of English identity aim to do. Even so, Djordjević’s study contributes to discussions of English identity in her challenging of the stereotype that “Middle English romances are more conventional than their French originals”, saying that *Bevis* “is less conventional than the Anglo-Norman” text in regard to its use of the appositional fixed epithets ubiquitous in the genre. So while her focus centers on the linguistic and poetic aspects of translation, Djordjević is, in a roundabout way, also able to show that the English poet behind *Bevis* had another agenda besides simply moving the story from one language to another.

The second essay in the collection that directly discusses issues relating to constructs of identity is Robert Allen Rouse’s chapter, “For King and Country? The Tension behind National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*”. Here, Rouse works from the observation that “a number of the Auchinleck romances can be seen as a direct result of the manuscript’s attempt to ‘English’ the texts” of which it is comprised.³⁷ The tension between the Christian West, Bevis’s homeland, and the Muslim East, the region where he lives much of his life, has long been under the microscope of critics with backgrounds in post-colonial studies. Looking beyond

³⁶ Djordjević. “Translator” 67-68.

³⁷ Rouse. “King and Country?” 115.

the obvious oppositions set up by the poet, Rouse turns his attention to the friction between Bevis's regional identity as a noble from Southampton and his nationality as an Englishman. These two sides of the hero's native identity are not always in sync. For Rouse, the text "stands as a complex manifestation of a sense of Englishness, containing an internal set of tensions between a constructed national English identity centered around 'the symbolizing potential of the king', and the powerful regional identities that were an important aspect of medieval English culture".³⁸ The most prominent of these internal tensions can be seen in the episodes set in London, a city and region with an identity distinct from Bevis's Southampton. In Rouse's reading, London is "constructed as a cosmopolitan, immigrant city, full of the kinds of foreigners that are dangerous to Bevis and to his regional Englishness". The unity of Bevis's England is superficial to some degree. "The social discourse that underlies this anxiety is perhaps," Rouse admits, "difficult to ascertain". However, he does point to the "increasing centralization of the royal court, as well as the number of foreign aliens during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries" as possible sources. If this is the case and the poet found London to be place of foreign peoples then the hero's association with Southampton, a location much closer to Winchester, the capital of Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex, marks him as more genuinely English. Beyond what may or may not have made London alien for the *Bevis*-poet, it is important to recognize that his construct of Englishness comes not just as a reimagining of the past, but in reaction to his present. In Rouse's estimation, Bevis's England is "constructed as a space in which tensions between competing regional discourses of identity can be played out in a simplified and secure past, rather than in the complex everyday world of the audience".³⁹

³⁸ Rouse. "King and Country?" 117.

³⁹ Rouse. "King and Country?" 123-125.

The permeability of boundaries in medieval romance, both those with non-literary equivalents as well as those which are more amorphous and metaphorical, is the subject of *Boundaries in Medieval Romance* (2008), a volume of essays edited by Neil Cartlidge which addresses the genre's "apparent readiness to breach the rules both of literary decorum and of literary realism". Collectively the volume's contributions hold to the common idea that "medieval romances frequently, and perhaps characteristically, capitalize on the dramatic or suggestive possibilities implicit" in all types of boundaries, and forfends against the accusation that romance is a kind of intellectual failure or in some way fundamentally dishonest.⁴⁰ Using the Sword Bridge from *Chevalier de la Charrette* by Chrétien de Troyes, Cartlidge, working from Erich Auerbach's famous declaration that no text can portray reality "except by using particular techniques that can be subject to literary-critical analysis", begins by suggesting that the imagined geographies of medieval romance serve primarily to negotiate moral and spiritual boundaries instead of political ones. In this understanding, the Sword Bridge has more value in its contribution to the opaque, undefined nature of Gorre, the kingdom to which it provides access, than as a geographic marker of the boundary between realms. For Cartlidge, Chrétien's attention to the bridge's physicality actually emphasizes its artificiality. Since Gorre is a place from which no visitor can return, but whose inhabitants come and go freely, Cartlidge sees the bridge and the landscape in which it has been placed as "dramatizing the boundary between life and death". In this understanding, the reality of the romance's topography and geography actually serves not just as the "assertion of the values of 'courtly culture', but the very means of making that assertion".⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*. Ed. Neil Cartlidge. Chippenham: D. S. Brewer, 2008. 1,3.

⁴¹ *Boundaries*, 3.

Several of the essays in *Boundaries* take English romance as their subject. The first of these is Rosalind Field's "The Curious History of the Matter of England" in which she scrutinizes the inconsistencies of the designation, the Matter of England. For Field, the term, which she credits as the invention of American literary historians, endues a false sense that the romances sometimes grouped under this title drew on a body of material familiar to both audience and author. As an alternative, she advocates for the title "Romances of English Heroes" in order to avoid shading the texts with a sense of political unity they do not carry. Field's observation is well-founded, yet an argument that a productive application of the traditional terminology can still be made. For instance, I use the term frequently throughout this study, especially when discussing commonalities between *Bevis of Hampton*, *King Horn*, and *Havelok the Dane*, not to give a false depiction of the texts' political uniformity, but to promote the idea that definite thematic similarities exist between the romances concerning constructions of Englishness. The term has value, for instance, in denoting English narratives that are either set in the Anglo-Saxon era or make reference to English cultural markers which clearly stand apart from French or Anglo-Norman ones.

In "The Hero and his Realm in Medieval English Romance" from the same volume, Laura Ashe suggests that the writers of ME romance invested the figure of the Good King with the characteristics now associated with the hero of romance. Ashe works from the etymological precariousness of terms for hero in English, noting that the Anglo-Saxon term, *heleth / hælath* did not survive the thirteenth century. The modern English term, *hero*, with its Latin and ultimately Greek origins, did not enjoy regular usage as a noun until the sixteenth century. In this lexical gap, Ashe claims, English romance emerges. In the OE poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, for example, Christ himself can take on the attitude and characteristics of a traditional Germanic

warrior, whereas in later centuries the Christ-like sacrifice of heroes was eclipsed by the stability they sought to establish in this world. The OE hero is not, for Ashe, the ME hero. Horn, Havelok, and Bevis all leave behind stable, secure kingdoms. Amid the increasing concern for heroes to address political and military concerns in the present, Ashe suggests that the Good King of ME romance, vested with qualities including peacekeeping and battlefield prowess, be considered as a temporary substitute for the hero position in literature between heleth and hero. Her assessment accords well with the fact that few if any kings in ME romance occupy an ambiguous ethical middle ground between good and bad. Virtually all are one or the other with the purpose of sharpening the spiritual and martial position of the protagonist.

The Present Study

Given this virtual explosion of critical attention to English identity, what still needs to be said about the constructs of Englishness in the generations leading up to the Hundred Years War? The present study is my reaction to several gaps and misrepresentations in the characterization of literary Englishness in this period. Primarily, I want to argue that Englishness, to borrow linguistic terms, should be understood diachronically and synchronically: in the moment and over time. A better understanding of literary Englishness can be made if the texts and MSS which concern themselves with what it means to be English are read with the intention of uncovering how the process of English identity formation changes over time. For several decades now, a majority of scholars in the field have accepted the idea that those writing in English while French was the language of prestige found self-definition in the Anglo-Saxon past. However, too often characterizations of how a given text depicts Englishness, even Englishness dependent on the Anglo-Saxon era, give only a fragmentary image of a literary topos that evolved significantly over time. Rouse's declaration that *Bevis* displays, "an internal set of tensions

between a constructed national English identity” and “powerful regional identities” is vitally important, but only a snapshot of Englishness in the 1330s. What sorts of literary Englishness preceded and influenced the *Bevis*-poet?⁴² If, as Neil Cartlidge says, “the [Owl and the Nightingale] are best regarded as comic figures” does it necessarily follow that they “hardly deserve” the “serious respect” of readers?⁴³ King Lear’s fool is not the only comic figure to amuse and reveal the truth simultaneously. According to David Staines, Havelok’s career is the “embodiment of the ideal king from the point of view of the lower classes”.⁴⁴ What made the Danish Prince’s humble adolescence and perseverance in the face of adversity so appealing to the masses? Did his character follow some sort of precedent?

In my understanding, generating credibility through King Alfred in the twelfth century is a phenomenon related but distinct from the presentation of dynastic synthesis between Denmark and England in *Havelok the Dane* at the end of the thirteenth century, or having dangerous foreigners steal English titles and land in *Bevis of Hampton* and *King Horn*. Saying that the *Proverbs of Alfred* and the later romances reimagine Anglo-Saxon England as a golden age in which current woes and anxieties could be addressed is true, but overly general. I want to argue that, after the initial trauma of the Conquest, it was possible for English writers to represent the Norman presence in England in relatively neutral terms for a time. The Normans were still depicted as foreign, but their presence could be used to sharpen concepts of Englishness without the explicit hostility seen in texts from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards. Central to my argument is the idea that as Norman presence became increasingly permanent, the reaction of

⁴² p. 21.

⁴³ *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Ed. Neil Cartlidge. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001. xxiv.

⁴⁴ Staines, David. "Havelok the Dane: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes." *Speculum* 51 (1976): 623.

those who saw themselves as the true English became more directly aggressive. Having the famous Anglo-Saxon king present certain values in *The Proverbs of Alfred* or having a Norman nightingale and an English Owl debate ethics around the end of the twelfth century is not the same as the obsessive, repetitive presence of foreign invaders and the loss of patrimony in the Matter of the England. What recreations of Anglo-Saxon culture could substantiate and support changed over time as political and cultural movements came and went. Put another way, English texts concerned with identity between the Conquest and the Hundred Years War show the act of identity construction involved reacting to the present first and looking to the past second.

In M. T. Clanchy's estimation, it is after the rebellion of 1258 that rulers in England pursued their dynastic aspirations as "heads of an English nation".⁴⁵ But even the most monumental socio-political events such as war are rarely seen in isolation. My desire to characterize English writers as growing increasingly hostile towards French cultural markers is corroborated by Elaine Treharne's observation in *Living Through Conquest* that the Norman Conquest was only inevitable and permanent in hindsight. In her study, Treharne is interested in "determining to what extent ... vernacular literature can be regarded as a manifestation of an English national consciousness and collective identity"; concluding that it can be.⁴⁶ In contrast to Clanchy, who finds "less conservative writers" to be the agents of literary change, she declares that the future of English in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was "in the hands of literate English elite ... who preserved linguistic and cultural snapshots of their society." For Treharne, these snapshots are the momentary exclamations of suppressed English voices. Collectively,

⁴⁵ Clanchy, Michael T. *England and Its Rulers 1066-1307*. 4th ed. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. 2.

⁴⁶ Treharne, Elaine. *Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020-1220*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 1, 7-8.

these voices comment on an entire assortment of concerns which constitute Englishness:

“Politics, law, medicine, education, Christian teaching, friendship pacts, and dire warnings”.

This scope of commentary leads her to the determination that these texts “sought to heal cultural trauma, and to ameliorate, perhaps, the loss of status, land, and power”.⁴⁷

Treharne is not only concerned with the impact of the Norman Conquest. She describes the whole of the eleventh century as a period of conquest. Her scope of investigation includes the years of Danish kingship that have been portrayed as successful and benevolent in the past.⁴⁸ Despite the temporary restoration of Anglo-Saxon kingship and a scarcity of historically significant texts from the period, Treharne finds a careful contemporary shaping of Cnut’s (1016-1035) image (cf. his portrait in MS Stowe 944 and *Letters to the English*) in ways that sharply contrast language of private texts like the *Knutsdrapur*, an Old Norse Skaldic verse which celebrates the king’s military victory over Æthelred (978-1013, 1014-1016). The point is that the reign of Cnut and those of his sons Harold Harefoot (1035) and Harthacnut (1035-1042) were traumatic in their own right, contributing to the greater wounding of English identity in the eleventh century.

From a modern vantage point, as Treharne makes clear, it is easy to characterize the period of Danish rule as something less detrimental than a foreign takeover, but this is what it was, and by at least the thirteenth century the eleventh came to be characterized as one of

⁴⁷ Treharne, 187.

⁴⁸ Treharne cites Frank Stenton’s praise of Cnut’s reign as “so successful that contemporaries found little to say about it” (qt in Treharne, 12).

political and military failure.⁴⁹ In hindsight, the twenty-four years of Anglo-Saxon kingship (mostly Edward the Confessor's reign) between the end of Danish rule and the Conquest was fleeting at best. Unlike William of Malmesbury who, writing in the twelfth century, offered the marriage of Henry I to Edith (Matilda after marriage) as a restoration of the Wessex line, Robert Mannyng's harsh characterization of the Danish rulers is eclipsed only by his disdain for the Normans and the weak English leaders whose selfishness opened the door to foreign invasion. Beyond the grievances of any specific writer, I aim to show that for English writers the full impact of the Conquest could not have been realized in a year, a decade, or even a century.

While I want to argue for a more nuanced understanding of how identity developed in English literature before the Hundred Years War, I also want to demonstrate the persistence of some English poetic traditions between the OE period and the rise of English romance. English writers could draw on varied conceptions of Anglo-Saxon England not just because it was the task of a given writer to shape this era but because a significant number of uniquely English literary topos survived the Conquest and rise of Anglo-Norman as the language of literary prestige. Along with the subject matter of a text (pre-Conquest heroes and the loss of patrimony), drawing on older, long-established features of English poetry was a ready-made way of coding a text as "truly" English people. Thinking again about the rebellion of 1258, it should not be forgotten that Simon de Montfort, a Frenchman, led the forces that opposed Henry III. For those who considered themselves the descendants of Anglo-Saxon England, the challenge to Henry's sovereignty still came within the familiar frame of French hegemony.

⁴⁹ It is not my intention to locate the events that precipitated the realization among the English that the Norman, Angevin, and eventually Plantagenet kings were not going to be overthrown by some remnant of the West-Saxon line, but it is important to recognize that after a certain point, the permanency of the Norman Conquest became evident.

Chapter I: Old English Epic Poetry and Middle English Romance

In his investigation of literacy and power in Anglo-Saxon literature, Seth Lerer finds evidence of writers across the era invoking “the conventions of runology to call to mind the past that they [shared] with Scandinavian and Continental Germanic peoples and to juxtapose that past against a Christian Latin present”.⁵⁰ These are some of the earliest acts of identity-formation through writing in English. Writers in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries did not have the access to the runic literacy of the past or the mythology associated with it that Anglo-Saxon writers had, but they were able to draw on the English language and uniquely English literary conventions established in the distant past to define Englishness in the present and undermine Francophone political hegemony. Long before Robert Mannyng’s sharp criticism of the Normans, whom he depicts as still holding the true English in servitude, the poets behind the earliest English romances were coloring their narratives with images and associations of Norman and English culture that overwhelmingly favor the English. This binary is central to the uniqueness of English romance. While the simple characterization of English romance as inferior adaptations of French originals has long since been overruled, definitive answers to the question of what exactly separates these strains of the medieval romance tradition remain elusive. I make no attempt to characterize the sum of what typifies either tradition. However, I do argue that English romance and especially the Matter of England drew on not just pre-Conquest heroes and settings, but also on earlier English narrative traditions that can be traced back to the OE narrative tradition. In my reading, this older strain of English narrative, often classified as epic, is largely responsible for the strong geographic and cultural insider-outsider dynamic so prevalent

⁵⁰ See: Lerer, Seth. *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon Literature*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1991. 11.

in the English romances of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. English narratives were about steadfast heroes defending their homeland from invaders from afar long before the introduction of romance, and the Normans were simply the most recent and appropriate outsiders to be inserted into this equation.

To support the connection I find between OE narratives and ME romance, I suggest that the position of English as a language of narrative did not wane and was little diminished by the socially and politically traumatic conquests of the eleventh century. I look to numerous parallels between the OE and ME traditions and discuss several themes and motifs which show striking evidence of continuity. In contrast to the Continental romance tradition, English heroes are, as a rule, placed in eminent danger (often involving invasion and loss of patrimony) before their maturity. Dire circumstances spur the English hero, not his own volition. In almost all cases, English heroes and their enemies are separated by not just ideological and ethical boundaries, but bodies of water: a physical representation of cultural separation. In these circumstances, confrontations between English heroes and their foes become an exercise in literally and metaphorically crossing boundaries and overcoming or eradicating foreign opposition. Subtler motifs span the gulf between the two periods of textual production as well. The enemies of the English, even if they are human, are routinely given grotesque, animalistic imagery which is remarkably consistent in its form and application in both periods. The continued presence of specific themes and rhetorical tropes in English narratives both demonstrates that the understanding ME writers had of pre-Conquest Englishness was more substantial than a creative use of certain characters and settings, and shows that the English tradition maintained markers of Englishness unavailable to or unrealized by Anglo-Norman writers. Writing in English was one marker of Englishness, but other poetic and thematic resources were maintained as well.

The two strongest impediments to acknowledging the continuous presence of the narrative tradition in English are the changes to the language between what is now demarcated as late Old English and early Middle English and the fact that so many English romances take French-language texts as source material. Addressing the first issue, obvious problems exist for any argument claiming that English had to somehow be reinvented from its barest elements haphazardly maintained by the semi-educated masses. Though he took governmental and ecclesiastic documents as his evidence, M. T. Clanchy demonstrated some time ago that Western Europe's shift to a culture of writing was slow and uneven with oral formulation holding sway over written documentation well into the fourteenth. A similar assessment can be made concerning the inscription of vernacular narratives. It is impossible to think that English speakers in the twelfth century had the capacity for only the most rudimentary narrative skills, or were so bereft of tradition in the thirteenth that they had no choice but to turn to Anglo-Norman sources. A more reasonable characterization of English narrative production after the rise of Anglo-Norman acknowledges the continued importance of oral transmission even while written texts declined in number. English certainly did evolve quite dramatically between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. The changes to its syntax, lexicon, and pronunciation, however, are evidence of its use, not disuse. When English began once again to gain momentum as a written language, writers had to engage the French language stories about their past and ancestors. To ignore established Anglo-Norman romances like *Horn et Rimenhild*, *Boeve de Haumtone*, and *Lai d'Havelok* completely would have damaged the credibility of the English texts.

Chapter II: “Ne may non ryhtwis king [ben] vnder Criste seoluen, bute-if he beo in boke ilered”: The Ingenious Compiler of the *Proverbs of Alfred*.

I argue in chapter I for a greater recognition of the English’s continuing role as a language of narrative through the ascendancy of Anglo-Norman. As indicated by the sharp decline in the number of English texts produced during this time, much of the English narrative tradition was maintained through oral transmission. However, I do not believe that the OE textual tradition was completely inaccessible for early ME writers. It has long been recognized that scholars at ecclesiastic centers like Worcester, Winchester, and Rochester preserved and catalogued many of the OE MSS that have survived to the present day. Beginning with Christine Franzen’s study of the Tremulous Hand of Worcester (1991), more attention has been given to the possibility that OE texts had not become incomprehensible by the thirteenth century.⁵¹ To paraphrase Franzen’s thesis: even though the scribe known as the Tremulous Hand of Worcester did not gloss OE texts with full accuracy, he absolutely had a working knowledge of OE. Franzen’s study is vitally important to understanding literary Englishness because it demonstrates that English writers did not always have to reinvent or reimagine the Anglo-Saxon past. They could engage with it directly.

In this chapter I turn my attention to the *Proverbs of Alfred*, a collection of proverbial maxims dating from around the middle of the twelfth century. The text is important to my investigation of how literary Englishness was formed for two reasons. First, it is explicitly concerned with English identity and draws on the Anglo-Saxon past. As numerous texts demonstrate, Alfred was fondly remembered in the twelfth century as a good king of sound

⁵¹ Franzen, Christine. *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

judgment and wisdom. As arguably the most famous of the good Anglo-Saxon kings, having Alfred voice the values expressed in the text demonstrates that the community that first received it saw themselves as descendants of the pre-Conquest English. In this context, an incorruptible voice from the past defies the passage of time to provide instruction for righteous living in the present.

Second, I believe that the poet of the collection was familiar with some of the actual writing which came from Alfred's court: the Alfredian version of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. This is a major break from the conventional scholarly understanding of the *PA*. No modern critics believe that the twelfth-century collection has any direct relationship to the ninth-century writing of the famous king. Olaf Arngart's 1952 study of the *Proverbs* substantiates this position. Arngart affectively demonstrates that the *Distichs of Cato*, along with the Bible, is the ultimate source of many of the proverbs. Still, these two sources do not account for the sum of the sententia in the collection. In comparing the *Proverbs* with both the narrative and metrical versions of the Alfredian *Consolation*, I want to show striking similarities in wording between the two texts should be sufficient enough to reconsider the position that no relationship between collection and Alfred's writing exists.

If the twelfth-century compiler was, even sparingly, using genuine Alfredian material, then this text is an invaluable resource in understanding the formation of literary Englishness. It demonstrates that OE texts continued to influence scholars and poets writing in English after the close of the eleventh century. Further, it is evidence that moral precepts and imperatives were more important to literary Englishness in the twelfth century than positioning English identity

against a French or Norman counterpart. The poet of the *Proverbs* reimagines the Anglo-Saxon past in his choice to have Alfred voice the wisdom assembled; he is the primary locus of Englishness. However, the poet has no issue with including material from obviously non-English sources. In other words, having Alfred voice this collective wisdom makes it English. The wisdom does not confirm either Alfred or the audience's English identity. Establishing that literary English identity was more inclusive than exclusive in the twelfth century is important because the inclusive, contemplative approach to its formation is eschewed after the middle of the thirteenth century in favor of a more aggressive form of Englishness.

Chapter III: The Castle and the Stump: *The Owl and the Nightingale* and English Identity

My study continues with a reading of *The Owl and the Nightingale* in which I argue that the Owl and Nightingale are respectively representative of English and Norman identities. In their debate, the titular birds are passionately concerned with who serves man, and by extension God, the best, but at the same time strive to depict themselves as diametric opposites. Their fierce opposition has made for a critical loop more than one hundred years old in which scholars alternately try to shoe-horn them into overly general descriptors like conservative and liberal, aristocratic and common, and sacred and profane, and very specific vocations like ecclesiastic lawyers and musicians. The key to avoiding this renaming, I argue, is to recognize the common Englishness of the birds that undercuts the opposition they proclaim. They both speak English, live in England, and are aware of English customs and history. In light of these commonalities, I do not argue that they are only meant to be Norman and English, but show instead how each bird's character is based on an awareness of these cultural markers.

Aside from their places of dwelling, the birds are consistently placed in separate social circles. The Nightingale depicts herself as interacting with lords and ladies, often in their bowers. She even pronounces a blessing for the soul of King Henry.⁵² The Owl, on the other hand, is described as a social inferior living among the common people, chasing mice out of the village church, and even offering herself up in Christ-like fashion as a scarecrow to save their crops. The Nightingale is always keen to create physical separation between the Owl and herself, not just through her dwelling, but by establishing a north-south geographic division in which she becomes symbolic of southerly attitudes. By making only seasonal appearances in the British Isles and declaring her homeland to be further south, the Nightingale evokes the common image of Norman and Angevin royalty who constantly traveled back and forth between the continent and England. As part of this positioning, the Nightingale accuses the Owl of being concerned with the afflictions of the “londfolc” (“land-folk”), making sure to distance herself from the common people.

Yet, despite this general alignment of one bird with English commoners and the other with the Norman aristocrats, their debate goes unresolved; neither triumphs and they end up agreeing to re-create their debate for the enigmatic figure of Master Nicholas of Portsham. Given this lack of resolution to the debate, I want to argue that the ethical, social, and moral positions represented by the Owl and the Nightingale are presented for contemplation not condemnation. What can be seen in the poem, therefore, is that at the time it was written, the cultural differences between Norman and English could be contrasted and passionately debated without Norman cultural markers being condemned. From the Owl’s perspective, the Nightingale’s

⁵² The debate as to which King Henry (II or III) the nightingale is referencing here is more than one hundred years old, but for my study the association with the king is of greater importance than which Henry it really is.

shortcomings concern her empty speech and aristocratic posturing, but she never accuses the smaller songbird of taking anything from her. For the poet of the *O&N*, English and Norman were stereotypes that were familiar, but the poem does not advocate physical conflict, and language of usurpation and conquest is conspicuously absent.

Chapter IV: The Anglicization of *Boeve of Haumton*

The identification of resistance to French cultural markers in this study also comes in response to the recent work of Dominique Battles, whose book, *Cultural Difference and Material Culture in Middle English Romance: Normans and Saxons*, makes significant headway in addressing the synchronic positioning of Englishness not covered by critics more concerned with just the English treatment of the Anglo-Saxon past.⁵³ In her study, Battles dedicates a chapter to castle architecture and English identity. Though other scholars such as Seth Lerer have also commented on the function of castles in English literature prior to the Hundred Years War, Battles' study is the most complete to date. The dynamic is easy to follow once highlighted. Castle-building was brought to England by the Normans. The Anglo-Saxons built and governed from great halls that were primarily timber in construction and situated within burhs, fortified townships that could be defended from within. The dwellings of the lord who ruled a given burh were modest by later standards and usually consisted of only a single room or small group of rooms on the same level as the open hall in which business was conducted or situated nearby. Castles, by contrast, were usually constructed on higher ground and designed to be the most effectively defensible location in the immediate territory. Certainly some early, usually temporary, castles were constructed with timber, but in most cases they were built with dressed

⁵³ Battles, Dominique. *Cultural Difference and Material Culture in Middle English Romance: Normans and Saxons*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

stone. Moreover, the first great wave of castle building in England accompanied William the Conqueror's seizure of the kingdom. Thus, as early as *The Rime of King William* (1087), castles appear in English texts as foreign impositions on the land: a physical and symbolic reminder of the Conquest.⁵⁴ For modern historians it would be an oversimplification to say that burhs protected the populace while castles controlled them, but for English writers after the conquest this was the dynamic.

In the Middle English *Sir Orfeo*, a romance based on the classical Orpheus myth, Battles draws attention to the positioning of Sir Orfeo in a hall very reminiscent of a pre-Conquest dwelling in the old Anglo-Saxon capital of Winchester and his adversary, the Fairy King, in an opulent castle alone in the wilderness.⁵⁵ This is an alignment which corresponds well with Saxon-Norman positioning, and allows Battles to make further observations about the association between the protagonist with Anglo-Saxon cultural markers and the antagonist with Norman ones: Sir Orfeo's soldiers form a shield-wall in the same fashion as Anglo-Saxons, the Fairy King's knights are a mounted cavalry as the Normans were (Anglo-Saxon warriors generally fought on foot), and Sir Orfeo, overcome with the loss of his wife, Heurodis, to the Fairy King, banishes himself to the wilderness to lament her loss. With this last observation, Battles is able to tie the ME *Sir Orfeo* to a specific OE text. The only other known version of the Orpheus myth in which he enters the wilderness is King Alfred's loose translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Whether the argument is made for a lost intermediary English version of the tale or an oral tradition that preserved Alfred's unique variation, the relationship between the two texts is a prime example of the undiminished nature of English as a language of

⁵⁴ The poem appears as part of the entry for the year 1086 in the Peterborough Chronicle.

⁵⁵ Auchinleck MS (1330s)

narrative. For the *Orfeo*-poet it was productive to place Anglo-Saxon cultural markers in direct opposition to Norman ones.

Battles applies her observations about the association between protagonists with great halls and townships and antagonists with castles and isolation elsewhere as well. She observes that the castles do not figure into the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn* while they play a major role in the English *King Horn*.⁵⁶ The alignment is thorough, but the most telling application is the association with castle-building and Fikenhild, Horn's onetime friend and companion, who betrays the hero and erects a castle to defend against him. Yet, despite the strong association between castles and antagonist in *Sir Orfeo* and *King Horn*, Battles does not bring *Bevis of Hampton* into her discussion. The passage cited at the outset of this introduction is only one of numerous instances in that romance where these same associations can be found. Just as Battles identifies the introduction of castles into *Horn*'s story in its earliest English version, the *Bevis*-poet consistently modifies the placement and associations of castles in his redaction of *Boeve de Haumton* in order to align them with the antagonists of the tale. Even with seemingly difficult passages in the Anglo-Norman version in which a protagonist clearly occupies a castle, such as Saber and his castle on the Isle of Wight, the poet changes the description of the structure to make it simpler and less defensive in nature.

The association of the antagonists with castles is only a fraction of the *Bevis*-poet's greater Anglicizing of the romance. Not only are the references to Bevis and his companions as Frenchmen eschewed, France as a sovereign kingdom is virtually erased. The entire geography

⁵⁶ Battles, 62-65.

of Bevis's world is rearranged in the English text to facilitate this, and the only episode to take place in France is the abduction of Josian by Ascopard, the hero's former page who has betrayed his master. Thus, in its single use as a setting in the tale, French land is transformed into a wild place where lawless Saracens like Ascopard and his company roam freely, and where the greatest betrayal of the story takes place. In another part of this erasure, Bevis, disguised as a palmer, recites for King Yvor all the places he has supposedly traveled. The list covers virtually the entire medieval map of the world with the conspicuous absence of France.

Not all of the opposition in the romance is dependent on geography or landmarks of some kind. Though Boeve also dupes his stepfather, Bevis's disguise as Gerrard the Frenchman allows him to act in ways he cannot as himself. "Gerrard's" deception of Devin is, consequently, far greater than the equivalent episode in the Anglo-Norman romance. Many of the cultural markers Battles identifies as Saxon and Norman had become, at least nominally, French and English by the time *Bevis* became an English hero, but the dynamic between the two cultures comes directly from the earlier juxtaposition. Finally, I discuss the *Bevis*-poet's use of the romance commonplace, "so it is found in _____". The narrator of the English *Bevis of Hampton* makes five direct allusions to "the Frenshe tale" and many more to the "romaunce", as deceptively simple appeals to credibility. In their introduction to the English romance, Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury remind reader that, "medieval writers held written authority in high esteem".⁵⁷ At one level this is certainly what the *Bevis*-poet is doing. Yet, insofar as none of the incidents marked by these declarations agree with the extant Anglo-Norman versions of the tale, I propose that the

⁵⁷ *Four Romances of England*, 333.

Bevis-poet is ventriloquizing a French source to gain the credibility inherent to Anglo-Norman and French texts without sacrificing any control of the process of his text's Anglicization.⁵⁸

Chapter V: “Pe Inglis in seruage”: The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Kings in Robert Mannyng’s Chronicle

In regard to the relationship between English texts and their Anglo-Norman sources, I want to focus on the ways Englishness was constructed, not just through select images and recreations of the Anglo-Saxon past, but through active opposition to what could be identified as French and foreign. Inroads have been made in identifying the synchronic aspects of English identity, most notably by Dominique Battles, but a great deal of work remains. In the English rewritings of Anglo-Norman texts such as *Bevis of Hampton*, numerous emendations and interpolations can be identified which have the common agenda of expunging or minimalizing key features that detract from the Englishness of their heroes. As discussed in Chapter IV, Boeve and his men are referred to as Frenchmen several times in the latter half of the Anglo-Norman romance *Boeve of Haumtone*. For a writer seeking to construct an Englishness to which his audience could aspire, the French-English duality of the hero had to be resolved. For the *Bevis*-poet this meant the expulsion of any references to the hero and his men as French. Even though *Havelok the Dane* presents a unification of Denmark and England's royal lines, the romance has long been recognized as showing more concern for the future of England than its Scandinavian neighbor.⁵⁹ Revisions made to favor more exclusive versions of Englishness were not only

⁵⁸ This postulation is also founded on Robert Allen Rouse's caution regarding any assignment of the homogeneous "nationalism prevalent in the modern age" to Middle English romance like *Bevis*. See: Rouse, Robert Allen. "For King and Country? The Tension between National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*." *A Companion to Bevis of Hampton*. Eds. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008. 126.

⁵⁹ For instance, the narrator's praise of Athelwold spans almost one hundred lines while that of Birkabeyn is a quick passage of barely fifteen lines which serves primarily to demonstrate the parallel situation of both.

limited to the romance poets and more needs to be said in regard to how English chroniclers at the dawn of the Hundred Years War modified their source materials to develop the image of the true English as a suppressed population in their own land.

In this chapter I focus on how Robert Mannyng reworked his Anglo-Norman source material in order to develop a certain depiction of the rise and fall of Anglo-Saxon kingship that makes plain why the English of his day live in suppression. Mannyng explicitly corrects Peter Langtoft, whose Anglo-Norman chronicle provides a large part of his source material, at numerous points and dramatizes the relatively optimistic tone of the earlier text. For instance, Langtoft accuses Edward the Confessor of forgetting his promise to William the Conqueror concerning succession. Mannyng reminds his readers that the punishment of the English was ordained by God for their sinfulness. The confrontation between King Alfred and Rollo (also found in Langtoft) is reworked to emphasize the latter's desire for conquest and his position as the founder of Norman line. By highlighting Mannyng's emendations, I want to show that the process of rewriting Anglo-Norman materials in a manner that favored Englishness at the expense of the Frenchness or Normanness was not limited to English romance. From a modern perspective, Mannyng's chronicle shows more concern for social division than any sort of real ethnic division, but he has no trouble naming the Normans as the source of trouble for the English of his day. Actual Englishness or Normanness of anything would have been, of course, just as subjective a judgment then as it is now, and ample evidence in the form of marriage records and onomastics attests the fact that a vast majority of landholding families were not

exclusively of Norman ancestry by the thirteenth century.⁶⁰ This incongruity does not, however, detract from the fact that the Englishness found in his chronicles is dependent on an opposition of English and Norman identities resembling something like the division as it existed at the end of the eleventh century.

Mannyng's chronicle does more than just add a stronger English-Norman contrast to the established narrative of English history. The text also repositions the English people (descendants of the Saxons in Geoffrey of Monmouth's narrative) as the rightful rulers of the land. Modeled on the exile of the Israelites in Babylon, Geoffrey depicts British as a dispossessed people forced from their homeland because they have forsaken the righteous living commanded by God. This moral and ethical fracture allows the invading Saxons to overtake the British. Chroniclers following Geoffrey repeat this theme that, after the Conquest, was favorable for the Norman elite who saw themselves as related to the descendants of the dispossessed British. The truly unique innovation of Mannyng's rewriting is that he is able to make the English the disposed people of the British Isles. He does not fit the English kings into the exact mold Geoffrey created. King Alfred is not an English Arthur nor is Edward the Confessor an English Cadwallader, but Mannyng supplies additional description to his source material to show that the English rose to power through righteous living and lost sovereignty when they lost their fear of God just like the British of Geoffrey's history.

⁶⁰ The classic example is the twelfth-century chronicler Orderic de Vitalis whose mother was English and father Norman. See: Chibnall, Marjorie. *The World of Orderic Vitalis: Norman Monks and Norman Knights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. 3-16.

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The construction of identity is a never-ending, recursive process, and it is crucial to understand that the Englishness fashioned in the period between the Conquest and the Hundred Years War, a time when English texts did not carry the prestige of those written in French or Latin, was less stable than at any other period of English history. The unique circumstances wherein English came to be the language of a vast majority of the populace but not the language of government or learning fueled a strong desire among those who did write in English to define the identity they shared with their readership. The use of England's Anglo-Saxon past by English writers is well-documented, but this characterization falls short of describing the changes literary Englishness underwent. English identity in the twelfth century was related to but fundamentally different from early fourteenth-century depictions. As the permanency of the Norman Conquest and the social divisions which followed became manifest, English writers had to revisit time and again what it meant to be English. At the turn of the thirteenth-century Englishness could be illustrated and contemplated without the opposition of a Francophone Other, but this changed. Later in the thirteenth century English writers had to address the fact that their history was, for the most part, recorded in French and Latin. Anglo-Norman writers had more control of their pre-Conquest heroes than they did.

The cultural dominance of English born of the great expansion of the British Empire makes it hard to imagine that at time existed when English writers (writing in England no less) saw themselves as a suppressed majority. Yet, for the first thousand years that English-speaking kingdoms existed in the British Isles, most were of modest political and social influence next to the more powerful continental kingdoms that became France, Spain, and Italy. English

hegemony is not something medievalists study. English writers have never been without a voice, but this voice has not always been one of global or even European dominance. The narratives and chronicles of the Anglo-Saxon period depict, a kingdom seeking to find balance between insular Celtic traditions, the more dominant Romanized Christianity of the continent, and its own pagan past. OE was a vibrant vernacular with the capacity to capture and express the nuances of life in Anglo-Saxon England, but after the Norman Conquest it lost much of the prestige that came with five hundred years of Anglo-Saxon rule. After enduring a century of conquest, a steep decline in literary production ensued before the language reemerged toward the end of the fourteenth century with a different program of syntax and a burgeoning wealth of vocabulary and idiom. Between the enigmatic imagery of OE poetry and the composite brilliance of Chaucerian English, it is easy to overlook the few English voices that work their way among the Anglo-Norman hegemony of the time.

The texts written while English was not a culturally dominant language have long vexed the critical response to the writing of this era. The Father of English Poetry's feelings toward the English romance of earlier generations remains debatable, but Chaucer certainly knew "[o]f Horn child.../[o]f Beves and sir Gy" (*Tale of Sir Thopas*, ll. 898-899).⁶¹ However, his own romances, most prominently *The Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde* display a poetic dexterity and cosmopolitan awareness far beyond that of any early English romance. Still, neither the merits of OE poetry nor the Chaucerian English which bracket the period can be counted against early Middle English literature, or be used to declare its narratives less significant. Despite their relative scarcity and humble poetics, they are the most immediate

⁶¹ Benson, Larry Dean, ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 216.

legacy of the OE tradition and the forbearers of Chaucerian English. The link between the characters of *Beowulf* and Chaucer's pilgrims is that they are depictions of English identity. King Alfred, the Owl, the Nightingale, Horn, Bevis, and Havelok too contributed to the ever-changing definition of Englishness and mark significant development between *Beowulf* and Chaucer's knight. These characters and the texts in which they appear provide evidence of rapidly evolving conceptions of Englishness built on select images of the Anglo-Saxon past but also contrasted with cultural markers declared to be Norman or French. Unlike the OE poets and Chaucer, the English writers who wrote between the late twelfth and early fourteenth century did not write in a language considered to be prestigious or scholarly.⁶² Yet, these depictions of identity are no less important and they deserve the modern scholarly attention afforded other periods of English literature.

Shortly after the passage from *Bevis* which opened this introduction, the narrator tells readers how the hero leaves his hillside watch and to go to the castle where his mother and stepfather feast. Upon his arrival, the seven year-old with his crude club is rebuked by the porter who tells him him: "Go hom, truant!" ("Go home, truant!") (l. 396). The irony of this imperative runs deep. Bevis, of course, cannot go home; he is now homeless in the land and at the gate of the castle that should be his. In a juxtaposition that the poem's original audience would have recognized, the porter calls the bereft prince a truant. The term comes from Old French and the first citation of its usage in the OED is 1290, a date that falls within a generation of the Auchinleck *Bevis*, and is perhaps contemporary with an earlier English version of the romance.⁶³ In the lexicon of the day, Bevis is branded with an imported derogatory appellation in

⁶² Arguably, it the writing of Chaucer that does more than anything else to change the perception of English as poetically adept.

⁶³ See: "Truant." A, †1. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

circumstances precipitated by foreign usurpers who control his land. His Englishness has been compromised politically, socially, and linguistically. Given the inseparable relationship between language and identity, it is just as important to understand the subtleties of Englishness in this era as any other.

Chapter I: "Wher beth they biform us weren": Old English Epic Poetry and Middle English Romance

To demonstrate the dramatic shift that literary depictions of Englishness underwent between the end of the twelfth-century and the beginning of the fourteenth it is necessary to look for the native English traditions available for poets to reconstitute in this period. As highlighted in the Introduction, poor imitation was the prevailing characterization of pre-fourteenth-century English narratives for many twentieth-century scholars. This manner of thinking has begun to ebb, but it is still difficult to establish what relationship English narratives, written while Anglo-Norman was the prestige language, had with the Old English tradition, if any. Breaking with conventional wisdom, I seek to demonstrate that early Middle English narratives had a substantial, continuous connection to the Old English epic tradition. The comments by the editors of the TEAMS series editions of English romances, *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Bevis of Hampton*, and *Athelston*, are representative of how the relationship between the Old English and later Middle English narrative traditions are treated. The introduction to *Horn* acknowledges that the poem “retains characteristics of Old English verse” and states that both it and *Havelok* are “based in part on the oral folk culture that survived the Norman Conquest”.⁶⁴ Qualifying oral tradition is a tricky business, but a very regular thematic relationship between the Old English epic tradition and the Middle English romance tradition can be made. Identifying this relationship supports the idea that Middle English writers were working within an established framework of Englishness that was founded in the use of the English language, but extended to the use of certain themes and tropes as well.⁶⁵ Invention and recreation were obviously part of

⁶⁴ See: *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*. Ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999. TEAMS. 11.

⁶⁵ In his characterization of Early Middle English, Thomas Hahn notes that, “English never completely lost touch with literate authority,” in part because, “authors and scribes of Latin and French text must often have been native speakers of English”. See:

literary Englishness, but a more homogenous conception of identity stood behind any given innovation.

English Romance: Problems of Definition

What exactly constitutes English romance is notoriously difficult to determine. The English tradition is obviously dependent on the Anglo-Norman and the continental French traditions; and attempts to sift out the uniquely English elements of the genre, in order to observe how older English narrative forms influenced it, have led to little scholarly consensus. Over the last two hundred years, numerous attempts have been made to typify and qualify the differences among these three branches of the romance genre. Most discussions start with the observation that romances by definition mark themselves as a divergent genre. They are not Latin poetry, but popular narratives written in vernacular languages. This acknowledgement, however, also marks the extent of scholarly consensus. In qualifying the relationship between the branches, it is significant that romance emerges at the same time French was beginning to gain traction as the first vernacular lingua-franca in Western Europe. In part, the English romance tradition develops later because English lagged behind French in prestige until at least the end of the fourteenth-century: all English language literary production waned after the end of the eleventh century, narrative or otherwise. Various texts have been selected at one time or another to demarcate the chronological development of romance, but its emergence in French and later in English can be used as a rough indicator of the prominence and prestige of each. The romances of Chrétien de Troyes and *lais* of Marie de France written during the last quarter of the twelfth-century are most frequently held up as the beginning of the French tradition. The dates for English romances are

Hahn, Thomas. "Early Middle English." *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1999. 65.

more speculative, but *King Horn* (late 13th C.) is frequently declared the earliest extant romance in English literature.⁶⁶ *Horn*, along with *Havelok the Dane*, *Bevis of Hampton*, *Guy of Warwick*, and sometimes *Athelston* have, since the early twentieth century, been grouped together as the Matter of England: romances which involve pre-Conquest English heroes and settings. Though modern critics are less dismissive of English romance than was once popular, the fact that this branch of the genre is a variation on a non-English invention cannot be avoided. What is the most appropriate way to discuss and typify the Englishness of a genre that is not English?

Rosalind Field sees a problem of definition when it comes to qualifying English romance. In 2008 she issued a strong challenge to the established title and classification “The Matter of England” in her essay, “The Curious History of the Matter of England”. She credits W. H. Schofield with the application of the term to English language romance following model used by Jean Bodel to distinguish between French, Roman, and British romance.⁶⁷ From a modern perspective, the problem with grouping any collection of medieval romances together along national or political lines is that criteria for inclusion will always be subjective to a certain degree. Allen Frantzen has cautioned Anglo-Saxonists about this very issue.⁶⁸ For Field too, early catalogs of the English Matter were constructed on the pro-Germanic sentiment that was prevalent in early period English scholarship at the turn of the twentieth-century. While Anglo-Saxonists today are more aware of the inconsistencies inherent in grouping texts along national lines, an incongruity between the sense of unity endued by the title, “Matter of England”, and the

⁶⁶ I agree with Herzman, Drake, and Salibury (following Rosemund Allen) who date the poem later than some who give it an early to mid-thirteenth-century date.

⁶⁷ Field, Rosalind. "The Curious History of the Matter of England." *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*. Ed. Neil Cartledge. Chippenham: D. S. Brewer, 2008.

⁶⁸ See: Introduction, 11.

unique character of each text included under that heading remains. Regarding the various texts that have been declared part of the Matter at one time or another, Field says: “These romances are not drawing on a body of material familiar to author and audience”. She instead advocates the alternative term, “Romances of English Heroes” in order to acknowledge the inconsistencies of English romance.⁶⁹

I do not disagree with Field’s assessment to the letter, but her declaration fails to acknowledge a number of important commonalities that regularly emerge in the texts’ traditional designation. The poets and audiences of English romance certainly were not producing and receiving texts with a fixed canon of material in mind, but they were aware of and employed several prominent themes that were regularly deployed in the formation of Englishness in a given text. Even without drawing on a familiar body of material per se, the English for whom these romances were written were aware of and expected the distinctly English themes and tropes woven into them. Acknowledging the difficulties inherent in declaring a text to be part of the Matter of England, I think a practical application of the designation is possible. Among the designation’s more recent definitions, Field cites Robert Allen Rouse who describes the Matter as “romances that are explicitly set prior to the Norman Conquest”, effectively *Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, King Horn, and Havelok the Dane*.⁷⁰ This definition acknowledges the cultural positioning so crucial to these texts. I use the title, “Matter of England”, to include English narratives that are either set in the Anglo-Saxon past or make use of cultural markers and themes that contrast Englishness with French or Anglo-Norman identity. For instance, the

⁶⁹ Field, 36-37.

⁷⁰ Rouse, Robert A. *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005. 52.

Orpheus legend is not English, but the ME *Sir Orfeo* is dependent on a cultural awareness of Norman and Saxon familiar to its audience. This cultural contrast gives the ME romance a distinctly English character. How it is Anglicized is more important to its Englishness than its origin.

Instead of trying to define English romance, I want to identify the themes and motifs that occur with regularity across a number of tales and hold them up against earlier English traditions. The differences between the English and French traditions are vitally important, but a complete distillation of either is not my intention. I am interested in the parts, not the sum. Though modified, reinterpreted, and fragmentary, I find that ME romance inherited several traceable themes and motifs used in older English narratives. These narrative conventions, along with the English language and pre-Conquest settings, are what make the romances in the Matter, English. By extension, the identification of connections between the OE narrative tradition and ME romance is an essential part of characterizing English cultural identity between the late twelfth and early fourteenth centuries. It has long been recognized that the English writers during this time looked to the Anglo-Saxon past to define themselves in the present, but a close examination of the narrative traditions and techniques in each era is an important exercise when it comes to characterizing the concern with English identity in ME romance.

Determining a Continuous English Tradition

An immediate problem is the gap in textual production that separates the two traditions. The twelfth-century marks the lowest point in the production of English texts since the language was first recorded in the sixth and seventh centuries. Despite this decline, OE epic and ME romance make use of a sufficient number of similar themes and motifs that prove the divide between them is superficial to some degree. The distance appears more significant than it actually is because of the changes to the English language and the introduction of French as the language of high literature and government; however, ME romance and OE epic poetry are the cultural narratives of a linguistically connected people. Though it declined as a written language, English was never abandoned as a language of narrative, and any thematic similarities held between the two traditions should be considered as evidence that certain elements of the older tradition were not lost and then revived but continually present in vernacular narratives and oral tradition. Given these circumstances, it should come as no surprise that the strongest thematic connections between the OE epics and ME narratives are to be found in the romances that take historical English heroes as their subject and are set in the Anglo-Saxon past. That ME poets found pre-Conquest England to be more authentically English than their present might strike many modern readers as curious given the fact that so many English romances were first written down by Anglo-Norman scribes in French. Still, these circumstances should not be taken as evidence that connections between the OE and ME narrative traditions were purely imaginary or wistful. From the literary record it is clear that ME poets started actively anglicizing Anglo-Norman romances and chronicles around the time English began to reassert itself as a literary language. These emendations tell modern critics that English poets were interested in developing

literary Englishness, but they also provide evidence as to which images and associations from the OE period were still part of how English identity was conceived and constructed.

Regarding the role oral record keeping played as writing culture spread beyond Latin to the vernacular languages, scholars have turned to M. T. Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record* for over three decades. In his oft-cited study, Clanchy, drawing from a large body of government and ecclesiastic records, highlights the incongruity between modern and medieval notions of literacy. Reading, for instance, was not limited to the individual act of interpreting words on a page as it is today. Clanchy finds evidence that reading was often communal and the apprehension of content was frequently a primary determiner of literacy. The inability to write did not mean an individual was illiterate.⁷¹ Along with the importance of comprehension apart from transcription, Clanchy discusses the continuing importance of oral modes of record keeping in medieval England. Through the thirteenth century, Clanchy reports, the physical parchment on which a given document was transcribed was often of greater importance than the writing on it.⁷² These circumstances demonstrate the persistent value of oral record keeping. Vernacular narratives are not a part of Clanchy's study. However, his observations apply to them as well. Oral circulation and preservation of cultural narratives took place as well. Elsewhere I have discussed the influence of oral transmission on the English Arthurian tradition in the fourteenth century, and references to the influence of oral narrative transmission are often mentioned when the date and provenance of a text are discussed.⁷³ The editors of the TEAMS edition of *King Horn* note

⁷¹ In this sense, signing a document with an X (sign of the Cross) was not a sign of illiteracy but an acknowledgement of a document's importance as part of eternal or secular law.

⁷² Clanchy, 256-262.

⁷³ See: Wingenbach, Joseph. "To the gome he gave up his needs: The Influence of Orality on the English Arthurian Romance Tradition". *Medieval Perspectives*, 30 (2015), 217-233.

that, along with *Havelock the Dane*, the poem is “based in part on the oral folk culture that survived the Norman Conquest”.⁷⁴ To an extent, oral transmission will always be the unqualifiable part of a text’s source material, but I want the evidence of this chapter to demonstrate that for English poets oral tradition held a trove of resources for defining English identity.

To a degree, the relationship between the OE and ME narrative traditions needs tangible proof far less than solid qualification. Some time ago Ward Parks demonstrated that, what he calls, “verbal dueling” is hardwired into narratives of war and battle in the Western, perhaps Indo-European, tradition.⁷⁵ Citing examples from the *Iliad*, *Mahābhārata*, *Beowulf*, *Battle of Maldon*, *Nibelungenlied*, *Song of Roland*, and *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Parks was able to show that verbal exchanges which anticipate conflict or potential conflict are structured in strikingly similar ways across many narrative traditions. OE epic and ME romance are both dependent on and concerned with conflict; they are separated by time and political circumstance, but, more importantly, come from the same language community. Therefore, the question of whether or not a relationship between these two variations of the English narrative tradition existed is less important than the work of establishing what, in fact, ME poets inherited from their OE forbearers. In comparing the formation and structuring of verbal sparring from the ancient Greek tradition with Anglo-Saxon manifestations of the same, Parks states that his comparison of the two traditions is grounded in their shared “roots in oral tradition”. Later examples of verbal flyting may have been composed by poets writing in private, but the type scenes that span so

⁷⁴ *Four Romances*, 11.

⁷⁵ Parks, Ward. *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative: The Homeric and Old English Traditions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

many languages and genres reveal their genesis in oral composition: “Oral composition must rely on memory heavily, stereotypic patterns suited to mnemonic recall serve well the economy of oral thought”.⁷⁶

In the fourth chapter of *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative*, Parks discusses the “contest paradigm” (to which verbal dueling is foundational) in the structure of Epic and Romance narratives to illustrate “the durability of the flyting and contesting themes and their susceptibility to transformation and sublimation under the influence of nonagonistic ideologies”.⁷⁷ Concerning the late fourteenth-century *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Parks describes the poem as “[casting] back to former times both in subject matter and in many of its outlooks,” remarking further that its “numerous and energetic” flytings may “[descend] through the channel of an oral tradition surviving from the Old English period into the efflorescence of the Alliterative Revival”.⁷⁸ The Arthurian tradition, like the romance genre itself, was taken up by English poets long after its establishment in other languages. The influence, however distant, of OE contest paradigms on the fourteenth-century text illustrates the same point about the oral tradition in English that I want to make: English poetry, as late as at least the end of the fourteenth-century, preserved, through oral tradition, themes and motifs its audience understood as uniquely English. As Parks points out in regard to the structure and prominence of pre-battle flyting, the older epic paradigms were not immutable. Just as the Alliterative Revival evoked rather than replicated OE poetics, ME narrative conventions descend from those used by OE poets. Understanding the role of oral tradition in the English narrative tradition is like looking at a large tree partly obscured by

⁷⁶ Parks, 9.

⁷⁷ Parks, 128.

⁷⁸ Parks, 136.

others and understanding that, even if its full branching cannot be seen, the upper and lower branches must stem from the same trunk.

Another problem in characterizing the English narrative tradition between the Conquest and the fourteenth-century is that, to date, no literary source has emerged that directly connects any of the romances with an OE exemplar. Frequently the historical figures from the Anglo-Saxon era, such as the kings Edgar and Athelwold, bear only a passing resemblance to what pre-Conquest contemporaries recorded about them.⁷⁹ Theories have been offered that present plausible, but always speculative, connections with the documentable past. As the thinking goes, if a romance can be connected with an actual historical event or events then some sort of now-lost narrative about the event or characters transcribed by Anglo-Saxon writers may have been part of its textual lineage. The late fourteenth-century romance, *Athelston*, which tells the story of the titular king's struggle to overcome the deception of a onetime friend whom he has made Earl of Dover, is a good example. In the mid-twentieth century several theories emerged in connection with identifiable historical events. In the 1950s A. M. Tronce argued that a connection could alternately be made between either Stephen Langton or William Bateman of Norwich and Alryke (1344-53).⁸⁰ Laura Hibbard Loomis postulated in the 1960s that the historical origin of the romance could be found in the story of Queen Emma (the mother of Edward the Confessor) who was said to have undergone ordeal by fire.⁸¹ *Athelstan* is not the

⁷⁹ *Apollonius of Tyre* may well be the earliest ME romance, but the story is, of course, not English in origin. As Treharne mentions, the Latin *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* remained popular through the early modern period (234). If considered part of the Matter, another exception is *Sir Orfeo*, the main elements of which also come from antiquity. The known king phonetically closest to Athelwold is perhaps Æthelbald of Wessex who ruled from 858-860.

⁸⁰ See: Tronce, A. M. *Athelston: A Middle English Romance*. London: Oxford UP, 1951.

⁸¹ See: Loomis, Laura H. *Medieval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cycle Metrical Romances*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1960.

only romance that has been connected with historical events. Rosemund Allen has suggested that “[i]n some ways [*King Horn*] is analogous to the political events of 1270s” when the crown passed from Henry III to Edward I (122).⁸² Still, problems persist. Aside from the continued absence of English exemplars for the romances, the dependence of these theories on a modern understanding of history as an attempt at an impartial, even if incomplete, textual record of documentable events is troubling. Medieval history-making was not an impartial or immediate process. The strict separation of history from literature began to take hold only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the words of Morton W. Bloomfield, “it is difficult to distinguish the two [disciplines] in European vernaculars before the late fourteenth-century”.⁸³ Though “history and fiction were often distinguished in Latin writing,” the same cannot be said about vernacular chronicles and romance.⁸⁴ Thirteenth and fourteenth-century chronicles frequently “correct” their source materials with narrative interruptions that draw attention to the changes made.⁸⁵ The gap between the extant textual record and contemporary understanding puzzled medieval writers themselves. Robert Mannyng expresses with conviction his belief that Havelok was once the ruler of England and is perplexed as to why he cannot find references to him in his sources:

Noiþer Gildas, no Bede, no Henry of Huntinton,
 No William of Malmesbiri, ne Pers of Bridlynton,
 Writes not in þer bokes of no kyng Athelwold,
 Ne Goldeburgh his douhtere, ne Hanelok not of told (25)

⁸² See: Allen, Rosemund. "The Date and Provenance of *King Horn*: Some Interim Reassessments." *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*. Ed. Edward Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph Wittig. Wolfeboro: D. S. Brewer, 1988.

⁸³ Bloomfield, Morton W. "History and Literature in the Vernacular in the Middle Ages?" *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*. Ed. Edward Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph Wittig. Wolfeboro: D. S. Brewer, 1988. 309.

⁸⁴ Bloomfield, 314.

⁸⁵ This is discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

(Neither Gildas, nor Bede, nor Henry of Huntingdon,
Nor William of Malmesbury, nor Piers of Bridlington,
Write in their books of King Athelwold,
Or of Goldeboru his daughter, or Havelok)

Neither is the appearance of Havelok, Goldeboru, and Grim on the town seal of Grimsby in the early thirteenth century out-of-place with medieval notions of history, and Mannyng's declaration that "lowed men vpon English" ("uneducated men in English") tell his tale can be taken as an attestation to the understanding of Havelok as genuine historical figure outside the realm of literature. Even after acknowledging the role oral tradition played in forming vernacular narratives, approaching them as a record of history (in the modern sense) is not an option for modern scholars. Hard evidence that the story of Havelok stems from actual historical events or older English texts remains elusive. But the fact that chronicles such as Mannyng looked for Havelok in the historical records available suggests that other narratives of English history existed apart from the chronicles and romances that have survived to the present day. Undoubtedly, part of the historical record was oral, and by recognizing that the production of history and narrative literature was not solely dependent on written texts, it is reasonable to expect that poets and chroniclers were able to draw on oral traditions when composing written texts.

Building on the work of Clanchy, Walter J. Ong, and Brian Stock, Jesse Gellrich's investigation of the tension between oral and written culture in the fourteenth-century provides valuable evidence for dispelling the notion that the former was inferior to the latter.⁸⁶ In reaction to those who claim that written literacy marginalized and then eclipsed oral tradition, Gellrich

⁸⁶ Gellrich, Jesse M. *Discourse and Dominion in the Fourteenth Century: Oral Contexts of Writing in Philosophy, Politics, and Poetry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

observes that both modes of language comment on the other in certain contexts. Consider Mannyng's comments regarding Havelok cited above. Literacy, Gellrich notes, should be thought of as being tied to a specific "social experience" that made it responsible for "the development of social patterns".⁸⁷ This is why Margery Kemp, a woman who knew no Latin and recorded the story of her life through dictation, and a grammarian such as John of Salisbury could both be considered literate. Gellrich's study focuses primarily on the fourteenth-century, but his characterization of the tension between the oral and written "orders" of language applies equally well to late thirteenth-century English romances.⁸⁸ English poets and audiences after the Conquest were not illiterate. Rather, the mode of language that best fit the social circumstances of most English was oral. Into the fifteenth-century French and Latin were the languages of the Church, government, and prestigious literary endeavor. From the perspective of the elite who had access to these languages, English was the language of the lewd (uneducated), but this opinion did not compromise the language as a viable vessel for narrative. Regarding both oral and written language Gellrich says that the power of each comes from "its capacity to deny opposition to its own utterance".⁸⁹ In this sense, English derived its force not just because it was not Latin or French, but because it was, to a degree, inaccessible to audiences expecting to receive transcribed narratives. The adherence of English poets and audiences to oral modes of transmission in the wake of French's rise as the vernacular of prestige maintained for their narratives both the ethos and pathos neither French nor Latin could generate outside of writing. It is not until the fourteenth-century that English writers attempt to compete with French and Latin narratives in their realm, writing.

⁸⁷ Gellrich, 6.

⁸⁸ Gellrich, 5.

⁸⁹ Gellrich, 35.

The declaration of Chaucer's Pardoner that "lewed peple loven tales olde" ("uneducated people love old tales") and "[s]wiche thynges kan they wel reporte and holde" ("such things they can ably report and hold") should not be doubted, but the influence of oral tradition on English romances may have also had a more professional side to it as well (PardP. ll. 437-8).⁹⁰ In editing the extant MSS of the *Wars of Alexander* (late 14th C), Hoyt Duggan finds evidence that literate poets introduced many of the variations between them. As he says, it would be "surprising if some of the extant texts were not touched in important ways by the facts of oral recitation, especially in the intrusion or rearrangement of material by the performers".⁹¹ These variations are "best explained by a limited form of oral transmission".⁹² Like *Wars*, none of the romances in the Matter are the product of original oral composition, but they have, in all likelihood, been shaped by oral recitation. Duggan's logical proposition is that literate poets, most likely retained by a patron of means, transcribed texts that diverged from their exemplars through numerous performances. Abundant evidence indicates that more people would have heard these poems read than have read them privately. The narrative intrusions in *Wars* (and in other romances) are the clearest indicators that poets wrote with "an eye to the essential oral nature of any given performance," but in addition to the poetic alterations Duggan discusses, I suggest that English poets also emended the content of narratives. This could be easily accomplished by drawing established tropes and themes. Just as a reciter "would, more or less consciously, have inserted his habitual expressions in preference to the readings of the exemplar," it is also possible that references to familiar markers of English identity could also have been worked into a given

⁹⁰ Benson, Larry Dean, Ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 195.

⁹¹ Duggan, Hoyt N. "The Role of Formulas in the Dissemination of a Middle English Alliterative Romance." *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976): 265-88. 266.

⁹² Duggan, 273.

narrative.⁹³ Indeed, Duggan ends his investigation of the contribution of oral performance to *Wars* by saying:

The appearance of performers' variants in manuscripts so descended suggests at least the possibility that other highly formulaic alliterative poems – and perhaps one should think of Old English as well as Middle English texts here – are similarly the product of collaboration between the poet and a line, long or short, of anonymous performer-scribes.⁹⁴

I would only change this to add narrative poems less dependent on alliteration. Duggan dates *Wars* to “sometime after 1360”, placing it much closer to the Alliterative Revival than any of the romances in the Matter.⁹⁵

Because English literacy between the Conquest and the Hundred Years War was not solely dependent on writing, it is possible to understand why such a significant degree of thematic unity between Anglo-Saxon literature and later ME romance can be found. Due to the decline in English textual production and a healthy oral tradition, a fairly regular set of themes and tropes remained popular in English writing for several hundred years. They were, I contend, preserved in the cultural memory of the people who found unity through the English language. English poets and audiences lent credibility to their narratives by, as Gellrich puts it, “[denying] opposition” from competing languages that had greater written currency. Between the OE epic tradition and ME romance, I find the following themes to be the most explicit and consistent: (1) the placement of heroes in dire situations before maturity, (2) the positioning of foreign threats relative to the protagonist(s), and (3) the animalist qualities of the heathen peoples from afar.

⁹³ Duggan, 279.

⁹⁴ Duggan, 288.

⁹⁵ Duggan, 267.

Imminent Danger, Threats from Afar, and Heathens

My investigation of the thematic connection between the OE and ME narrative traditions starts with Dorothy Everett's declaration that "[i]n different periods and in the hands of different writers [medieval ideas of chivalric conduct] are naturally not precisely the same".⁹⁶ This is an understatement of deceptive magnitude. Unlike the heroes of Chrétien de Troys' and Marie de France's romances, Old and Middle English heroes rarely seek to join knightly ranks or track down opponents whose defeat will confirm their worthiness. Consider, by contrast, Chrétien's five romances in which the titular hero of each must first endure mental and martial trial so that later he can obtain an object of desire: a woman, acceptance by peers, or both. As a young man Percival encounters a group of knights in the woods and afterwards is determined to join their ranks despite his numerous misunderstandings of knighthood and chivalrous conduct. Erec must defeat Yder before returning to Arthur's court to marry Enide. In *Cligés* the hero's father, Alexander, must first convince his own father to allow him to travel to Arthur's court and then he has to prove his loyalty in order for the king to knight him. Cligés himself appeals to Arthur in order to get his kingdom from his uncle. Likewise, when the hero falls in love with his uncle's wife, Fenice, he must express his love in secret until his uncle dies. The Knight of the Cart, Lancelot, goes through innumerable trials to win Guinevere's favor, none more significant than the humiliation of riding in the dwarf's cart. Finally, Yvain must avenge his cousin, Calogrenant, by defeating Esclados before marrying the fallen knight's widow and going on adventure with Gawain. Similar circumstances are present in several of the Lais of Marie de France. Most

⁹⁶ Everette, Dorothy. *Essays on Middle English Literature*. Ed. Patricia Kean. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.

notably, Lanval must suffer Arthur's inattention and Guinevere's false accusations before he can be reunited with his fairy lady. The point is that notions of chivalry in these tales rely on a formula whereby a knight must patiently prove his worth before taking on quests of greater challenge, scope, and scale. In none of these stories is the young hero forced into immediate, imminent danger by malevolent forces beyond his control. English romance, by contrast, is dominated by a pattern wherein "the hero works to restore his social and material standing in society".⁹⁷ For the heroes of the earliest English romances, concerns with courtly conduct are secondary to the maintenance of kingdom and livelihood.

Susan Crane, typifying the genre generally, says that "medieval romances are secular fictions of nobility" and "do not claim to be coextensive with the contemporary world". This is the case to an extent. Romances are always set in the past. However, they are also an exercise in identity formation. Audiences are rarely receptive to stories about heroes with whom they cannot identify and the heroes of romance certainly had effect in the socio-political realm. Mannyng at least says he mystified as to why Havelok is missing in the historical record. Henry II claimed to have discovered King Arthur's grave at Glastonbury. Edward III had a round table built at Windsor. As I will detail in chapter two, Alfred the Great continued to instruct the English in righteous living as a literary figure in the twelfth century. Romances in any language absolutely "contemplate the place of private identity in society at large," but I disagree with the notion that the genre "poses that private identity exists somehow above and apart from collective life".⁹⁸

⁹⁷ See: Battles, Dominique. *Cultural Difference and Material Culture in Middle English Romance: Normans and Saxons*. New York: Routledge, 2013. 9.

⁹⁸ Crane, Susan. *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 10-11.

Once in the hands of popular audiences, private identity becomes bound to collective life. *Bevis of Hampton* may have originally reflected the desire of Norman descendants to adopt a pre-Conquest ancestry, as W. R. J. Barron has suggested.⁹⁹ But by the time the romance was rewritten in English, the concerns of its early poets and patrons were less important than the hero's potential to represent an appealing, imagined Englishness. *King Horn* is the story of a hero who waxes in wisdom and battle prowess until he is able to right all the wrongs done to him and his family, but, as I will discuss, the Saracens who invade Suddene come to kill all its inhabitants. It is not just Horn's wellbeing that is threatened by heathen invaders; all dwelling in his kingdom are at risk. The English hero's "self-advancement" is undoubtedly in "consonance with defense of the community". Over time as stories like Horn's circulated among audiences who were themselves in need of defense and good leadership, the relationship between hero and community became increasingly symbiotic.

Invasion is a primary concern in English romances. Tactically and politically the Viking raids of the ninth-century were significantly different from the Norman Conquest in the eleventh, but both were part of a centuries-long struggle against invasion by the English. Making connections with historical circumstances is not one of my primary objectives, but an obvious historical precedent for the English preoccupation with invasion and usurpation exists. Early Medieval England was, from almost any perspective, invaded on a regular basis. Commoners, merchants, aristocrats, and royalty alike were affected. As it concerns narrative formation, several hundred years of invasion had an effect on the English mindset, even if the English

⁹⁹ Barron, W. R. J. *English Medieval Romance*. London: Longman, 1987. 217.

themselves had been invaders at one point. In chapter five I will discuss how balancing origin myths (usually Trojan and Saxon) became a familiar exercise for English and Anglo-Norman writers by the turn of the fourteenth-century, but the predominant concern with invasion, understandably, spans both OE and ME narratives. This preoccupation is perhaps the least complicated explanation as to why English heroes get thrown into dire circumstances without warning, and it also explains the heavy presence of the threat-from-afar as a foundational theme.

For most critics, the response of heroes and protagonists to foreign threats in ME romance is addressed as part of the exile-and-return (alternatively loss-and-recovery) theme.¹⁰⁰ I find this classification to be overly broad. In order to focus on the relationship between the two periods of narrative production in question, I want to approach these departures and returns from a hero's homeland from a chronologically based perspective that gives more attention to the earlier forms of the theme in OE narratives. In *Cultural Difference and Material Culture in Middle English Romance: Normans and Saxons*, Dominique Battles connects the presence of the exile-and-return in ME romance with the lingering cultural memory of the Norman Conquest, an identification with which I completely agree.¹⁰¹ I also find reason to believe that the presence of a threat from afar goes back much further than the Conquest. A brief look at the defensive and offensive responses to foreign threats in OE literature shows how these patterns were adapted for the concerns of ME romance. As Battles suggests, the Norman Conquest continued to have a

¹⁰⁰ The exile-and-return theme is so ubiquitous that Rosalind Field has declared it to be "largely unexamined in romance scholarship" (41). See: Field, Rosalind. "The King Over the Water: Exile-and-Return Revisited." *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*. Ed. Corinne Saunders. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005.

¹⁰¹ Battles. *Cultural Difference*. 13-14.

strong influence on English writers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in ways that have hitherto not been fully recognized. But Elaine Treharne's observation that the English concern with and understanding of invasion by foreign powers, specifically pagan ones, has deeper roots than even the Conquest ought to be considered as well.¹⁰² The insular preoccupation with invasion and heathen threats from afar precedes the Conquest by about three centuries, going back at least as far as the Viking incursions. Exile-and-return as found in ME romance, from this perspective, was a natural adaptation of pre-established themes on the part of English writers and audiences. At one level, English poets were keen to push back against Norman hegemony, but at the same time, as Treharne has made clear, insular concerns about conquest did not begin with the Normans. As part of an unbroken narrative tradition, English romance preserves a wariness of invasion far older than the Normans.

Concerning the historical records of medieval England, a complete recitation of what was recorded through the fourteenth-century is not necessary to understand the imprint of foreign attack. More than three centuries of Viking raids were the greatest contributor to an insular wariness of outsiders before the eleventh-century. The traditional date for the beginning of these raids is the 793 sack of Lindisfarne, but the incursions continued on and off until the crown was finally lost to Cnut (1016-1035) and his sons, Harold Harefoot (1035-1040) and Harthacnut (1040-1042). At times the threat was greater than others. The periods frequently cited as the first and second invasion spanned the second half of the ninth-century and 980-1012 respectively, but the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* shows that the threat of invasion loomed large in the English consciousness throughout the entire latter half of the Anglo-Saxon period. The incursions by

¹⁰² Treharne, 9-12.

raiders from Scandinavian kingdoms did not cease after the Danish occupation either. The C and D MSS of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describe King Harold as traveling north to engage his own brother Tostig and Harold of Norway before having to turn around and face William I at the Battle of Hastings. Even after William took the throne he had to put down a rebellion in the north comprised of English earls and “Denmarcon þreo Swegenes suna kyninges” (“three sons of King Sweyne of Denmark”).¹⁰³

Along with the threats from the North, the Norman Conquest was obviously a pivotal factor in the establishment of foreign invasion as a norm for the English. Support for John Gillingham’s declaration that “the devastating experience of 1066 ... meant that the correspondence between a kingdom and a people, a community of tradition, custom, law and descent ... no longer applied in England”¹⁰⁴ can readily be found in English writing from the end of the eleventh-century onward. Given the restoration after the period of Danish rule, the Conquest might have initially been seen as a temporary disruption to Anglo-Saxon kingship, but by the time English romance came into its own in the thirteenth-century it was seen as both inevitable and a sign of divine retribution.¹⁰⁵ Add to this the influential version of British history made popular by Geoffrey of Monmouth in which the ancient Britons are depicted as being under constant threat from the Romans and then the Saxons, and it becomes clear that romance writers in the late thirteenth and early fourteen centuries were working within a historical framework in which invasion was constant.¹⁰⁶ Influential in its own right as a widely-circulated

¹⁰³ Entry for the year 1068; D MS. The E MSS dates this event to 1069.

¹⁰⁴ Gillingham, John. *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity, and Political Values*. Rochester: Boydell Press, 2000. 128.

¹⁰⁵ See: Treharne, Elaine. *Living Through Conquest*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ In *Worlds of Arthur: Facts & Fictions of the Dark Ages*, Guy Halsall points to archeological evidence which supports his argument that the conflicts between Germanic tribes from the east and the Romano-British culture that remained in the wake of

Latin history, Geoffrey's account of British kingship also became the primary source for Robert Wace's Anglo-Norman *Brut* and, by extension, Laȝamon's English *Brut* both of which were in circulation by the turn of the thirteenth-century. If the chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft from the late thirteenth-century and its English redaction by Robert Mannyng in the early fourteenth-century are anywhere close to being representative of the popular English conception of history at the time, then the writers behind the Matter of England wrote with an understanding that the history of their island nation was one of threats from afar.

Central to the historical presence of invasion is religious difference. The Normans who set the English "in seruage", according to Mannyng, were undeniably Christian, but for his contemporaries who wrote romances, like their predecessors in the Anglo-Saxon period, the threat from afar is primarily heathen (52). The Danes and Norwegians who harried English shores from the late eighth through the eleventh-century were, for the most part, not yet Christianized and exceptions get special attention. All the MSS of the *ASC* tell the story of King Alfred's sponsorship of Guthrum's baptism.¹⁰⁷ Langtoft and Mannyng go a step further and duplicate the story with an additional episode in which Alfred converts Rollo as well, creating a situation where an English king was responsible for the conversion of the man who established the House of Normandy. But while the heathen threat in the Anglo-Saxon period did not come from the Islamic East, the substitution of Islamic for Norse invaders seems to have been made fairly easily after the Crusades. In the romances, Saracen invaders figure prominently in *Horn*

the Roman Empire's withdrawal from the island was considerably less dramatic and more gradual than it is depicted in either the *ASC* or Geoffrey's *HRB*. Who and how many residents of England at the turn of the fourteenth-century considered themselves to be British or have British ancestry is not a question I take up, but by this time the Trojan origins of the British and Arthurian legend had become staples in vernacular history.

¹⁰⁷ Fragment H does not cover the year in question.

and *Bevis*, and the antagonists in *Havelok* are Christian by name but unmistakably unchristian in deed. The question of whether or not these heathen invaders were Norse instead of Islamic in lost, earlier versions of these romances has been taken up elsewhere.¹⁰⁸ For the present discussion it need only be recognized that, by virtue of being written after the initiation of the Crusades, abundant commentary on the relationship between the Christian West and the Muslim East asserts itself in the place of less well defined religious differences. Robert Allen Rouse's declaration that "Bevis's death and burial in the exotic East act only to reinforce his own troublesome relation to English identity" is echoed in various ways by many critics of not just *Bevis of Hampton* but all the English romances where pagans from the East threaten.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence of the shift from Northern and Eastern pagans, ME romances generally make use of a greater geographic and political scope than OE narratives, and the geographic positioning of protagonists and antagonists shifts much more frequently. Finally, though the separation between Christian and non-Christian is maintained in the romances, after *King Horn* the antagonists are not always explicitly declared pagan. More often than not, the actions of a given character determine his or her adherence to Christian living.

¹⁰⁸ In her study of the Saracens of *King Horn*, Diane Speed comes to the conclusion that the author of the poem was likely familiar with concept of Saracens as Islamic people, but she also acknowledges that it is possible that "he was also aware of some group of "Saracens" which included Germanic pagans as well" (594-595). Speed finds this same dichotomous understanding to be present in the chanson-de-geste tradition from which the English *KH* was formed. Stopping short of extending Speed's observation to *Bevis* and *Guy*, her study confirms, for the present study, that the most important aspects of these characters is their status as foreign and non-Christian.

¹⁰⁹ See: Rouse, Robert Allen. "For King and Country? The Tension between National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*." *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*. Eds. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008. 125.

As part of the 2005 collection of essays entitled, *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, Rosalind Field examines the exile-and-return motif in the Anglo-Norman and English romance traditions with the aim of moving past “simple awareness” of the motif to “ask why it occurs in such a noticeable cluster in insular romance in the Anglo-Norman period”.¹¹⁰ She draws a distinction between exile-and-return and the Chivalric Quest, which other critics, such as Diane Speed, have labeled as a variation of exile-and-return. The Chivalric Quest, Field points out, is “more individualistic and more unpredictable” than exile-and-return.¹¹¹ She observes as well that traditionally exile-and-return has been characterized as feature that is intrinsically insular with little attention to the possibility that it is reactive. The sketch she provides of the theme is succinct and accurate:

It opens with the male protagonist as a young boy. The initial stasis is broken by a violent crisis in which the father is killed. The boy, now heir to his father’s lands, is exiled across the water by the usurper, often after cruel treatment. In exile, disguised or otherwise deprived of his identity, he is often in danger as he reaches maturity. Aided by friends and/or love, he may become a leader in his new land. He returns – across water – often with an army. He finds a welcoming party, often hidden allies from his father’s generation. He defeats and kills the usurper, thus avenging his father’s death. He regains the lands to general acclaim and establishes a dynasty (43).

What I would add to the beginning of this summary is an emphasis on the foreignness of those who initiate the “violent crisis”. Domestic usurpers are often important to these attacks, but the disruption of right rule is never completely insular.

¹¹⁰ Field, Rosalind. “The King Over the Water: Exile-and-Return Revisited.” *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*. Ed. Corinne Saunders. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005. 41.

¹¹¹ Field, 42.

Where I diverge from Field's assessment is in her location of the motivation behind the exile-and-return theme. She finds that "the legendary geography of pre-Conquest England as the locus of action for many of these romances neatly conflates the narrative preference for kingship with the smaller units of actual aristocratic inheritance".¹¹² An equally valid argument could be made that the smaller kingdoms found in the romances with pre-Conquest settings reflect the cultural memory of actual historical circumstances and manifest the stronger regional identification dominant in the era. Robert Allen Rouse has written about the latter and its influence on *Bevis of Hampton*.¹¹³ Finally, Field finds the preoccupation with exile-and-return in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries to be the product of royal instability after the death of Henry I, the struggle for power between Stephen and Matilda being a primary influence.¹¹⁴ I concede that these shifts of power may have provided a template for Anglo-Norman writers, but in the hands of English writers, older concerns about foreign invaders and the usurpation of birthright are far more prominent motivations.¹¹⁵ In defense of her assessment, Field cites John Niles' demonstration of how Geoffrey of Monmouth "used the prophecies of Merlin to adumbrate the Norman Conquest as restoring [Britain] to its rightful owners, the British and by extension the Normans, after the misrule of the usurping English".¹¹⁶ For English writers and

¹¹² Field, 49.

¹¹³ See: Rouse, Robert Allen. "For King and Country? The Tension between National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*." *A Companion to Bevis of Hampton*. Eds. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008.

¹¹⁴ Field, 50.

¹¹⁵ Susan Crane's understanding of exile-and-return ("departure and return" in her words) is somewhat similar to Field's in that she locates the motif's genesis in the social and political instability of the baronial rank during the Angevin period. In her reading, "[t]he English hero is an adopted ancestor whose exploits and nobility establish and enhance the status of the insular aristocracy". Though literary revision and imagination, the "fines, inheritance duties, and petitions to the king" that plagued English landholders were replaced with "a glorious exile, a righteous and sometimes bloody return, and a marriage blessed with sons" (23). I do not object to the claim that the trials and triumphs experienced by heroes in Anglo-Norman romance appealed to landholders whose socio-political stability was precarious. However, this does not change that fact that invasion and exile were preoccupations of English writers before, during, and after the Conquest. Even if this motif emerged separately in Anglo-Norman romance, it would not have been unfamiliar or seen as foreign when translated into English.

¹¹⁶ Field, 49-50.

audiences, however, it would be surprising to find such concern for the Norman right to rule. From an English point-of-view concern with invasion in general trumped any specific dynastic disruption that they did not see themselves as part of anyway. The Normans were the most recent invaders, but hardly the first. This is why many of the same tropes used to describe foreign threats in OE resurfaced in ME.

Following imminent threats and concerns of invasion, the final trope I discuss is animal imagery. The application of this sort of imagery to describe friends and foes alike is not unique to the English literary tradition, but some specific understandings and deployments can be found in English narratives from the late Anglo-Saxon period through the early fourteenth century. These images frequently appear as part of, or the result of, battle or physical conflict. In the OE tradition, the birds of war, eagles and ravens, appear with consistency at the site of battle to feast on the carnage left behind. The birds are accompanied by the most prominent of OE predatory animals, the wolf. Wolves not only appear at the sight of battle; frequently enemies becomes slaughter-wolves themselves in a move that replaces their humanity with primal, predatory inclinations. In much the same manner, giants, monstrous beings, and dragons can be found in both traditions as figures of gross, unchecked appetites with only vaguely identifiable human features. Of course, none of these mythical characters are uniquely English in origin, but the context in which they appear and the role they play demonstrates a connection between OE and ME traditions.

Old English Type-Scenes

Before turning to ME romance, it is necessary to take a quick survey of several OE narratives to establish the presence and unique features of the themes and motifs which persisted through the dry spell of literary production from the beginning of the twelfth-century through the middle of the thirteenth-century. Most of the representative texts I cite are epic by definition or character; it is rarely disputed that this style of poetry lent itself most directly to romantic adaptation in later centuries. My investigation also represents a sort of cross examination. None of the texts presents a blueprint or prototype for English narrative which underlies almost five hundred years of literary production, but when examined collectively the concerns, themes, and tropes that drive them emerge. For instance, I read the strong presence of the threat-from-afar and imminent danger in OE literature and ME romances that take the Anglo-Saxon past as their setting as a clear indication that the relationship between the two traditions is one of inheritance. However, an argument could be made that the prominence of the theme in two different periods of literary production could simply be unrelated responses to broadly similar threats. What is more logical than having the heroes of an island nation fight-off unexpected outsiders who threaten the sovereignty of their kingdom? To this I would argue that a close comparison of the applications of the theme show undeniable similarities between the two traditions that cannot be random. Further, if English poets in successive generations saw their history, which included Anglo-Saxon history, as an unending series of invasions from foreign kingdoms, why should a break have occurred in the use of these themes in literature? If the threat was continually present, the response should be too.

Concerning the foreign threats in OE literature I find two basic patterns of response, both of which are maintained, though slightly modified, in the ME romance. The first is a threat that arrives at the shores of the native, Christian populace. In the second, the protagonist must go overseas to confront an enemy that stands at odds with Christian living, sometimes with a small company, other times alone. This second pattern is an inversion of the first spatially, but the religious and moral positioning of the protagonist and antagonist is the same in both. In some instances the far-off threat to be confronted poses a danger to homeland of the protagonist, but more frequently it is the Christian and ethical duty of the hero to seek out the menace. The common thread between the two patterns is that the threat consistently comes in the form of non-Christian, often physically grotesque or animal-like, invaders who are separated from the protagonists by a body of water. The invaders are frequently superior in number and must be overcome through the superior battle prowess supported by a right relationship with the Almighty. Field is correct in saying that exile-and-return in ME romance encodes “specifically feudal ideas of mutual dependency between king and supporters”, but the spatial transferability of the confrontation between Christian hero and heathen invaders in both OE and ME leads me to believe that English treatment of insularity can be literal, figurative, or both.¹¹⁷

The Battle of Maldon

It is difficult to assess completely the presence of imminent danger in the *Battle of Maldon*, written around the turn of the eleventh-century, since the beginning of the text is missing, but battles rarely present passing dangers and the poem displays many of the elements

¹¹⁷ Field, 53.

associated with the first pattern of foreign threat.¹¹⁸ As in the actual battle, the enemies of the English are Vikings, pagan Norse warriors, and the repeated emphasis on shoreline confrontation and the seafaring nature of the enemy are vitally important in defining their identity. The Viking messenger first addresses the English leader, Byrhtnoð, from the “stæðe” (“shore”) with a message from the “brimliþendra” (“seafarers”) (ll. 25, 27). He proceeds to tell the English leader that he is sending “sæmen snelle” (“quick, strong men of the sea”) to whom it would be wise to pay tribute (l. 30). If paid-off, the messenger proclaims that the Viking host will: “On flot feran, / and eow friþes healdan” (“Put out to sea and hold peace with you”) (l. 41). In his response, Byrhtnoð too emphasizes the most foundational aspects of his foes. The messenger is a “sælida” (“sea-traveler”) and his people “brimmanna” (“seafarers”) and “hæþene” (“heathens”) (ll. 45, 49, 55).

In addition to these descriptions of the Vikings as heathen warriors from the across the sea, the battle itself is spatially framed by water features. Before it can begin, the narrator is careful to describe how both armies must wait until the tide goes out (ll. 63-72).¹¹⁹ Besides forestalling the fighting to dramatic effect, having the two armies face off across the two banks of the river is a duplication in miniature of a defining difference between the Viking and the English, the former comes from across the water. Once the battle begins, the English invite the Vikings to cross the river and allow them to *make landing* on the English side: “alyfan landes to fela / laþere ðeode” (“allow landing for many / hateful people”) (l. 90). The water in and of itself is a neutral entity in this confrontation, and it would be hard to argue that it carries the Christian

¹¹⁸ Quotations from the *Battle of Maldon* from transcription found in: McGillivray, Murray, ed. *Old English Reader*. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2011.

¹¹⁹ The two armies are facing each from across the River Blackwater in Essex, which is named Panta in the text.

association of purity as the permeable, temporary boundary between the English and the Vikings. Its purpose here and elsewhere is to serve as a literal and figurative marker of difference. Separation by water draws attention to the disparate origins, geographic and spiritual, of the protagonists and antagonists.

The alliterative structuring and emphasis on kenning in OE poetry makes the paratactic renaming and defining of the Vikings constant, but it would be a mistake to understand these poetic conventions as the only reason for the emphasis on their seaward nature and lack of Christian adherence. To draw the contrast between the two armies into even sharper focus once the battle is underway, the enemies of the English begin to be described as animals, giving them grotesque, inhuman qualities. Sometimes these descriptions are very specific. When the Vikings wade across the river they are “wælwulfas” (“slaughter-wolves”) (l. 96). Along with the wolves, ravens, and eagles who circle the battlefield waiting to gorge on the flesh of the slain, they become part of the greater menagerie present. (ll. 106-107). In context, the Vikings are animals driven by appetite; the English, warriors emboldened by God and the fealty due their temporal lords. As he succumbs to his injuries Byrhtnoð gives thanks to the Almighty for, “ealra þæra wylna / þe ic on worulde gebad” (“all the joys I have enjoyed in this world”) before asking that he be spared from the “helsceaðan” (“hell-scathers”) on his way to heaven (ll. 174, 180). Unlike wolves, hell-scathers are not going to be found in any bestiary, but as hell-sent marauders, the Vikings are just as grotesque and inhuman as “wælwulfas”.

The Battle of Brunanburh

The *Battle of Brunanburh* (937), preserved in poetic form in the *ASC*, presents images of battle similar to those found in the *Battle of Maldon* and, being complete, gives a better sense of the imminent danger created by the Vikings and Scots who oppose the English.¹²⁰ In the *ASC*, the battle is presented as the highest achievement of Æthelstan's reign, and at the outset of the poem it is declared that the king and his brother, Edmund, attained "ealdorlangne tir" ("eternal glory") through their fighting (l. 11). Eternal glory is not gained by defeating a weak foe or passing danger. In what modern editors mark-out as the second sentence of the poem, the violent image of swords spitting shields brings the action of battle to the fore (ll. 13-14). Before describing the battle in full, the poet is careful to note that it was natural for King Edward's sons to "land ealgodon, / hord ond hamas" ("defend land, treasure and homes"), a direct statement about what is at stake (ll. 17-18). The Vikings themselves are first described as "scipflotan" ("ship-floaters"), and when one of their leaders retreats to save his life he does so over the "fealene flod" ("dark flood / waters"), emphasizing his position as an enemy from afar (ll. 19, 44). When the defeated Vikings retreat, they return to their "nægledcnearrum" ("nailed-ships") and travel "ofer deop wæter" ("over deep water") back to Dublin (ll. 61, 63). More than just creative visual imagery, these descriptors show how stark the division is between the English and their Viking foes. As in the *Battle of Maldon*, the Christian English armies fight on their land with God on their side. Poetically they do so under "Godes condel beorht" ("God's bright candle"), an image of divine light that stands to contrast the deep, dark waters the Vikings cross (l. 23). In this poem the enemies are not directly described in animalistic terms as before, but the

¹²⁰ All quotations from the *Battle of Brunanburh*: "Reign of Æthelstan and *Battle of Brunanburh*." *Old and Middle English c. 890-1400 An Anthology*. Ed. Elaine Treharne. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

beasts of battle are still present. After the conflict the “saluwigpadan” (“dark-coated”) ravens, “hyrnednebban” (“horny-beaked”) eagles, and the “wulf on wealde” (“wolf in the woods”) appear to feast on the carrion (ll. 69, 70, 73). These animals are not themselves the enemy, but the battle provoked by the Vikings and Scots has brought them forth. Finally, an image which can be considered animalistic in a sense, is that of the Viking Anlaf’s warriors being carried in the bosom of their ship (l. 35). The ship is the protecting body of the heathen warriors.

Beowulf

In the grandest of all OE epics, *Beowulf*, the fights between the hero and the succession of monsters he faces are framed in familiar ways. After the recital of Hrothgar’s genealogy, the poet juxtaposes the construction of Heorot with Grendel’s emergence to emphasize the gravity of the situation in the present (ll. 64-101). Whereas the Vikings were men with animalistic qualities and associated with battlefield predators, Grendel is a monster with human features, and he does not fight in the open. He comes at night when the Geat warriors are “swefan æfter syble” (“asleep after feasting”) (l. 119); his guerilla attacks contrast the face-to-face battle depicted as honorable elsewhere (cf. *Battle of Maldon*). When describing the twelve years in which Hrothgar and the Geats suffer Grendel’s wrath, the poet makes it clear that the monster is in control: “Swa rixode ond wið rihte wan” (“So [he] ruled, against right”) making Heorot his own dwelling (“eardode”) (l. 144, 166). Thus, when Beowulf enters the narrative he must confront a threat both looming and entrenched.

The poet too relies heavily on the opposition of heathen and Christian, the alien, animalistic qualities of the hero's foes, and their distant positioning. Grendel and his mother live apart from the Danes in a lake and a cave under a swamp. Like the Viking warriors in the poems based on historical occurrences, they come from dark watery far-off places, and as descendants of Cain they are a pagan threat living apart from God's righteousness. When the hero returns to Heorot and recounts his battle with Grendel's mother, he describes Grendel's head as a prize from the "sæ-lac" (sea-lake) where the battle was fought "under wætere" ("under water") (ll. 1652, 1656). The numerous kennings for Grendel and his mother continually emphasize their position as heathen enemies, foreign and animalistic. Grendel is alternately a "sceadu-genga" ("shadow-walker") (l. 703), "fyrena hyrde" ("sin's guardian") (l. 750), "man-scaða" ("man's enemy") (l. 712), and he "Godes yrre bær" ("bore God's ire") (l. 711); his mother a "aglac-wif" ("bride of misery") (l. 1259) "wæl-gæst" ("slaughter-spirit") (l. 1331), "grund-wyrgegne" ("strangler from below") (l. 1518), "mere-wif mihtig" ("mighty sea-woman") (l. 1519), and "brim-wylf" ("sea-wolf") (l. 1559).¹²¹

Not to be missed in the animalistic coloring of the poem's monsters is that Hrothgar rules his Spear-Danes from Heorot, a hall of great size and grandeur named for the hart, a "familiar royal emblem".¹²² The unfortunate king and his people themselves are not described with animalistic imagery, but Heorot's name draws to attention to a dynamic central to the first two-

¹²¹ Sonya R Jensen has suggested that at least the episode with Grendel is a poetically transformed version of the story of Agnar (Grendel) and Brothvarr Bjarki (Beowulf), two human characters mentioned in both the *Saga of the Scyldings* and the *History of the Danes*. If this is case, and at least one of the monsters Beowulf fights has a considerably less fantastic genesis in another narrative familiar to at least some of the poem's audience, the epic is another testament to how hardwired the idea of the monstrous heathen invader was for English poets. See: Jensen, Sonya R. *Beowulf and the Monsters*. Sydney: ARRC Publishing, 1997.

¹²² See: Wentersdorf, Karl P. "The "Beowulf"-Poet's Vision of Heorot." *Studies in Philology* 104.4 (2007): 409.

thirds of the tale: hunter and hunted. Before Beowulf's arrival, Grendel, by virtue of his nightly raids of the great hall, has thwarted royal prerogative. His mother briefly extends her son's reign of terror. The hart is the prey of the "shadow-walker". The extent to which Heorot symbolizes royal authority is debatable. The OED places the earliest references to the concept of the *hart royal* in the later fourteenth century.¹²³ Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of predator and prey remains.

Seeking the Threat in OE Narratives

Grendel and his mother fit the description of pagan enemies from a land removed, but *Beowulf* also employs the second pattern of threat-from-afar: the journey overseas to quell a heathen threat. Beowulf himself is central to this dynamic as he travels from Geatland over the water to fight monstrous heathen foes in Denmark. This assessment cannot be made without qualification. The religious positioning of the tale as a whole and the Christian nature of Beowulf himself are debatable. Certainly, Christian values and those of Germanic warrior society are juxtaposed in ways that would be incompatible in later eras, but the persistence of the traditional Germanic warrior figure in later, nominally Christian texts is not hard to find. The *Dream of the Rood* and *Judith* are frequently cited as other prominent examples of OE poetry in which the warrior-like disposition of Christ and the Old Testament heroine are more prominent than the piety later medieval readers would have expected from Biblical protagonists. From this perspective, the depth of Beowulf's Christian adherence is debatable, but not his Christianity. Though he concedes that, "Christliche umgestaltung alter sagen, oder märchen, motive läßt sich noch deutlich an einigen musterbeispielen beobachten" ("Christian motives for reshaping older

¹²³ "Hart." †b. *Oxford English Dictionary*. University of Oxford. Web. 10 Feb. 2016.

stories and tales can be observed in some paradigms”), Friedrich Klaeber’s famous ultimate declaration that, “heidnische züge spielen im Beowulf keine große rolle” (“pagan features play no significant role in *Beowulf*”) is correct.¹²⁴ Beowulf’s ego plays into his decision to come to Hrothgar’s aid, but his position as a Christian warrior, and ultimately savior, is clear, and as part of his introduction he is purposefully contrasted with some Danes whose faithfulness has begun to falter.¹²⁵

Immediately before the hero appears, the narrator relates how some of the Danes had begun to turn to heathen gods because of their suffering at the hands of Grendel (ll. 170-188). The strongest condemnation of these deserters of the faith is that those who do so forfeit their souls: “Wa bið þæm ðe sceal / þurh sliðne nið / sawle bescufan / in fyres fæpum, frofre ne wenan, / wihte gewendan” (“Woe be to those who, through cruel hatred, throw away their souls in the fire’s depth, not to believe in the Holy Spirit”) (ll. 183-186). By contrast, Beowulf’s attitude toward fate is steadfast and unwavering; he is willing to let God determine the outcome of his exploits. In making his proposal to Hrothgar, he declares the following about the outcome of the fight he desires with Grendel: “ðær gelyfan sceal / Dryhtnes dome / se þe hine deað nimeð” (“there those death has taken must believe in God’s judgment”) (ll. 440-441). By trusting in God’s judgment, Beowulf stands apart from those who have turned away from God. The

¹²⁴ Klaeber, Frederick. "Die christlichen Elemente im Beowulf." *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 36 (1912): 169-99. 178, 169.

¹²⁵ In a more recent assessment of Beowulf’s Christian adherence that confirms Klaeber’s findings, Joseph E. Marshall has argued that the hero’s recovery of the treasure guarded by the Dragon in the final episode of the story is an expression of Christian lordship and not, as many have argued, avarice. Marshall’s claim is important to the present discussion because the dragon, a monstrous, unhuman character, as Beowulf’s foe represents the opposite of the Christian redistribution of wealth through its hoarding. Grotesque physicality and the rejection of Christian ideals are maintained as a pair. See: Marshall, Joseph E. "Goldgyfan or Goldwlance: A Christian Apology for Beowulf and Treasure." *Studies in Philology* 107.1 (2010): 1-24.

language that repeatedly describes Grendel and his mother as being literal and moral outsiders is the most obvious part of the poem's Christian – pagan opposition, but by mentioning that some of the Danes had begun to falter in their faith, an action reminiscent of the Hebrews when Moses is away receiving the Ten Commandments, the poet shows an interest in the separation of the faithful from the unfaithful. Denmark is a Christian kingdom throughout the tale, but the combination of those whose faith has begun to fray and the unchecked terror enemies of God inflict on the royal hall allows the kingdom to be positioned as a de facto heathen land. Beowulf's defeat of Grendel and his mother shifts the balance of power in Denmark. The presence of moral and religious instability within Christendom is important to recognize because it is a trope that reemerges in ME romance.

Denmark's temporary status as a heathen land in *Beowulf* is supported by other OE texts in which the religious positioning of kingdoms and lands of opposing forces is less opaque. Crossing the sea to battle heathen foes figures prominently in two of the most memorable OE saints lives, *Andreas* and *Elene*. *Andreas* begins with St. Matthew going to a land called Mermedonia to preach (presumably) to the "deofles þegnas" ("devil's thanes") who inhabit the land (l. 43).¹²⁶ The traditional locations for the land of Mermedonia were alternatively Scythia and Ethiopia, but, as explained by Alexandra Bolintineanu, when compared with its Greek and Latin analogues, the OE version makes a more concerted effort to amplify the "otherworldliness" of the cannibalistic inhabitants and their domains (150).¹²⁷ The kennings make the animalistic nature of those who eat as food "blod ond fel, / fira flæschoman, / feorrancumenra / ðegon"

¹²⁶ Both *Andreas* and *Elene* come from the *Vercelli Book* and can in extant form, therefore, be dated to the around the end of the tenth-century. Quotations of both texts from: *Labyrinth Library*. Georgetown University, <<http://aspr.oepoetry.ca>>

¹²⁷ Bolintineanu, Alexandra. "The Land of Mermedonia in the Old English *Andreas*." *Neophilologus* 93 (2009): 149-64.

("[the] blood and skin, flesh of men, [and] those from afar") readily apparent. Among their many titles, they are: "hæleð hellfuse" ("hell-bound warriors"), "elpeodige" ("strange / alien people"), "leodsceaðena" ("people's enemies"), and, like the Vikings in the *Battle of Maldon*, "wælwulfas" ("slaughter-wolves"). But as important as their heathen nature is, the OE poet is also keen to emphasize their remove from surrounding peoples, demarcated again by water. The insularity of the Mermedonian kingdom is described first in terms of literal demarcation: "mearcland" ("boarderland") and then as an "ealand" ("island") (l. 19, 28). When Andrew is told about Matthew's capture by God, his immediate response is to question how he will get to Mermedonia because it is so far away across the sea:

Hu mæg ic, dryhten min, ofer deop gelad
fore gefremman on feorne weg
swa hrædlice, heofona scyppend,
wuldres waldend, swa ðu worde becwist? (ll. 190-194)

(My Lord, how can I, over deep course,
go forth on troubled way
so quickly, Creator of Heaven,
wonder-wielder, as your words command?)

God provides, and no less than the Almighty Himself along with two angels, dressed as common sailors, pilot the boat that takes Andrew and his men to Mermedonia (ll. 244-249). The greater point, though, is that in this poet's conception, like so many others in the OE tradition, the imposition of a body of water was an established, stock means of making both a symbolic and literal division between the wild, animalistic heathen peoples and the Christians who have God's favor.

As in *Beowulf*, both variations of threat-from-afar can also be found in *Elene*, the story of Helen, the mother of Constantine, who traveled to the Holy Land to find the true Cross. When

Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, is introduced, he is described first as a “hildfruma” (“battle-lord”) and is immediately placed in the context of battle (l. 10).

Constantine is a mature, established king when the tale begins, but, as in so many other English epics and romances, an enemy that threatens his kingdom is present and manifest from the beginning. Well before the vision granted him by the Almighty is recounted, he must fight a heathen force that places his kingdom in peril. Unlike other accounts, the battle in which Constantine is granted his miraculous vision does not take place at the Milvian Bridge which spans the Tiber, and his enemy is not the army of Maxentius. The soon-to-be Christian emperor here travels to the Danube to face a heathen army made up of Huns, Hrethgoths, Franks, and Hugas. In a scene reminiscent of the situation in the *Battle of Maldon*, the heathen army and the hero’s face-off on either side of the “egstreame” (“water’s edge”), temporarily separated by the river (l. 66). Sensing the battle to come, the animals of war make their customary appearance: the “wulf on wealde” (“wolf of the woods”) (l. 28), the “urigfeðera earn” (“dewy-feathered eagle”) (l. 29), and the “hrefen”, (“raven”) “wan ond wælfel” (“desirous and slaughter-greedy”) (ll. 28, 29, 52-53). More like the *Battle of Brunanburh*, the heathen hordes are not animals themselves; the war-birds and wolves appear by virtue of their intentions and actions. Rome’s enemies explicitly intend to “ahyðan” (“plunder”) the city (l. 41).

While the poem begins with the familiar image of heathen hordes who threaten at the kingdom’s borders, Constantine’s battle, even with the revelation of the Cross in the heavens, is just the precursor to the main action of the story: Elene’s recovery of the true Cross from the Jews who have been hiding it. The story turns to its primary antagonist when the emperor calls

on Elene to cross the sea on “sæmearas” (“sea-horses”) in order to undertake the recovery (l. 228). Like Beowulf and Andreas, Elene becomes a hero who must venture into non-Christian lands by the compulsion of her faith. The Jews, as the antagonists of the tale, are not the same warmongering heathens depicted elsewhere. They are, instead, “modblinde” (“blind of spirit”) as the people who “wiðweorpon” (“threw-off, rejected”) Christ (l. 306, 294.) Consequently, the war that Elena wages with the Jewish elders is not one of weapons: it is one of reasoning and words. Still, the Jews are the antithesis of Christian protagonists in a manner that maintains the established dynamic. Given that they are more of a moral and ethical threat than a martial one, this is not a story in which the intervention overseas engages a military menace. However, failure to recover the Cross, the holiest of all relics, from those who rejected Christ threatens the stability of the burgeoning Christian movement in Rome. The healing powers of the Cross are unmistakable: “þær bið a gearu / wraðu wannhalum wita gehwylces, / sæce ond sorge. Hie sona þær / þurh þa halgan gesceaft helpe findaþ, / godcunde gife” (“There it is ready to aid those affected by great sorrow and hostility: Through that holy sign, they shall soon find help, a gift from God”) (ll. 1028-1032). The spiritual power of the cross can no more be ignored than a heathen army.

Apollonius of Tyre

To begin my examination of the ways ME romance made use of established themes and tropes following the Anglo-Saxon era, I turn first to *Apollonius of Tyre*. Though Apollonius’ story is not part of the Matter of England, Elaine Treharne has called the eleventh-century OE

text the first English romance.¹²⁸ This is an apt description and one with which I agree, but it is important to consider the distinction that Treharne makes in declaring the text an *English* romance. Unlike the heroes of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France's romances, Apollonius does not seek to join knightly ranks nor does he have to seek-out the opponents whose defeat will confirm his worthiness. Treharne identifies numerous characteristics of the genre: "adventure, the quest of the hero, the love interest, loyalty, exile and return, disguise, and [an] aristocratic focus" (234). However, chivalry does not function in the text as it does in the French romances of the late twelfth-century.

A key difference between the threats facing OE heroes and those of their ME successors is the political character of latter, a modification resulting from conquests of the eleventh-century. Beginning with Apollonius, the heroes of ME romance are frequently born into or mature under the threat of a malevolent ruler, rulers, or kingdom, meaning they must endure mental and martial challenges beyond their control in their adolescence or young adulthood. The imminent danger associated with specific battles in the OE tradition gets frontloaded in the structuring of the narrative, potential political gains or losses are for the audience to infer. Consider that the Vikings in the *Battle of Maldon* nominally demand only tribute from English, while the combined Norse and Scottish foes in the *Battle of Brunanburh* make no specific demands at all. In each case, the poet assumes that the danger the enemies pose is self-evident. By contrast, the Saracens of *King Horn* rob Horn of his patrimony in their quest to exterminate all Christians. Likewise, the betrayal and murder of Bevis's father places the hero in peril, but

¹²⁸ Treharne, Elaine. *Living Through Conquest*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 77.

also has political implications since his Scottish mother and German stepfather, two foreigners, take control of Southampton.

Given the attention it gives to political positioning, Apollonius's tale aligns more closely with the romances that would come more than one hundred years later than the OE heroic poetry which preceded it. Long before Apollonius enters the narrative the audience is told about how Antiochus, the king of Antioch, has entrenched himself in evil living and put the future of his kingdom in jeopardy because of the incestuous relationship he forces on his daughter (I).¹²⁹ His evil is twofold; he ruins the life and marital prospects of his daughter and deceives those whom he ought to be protecting: "On þisum þingum soðlice þurhwunode se arleasesta cyngc Antiochus, and mid gehywedan mode hine sylfne ætywde his ceastergewarum swilce he arfæst fæder wære his dohtor" ("In truth, the wicked king Antiochus persisted in these affairs, and with false mind he showed himself to his citizens as if he were a devoted father to his daughter") (III). His lasciviousness further affects the future stability of the citizens of Antioch when he devises what he considers to be an impossible riddle for suitors of his daughter. When Apollonius comes to ask for the princess's hand, she is effectively unavailable to be married in the traditional diplomatic way.

¹²⁹ All quotations and translations of *Apollonius of Tyre* are Elaine Treharne's: "Apollonius of Tyre." *Old and Middle English c. 890-1400 An Anthology*. Ed. Elaine Treharne. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 234-53. Given that the narrative is in prose, citation has been made by paragraph.

Apollonius matures over the course of the romance, but he does not need to prove himself before he can take on a quest of great significance. He is already “swiðe welig and snotor and ... ealdorman on Tiro þare mægðe” (“very wealthy and intelligent and ... a nobleman in the region of Tyre”) when he is introduced, and within the first fifty lines of the text he is thrown into the conflict which will ultimately give direction to the rest of his life (IV). Apollonius quickly solves Antiochus’s riddle and in doing so put himself in mortal danger. Absent is a drawn-out process wherein he must suffer and pine in order to prove his worth, and the audience is given no indication that he foresaw any sort of mortal danger in seeking the hand of the princess. His innate nobility is already in place when he enters the narrative, and for a time it is the only thing which safeguards his wellbeing, and, by extension, that of his own people and the citizens of Antioch.¹³⁰ Apollonius matures over the course of the narrative, but absent is the drawn out period of training and the threats against his life are immediate.

Understanding the relative positioning of the foreign threats in the tale is not difficult even though the religious alignment of the romance is revisionary. Apollonius is described in terms that indicate he is in a right relationship with a singular God, even though the presence of the Greco-Roman deities has not been erased and the hero himself is never directly said to be Christian. The evidence is scattered. When the hero is presented with Antiochus’s riddle, the narrator says that he solves it with “Godes fultume” (“God’s help”) (IV).¹³¹ Sometime later, after relating the story of his flight from Antiochus, Apollonius tells a friend in Tarsus, Stranguillo, that he escaped with “gefultumigendum Gode” (“the help of God”) (IX). Soon thereafter in

¹³⁰ At first Apollonius is just described as a nobleman, but later readers learn that he is, in fact, the prince of Tyre (X).

¹³¹ “Godes” is a genitive construction, not a plural.

Pentapolis, when he meets King Arcestrates for the first time at the gymnasium, the text says that Apollonius participated in the king's game "swa swa God wolde" ("as God wished") (XIII). The king is not said to be Christian either, but after his meeting Apollonius for the first time, he swears by their "gemænan hælo" ("common salvation") that he has never been served better (XIV). Other details in the text, though they may not have originally supported Christian positioning, contribute to the idea that Apollonius has God's favor. When he departs from Tyre in the wake of incurring Antiochus's wrath, the hero loads his ships with "hundteontig þusenda" ("one hundred thousand") measures of wheat which he later distributes among the starving people of Tarsus (IX). The image alternatively recalls God providing for the Israelites in the desert during the Exodus and Christ feeding the five thousand. The episode is lost from the OE text, but after the apparent death of his wife, Arcestrate, Apollonius spends fourteen years traveling through Egypt, an act that bears a resemblance to the retreat of the Holy Family after the birth of Christ.

If the religious positioning of the text is revisionary, or perhaps ambiguous, the separation by water of the protagonists from the antagonists is unmistakable. Apollonius must journey by sea to Antioch before he can try his hand at the king's riddle (IV). When he solves the riddle and is dismissed by Antiochus he, "mid his geferum on scip astah and reow oðþæt he becom to Tirum" ("boarded his ship with his companions and sailed until he came to Tyre) (V). Antiochus sends a henchman, Thaliarcus, after Apollonius who must also cross the sea, but the manner in which this takes place is very telling of the separation so important heroic narratives. Thaliarcus follows "æfter þam unscæððian Apollonie oððæt he to his eðle becom" ("after the unwitting Apollonius until he came to his native land") (VI). In an alignment not completely

unlike battle lines, the protagonists are positioned on one side of the sea in their homeland and the antagonists on the other side. The action of the story is completely dependent on the crossing of these boundaries and the movement across water gets repeated. Angered by Apollonius's evasion, Antiochus puts a price on his head, and the prince must flee yet again, this time to Tarsus where he remains for several months. Finally, Apollonius finds haven at the court of King Arcestrates, but even this involves sailing from Tarsus to Pentapolis. In order to escape Antiochus a full three degrees of watery separation are needed, and in the process the hero must abandon his homeland. In the final leg of his journey, his companions die in a violent storm at sea (XI). Thus, while Apollonius arrives whole and eventually finds the support he needs in Pentapolis, he loses all his possessions and companions in the process

Shores are the setting for several key moments of transition in the text, all of which mark the development of Apollonius's character. When he first arrives in Tarsus, the prince is met on the beach by a man he knows named Hellanicus. However, "forseah he Apollonius cyrlisce mannes gretinge æfter ricra manna gewunan" ("Apollonius scorned the churlish man's greeting as is the custom of more powerful men") (VIII). Despite Hellanicus's timely news that Antiochus has condemned him, the prince repeatedly questions how and why this is the case. As they part, Apollonius tries to give the low-born man gold to go to Antiochus and tell the tyrant that he has been beheaded. Hellanicus refuses and offers the prince what might have been an Alfredian maxim had the text been written in the twelfth-century: "Ne gewurðe þæt, hlaford, þæt Ic mede nime æt ðe for þisum þingum, forðon þe mid godum mannum nis naðer ne gold ne seolf for wið godes mannes freondscipe wiðmeten" ("It cannot be honorable, lord, that I should take reward from you for such a thing, because among good men neither gold nor silver can

compare with a good man's friendship) (VIII).¹³² At his removal in Tarsus, Apollonius's is still immature and the poet uses a shorefront meeting to draw attention to this: "Hwa mihte me fordeman minre agenre þeode ealdorman?" ("Who can condemn me, a nobleman among his own people?") (VIII). The beach is a place of transition literally and figuratively.

When he arrives at his final destination in Penatapolis, after the shipwreck that takes the lives of his companions, Apollonius finds himself bereft of all that he once had. His exile reaches its zenith. Accordingly, another shoreline meeting shows the audience how his loss of possessions coincides with his growing wisdom. This time the hero meets an unnamed old fisherman who, though poor, lifts up the shipwrecked prince, feeds him, and gives him half of his own cloak (XII). After leaving the fisherman Apollonius meets King Arcestrates and begins to slowly regain what he has lost. At the end of the tale, Apollonius meets the same man a second time and repays him handsomely, but in the moment the encounter marks the prince's transition from naïve and perhaps arrogant to humble and wise. The second meeting is again on a beach and takes place after Apollonius, now a king, has had his daughter and wife restored to him (LI). Due to the missing folios this is the sum of the shoreline transitions in the English text, but from the Latin text it can be inferred that the English once also contained the episode where the hero's wife, thought to be dead after childbirth, washes ashore in her coffin in Ephesus and is found alive.

¹³² Several of the proverbs attributed to the king in the *Proverbs of Alfred* decry worldly wealth and gold and silver by name: "Moni mon for his gold, / hauð Godes erre, / and þuruh his siluer / his saulle he forleseð... Betere him were / iborin þat he nere!" ("Many a man for his gold has God's ire, and because of his silver has lost his soul... Better it would be for him if he had never been born!). Trinity College MS, ll. 204-210.

In a pattern that will emerge again in later English romances, the sea separates protagonists from the antagonists, and the shore marks the hero's development throughout the tale. From the beginning, the text leaves no ambiguity about Apollonius's nobility and physical prowess, but he has to lose everything before, through wisdom, humility, and the aid of King Arcestrates, he can start to regain what he has lost. The shoreline episodes single out these developments from the rest of the narrative action, an effective move by the poet that layers physical and symbolic transition. After his rejection from Antiochus's court, Apollonius' tale fits Field's outline of English romance almost without exception. However, it is important to see that the young hero does not seek an enemy to prove himself. Antiochus' evil actions are the genesis of the events that will jeopardize Apollonius' freedom and right to rule, and no indication is given that the prince has any knowledge of the king's evil ways until he solves the riddle. The crisis that begins the narrative is not initiated by the protagonist. He blindly stumbles into it.

King Horn: Imminent Danger

The juxtaposition of imminent danger with the nobility and prowess of the hero resurfaces in the romances that make up the Matter of England. Critics have long noticed that romantic love plays a secondary role to vengeance and justice in these tales. In a statement about Horn that could be applied to many more English heroes, Laura A. Hibbard noticed almost one hundred years ago that he is "conceived primarily as a fighter, and the romance as a whole has an air more militant than romantic".¹³³ In the romance, Horn's father is killed by Saracens within

¹³³ Hibbard, Laura A. *Medieval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances*. New York: Oxford UP, 1924. 84.

the first sixty lines, and the immediacy of the situation is emphasized in the first exchange between the king and the newly arrived invaders:

They lond folk we schulle slon,
And alle that Crist luveth upon
And the selve right anon.
Ne shaltu today henne gon. (ll. 47-50)¹³⁴

(The people of the land we shall slay,
And all who believe in Christ
And you immediately.
You shall not today go forth.)

The foreign invaders intend to kill everyone, all who occupy the land and all who are Christian. This a doubling which emphasizes the political and religious, not personal, character of the invasion. England is a Christian realm and the heathen Saracens come from outside Christendom. The threat they pose is tremendous. The invaders are not interested in negotiation or even any sort of covert takeover; they come to fight, conquer, and eliminate. To drive the point home, the king is informed that his own life is at an end just before he is overcome through insurmountable odds (ll. 49-50).

The quick dispatch of the king and the unchecked conquest of Suddene takes place when Horn is only fifteen and not quite old enough to mount a substantial resistance himself, but the prince, even at this moment, is a force to be reckoned (l. 18). As justification for his plan to drown Horn and his companions in the sea, the admirad (emir) who leads the Saracens recognizes that, though still immature, the prince will, in seven years, come into his own and be

¹³⁴ All quotations from *King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, and *Bevis of Hampton: Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*. Ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury. TEAMS Middle English Texts ed. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999.

able to retake the kingdom (ll. 95-113). Horn's nobility and ability need no period of trial as confirmation, they are completely evident even in his youth. After being put out to sea, the prince and his companions prevail and find refuge with King Aylmar of Westernesse from whose kingdom they hope to mount their attack against the Saracens. The dynamic established at the beginning of the romance aligns more closely with the situation at the outset of *Apollonius of Tyre* than with initial positioning found in any of the French Arthurian romances. Apollonius, without foreknowledge or warning, quickly finds himself in a situation where his life and the people of several kingdoms are in danger. Horn too has no warning about the approach of the Saracens. At an age when he would not normally be expected to take on the burden of his kingdom's defense he finds himself up against an overwhelming situation.

Horn goes through a period of training that might initially appear to be an imitation of the model found in the French romances.¹³⁵ After hearing his story, King Aylmar asks his steward, Athelbrus, to teach Horn how to hunt, hawk, harp, and serve both food and drink (ll. 231-244). This coincides with emergence of the hero's love interest, Rymenhild, the princess of Westernesse. When Rymenhild reveals her love for Horn, the hero declares that he must prove himself before he can woo her, another action that appears to parallel those situations in French romances where the young hero must prove himself before he can court the lady he has fixed upon (ll. 545-550). However, upon closer examination it can be seen that Horn's period of training is much less about proving his worth before Rymenhild and her father than it is about positioning himself for the recapture of his kingdom, the real object of desire at this point in the narrative. Like the admirad in *Suddene*, King Aylmar immediately recognizes Horn's inborn

¹³⁵ See: Ziegler, Georgianna. "Structural Repetition in King Horn," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81 1980.

ability and nobility, characteristics that make it possible for him to bring a “fundlyng” (“foundling”) into his court to be trained as a noble (l. 232):

So scahal thi name springe
Fram kyng to kyng,
And thi fairnesse
Abute Westernesse,
The strength of thine honde
Into evrech londe.
Horn, thu art so swete,
Ne may ich the forlete (ll. 215-222)

(So shall your name spring
From king to king,
And your fairness
[All] about Westernesse,
The strength of your hand
Into every land.
Horn, you are so sweet,
I cannot abandon you.)

Horn’s affection for Rymenhild should not be doubted, but it is less important to the hero than the recapture of Suddene early in the romance. Though he appears to have a genuine interest in Rymenhild romantically, Horn exploits their relationship to get himself and his companions knighted (ll. 437-446). An argument that Horn is thinking first about his love for the princess and avenging the loss of his kingdom and father second would have to account for the duplicity of his words. He tells Rymenhild that he is, “ibore to lowe” (“born too low”) and only with the king’s dubbing will his “thralhod” (“servitude”) become “knighthod” (“knighthood”) (ll. 421, 443-444). He is not low-born in any interpretation; he is the son of a king. His first action as a newly minted knight, thwarting an attempted Saracen invasion, is almost an exact replication of circumstances that open the romance. Even though it will be some time before he can avenge his

father and retake his kingdom, Horn begins to secure the support he and his company need to mount an offensive at home. Horn is an admirable, noble hero from the beginning, but the disjuncture between his words to Rymenhild and his actions immediately following his knighting are telling about his primary desire. Overcoming the Saracens who endanger Westernesse, given the episode's close parallel to the circumstances in which his father was killed, is more about undoing the wrongs done to him by his Saracen enemies than it is about proving he is worthy of the knighthood required to woo Rymenhild.

In the *Romance of Horn* (1170s), the Anglo-Norman text that precedes the ME *King Horn*, Susan Crane identifies, not a primary concern with a foreign threat, but dynastic concerns she connects with English barony in the twelfth century. In addition to his own loss and recovery of land, Horn “recalls his father’s life as a foundling in Suddenne” and subsequent “marriage to the king’s daughter”. Wikele (Fikenhild’s Anglo-Norman counterpart) not only betrays Horn, but readers learn that his grandfather once “falsely accused Aälof,” Horn’s father of wrongdoing. In the parallels between the lives of father and son, Crane sees “cyclical patterns” that “endorse structurally the theme of a family’s renewal and extension”. “Horn’s goal,” in this patterning “is dynastic – to avenge his father and to regain his land”.¹³⁶

Thought I am not convinced that the intention of Horn’s son to travel to Africa and fight pagans in their homeland adds to the insular dynastic concerns Crane sees, I agree that

¹³⁶ Crane, 26-7.

inheritance and patrimony are central to the Anglo-Norman text. The foreshortened English text, however, does not duplicate this image of dynastic renewal. In a text that, in Crane's words, leaves out "[a] profusion of Anglo-Norman customs, stratagems, and word-plays; a host of uncles, cousins, and retainers; a wealth of spiced wines, white greyhounds, brocades, and jewels," the attention of the poet focuses exclusively on the foreign invasions that challenge Horn's right to land and title.¹³⁷ The English romance eschews Horn's father's backstory and no mention is made of his son. Invasion by pagan foreigners ignites the main conflict of the narrative and the successful reversal of the wrongs caused by the Saracens and Fikenhild resolves it.

King Horn: Threats from Afar

In *King Horn*, confronting the threat from afar both at home and abroad frames the entire tale. Like Apollonius, Havelok, and Bevis, Horn is not yet of age when the invasion of his homeland takes place. But while he cannot yet confront the invading Saracens militarily, his prowess saves him and his companions after they are put out to sea. Twice more in the first half of the tale, Saracens arrive to threaten kingdoms where Horn has found refuge. In these later two instances, however, Horn has come of age and is able to defeat them. The heathen army he confronts and defeats just hours after being dubbed by King Aylmar in Westernesse marks his transition into adulthood. Later, after his betrayal by Fikenhild, Horn goes even further west and ends up in Ireland. Here too, he thwarts invading Saracens. This time he is placed in single combat with a giant to determine whether or not King Thurston will keep his lands. All three

¹³⁷ Crane, 29.

episodes involve evading or overcoming the pagan threat to the security of the Christian kingdom in which Horn resides.

As in the OE tradition, a body of water is always present as the trespassable boundary between the Christian kingdoms and the Saracens with the shore itself being the spot of several important confrontations. When Horn's father, King Murry, first encounters the Saracens, the heathens arrive in fifteen ships and are first sighted on the "stronde" ("strand, shore") (ll. 39,41). In their address to King Murry, their intention to take the land and kill Christians is made clear. Immediately after murdering the king, this plan is reiterated by the narrator who emphasizes the actions which the formerly distant pagans intend to carry out. They will capture ("neme"), kill ("quelle"), and destroy ("felle").

The pains come to londe
And neme hit in here honde
That folc hi gunne quelle,
And churchen for to felle. (ll. 63-66)

(The pagans came to [the] land
And took it in their hand
Those people they began to kill,
And churches to fell.)

In Horn's first fight with the Saracens as a mature knight, he encounters the invaders on the "stronde" ("strand, shore") just as his father did (601). When the fight is recounted for King Alymar, Horn describes the docked position of the enemy as he found them:

I fond o schup rowe
Mid watere al byflowe
Al with Sarazines kyn,
And none londisse men (ll. 635-638)

(I found ships [in] a row,
Surrounded with water
Filled with Saracens,
And no native men)¹³⁸

Not only have the Saracens crossed the boundary of the water, the narrator is careful to mention that they are outsiders and not native men.¹³⁹ Once in Ireland, the Saracen giant who comes to King Thurston's court at Christmas, tells the king that his companions wait "on the sonde" ("on the sand"), again drawing attention to their arrival by water (l. 815).

The castle Fikenhild builds while Horn is away is not just a stronghold unto itself. It too is surrounded by the sea:

Strong castle he let sette,
Mid see him beflette;
Ther ne mighte lighte
Bute foghel with flighte. (ll. 1409-1412)

(A strong castle he built,
[And] surrounded it with sea;
There might none alight
Except for birds by flight.)

In separating his castle and himself by water, Fikenhild, the figure of betrayal in the tale, completes his transformation into an outsider. In a reversal of the preceding Saracens incursions,

¹³⁸ There may be a bit of incongruity on the part of the poet since Horn sees only one ship at line 601 by then tell the king of a row of ships at like 635.

¹³⁹ See: "Löndish." *Middle English Dictionary*. 2001. University of Michigan. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.
<<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED26003>>.

Horn and his companions arrive to kill Fikenhild and save Rymenhild by the beach: “Hi yeden bi the gravel” (“They went by the gravel”) (l. 1479). Once reunited, the couple leaves the enemy castle the same way: “Horn tok Rymenhild bi the honde / And ladde hure to the stronde” (“Horn took Rymenhild by the hand and led her to the strand”) (ll. 1513-1514).

King Horn is a well-balanced narrative structurally making extensive use of repetition; no loose ends remain when the tale is finished. Yet, Horn’s movements from Suddene to Westernesse to Ireland can make it difficult to see when he is defending against a foreign threat and when he is seeking out one. Determining the defensive and offensive stages of Horn’s engagements, however, is simply a matter of dividing the tale in half with the defeat of the Saracens and their giant champion in Ireland as the median point. In the first half of the tale, the hero acts defensively. Horn is not initially able to defeat the Saracens that kill his father, but he and his companions survive, a victory in itself. His battle in Westernesse too is defensive in nature. He does not seek out the Saracens; they arrive of their own volition. The same is true with the episode in Ireland when the giant and his fellow pagans address King Thurston’s court. But after this point, Horn proactively seeks his enemies. First, he returns to save Rymenhild from King Mody of Reynes. He then returns to Suddene to defeat the Saracens who captured his father’s kingdom. Finally, the defeat of Fikenhild completes the narrative. In each of these episodes Horn crosses the sea to confront those who have wronged him. Thus, the romance very neatly utilizes both ways that an English hero can address a foreign enemy.

King Horn: Animal Imagery

ME romances do not present wolves, eagles, and ravens in the same manner as the OE narratives do, but the association between the non-Christian antagonists and animalistic features, especially base appetites, is maintained. Pagan Saracens are frequently described with animal imagery and are often referred to as “heathen hounds” or just “hounds”. Dorothee Metlitzki has identified four primary representations of Saracens in the romances: “the enamored Muslim princess; the converted Saracen; the defeated emir or sultan; and the archetypal Saracen giant”.¹⁴⁰ All of these types are well-represented in the genre, but to this I propose the addition of the nameless Saracen warriors laden with animalistic qualities. Though less conspicuous individually, these warriors make up the Saracen armies that are so important to the genre, and given their sheer volume their presence needs to be qualified.

To say that the ME denomination, heathen-hound, is a direct or complete replacement of the *-wulf* compounds in OE narratives such as the “*wælwulfas*” of the *Battle of Maldon* and *Andreas* would be a stretch, but the two overlap. Both take canines as their subjects, highlighting the sometimes contradictory nature of an animal that is domestic and wild, a boon and a threat. Western literary tradition is fraught with the symbolic slippage between the domesticated dog and the wild wolf. The survival of the compound *werewolf* and the innumerable Anglo-Saxon personal names which incorporate *-wulf* are a testament to the tension between wild and domestic natures humans find in themselves and canines. Significant in the English tradition, both pairings are alliterative and formulaic, making them a familiar point-of-reference for poets

¹⁴⁰ See: Metlitzki, Dorothee. *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977. 161.

and audiences that did not need extensive explanation. Both traditions use the denominations to mark heathen warriors too. Though the non-Christian fighters in question become predominantly eastern in ME romance, the continuity regarding the manner in which outsiders are labeled is undeniable. The terms both derive from relatively unaltered Germanic language roots and coexisted for a time. “Heathen hound”, judging by the attestations in the OED and MED came into its own during the thirteenth-century, but it does appear in OE literature. In the OE epic *Judith* which can be dated to around the turn of the eleventh-century, the narrator describes Holofernes as a “hæðenan hund” when he is decapitated by the heroine (l. 110).¹⁴¹

The *Horn*-poet makes use of the heathen-hound epithet numerous times: usually with the truncated denomination, *hund(es)*, but each time in reference to the Saracen armies that harry the Christian kingdoms of Suddene, Westernesse, and Ireland. The first references occur when Horn finds heathen ships at the shores of Westernesse after his dubbing (ll. 602, 605, 615). Line 602 contains the only occurrence of the full pairing in this particular romance, an indicator of the audience’s familiarity with the description and, perhaps, understanding that *Saracen* and *heathen* were synonymous to a degree. The shortened descriptor is used again when, as Cutberd, Horn fights the Saracens who seek to take over Ireland (ll. 837, 889). It is used a final time when Horn and his brother, Athulf, return to Suddene with their Irish companions to avenge King Murry’s death and recover his birthright (l. 1381).¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ See: “hound” 4a. *Oxford English Dictionary*; “**hound**” 2b. *Middle English Dictionary*. University of Michigan.

¹⁴² Readers familiar with *Horn* might point out that hero appears as a fish that cannot be caught in Rymenhild’s dream during his stay in Westernesse (ll. 661-668). However, the fish in the dream is representative of Horn, the hero himself is not described as being fish-like or having ichthyic qualities.

While the Saracen armies are heathen-hounds generally, their ranks are also populated by giants, as observed by Metlitzki. Among the army that threatens King Thurston in Ireland is at least one, possibly two, giants.¹⁴³ The audience also learns that the giant Horn fights the day after the Saracen army arrives has been part of other raids, specifically the one in Suddene in which Horn's father lost his life, making giants an integral part of the pagan hordes: "Hi sede hi nevre nadde / Of knichte dentes so harde, / Bote of the King Murry" ("He said he had never had blows so hard except those from King Murry") (ll. 869-871). That at least some of the threatening pagan force are giants should not be surprising. Like wolf imagery, giants have been a part of literary history from the beginning. Though a French borrowing by the thirteenth-century, OE made use of the Latin term, *gigant*, attested in the description of David's famous foe in the Bible.¹⁴⁴ Traditionally giants, like the one King Arthur fights atop Mont Saint-Michel, are associated with greed, lust, and unchecked physical appetites. It takes Horn a relatively short amount of time to dispatch the giant in Ireland; giants do, however, contribute directly to physical reshaping of the enemy by the poet. Like a heathen-hound, a giant is something that is partly human and familiar but at the same time wild and dangerous.

Though it is only mentioned once, it is worth noting that the Saracens of *King Horn* are explicitly described as being black (l. 1333).¹⁴⁵ On one hand, this a convention found throughout medieval romance. In Chrétien de Troy's *The Knight with the Lion* (1170s) a churl, described

¹⁴³ Diane Speed holds that the use of an indefinite article at line 858 presents the possibility that the giant who announces the arrival of the Saracen army to the court at Christmas could be a different giant than the one Horn fights the following day (577).

¹⁴⁴ Blickling Homilies, late 10th C.

¹⁴⁵ It is well attested that black coloring was a convention used in literature and the visual arts to depict Satan and those that oppose God. William D. Wright lists among Satan many medieval aliases: "Black Knight", "Black Man", "Black Ethiopian", and "Big Negro". See: Wright, William D. *Black History and Black Identity: A Call for a New Historiography*. West Point: Praeger, 2001. 98.

alternately as looking like a Moor and being as dark as a blacksmith, guards the field of bulls who fight one another on the way to the tree with the basin by the spring (260, 265).¹⁴⁶ Similarly, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's, *Parzival* (13th C), which probably precedes *King Horn* by only a decade or two, the hero's half-brother, Feirefiz, has mottled skin since his father, Gahmuret, is white and his mother, Queen Belacane from the African kingdom of Zazamanc, is black. But while the dark skin of the Saracens marks them as foreigners conventionally, it is also part of what makes them grotesque physically. In a poem which is sparring and formulaic in its description of all things, it becomes conspicuous that being black is limited to the heathen-hounds from Paynyme.

Bevis of Hampton: Imminent Danger

In *Bevis of Hampton* (1330s), long recognized as having thematic parallels with *King Horn*, the hero and his homeland are also immediately thrown into peril by the intrusion of outsiders. Bevis's father, Guy, is advanced in age when he marries the daughter of the King of Scotland. The young queen quickly becomes uninterested in Guy and conspires with a former suitor, the Emperor of Germany, to have her husband killed. The two carry out their plan and the king is ambushed while hunting. The queen immediately marries the emperor and takes control of Southampton. Even before seven-year-old Bevis speaks out against his mother, it is apparent that something must be done about the young prince since he is the rightful heir of his father's land and title. After an unsuccessful attempt to have Bevis's teacher, Saber, kill him, Bevis's mother and stepfather sell him to Saracen merchants who take him back East with them.

¹⁴⁶ See: "The Knight with the Lion." *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troys*. Ed. David Staines. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.

As in the *Horn*, the young prince and his kingdom are placed in a desperate situation before any object of desire can be fixed upon. The genesis of this crisis is, as in the other romances, of foreign origin. Equally important is that, like the unnamed admirad in *Horn* and Grim in *Havelok*, King Ermin, the heathen king of Ermonie, recognizes Bevis's innate strength at the moment of his arrival at his court:

Be Mahoun, that sit an high,
A fairer child never I ne sigh,
Neither a lingthe ne on brade,
Ne non, so faire limes hade! (ll. 535-58)

(By Mohamed, who sits on high,
A fairer child never saw I,
Neither in height nor breadth,
Nor any, limbs so fair!)

This recognition, as in other romances set in the Anglo-Saxon past, signals to the audience that Bevis will eventually possess the martial and spiritual prowess to avenge the wrongs done. What makes the king's recognition even more poignant in this romance is Bevis's initial rejection of the offer of the king's daughter Josian's hand in marriage, an arrangement which would make him the heir to the eastern kingdom, because he will not forsake his Christian God (ll. 555-560). The precocious young hero even goes so far as to denounce all those who do not believe in his Christian God: "[A]l might thai be doum and deve, / That on the false godes believe" ("May all those become dumb and deaf / who believe in false Gods"), a direct insult to his new king (ll. 567-568). Still, Ermin cannot reject Bevis and in the young Christian's rejection he sees the mark of a warrior:

The king him lovede wel the more,
For him ne stod of no man sore,
And seide: "Beves, while thow ert swain,
Thow schelt be me chaumberlain,
And thow schelt, whan thow ert dubbed knight,
Me baner bere in to everi fight!" (569-574)

(The king loved him all the more,
For he would not stand for any man's sorrow,
And said: "Bevis while you are in service,
You shall be my chamberlain,
And you shall, when you are dubbed a knight,
Bear my banner into every fight!")

Bevis agrees to this arrangement in which he will serve first as a chamberlain before becoming a knight in the king's service. But as he comes of age, he becomes enshrouded in incrementally greater layers of danger, an arrangement similar to *Horn* and *Apollonius*. His adamant, at times confrontational, adherence to his Christian faith puts him at odds with King Ermine's knights. In the first major episode of his adulthood, a fight breaks out between the displaced Christian and a number of heathen knights after one of them suggests that Bevis honor his God while he honors his gods Mahoun and Apolyn (ll. 605-606).¹⁴⁷ After killing the entire company of knights, Bevis returns home while news of the skirmish circulates. Before King Ermin can have him put to death for treason, Josian intercedes and Bevis is allowed to tell his side of the tale which endears him to the king even further. Soon thereafter, Bevis's life is put in jeopardy again, this time because of the jealousy of the king's steward. After hearing of a wild boar that has been killing men and dogs, the young hero decides to take up the task of killing it himself (ll. 739-745). After successfully doing so, he is ambushed by the steward along with a company of ten foresters and twenty-four soldiers. Bevis defeats and kills his assailants, but this

¹⁴⁷ Famously, Bevis has little recollection of what his faith actually entails, and it is a Saracen knight who has to explain to him that it is Christmas and why the holiday is important for Christians. Though Bevis has fifteen Saracens with him when the episode begins, the number has increased to fifty by the time the fight breaks out (ll. 588, 635).

fight serves is to pile another layer of opposition atop the hero. His religion has put him at odds with many of those around him, and now his growing prowess and savvy do the same through envy: the steward “hadde ticht to sle that swin; / To Beves a bar gret envie” (“had thought to slay that swine, [and] to Bevis he bore great envy”) (ll. 838-839).

The final threat to Bevis in the first section of the text, and the one which will have the greatest longevity, comes from his relationship with King Ermin and Josian. Despite his confrontations with the king’s knights and his steward, Bevis is Ermin’s obvious favorite. When King Brademond threatens to destroy Ermine if he is not given Josian’s hand in marriage, the king knights Bevis and taps him to lead the fight against his rival (ll. 909-978). Even though Bevis will not entertain any plea for his love from Josian until she becomes Christian, she regularly becomes the focal point of numerous conflicts later in the romance: her rescue from King Yvor, the lions in the wilderness, the earl Miles, and Ascopard after he betrays the hero. Together, the relationship he builds with both King Ermin and Josian temporarily move him even further from recapturing his homeland than when he arrived in Ermonie.

Bevis is a more complex narrative than *Apollonius*, *Horn*, or, arguably, *Havelok*, and the intricate, successive layering of threats to his livelihood reflect this arrangement. As a boy he loses his father and his patrimony, and as a young adult he is constantly in peril because of who he is and the envy and anger he incites in others. In keeping with other heroes of English romance, Bevis does not long for his love from afar and seek to prove himself as means of attaining his object of desire. He is continually placed in contentious situations in which he must

either prevail or perish. As he contemplates killing the man-eating boar he is described as thinking this act will prove his might: “a wolde kethen is might” (“he would make his might known”) (l. 752). This is a declaration I believe to be purposefully ambiguous. It is unclear if he intends to prove himself to King Ermin, the court, or himself. It is doubtful that he is thinking of Josian at this point. The text is clear that her love for him is still a private matter, and he certainly has not sought her out as a love interest (ll. 765-770, 891-900). After his first fight, the gravely injured Bevis even calls her a heathen “honde” (“hound”) as he lays on the floor of his chamber (l. 693). As with Apollonius, Horn, and Havelok, Bevis is, at the beginning of the narrative, a victim of circumstances beyond his control.

Bevis of Hampton: Threats from Afar

Despite its similarities with *King Horn*, *Bevis of Hampton* has a greater cast of characters almost all of whom are more developed. As a result, pinpointing the threat from afar is a more intricate affair. A prime example of the difficulty in pin-pointing Bevis’s geographic or national identity, cited by innumerable modern critics, is that he is ultimately more at home in Ermonie in the East than England in the West. This situation is part of the text’s commentary about the relationship between the Christian West and the Islamic East, and in many ways the concept of homeland itself gets challenged in the English version of the romance. Still, the foreign threats, while more numerous and disparate than those in *Horn*, are frequently demarcated by water, and the non-Christian peoples of the East are colored with familiar animalistic imagery which belie the handful of conversions and alliances made.

As outlined above, the initial event that threatens Bevis's life and homeland takes place while he is still an adolescent and unable to effect change himself. In the usurpation of the throne by his mother and stepfather, a familiar positioning of the threat from afar can be identified. Bevis's stepfather, Devon, is both a former suitor of his mother and the Emperor of Germany, and is summoned by "schip" (l. 112). The separation by water is neatly maintained. On the other hand, though she is a foreigner to English lands, it is difficult to argue that Bevis's mother trespasses a watery boundary to enter England and Southampton. Scotland is, of course, not a separate landmass. It is possible that either the River Humber or the River Tweed, traditionally associated with parts of the border between England and Scotland, could have been considered to be a watery barrier between antagonist and protagonist, but this cannot be substantiated.

In the removal of Bevis's father and the imposition of his mother, stepfather, and their foreign army, the recognizable pattern of incursion by a foreign force emerges. In this context, the apparent lack of insular separation between Bevis's mother and Southampton should not be given too much credence because she is only a part of the larger foreign invasion. She and Bevis's stepfather are key components of the foreign threat to his homeland, but not the sum. It takes the army that Devon commands, and which comprises the bulk of the foreign force, to complete the equation. In her message to the emperor, it is requested that he come with his "ferde" ("army, company") and be ready to fight (l. 137). Later, before Bevis, Saber, and Ascopard fight with Devon and his forces outright, Bevis's mother encourages her husband to send "[a]fter your ost in to Alamine" ("for your host in Germany") in order to supplement their

army (l. 3316). Thus, while Devon is the only named foreigner from Germany, his army, the strength of his rule, comes from across the water.¹⁴⁸

Though it may seem backwards, for a time the Islamic East is Bevis's homeland and England a foreign land. This is, however, simply a development of the removal of the hero from known lands seen in other romances and epics. Beowulf travels to a Danish kingdom in which heathen monsters are in control. After his arrival he must travel to otherworldly places such as the cave under the lake where Grendel's mother lives and dragon's lair. Andrew and Matthew must fare across the sea to reach the Mermedonians. Elene must also cross the sea to the Holy Land and then negotiate further to get the Jews to reveal the location of the true Cross. In terms of creating Christian identity, it is arguably more problematic that the Holy Land is in the hands of non-Christians than England. Though the origin of his story is not English, Apollonius's methodical retreat and subsequent reestablishment across several kingdoms (and seas) must have appealed to English audiences. Horn's journeys to both Westnesse and Ireland temporarily distance him from his homeland, each providing, for a time, the safety and security he should have enjoyed in Suddene. English romances are stories about heroes who must travel across the sea to find reach their potential and restore order. Ermonie's function as a default homeland for Bevis is a natural development of this patterning.

¹⁴⁸ The circumstances surrounding the loss of Southampton to Devon is vaguely reminiscent of the situation Robert Mannyng described under Æthelred the Unready (978-1016) where northern earls such as Edrike sought to make alliances with Danish rulers such as Cnut. Bevis's story nominally takes place during the reign of Edgar (959-975) and the foreign ruler is German not Danish, but this episode written from the perspective of a southerner, at some remove, may preserve a memory of treacherous northern rulers.

Additional considerations must be made in regard to the ways that Bevis's mother and stepfather figure as foreign threats marked out by insular separation. Upon the death of Bevis's father, Southampton itself, not unlike Denmark while under the threat from Grendel and his mother, becomes a de facto foreign land for a time, and the expulsion of the young hero and his tutor, Saber, confirm this. As a child, Bevis immediately becomes distraught at the news of his father's death and quickly turns on his mother calling her a whore and declaring that he will avenge his father's murder if he lives long enough to come of age (ll. 295-318). In response, she commands the boy's tutor to "[l]et him anhang swithe highe ... [s]ithe he be cold" ("hang him very high until he is cold") (ll. 340, 342). Saber is unable to do this or hide the precocious child, and when Bevis's mother finds out that her son is still alive she commands he be taken "to the stronde" ("to the strand") to be sold "right in to hethenesse" ("right into heathen lands") (ll. 495, 500). As in *Horn* and *Apollonius*, the shore marks an important moment of transition. This episode is an inversion of the invasion by Saracens in *King Horn* since Bevis is sold in his homeland to be taken to "painim londe" ("pagan land"), but it aligns well with the placement of a hero in foreign lands in order to confront those outside Christendom (l. 496).¹⁴⁹ Further, it puts a lot of water between Bevis and the immediate foreign threat to his homeland, his mother and stepfather. The *Bevis*-poet addresses the relationship between West and East in a different manner than the *Horn*-poet does by cleverly making the Islamic East the hero's homeland and England the foreign land.

¹⁴⁹ Unlike Beowulf, Bevis's trip overseas is not of his own volition. It does, however, bare resemblance to the voyage of St. Andrew in that he is compelled by another for, eventually, the greater good. Helen's trip to Jerusalem, though not as coercive, could be viewed the same way since she travels at her son's behest.

As noted, Saber and his castle on the Isle of Wight also show that, temporarily, Southampton becomes the foreign land from which the protagonists are separated. When she finds out that Saber has not followed her commandment to kill Bevis, the queen tells her son's tutor that unless he divulges the boy's location he will pay, presumably with his life (ll. 484-486). Overhearing this threat, Bevis reveals himself and seemingly intercedes for his master: "Lo, me her be name! / Do me meister for me no schame!" ("Lo, I am here by name! Do not shame my teacher because of me!") (ll. 489-490). It is at this point that the child is sold to the Saracens. From the moment Bevis is sent to Ermonie until he returns to reclaim Southampton, the audience is given only scant details about what happens to Saber. But it can be inferred that he withdraws to Isle of Wight and takes up a defensive position since he is able to escape punishment from Devon and Bevis's mother for the duration of the time the hero is away. Given that Saber sends his son, Terri, out to seek his former student in the East, it is reasonable to say that he enjoys some level of security and autonomy as well. Just before Bevis returns to England, the audience does learn that Saber has been making yearly attacks against Devon and his wife for Bevis's sake (ll. 2916-2920). The important thing to recognize in the opposition of Devon and Bevis's mother in Southampton by Saber on the Isle of Wight is that the proverbial line in the sand is once again a body of water: the Solent.

Bevis diverges from *Horn* and OE narratives in the way it presents paganism as something less than monolithic. The Vikings, monsters, Mermdomians, and Jews (with the exception of Judas, who finally converts and reveals the true Cross) of the OE narratives remain as such; conversion is not a prominent theme in these narratives. Likewise, the Saracens in *King Horn* are static and unchanging. But the *Bevis*-poet plays with the binary between Christian and

pagan. The hero's wife enters the story as pagan but converts before marrying the hero. Ermonie, thoroughly pagan at Bevis's arrival, is later converted to Christianity. In this romance, the actions of the dynamic characters determine their position relative to what is a stricter Christian – pagan divide elsewhere. In this context, the potential for conversion is, in part, what makes the treachery of Ascopard so poignant. He aids Bevis and Josian, helps recover Southampton, but when he comes face to face with the baptismal font he rejects the Christian faith and acts treacherously.

Strictly speaking, Bevis's mother and stepfather are not a genuinely heathen threat. Nothing in the text suggests they are not Christians, though they are not declared to be so either. Their actions, however, are unmistakably out of alignment with Christian virtue, and abundant evidence reveals that the pair are meant to stand in opposition to Christian value and virtue. At the very beginning of the romance the audience is told that Bevis's mother was the "paramur" ("paramour") of the emperor of Germany before marrying Bevis's father, Sir Guy (l 35). Then, as now, the term designated not just a suitor but an illicit lover. After marrying Bevis's father, the queen's mind quickly strays and she grows jealous because her husband would rather spend time at church than in her bower, and she laments that she did not marry a younger man who would, in her words, "me loven dai and night" ("love me day and night") (ll. 59-60, 64). On hearing of her husband's death, the first thing she does is command that Devon meet her in her bower (l. 291). Sometime later, when Bevis sends a messenger back to Devon to tell him that he has been deceived and that "Gerrard" was actually his stepson, the messenger says:

Thow gropedest the wif anight to lowe,
Thow might nought sen aright to thowe;

Thow havest so swonke on hire to night,
Thow havest negh forlore the sight: (ll. 3105-3108)

(You have groped your wife tonight too low,
[Therefore] you might not see correctly in this instance;
You have exerted [yourself] on her tonight,
[So that] you have nigh lost your sight:)

The emperor has blinded himself through lust. Bevis, on the other hand, marries a “clene maide” (“virgin”), and Josian herself is at pains to protect her virginity from King Ivor and later the earl Miles (l. 1969). That both Bevis’s mother and his stepfather put desires of the flesh before adherence to the Word of God cannot be missed, and as a result they commit murder and break the holy covenant of marriage, acts that do not make them heathens by name but absolutely put them outside the sphere of Christian righteousness.

Another instance when the separation between antagonist and protagonist superficially contradicts the Christian-pagan divide can be seen when the earl Miles captures and forcibly marries Josian. While Bevis returns to England and reunites with Saber, Josian is left in Northern Italy under the protection of Ascopard. With her betrothed away, a certain earl named Miles decides he wants to marry Josian. Seeing that he will not be able to get past Ascopard by force, Miles tricks the giant into going to a castle on an unnamed island under the guise that Bevis wants to meet him there (ll. 3140-3154). Little is said about Miles, but nothing leads readers to think he is not Christian. He is said to be from Cologne (Lombardy), a Christian kingdom.. Ascopard, on the other hand, is pagan, meaning that while the giant is imprisoned, a Christian character has created insular separation from the pagan character. The nominal designations of Christian and pagan in this episode do not align with the intentions and actions of the characters.

Ascopard is on the side of good; his betrayal of Bevis comes later. As a consequence, he is eventually able to break down the walls of the castle which holds him, commandeer a boat, and find Bevis, and in the process pass through the separation between protagonist and antagonist and affect change, actions usually reserved for Christian characters.

The episode that is the most telling about how the romance places foreign threats at a remove from land protected by the hero involves the battle at the end of the tale in London, a domestic location. After Bevis defeats King Yvor and is crowned King of Mombraunt, a messenger arrives from England and reports to him that King Edgar has confiscated Saber's heir's lands. Once back in England, Bevis goes to London with six knights to meet with Edgar. The king and Bevis are almost at an accord when the king's steward declares Bevis to be an outlaw and a traitor. The hero chases the steward out of the hall into Cheapside where a fight breaks out. All of Bevis's company are killed and word gets back to Miles and Guy, his sons, that Bevis too has been killed. The brothers depart for London to avenge the apparent death of their father. Bevis is, of course, not dead and the three prevail in a battle with a mob of Londoners instigated by the slanderous steward.

Though the location of the conflict is domestic, the beginning and end of the confrontation are marked out by the River Thames. After leaving Josian at Putney, Bevis and his six knights travel towards London and their arrival is signaled by their passing "over Temse flode" ("over the Thames' flood") (l. 4294). So too, the audience knows that the battle with the

incited Londoners is over when “al Temse was blod red” (“all the Thames was blood red”) (l. 4530). Identifying that this confrontation begins and ends with references to Thames, the traditional divider between the South and Midlands, is not difficult. Slightly more subtle are the ways in which the actions of the steward, who slanders Bevis and stirs up the people of London, place him in opposition to Christian virtue. As with Bevis’s mother and stepfather and the earl Miles, the steward from King Edgar’s court is undoubtedly Christian. Yet, in now-familiar positioning, his actions place him outside of Christian righteousness. Three times he accuses Bevis of killing Edgar’s son, an act of which he is not guilty (ll. 4311, 4335, 4375).¹⁵⁰ When the steward makes his accusations against Bevis he is bearing false witness, an act forbidden by the Church and secular courts alike. It is no mistake either, that the false accusation is made three times. It cannot be said with full certainty that the steward’s accusations duplicate any specific story from the New Testament, but they absolutely mark the action as having moral and religious implications.¹⁵¹

Altogether, London, like Southampton earlier, becomes a threatening foreign location for a time. The steward is the first to make accusations against Bevis, but after being pursued into Cheapside, he is able to incite a whole host of Londoners who turn against the hero and kill his six knights. Even when Miles and Guy join their father, the whole of London is depicted as turning against the trio on the word of a single, slanderous man. Prominent among the mob is a Lombard, an actual foreigner, who is well-armed and seeks Bevis’s life before being killed by

¹⁵⁰ Earlier, after defeating Devon, Bevis traveled to the king’s court to seek recognition as the rightful lord of Southampton. The king was happy to do so and even asked Bevis to serve as his marshal. The situation, though, deteriorated quickly when Edgar’s son tried to steal Arondel after Bevis refused to give him the horse outright. Then, in a botched robbery, Arondel kicked the prince and killed him.

¹⁵¹ The closest parallel is probably the three times the Jews call for Pilate to crucify Christ during the Passion (Luke 23: 22). The first accusation against Bevis is made at Edgar’s court, but the second and third are part of steward’s incitement of the crowd.

Miles.¹⁵² All of those who oppose Bevis and his sons in this battle are Christians, but the unflattering treatment of London in the romance and its separation from Southern England by the Thames makes it, temporarily, a locus of foreign threat. Both of Bevis's journeys to the English court in the romance are marked by bloodshed and ignoble actions by Edgar's retainers. The king himself is ambivalent at best. He is always prepared to recognize Bevis and restore his patrimony, but he is equally ready to seize lands and cannot control the members of his court. Arguably, his only laudable action is to arrange the marriage between his daughter and Miles, but it is really Bevis and Saber's martial prowess which force his hand (ll. 4543-4550). When read together with Bevis's estrangement from his homeland, it becomes apparent that no small part of the tension in the romance comes from the temporary transformation of places that would have been familiar to the audience as threatening and unfamiliar.

Bevis's exploits in the East are not consistently demarcated by water in the same manner as they are in the West. The simple reason for this is that he now dwells in "hethenesse", the lands outside of Christendom. The separation between Ermonie and the kingdom of Brademond is significantly less stark than the separation between England and Ermonie. The key difference is not just geographic but religious. Still, water does occasionally mark moments of transition that are moral and physical in nature. After escaping from Brademond's prison, the hero soon finds himself pursued by the king and a host of other heathen kings. Bevis is able to kill a certain King Grander and seven of his knights, but is still forced in a position where he must either jump into the sea or "fighte aghenes al hethenes" ("fight against all heatheness") (l. 1794). After

¹⁵² The presence of Lombards in London is a historically accurate detail. The land that became Lombard Street was granted to goldsmiths from what is now Northern Italy by King Edward in the last quarter of the thirteenth-century.

praying to Christ, Bevis has the timely revelation that God made fish who know nothing of sin, and he, along with the horse Tenchefis, jump into the uncorrupted sea and swim to safety (ll. 1795-1816). Bevis literally uses the sea to separate himself from “all hethenes”, but this is not all. Upon reaching the shore, the hero is thrown from Tenchefis’s back and suddenly remembers his own horse, Ardonel, and presumably more of his life before his imprisonment. After battling a giant who happens to be the brother of the late King Grander, he travels “be the strem” (“along a stream”) to Jerusalem and visits a patriarch who tells him he can only marry a virgin (ll. 1959, 1965-1969). This in turn, spurs Bevis to turn his attention to Ermonie and Josian. Sequentially, it is first the sea which puts distance between Bevis and his pagan pursuers, helping to save his life, and then, while still in heathen lands, a stream which leads him to Jerusalem where he regains the purpose and direction in his life that were weakened during his imprisonment. The discussion of how Jerusalem, especially in post-Crusade Europe, functions symbolically or politically is not a subject I intend to take up, but suffice it to say that the city is a place apart in the Islamic East and the patriarch with whom he meets is not Muslim. As a child Bevis was banished from a Christian kingdom to a heathen one. The geographic movement is not the same, but when he returns to Ermonie to recover his position as Josian’s suitor and King Ermin’s heir, the movement between Christian and pagan realms across water is repeated further emphasizing the literal and symbolic separation.

In later episodes the separation between non-Christians and the domestic Christian forces is more straight-forward. In what is usually designated as the fourth episode of the romance, Bevis, along with Ascopard and Saber, finally retakes Southampton from his stepfather and mother. He, Josian, and Ascopard have to cross the sea to the British Isles in a fairly

straightforward application of threat from afar theme in which the hero crosses the sea to address a foreign threat. Southampton is functionally a foreign land, but the confrontation is not between Christians and pagans nominally. It is, however, a battle between Christians and non-Christians in the context presented. In the hero's company only Ascopard, who refused baptism on the grounds that he was too big for the baptismal font, remains pagan. The rest are Christian. Josian has converted and the one hundred men given to Bevis by his uncle Saber (not his tutor), a bishop in Northern Italy, are also Christian (l. 2923).

The *Bevis*-poet was not consciously looking to make his romance fit into the mold of an OE narrative. Rather, he was using themes and motifs which predate the Conquest and were still familiar through continuous use. It possible that the poet knew versions of *Elene* and *Andreas*, since both have Latin sources, but my argument is not that the defensive and offensive reactions to heathen threats was maintained in any consciously prescribed way. Even more than *Horn* or *Havelok*, the *Bevis*-poet seems to be purposefully putting the familiar in unfamiliar places and making domestic locations foreign. Despite this fluidity, the romance consistently shows awareness of the geographic separation between protagonist and antagonist deeply embedded in the medieval English tradition. Even with all of the complications that preceded it, the final episode of the romance, in which Bevis and his son Guy retire to their newly Christianized kingdoms of Mombraunt and Ermonie respectively, shows the continued presence of the geographic and spiritual movements which ME romance inherited from the OE epic tradition. This crossing is a major event marking the restoration of right Christian rule in three countries: England and two formerly Muslim countries. Understandably, this crossing is the least contested

in the romance; no one needs to be rescued, no hostile armies are waiting, and religious differences have been leveled.

Bevis of Hampton: Animals and Animal Imagery

The trope is not unique to OE literature, but frequently the animals and monsters that appear in the context of battle get ranked or are sequentially amplified over the course of a given narrative. Eagles and ravens, the birds of prey in poems like the *Battle of Maldon* and the *Battle of Brunanburh*, are markers of carnage, but wolves are the predominant animal of battle.

Concerning the animals and monsters Bevis encounters, I find an arrangement similar to that in *Beowulf*, where the case can be made that each monster presents a measurably greater challenge.

Grendel comes to Heorot, and Beowulf fights with him within the realm of men using only his own physical strength. To defeat Grendel's mother, he must cross over to the watery world beneath the lake she inhabits and fight her there, in her home. This time the hero needs the help of a magical sword he finds in her abode. In his final fight, Beowulf must travel to the lair of the dragon, and though he is able to defeat the menace, the price is his life. None of these monstrous characters can be said to be equal in symbolic weight or the threat they pose. Unlike Guy of Warwick who has a change of heart half way through his lengthy romance and spends most of his married life in penance making amends for his deeds as a young man, Bevis slowly but steady gains control of his life throughout the course of the narrative, restoring the wrongs done at the outset. He proves his prowess as a fighter, escapes from prison, defeats numerous foes, sees the conversion of his wife-to-be, and, by the end of the romance, converts and refashions Mombraunt and Ermonie into Christian kingdoms. The animals and monsters Bevis fights throughout his life, beginning with the boar in Ermonie and ending with the dragon in Italy are

representative of his development as a Christian knight.¹⁵³ All of these confrontations are challenging feats, but when examined sequentially a steady increase in the symbolic weight and physical strength of each animal can be identified.

The initial challenge Bevis seeks on his own is against the man-eating boar that has been plaguing the countryside. He defeats the beast by thrusting his sword in its mouth and carving “his hertte evene ato” (“his heart evenly in two”) (l. 827). This battle with the boar is a starting point and shows Bevis’s emerging martial abilities. The animal’s legendary ferocity gives the fight credibility, but when compared with the fights to come it is not an extremely exotic or meaningful kill. The next animal fought is a flying adder in Brademond’s prison. During his confinement Bevis has been continually fighting off “[s]nakes and euetes and oades fale” (“snakes and lizards and toads foul”) with a club he brings with him, but a black-as-coal flying adder concealed in a hole surprises the hero and leaves a mark on his forehead before he can kill it (l. 1541). Bevis prevails but he swoons for a time, presumably from the venom of the snake, and is literally left scared.¹⁵⁴ He does not seek the snake, it surprised him. When compared with the boar the snake is wilier, and the constant threat from the assemblage of venomous creatures presents a greater challenge.

After Bevis returns from his seven years of imprisonment, he learns that Josian has been married to King Yvor. He enters his rival’s court disguised as a beggar and, with the help of a

¹⁵³ I agree with the editors and critics who believe that core of the original narrative ended when Bevis reclaimed Southampton, and the disappearance of animal battles after this episode seems to be additional confirmation of this assessment. If this is the case, the use of a dragon as the most formidable animalistic opponent is precisely the same as *Beowulf*.

¹⁵⁴ Grendel’s mother, and possibly the rest of the reptiles that inhabit the lake above her lair, is said to be poisonous. She is described after being killed by Beowulf as an, “ættren ellor-gæst” (“poisonous otherworldly-ghost”) (l. 1617).

servant named Bonefas, rescues Josian, after she assures him she still a virgin. After escaping from Yvor's court, Josian and Bonefas wait in a cave while Bevis goes out to hunt. While the hero is away a pair of lions attack and Bonefas is killed. Josian, however, is preserved by her virginity. Upon his return, Bevis fights both lions and eventually overcomes them, but the ante has again been raised. He is now not just responsible for himself; he must protect Josian. Though she offers to help him in the fight, Bevis rejects her request saying that he "myght yelp of lytel prys, / There I had a lyon quelde, / The while a woman another helde" ("might boast little, though I had killed a lion, if a woman held the other") (ll. 2414-2416). Josian needs Bevis's help to escape the lions, but she does not need him to avoid direct harm, her steadfast maintenance of her virginity shields her. More than the previous two animal encounters, this episode is a commentary on Bevis's spiritual development as a knight. Josian, through her purity, has the spiritual fortitude to deal with the lions while he has the physical strength to defeat them. The spiritual and martial prowess of both are needed for the pair to prevail.

The last creature Bevis fights, the dragon in Italy, is the most challenging. This clash, even more than that with the lions, is about showing the hero's dependence on God. Through a digression before the actual fighting, the audience learns that the dragon is one of two who were once warring kings in a previous life. Their constant fighting destroyed their kingdoms and for this they were made to suffer "helle pine" ("the pain of hell") and became dragons (l. 2622). Consequently, the fight is explicitly a conflict between Christian and non-Christian forces in ways the previous ones were not, a dynamic supported by Ascopard's unwillingness to join the fight. The first time Bevis appeals directly to Christ for aid comes during his imprisonment after he has been bitten by the flying adder, but prior to fighting the dragon he is forewarned in a

dream about the danger of its venom and the healing properties of virginity in a manner reminiscent of innumerable episodes in both Old and New Testaments (ll. 2681-2714). During the fight he appeals to St. George, Mary, and Christ (ll. 2817, 2868, 2838 & 2860). Christian spiritual awareness has now become an integral part of who Bevis is and how he fights. The miraculous healing powers of the well in which a virgin bathed also tie directly into the spiritual positioning of the fight. Despite his full maturity as a warrior, Bevis cannot overcome the dragon without the restorative powers of the well.

When read sequentially Bevis's battles with these nefarious creatures, from boar to dragon, are markers of his development as a Christian knight.¹⁵⁵ At the beginning, his martial prowess shows forth as he seeks out the boar and quickly dispatches the menace no one else could, an episode roughly analogous to Beowulf's defeat of Grendel. As the battles progress, Bevis's innate strength figures less and less in the outcome of his fighting. In prison he does not seek the fight against the venomous vermin and he must learn to be constantly on guard; he will not always be able to choose his fights. In the episode with the lions, divine intervention begins to figure more prominently into the outcome of the fight. Bevis's pride is hurt by Josian's suggestion she hold one of them back, but her protection and Bevis's ultimate triumph over the lions are the work of "Godes grace and is vertu" ("God's grace and his virtue"), not just the hero's ability (l. 2490). The battle with dragon is constructed on a strict Christian – non-Christian binary and Bevis's physical strength avails him little against his foe. Only through appeals to St. George, Mary, and Christ along with the miraculous well can he overcome the dragon. It is Christian virtue which prevails; Bevis's martial prowess is ancillary.

¹⁵⁵ Though a Christian by name, it can be argued that Beowulf never truly embodies Christian living.

Though the arrangement of the animal trials is both more prominent and laden with symbolism, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* stands as a later example of this arrangement's persistence in Middle English romance. Gawain, during his stay at the castle of Bertilak de Hautdesert, enters into an agreement with the lord whereby each will exchange whatever they gain during the day. Sequentially, Bertilak gives Gawain a deer, boar, and fox captured during his hunts and Gawain gives Bertilak one, two, and then three kisses, infamously withholding the green girdle given him by Lady Bertilak on the third day. As critics have long noted, Bertilak's hunting of the animals and Lady Bertilak's wooing of Gawain parallel each other in purposeful ways. In J. D. Burnley's estimation, "[m]oral concern is emphasized in neither the bedroom nor the hunting field" during the first day of Gawain's stay. "The second hunt represents a notable struggle between antagonists carefully isolated in a face to face encounter" with a more capable adversary. Likewise, in the bedchamber, "the contest of wits is more intense". The third day of hunting and wooing is the most intense in both realms for characters and audience alike. "On the hunting field anxiety turns to panic" as the audience, set up to sympathize with the fox, follows its evasions and eventual death in minute detail. Concordantly, in his bedchamber, Gawain slips from his position as a morally perfect knight, concealing the gifted girdle.¹⁵⁶ In none of these challenges is the hero confronted in a physical manner as Bevis is, but the association of animals and monsters with increasingly difficult trials for the hero is the same. Gawain's final challenge is, of course, the Green Knight in his chapel, a confrontation that also plays out through a test of will, not physical prowess. But like the dragons of *Beowulf* and *Bevis of Hampton*, the Green Knight undoubtedly presents the hero with his most formidable challenge.

¹⁵⁶ See: Burnley, J D. "The Hunting Scenes in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 3 (1973): 9.

In addition to fights with animals and monsters that mark Bevis's development as a Christian knight, the poet also make use of the heathen-hound trope seen elsewhere. As with the structuring of the tale and the depth of its characters, *Bevis of Hampton* presents a significant development in use of the trope. In a romance in which the traditional boundaries between and oppositions of East and West, Christian and pagan, domestic and foreign are depicted as transitory and unstable, the poet uses the pagans-as-dogs insults as one of the markers of Bevis's immaturity. The closest grouping of heathen-hound insults occurs after the young hero, drawn into a fight with fifteen fellow knights of Ermonie, takes shelter in his chambers, wounded from battle. The first "hound" insult is thrown at Bevis by the knight with whom he has been quarrelling before the fighting breaks out: "Lo, brethern, hire ye nought this sawes, / How the yonge Cristene hounde, / A saith, a wolde us fellen te grounde." ("Lo, brothers, do you not hear these boasts, / how the young Christian hound, says he will cut us down.") (ll. 620-622). Bevis prevails and kills all fifteen. Josian eager to appease her father, immediately intercedes and presents the possibility that Bevis could have been acting defensively. Two knights are sent to Bevis's chambers where, exhausted and bloodied, he is laying on the floor. When the pair summon him to speak with Josian, his response is laden with insults:

"Yif ye ner masegers,
Ich wolde yow sle, losengers!
I nele rise o fot fro the grounde,
For speke with an hethene hounde:
She is an honde, also be ye,
Out of me chaumber swithe ye fle!" (ll. 689-694)

("If you were not messengers,
I would slay you, liars!
I will not rise one foot from the ground,

To speak with a heathen-hound:
She is a hound, as are you,
Fly quickly out of my chamber!”)

The messengers report to Josian what Bevis has said, and calmly she goes herself to the injured knight, kisses him, and applies a healing ointment to his wounds (ll. 709, 716). Immediately the insults stop. Heathen-hound insults decline steadily after this episode and disappear altogether in the second half of the romance. When leading the army of Ermonie against King Brademond, Bevis calls King Redefoun, a subject-king of Brademond, a “hethen hounde” after he kills him in battle (l. 1006). Later, in the prayer he utters before he jumps into the sea to escape “al hethenes”, he refers to the “hethene hounde” who beat and bound Christ.¹⁵⁷

This first episode contains the insults of a young Bevis for whom the Christian – pagan divide is still impenetrable: Josian has not yet converted and his relationship with King Ermin has not yet cemented. He is still a relatively young man who was sold away from his homeland. As his ignorance of what constitutes Christmas demonstrates, Bevis has an incomplete understanding of what it means to be Christian. For all intents and purposes he understands his Christianity as the binary opposite of what he sees around him. This dynamic breaks down over the course of his life until virtuous deeds and appeals to God trump nominal Christian or pagan adherence. Another unique feature of the hound insults is that, as noted earlier, they can be thrown in either direction. The knight who initially provokes Bevis in his first fight in Ermonie calls him a “yonge Cristene hounde”. Likewise, when he arrives at the castle of the giant who is

¹⁵⁷ Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury take this conflation between the Jews and Romans in the Bible with people of the Islamic faith to be an indication of guilt through implication (331). I think the more likely case is that this is an application of the term that demonstrates its designation of nations and people who are not Christian generally aside from other faiths specifically.

the brother of King Grander, the giant's wife declares that her husband "leveth on Mahoun and Tervagaunt / And felleth Cristene men to grounde / For he hateth hem ase hounde" ("believes in Mohamed and Termagant and fells Christian men (to the ground) because he hates them as hounds") (ll. 1846-1848). These are both inversions of the traditional application of the term that detract from its power of exclusion. The insult is weakened when everyone is a hound.

How, then, does this ambivalent application of hound insults connect with the animalistic heathens of the OE tradition? If the *Bevis*-poet can use the insult ambivalently and even subversively, then both he and his audience have to have an awareness of the straight-forward or traditional application of the term. In order for the poet to show that it is an immature Bevis who throws heathen-hound insults at his future wife, there must be an understanding of the trope in which only foreigners and pagan characters are the animalistic heathen-hounds. It is not surprising that the insults drop out of the narrative around the point where Bevis returns from imprisonment to rescue Josian. This is also the episode in which he moves past being just a knight of great strength. It is doubtful that the poem represents any sort of quasi-modern egalitarian view of religious differences; nor does it make any real concessions towards the Islamic faith. However, it repeatedly underscores the importance of deeds relative to Christian righteousness.

Havelok the Dane: Imminent Danger and Threats from Afar

I have examined the positioning of the external or foreign threats relative to the protagonist(s) and the similarity of the arrangements in both OE and ME narratives but have not discussed the internal threats which loom large in ME narratives. A note about the function of the treacherous insider is warranted at this point in order to understand the positioning of foreign threats in *Havelok the Dane* and how they provide the imminent danger for the Havelok and Goldeboru at the beginning of the romance. As Susan Crane points out, ME romance does not concern itself with “rebel barons’ dark affairs”; no characters are to be found who explicitly hold land in trust and take up arms against their sovereign.¹⁵⁸ Serious threats have their genesis beyond the borders of the kingdom. However, ME romances is rife with characters like Fikenhild in *King Horn* whose jealousy leads him to betray Horn twice. As one of the Hero’s twelve companions set adrift by the Saracen admirad, it is not hard to see how Fikenhild is set-up to be a Judas-like character. In *Bevis of Hampton*, the audience sees court insiders including two stewards, one English and one foreign, as well as King Edgar’s son act treacherously. So too, Ascopard, on whose behalf Josian intercedes and who becomes Bevis’s page, betrays the hero and returns to his former master, King Yvor. The grandest betrayal is that of the Bevis’s mother, who forsakes her husband to elope with a lover she had before marriage. In *Athelstan*, the Earl of Dover, despite his earlier pact with the king, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Earl of Stone, falsely accuses the latter of treason against the king. So whereas landowning barons do not take seek to take the throne by force, treacherous insiders are a fundamental part of ME narratives set in the Anglo-Saxon past. *Havelok* is no different.

¹⁵⁸ Crane, 14.

Some characters in the OE tradition come close to having the same subversive weight as those named above and can be considered insiders or betrayers. In the *Battle on Maldon*, Ælfwine adamantly calls on the warriors who boasted while drinking in the hall to be brave in battle (ll. 212-215). In a poem that leaves no ambiguity about who fought bravely and who did not, Ælfwine's exhortation is a warning to those who are valiant in word only. In *Beowulf*, Unferð is an obvious source of domestic disturbance, but Grendel and his mother are also a domestic threat to Hrothgar's court given their dichotomous positioning. They are outsiders in that they live in a swamp and lake separated from realm of men, but in strict geographical terms their watery home is part of Denmark. As can be expected, the primary fault of the Jews, God's chosen in the Old Testament, in *Elene* is their rejection of Christ, confirming their standing as the benchmark from which all betrayal is measured (ll. 293-297). Yet, none of these characters function in quite the same way as the insiders in ME narratives who betray those who have God's favor and seek to protect their people.

Havelok the Dane (late 13th C) presents a brilliant layering of threats which both embraces the older paradigm and the distinctive ME concern for the treacherous insider. Before Havelok and Goldeboru can unite Denmark and England through marriage, the treachery of each country's evil usurpatious earl must be overcome. In England it is the earl Godrich who breaks his promise to the late King Athelwold, and in Denmark the earl Godard. As even first-time readers notice, the treacherous actions of each are meant to mirror each other. But when viewed in light of the synthesis the romance ultimately presents, it becomes apparent that Godrich and Godard are simultaneously foreign and domestic threats. Godrich is a domestic threat in

England, and before Havelok marries Goldeboru, a foreign threat relative to the hero. Goddard is a domestic threat for the Danes including Havelok and his foster-father Grim, but he is a foreign threat relative to Goldeboru and English people she and Havelok eventually rule.

Godrich and Godard are quickly put in position to take the thrones of each country at the outset of the narrative in order to synthesize a meaningful marriage and unity between Denmark and England at the end of the romance. On the death of King Birkabein, Havelock's father, in Denmark the young prince and his sisters are placed under the care of Godard. In a parallel situation, when King Athelwold of England dies his daughter, Goldeboru, is left in the care of the earl Godrich. Goldeboru and Havelok are even younger than Horn when they are robbed of their inheritances. The princess is not even a toddler. "Sho ne can speke ne sho kan go" ("She can neither speak nor walk") (l. 125). When Godard imprisons Havelok and his two sisters none of them are yet "thre winter hold" ("three winters old") (l. 417). As in *Apollonius, Horn*, and *Bevis*, the hero of the story is thrown into a conflict of international proportions and placed in imminent danger through no action of his own.

The difference is so great in this tale, it could be said that Havelok is the antithesis of the romantic knight who seeks to prove himself. With the exception that he grows up unaware of his noble birth, Havelok's feats of strength are reminiscent of the heroes of the OE epics. Just as the admirad Saracen and King Ermin recognize Horn and Bevis as a legitimate threats even in their adolescence, Havelok's nobility is recognized by others long before he knows of his noble birth

himself. When Godard commands his servant, Grim, to kill the young prince, the future foster-father of the hero cannot do so after he and his wife see the miraculous light come from his mouth and the red-gold cross on his shoulder while he sleeps (ll. 589-608). Havelok remains unaware of his royal blood until Goldeboru sees the same miraculous signs and is told by angels that he is a “kings sone and kings eyr” (“king’s son and king’s heir”); in any interpretation these are innate qualities (l. 1268).

As in *Bevis* threats to the realm are not divided along a Christian-pagan boundary. Nothing in the text suggests that either Godrich or Goddard are anything but Christian by name. In context, however, they are the non-Christian threat from afar and within. Their villainous, treacherous behavior is unmistakable. Yet, despite these relatively straight-forward circumstances, the artistry of the *Havelok*-poet lies in showing just how far apart from Christian virtue these two are. This is done through three neat, parallel steps. First, the piety and goodness of Athelwold and Birkabein are expounded to provide contrast with the self-interested, cruel earls. Second, each breaks a vow made before God on a “messe bok” (“mass book”) and “masse-gere” (“mass gear”), the implements of the Eucharist. Finally, the narrator allows the audience omniscient insight into the thought-process of the two usurpers as a confirmation of their subversiveness.

Athelwold, the first of the good kings introduced, is described in terms usually reserved in ME narratives for King Alfred. The first thing said about him is that “in his time were gode laws” (“in his time [there] were good laws”), followed by the observation that he loved all equally and God with all his might (l. 28):

Hym lovede yung, him lovede holde –
Erl and barun, dreng and thain,
Knict, bondeman, and swain,
Wydues, maydnes, prestes and clerkes,
And al for hise gode werkes.
He lovede God with al his micht,
And Holy Kirke, and soth and richt. (ll. 30-36)

(He loved young, and he loved old –
Earl and baron, tenant and thane,
Knight, bondman, and swain,
Widows, maidens, priests and clerks,
And all for their good words.
He loved God with all this might,
And [the] Holy Church, and truth and right.)

The narrator also emphasizes that Athelwold rejected outlaws, thieves, traitors, and informers (ll. 39-42). The accolades heaped on the king go on for almost eighty lines and by the end he is nothing less than impossibly pious, fair, and righteous.

When the king takes ill and sees his death at hand, the young age of his daughter makes for a predicament. She is an infant: “Sho ne can speke ne sho kan go” (“She can neither speak nor walk”) (l. 125). While he is on his deathbed, the king’s earls and barons nominate Godrich, the Earl of Cornwall to watch over the princess until her maturity.¹⁵⁹ The king calls for the

¹⁵⁹ Initially Godrich is described as a “trewe man wituten faile” (“true man without fail”), “man of red” (“man of counsel”), and a “wis man of dede” (“wise man in deed”) (ll. 179-180). However, the poet leaves a hint as to his true nature saying that, “men haveden of him mikel drede” (“men had great fear of him”) (l. 181).

“messebok” (“missal”), chalice, paten, and communion cloth, and has Godrich swear on them that he will be the princess’s guardian until she is twelve years old and see to it that she marries “[t]he beste man that micthe live” (“the best man who might live”) (ll. 185-192, 199). Soon after the king dies, however, Godrich consolidates power, places knights loyal to him in various castles, has the earls and barons of the land swear loyalty to him, and sends sheriffs, beadles, reeves, and peacekeepers out into the rural areas so that “[a]ll England was of him adrad, / So his the beste fro the gad” (“all England was afraid of him, / as beasts are of the goad”) (ll. 278-279).¹⁶⁰ These are all moves that closely parallel the English accounts of William the Conqueror’s reign, and the contrast with the late king could not be greater. Athelwold ruled with righteousness through love, Godrich with inequity through fear.

When Goldeboru comes of age, Godrich has no desire to let her take the throne, and the narrator makes the audience privy to his thought process as he questions why he should have to turn the kingdom over to her instead of his own son:

Shal it nouth ben als sho thenkes:
 Hope maketh fol man ofte blenkes.
 Ich have a sone, a ful fayr knave;
 He shal Engelond al have! (ll. 306-309)¹⁶¹

(It shall not be as she thinks
 Hope often makes a foolish man blind.
 I have a son, a full fair boy;
 He shall have the whole of England!)

¹⁶⁰ Godrich also changes the terms of the king’s charge so that he becomes Goldeboru’s ward until she is “[t]wenti winter hold and more” (“twenty winters old or more”) (l. 259).

¹⁶¹ Of course the irony is that jealous desire in the guise of hope has made Godrich blind to what is right.

After this passage the narrator tells the audience explicitly that the earl has abandoned his oath and acts as the “wicke traytur Judas” (“wicked traitor Judas”) (ll. 314, 319).

Godrich is very obviously treacherous and evil, but what makes his transgression all worse is that it does not simply betray Athelwold’s wishes or even the people of the kingdom: Godrich contravenes God and His Church. Athelwold in his supreme perfection loved all his subjects equally and kept God’s commandments at the fore of his thinking. When Godrich breaks the oath he made before Athelwold, he violates the binding power of the holy implements on which he swore. His treachery defines his character and in the spiritual and moral blindness created by his greed he forces Goldeboru to marry Havelok precisely because he mistakenly thinks the prince is low-born. In these transgressions the important thing to see is that Godrich is not only unfaithful to the late king, he becomes the enemy of God and the English people, or in modern terms, church and state.

The set-up of Denmark’s treacherous earl, Goddard, is less elaborate, but no less poignant.¹⁶² The description of King Birkabein is considerably less detailed than that of Athelwold, but the same elements are present and the audience has been primed to expect what is coming. He too is fair, strong, and an excellent warrior and horseman, and when he sees that his life is at its end he calls for priests, canons, and monks to hear his confession and absolve him of his sins (ll. 341-347, 358-363). Like his English counterpart, he gathers his retainers together in

¹⁶² Judith Weiss points out that that more attention is given to Godrich initially because poet’s primary concern is England. See: Weiss, Judith. "Structure and Characterisation in Havelok the Dane." *Speculum* 44.2 (1969): 247-57.

counsel to see who might look after his two daughters and son until they, like Goldeboru, can “[s]peken and gangen” (“speak and walk”) (l. 370). Unlike Athelwold who acts on the advice of his retainers, Birkabein himself charges Goddard with the care of his children, at least in part because he is the “kings owne frende”, a detail which makes the earl’s betrayal all the stronger (l. 375). Once the decision is made, the king “on Godard hands leyde” (“laid hands on Godard”) entrusting him with his kingdom and children and has the earl swear on holy implements, this time on the altar, “messe gere”, handbells, and the missal (l. 383).

Goddard also differs slightly from Godrich in that as soon as King Birkabein is laid to rest, he takes the children and imprisons them; absent is any waiting or moment of consideration. Once imprisoned, the children are given only the most meager rations and clothes and made to suffer hunger and the cold. Goddard too is declared a “wike Judas” and deserving of the curses of an extensive list of ecclesiastical figures including patriarchs, priests, monks, hermits, the Pope, and the Cross itself (l. 425, 428-431). Finally, though Godrich is self-interested and treacherous, Goddard is this and more. When the young Havelok complains about the how little he and his sisters are being fed, the earl’s response is to play cruelly with the prince’s sisters before cutting their throats.

Godard herede here wa,
Ther-offe yaf he nouth a stra,
But tok the maydnes bothe samen,
Al so it were up on his gamen,
Al so he wolde with hem leyke
That weren for hunger grene and bleike.
Of bothen he karf on two here throats,
And sithen hem al to grottes. (ll. 465-472)¹⁶³

¹⁶³ The OED assigns to this particular usage of the verb *to lake*, “an amorous or obscene sense”. See: “Lake.” 2a. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

(Godard hear their woe,
Thereof he gave not a straw,
But took the maidens both together,
As if it were a game of his,
He would also play with them,
Who were green and pale for hunger.
He carved upon both their throats,
And afterwards cut them all to pieces.)

After the terrible death of his sisters, Havelok pleads with Godard to spare his life and, through miraculous intervention, the earl does not kill the prince. It is at this moment the audience gets omniscient insight into Godard's thoughts. His thinking can be described as a synthesis between the concerns expressed by the admirad in *King Horn* and those of Godrich earlier in the tale. He is hesitant to let the prince live, even after his promise to forfeit the throne, because he might later, "wirchen michel wo" ("cause great woe") (l. 510). On the heels of this thought, it occurs to Godard that in Havelok's absence his issue could inherit the throne, a revelation similar to that which Godrich had (ll. 513-516). Consequently, Havelok is handed over to a fisherman named Grim with instructions that he be drowned at sea under the cover of darkness (ll. 532-535).

The *Havelok*-poet is not interested in the Christian-pagan dynamic as the *Bevis*-poet and *Horn*-poet are. England and Denmark are Christian kingdoms. Still, a clear division between the protagonists' adherence to Christian virtue and the rejection of the same on the part of the antagonists can be identified, and not being a heathen by name does not mean a character is Christian by default. The treacherousness of the earls is not signaled by the kingdom from which they come or their religion but by their actions. Breaking vows made to their dying sovereigns, abusing the heirs to the throne, and mistreating the people of each kingdom is evidence enough

of their rejection of Christian virtue; but to drive the point home the poet has each break oaths made on the implements of the Eucharist, a sacrament. Their actions too, are similar to the pagan threats of other romances. Like the Saracens in *Horn* and *Bevis*, Godrich foresees that Havelok will be able unseat him when he comes of age. The Danish prince, like Horn, is sent seaward to drown by the man who has unjustly taken the crown. That Godrich and Godard are not pagan in by name would not have confused English audiences accustomed to the opposition of cast-off Christian protagonist and invading heathen. Their function is the same as the pagan threat elsewhere. Moreover, by having two antagonists mirror each other in separate countries which will eventually be united, the poet is able to layer domestic and foreign threats on top of each other.

Havelok the Dane: Animal Imagery

In *Havelok* animalistic features are often given to characters involved in a conflict or fight and might initially it might appear to be indiscriminately assigned or simply to mark an act of violence, but this is not the case. In two episodes that make extensive use of animal imagery, the fight between Havelok and Bernard Brun and the sixty robbers that besiege Brun's house and the final capture of Goddard, a careful distinction built on the ambivalent nature of familiar animals can be identified. The antagonists are dogs and hounds in the sense of a cur or even prey; they are depicted as having the unchecked appetites and the same pack mentality of the wild animals so familiar in the OE tradition. The protagonists, on the other hand, get animal imagery that reflects laudable characteristics such as physical skill and single mindedness, an application, like the elements of so many Anglo-Saxon personal names.

Upon returning to rescue his home kingdom of Denmark after years in England, Havelok is received by an earl named Ubbe who entrusts his protection to Bernard Burn, “[t]he beste man of al the toun” (“the best man in the whole town”) (l. 1750). A company of sixty robbers attack while the prince is at Bernard’s. Havelok and Burn put up a valiant fight and, despite numerous injuries, prevail. The descriptions given to both defendants and assailants displays a subtle separation of animal features. After watching Havelok kill six of their comrades in gruesome fashion, the rest of the robbers retaliate and “shoten on him so don on bere / Dogges that wolden him to-tere,” (“assaulted him as dogs do a bear that they want to tear (apart)”) (ll. 1838-1839). The bear-baiting image is a potent and fitting analogy. Havelok is confined against his will by the gang of robbers and actively provoked. The assailants, like dogs and wolves, attack as a pack. The number of foes Havelok must fight off is overwhelming and he sustains injuries to the point that “blod ran of his sides” (“blood ran down his sides”) (l. 1850). However, instead of weakening him physically or emotionally, the wounds spur him on to greater ferocity and soon the robbers dare not go nearer to him than they would a boar or lion (l. 1867). To be recognized here is that Havelok is not being vested with the inherent limitations of these animals; he is associated with their steadfast ability to fight back against overwhelming odds. Eventually, Grim’s sons Huwe, Roberd, and Willam join Havelok and Bernard in the fight. And when they do so, Huwe declares that they shall not “late ... nouth thise does fle” (“let not these dogs flee”) (l. 1883). In keeping with the earlier image of the robbers as attacking animals, they are again dogs in a derogatory sense as animals that incite aggression without a human’s sense of reason.

The morning after the fight when Ubbe returns, the narrator describes a scene of carnage not unlike that found after full scale battles between armies. The ground is littered with the bodies of the attackers “[a]ls it were dogges that weren henged” (“as if they were dogs that had been hanged”) (l. 1922). The analogy here is thin and arguably “dogs” refers more directly to disreputable men than dogs in any true sense of being canine, but it maintains the earlier association by again calling the assailants by the same name. It also shows that these predatory robbers are something worthless to be thrown away, an image that calls to mind the wretched cur. Recounting the previous night’s battle, Bernard describes how the enemy came on “[s]o dogges ut of milne-hous” (“as dogs out of a mill-house”) (l. 1967). The exact association between dogs and mills is unclear, unless the image is that of guard-dogs, but the plural form once more evokes the idea of pack mentality developed earlier. Before finishing, Bernard describes Havelok himself as a hound, but in a very different way than the attacking pack. As the tide of battle turned, Havelok, even with his manifold injuries, “folwede hem so hund dos hare” (“followed them as a hound does a hare”) (l. 1994). Though virtually all medieval images of hunting depict multiple dogs, the hero in this passage is singular and it is the virtuous tenacity of the animal being applied to the hero. In the scene as a whole, animal imagery plays no small part, but careful distinction is made on the part of the poet between the wild, carnal side of dogs and the admirable single-mindedness of what today might be called apex predators.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Animal baiting comes up later, this time with bulls and boars, after Ubbe spreads word among the people of Denmark that Havelok is the kingdom’s true heir, but in this celebratory instance there is actual baiting for sport (l. 2330-2331). There is no analogy being made.

In the scene in which Goddard is captured animal imagery reappears in familiar ways. After a small skirmish in which the earl's men abandon him then briefly return to no avail, the traitor is bound fast before he is brought before Havelok and his court. When this happens the narrator recalls that he “rorede als a bole / That wore parred in an hole / With dogges forto bite and beite” (“roared like a bull that is trapped in a hole with dogs to bite and bait”) (ll. 2438-2440). At one level it is telling that immediately upon his capture Godard begins to wail inarticulately in an animalistic fashion before seeking the mercy of God, but this instance also makes use of the earlier baited-animal image (l.2443). When Havelok was compared to a bear tied up before dogs the image was one of single minded ferocity, but when the analogy is applied to Godard, it is that of wailing helpless prey. If this weren't enough, after being bound, Godard is put on a “scabbed mere” (“wretched mare”), “[h]ise nese ... unto the crice” (“his nose ... into the crease”) (ll. 2449-2450). He is simultaneously at the end of the horse and his life.

Analogies and allusions to animals are one of the *Havelok*-poet's staples. But more than just signaling conflict and base emotions generally, the ambivalent nature of familiar animals is exploited. Havelok's foes are inferior in their wild, uncontrolled impulses and even dangerous nuisances to be cast aside. Alternatively, when the hero is compared to animals he is first an enraged bear determined to prevail in a fight he did not choose. Later, he is likened to a hunting hound, single-minded in its pursuit of the hare it hunts. This is a more complex usage of animal imagery than the black, heathen-hounds of *King Horn*. Still, the pack-like mentality of the robbers who threaten Havelok on his return to Denmark serve a similar function the “wælwulfas” who fought against the English at Maldon through the association of animals with the carnage of battle.

Conclusions

While the popular French romance tradition had a significant influence on English romance, so did themes and tropes that go back to OE narrative poetry. Uniquely English socio-political concerns, primarily a wariness of invasion, also manifest themselves in this tradition. Unlike their French counterparts, English heroes are often born into or mature under the threat of imminent danger; foreign invaders and traitorous usurpers force Horn, Bevis, and Havelok from their native lands and jeopardize their rightful inheritance. As in the OE tradition, threatening forces come from afar and across the water: an understandable concern for the people of an insular kingdom. Bodies of water also function as places of transition. In the OE tradition it was Beowulf diving down to Grendel's mother's lair. In ME romance it is Havelok being ferried away across the North Sea by his foster-father, Grim. Through the early fourteenth-century, watery journeys were an expected part of a hero's maturation. Figuratively and symbolically, separation is created between English protagonists and their enemies through the division provided by rivers, channels, and seas. And though assigning righteous heroes Christian virtue is not a uniquely English move, the language which gives animalistic features to the non-Christian and pagan foes of the English is remarkably similar in the OE and ME traditions.

The themes and motifs that made OE narratives unique had a longer afterlife than they are frequently credited as having. This is not to say that later English writers sought to recreate or maintain OE poetry. It does mean, however, that many of the fundamental concerns of the earlier tradition were also those of the latter, albeit with a degree of development. In a tradition where foreign invasion from pagans is a constant concern, the move from Norse pagans to Saracens was natural. And though it declined as a written language between the late eleventh-century and

the fourteenth, English never declined as a language of narrative and storytelling. During the period in question, oral narrative composition and circulation were not understood as indicators of illiteracy. Latin and French are predominant in the written record because they were the languages of government, the elite, and the Church. Grammatically and phonetically OE is quite different from the ME used by the poets who transcribed the romances, and the emerging influence of a second strong vernacular, Anglo-Norman, was tremendous, but the narratives written by English writers for English audiences hold more continuity than has been recognized.

Chapter II: “Ne may non ryhtwis king [ben] vnder Criste seoluen, bute-if he beo in boke ilered”: The Ingenious Compiler of the *Proverbs of Alfred*.

In chapter I argue that the OE epic narratives and ME romance should be seen as distinct but related parts of the same tradition. The dramatic decline in the production of texts between the periods is not a break in the English narrative tradition. Where French and Latin took over as the languages of government, high literature, and the Church, English remained a potent language for orally transmitted narratives. A number of uniquely English themes and motifs survived the drought of English literary production in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and reemerged in altered but recognizable forms as writers embraced romance and developed their own unique version of the genre. Recognizing the continuity in the English narrative tradition is vitally important when it comes to characterizing how literary English identity was formed in the Anglo-Norman period. If the similar themes, motifs, and character types continued to be appealing for English audiences, then drawing on the Anglo-Saxon past as a golden age to define what it meant to be English, while still an act of imaginative recreation, was one founded in an established, on-going tradition. Without a strong textual record qualification is not easily made, but sufficient evidence exists to claim that the English tradition, far from impoverished, continued to develop and diversify. “The abrupt severing of English from an official standard,” notes Thomas Hahn, “made [Early Middle English] the interval in which communities of speakers most owned their language, and in which the greatest number of cultivated (and uncultivated) varieties flourished”.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Hahn, Thomas. "Early Middle English." *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1999. 66.

Yet even with English temporarily removed from the realm of literary prestige and official capacity, not all ties to the texts, literary or otherwise, produced in the Anglo-Saxon period were severed. Seth Lerer has examined the cultivation of English after the Conquest in “Old English and its Afterlife”, and describes several later eleventh-century texts (*Rime of King William, Durham, and the Life of St. Cuthbert*) and even the *First Worcester Fragment* (late 12th C.) as engaging with the OE literary tradition.¹⁶⁶ For some time it has been recognized that Worcester Cathedral was involved in the preservation and housing of OE texts, and in Lerer’s estimation “[i]t is no accident that the *First Worcester Fragment* has about it the patina of Alfredian nostalgia,” given that “King Alfred’s own copy of *Pastoral Care* ... continued to be part of the intellectual life of the cathedral community”.¹⁶⁷ The Worcester Cathedral texts, however, are not used by Lerer to make sweeping statement about all Early Middle English literature. Regarding the *Owl and the Nightingale* (late 12th C.), he declares that the poem shares in the “afterlife of the Old English language and its literature,” but describes it as being “a formally and generically continental work”.¹⁶⁸ For Lerer not just pre-Conquest cultural identification, but the actual literature from the Anglo-Saxon period continued to influence English writers in some areas through the late twelfth-century.

Lerer’s observations about the influence of OE writing on Early Middle English have obvious ties to the development of post-Conquest literary Englishness, but further investigation of the textual connections between these eras has been sporadic and incomplete. Though writing

¹⁶⁶ Lerer, Seth. "Old English and Its Afterlife." *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.

¹⁶⁷ Lerer, 25.

¹⁶⁸ Lerer, 34, 33.

in English was of limited value for much of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, I agree that Early Middle English writers were not as disconnected from the writing of their Anglo-Saxon forbearers as the sporadic, limited production of English texts seems to indicate. It is true, as critics have reiterated for decades, that the Anglo-Saxon era became more genuinely English after the Conquest; it could be depicted as being free of the taint of foreign domination. However, this popular generalization ignores some very important emendations on the part of Early Middle English writers. It cannot go unnoticed, for instance, that in order for the Anglo-Saxon era to be a golden age, almost four hundred years of attacks from the Vikings, Scots, Picts, and Welsh had to be expunged from the historical record or carefully explained. In other words, examining the reformulation of the Anglo-Saxon era presents to modern readers a chance to see new forms of Englishness under development. Further, if other texts exist that can be reasonably added to those discussed by Lerer, an increasingly accurate, detailed characterization can be made regarding how Early Middle English writers used the numerous OE texts housed in churches, cathedrals, and other ecclesiastic centers across England to inform their writing.

A work not addressed in detail by Lerer in his essay is the so-called *Proverbs of Alfred*, but I find reason that the collection of proverbs should be included with other twelfth-century texts, such as the *First Worcester Fragment*, proven to have a direct relationship with the OE textual tradition. In a break with accepted scholarship, I want to argue that some portions of text were influenced by writing which came from Alfred's court, most prominently the king's unique translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. The *Proverbs*, in addition to engaging the OE textual tradition, are important because they are directly concerned with Englishness. They

are supposedly delivered by Alfred to his retainers as maxims on how to live righteously. Yet unlike the romances written after the middle of the thirteenth century, the *Proverbs* promotes an Englishness not dependent on an opposition with a French or Norman counterpart. Its Englishness is founded in uniquely English customs, traditions, and spiritual awareness. The presentation of King Alfred as the archetypal Englishman implicitly makes the claim that current cultural tides have carried the English away from the standard he represents, and no explicit discussion of the Conquest is needed to accomplish this.

Alfred in the Twelfth Century

Despite being one of the most well-known Anglo-Saxon kings from the end of his reign onward, Alfred of Wessex (849-899) did not receive the appellation “the Great” until the sixteenth century, roughly six hundred years after his death.¹⁶⁹ When this epithet did come into use, its application was neither arbitrary nor inconsistent with historical precedent. His reputation experienced significant, if not always regular, gains throughout the later Middle Ages that continue even today.¹⁷⁰ Alfred’s medieval popularity was due in large part to the fact that he was thought to be good king in his own time. What Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge appropriately dub the “cult of Alfred” in their introduction to Asser’s *Life of King Alfred (Vita Ælfredi regis Angul Saxonum)* took root while the king was still on the throne. At the time of his death, he was venerated for his ability to withstand the waves of Viking attacks which England

¹⁶⁹ Matthew Parker with his 1574 edition of *Asser’s Life of Alfred* and John Foxe with his *Book of Martyrs* (seven 16th C. editions) are usually credited with the promotion of Alfred in the 16th C. At beginning of Park’s text, the famous king is “Ælfredi regis amplijsimi” (“King Alfred the Great”).

¹⁷⁰ In 2002 the BBC ranked Alfred fourteenth on their list of the one hundred greatest Britons. “BBC TWO reveals the nation’s top 100 Greatest Britons of all time.” *BBC Press Office*. BBC, 21 Aug. 2002.

suffered in the second half of the ninth century.¹⁷¹ Later, in the twelfth century, the king who was responsible for keeping the Vikings at bay and maintaining the English monarchy was as well-known for his love of learning and wisdom as his military prowess.

Alfred's forethought and righteousness are remembered and attested in several prominent texts from the twelfth century through the fourteenth. He is "Englelondes deorling" in Laȝamon's *Brut* (c. 1200) and a "[c]lerc" ("clerk") and "bon astronomien" ("good astronomer") in Geoffrey Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engles* (c. 1140). In the *Mirror of Justices*, a late thirteenth century legal treatise, he sentences forty-four corrupt judges to death for passing unrighteous judgments. In Robert Mannyng's chronicle of English history (c. 1330), Alfred is remembered admirably as both a scholar and defender.¹⁷² The origins of this dichotomous image of the king are not hard to uncover. Though he made many concession in dealing with the Danes, he was responsible for maintaining English sovereignty during the second half of the ninth century. Besides being a military leader and statesman, Alfred's interest in literacy is well documented. Through his own writing and that of his Welsh biographer, Asser, an image emerges of a king who viewed the translation of texts essential to the Christian tradition into English as part of a social agenda for the betterment of his kingdom. In the king's OE adaptation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Nichole Discenza sees the negotiation of the deep cultural divide between late tenth-century Wessex and the late-antique world. In her estimation, "Alfred saw Boethius as part of the

¹⁷¹ The brief note in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle marking Alfred's death provides a good indication. The entry for the year 900 commemorates Alfred as "king over the whole English people, except for that part which was under Danish rule". (120) Translation of the ASC as found in Keynes and Lapidge: *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources*. Trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge. London: Penguin Books, 1983.

¹⁷² "Peter Langtoft's Chronicle, as illustrated and improv'd by Robert of Brunne". *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*. University of Michigan. <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/me/ABA2096.0001.001/1:3?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>>; "ALFRIDE his broþer, a gode clerk was he one, / Of body so douhty in Ingland was none. / He resceyued þe coroune, after his broþer dede, / Strong were þe batailes þe Danes on him bede."

patristic tradition that encompassed Gregory the Great, Augustine, and others,” adding that his “addition of specifically Christian elements” helped to make his translation “more acceptable to readers”¹⁷³ Alfred’s adaptation of Mosaic law, has been described by Stephen Jursinski as “a pastoral theology that viewed intentions as well as act”.¹⁷⁴ In later centuries, along with being remembered as a purveyor of justice, it became popular to attribute proverbial wisdom to Alfred. Along with the *PA*, the Anglo-Saxon king’s proverbs provide the ultimate source of ethos for both birds in the *Owl and the Nightingale* (late 12th C.).¹⁷⁵ Yet, while Alfred, along with a group of scholars he brought to his court, is known to have produced or sponsored a number of texts, including editions of Gregory the Great’s *Pastoral Care*, the first fifty psalms, Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, and a set of law codes with a prologue adapted from Mosaic law, the general scholarly consensus, for some time, has been that the proverbs found in the *O&N* and the *PA* have no connection with the king or the writing produced at his court.¹⁷⁶ In this regard, opinion has rarely strayed from Keynes and Lapidge’s declaration that “there is no reason to believe that any of the sayings derive from Alfred himself”.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Discenza, Nichole G. “A Christian Art of Reading.” *The King’s English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. 31-32.

¹⁷⁴ Jurasinski, Stefan. “Violence, Penance, and Secular Law in Alfred’s Mosaic Prologue.” *Haskins Society Journal* 22 (2011): 39. Concerning violence towards slaves in the Mosaic Prologue to Alfred’s laws, Jurasinski sees the influence of the Elvira canon and possibly some form of the Theodore and Halitgar penitentials (41-42).

¹⁷⁵ All quotations of the *PA* used in this study are from the Jesus College or Trinity College MSS as found in Skeat, Walter W. *The Proverbs of Alfred*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907. Hereafter: *PA*. The *PA* survives in four manuscripts: Cotton Galba A. XIX (C), Maidstone Museum A.13 (M), Trinity College B.14.39 (T), and Jesus College 29 (J). Of the four, the Cotton MS, which was damaged in the Cotton Library fire of 1731, is thought to be the oldest of the surviving texts.

¹⁷⁶ As a matter of economy I will refer to Alfred’s writing in a general manner acknowledging here that Alfred himself certainly did not pen all of the texts traditionally attributed to him. It is more important for this study that these texts were produce at Alfred’s behest.

¹⁷⁷ Keynes and Lapidge, 47.

Concerning the twelfth-century wisdom associated with Alfred, Robert Allen Rouse observes that a “majority of past studies have largely passed over this material, pausing only to link particular proverbs to their sources in the Bible or other works of *sententiae*” (12-13).¹⁷⁸ This lack of scholarly investigation is unfortunate because the act of attributing material to the famous king is crucially important in understanding how English writers of the period participated in the recreation of the Anglo-Saxon past as a means of distinguishing themselves in the period of Anglo-Norman cultural domination. The English language during this time was not just different syntactically, semantically, and phonologically from it was in Alfred’s day, it was no longer the language of prestige. Because language is a primary marker of social distinction, Seth Lerer, Robert Allen Rouse, Thorlac Turville-Petre, Dominique Battles, and others have come to understand the appropriation of Anglo-Saxon texts, language, characters, and settings by writers after the Norman Conquest as a means of developing a uniquely English identity.¹⁷⁹ As Lerer puts it: “In their appeals to the great scholars of the Anglo-Saxon age or their avowals of book learning, the writers [in] the afterlife of Old English voice a vernacular identity in the face of external political challenge and internal linguistic change”.¹⁸⁰ Though he also believes no direct connection exists between Alfred’s writing and the Middle English proverbs, Rouse acknowledges that the *PA* “provides a construction of Anglo-Saxon England that belies any simple process of cultural appropriation”, and embodies a “complex interplay between local legends, textual traditions and contemporary twelfth-century concerns”.¹⁸¹ Rouse’s words reflect the emerging notion that the tradition of attributing proverbs to Alfred is more complex socially

¹⁷⁸ Rouse, Robert A. *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005. Robert T Lambdin does not believe there to be any connection between the *PA* and the king either. See: Lambdin, Robert T., and Laura C. Lambdin, eds. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*. Westport: Greenwood, 2000.

¹⁷⁹ Lerer, 7-34; Turville-Petre, Thorlac. *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996; Battles, Dominique. "Sir Orfeo and English Identity." *Studies in Philology* 107.2 2010. 179-211.

¹⁸⁰ Lerer, 11.

¹⁸¹ Rouse, 51.

and linguistically than it has been thought to be in the past, given its participation in what is now recognized as a widespread desire to define and establish Englishness between the Conquest and the Hundred Years War. Because of its place in this social movement within English writing, the relationship between the *PA* and the writing that came from Alfred's court deserves to be revisited in order to see whether the connection between the two is really as tenuous or fanciful as it has been thought to be.

Sources and Analogues of the *Proverbs*

Since the early 1950s critics have steadfastly maintained that no connection between the *PA* and the actual writing of King Alfred exists. Rouse characterizes the question of connection as one which "occurs to most first-time readers of the *Proverbs*".¹⁸² It is not without good reason that declarations such as this have been made. Over sixty years ago, Olaf Arngart identified the *Distichs of Cato* as an immediate source for a number of the proverbs.¹⁸³ While scholars know that Alfred was interested in and collected short bits of wisdom, no extant text from his reign has emerged which can definitively be declared his collection of proverbial wisdom.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, quite a few of the proverbs in the collection, like those discussed by Arngart, can be traced to sources other than the king's writing. It is not necessary, therefore, to call into question Rouse's summary of the text's sources as "a synthesis of local tradition regarding Alfred and a number of proverbial sayings drawn from the *Disticha Catonis*, local oral culture, and the Bible".¹⁸⁵

However, the *Distichs of Cato* and the Bible are not the sum of *PA*'s source material, and local

¹⁸² Rouse, 40.

¹⁸³ Arngart, Olaf. *The Distichs of Cato and the Proverbs of Alfred*. Lund: Gleerup, 1952.

¹⁸⁴ Twice (chaps. 24 & 89) Asser mentions that Alfred had an *enchiridion* (handbook) in which he recorded prayers and psalms. The king kept adding to this book until it, in Asser's estimation, reached the size of psalter.

¹⁸⁵ Rouse, 38.

lore can be problematic when closely scrutinized. I will not argue that the twelfth-century collection represents the survival or recovery of a private collection of wisdom Alfred assembled, but I do think that writing traditionally attributed to the king directly influenced portions the text. Striking similarities between Alfred's version of the *Consolation of Philosophy* and the Mosaic Prologue to his laws prompt a reconsideration of the traditional thinking on this matter.

Looking across the materials repackaged as Alfredian proverbs, I find that something close to the original intention of the *Proverb's* poet can be uncovered. In one of the most well-known passages from Alfred's writing, his preface to *Pastoral Care*, the king sets down a literary agenda for his subjects. In short, he describes his desire to have "suma bec" ("certain books") translated and disseminated in English to rekindle learning in the kingdom.¹⁸⁶ In keeping with his recruitment of clerics from outside Wessex such as Asser, John the Saxon, Grimbald, and Plegmund, Alfred's literary program gives no special preference for writing of English origin. The ultimate source of these certain books is less important than the wisdom they contain, the underlying idea being accessibility to valuable knowledge in English. This unique approach, originally intended to bolster the viability of English in the tenth century, I believe, is reflected in the *PA*.¹⁸⁷ The text effectively re-creates Alfred's socio-literary program for a contemporary

¹⁸⁶ Sweet, Henry, ed. *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*. 2005 Reprint: Elibron Classics. London: The Early English Text Society, 1871. 6. (Cotton MS)

¹⁸⁷ Lerer makes a similar claim for the scribe known as the Tremulous Hand of Worcester (13th C.): "In his overall project of glossing, transcribing, and lexicographically studying the core texts of the Old English prose tradition ... the Tremulous Hand glossator has, in effect, re-created the Alfredian project of vernacular education renewal." The *Preface* is one of not the most well-know of Alfred's texts. Therefore it is not inconceivable that the Tremulous Hand was not the first ME scribe to attempt a recreation of Alfred's literary agenda. See: Lerer, 25.

audience by adapting diverse materials in the same manner the great king himself advocates.¹⁸⁸

In translating the voice of Alfred into the twelfth century, the poet of the *PA* acts as a *compiler* of supreme ingenuity, ably synthesizing material from a number of sundry sources.¹⁸⁹

The *Distichs of Cato*

In his 1952 study of the *PA* and the *Distichs of Cato*, Olaf Arngart convincingly demonstrates that the author of the former used the latter as an immediate source for a significant number of the proverbs in the collection.¹⁹⁰ Two examples from Arngart's study demonstrate the parallels he saw:

DC: Uxorem fuge ne ducas sub nomine dotis,
Nec retinere uelis, si coeperit esse molesta. (III, 12)

(Avoid taking a wife for the sake of a dowry,
Nor wish to retain [her] if [she] becomes troublesome.)¹⁹¹

PA: Ne shal þu nefre þi wif
Bi hire wlite chesen,
Ne [hire] for non ahte
To þine bury bringen.

.....
Wo is him þat iuel wif
Bringeð to his cot-lif. (ll. 248-59, Trinity MS)

(Nor shall you ever choose

¹⁸⁸ André Crépin has discussed the strong thematic alignment between what Alfred writes about literacy in his preface to *Pastoral Care*, what Asser writes about the king's literary habits, and how the *PA* portrays the king. For instance, the declaration by the Alfred of the *PA* that: "Ne may, non rythwis king / [ben] vnder Criste seoluen, / bute-if he beo / in boke ilered" (No righteous king under Christ himself may [rule well] except if he is literate.) See: Crépin, André. "Mentalités anglaises au temps d'Henri II Plantagenêt d'après les Proverbs of Alfred." *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 37 (1994): 49-60.

¹⁸⁹ Since Skeat's 1907 edition of the *Proverbs*, critics have recognized that there are at least two narrative voices in the extant MSS, but the original composer of the text fill the role of *compiler* perfectly. According to Alastair Minnis, the medieval compiler "firmly denied any personal authority and accepted responsibility only for the manner in which he had arranged the statements of other men". See: Minnis, Alastair. *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*. Second ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988. 191-2.

¹⁹⁰ Arngart, Olaf. *The Distichs of Cato and the Proverbs of Alfred*. Lund: Gleerup, 1952.

¹⁹¹ Transcriptions and translations of the *Distichs*: Cato. *Collectio Distichorum Uulgaris*. Ed. L D. Benson. Harvard College, 29 Apr. 2006. <<http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/authors/cato/cato-mon.html>>.

Your wife by her appearance,
Nor for anything bring
Her to your town.

.....
Woe to him who [an] evil wife
Brings to his home life.)

DC: Utere quaesitis opibus, fuge nomen auari:
Quid tibi diuitias, si semper pauper abundes? (IV, 16)

(You who seek to use [your] resources; avoid the name of miser;
What good is wealth, if the poor abound?)

PA: 3if þu hauist duʒeðe
And drihten [it] þe sendeþ,
Ne þenk þu neuere þi lif
To narruliche leden,
Ne þine faires
To faste holden,
For þer ahte is [i]hid,
þer is armþe i-noh. (ll. 516-23, Trinity MS)

(If you have riches,
And God sends them to you,
Never think to lead your life
Too miserly.
Nor hold your goods
Too tightly.
For their value is obscured,
Where poverty abounds.)

As with biblical wisdom, use of the *Distichs* as source material substantiates the credibility of the text. The collection was known throughout Western Europe in the Middle Ages, and was used as both a Latin reader and textbook on moral virtues. The existence of three separate MSS in OE that contain loose translations of portions of the work attest that the *Distichs* were also known during Anglo-Saxon times, and it does not take much imagination to see why it would be appealing to translate and adapt the *Distichs* so that they could be attributed to Alfred.¹⁹² Of the

¹⁹² Some time ago, Max Förster identified that two of the known OE versions of the *Distichs* are based on the OE Boethius. See: Förster, Max. "Zum altenglischen Boethius." *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 106 (1901): 342-43.

possible sources Rouse mentions, the *Distichs*, like the Bible, clearly carries sufficient merit to be given voice by Alfred. I do not discount Rouse's addition of "local oral culture", but beginning with the Alfredian *Consolation of Philosophy*, writing from Alfred's court needs to be added to the list of sources.

The OE *Boethius*

I find it very likely that the proverb which addresses the transitory nature of worldly wealth and the true value of wisdom has its source in Alfred's unique version of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (OE *Boethius*), a text known to have had an influence on other ME texts.¹⁹³ Apart from the *PA*, Alfred's adaptation seems to have been known to the poet of the early fourteenth-century Middle English romance *Sir Orfeo*. Dominique Battles, following J. Burke Severs, has demonstrated that the OE *Boethius* is most likely the source of Orfeo's exile in the wilderness after the loss of his wife to the Fairy King.¹⁹⁴ The only other known version of text in which the hero undergoes this period of suffering in the wild is Alfred's OE translation. Concerning the frailty of wealth in the *PA*, the first parallel which can be drawn involves the superiority of wisdom over physical ability, a theme which is addressed time and time again in the *CP*.

¹⁹³ Prose and prosimetrum versions of the *CP* exist in OE. I differentiate between two citation by citation but refer to them collectively as Alfred's version for economy.

¹⁹⁴ See: Battles, Dominique. "Sir Orfeo and English Identity." *Studies in Philology* 107.2 2010. 181; Severs, J B. "The Antecedents of *Sir Orfeo*." *Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh*. Ed. MacEdward Leach. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961. 187-207.

CP: Forþam ælc cræft and ælc anweald biþ sona forealdod and forswuzod zif he biþ butan wisdom. Forþam ne mæz non mon nænne cræft forþbrinþan butan wisdom (XVII).

(Therefore each craft and each power soon become old and passed over, if they are without wisdom. For this reason, no man may perform any craft except with wisdom.)¹⁹⁵

PA: Wyþ-vte wysdome
Is weole wel vnwurþ (ll. 119-20, Jesus College MS)

(Without wisdom
Wealth has no worth)

The latter is not a translation of the former, but it absolutely preserves the direct opposition of what is conventionally thought to be enabling with wisdom. It even maintains the idea that it is wisdom which provides the value that tangible wealth and skill can have. This proverb, like others in this section of the *PA*, does not seem to have a source in the *Distichs of Cato*. The closest distich is in Book IV:

DC: Cum tibi praeualidae fuerint in corpore uires,
Fac sapias: sic tu poteris uir fortis haberi (IV, 12)

(When you are physically strong of body,
Act wisely so you can be considered courageous.)

The value placed on wisdom is much the same, but the paring with physical strength in the Latin text does not align with the ME proverb. “Cræft” can mean strength or might in OE, but the association of tools (“tolum”) and materials (“andweorce”) with craft by the Mind just before the passage quoted makes this unlikely.

¹⁹⁵ Transcription of Alfred’s text from: *King Alfred’s Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiæ: With Literal English Translation, Notes, and Glossary*. Trans. Samuel Fox. London: 1864. Translations are my own. I have substituted the letter *w* for the wynn character, *s* for *ʃ*, and *þæt* for the abbreviation: þ .

Along with the *PA*, other evidence suggests that philosophical concern for the intersection of wealth and wisdom was associated with King Alfred in the twelfth century. Nicole Discenza has discussed the special attention paid to the “linkage between wealth and wisdom” in the king’s writing, finding that the connection is one of social economy: “Wealth is economic capital. Wisdom, as part of public discourse, is symbolic or cultural capital”.¹⁹⁶ Alfred, she points out, addresses both directly in his preface to *Pastoral Care*: “Ure ieldran, þa þe ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom & ðruh ðone hie begeaton welan & us læfdon” (“Our ancestors, who held these places before, loved wisdom, and through it they acquired wealth and left it to us”).¹⁹⁷ As Discenza illustrates, Alfred is lamenting the loss of not just economic capital but intangibles of value such as wisdom and learning. *PC* circulated during Alfred’s reign, but it continued to be copied throughout the Middle Ages, becoming the king’s most well-known piece of writing. Cultural memory of Alfred’s concern for wisdom and wealth as a pair is corroborated by the *Owl and the Nightingale* too. The Owl quotes Alfred, saying: “ne truste no mon to his weole / to swiþe, þah he habbe ueole” (“No man [should] ever trust in his wealth / too much, even if he has a lot.”) (ll. 1273-4). Perhaps the most well-founded characteristic of the literary Alfred in the twelfth century was his concern for wealth and wisdom.

¹⁹⁶ See: Discenza, Nicole G. "Wealth and Wisdom: Symbolic Capital and the Ruler in the Translational Program of Alfred the Great." *Exemplaria* 13 (2001): 438.

¹⁹⁷ Discenza, "Wealth," 434.

Another parallel with the OE *Boethius* in a later section of this same proverb can be found in their shared image of growing gold.

CP: Hwæþer 3e nu recan 3old on treowum. ic wat ðeah þæt 3e hit þær ne recað.
Ne finde 3e hit no. forþam ðe ealle men witon þæt hit þær ne weaxt. Ðe
ma þe gimmas weaxað on win3eardum (XXXII).

In any case, consider now gold on trees. I know, however, that you do not expect it to be there, neither find you it; for all men know that it does not grow there, any more than gems grow in vineyards. (118-119)

PA: For þey o mon ahte
Hundseuenti acres,
And he hi hadde isowen
Alle myd reade golde,
And that gold greowe
So gres doþ on earþe
Nere he for his weole
Neuer þe fuþer (ll. 121-6, Jesus College MS)

(For though a man owns
One hundred-seventy acres,
And he has sown them
All with red gold,
And that gold grows
As does grass on [the] earth
He is not for his wealth
Any better off)

In the OE text the tone is sterner and growing gold is explicitly ridiculous, but the passages pair well because they both present the unique image of growing the precious metal in some sort of vegetative manner. When the proverb is paired with the metrical version of this wisdom the connection becomes even stronger.

CP: Hwæþer 3e willen. On wuda recan. 3old þæt reade. On 3renum triowum.
(Which of you will, in the woods, expect [to find] red gold on green trees?)
(Metrum XIX)

In this version not only is the unique addition of gold into an image of plant life maintained, but the specific term *red gold* is shared, and the reason for the use of the color red emerges. As the translation indicates, the red gold is meant to contrast the green of the trees chromatically, underscoring the incompatibility of worldly wealth with the natural world God has presented to mankind, or perhaps seeking permanence (gold) in transitory objects (green trees). The grass in the proverb duplicates this juxtaposition faithfully. “Red Gold” is not a unique term, but the use of this designation to contrast the green of the earth is unique and does not appear in the Latin text: “Non aurum in uiridi quaeritis arbore / nec uite gemmas carpitis” (Book III, Metrum VIII, ll. 3-4).¹⁹⁸ What does the replication of imagery from the OE text say about the Englishness of the *PA*? It means that at least the compiler and perhaps his audience were familiar with this unique version of the proverb, or that the source material was an English text derived, in some form, from the OE *Boethius*. In either case the proverb is presented within the confines of an English tradition.

This proverb yields still more connections to the OE *Boethius*. The incompatibility of wealth and friendship may have its source there as well.

¹⁹⁸ *Boethius: Consolatio Philosophiae*. Ed. James J. O'Donnell. University of Pennsylvania. <<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/boethius/boethius.html>>.

CP: Ac mid ðissum [w]oruld ʒesælþum 7 mid ðis andwearðan welan mon
wynecþ oftor feond ðonne freond. (XXIV)

(But with these worldly goods, and with this present wealth, men more
often make enemies than friends.)

PA: Nere he for his weole
Neuer þe furþer,
But he him of [fremde]
Freond iwurche; (ll. 127-30, Jesus College MS)

(He is not for his wealth
Any better off
Unless he makes
A stranger a friend)

Arngart pairs this bit of wisdom with the first distich in Book II, but does so with “some
hesitation”:¹⁹⁹

DC: Si potes, ignotis etiam prodesse memento:
Utilius regno est, meritis acquirere amicos. (II, 1)

(If you can, remember to help even the ignorant;
It is better for the kingdom to acquire friends than earnings.)

The pairing is not seamless, and though the *PA* presents what might be called a more proactive
version of the maxim when compared with the OE text, the distich does not address the binary of
which friend is necessarily only half. A “fremde” (“stranger”) has the potential to become either
friend or foe.

¹⁹⁹ The hesitation seems to be based on his translation of *frump* in the Jesus College MS. In Arngart’s translation the word is derived from OE *fyrmp* / ME *–fremthe* which he glosses as “food, provision, entertainment, [or] feast”. This makes his translation: “his wealth would be no more worth to him (or he would be no further for his wealth), unless with entertainment (or benefaction) he wins friends” (105). I disagree and think that *frump* is the OE term of the same spelling defined as “a beginning” in the Bosworth-Toller. This makes the passage something closer to the following: *He is not for his wealth, ever the greater, unless he made for himself, a friend in the beginning*. It is not a person’s wealth which helps gain friends. The friends have to be there already – from the beginning. Skeat glosses *fremde* as stranger however the Bosworth Toller lists the word as adj. making this translation doubtful as well.

Images of the natural world and metaphors derived from it are spread throughout both the *PA* and *CP*. In a section from the *PA* in which Alfred expounds on the frailty of the present life, readers are given an image of herbs (“wurt”) being unable to stave off fate, death. In Metrum XI, “Of God’s Wise Government”, herbs are tied to the cycle of life as well:

CP: Hæfð se ælmihtiza
eallum Ʒescæftum
þæt Ʒewrixle Ʒeset
þe nu wunian sceal
Wyrta Ʒrowan
Leaf Ʒrenian
þæt on harfest eft
hrest and wealuwað. (Metrum XI).

(The Almighty has set this change upon all creation which is now manifest: wort to grow, leaves to green that at harvest afterwards shall perish and fade away.)

PA: For nys no wurt wexynde
A wude ne a velde,
þat euer mvwe þas feye
furþ vp-holde. (ll. 168-71, Jesus College MS)

(For no wort grows,
In wood or field,
That may ever continually
Sustain those fated [to die].)

The presentation is somewhat different. In the OE text, herbs and grass are presented as an example of the order for the natural, physical world set by God. Their yearly growth and death are the process God has ordained for all. In the ME text herbs are used to illustrate the fact

that nothing in the natural world can defy God's order. In the Trinity College MS a redactor has altered the message so that it applies more directly to Alfred's audience and the reader. The last two lines read: "þæt euure muze / þe lif up-helden" ("that ever may / thy life uphold") (ll.170-1). This version obscures the original illustration to a degree because the herbs take on the medicinal properties associated with them elsewhere. The similarity of the illustration, however, is close enough to warrant consideration as evidence that the poet of the *Proverb's* was thinking of, or working from, the OE text when the text was being compiled. Once again, none of the distichs represents well these illustrations of the process God has established for the tangible world.

A similar theme found in both the *CP* and the *PA* involves the end to which worldly wealth will come. The corresponding passage in the *PA* is a bit more explicit, but in both cases the proverb encourages the reader to shun worldly goods which will cease to be valuable.

CP: Ne sindon þa woruld sælða ana ymb to þencenne þe mon þonne hæfþ. ac ælc 3lea[w] Mod behealt hwelcne ende hi habbaþ. 7 hit 3ewarenað æ3þer 3e wiþ heora þreaun3a 3e wiþ olecun3a. (VII)

Neither are worldly goods, which we at this time possess, to be thought about by themselves, but every intelligent mind sees what end they have; and warns each of you against their threats with gentleness. (18-19)

PA: Alle world-ayhte
 Schulle bi-cumen to nouhte;
 And vycles cunnes madmes
 To mixe schulen i-multen;
 And vre owe lif
 Lutel while ileste. (ll. 382-7, Jesus College MS)²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ The wording of the T MS varies, but underscores the point with equal vigor:

Werldes welþe
 To wurmes shal wurþien;

(All the world's wealth
Shall come to nothing,
And every king of treasure
Shall mix [together] and melt;
And your own life
[Shall] last [only a] little while.)

The fifth proverb in Book IV of the *Distichs* provides a possible parallel, but the imperative at the beginning to care for the health of the body when wealthy is quite different from the message conveyed in the *PA* and the OE *Boethius*:

DC: Cum fueris locuples, corpus curare memento:
Aeger diues habet nummos, se non habet ipsum. (IV, 5)

(When rich, remember to take care of [your] body:
The infirm rich [man] has money, but not himself.)

A good deal of the condemnation of wealth in *PA* has its source in the *DC* (especially Book IV), but even these cautions may be tempered by the *CP*. A related passage from the *PA* which can be read as echoing the *CP* describes those who prize gold and silver as drawing the ire of God.

CP: Ðeah nu God ʒefylle ðara weleʒra monna willan ʒe mid ʒolde. ʒe mid seolfre. ʒe mid eallum deorwyrþnerrum. Swa ðeah ne biþ se ðurst ʒefylled heora ʒitsunʒa. ac seo ʒrundlease swelʒend hæfþ swiþe maneʒu weste holu on to ʒadrienne. (VII)

Though God fulfills the wishes of wealthy men with gold, and with silver, and with all precious things, the thirst of their desire will still not be

And alle cunnes madmes
To noht shulen melten
And ure lif shal
Lutel lasten. (ll. 382-87)

satisfied, and the groundless abyss has very many waste holes to drain into.²⁰¹

PA: Monymon for his gold
Haueþ Godes vrre,
And for his seoluer
Hym-seolue for-yemep
For-yetep and forleseþ. (ll. 204-8, Jesus College MS)

(Many man, for his gold,
Has God's ire,
And for his silver
His soul forsaken,
Forgotten, and completely lost.)

The ME proverb is not a translation of the OE passage; however, none of the distichs address the problems which come from gold and silver as a specific pair. The actions of the Almighty are portrayed somewhat differently in the two passages, but the underlying idea, that it is the esteem in which men hold these precious metals that displeases God, is the same. Even the proverb's declaration that the wealthy will neglect, forget, and eventually lose their soul portrays a similar hopelessness as the unquenched avarice which is like a bottomless pit into which waste falls.

The Mosaic Prologue

In addition to the OE *Boethius*, parallels can be identified between the Mosaic Prologue to Alfred's laws and the *PA*. More than just underscoring the idea that materials from disparate sources inform the text, the influence of the *MP* demonstrates the compiler's intention to

²⁰¹ Fox, 22-23. Swelgend seems to be a pun as it can mean an abyss or pit and an avaricious person. See: "Swelgend." *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.

translate both words and concepts into a composite (ME) identity. More with the *MP* than with the *Distichs*, the ultimate source of the sententia is obviously not Alfred. The Bible is brimming with wisdom, but the twelfth-century compiler of the *PA* was attuned to what was, evidently, a uniquely English appreciation for certain bits of biblical wisdom. Just as he drew on the uniquely English version of the *CP* when it came to wisdom concerning the frailty of worldly wealth, the *MP* appears to be the source for the wisdom concerning the equal treatment of rich and poor. Notice how the corresponding material in the Prologue all comes from a specific section of the text.

MP: Leases monnes word ne rec ðu no þæs to gehieranne, ne his domas ne geðafa ðu, ne nane gewitnesse æfter him ne saga ðu. (El. 40)

Do not reckon of [a] false man's word nor hear [the same], nor to his judgments consent, nor speak any witness after him.

MP: Ne wend ðu ðe no on þæs folces unræd 7 unryht gewill on hiora spræce 7 geclysp ofer ðin ryht, 7 ðæs unwisestan lare ne him ne geðafa. (El. 41)

Neither [should you] turn yourself to folk of poor council and the unjust desire of their speech and clamor over your rights, and to the teaching of the unknowing do not consent.

PA: Ne gabbe þu ne schotte,
Ne chid þu wyþ none sotte,
Ne myd manyes cunnes tales
Ne chid þu wiþ nenne dwales. (ll. 411-14, Jesus College MS)

(Neither gab nor argue,
Nor chide with any sot,
Nor with many kinds of tales
Chide with any fools.)

Compare these passages with the closest match from the *Distichs*.

DC: Contra uerbosos noli contendere uerbis:
Sermo datur cunctis, animi sapientia paucis. (III, 10)

(Against talkers do not argue with words;
Discourse is given to all: wisdom of mind to few.)

The *PA* is closer to the sense of avoiding those who speak falsely or foolishly in the *MP* than the distich, which only discourages trying not to outdo those who talk too much.

The imperative, ultimately traceable to Exodus 23:6-7, to treat rich and poor alike is addressed twice in the *PA*. In both instances wording of the *PA* is worth consideration in light of Alfred's in the Mosaic Prologue.²⁰²

MP: Dem ðu swiðe emne. Ne dem ðu oðerne dóm þam welegan, oðerne ðam earman; ne oðerne þam liofran 7 oðerne þam laðran ne dem ðu. (43)

You [shall] judge with great equality. Neither [shall] you judge one judgment for the well-off man, [and] another for the poor man, nor another for the beloved and another for the hateful.

PA: þe eorl and þe eþeling
Ibureþ, vnder góðne king,
þat lond to leden
Myd lawelyche deden.
And the clerk and þe knyht
Shulle démen euenliche riht;
þe poure and þe ryche
[Hi schulle] démen ilyche. (ll. 74-81, Jesus College MS)

²⁰² "You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty." All Biblical citations: *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

([It] behooves the earl and the noble
Under a good king,
To lead the land
With lawful deeds.
And the cleric and knight
Shall pass judgment evenly;
The poor and the rich
They shall judge alike.)

PA: At chepyng and at chyrche
Freond þu þe iwurche
Wyþ pouere and wyþ riche,
Wyþ alle monne ilyche. (ll. 372-6, Jesus College MS)

(At market and at Church
You should make friends
With poor and with rich,
With all men the same.)

The sense is not exactly the same, but quite close. In the OE text the commandment to judge evenly is not directed to any specific person or position. The ME proverbs call on earls, nobles, clerics, and knights to judge with equality. Despite this trivial difference, the two texts use the exact same verb (to deem) to address how rich and poor are to be treated.²⁰³ The Distichs are critical of worldly wealth and false security of riches, but none addresses treating rich and poor alike.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ The verb to judge does not come into regular use until the late 14th C., but this does not take away from the fact that both texts are explicitly concerned with judgment and not some other sort of treatment or politesse.

²⁰⁴ Giving equal judgment to rich and poor alike would have been an especially attractive concept for a writer who may have been less than pleased with the status quo and looking to create a certain English identity. The concept is repeated throughout English narratives through the Hundred Years War. In Robert Mannyng's chronicle from the 1330s the author repeatedly describes the Norman gentry as holding the true English in servitude. In the Auchinleck MS *Bevis of Hampton* a key departure from the French antecedent involves the hero being raised as lord of Hampton through the right of law by his subordinates.

The Language Gap

Despite the preservation of key concepts and even specific terms between the two OE texts and the *PA*, the twelfth-century compilation is not updated Old English. While the parallels between the two OE texts alone merit a reconsideration of Alfredian source materials, other proverbs clearly take the *Distichs* as their source. In part, what makes Arngart's study so plausible is that the image of the compiler as a cleric of some sort using Latin source materials in the twelfth century is very much in keeping with what is known about clerical practice at the time. Translation between Latin and English, though not as common as Latin to Latin transcription, was commonplace. Still, whether or not the author of the *Proverbs* was even capable of working with Old English sources needs to be considered.

Christine Franzen's study of the Tremulous Hand of Worcester (13th C), along with the evidence that the Alfredian *Boethius* influenced the ME *Sir Orfeo*, helps to provide some perspective on this matter.²⁰⁵ Based on the corrections and emendations the scribe made to texts like Ælfric's *Grammar and Glossary*, the *St. Bede Lament*, and the *Soul's Address to the Body*, Franzen comes to the conclusion that "[t]here is no doubt that the tremulous scribe generally understood what he was reading, particularly with Ælfrician prose", further noting that "even when a gloss was incorrect, the word which he chose usually made some sense in ... context".²⁰⁶ Without a glossed Old English text from the same unnamed assembler of the *PA* it is impossible to say definitively whether or not this person could work with Old English. However, the

²⁰⁵ Franzen, Christine. *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

²⁰⁶ Franzen, 94

compiler definitely knew traditions about Alfred and had an interest in the Anglo-Saxon past. In this light, it is not at all unreasonable to think that the compiler had sufficient knowledge or means to draw inspiration from Alfredian texts, perhaps in OE or some intermediate version, now lost. The Tremulous Hand presents a neat case study because his unique hand can be distinguished from others, but if a scribe in the thirteenth-century could work with OE materials, it is probable that earlier scribes could do the same.

Further understanding of the compiler's language capacity can be found in Donka Minkova's study of the unique meter of the twelfth-century collection.²⁰⁷ Minkova describes the *PA* as having a unique meter that, in her estimation, can only be compared to *Lazamon's Brut* and fails to conform to any of Siever's five types of Old English meter or any of their variants.²⁰⁸ In the *PA* she identifies: alliterative without rhyme, alliterative with rhyme, couplets without alliteration – isosyllabic, non-canonical alliteration, and lines without any identifiable pattern of alliteration or rhyme.²⁰⁹ This is a very diverse group of poetic patterning and, in my reading, is not simply abstract creativity on the part of the poet. Instead, I believe that these various metrical forms are the result of a cleric working to bring together a diverse group of source materials. The simultaneous use of alliteration and rhyme connects the *PA* to two different poetic traditions, but more than just evoking the most prominent metrical features of both Anglo-Saxon and continental poetry, synthesizing a unique verse form was the only option in a text that had to bring together and cohesively translate Middle English, Old English, and Latin source materials.

²⁰⁷ Minkova, Donka. "The Credibility of Pseudo-Alfred: Prosodic Insights in Post-Conquest Mongrel Meter." *Modern Philology* 94.4 (1997): 427-54.

²⁰⁸ Minkova, 431

²⁰⁹ Minkova, 428

²¹⁰ Even if the compiler could identify and replicate Old English poetic meter, this would be inappropriate for an audience who knew Middle English. Instead, he mimics Old English poetics, an approach which makes sense for someone assigning proverbs to an Anglo-Saxon king.

Conclusions

The *PA* is a text directly concerned with Englishness. It is a collection of proverbs for good living given voice by the most popular Anglo-Saxon king of the twelfth-century. By virtue of being penned and circulated over three hundred years after the Alfred's death, it portrays the past as being better than the present. Yet, for all its concern with Englishness the text does not, as later ME texts will, depict a version of Englishness dependent on contrast with a French or Norman counterpart. It is a reaction to the political and social climate in which its compiler and audience found themselves, but the questions it poses for contemporary rulers and overlords must be inferred. If all was as it should be, why would a mythologized Alfred, a celebrated king from the past, have been such an appealing choice of spokesman for the ME audience? It is conceivable that the cleric who compiled the text sought to address some specific difficulties or troubles of his day with a reimagining of Alfred, the great Anglo-Saxon king who was known to have prized wisdom.²¹¹ Alternatively, the collection could just represent an exercise in self-definition apart from any specific ill. In either case, the overall effect of the text was of greater concern than the ultimate origin of its several sources, and compiler did quite a remarkable job of synthesizing a wide array of source materials in order to produce a coherent, cohesive,

²¹⁰ Arngart also finds a Scandinavian influence in the *Proverbs* as well.

²¹¹ For Discenza, Alfred's understanding of wisdom "focuses primarily on the soul's relationship with God" ("Wealth" 433). The literary Alfred reflects this concern as well, but wisdom definitely has benefits in the temporal world. This is seen, for instance, in the king's call for those of rank to rule justly (ll. 74-81, 872-6, Jesus College MS).

unmistakably English text. The *PA* imitates the approach to literacy Alfred himself had advocated, and it is unlikely that this is a coincidence. Whether by necessity or not, Alfred's translations were often sense-for-sense renderings of their sources. He is quite explicit about this both in the prologue to his laws and *PC*. From these texts and Asser's biography it is clear that the king actively sought wisdom from multiple sources. He did not collect and repackage exclusively English wisdom or literature. The idea was to take the most valuable, important material and make it available in English. This is the same approach taken in the assembly of the *PA*.

It makes sense that a good deal of the wisdom of the *PA* comes from a prominent Latin source well-known in the twelfth century. Like the legendary Anglo-Saxon king, the poet had no issue with incorporating material from non-English sources. As a cleric, he most likely had a great deal more experience reading and translating Latin than older forms of English. If a certain distich fit with the image of Alfred he was trying to create, it was reasonable to appropriate the Latin text. An admixture of sources also helps to explain the unique nature of the *PA*'s poetic arrangement which, as Minkova has shown, is not some sort of advanced Old English meter. It also explains the somewhat piecemeal nature of the collection. The *PA* is the product of a compiler who had the same conception of Alfred as can be found in Asser's biography and the writing which came from his court: a king who collected bits of wisdom for the benefit of those around him and for himself. Not having an original collection of proverbs that Alfred wrote, the author did the next best thing. He assembled a collection in conceivably the same way Alfred did.

I depart from earlier studies of the *PA* in that I believe sufficient evidence exists to say that its compiler was familiar with, not just general cultural or oral traditions about Alfred, but actual texts that were produced during his reign. I find it reasonable to say that the poet was familiar with the OE *Consolation*, the Mosaic Prologue to Alfred's laws, and perhaps his translation of *Pastoral Care*. It is even possible that the cleric had access to some version of Asser's biography of the king. The text has what Lerer calls the "patina of Alfredian nostalgia" (his characterization of the *First Worcester Fragment*).²¹² Like the *First Worcester Fragment*, the *PA* has a connection, not just with the twelfth-century idea of Alfred, but the texts that circulated during his reign. This is an important acknowledgement to make in identifying the changes that literary Englishness underwent between the time the *PA* was written and the dawn of the fourteenth century. In the text Englishness is created through inclusion not exclusion. The *Distichs of Cato* are not English but they become so when spoken by Alfred.

²¹² Lerer, 25.

Chapter III: The Castle and the Stump: *The Owl and the Nightingale* and English Identity

Despite a composition date somewhere in the very trough of English literary production, *The Owl and the Nightingale* has attracted the attention of an uninterrupted stream of literary critics since the first modern editions were published in the second quarter of the nineteenth-century.²¹³ The poem has frequently appeared in anthologies of Old and Middle English as the representative link between the two periods, and no small part of its appeal is to be found in its playfulness and absurdity which even bowdlerized versions, such as J. W. H. Atkins's 1922 edition, could not mask.²¹⁴ Anthropomorphizing animal characters to debate human issues and ethics has a long history and was especially popular in the Middle Ages, but even for modern readers, more than seven hundred years removed from the poem's composition, it still retains much of its original humorous force. The poet's ability to weave together serious topics, such as martial fidelity and Christian duty, with scatological humor and what might be termed slap-stick comedy today, bears the mark of literary mastery.

Concerning the thesis of this study as a whole, namely that English identity needs to be read diachronically and synchronically, I want to uncover the English and Norman aspects of the birds' characters to present a contrast between the way these two identities are treated in English literature from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In the *O&N* I find an awareness of the social dichotomy in English society stemming from the Conquest, but in its concern with

²¹³ *The Owl and the Nightingale: A Poem of the Twelfth Century*. Ed. J. Stevenson. London: Roxburghe Club, 1838; *The Owl and the Nightingale: An Early English Poem*. Ed. Thomas Wright. London: Percy Society, 1843.

²¹⁴ *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Ed. J. W. H. Atkins. London: Cambridge University Press, 1922.

English identity the poem does not directly condemn the Normans or the cultural markers associated with them. Norman identity is part of a greater, multifaceted Englishness. The *O&N* is a debate poem with only the barest thread of narrative, but medieval debate is a genre not motivated specifically by narrative. It is, however, a very effective means of facilitating confrontation, and the birds attack each other in manifold ways: morally, ethically, and ideologically. When compared to English narratives that emerge over the course of the succeeding century, the poem maintains a conspicuous absence of language relating to usurpation, theft, and servitude (in the social sense). Rather, each bird perceives the other as her ideological opposite, but neither claims the other has taken anything from her.

For a number of different reasons, virtually all critics of the poem have found at least some aspect of it praise-worthy. Linguistically it is a fascinating example of a predominantly Anglo-Saxon vocabulary deployed within a continental poetic arrangement. Its debate structure has been used to assess how the rhetorical arts were being taught in England around the turn of the thirteenth-century. But the most frequently employed critical approach to the text involves an attempt to uncover the allegory underlying the birds' debate, or, alternatively, the specific positions within medieval society the two represent. In his 2001 edition of the poem, Neil Cartlidge provides a representative list of the twentieth-century "attempts to locate the poem within specific frames of reference" which include readings of the pair as: civil lawyers (J. W. H. Atkins), canon lawyers (E. G. Stanley, David Lampe, Janet Coleman), musicians (B. Colgrave, Richard E. Allen, Christopher Page), theologians (Mortimer J. Donovan, R. M. Lumiansky, Kurt Olsson, Monica B. Potkay), astrologers (A. C. Cawley), philosophers (Tamara A. Goeglein), preachers (Irene Moran), women (Alexandra Barratt, John Eadie), and the laity (Jane Gottschalk,

Paule Mertens-Fonck).²¹⁵ The problem reflected in this long and varied list of occupations and personalities is that none of the identities assigned to the birds has held up over time. Concerning the problems encountered by interpretations that try to fit the birds and their debate into a specific allegorical framework, Cartlidge points out that the absence of consistency within their individual arguments (both contradict earlier positions to counter the other in the moment) and the apparent lack of an identifiable set of principles being debated makes a formidable obstacle for any definitive postulation.²¹⁶

Given the wide array of positions and opinions the birds advocate, fitting them into any sort of sharply defined ideological or social framework, as Cartlidge points out, has proven precarious at best. The poem, it must be admitted, provides a convenient platform for the “preoccupations of . . . readers themselves,” making any question concerning how it can productively contribute to a study of English identity worth asking.²¹⁷ Without denying these

²¹⁵ In order listed: *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Ed. Eric G. Stanley. London: Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library, 1960; Lampe, David. “Law as Order in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Acta* 7 (1980): 93-107.; Coleman, Janet. “*The Owl and the Nightingale* and Papal Theories of Marriage.” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987): 517-68.; Colgrave, B. “*The Owl and the Nightingale* and the ‘Good Man from Rome’.” *English Language Notes* 4 (1966): 1-4.; Allen, Richard E. “The Voices of *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Studies in Medieval Culture* 3 (1970): 52-58.; Page, Christopher. *The Owl and the Nightingale: Musical Life and Ideas in France 1100-1300*. London: University of California Press, 1989.; Donovan, Mortimer J. “The Owl as Religious Altruist in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Medieval Studies* 18 (1956): 207-14.; Lumiansky, R M. “Concerning *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Philological Quarterly* 32 (1953): 411-17. Olsson, Kurt. “Character and Truth in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Chaucer Review* 11 (1977): 351-68.; Potkay, Monica B. “Natural Law in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Chaucer Review* 28 (1994): 368-83.; Cawley, A C. “Astrology in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Modern Language Review* 41 (1946): 161-74.; Goeglein, Tamara A. “The Problem of Monsters and Universals in *The Owl and the Nightingale* and John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*.” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 94 (1995): 190-206.; Moran, Irene. “Two Notes on *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *English Studies* 59 (1978): 499-507.; Barratt, Alexandra. “Flying in the Face of Tradition: A New View of *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 56 (1987): 471-85.; Eadie, John. “The Authorship of *The Owl and the Nightingale*: A Reappraisal.” *English Studies* 67 (1986): 471-77.; Gottschalk, Jane. “*The Owl and the Nightingale*: Lay Preachers to a Lay Audience.” *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966): 657-67.; Mertens-Fonck, Paule. “Tradition and Feminism in Middle English Literature: Source-hunting in the Wife of Bath's Portrait and in *The Owl and the Nightingale*.” *Multiple Worlds, Multiple Words: Essays in Honour of Irène Simon*. Ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek, Pierre Michel, and Paulette Michel-Michot. Liège: University of Liège, 1987.

²¹⁶ *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Ed. Neil Cartlidge. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001. XVI-XXVI.

²¹⁷ Cartlidge, xvii.

problems, I argue that this poem is vitally concerned with defining Englishness. Older studies that advocate relatively narrow identities for the pair run into trouble because they must necessarily ignore or exclude parts of the birds' identities that do not fit. How can the birds represent canon or civil lawyers without any clear statement as to what they are arguing? However, no aspect of either the Owl or the Nightingale's identity needs to be passed over or explained away to argue that they are a composite of Englishness. The birds live in the English countryside, they speak in English, are aware of English history and tradition, and have at least a general knowledge of political developments in the kingdom. None of the human occupations that the birds can be associated with existed outside of English culture at the turn of the thirteenth century. Moving away from the neat, direct opposition the pair claim to represent, I want to look at their debate with an eye towards the less-well defined awarenesses that lay below the surface of their forceful argumentation.

In order to see the poem's concern with Englishness it is necessary to look past the birds' combative rhetoric and identify their commonalities. Over and over, both strive to depict themselves as the polar opposite of the other; and, without question, their differences are what fuels their debate. But behind the birds' relentless parading of these differences are similarities so foundational they get lost in their heated exchanges. In addition to both being English, the debaters are both birds; they are the same general kind of animal. As evidenced by *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (c. 1240) written by Bartholomeus Anglicus (translated into English by John of Trevisa in the fourteenth-century), Birds of the Air were considered a fundamental

category of animal in medieval thinking.²¹⁸ In an attempt to single out her opponent, the Nightingale claims the Owl is hated by all other birds, but she also acknowledges that her opponent is still part of “fowl kinne” (“fowl-kin”) (l. 65).²¹⁹ Throughout the poem both compare the physical features they share: bills, talons, flying abilities, and singing voice.²²⁰ They have a shared purpose as well. Both claim to have superior influence on mankind, and thereby aid humanity in gaining a right relationship with God. These commonalities are ingrained and revealing of their likeness, and give their differences a superficial aspect. The pair are not representative of extreme differences such as competing religions or separate categories of animal. The *O&N* is not a debate between Christian and Muslim ideals, a pairing prominent in later English romances such as *King Horn* and *Bevis of Hampton*. This is why, when the Nightingale tries to support her claim that her one song is better than any of the Owl’s and tells the story of the Cat and the Fox, the Owl immediately rejects the comparison of unlike animals and accuses the Nightingale of using “swikelede” (“trickery”) (l. 838). Each declares she is her opponent’s antithesis, but the pair are more accurately two sides of the same coin. Their differences stem from disagreements over issues and concerns within the larger construct of Englishness.

²¹⁸ From a modern, post-Darwinian biological perspective, there are some obvious incongruities for a category that also contains bees, the phoenix, and griffins, but the salient point is that birds of the air were conceived of as a coherent category with shared similarities. In his late fourteenth-century redaction, John of Trevisa adds the figure of the Owl along with a description of it which aligns well with many of the characterizations of the character in the *O&N*. See: Trevisa, John. *On the Properties of Things*. Vol. I. Ed. Nancy A. Hunt and M C. Seymour. London: Oxford University Press, 1975. 614.

²¹⁹ All quotations of the text from Atkins’ transcription of the C text.

²²⁰ Hume finds that the purpose of having the Owl and Nightingale voice human issues, apart from their established associations, is that they help facilitate the “setting up and knocking down,” “building and undercutting,” and “contrasting and contradicting” foundational to the poem. See: Hume, 30.

Despite their shared Englishness, I disagree with Atkins, who read the poem as reflective of some sort of great sociological synthesis in which “dawning [of] a new national self-consciousness” could be found, and wherein “[r]ace-antagonism between the Norman and English sections of the community was rapidly becoming a thing of the past.”²²¹ I view the poem as a pragmatic debate that puts readers in a position to contemplate the differences between the birds’ viewpoints. The Owl and the Nightingale, without necessarily precluding other features of their characters, represent two distinct, equally valid, versions of English identity. The Owl is the voice of the “native” English. The Nightingale, conversely, is the voice of Norman descended elite. Both of these identities, however, are presented as English and contemporary. The birds do not represent the Normans and English who met on the battlefield at Hastings. Their identities represent the social and cultural legacy of the Conquest. For instance, both birds make appeals to the wisdom of Alfred the Great, a preeminent figure of pre-Conquest virtue in the twelfth-century.²²² It would be difficult to argue that the Nightingale makes use of Alfred’s wisdom with the same effectiveness as the Owl; the former quotes the king only twice (ll. 236, 761). Nevertheless, it is indicative of their shared Englishness that the pair, despite presenting themselves as polar opposites, can draw on the same source of credibility, a ruler and author who was unquestionably Anglo-Saxon.

In what way does the poem encourage contemplation? Regardless of whether an interpretation shows it to be allegorical or more loosely representative of a polemic in medieval society, the fact that the debate goes unresolved makes for a conspicuous conclusion, and must

²²¹ Atkins, XX.

²²² See: Rouse, Robert A. *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005. 11-51.

be taken into account in any attempt to characterize or typify the poem and its argumentative debaters. If the point of the debate is not to make a definitive statement about a particular issue, a closer look at the debaters themselves is logical. Comparing the ending of the *O&N* with other non-human medieval literary debates, Katheryn Hume has found reason to declare that, “it seems probable that the ending [the poet] gives us is not meant to favour one or the other contestant”, and, by extension, this also means that the debate cannot be considered “decided”.²²³ Without resolution the poem is limited in its ability to make definitive declarations about even the most consistent descriptors that can be assigned to the birds: liberal and conservative, lay and clerical, or aristocrat and commoner. All readers are left with is the unsatisfying promise that the pair will re-create their debate for the enigmatic Master Nicholas of Portesham, a figure about whom little can be said definitely.²²⁴ For the very first audiences of the poem this now shadowy figure may have provided a familiar, immediate reference as a well-known cleric or circuit judge. Yet, the passage of time has done little to erode the most enduring and important aspect of Master Nicholas’s character in the poem: he is deemed a fair judge by both debaters, and readers are forever left to speculate about his decision. Neither bird thinks she is giving the other an advantage in appealing to his judgment. Even with the backstory concerning his being passed over by shameful bishops, Master Nicholas functions much like the allegorical figure of Lady Justice (ll. 1760-1780). Instead of being an actual judge by action, he is a symbolic reminder that resolution is to be found within the law. Together, the presence of Master Nicholas, a symbolic

²²³ Hume also notes that, apart from the *O&N*, “in English bird debates, the nightingales are always victorious”. This makes the lack of clear victory for the nightingale in the *O&N* even more significant. See: Hume, Kathryn. *The Owl and the Nightingale: The Poem and its Critics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975. 39, 45.

²²⁴ Attempts have been made over the years to connect Master Nicholas with various persons of record named Nicholas, but no lasting connection has been made. All that can be said for sure is that, as presented in the poem, Master Nicholas is cleric as his title indicates, he lives in Portesham, and the birds find him to be a fair judge. See: Haganir, Kathryn. *The Owl and the Nightingale: Sources, Date, Author*. New York: Haskell House, 1931.63-193; Hinckley, Henry Barrett. "The Date of "The Owl and the Nightingale"." *Modern Philology* 17.5 (1919): 253; Baldwin, Anne W. "Henry II and *The Owl and the Nightingale*." *JEGP* 66 (1967): 207-29; Russell, J.C. "The Patrons of *The Owl and the Nightingale*." *PQ* (1969): 178-85.

figure of right judgment, and the birds' inconsistent ethical positions, the commonalities between them, and the absence of resolution regarding the topics debated, leads me to believe that the poem is less about any specific occupation, issue, or judgment than about the debaters themselves and what they represent. The Englishness of the Owl and the Nightingale is diverse, allusions are made to a range of social, theological, and ethical positions, but when the poem opens they are in the same corner of the same field in the same kingdom and when it ends they seek the same judge.

The Date of the Text

I am not concerned with the date of the *O&N* in that I am not seeking to make a definitive statement about it or validate the poem's authenticity through dating. But it is necessary, if I am going to argue that the poem presents a significantly different understanding of Englishness from later narratives, to consider why conjectured dates of composition range from the 1170s through the late thirteenth-century, and why I propose an earlier date than some recent scholars. Much of the debate on this matter stems from the fact that the extant MSS and the text itself leave only frustratingly ambiguous clues concerning the poem's date of composition. Since N. R. Ker's 1963 paleographic study and facsimiles of both the Jesus College MS 29 (J) and British Museum Cotton Caligula A.IX. (C), there has been little disagreement that the MSS should be dated to the second half of the thirteenth-century based on orthographic similarity to other datable texts.²²⁵ Another copy, now lost, is listed among the holdings of Titchfield Abbey around the year 1400. But since the nineteenth century disagreement as to how far the extant texts of the poem are

²²⁵ See: *The Owl and the Nightingale: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Surviving Manuscripts, Jesus College Oxford 29 and British Museum Cotton Caligula A.IX.* Ed. N R. Ker. London: Oxford University Press, 1963. ix; Cartlidge, xl.

removed from the original has led to numerous attempts to date it based on internal references. The most prominent among these is the mention of “king Henri” followed by a blessing for his soul in the following line (ll. 1091-92). The king signified is either Henry II (1154-1189) or Henry III (1216-1272), but depending on the Henry chosen, the composition date can vary by more than a century.²²⁶ Of the scholarly editions published in the last one hundred years, Atkins and E. G. Stanley use these lines as evidence of a composition date between 1189 and 1216, or after the death Henry II but before the coronation of Henry III.²²⁷ Cartlidge, who finds “no internal or linguistic evidence that shows the poem is very much older than its extant manuscripts”, presents the possibility that the poem was written after the death of Henry III in 1272.²²⁸ Though they have received less attention in recent years, other internal references have been used to date the poem. Perhaps the most famous is the 1919 study by Henry Barrett Hinckley which proposes that the mention of Norway and Galloway be taken as a reference to a series of Papal missions to the northern British Isles in the 1170s: “Hwi nultu fare to Noreweie, / an singin men of Galeweie?” (“Why won’t you travel to Norway, / and sing to the men of Galloway?”) (ll. 909-910)²²⁹ Insisting that the blessing following the mention of King Henry is for a monarch who has passed away, Frederick Tupper dates the poem to 1194 based on line 1732 which describes the current king as being neither dead nor injured: “Ȝe[t] nis he nouper ded ne lame” (“Yet he is neither dead nor lame”).²³⁰ Tupper takes this to be a reference to King Richard’s poor health leading up to, or during his imprisonment following the Third Crusade.

²²⁶ A possibility exists that the reference to Henry the Young King (b. 1155), the son of Henry II who ruled with his father after 1170. The younger Henry was ultimately rebellious and did not survive his father.

²²⁷ See: Atkins, xxxiv-xxxv; *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Ed. Eric G. Stanley. London: Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library, 1960. 19.

²²⁸ Cartlidge, xv.

²²⁹ Hinckley, Henry Barrett. "The Date of "The Owl and the Nightingale"." *Modern Philology* 17.5 (1919): 247-58. Raymond Chapman uses this same reference in his dating of the poem, but cites evidence that the Papal mission took place in 1196: Chapman, Raymond. "'Noreweie" and "Galeweie" in *The Owl and the Nightingale*." *The Modern Language Review* 41.4 (1946): 408-09.

²³⁰ Tupper, Frederick. "The Date and Historical Background of the "Owl and the Nightingale"." *PMLA* 49.2 (1934): 406-27.

Precise dating of poems such as the *O&N* is less popular than it once was, but the orthography and language of the poem are still frequently used as a means of addressing questions of composition date in a broader manner.

With some frustration, however; the linguistic evidence in the texts lends itself to multiple interpretations as well. Some features, like the overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, support early dating. By Cartlidge's tally, the poem contains only forty-six terms "which are likely derived from ... dialects of Old French", and concedes that some of these would have entered the language before the Conquest.²³¹ Whatever the case, French loanwords account for only a small percentage of the poem's lexicon.²³² In terms of its grammar, the poem retains other features that suggest an early date: (1) grammatical gender, (2) the use of a final *-e* to mark plurals, and (3) the retention of the dual pronoun, *unker*.²³³ Conversely, other linguistic features, as Cartlidge points out, anticipate later Middle and Early Modern English: (1) indeclinable articles, (2) dative and genitive constructions formed with a preposition, and (3) the use of auxiliaries (shall and will) to indicate future tense.²³⁴ The level of grammatical ambiguity within the text makes for a situation where attempts to date the text orthographically or linguistically come perilously close to a zero-sum-game. It can be argued that the poem is a late thirteenth-century product written by a poet working archaisms into the text or writing in a

²³¹ Cartlidge, xlvi.

²³² The poem is 1794 lines long.

²³³ A copy of Lazamon's *Brut*, more definitely datable to the turn of the thirteenth-century, also appears in the MS Cotton Caligula A. IX and is cited alongside the *O&N* in the OED as some of the last recorded uses of the dual pronoun in English. See: "† unker." *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²³⁴ Cartlidge, xlvi.

dialect with a number of older features, or that it was penned in the late twelfth-century with the more modern linguistic features entering in through several generations of rewriting.

In the face of these competing theories, I still find reason to place the composition of the poem after the reign of Henry II and before the coronation of Henry III. Concerning whether or not the poem takes place during or after the reign of the Henry in question, the blessing for the soul of the king is clearly in the past tense, meaning that it should be dated to the period after the reign of one of the two. This makes the window of composition either 1189-1216 or 1272-1307 (Edward I's reign). Some features of the grammar do support a later date, but how are the numerous older features to be explained away? It is doubtful that a poet writing in the last quarter of the thirteenth-century would so consistently archaize the language of a poem that is clearly set in the present.²³⁵ When the Wren intervenes at the end of the debate, she proclaims that the king is well and unharmed in the present tense. Likewise, the detailed story about the nightingale being captured by a jealous knight who thought she was trying to trick his lady into "uuel luue" ("unclean love") is a reference to a relatively recent scandal and not some storied event in the past, since the speaker herself was involved in the incident (ll. 1049-1105). Finally, the thorough incorporation of proverbs attributed to King Alfred supports earlier dating. The only other known collection of proverbial material attributed to the Anglo-Saxon king, the *Proverbs of Alfred*, can be dated to the middle of the twelfth-century.²³⁶ Through a similar argument of proximity, the inclusion of the earliest of the known copy of Lazamon's *Brut* (turn of the 13th C.) in the same MS as the C text also points towards an earlier date. Finally, as I hope

²³⁵ A lot of the orthographic inconsistency of at least the C text is due to the presence of two different scribal spelling systems. See: Stanley, 7. Atkins finds extensive evidence of scribal modernizing (xxx-xxxi).

²³⁶ See: Rouse, Robert A. *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005. 15.

to demonstrate, the strong presence of the English and Norman identities as cultural markers that individuate the birds should also be taken as an indication that the poem should be dated no later than the first quarter of the twelfth-century.

Places of Dwelling

A good portion of the birds' different versions of Englishness is encoded in their respective places of dwelling. The Nightingale is not representative of a pre-Conquest Norman identity, but Norman cultural markers contribute significantly to her composite identity. The most immediate and accessible manifestation of this is her home: a "castel god" high upon a "rise" ("good castle high in the branches") (l. 175). A bird who lives in a castle is certainly part of the anthropomorphizing humor of the poem, and it fits well with the Nightingale's aristocratic inclinations, but a social distinction is also part of her castle dwelling. Numerous references in English writing between the Conquest and the Hundred Years War attest to the actual and symbolic oppression associated with castles. For instance, just two decades after the Conquest, castle building is described as one of the defining actions of William I's reign in the poem known as the "Rime of King William" (*Peterborough Chronicle*, entry for year 1086). Roughly two hundred and fifty years later, Robert Mannyng can still emphasize how William I and his son, William Rufus, erected and maintained castles as a means of securing the land. Being a bird, the Nightingale's castle is literally made up of "spire & grene segge" ("stalks and green sedge"), but it is also a "vaste picke hegge" ("fast, thick hedge") that makes her "gladur uor þe rise" ("glad of the outcropping") (ll. 18, 17, 19). Yet her home, like actual castles, is depicted as a defensible stronghold. The Nightingale's castle, therefore, creates a conspicuous association with Norman identity.

The Nightingale's castle is not the sum of her dwelling. It is an easy detail to miss, but the "rise" upon which her castle sits deserves consideration as well. The term in question, "rise" (modern spelling: *rice*), is a now archaic term used to describe an outcropping of small branches or twigs on a tree or sometimes a whole thicket. This rice is also an important contributor to the Norman character of the Nightingale's dwelling. Though she mentions her castle only once, the superior position and security of her rice comes up a full eight times (ll. 19, 53, 175, 520, 586, 894, 1636, and 1664).²³⁷ The Owl as well acknowledges that her counterpart is inaccessible on her rice:

Ȝif ich þe holde on mine uote,
(so hit bitide þat ich mote!)
& þu were vt of þine rise,
þu sholdest singe an oþer w[i]se. (ll. 51-54)

(If I [could] hold you with my foot,
(I hope it comes to pass!)
And you were out of your rice,
You would sing different song!)

Why does twiggy outcropping the Nightingale calls home makes for such a good defensive position? Is the Owl somehow incapable of flying into the close quarters of the rice because of her size? Is she, who is described as blind by day, unable to pick the smaller bird out from this thick, leafy backdrop (ll. 230, 241)? Among spatial and visual conjectures of this nature, I suggest that when paired with a castle, the rice of the Nightingale becomes a direct part of the association with Norman control of the land: a Motte and Bailey castle. By definition, a rice is not a rise in the sense of a small hill or upward sloping ground, but it would be difficult to argue

²³⁷ See: "rice." 1 A. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

that the phonetic proximity of the terms does not allow for any slippage. Rice is a double-entendre. According to the OED, the primary phonic difference between the two words is voicing of the sibilant at the end of each: rice - rʌɪs (unvoiced), rise - rʌɪz (voiced).²³⁸ Yet, in six of the instances where rice is used in the poem, it is coupled with wise (manner, custom, habit) which, like rise, has a voiced sibilant as the second consonant (waɪz).²³⁹ Conversely, the single time that rice is not rhymed with wise at the end of a line, it is paired with “þis” (“this”) which, then as now, has an unvoiced sibilant (ðɪs) (l. 1636).²⁴⁰ In the slippage between rice and rise the audience of the poem is simultaneously given the image of a leafy outcropping and a Motte and Bailey castle, the specific style of defensive building associated with the Normans and their descendants.

Even the geographic area where the Nightingale has established her home aligns with the Norman reorganization of England. Very early in the poem the narrator describes her as speaking from “one hurne of one breche” (“a corner of a field”) (l. 14). This field where the dispute takes place is itself located in a “sumere dale” (“summery valley”) (l. 1). The rural setting here aligns with what Dominique Battles, citing O. H. Creighton, describes as the second wave of castle building after the Conquest. Battles’ study, which uncovers similar Norman and Saxon cultural markers in the early fourteenth-century English romance *Sir Orfeo*, discusses how castle construction in more remote areas of the kingdom began as Norman lords established forests, deer parks, and administrative centers for governing the surrounding land.²⁴¹ Seth Lerer, too, has

²³⁸ See: “rise.” 1 A. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²³⁹ See: “wise.” †1 A. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²⁴⁰ See: “this.” 1 A. *Oxford English Dictionary*. The eighth use of rice comes at line 586 and is used internally and therefore does not fit into a couplet: “þar þornes boþ & ris idraʒe”.

²⁴¹ Battles, Dominique. “Sir Orfeo and English Identity.” *Studies in Philology* 107.2 2010. 192.

made a connection between “breche” and the “fields, broken up for cultivation, that were the result of William the Conqueror’s domestication of the forest”.²⁴² When compared to the humble abode of the Owl, not only does the Nightingale occupy a dwelling at a higher position from which she can cast judgment without fear of retaliation, she is placed within the post-Conquest reconfiguration of the land.

In contrast to the lofty mock Motte and Bailey castle of the Nightingale, the Owl lives in an “old stoc” (“old stump”) that is “mid iui al bigrowe” (“completely grown-over with ivy”) (ll. 25, 27). And though it receives less attention, her dwelling establishes several important aspects of her identity and positioning too. First, the Owl’s old stump reveals her inclination towards wooded, less civically demarcated areas controlled by the heirs of the Normans. It carries a sense of longevity as well. The Owl’s dwelling is as old as the Nightingale’s is new. Small branches and twigs are, of course, the newest growth on a tree or shrub, while a stump, especially one overgrown with ivy, is the remnant of the oldest part of the plant: symbolically what once was. The age of the Owl’s dwelling, and its more mature state are indications that she has lived in her home longer and support her native English identity. Second, the stump on the ground draws a contrast with the Nightingale’s fortified castle on a rise. It is low and not positioned well for tactical advantage. No indication is given that its ivy covering provides the protection the “picke hegge” (“thick hedges”) and “þornes” (“thorns”) surrounding the rice do (ll. 17, 586).²⁴³ In addition to extoling the imperviousness of the deep woods to both heat and cold, the Owl refers

²⁴² Lerer, Seth. "Old English and Its Afterlife." *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 34.

²⁴³ Later in the poem, the Owl declares that she also frequents “at wude tron wel grete” (“great trees in the woods”) which are, like her stump, are covered with ivy (l. 615).

to this dwelling as her “ihold” (l. 621).²⁴⁴ Cartlidge translates this as “stronghold”, but I prefer something closer to the definition of “[p]lace of shelter or abode” listed in the OED.²⁴⁵ My reason is that while the Nightingale consistently thinks about her home in terms of human defensive construction, the Owl does not. She considers her dwelling superior to the Nightingale’s, but is not concerned with defensive enclosure in the same way as her smaller counterpart. Her ability to protect herself rests on her superior size, strength, and ability to see well at night, not the defensibility of her home (l. 89). Placing the Owl in a humble dwelling of inferior means contributes significantly to the symbolic social separation between the birds. When the poem opens, the Nightingale literally and figuratively looks down on the Owl.

The spaces the birds inhabit directly tie into their respective Norman and English associations, but they also demonstrate that the differences between the two are more a matter of their perceptions than a reality. In his 2004 article, “The Nightingale's Forum: A Privy Council?” John P. Brennan points to textual evidence which indicates that the Nightingale’s dwelling occupies a decidedly ignoble position behind an outhouse.²⁴⁶ Along with the “dizele hale” (“secluded corner”) mentioned at the outset of the poem, Brennan looks to the following passage, spoken by the Owl:

An oþer þing of þe ich mene,
 þu nart vair ne þu nart clene.
 Wane þu comest to manne hāze,
 ar þornes boþ & ris idraze,
 bi hegge & bi þicke wode,
 þar men goþ oft to hore node,
 þarto þu draʒst, þarto þu w[u]nest,
 an oþer clene stede þu schunest.

²⁴⁴ Being that the Anglo-Saxons built primarily with timber, the Owl’s affinity for the woods might also be read as part of her native English coloring.

²⁴⁵ Cartlidge, 16; “ihold.” †1 A. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²⁴⁶ Brennan, John P. “The Nightingale's Forum: A Privy Council?” *The Chaucer Review* 38.4 2004: 376-382.

Pan ich flo niȝtes after muse,
I mai þe uinde ate rum-huse;
among þe wode, among þe netle,
þu sittest & singst bihinde þe setle:
þar me mai þe ilomest finde,
þar men worpeþ hore bihinde. (ll. 583-96)

(Another thing I [should] mention,
You are not fair nor are you clean.
When you come to men's dwellings,
Where thorns are and the branches draw together,
By the hedge and by thick woods,
Where men often go to [do] their need,
Thereto you draw, thereto you dwell,
And other clean places you shun.
When I fly at night after mice,
I may find you at the outhouse;
Among the woods, among the nettle,
You sit and sing behind the seat:
There I can often find you,
Where men stick-out their behinds.)

The Nightingale does not dispute this accusation, but chooses instead to defend her singing in a general manner after this particular attack. Her frequent attendance at outhouses is, therefore, presented as fact. For his purposes, Brennan uses this observation to counter claims that the Nightingale is the winner of the debate, essentially adding a point for the Owl. As it pertains to assessing the validity of the Nightingale's association with Norman cultural markers, Brennan's observations need not detract from the "castle-on-the-rise" image presented elsewhere. On the contrary, it is vitally important that the Nightingale see her dwelling as beautiful, ornate stronghold covered in "blosme inoȝe" ("many blossoms") while the Owl focuses on its proximity to the privy (l. 16). These two disparate understandings of the same dwelling support the contrast the birds wish to create between themselves, but it also shows that the separation between the two is less stark than they present it. The proximity of the Nightingale's home to the outhouse is

a reminder that her aristocratic superiority is her own creation. She is not a late eleventh-century Norman landowner; she imitates one.

Despite their fierce opposition, the pair are more representative of two later stereotypes than actual late eleventh-century Normans and English. The Norman identity of the Nightingale is especially inconsistent. The following passage illustrates the less-than-monolithic nature of this identity well:

Oft spet wel a lute liste,
þar mucche strengþe sholde miste;
mid lutle strengþe, þurȝ ginne,
castel & burȝ me mai iwinne.
Mid liste me mai walle[s] felle,
an worpe of horsse kniȝtes snelle. (ll. 763-68)

(A little cunning often succeeds well
Where great strength will miss;
With little strength, [but] through ingenuity.
Castle and towns I may win.
With cunning, walls I may bring down,
And throw strong knights off [their] horses.)

Despite her use of “gin”, one of the poem’s few French loan words, conspicuous in their scarcity, a tight alignment of the Nightingale with Norman identity would probably not have her claiming to bring down cavalry.²⁴⁷ Like castle building, mounted cavalry divisions came to England with the Norman Conquest. The Anglo-Saxons generally fought on foot.²⁴⁸ Also detracting from the

²⁴⁷ See: “gin.” †1. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²⁴⁸ Evidence of this is abundant. In the Bayeux Tapestry the Normans are consistently depicted on horseback and the English on foot. The classic example from Anglo-Saxon literature is Byrhtnoð’s instructions to his warrior from the *Battle of Maldon*:

Het þa hyssa hwæne hors forlætan,
feorr afysan, and forð gangan,

soundness of the Nightingale's Norman identity, is her reference to a proverb attributed to King Alfred just before the passage cited: "Ne mai no strengþe aȝen red" ("No strength [can prevail] against reason") (l. 762). As mentioned above, the Nightingale does not appeal to the ethos of Alfred's wisdom as effectively as the Owl, but this instance, the second and final time she quotes the famous king herself, is a prime example of the permeability of her Norman identity.

This passage makes plain the complications inherent in a simple declaration that the Nightingale is Norman, but it also offers strong evidence that Norman–English cultural awareness is foundational to the poem. Despite conceding that she has little physical strength, the Nightingale says that her "gin", her ingenuity, is sufficient to win "castel & burȝ" ("castles and towns"). The pairing is important. While the castle, as a concept and term, was brought to England by the Normans, the burh was functionally the Anglo-Saxon equivalent: a fortified town.²⁴⁹ Battles, in her study of *Sir Orfeo*, finds the deliberate opposition of these pre- and post-Conquest defense systems. Her observations apply equally well to the pairing used in the *O&N*: "The Old English *burhs* belonged to a system of national defense overseen by royal authority and paid for through public taxes." The castle, she continues, "in contrast to the burh, is a more or less private dwelling, a fortified residence that...served public functions."²⁵⁰ Although, the early fourteenth-century Middle English *Sir Orfeo* post-dates the *O&N*, the continued use of this dynamic in English literature, from the "Rime of King William" well into the fourteenth-century,

hicgan to handum and to hige godum

(Then he commanded each of the warriors to let go his horse
Drive [it] away and go forth,
Resolve to hands (i.e. hand-to-hand fighting) and to doughtiness to mind.)

Transcription from: "The Battle of Maldon: Hypertext Edition." *Old English Literature: A Hypertext Course Pack*. Ed. Mark Faulkner, Katharine Lindsay, and Stuart Lee. University of Oxford, 2009.

²⁴⁹ See: Wormald, Patrick. "The Burhs." *The Anglo-Saxons*. Ed. James Campbell. London: Penguin Books, 1982. 152-53.

²⁵⁰ Battles, 187.

means that it was well established and a frequent point of reference in writing that demarcated the subject of English identity.

In addition to the corner of the field, stump, and outcropping where the birds are placed at the outset of the debate, their opposition encompasses broader geographic positioning reflective of their unique versions of Englishness. Early in the debate, the Nightingale accuses the Owl of singing dolefully in the dead of winter and being dumb in the summer (ll. 415-16). By contrast, she proclaims that her song brings joy and heralds the coming of springtime (ll. 434-38). However, like actual nightingales which spend only the spring and summer months in the southeastern British Isles, the Nightingale concludes this particular defense of her singing by saying that she stays “noȝt ouerlonge” (“not too long”), choosing instead to take her leave before winter and “fare hom to min erde” (“travel home to my land”) (ll. 450, 460).²⁵¹ Initially the Owl focuses on defending her winter singing by arguing that only the “harde” (“hardy”) endure the winter to “frouri” (“comfort”) those who are weaker, but the debate returns to the subject of the territories each bird frequents. After accusing the Nightingale of singing in a manner that incites lecherousness, the Owl goes on to chide the songbird for being selective in regard to where she sings (ll. 527, 535).

[w]i nultu singe an o[b]er þeode,
þar hit is muchele more neode?
Ðu neauer ne singst in Irlonde,
ne þu ne cumest noȝt in Scotlonde.
Hwi nultu fare to Noreweie,
an singin men of Galeweie?
...

²⁵¹ For mapping of the nightingale’s territorial range in the British Isles see: "Nightingale." The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 3 Dec. 2014. Web. 9 Mar. 2015.
<<http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/n/nightingale/>>.

Du farest so doð an ydel wel
þat springeþ bi burue þa[t] is snel,
an let fordrue þe dune,
& flo[þ] on idel þar adune. (ll. 905-10, 917-20)

(Why won't you sing for other peoples,
Where there is much greater need?
You never sing in Ireland,
Nor do you ever go to Scotland.
Why won't you travel to Norway,
Or sing to the men of Galloway?

...
You travel like a worthless spring
That gushes forth next to a quick brook,
And leaves [the rest of] the hill to dry up,
Flowing down to no effect.)

In contrast to the Nightingale's selectiveness, the Owl makes it clear that she can be found everywhere: "in eauereuch londe ich am cuþ" ("in every land I am known") (l. 922). Shortly thereafter, the Nightingale answers these charges, defending both the intention of her song and her reason for not traveling to northern lands:

Ðat lond nis god, ne hit nis este,
ac wildernisse hit is & weste:
knarres & cludes houen[e]-tinge,
snou & hazel hom is genge.
Ðat lond is grislich & unuele,
þe men boþ wilde & unisele,
hi nabbeþ noþer griþ ne sibbe:
hi ne reccheþ hu hi libbe. (ll. 999-1006)

(That land is neither good nor pleasant,
It is but wilderness and deserted:
Rocks and crags reach up to heaven,
Snow and hail, are familiar to them.
That land is grisly and foul,
The men are wild and unhappy,
They have neither peace nor accord:
They do not understand how they live.)

In these descriptions of the birds' larger territorial inclinations is a north-south positioning that generally aligns with associations of the Norman elite and English commoner. Most of this positioning is created by the Nightingale who, through her preference for her southern home in the winter and the uselessness she assigns to the people and climate of the far north, creates a geographic scale aligned on a north-south axis in which value and worth are placed and the southern end. On this scale, the southern British Isles are the midpoint between the two extremes. When read alongside the Nightingale's aristocratic inclinations, purported relationship with King Henry, her castle, and other Norman cultural markers, her seasonal commitment to southern England evokes the governing practices of the Norman and Angevin kings who often spent far more time on the continent than in England. The Nightingale claims that the outcropping she occupies is hers (a claim that goes unchallenged by the Owl), but she also calls the southern lands to which she retreats her "erde", an Anglo-Saxon term meaning homeland or native land.²⁵² Thus, while she has established a defensible stronghold in the English countryside, the Nightingale's origins, considering present location of the birds in Portesham, are ultimately more southerly and French.²⁵³

As with their specific dwellings, the Norman and English associations that come with the territories of the birds are tempered by their alignment with actual owls and nightingales who inhabit the British Isles and their migration patterns. Both are equally English in the sense that nightingales do not seize territory from owls. The Nightingale's territorial inclinations are inseparable from her natural movements as a migratory songbird, and as the bird who argues for

²⁵² See: "†erd." 1. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

²⁵³ The connection is speculative, but in the Owl's more northerly inclinations can also be read as a reference to the northern Anglo-Saxon lords who held out against the William and Normans longer than their southern peers.

love over penance, she brings the growth and love associated with spring. She pridefully declares: “ich alle blisse mid me bringe” (“I bring all blissfulness with me”) (l. 433). The arrival of the harvest, on the other hand, hastens her departure: “Wane mon hozep of his sheue, An falew icumep on grene leue, Ich fare hom & nime leue.” (“When men harvest their sheaves, and fallowness comes to green leaves, I go home and take leave.”) (ll. 455-57). Similarly, the Owl’s Englishness does not override her natural inclinations as an owl, but works within them. Her claim that she is known in every land (l. 922) is not a claim that the English are everywhere. Instead, she is presented as the more stable of the pair in terms of occupation, and, as the image of her stump suggests, she has been in place longer. The Owl, like commoners, does not come and go seasonally; she is always there, in the heat of summer and the cold of winter.

Social Circles

The Owl’s humble stump and anchoring in the land juxtaposed with the Nightingale’s seasonal residence calls for an investigation of the broader social positioning of the birds. Just as with their individual homes and territorial inclinations, when it comes to their interactions with humans, the birds can be read as representative of two competing English identities: one based on the Anglo-Saxon commoner and the other on the aristocratic Norman. Together these characters represent a class struggle within the emerging notion of national English identity. The association of the Nightingale with the aristocracy and the Owl with commoners is, alongside their liberal and conservative Christian understandings, the most consistent aspect of their characters. At the turn of the thirteenth-century it is highly doubtful that the actual ethnic divide between Norman and English as aristocrat and commoner was as stark as it was in the decades

that followed the Conquest. As Hugh M. Thomas has discussed, the early to mid twelfth-century chroniclers Orderic Vitalis, Ælred of Rievaulx, and William of Malmesbury all make note of the Norman openness towards intermarriage with their subjects in the generations following the Conquest.²⁵⁴ What the poem demonstrates is that, even with intermarriage and the passage of time, the stereotypes of Norman elite and English commoner were familiar to the poem's original audience and could be exploited by its poet. Moreover, as characters that are composite generalizations, the Owl and the Nightingale are ideal figures to debate the merits of both common and elite lifestyles because, as abstractions, they present a stronger binary than any human debaters ever could.

What, besides her humble home, connects the Owl to the stereotypical English commoner? In the text, she repeatedly claims to have the interest of the downtrodden and less fortunate in mind, and displays a greater awareness of the social divide between rich and poor. In defending her winter singing, for example, she makes reference to the Christmas season as a time “[w]ane riche & poure, more & lasse” (“when rich and poor, greater and lesser”) sing together, highlighting a well-known instance of social leveling (l. 482). When she defends against the Nightingale's charge that her young foul their nest, she explains that all newborns, “Boþe chorles an ek aþle - / Doþ al þat in hore 3oeþe / þat hi uorleteþ in hore du3eþe” (both churls and also nobles / do [things] in their youth / that they forgo in their adulthood”) (ll. 632-34). The Nightingale too recognizes the Owl's concern for the common folk. In listing all of the disasters

²⁵⁴ See: Thomas, Hugh M. “English Women and Norman Men.” *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity 1066-C.1220*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Orderic is known to be of mixed English and Norman heritage. His father had followed Roger of Shrewsbury from Normandy to England after William I granted lands to the Earl. See: Vitalis, Orderic. “Historia Ecclesiastica.” Vol. II. *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*. Ed. Thomas Forester. London: Bohn's Antiquarian Library, 1854. 11-113.

the Owl laments, the Nightingale concludes the list by saying: “þat londfolc wurþ idorue” (“that people of the land will undergo peril”) (l. 1158). The compound subject is unambiguous and telling. In and of themselves, the Owl’s awful prognostications bode ill for rich and poor alike, but the use of the term “londfolc” (“people of a land or country”) and perhaps the reference to “cualm” (“cattle-plague”) in the preceding line make strong associations with commoners (l. 1157).²⁵⁵ The divide between wealth and poverty also colors the Owl’s attitude towards ecclesiastics. It is a small detail, but in her agreement with the Wren regarding Master Nicholas’s mistreatment at the hands of self-interested bishops, the Owl adds the detail that the bishops in question are “riche men” (“rich men”) (l. 1770).

By contrast, the Nightingale attempts to show a greater awareness of events beyond the kingdom than the Owl as part of her aristocratic posturing. She presents herself as the more cosmopolitan of the two. A third of the way into the debate she suggests to the Owl that they put their argument before the Pope for judgment: “Ich graunti þat we go to dome / Tofore þe sulfa þe Pope of Rome” (“I grant that we go to be judged before the Pope of Rome himself”) (ll. 745-6). Since the birds have already agreed that Master Nicholas will judge their argument, this offer becomes something more like namedropping than a real suggestion. As with her seasonal visitation of southern England, the Nightingale depicts herself as someone who can travel with ease from kingdom to kingdom. The Owl shows an awareness of the affairs of regional bishops, as when Master Nicholas and his past are discussed at the beginning and end of the poem, but her only real reference to events beyond the kingdom is her claim that the Nightingale does not

²⁵⁵ See: “lōnd-folk.” *Middle English Dictionary*; “landfolk.” *Oxford English Dictionary*. The compound is well-attested in OE.

travel to the northern countries. As part of the Nightingale's response to this accusation and her condemnation of northern peoples, she makes reference to an envoy from Rome who sought to correct their misdeeds: "So wile dude sum from Rome / For hom to lere gode þewes, /An for to leten hore unþewes" ("Once a certain [man] from Rome did in order to teach them good practices, and to let go their bad practices") (ll. 1016-18).²⁵⁶ Questions linger regarding the Papal mission being referenced, but this is another instance in which the Nightingale displays a knowledge of European affairs. Appealing to the Pope and having knowledge of papal missions to foreign kingdoms is not usually thought of as the business of commoners.

Though the Owl accuses her of visiting their privies, the Nightingale, to go along with her knowledge of international affairs, makes it known that she visits the bowers of lords and ladies. In doing so, she portrays her domestic status as aristocratic too:

"Ðu seist ic fleo bihinde bure.
 His is riht, the bure is ure:
 þar lauerd liggeþ & lauedi,
 ich schal heom singe & sitte bi." (ll. 957-60)

(You say I fly behind bowers.
 It is right [to do so], the bower is ours:
 Where lord and lady lie [together],
 I shall sing and sit by them.)

²⁵⁶ Several scholars have tied this reference to specific mission to Norway by Cardinal Vivian in the last quarter of the twelfth-century, but there is disagreement concerning the exact date of the mission. The reference has not proven to be a sound means of dating the poem. See: *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Ed. J. W. H. Atkins. London: Cambridge University Press, 1922. Xxxvi-xxxvii; Chapman, Raymond. "'Noreweie" and "Galeweie" in *The Owl and the Nightingale*." *The Modern Language Review* 41.4 (1946): 408-09; Hinckley, Henry Barrett. "The Date of "The Owl and the Nightingale"." *Modern Philology* 17.5 (1919): 247-58.

This accusation leads to the same story in which the Nightingale boasts that King Henry came to her aid. The association between nightingales and ill-fated courtly love is not unique to the *O&N*. A very similar version of this story can be found in Marie de France's *Lai de Laüstic*. What makes this version of the story in the *O&N* unique is the songbird's rescue by King Henry who subsequently banishes the offending husband. None of the other human characters in the story is named; so, besides gaining credibility through an established association, the Nightingale's story serves to reinforce her social position. At the beginning of the story the jealous husband is a lord and by the end he is a knight, but the point is that, here and elsewhere, Nightingale puts herself in higher social circles than the Owl (ll. 1076, 1093). The Nightingale's frequenting of the dwellings of lords and ladies is intended to stand in contrast with the Owl who earlier describes herself catching mice in barns and churches, locales associated with commoners, to keep them clean (ll. 603-612).

The Nightingale's aristocratic identity also comes to the fore at the end of the poem with the introduction of the Wren. Though the Wren is the figure who reminds the Owl and the Nightingale of their original commitment to argue before Master Nicholas, she is a songbird and an ally of the Nightingale: "Þe wranne, for heo cuþe singe, / þar com in þare morezen[i]nge / to helpe þare niȝtegale" ("The Wren, because she could sing [well], came there in the morning to help the Nightingale.") (ll. 1717-19). Along with her wisdom, the Wren has royal connections which appear to be even more substantial than the Nightingale's: "Heo miȝte speke hwar heo walde, / Touore þe king þa heo scholde." ("She could speak wherever she desired, [even] before the king if she wanted.") (ll. 1727-8). She is also vitally concerned that the Owl and the

Nightingale keep their peace and avoid dishonoring the king: “Hwat! wulle 3e þis pes tobreke,/ an do þanne [kinge] swuch schame?” (“What! Will you break this peace and dishonor the king?”) (ll. 1730-1). The Wren is a distinct character unto herself and not a doppelganger of the Nightingale; she is wise and calm, not rash. Still, her introduction makes it clear that it is the songbirds who have stronger connections with the second estate.²⁵⁷ The Owl does not have access to the elite as the Wren has and the Nightingale claims to have.

The Wren is also a reminder for readers that the differences between the belligerents are more a product of their perception than reality. When she appears at the end of debate, it is with the explicit intention of helping the Nightingale (l. 1719). However, when she arrives her concern immediately turns toward the conduct of both birds which threatens the peace of the realm. Only the narrator’s description of her wisdom separates her arrival and intervention in the debate. From her perspective, even if her sympathies are with the Nightingale, keeping the peace is more important than the triumph, martial or ethical, of either debater. She is wiser than the Owl and the Nightingale because she does not allow their differences to subvert their commonalities. The reader too, has been primed to identify this situation. For all her posturing and pretensions, the Nightingale is just as aware of the occupations and practices familiar to commoners as the Owl. For instance, she twice makes reference to the workings of mills, the less-than-flattering behavior of churlish men around women, and the daybreak singing of country priests, all familiar parts of the lives of commoners (ll. 85-6 & 775-9, 512-16, 733-5). The Nightingale is more aristocratic than the Owl but something less than an actual aristocrat. Her

²⁵⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the nightingale as a symbol of courtly love see: Shippey, Thomas A. "Listening to the Nightingale." *Comparative Literature* 22.1 (1970): 46-60.

lack of true separation from the Owl is part of what makes her so confrontational. She wants to be more different than reality allows.

The Wisdom of Alfred

With the possible exception of the Owl's claim that she "can of þe Goddspelle" ("knows of the Gospel"), "nowhere in the course of the poem," says Cartlidge, "do any of the speakers make any explicit appeal to biblical, patristic or classical authority" (l. 1209). This being the case, the famous Anglo-Saxon king, Alfred the Great (849-899), stands as the highest source of credibility for the Owl, Nightingale, and narrator alike. Alfred's significance to the poem's depiction of Englishness cannot be understated. Not only is he the most prominent named source of authority, his Englishness is pre-Conquest in origin, undisrupted by the arrival of the Norman elite. In terms of how Alfred's wisdom is used in the debate, it is easy to identify that the Owl, and the narrator to a lesser extent, use his proverbs effectively and with ease. This familiarity with a figure so central to the memory of the Anglo-Saxon past bolsters the Owl's association with the native English socially displaced by the Conquest.²⁵⁸ The Nightingale's use of proverbs attributed to Alfred, on the other hand, is best described as momentary or experimental. When it comes to quoting the king, she has far less experience and comfort than her counterpart. In purely quantitative terms, seven quotations of Alfred come from the Owl, four from the narrator, and only two from the Nightingale. Yet it is impossible to say that she does not see the value that Alfred's word holds. As I plan to demonstrate, the Owl's greater success appealing to the famous Anglo-Saxon king's wisdom should be taken as a strong indicator of her native English identity,

²⁵⁸ See p. 149 in chapter II for a detailed discussion of how King Alfred was remembered in the twelfth century.

but, despite her less effective use, the Nightingale's desire to use the same source of credibility is a clear indication that she too thinks of herself as English.

As discussed in chapter II, modern critics have agreed for some time that it is highly unlikely that any connection between the writing which came from the Anglo-Saxon king's court and the proverbs attributed to him in twelfth-century texts exists.²⁵⁹ As part of this conventional thinking, Cartlidge presents the possibility that the poet of the *O&N* "may not have had any particular written source in mind," declaring instead that "Alfred may well have served here simply as a distant archetypal figure of wisdom – an equivalent, in this respect, of Merlin, Cato or King Solomon".²⁶⁰ To an extent, this assessment can be confirmed by the absence of exact matches between the *O&N* and the *Proverbs of Alfred*, an earlier twelfth-century collection of wisdom attributed to the king. However, fairly tight thematic agreements between the proverbs in the *O&N* and those found in the *PA* do exist. The two most prominent themes involve warnings against associating with the foolish, drunk, or quarrelsome and the frailty of worldly wealth.

- 1) *O&N*: "Loke þat þu ne bo þare / þar chauling boþ & cheste ʒare: / lat sottes chide & uorþ þu go."

("Look that you be not where there is ready complaining and contention: Let sots chide and go forth by yourself.") (ll. 295-7).

PA: "Ne gabbe þu ne schotte, / ne chid þu wyþ none sotte"

("Neither gab, consort, nor chide with any sot") (Jesus College MS 29, ll. 411-12).

- 2) *O&N*: "ac eauereu[c]h þing þat eche nis, / agon schal, & al þis worldes blis."

²⁵⁹ See: Robert A. "Remembering Alfred in the Twelfth-Century." *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005; Arngart, Olaf. *The Distichs of Cato and the Proverbs of Alfred*. Lund: Gleerup, 1952.

²⁶⁰ Cartlidge, xxxix.

(“[For] everything that is not eternal, shall disappear along with all this world’s bliss.”) (ll. 1279-80).

PA: “Alle world-ayhte / shulle bi-cumen to nouhte”

(“Everything worldly shall come to nothing”) (Jesus College MS 29, ll. 382-3).

In addition to the credibility that came with Alfred’s name these two texts show that certain proverbial themes were associated with the Anglo-Saxon king. In light of the thematic overlap between the two collections of Alfred’s wisdom and the *O&N*’s concern with Englishness, I want to challenge the characterization of Alfred’s presence as distant. When the sum of the twelfth-century Alfredian proverbs are considered, it becomes apparent that attributing a proverb to the Anglo-Saxon king is not haphazard or random; those who do it well are aware of certain themes associated with him.

The Nightingale is the first to quote Alfred, but once the Owl appeals to his authority, she does so with unmatched skill and expertise, making reference to three proverbs in just over fifty lines. After the birds have agreed to appeal to Master Nicholas, the Owl counters with the claim that the Nightingale is essentially full of empty rhetoric, speaking too much, chattering and using foul language, an activity she claims she will avoid (ll. 255-93). In support of her desire to “ne chide wit þe gidie” (“not chide with the foolish”), the Owl cites two Alfredian proverbs in close thematic keeping with those found in the *PA* (l. 291):

1) “Loke þat þu ne bo þare / þar chauling boþ & cheste 3are: lat sottes chide & uorþ þu go.”

(“Look that you be not where there is ready complaining and contention: Let sots chide and go forth by yourself.”) (ll. 295-7).

2) “Þat wit þe fule haueþ imene, / ne cumeþ he neuer from him cleine.”

(“[Those] who associate with the befouled, [can] never wash themselves of them.”)
(ll. 301-2).

While still focused on the worthlessness of the Nightingale’s song, the Owl turns again to Alfred’s wisdom, saying this time:

3) “Eurich þing mai losen his godhead / mid unmeþe & mid ouerdede.”

(“Everything may lose its goodness with excess and with overuse.”) (ll. 351-2).

Later in the debate, the Owl defends her own singing with another proverb attributed to Alfred:

“Nis no man for is bare songe
lof ne w[u]rþ noʒt suþe longe:
vor þat is a forworþe man
þat bute singe noʒt ne can.” (ll. 571-4)

(“No man is, for just his song,
Loved or valued very long:
For it is a worthless man
Who cannot do nothing but sing.”)

This proverb has application in context, but does not appear to have a direct connection with the wisdom found in the *PA*. It does, however, continue to demonstrate the Owl’s superior ability to draw credibility from the king and her understanding of the themes associated with Alfredian proverbs.

Three quarters of the way through the debate the Owl definitively takes control of the king’s wisdom. Again making reference to three Alfredian proverbs within fifty lines, the Owl now quotes proverbs attributed to the king which involve temporal and spiritual foresight. In her

preceding attack, the Nightingale had accused the Owl of being a harbinger of disaster and misfortune (ll. 1075-1176). The Owl, in turn, defends her foresight into impending danger by saying that she is capable of forewarning those who will be affected. A quotation of Alfred supports her position: “Ʒef þu isihst [er] he beo icume, / his str[e]ncþe is him wel neh binume.” (“If you see someone before he has arrived, / his advantage is taken from him.”) (ll. 1225-6). Shortly thereafter, the Owl, reaffirming the ethos of the king’s word by declaring it to be a sort of gospel, delivers the poem’s final flourish of Alfredian wisdom:

Forþi seide Alfred swiþe wel,
 and his worde was Goddspel,
 þat “euereuch man, þe bet him beo,
 eauer þe bet he hine beseo:”
 “ne truste no mon to his weole
 to swiþe, þah he habbe ueole.”
 “Nis [nout] so hot þat hit nacoleþ,
 ne noȝt so hwit þat hit ne soleþ,
 ne noȝt so leof þat hit ne aloþeþ,
 ne noȝt so glad þat hit ne awroþeþ:
 ac eaueruu[c]h þing þat eche nis,
 agon schal, & al þis worldes blis.” (ll. 1269-80)

(For this reason Alfred said very well,
 And his word was gospel,
 That “every man is better off,
 The better he looks after himself:”
 “No man [should] ever trust in his wealth
 Too much, even if he has a lot.”
 “There is nothing so hot that it will not cool,
 Nothing so white it will not soiled,
 Nothing so loved it cannot be loathed,
 Nothing so pleasing it cannot cause anger:
 Everything that is not eternal,
 Shall disappear, along with all this world’s bliss.”)

While the earlier proverb had a more temporal application, the Owl here cites wisdom that emphasizes the spiritual benefits of foresight. With the ethos of Alfred’s name already established through references by both birds and the narrator, the condemnation of worldly

wealth turns this passage into a social statement. The Owl is the advocate of the commoner, not those of higher social status who enjoy worldly wealth.

The two instances in which the Nightingale quotes Alfredian wisdom are equally telling about her identity. In her first attack after the pair have decided on Master Nicholas as the judge of their debate, the Nightingale condemns the Owl's nocturnal inclinations with the implication that darkness covers her true, evil nature (ll. 215-52). As part of this accusation, she becomes the first to quote an Alfredian proverb explicitly: "for Alured King hit seide & wrot: / He schunet þat hine [vu]l wot." ("For King Alfred said and wrote: / One shuns that which he knows to be foul.") (ll. 235-236). The call to distance oneself from people and practices known to detract from a righteous lifestyle is certainly not out of keeping with Alfredian wisdom in either the *PA* or the *O&N*, but what the audience gets here is the Nightingale trying her hand at citing Alfredian wisdom rather than wielding it with force and precision. As a preface to the maxim itself, the Nightingale says that it "[i]s fele manne a-muþe imene" ("is commonly spoken by many a man") (l. 234). In other words, it is common knowledge, and when read against the Owl's extensive use of Alfredian proverbs, this bit of wisdom does not represent a significant depth of understanding. It is only a single line of common knowledge. The second time the Nightingale quotes Alfred, the wisdom is equally brief and general: "Ne mai no strengþe aþen red." ("Strength will never prevail against wisdom.") (l. 762). This short bit of wisdom supports her argument but only in the most general way, and after this point she abandons Alfred as a source of credibility. The Nightingale does not show the same depth of awareness concerning the proverbial themes

associated with the Anglo-Saxon king as the Owl does; she only recognizes the value of his authority.

What then can be said about the use of Alfredian wisdom by the Owl and the Nightingale respectively? The Owl is clearly more adept in her usage than the Nightingale. She not only quotes the famous king more than her counterpart, she adds greater detail about his position as a wise authority and her quotations show thematic consistency and awareness. As part of her deeper understanding of attributing wisdom to the king, the Owl bundles proverbs together and displays a greater ability to substantiate her position. The proverbs she quotes are longer and of greater substance than either the Nightingale uses. Both birds briefly allude to the record of Alfred's wisdom in written sources (ll. 235, 350), but in her final three quotations of Alfredian proverbs, the Owl declares the Anglo-Saxon king's word to be gospel, adding a spiritual dimension to Alfred's authority and credibility. The king's proverbs may have been transcribed, but for the Owl they are of great enough consequence that her connection with them supersedes written records. It is not a coincidence that the Nightingale ceases to wield Alfredian wisdom herself after the first third of the poem. The audience is meant to see that the Owl is better at quoting the famous king and places more value in doing so. Her control of this source contributes strongly to the Anglo-Saxon roots of her identity.

Alfred's wisdom is also the key to understanding how the narrator contributes to the Englishness of the poem. Occupying a quantitative middle ground between the Owl's expert and the Nightingale's amateur use, the narrator quotes the Anglo-Saxon king four times. It should not go without notice that each time the narrator quotes Alfred it is to describe the Nightingale's thought process. The narrator does not speak for the Nightingale per se; the songbird's inexperience in quoting the Anglo-Saxon king remains evident. However, in applying Alfredian wisdom to descriptions of the Nightingale's thinking, the same voice which described the birds as occupying the same corner of the same field at the outset of the poem reinforces the overarching Englishness of the poem and the unity the debaters themselves are so eager to deny. Though the Nightingale wields Alfred's authority less deftly than the Owl, the narrator ensures that she is not denied Englishness.

After a particularly strong speech by the Owl in which she defends her nesting arrangements, describes her duties regarding the cleaning of houses and churches used by humans, and accuses her opponent of frequenting privies, the narrator describes the Nightingale as being momentarily at a loss for words (l. 659-60). However, instead of faltering, the Nightingale is said to collect herself, and the narrator adds an Alfredian proverb that advocates perseverance in the face of danger: "Wone þe bale is alre-hecst, / þonne is þe bote alre-necst" ("When trouble is at its highest, then the solution is the nearest") (ll. 687-8). This proverb has a logical connection to what is known about the life and writing of King Alfred, and is in perfect keeping with what was known about the king who fended off the Danes from the marshes of

Sommerset.²⁶¹ The narrator also notes that this is a bit of wisdom that “nis of horte islide” (“has not slipped [from people’s] hearts”), indicating that, like the Owl, the narrator is aware of the cultural currency Alfred still has (l. 686). The narrator displays a greater level of competency than the Nightingale, but her interjection shows readers that Alfred’s wisdom transcends superficial identity markers. A repetition of the same proverb a few lines later confirms this:

Vor Alur[e]d seide, þat wel kuþe,
eure he spac mid soþe muþe:
"Wone þe bale is alre-hecst,
þanne is þe bote alre-nest." (ll. 697-700)

(For Alfred, who spoke well,
[And] always with truth words, said:
“When trouble is at its highest,
Then the solution is the nearest.”)

The advice is the same, but its inclusion further substantiates the credibility of Alfred and his wisdom.

The narrator’s use of Alfredian wisdom also highlights the fruitlessness of the birds’ anger, itself born of the differences they perceive. Coming on the heels of another a strong speech by the Owl, the narrator, as before, describes the Nightingale pausing for a moment to formulate her response. Apparently still caught up with Owl’s earlier accusation that she sings behind privies (which does not come up in the preceding speech by the Owl), the songbird waits a moment to respond in order to avoid doing so in anger and losing control (ll. 939-54). Once again, an Alfredian proverb is given as part of the narrator’s description of her thought process: “Sel[d]e

²⁶¹ Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS B: “Ond þæs on Eastran worhte Ælfred king lytle weorode geweorc æt Æþelingaigge, 7 of þam geweorce wæs winnende wiþ þone here, 7 Sumorsætena se dæl þe þærnehst wæs.”

endeð wel þe lope, / an selde plaideð wel þe wrope.” (“Seldom [do things] end well for the hateful, and seldom do the wrathful argue well.”) (ll. 943-4). Valuing wisdom over strength is consistently Alfredian in both the *O&N* and *PA*. The wisdom cited also undercuts the superiority a reader might find with either bird in particular. Despite this narrative interjection, the Nightingale mocks her opponent and predicts her failure instead of addressing her line of argumentation in any systematic way: “Lust nu hider! / Ðu shalt falle - þi wei is slider!” (“Listen here! You will fall – you are on a slippery path!”) (ll. 955-6). The Owl too is described at points as biding her time before responding to the Nightingale, but just like her opponent she is prone to hateful, angry outbursts, even after contemplating the forgoing plaint. For instance, after the Nightingale’s first volley, the Owl waits “fort hit was eve” (“until it was evening”) (l. 41). Yet when she breaks the silence it is because she can no longer abide her anger: “Ho ne miȝte no leng bileve, / Vor hire horte was so gret / Pat wel-neȝ hire fnast atschet” (“She could no longer bear it, for her heart was so heavy that her breath (i.e. objection, retort) well-night burst forth”) (ll. 42-4). The narrator again, through an interjection, forges a stronger connection between the Nightingale and Alfred’s credibility than the songbird is able to do on her own, but the advice given draws attention to the primary flaws of both birds.

The final Alfredian proverb quoted by the narrator can also be characterized as the type concerned with self-control and value of wisdom over physical strength. After the Owl finishes describing the temporary imprisonment of the Nightingale by the lord who felt the songbird had led his wife astray, her adversary is as angry as she has been at any point in the debate. According to the narrator, the Nightingale would have taken up weapons if she had been a

human, but turns again to her wit to combat the Owl (ll. 1067-74). As with the wisdom regarding perseverance in the face of trouble, the narrator repeats the same maxim with a short span, this time only two lines apart for emphasis: “Wel fr̥t þat wel specþ” (“[Those who] speak well, fight well”) (ll. 1072, 1074). After the second iteration, the advice is attributed to Alfred. The proverb supplied by the narrator, though sound advice, stands at odds with the Nightingale’s actions. She begins her response by deriding the Owl before going on to defend her actions: “Wat! Seistu þis for mine shome?” (“What! Do you say this to shame me?”) (l. 1075). In showing a second time the fundamental flaw in the birds’ approaches respectively, the narrator creates a distinction between using the king’s wisdom superficially to support a personal position and understanding what the proverbs actually advocate.

These appeals to Alfred’s authority by the narrator directly support the image of a king who valued wisdom and knowledge above all else, and when compared with birds’ appeals, the narrator creates a contrast with the Owl’s experienced and the Nightingale’s amateur use of Alfred’s wisdom. Both birds are hypocritical in that they understand Alfred’s name carries credibility, but they cannot move past that point. As the voice that addresses the audience directly, the narrator provides the benchmark by which the validity of the debaters’ arguments and methods can be assessed. The prominence of Alfredian wisdom demonstrates that this poem, the debate between Owl and the Nightingale, is explicitly concerned with Englishness. Through the perspective created by the narrator, the audience can see that when it comes to professing knowledge of the king and the Anglo-Saxon era with which he is associated, the Owl

overachievers and Nightingale underachievers. But the disparity between the equality Alfred's proverbs actually advocate and the birds' actions also shows that both are misguided.²⁶²

In this tripartite use of Alfredian wisdom, a clear depiction of several distinct English identities emerges. In the Owl the audience gets a character more closely aligned with older English identities. For her, Alfred's word is gospel; it has a spiritual aspect to it. She understands the credibility Alfred's name and wisdom carry as the quasi-mythological English king who staved off the Danes, committed himself to the English language, and was remembered as uniting Anglo-Saxon England. Moreover, the predatory bird is as adept at quoting Alfred's wisdom as a cleric would be at citing the actual gospels. Yet, her Englishness is not shown to be superior to her opponent's. She fails to understand the actual content of the proverbs and acts out of resentment and anger. By contrast, the Nightingale's quotations of Alfred are shorter, almost experimental. Her association with Norman cultural markers makes her a newcomer to Alfred's wisdom. The short, single-line proverbs she cites are fairly general and have a wide application, and she indicates that at least the first (shunning what is foul) is one of the most frequently repeated. However, despite her halting, limited use of Alfred as a resource, she recognizes his importance and cultural currency. She is not unique in doing so. The historical record is awash with examples of Angevin and Plantagenet kings fortifying their Englishness in like ways.²⁶³ The narrator's use of Alfredian wisdom, by contrast, is not as zealous as the Owl's nor is it as unpracticed as the Nightingale's. Most importantly, the narrator helps the audience to see that the

²⁶² In the *PA*, Alfred's character calls for equality between rich and poor, noble and common on several occasions. See pp. 20-3 in chapter II.

²⁶³ The marriage of Henry I and Edith (Matilda thereafter) symbolically united the Angevin bloodline with the old House of Wessex. Henry III adopted Edward the Confessor as his patron saint and named his first son after the Anglo-Saxon king.

birds are equally flawed and less different than they claim to be. The pair are well-practiced in claiming superiority, but neither is able to live out the precepts necessary to actually be so. The choice of Alfred, rather than some other authoritative figure from the past, confirms that Englishness is what is at stake in the argument.

Conclusions

If the Owl and the Nightingale were plotted on a line with Anglo-Saxon identity on the left and Norman identity on the right, the Owl would best be placed somewhere left of center and the Nightingale to the right. The Owl's character is more dependent on the image of the English commoner and the Nightingale's on the Norman overlord. Though they try to present themselves as polar opposites in terms of social identification and temperament, they are not. The imaginary scale they occupy covers the breadth of Englishness. Movement toward either pole does not change the scale of measure. The poem is concerned with two stereotypes of Englishness, not separate English and Norman identities. It is perfectly reasonable to characterize the Owl as an English commoner and the Nightingale as a Norman aristocrat as long as the reader remembers that these identities are more a product of the birds' own perception than anything else. If the poem dates to the turn of the thirteenth century, as I have argued, the pair demonstrate that a recognizable contrast could be made by positioning each identity against the other, as numerous other chronicles and romances written between the Conquest and the Hundred Years War attest. The poet of the *O&N* was neither the first nor the last writer to exploit these stereotypes. But while English and Norman cultural markers contribute significantly to opposing identities well-suited to debate correctness, the poem does not declare either to be superior. The unresolved

nature of the debate is a primary reason why attempts to declare one bird or the other the winner of the debate do not hold up over time. The lack of resolution is also why the character of Master Nicholas is as important to the poem as he ever was, regardless of whether or not he was even a real person. As far as the birds are concerned, he is an impartial judge. For the audience, it is vitally important that they never hear Master Nicholas's verdict; its value comes from its open-endedness. I can understand why critics like Atkins see the poem as representative of a great cultural synthesis, but to synthesize the differences the birds represent, the poem would need to make some sort of proposition or at least hint at how this should be done. It does not. Instead, the unresolved nature of the debate leads the collective readers of the poem to a contemplative stalemate: How do righteousness, nobility, corporeality, and spirituality align with the various expectations attendant upon higher and lower social positions? In what ways do these aspects of life resist national identification? Both debaters are flawed.

The poem does not present neat answers concerning which ideology and identity is superior, but it is certainly not without directives. The opposition the birds represent is not one that can be resolved through conflict. As it concerns this study as a whole, I want to emphasize the use of Norman elite and English commoner as competing but not conflicting stereotypes of a unified English identity in this chapter because this dynamic will change in the English literature of the coming decades. At several points, the Owl is described as wanting nothing more than to establish her superiority by means of her size and strength. In her first two responses to the Nightingale's taunts, she shows frustration that the smaller bird has fortified herself in her arboreal castle (ll. 41-54, 150-2). At the end of the debate, when the Nightingale declares she has

bested the Owl, her fellow songbirds gather around her in triumph (ll. 1655-66). The Owl interprets this gathering as an army that she will have to fight: “Hauestu . . . ibanned ferde? / an wultu, wreche, wið me fiȝte?” (“Have you assembled an army? And will you fight with me?”) (ll. 1668-9). But at each moment when it appears that a fight will break out, lawfulness is maintained. As the Wren, who is categorically more closely aligned with the Nightingale, emphatically points out, a breach of the peace dishonors not just the king but the belligerents themselves: “Hunke schal itide harm & schonde, / ȝef ȝe doȝ griȝbruche on his londe.” (“The two of you shall come to harm and shame if you break the peace in his land.”) (ll. 1733-4). The Owl and the Nightingale for all their differences do not resort to physical conflict. Instead of images of theft, usurpation, and injustice, the *O&N* draws attention to the superficiality of the birds’ identities with a framework of united Englishness. Their identities are formed in large part on Anglo-Saxon and Norman cultural markers, but these older associations are constrained by a relatively unified concept of contemporary Englishness.

Chapter IV: The Anglicization of *Boeve of Haumton*

Romance was an extremely popular narrative genre throughout the later Middle Ages, celebrated across many languages. It can be said incontrovertibly that French writers in the twelfth century were responsible for establishing its most recognizable features: the quest, the knight errant, displays of chivalrous behavior, and the stylized expressions of love which drive the genre. The widespread popularity of the genre in English literature came later and a majority of the most famous English romances have Anglo-Norman exemplars. Some, like *Havelok the Dane*, can be identified as being the product of several Anglo-Norman sources.²⁶⁴ Amid the innumerable attempts to identify what qualifies each tradition of the genre, the most constant assessment has been that English redactors produced poor or amateur versions of established, superior Anglo-Norman texts. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, twentieth-century critics such as Fernand Mossé, Dorothy Everett, W. R.J. Barron, and others had harsh words for the English adaptations of original French language romances.²⁶⁵ More recent critics, however, have noticed that while these poems rely on alliteration, a fairly limited vocabulary, and simplistic end-rhyme schemes, subtleties exist in the English tradition that deserve attention. Along with the poetics and structural patterning of ME romances, the thematic decisions made by the English poets need to be considered.

Certainly it took more skillfulness and art to develop the English romances than has been recognized in the past, but my purpose here is not simply to shift accolades from the Anglo-Norman to the English. A more effective way to understand one of the primary points of

²⁶⁴ Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury note that Geoffrei Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis* (c. 1140) and the anonymous *Lai d'Haveloc* as the most prominent sources for the English version which they date to the end of the thirteenth-century.

²⁶⁵ "Introduction", 7-23.

departure between the English and French romance centers on the unique phenomenon whereby Anglo-Norman romance poets became the first to popularize nominally English heroes whose exploits were set in the Anglo-Saxon past. If, as Rouse and other have argued, the poets behind English romance drew on what they saw as their Anglo-Saxon past to create Englishness, it stands to reason that the existence of pre-Conquest heroes in French language romances was unacceptable for English audiences. For English poets the monopoly their Anglo-Norman counterparts had on narratives about the English past had to be broken up and the stories retold by those who saw themselves as truly English.

It is no coincidence that the formation of literary Englishness changes significantly after the middle of the thirteenth-century with the appearance of the earliest English romances. The poets of the most well-known tales still drew on the pre-Conquest past, but they also construct an identity based in large part on the exclusion of French cultural markers in the revision of narratives first written in Anglo-Norman: *Boeve de Haumton*, the *Romance of Horn*, and *Lai d'havelok*. Neither the *Proverbs of Alfred* nor the *Owl and the Nightingale* rely on Anglo-Norman source materials.²⁶⁶ Seth Lerer has described the English writing of the twelfth-century as having a unique “vernacular self-consciousness”, a characterization that fits well with Turville-Petre’s declaration that writing in English during the Anglo-Norman period was an act of self-definition.²⁶⁷ However, by the latter half of the thirteenth-century, most likely as the result of the changing political climate, creating literary Englishness required more than simply using

²⁶⁶ The poet of the *O&N* is definitely aware of continental poetic conventions, but the debate is not based on an Anglo-Norman narrative.

²⁶⁷ Lerer, Seth. "The Afterlife of Old English." *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*. Ed. David Wallace. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1999. 10. Turville-Petre, Thorlac. *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. 11.

the English language: it meant reclaiming the stories of pre-Conquest English heroes from the Anglo-Norman writers who first recorded them. As a result, literary Englishness grew in complexity. The golden age of the Anglo-Saxon past still held appeal, but nominally English heroes had to be made distinguishable from their Anglo-Norman exemplars. In chapter I, I discussed the continuity I find between the OE narrative and ME romance traditions. To show how heroes with hybrid English – Anglo-Norman identities were Anglicized, this chapter returns to *Bevis of Hampton* to examine the ways in which it, in addition to being rewritten in English, was revised thematically. When exemplar and redaction are compared, a clear picture emerges. *Bevis* is not the story of Boeve rewritten in English. He is a fundamentally different character because of sharp opposition of French and English cultural markers foundational to the English text. In the English text (1) antagonists use castles to control the land, (2) the geography of the tale is rearranged so that France as a sovereign kingdom is virtually eliminated, (3) the episode in which Bevis disguises himself as Gerard the Frenchman is reworked so it is clear that French identity allows for deception, and (4) the poet asserts control over the common place, “so it is found in the French” tale to show he has a superior understanding of the story. The poet of the romance did not seek to eliminate France or the French in his rewriting, but he was keen to show the superiority of Englishness.

Control of the Land

For Corinne Saunderson: “The energy of insular romance is precisely rooted in the many kinds of cultural encounter that occurred within medieval England”.²⁶⁸ Challenges to

²⁶⁸ Saunders, Corinne. “Introduction”. *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*. Ed. Corinne Saunders. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005. 1.

sovereignty and dominion are elemental, to not just *Bevis*, but all the English romances. The *Proverbs of Alfred* advise readers how to rule justly and the Owl and the Nightingale lay claim to certain areas of the human world, but the proverbs are not a narrative and the loquacious debaters, for all their posturing, are just birds. It is true that no small part of the Nightingale's Norman coloring comes from her claim to have a castle on a rise, a Motte and Bailey stronghold. Readers, however, are aware that her castle is no more than a leafy cluster of branches. In the romances, by contrast, human contention for control of land and status frame the narrative. Saunter's observations about the centrality of cultural encounter in insular romance is well taken, but to this I want to draw attention to the importance of sovereignty. Cultural encounter in romance has to have a geography, and in the English romances castles loom large as the means by which the land is controlled.

The association between the Normans and castles is by no means unique to the *O&N*. English writing from the eleventh century through the fourteenth is awash with it. For Robert Mannyng the erection of castles was part and parcel of the conquest of William and his successors. During their campaign to bring the north under control after the Battle of Hastings, castles are first mentioned when Normans are described as coming from their "kastels & of touns" to thwart a Danish attack on York.²⁶⁹ As in the "Rime of King William", the implication is that immediately after overtaking London, William began erecting castles to secure his position.²⁷⁰ Once the Normans gain control of the land, castle building became commonplace. Toward the end of the campaign in the north, in order to atone for the damage done to the See of

²⁶⁹ Pierre de Langtoft. *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft (as illustrated and improv'd by Robert of Brunne)*. Vol. I. Trans. Thomas Wright. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866. 75. (Mannyng).

²⁷⁰ See: "The Rime of King William", Appendix B

Durham, William builds a castle as part of the restoration efforts.²⁷¹ In some ways the first descriptions of castles are deceptively inconspicuous, but references to their construction are continued through the reigns of William Rufus, and Henry I making them synonymous with Norman rule.²⁷² When William Rufus is crowned after the death of his father, “grete lordynges, erles & barounes” (great lords, earls, and barons”) rebel by seizing castles, manors, and towns.²⁷³ Later, after a challenge to the throne by his brother Roberd and arbitration by Philip, the King of France, William Rufus meets with the lords who, at least nominally, return his castles: “[h]is kastels þei him 3olde” (“they yielded his castles to him”).²⁷⁴ When Roberd challenges Henry after William Rufus’s death, castles again come into play. Roberd seizes “kastelle Arondelle” (“Castle Arondel”) in his first attempt to overthrow Henry. At another point, Henry commands a castle be “vp sette” (“set-up”) at Hastings because he anticipates that his brother’s fleet will come that way.²⁷⁵ The importance of the loss and recovery of the castles is unmistakable. They are an essential part of maintaining control over the land for the Norman kings, and for Mannyng’s readers they are a Norman imposition on the land. Dominique Battles’ study of *Sir Orfeo*, a text roughly contemporary to Mannyng’s chronicle, corroborates the idea that dwellings could be an effective marker of English and Norman identity.²⁷⁶

Battles begins her investigation of the cultural positioning and architecture associated with *Sir Orfeo* and the *Fairy King* by drawing on a body of research that makes the common

²⁷¹ Mannyng, 79.

²⁷² Mannyng mentions castles only once before the arrival of the Normans. It occurs when Suane arrives from Denmark during the reign of Elired. “Kastels suld þei bete down, kirkes suld þei brenne, / Boþe citez & tounes, þat þei mot se or ken” (43). This single reference to castles is not sufficient enough to compromise the association between the Normans and castles that is used after the Conquest.

²⁷³ Mannyng, 85.

²⁷⁴ Mannyng, 87.

²⁷⁵ Mannyng, 96.

²⁷⁶ Battles, Dominique. “*Sir Orfeo* and English Identity.” *Studies in Philology* 107.2 (2010): 179-211.

observation that the Middle English version of the Orpheus tale has stronger political overtones than other medieval versions of the story.²⁷⁷ In her reading, “the land holdings, castles, and military strategies surrounding [the loss of the queen], among other aspects of the poem, to some extent cast the central conflict between Orfeo and the Fairy King in cultural terms that suggest an awareness of the racial difference between Anglo-Saxon and Norman long after the Conquest”.²⁷⁸ Since the oldest extant version of the tale in English is found in the Auchinleck MS (1330s), the cultural awareness that Battles identifies is roughly contemporary to that which can be found in Mannyng’s writing. But whereas a good deal of Mannyng’s feelings about racial and cultural difference are overt, the poet of the English *Orfeo* works with more subtlety.²⁷⁹

In the section of her essay entitled, “Royal Residences in *Sir Orfeo*”, Battles notes that the differences between Sir Orfeo’s dwelling and that of Fairy King are not made apparent in the vocabulary used to describe them; the words, “castel”, “palays”, and “tour” are used interchangeably for both.²⁸⁰ However, the descriptions of the two dwellings stand in sharp contrast, creating an image that Mannyng’s audience would have recognized. Sir Orfeo’s dwelling can be equated with a *burh*, a fortified town or city designed to protect a community, while the Fairy King’s castle is the residence of an individual landowner.²⁸¹ Battles’ recognizes that Orfeo lives in Winchester, a “cite of noble defens” (“city of noble defense”), and later is said to be going out of *town* (as opposed to his castle) when he goes into exile (ll. 48, 236). As the

²⁷⁷ Battles cites: Edward Donald Kennedy, “Sir Orfeo as *Rex inutilis*”; A. S. G. Edwards, “Marriage, Harping and Kingship: The Unity of *Sir Orfeo*”; Andrea Pisani Babich, “The Power of the Kingdom and the Ties That Bind in *Sir Orfeo*”; and Oren Falk, “The Son of Orfeo: Kingship and Compromise in a Middle English Romance”

²⁷⁸ Battles, 179-80.

²⁷⁹ In regard to the romances for which no author is known I refer to a singular author with the acknowledgement that there may well have been multiple authors behind any particular MS for the sake of convenience.

²⁸⁰ Battles, 186.

²⁸¹ Battles, 187-8.

capital of the Kingdom of Wessex and later the whole of Anglo-Saxon England, Winchester suggests a pre-Conquest setting, though the supernatural elements of the story somewhat obscure a definitive historical setting. In Battle's estimation, Orfeo's "castle" also occupies a central spot in the city itself, an arrangement much more in keeping with position of the lord or king's hall in an Anglo-Saxon town than the Norman castle which was set apart as an individual ruler's stronghold from which control over the surrounding land was maintained. The descriptions of Orfeo's residence itself depict a modest "halle" (ll. 219, 524) and "chamber" (l. 196) which also suggest an Anglo-Saxon lord's dwelling.²⁸² As Battle reminds readers, the hall was the seat of power for local lords and kings in Germanic societies from which they would conduct business and entertain their retainers.²⁸³ Orfeo's desire to be seen by his "[e]rls & barouns" ("earls and barons") in the streets of his town supports the communal interaction between ruler and retainer suggested by the placement of the central hall.

In contrast to Orfeo's fortified town, the Fairy King's castle is remote and opulent. The isolation of the castle, which is depicted as being apart from town or city, is tied, in Battle's estimation, to the post-Conquest castle building campaign which saw a shift away from towns in favor of the countryside. Here, she cites the work of O. H. Creighton, who describes this second stage of Norman castle building as that which was associated with rural expanses such as the royal forests and deer parks created by the Normans.²⁸⁴ In addition to its location, the Fairy

²⁸² The terms used do not align with the English – Norman binary. Chamber is a French term (AN, *chambre*) roughly equivalent to bower (ME, *bour*; OE, *būr*), but as Battle emphasizes it is the arrangement of the structure which matters.

²⁸³ Innumerable examples of these functions taking place in the Anglo-Saxon hall are to be found in Old English poetry, but it is important to recognize that the image, as discussed in chapter one, was maintained overtime. *Lazamon* depicts the hall as the seat of power in his *Brut* written around the turn of the thirteenth-century.

²⁸⁴ Creighton, O. H. *Castles and Landscapes*. London: Continuum, 2002; It should be remembered that Mannyng is also concerned with the forests and parks established by the Normans depicting William Rufus as clearing Anglo-Saxon churches for their creation.

King's castle is "riche & real" ("rich and royal"), "wonder heize" ("wondrously high") (l. 356), has an "vt-mast wal" ("outermost wall") (l. 357), and is surrounded by a "diche" ("ditch") (l. 361). Being richly decorated or adorned, wondrously tall, and surrounded by ringwork (the wall generally found at the base of a castle motte) leads Battles to the conclusion that the Fairy King's castle is a motte-and bailey style castle.²⁸⁵ This castle, like Orfeo's has a hall, but more barriers (gates and walls) have to be crossed before it can be reached, and the hall itself is segmented in a hierarchical nature instead of being open.²⁸⁶ The Fairy King's castle, therefore, is the diametric opposite of Orfeo's hall and adjoining chamber in his fortified town.

Aside from the dwellings of the protagonist and antagonist, other features of *Sir Orfeo* point towards a subtle but identifiable Anglo-Saxon – Norman racial awareness. This dynamic was first uncovered by J. Burke Severs who argued that Orfeo's exile into the wilderness must come from the OE version of the tale found in King Alfred's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*.²⁸⁷ Battles expands this observation connecting Orfeo's self-imposed exile with the exile theme found in numerous Old English poems, noting that in "Old English literature, exile can also express a state of mind, not necessarily a physical condition, and both types of exile, mental and physical, come into play in *Sir Orfeo*".²⁸⁸ Like other English language romances, the tale diverges from continental exemplars in which the protagonist goes into the

²⁸⁵ The presence of multiple towers (l. 359), "butras" (buttresses, 361), and "bataild stout" (crenellation, 360) are also taken as by Battles as evidence of Norman architectural design (193).

²⁸⁶ Battles, 194.

²⁸⁷ Severs, J. Burke. "The Antecedents of Sir Orfeo." *Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh*. Ed. MacEdward Leach. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1961.

²⁸⁸ Battles, 197.

unknown to physically prove himself. “The vantage of Old English elegy,” Battles reminds readers, “remains entirely retrospective”.²⁸⁹

The Castles of *Bevis of Hampton*

Mannyng’s chronicle, *Sir Orfeo*, and even the *O&N* are not alone in their awareness of the Norman imposition on the land. *Bevis of Hampton*, participates in this movement too.²⁹⁰ Like so many Middle English romances, the earliest English version of the tale is a redaction of a text in Anglo-Norman written in the first half of the thirteenth-century.²⁹¹ *Bevis* was very popular, and given that six extant Middle English versions of the tale survive, A.C. Baugh’s comment (echoed by Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury) that readers should consider them separate romances is worth consideration.²⁹² I focus on the Auchinleck MS version (1330s) of the tale, generally acknowledged as the oldest extant English version, because it is roughly contemporary with both Mannyng’s chronicle and *Sir Orfeo*. As Turville-Petre has stated, the Auchinleck MS as a whole is concerned with defining Englishness through moral precepts worked into writing about the past. Accordingly, this early English version of *Bevis* is a fitting text to identify resistance to perceived Frenchness (“The Nation”).²⁹³

²⁸⁹ Battles, 198.

²⁹⁰ I refer exclusively to the A version of the Auchinleck MS when discussing the English romance: *Bevis of Hampton: Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*. Ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury. TEAMS Middle English Texts ed. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999. The text of *Boeve de Haumtone* I use is Judith Weiss translation of the Anglo-Norman text: “Boeve De Haumtone and Gui De Warewic.” Vol. 3. Trans. Judith Weiss. *The French of England Translation Series*. Ed. Thelma Fenster and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008.

²⁹¹ Most likely there were intermediate texts, but the point is that a relationship between the *Boeve* and *Bevis* exists.

²⁹² Baugh, A. C. “The Making of Beves of Hampton.” *Bibliographic Studies in Honor of Rudolf Hirsch*. Eds. William Miller and Thomas Waldman. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974. 34.

²⁹³ Turville-Petre, Thorlac. “Englishness in the Auchinleck Manuscript.” *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

The relationship between the Anglo-Norman tale and the earliest known English version is multifaceted.²⁹⁴ The narrator of the Auchinleck *Bevis* is hyper-aware of the relationship his text has with its French language antecedents, making reference to “the Frensche tale” no less than five times. Medieval romance is certainly a self-referential genre and credibility was the object of any good medieval auctor, but no other preceding English romance gives as much attention to this convention as *Bevis*. Ivana Djordjević has studied the process of translation the “composer” of the English romance adopted in working with the Anglo-Norman, *Boeve de Haumtone*, but in order to focus on the act of translation itself she does not discuss the “substantial omissions, lengthy interpolations and bold rewritings” that accompany passages that are translated in a more traditional sense. Djordjević, however, does recognize that these broader emendations are “obviously motivated by conscious agendas” which could be “aesthetic or ideological or both”.²⁹⁵ It is among these broader thematic changes where I propose a good deal of the text’s Englishness is derived, through an ideological agenda that manifests itself as aesthetic and thematic alteration.

As in the texts mentioned above, Englishness in *Bevis of Hampton* is created in large part through the binary opposition of French and English as loosely based concepts. Often this meant that the process of Anglicizing necessarily became one of deleting and replacing details that could be seen as detracting from the hero’s Englishness. Readily apparent emendations of this sort include the deletion of numerous conspicuously Norman / French characters such as the

²⁹⁴ The Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* is the oldest extant version of the story and dates from the early thirteenth-century. There are three French chansons de geste of Beuve d’Hanstone which also date to the thirteenth-century, but these are thought to come after the Anglo-Norman text.

²⁹⁵ Djordjević, Ivana. “From *Boeve* to *Bevis*: The Translator at Work” *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition*. Eds. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008. 67.

retainers, Brise de Bretoe, Glos de Gloucester, and Claris of Leicester in Edgar's English court and the references to Boeve and his companions as French in the last quarter of the Anglo-Norman text.²⁹⁶ In the other direction, episodes were added that directly contributed to the hero's Englishness such as Bevis's dragon slaying and his calling upon St. George for aid (l. 2817). Along with these unmistakable markers of English identity, more subtle additions were made which systematically Anglicize the romance's hero.²⁹⁷ The association between castles as a symbol of domination and oppression is not initially the most noticeable way the text rebukes Norman authority, but it is an appropriate point-of-entry for understanding how the Anglicized *Bevis of Hampton* stands apart from its Anglo-Norman forbearer.

The Auchinleck *Bevis* makes use of the same opposition of Norman castle and Anglo-Saxon hall to contrast the hero and his supporters with their enemies Battles identified in *Sir Orfeo*. The opposition, admittedly, is not as neat in *Bevis* because it is a much more complex tale incorporating more than the simple opposition of two kings. The protagonists and antagonists in *Bevis* span a number of political and social ranks. Neither Bevis nor his father, Sir Guy, are ever the King of England, nor are they explicitly associated with a specific dwelling. Obvious chronological inconsistencies exist, but in all probability the aim was to portray Guy and Bevis as Anglo-Saxon lords.²⁹⁸ In the opening lines of the English poem, Sir Guy is said to be the "wardi" ("guardian") of all of Hamptonsire (ll. 10-12). Later, when Bevis turns his attention

²⁹⁶ The opening line of Turville-Petre's chapter, "The Nation" go a long way towards explaining the important of exclusion in the English text" "Defining a nation necessarily involves exclusion. What does not belong needs to be identified in order to safeguard the unity of what is part of the nation." (1)

²⁹⁷ Like most critics, I am of the opinion that there are an unknowable number of rewritings between the Anglo-Norman versions of the story and the English version in the Auchinleck MS. Therefore, references to the *author* of the English text should not be understood as a statement about singular authorship.

²⁹⁸ For a nuanced discussion of the differences between an Anglo-Saxon and a post-Conquest lord see: John, Eric. "The Age of Edgar." *The Anglo-Saxons*. Ed. James Campbell. London: Penguin, 1991.

back toward his homeland he seeks to rescue his “eritage”, or his *heritage* in the sense of patrimony. Once he has defeated his stepfather, Devon, the lesser lords of the shire make Bevis their “lord and sire / And dede him feuté and omage, / Ase hit was lawe and right usage” (“lord and sire / making fealty and homage to him, / as it was lawful and right [to do]”) (ll. 3468-3470). Though the title of *lord* as it is used in the text has some overtones of post-Anglo-Saxon feudalism, it is important that the English Bevis is raised to his new position through the right of law, a detail not included in *Boeve* where the citizens of Hampton ask instead for the hero’s mercy and present him with treasure (165).²⁹⁹ This is, significantly, the first real action ascribed to the populace of Hampton in the romance and fits neatly with Battles’s description of Anglo-Saxon *burh* as a civic unit that was public in nature, “instituted by royal prerogative, [and] designed to benefit the community at large”.³⁰⁰ The inclusion of the citizens of Hampton at this point and their endorsement of Bevis under law can only be an attempt on the part of the English writer to make Bevis less of a conqueror and more of a rightful heir.

The similarity to *Sir Orfeo* regarding the places of dwelling emerges in full when the castles and estates of Bevis’s various foes are described. Once Bevis has overcome Josian’s first suitor, Brademond, the defeated king offers to relinquish all he controls. This includes, “[s]exti cites with castel tour” (“sixty cities with a castle tower”) (l. 1045). Like the Fairy King’s castle, Brademond’s is strategically positioned, not in a city, but among the territory he controls, and the primary feature of his castle is its tower. Later, when the deceived King Ermin turns Bevis over to Brademond, readers learn that this same castle also has a keep below the “the castle right” or

²⁹⁹ References to *Boeve de Haumtone* are by stanza number.

³⁰⁰ Battles, 187.

the castle proper (l. 1650). In this part of the structure is a chamber which sits under a watchtower, and Brademond's personal chambers are presumably also part of this structure (l. 1658). Whether or not the tower comprises the whole of the structure or is simply its primary feature irrelevant. The important thing is that complexity and defensive nature of the castle makes it a Norman style structure, functioning as a means of controlling the surrounding land and existing as a visible reminder of domination.

King Yvor, as well, is master of at least one Norman style castle. When Ascopard betrays Bevis and delivers Josian to his former master, Yvor sends them both to a castle that is set, "[i]n wilderness upon a plaine" ("in the wilderness on a plane") (l. 3707). The text does say that this castle, where Ascopard will serve as Josian's jailor, is not Ivor's only residence, but this does not detract from its function as the stronghold of an antagonist. The placement and function of the castle clearly identify it as being Norman in character. The castle sits, "fif mile and more" ("more than five miles") apart from the king's "paleise" ("palace") (l. 3702). This remote positioning is described by Battles and Creighton as a distinctive feature of Norman castle building. Instead of being a part of a defense system for the kingdom like the Anglo-Saxon *burh*, the Norman castle served the function of controlling "the land and its population" who existed at a social, political, and literal distance from their overlords.³⁰¹ The poet gives less attention to the specific features to Ivor's castles than Brademond's, but its placement in the wilderness directly supports the association between Bevis's various foes and defensive castles.

³⁰¹ Battles, 189.

At points, the association between castles and antagonists does not initially appear to hold up, but a close reading reveals the consistency of the association. The castle in Hamptonshire from which Bevis's mother and his stepfather, Devon, operate appears to be a Norman style castle. Details about it are scattered throughout the romance, but when assembled a familiar image emerges. When Bevis's messenger approaches to tell Devon that the hero's army is a division of French mercenaries, he meets a porter at the castle gate (l. 2977). After Bevis, disguised as Gerard, gains the audience of the emperor, the two sit down to supper in what can only be a central hall (l. 2981-2982). Before Bevis leaves to meet his tutor, Saber, all one hundred of his men are armed by Devon, implying that this castle has some sort of armory (l. 3013). The emperor is also able to provide Bevis with a ship, meaning that wherever this castle is in Hamptonshire it cannot be far from the shore (l. 3017). This is not the same geographic placement as the other enemy strongholds in the tale, but a castle by the shore is just as effective in terms of controlling people and territory as a castle in a rural area. A final detail to be deduced about Devon's castle is that it must have some sort of tower or towers. In the English version, the description of Bevis's mother throwing herself from her tower after hearing the news of her husband's demise is missing (165). However, instead of getting the news from a messenger, she is able to witness Devon's death firsthand before mysteriously falling and breaking her neck (l. 3460-3462). That Bevis's mother can see her husband on the Isle of Wight is problematic, yet even if he were dispatched just outside the castle she would still need the full height of a tower to witness the event. Through the inclusion of at least one tower, the imposing vertical dimensions of a Norman castle are maintained.

These details prove that a Norman-style castle is to be found in Bevis's Hamptonshire, a detail that might appear to compromise Bevis's Englishness. This is, however, not the case. In the Auchinleck *Bevis* the castle dynamic works along protagonist – antagonist division. This is also the case in *Sir Orfeo*, but in *Bevis* the multiplicity of castles makes simple territorial separation impossible. With no small significance, the castle in Bevis's English homeland is associated with neither his father nor him and, presumably, when his son, Miles, inherits the throne of all England through marriage to King Edgar's daughter, he will not be occupying this castle either. The protagonists and rightful governors of the land do not operate out of Norman-style castles to control the populace. Their power and authority, as seen in the detail where the lords of Hamptonshire confirm Bevis as their lord, is derived from their ability to protect those people who have pledged to serve them. Fittingly, though Bevis is able to rescue his patrimony, he is the lord of Hampton for only a relatively short time in part because he spends so little time there with the people of the land.

A second castle that also calls for explanation is Saber's castle on the Isle of Wight. In *Boeve* this castle is explicitly said to have been built on a rock by the sea (140). Saber's castle in *Bevis* is not described as being right on the coast, but no details suggest that it has been moved dramatically inland. When Bevis and his men arrive, his old master can see them before the ship draws to land, and the messenger Bevis sends back to Devon to tell him he has been tricked is described only as traveling by water (ll. 3047, 3064, 3080) The building also seems to be constructed of stone since Devon's strategy is to besiege it (l. 3350, 3356). Finally, the castle has at least one main tower (l. 3357). Given all the features that Saber's castle shares with Devon's, is the dwelling of Bevis's longest-standing supporter an exception? Yes and No. To a large

extent, Saber's castle symbolically mirrors Devon's castle. Each sits on opposing sides of the Solent at the water's edge. Though Hampshire comprises a larger territory, Saber's castle is of comparable strength to Devon's. After all, he has been able to resist retaliation from the emperor and Bevis's mother for many years while Bevis has been abroad. Given this symbolic arrangement of the two strongholds, to separate Saber from his castle would have required more dramatic changes to the storyline than the English redactor was prepared to make.³⁰² Saber's castle figures most prominently into the episode where he and Bevis unite to retake the hero's ancestral lands. Yet, in addition to maintaining this pivotal episode, the English version still attempts to downplay some of the more Norman aspects of Sabaoth's castle in *Boeve*. Before the battle in the earlier tale, Sabaoth is described as fortifying his castle in anticipation of the upcoming confrontation: "his walls raised, and his moat repaired" (155). The raising of the castle's outer walls is very much a feature identified with Norman castle building, and, ignoring the possible incongruity of repairing the moat of a castle built on a rock, the second feature is also Norman.³⁰³ These are small details, but once edited out Saber's castle becomes a more integral part of the defeat of Devon and less of a defensive, controlling feature in its own right.³⁰⁴

³⁰² The battle between Devon, his army from Germany, and the king of Scotland with Bevis, Saber, and Ascopard seems to cap the original core of what became a longer romance as Weiss and others believe, making it one of the more stable parts of the tale across its many variations (8). See: Weiss, Judith. "The Date of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*." *Medium Aevum* 55 (1986): 237-241.

³⁰³ See: Toy, Sidney. *Castles: Their Construction and History*. New York: Dover, 1985. 52-65.

³⁰⁴ Readers familiar with tale will also remember that Bevis promises to build Arondel a castle if he prevails in the race held after Bevis is reconciled with King Edgar. The significance of the episode may be tied to original Norman patrons of the romance, but in neither tale are any details of the castle given. In this sense, Arondel's castle does not clearly fit into the castle dynamic as it exists in the rest of the tale.

The Blank Spot

Enough of the castle-antagonist association can be found in the English *Bevis* that the audience of *Sir Orfeo* would have recognized the motif, but this is hardly the sum of the moves that transformed Boeve into Bevis.³⁰⁵ Besides the fact that audiences who identified themselves as English may have felt a different attachment to the hero - he is at least nominally one of them by being a lord during the reign of King Edgar - other aspects of the earlier Anglo-Norman text presented tailor-made opportunities for later English writers to anglicize Boeve. Most of these possibilities arise in connection with vague or problematic passages that could be rewritten in such a way that Bevis's Englishness could be fortified. Perhaps the most consistent ambiguity throughout the romance as a whole involves the role of France as a country. In *Boeve*, a strong French cultural presence is to be found throughout the narrative: the hero and his comrades are referred to as Frenchmen several times in the second half of the romance, numerous characters have conspicuously French names, Boeve disguises himself as a Frenchman named Gerard, and Nimes receives a brief reference. Yet, as a territory and a sovereign nation, France ends up being a large blank spot on what is otherwise an expansive, detailed mapping of the known world. Boeve's maternal grandfather is the King of Scotland; his stepfather is the Emperor of Germany, his uncle is the Bishop of Cologne in Lombardy, Sabaoth's son, Terri, becomes the king of Seville through marriage; several visits are made to Rome, and his adventures in the East take him to virtually all of the known kingdoms there, but France as political entity or destination is virtually missing. A full explanation of this absence in the Anglo-Norman tale is not necessary here, but it is not hard to imagine why an Anglo-Norman patron of this text writing in the first half of the thirteenth-century after Philip II wrested virtually all of Normandy from the English

³⁰⁵ Both texts are part of the Auchinleck MS and can, therefore, be assigned roughly the same audience.

(1204) might avoid mention of Norman and French locals. Whatever the reason, this conspicuous absence in the geography of romance presented an opportunity for the English writer.

In the hands of an English poet, France's absence is magnified by an expansion in the mapping of the world Bevis occupies, making England's primary rival even less visible. In some instances this is done through subtle detail and emendation. The adventures of Bevis and Terri following Josian's capture provide a fitting example. After entrusting Bevis's newborn sons to a forester and a fisherman, the pair find themselves in a fight that brings them into the company of the Lady of Cville. In *Boeve* the fight is a full-blown battle that begins the day after they meet and lodge with the previously unmentioned Gerner, possibly the lord of the city. Curiously, no explanation is given as to why the battle occurs in the Anglo-Norman text. During the fighting Boeve catches the eye of the lady of the town who, after several attempts, gains an audience with him. A clipped exchange between the two follows as Boeve tries to explain that he is married but has recently lost his wife in a forest. To this the lady replies: "That's an extraordinary story. My lord, marry me" (177). A deal is struck and the lady agrees to wait seven years to see if Josian returns, but, unlike the English version, Boeve actually marries the lady.³⁰⁶ This episode is ambiguous and problematic and by the time Auchinleck MS is written several changes have been made.

³⁰⁶ Since the two do not engage in a carnal relationship the implied dissolution of the marriage when Josian returns rests on a lack of consummation.

The most noticeable change made to the scene is that Bevis does not marry the lady. She agrees instead that Bevis will be her “lord in clene manere” (“lord in clean conduct”) unless Josian fails to reappear after seven years (l. 3836). Lord can be a synonym for husband, but the exclusion of a reference to marriage changes the character of the agreement. Less noticeable, but equally important, is the way in which the English version of the tale reworks the geography of the episode. Instead of having Bevis, Terri, and Josian wander through an unnamed forest, the trio now proceed through “Fraunce and through Normondie” (“through France and Normandy”) in what stands as the only mention of either in the entire poem (l. 3618). France in the English text is an untamed wilderness where the traitor Ascopard the Saracens accompanying him are allowed to roam freely (ll. 3642-3643). It becomes the location of perhaps the most tragic episode in the whole romance, the capture of Josian. The lawlessness of France is also contrasted with civility of Spain. To help remedy the ambiguous location of Civile the name of the city is taken out and is replaced with a scene in which Bevis and Terri arm themselves with “faire queintise” (“elegant clothing, armor”) that includes gold of “Tolede” (“Toledo”) (ll. 3782, 3785). The fight is now a prestigious tournament instead of an unexplained battle and includes knights from the far corners of the world including a prince of “Asie” (“Asia”) and “Nuby” (“Nubia”) expanding the geography of the episode (ll. 3805, 3816). Bevis not only emerges from this episode morally superior to Boeve, but French territory in its single appearance is depicted as a lawless place of betrayal where heathens go about as they please.

The geography of the romance is reworked and expanded in other episodes as well, continually making the diminished status of France even more conspicuous. When Bevis, in the guise of a palmer after escaping from his imprisonment, approaches King Yvor, he gives the king a long list of counties, cities, and regions that he has supposedly visited in his travels. The list covers virtually the entirety of the known world and again excludes France:

Sire, ich come fro Jurisalem
Fro Nazareth and fro Bedlem
Emauns castel and Synaie;
Ynde, Erop, and Asie,
Egippte, Gese, and Babilonie,
Tars, Sesile and Sesasonie,
In Fris, in Sodeine and in Tire,
In Aufrik and in mani empire, (ll. 2261-2268)

(Sir, I come from Jerusalem
From Nazareth and from Bethlehem
Emmaus castle in Sinai;
India, Europe, and Asia,
Egypt, Greece, and Babylonia,
Tarsus, Sicily, and Saxony,
From Frisia, Sidon, and Tyre,
From Africa and many empires)

It is more than a little curious that Frisia and Saxony are mentioned while France is not. For an audience attentive to Bevis's Englishness, the European countries mentioned virtually encircle France: England to the north-west, Frisia to the north, Saxony to the east, Africa to the south, and Sicily to the southeast. In the Anglo-Norman tale *Boeve*, also in disguise, provides a list of countries too, but these are only eastern and southern kingdoms: Nubia, Carthage, Esclavia (Slavonia in Croatia), Dry Tree (Hebron), Barbary, and Macedonia (123). This attention to the geography of the romance also serves to support subtler alterations later in the narrative. In *Boeve* Sabaoth catches up to Josian and her captors near "St Gilles", thought by Weiss to be St Gilles-du-Gard near Nimes (175). In *Bevis*, Saber travels through the "Grikische se"

(“Adriatic”) before saving Josian on the Greek mainland (ll. 3859, 3899). As with the episode in Spain, geographic manipulation shifts attention away from France. The dramatic recovery of Josian is awarded to another country and France is again left in obscurity.

Gerard the Frenchman

A full understanding of the French – English oppositions made in the tale would not be complete without addressing the episode in which Bevis disguises himself as a Frenchman. In the Anglo-Norman romance the episode is far briefer than in the English. Prior to sailing for England, Boeve turns to the knights his uncle, the Bishop of Cologne, has given him and tells them that before meeting with Sabaoth he will speak with his stepfather and trick him (144). After their crossing Boeve and his knights proceed to the court of Hampton and are met by the emperor, Doun (Devin), who asks Boeve where he is from and what he is called. Boeve replies that he is from Dygon in France and is named Gerraud.³⁰⁷ Once finding out that “Gerraud” and his men are mercenaries, Doun asks if the company would be willing to capture Sabaoth. Boeve agrees and requests only that Doun restock his ship. After reuniting with Sabaoth, Boeve calls for a knight, named Karfu in this version, to return to Hampton and reveal to Doun that he has been tricked and will be hanged (156).

This particular episode attracted more than a little attention by its English redactor because it has been both consolidated and expanded. In *Boeve* the arrival of the hero and the sending of the messenger are separated by the entire story of Count Miles’s ill-fated attempt to marry Josian which continues for one hundred and fifty lines. In the English text the tale is not

³⁰⁷ Weiss and Flutre believe this to be Dijon (63).

divided. Further, while it is clear that Boeve's intention to trick his uncle was premeditated, in *Bevis* the plan to trick Devon is considerably more elaborate and detailed. Just before leaving for Hampton, Bevis calls for a brave volunteer willing to go ahead to Devon's court to tell him that they are a band of mercenaries from France under the command of Gerraud. Immediately, a man comes forth who, "renabliche kouthe Frensch speke" ("knew French reasonably well") to volunteer (l. 2974). Once Bevis gains an audience with Devon he does not just ask that his ship be restocked, he asks for arms for his companions, horses, and additional men (who will later be thrown overboard). Upon revealing himself to Saber, Bevis immediately asks for another volunteer to return to Hampton to reveal to Devon that he is not Gerraud and not French. As Gerard, Bevis exploits Devon to a much greater degree taking weapons, horses, and men, the primary implements of medieval warfare.

The English poet reformats the episode and makes several changes to reinforce the English – French opposition. First, Gerard is now not from Dijon, a specific locale in France, he is just French; a change which associates his identity with the country more generally. He is a stereotype. Second, the English romance emphasizes language in ways the Anglo-Norman does not. When describing his plan to his knights, Bevis says that the emperor must be told that they will fight "[a]c ever, an erneste and rage" ("ever yet, with [the] intensity and madness") of any that "[e]ver speketh Frensche laungage" ("[have] ever spoken [the] French language") (ll. 2968-2969).³⁰⁸ Bevis is making a direct association between those who speak French and violence. The language does not make an association with martial prowess. This is reserved for the English hero. As described above, the volunteer who steps forward is said to have a knowledge of

³⁰⁸ ME the primary connotation of rage is madness or insanity. Anger is secondary. See: "rage." 1. *Middle English Dictionary*. University of Michigan.

French, presumably to aid in his disguise (l. 2974). This emphasis on language is important because it is a primary indicator of identity. Underscoring the attention to language is Bevis's instruction to the messenger he sends back to Devon. The messenger is to tell the Emperor that the mercenary soldier is not named Gerard and is not a French knight (l. 3066). Language is a large part of the disguise Bevis uses to dupe Devon because the latter, like the audience, makes an easy association between language and identity. When Bevis reveals himself to Saber, he symbolically sheds not only his disguising name, but his disguising nationality.

The sum of these changes makes a very specific association. When Bevis, the English hero, needs to lie and deceive to a violent end he does so in the guise of a Frenchman, a move in keeping with the multitude of other ways the text systematically eschews the Frenchness of its source. In the Anglo-Norman, Boeve also desires to trick his stepfather, but his disguise as Gerraud of Dijon forms a small part of a more modest overall scheme and considerably less emphasis is put on Gerraud's Frenchness; the character has a regional identity. In *Bevis* considerably more attention is given the putting on and taking off of the hero's French disguise which is formed, in part, by the associations of language. Bevis's disguises are a motif in the tale that enable him to do things he cannot do as himself. The episode in which he becomes Gerard is not the only time that he tells an untruth. Before sending the hero to Brademond's court, King Ermin asks Bevis to leave his sword, Morgelai, and his horse, Arondel, both inseparable parts of his identity from the time he matures until his death. When he meets Terri on the road to Brademond's court, Bevis withholds his name and identifies himself as a clerk who to "scole yede" ("school travels") (l. 1325). He continues the deception telling Saber's son that the young Englishman, Bevis, has been hanged (l. 1308). When he reunites with Josian after his

imprisonment, he approaches her in the guise of a palmer and tells her that Bevis is at home in England, another lie (ll. 2051, 2137). Important to see in these three episodes is that for Bevis to lie he has to become something other than himself. Arguably, his misleading of Terri and Josian are for the good of those for whom he has concern. To some extent his deception protects both, but under the guise of a Frenchman he carries out a violent deception, a detail that could not have escaped the notice of an English audience.

So Hit is Founde in Frenshe Tale

The most conspicuous part of the English – French binary are the narrative intrusions that say, “So hit is founde in Frenshe tale”, “the Frensch seth”, and other variants of this reference (ll. 888, 3643). Traditionally, these references to earlier versions of the tale have been understood as a fairly straightforward appeal to credibility, reminding readers, in the words of Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury, that “medieval writers held written authority in high esteem”.³⁰⁹ This is true, but as noted earlier, the Auchinleck MS *Bevis* makes more use of these references than most romances, giving special attention to a French version of the tale. In a text that seeks to define Englishness in part by rejecting markers of Frenchness, a direct appeal to a French source can appear problematic and calls for explanation.

References to the “book” as the source of the immediate author’s writing is a well-established convention, and the poet of the Auchinleck *Bevis* draws more attention to his source text than any other English romance poet. In addition to the five references to a French source

³⁰⁹ Herzman, Drake, and Salisbury, 333. As noted in chapter I, evidence abounds for the authority of oral tradition as well. See: chapter I: pp. 6-14.

behind the present text, two references to the “romounce” (“romance”) are made and five to simply the “bok” (“book”). The French tale, the romance, and the book are likely all the same source, but this is debatable. As meta commentary, the extensive use of this convention both draws attention to the role of Bevis’s story as part of the genre and continually reinforces the poet’s credibility. But at the same time, these references are also formulaic and serve to transition between couplets and scenes. The first two references to the French tale are almost exactly the same: “And hew hem alle to pices smale: / So hit is fonde in Frensche tale.” (“And hewed them all to pieces small: / as it is found in [the] French tale.”) (ll. 887-888), “And bet hire al to pises smale, / As hit is fonde in Frensche tale.” (“ And beat her all to pieces small, / as it si found in [the] French tale.”) (ll. 15165-1566). Likewise, references to the “bok” (“book”) are always coupled with the verb “tok” (“took”). At the level of poetic arrangement, a number of these references make use of the established convention to transition between scenes.

Considerations of ethnicity and nationality, however, are still an inextricable part of the references made to the French romance. In understanding how these references affect the Englishness developed by the poem generally, the recommendation of Robert Allen Rouse regarding identity formation in the text is of great value. Rouse comments that, in light of way Bevis seems to be more at home in the East than in his native England and the “troublesome hybrid nature of his identity during his life [, he] can be read as representing the internal tensions and external anxieties that were important concerns for the nascent fantasy of English identity during the Middle Ages”. Rouse therefore cautions readers to “be careful not to ascribe to the medieval English national identity portrayed in Middle English romances such as *Bevis* the monolithic homogeneity that we have come to expect from the forms of nationalism prevalent in

the modern age”.³¹⁰ This is a statement that challenges Turville-Petre’s declaration in the opening of *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity* that the differences between medieval and modern notions of nationality are peripheral, but is supported by the differences between the Anglo-Norman *Boeve* and the English *Bevis*. The Anglicizing of *Boeve* was not dependent on a completely cohesive idea of England as the political state, nor could it be. As the foregoing discussion about the architectural divide between the protagonists and the antagonists as well as the mapping of *Bevis*’s world shows, the aim of the writer behind the Auchinleck *Bevis* was to draw a contrast between French and English but never to erase the French; to do this would have been a virtual impossibility. Despite all of attention to English identity by the Auchinleck text’s poet, readers familiar with the history of the English language quickly notice the number of French loan words with which the audience of the text must have been familiar. These are terms of post-Conquest feudalism like fealty, homage, and service. Given the impossibility of expunging all the French elements of the romance, I agree that these references are indeed an appeal to the credibility that only the established version of the tale could provide. Still, when read alongside *Boeve de Haumtone*, the acknowledgement of French authority in *Bevis of Hampton* represents a careful attempt to control these appeals.

None of the five references to the French romance in *Bevis* present a straightforward agreement with the French version. In each case a significant change has been made in order to make the hero stronger or an enemy more formidable. The first reference is made following the episode when *Bevis* slays the attackers who ambush him after he kills the man-eating boar which has been plaguing Ermonie. This is a significant episode because it shows the hero’s command

³¹⁰ Rouse, Robert Allen. "For King and Country? The Tension between National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*." *A Companion to Bevis of Hampton*. Eds. Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008. 126.

over the natural world (the boar), his superiority as a knight, and the envy of the hero within Ermonie which will eventually lead to his imprisonment.³¹¹ In *Boeve* the incident is considerably less dramatic. The attack is made by only ten foresters (four of whom escape) instead of a steward of the king and a whole division of twenty-four knights (ll. 842). The second episode that incorporates a reference to the French tale comes when Bevis is bitten and scared by a venomous adder in Brademond's prison. Again, the incident has been significantly reworked in the English version. The adder is now a flying adder that attacks the hero as soon as he is thrown into prison. Even though Bevis is able to kill the snake, the bite he sustains makes him swoon (ll. 1545 – 1565). In the Anglo-Norman text, Boeve has been imprisoned for some time before being bitten, which, in that episode, takes place while he is asleep (94-96). When read together the English text does not allow for an interpretation in which Bevis could be described as vulnerable or letting his guard down. The next reference comes when King Grander is killed. In *Bevis* the detail that the hero also killed seven heathen kings before jumping into the sea is added. In *Boeve* the additional kings are missing and the body of water is just a river (1779-1785).³¹² The next time the French version is referenced takes place when Ascopard and a company of Saracens find Josian alone in the woods after giving birth and capture her. In the Anglo-Norman tale, the treacherous giant commands a whole company of one hundred knights (172). Only forty knights are present in the English version, and instead of just ferrying Josian away the heathen knights beat her with their swords (l. 3642-3651). The changes make the heathens a stealthy band instead of a formal division, and they are obviously much crueler. This scene is also part of the move

³¹¹ For most editors too, this episode wraps-up the first section of the text that covers the adolescence of the hero.

³¹² The reworking of this whole episode is problematic in the Auchinleck MS. Instead of being killed by the hero in combat, Brademond is simply left on the cliff watching Bevis swim away before he disappears from the story.

described earlier in which the geography of the scene is rearranged so that Josian's abduction takes place in France.

The fifth and final reference to the French tale stands as the most significant divergence from the Anglo-Norman version. At the end of the English text, King Edgar is on the verge of restoring Bevis's lands a second time when his steward declares Bevis to be an outlaw. The hero arms himself and pursues the dissenting steward into Cheapside with six knights. A fight breaks out in the streets and numerous Londoners join in the fight, apparently swayed by the steward's public accusation that Bevis is a traitor and a thief (l. 4374). Eventually all of the knights accompanying Bevis are killed, and though he stays alive word gets back to his sons, Guy and Miles, in Putney that he has been killed. The brothers leave immediately, intent on avenging their father. When they arrive at the gates of the city they find many men "Wel iarmed to the teth, / So the Frensche bok us seth" ("completely armed to the teeth, as the French book tells us") who are ready to fend off the brothers (ll. 4485-4487). The hero and his sons prevail, but the reason this reference to the French tale is so curious is because this is an episode unique to the English versions of the story. In *Boeve*, King Edgar learns that the hero is approaching and immediately decides to give his daughter to Boeve's son, Miles, in order avoid war. The fighting in the streets of London is not a part of this version.

Why, then, would four incidents that have been significantly altered and one incident which is totally invented be credited to a French source? There are two easy, but incomplete answers. First, the English redactor could have been working from a French language source that had these specific details and wanted to show knowledge of that text. This would represent the

well-established, traditional relationship between source and redaction in medieval literature, but in this case it is unlikely given the numerous alterations between the Anglo-Norman text and the Auchinleck MS that address ambiguities or revise passages in which Bevis could be interpreted as weak or having poor judgment. Regarding the final reference, critics for a long time have noticed that the battle in the streets of London almost certainly displays a firsthand knowledge of the city's geography as well as unique features of the area such as the London Stone and the community of immigrants from Lombardy (ll. 4495-4500). The switch to first person pronouns in this passage also gives at least the impression of a shared experience with the audience: "So the Frensche bok us seth" ("So the French book tells us") (l. 4486); "Betwene Bowe and Londen ston, / That time stod us never on" ("Between Bow and [the] London Stone, / none withstood us that time") (ll. 4495-6). A second easy answer is that the author of the English tale did not work directly from any French version of the tale and only had a secondhand knowledge of Bevis's story, possibly through oral circulation and reception. This is more plausible but with the evidence available would be impossible to prove. With either explanation, though, an important phenomenon gets missed.

When the poet of the Auchinleck *Bevis of Hampton* makes reference to the "French tale" he does so using a ventriloquist's voice. I do not believe that the poet is directly citing any specific French language source. Some version of the tale from the Anglo-Norman tradition informs the English text, but the specific references made to the French tale correspond to episodes have been heavily edited or do not exist at all. This is not a unique move in fourteenth-century literature. The *Pearl*-poet proclaims to be retelling the story of Sir Gawain and Green

Knight as he “in toun herde” (“heard in town”) (l. 31).³¹³ In his introduction to *Troilus and Criseyde*, Stephen A. Barney note a shift from an “allegorical to a pseudo-historical mode of representation” in Chaucer’s writing. As the Father of English Poetry moved from predominantly French to Italian sources he “freely alter[ed]; augmenting and contracting his sources so much that the poems [were] essentially new”.³¹⁴ Chaucer is no more citing Publius Lollius Maximus, the first-century associate of Horace, in *T&C* than the *Bevis*-poet is his “French tale”. The unknown poet of the early fourteenth-century romance possess only a fraction of Chaucer’s poetic dexterity, but he too positions himself as an “expert in the subject” of his narrative.³¹⁵ In alluding to an unknown “French book,” he is able to manipulate the originally Anglo-Norman tale in a way that he could not if he were actually referencing specific details from a text in that tradition. In a redaction that seeks to assert its Englishness in so many other ways, a distinct advantage is created in having complete control over what the “Frensche bok us seth” (l. 4486). Pairing revised passages with references to the French book also has the effect of making the French language tradition acknowledge the prowess of the revised and Anglicized *Bevis*. The ambiguity of the earlier passages has been purged and *Bevis* possess greater martial prowess than *Boeve*. By revising the textual history of the romance, the English poet is able to make the Anglo-Norman poet or poets who shaped the narrative acknowledge and approve of his thoroughly English *Bevis*.

³¹³ See: Andrew, Malcolm, and Ronald Waldron, eds. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1978.

³¹⁴ Barney, Stephen A. Introduction. “Troilus and Criseyde.” *The Riverside Chaucer*. Benson, Larry Dean, ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 471.

³¹⁵ Barney, 472.

Conclusions

The most prominent non-English antagonists in *Bevis of Hampton*, like *King Horn*, are Saracens from the East that fall neatly into the established Christian – Muslim divide. However, the formation of Englishness in the Auchinleck *Bevis*, like *Sir Orfeo* and Mannyng's chronicle, is dependent on an opposition to cultural markers that are antithetically French. In the chronicle, it is specifically the Normans who do not share the values and noble past of the true English. In *Sir Orfeo* a more subtle, but still identifiable, coloring of the Fairy King and his dwelling creates a resistance to the most conspicuous visible sign of the Norman Conquest. *Bevis of Hampton* relies on the association between antagonists and castle strongholds as well, but this romance goes further, Anglicizing its hero by erasing markers of French identity: excluding France as a kingdom, amplifying and altering the Gerraud disguise of the Anglo-Norman text to create the scheming, duplicitous alter-ego Gerard the Frenchman, and ventriloquizing French sources. The fictitious French book referenced in the English text supports Rouse's idea that national identity, while growing in importance, was significantly less fixed in the thirteenth century than it is today. Still, the Englishness of *Bevis* is constructed in large part through the consistent opposition of English and French cultural markers. It is true that writers have a limited amount of control over their audience, but the popularity of *Bevis's* story in English can be taken as an attestation that audiences who identified themselves as English were receptive to writing in which the opposition of French and English identities was foundational.

Chapter V: “Pe Inglis in seruage”: The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Kings in Robert Mannyng’s Chronicle

As the romances that make up the Matter of England demonstrate, the inclusive English identity of the *Proverbs* did not survive the thirteenth-century. When compared with earlier depictions of literary Englishness, such as those found in the *Owl and the Nightingale* and the *Proverbs*, the romances present a markedly different perspective on English character. In these narratives, set in pre-Conquest England, the relationship between English identity and French or Norman identity is considerably more hostile. Despite the chronological incongruity, antagonists are put in castles, heroes are purged of anything that could be interpreted as un-English, and foundational concerns about invasion are woven into romances of Anglo-Norman origin. The English Bevis is a fundamentally different character than his Anglo-Norman predecessor because he has been excised from the sphere of Anglo-Norman romance. Romance, however, is not the only genre in which English writers sought to correct Anglo-Norman source materials. After the middle of the thirteenth-century the Normans and the French become increasing antagonistic in English language chronicles as well. Like their contemporaries who wrote narrative poetry, chroniclers too were at pains to purge their history and historical figures of their Anglo-Norman shading.

In her introduction to the collection of essays, *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, Corinne Saunders describes cultural encounter as a primary feature of the

romance genre.³¹⁶ The same characterization can be applied to medieval histories.³¹⁷ Among the many things “cultural encounter” encompasses, Saunders focuses on literary traditions, the stories and tales of a given culture, and the literary forms: linguistic and grammatical conventions, as well as narrative perspectives. The difficulty with thinking about romances or histories as cultural encounters is that it is easy to miss or downplay how the collision of cultures resolves or resists resolution over time. When two or more cultures occupy the same space, conceptually, physically, and chronologically, the amalgamation is an infinitely complex process which, arguably, never reaches complete stasis. The social and political circumstances which made the *O&N* and the *Proverbs* popular at the turn of the thirteenth century were considerably different from those in which the *Bevis*-poet and Robert Mannyng of Brunne wrote in the early fourteenth century. Mannyng, writing more than a century after the poet of the *O&N*, is also motivated by a desire to portray Englishness. However, he leaves no ambiguity in his chronicle of English history as to who is in the right and who is not. The English in his narrative are a people betrayed and bereft, placed in the yoke of thralldom by the Normans and their ancestors. His condemnation of the Normans is noticeably more direct and forceful than the artful emendations of the *Bevis*-poet.

Mannyng’s account, however, is not simply a recitation of established English history from the perspective of a writer with English sympathies. It effectively reclaims the narrative of dispossessed people from Anglo-Norman writers. Writing in the second quarter of the twelfth-

³¹⁶ See: Saunders, Corinne. Introduction. *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*. Ed. Corinne Saunders. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005. 1-9.

³¹⁷ Saunders notes that romances and histories often informed each other across genre, but the investigations in the study, as the title indicates, focus on the romance genre with only brief references to contemporary chronicles.

century for Anglo-Norman patrons, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* portrays the British as a people overcome by their enemies because they have lost the favor of God.³¹⁸ At the end of the text, overcome by the invading Saxons, King Cadwallader is forced to retreat to Britany with the remainder of the British to await the time when they will be able to reclaim the land they forfeited.³¹⁹ Through Geoffrey's narrative, the Norman elite could make a claim to the throne of England which, according to the text, had been unjustly stolen by the Saxons.³²⁰ Within a generation Geoffrey's history was translated from Latin into Anglo-Norman by the court poet Robert Wace, and both texts continued to influence interpretations of English history through the fourteenth-century. Mannyng was certainly familiar with this established narrative because it is the foundation of his source text, Peter Langtoft's Anglo-Norman chronicle.

For all its extensive revisions and interpolations, Mannyng's chronicle does not create a parallel version of Geoffrey's history with Anglo-Saxon characters mirroring British ones. No exact English equivalent of Arthur is to be found. However, he does more than any English writer before him to fit the Anglo-Saxons of the past and the English of his day into the mold

³¹⁸ The example from which Geoffrey was working is the story of the Israelites exile in Babylon. See: Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin Books, 1966.

³¹⁹ At his leaving, the last of the British Kings declares: "The vengeance of His might lies heavily upon us, even to the point of uprooting us from our native soil- we whom the Romans, long ago, the Scots, the Picts and the Saxons, in their cunning treachery, were unable to exterminate." (281).

³²⁰ G. A Loud has discussed how, like the British, the Normans thought themselves to be descended from the Trojans as well:

"But though they must have been at least partially conscious of the artificiality of the literary concept, nonetheless the idea of common descent as a key element in the identity of the *gens* was so well-established as to be fundamental in the Normans' own conception of themselves. The legend of Norman descent, via the Danes and Dacians, from the Trojans, promulgated by Dudo, copied by William of Jumièges, and accepted to a greater or lesser extent by their successors, was no isolated creation of the early eleventh century."

See: Loud, G A. "The Gens Normannorum - myth or reality." *Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1981, Anglo-Norman Studies IV*. Ed. R A. Brown. Woodbridge: Boydell, 1982. 104-16.

Geoffrey created for the British.³²¹ Because of the sinful, careless actions of misguided leaders, the Anglo-Saxons of his chronicle, like the British in Geoffrey's *HRB*, are overcome by their enemies and the loss of God's favor. In its chronological ordering of events Mannyng's work varies only minutely from Langtoft's, but the gradual, grand ascension of Anglo-Saxons under the guidance of the House of Wessex, followed by the dramatic dissolution of the Anglo-Saxon political state, recreates Geoffrey's depiction of British rule. Lewis Thorpe has characterized Geoffrey's "essential inspiration" as a "patriotic one".³²² The same can be said about Mannyng's chronicle. A key difference between Mannyng's review of English kingship and those of William of Malmesbury, John of Worcester, or Robert of Gloucester is that he does not synthesize a resolution between the old Anglo-Saxon aristocracy and the Normans. The "true" English of his day still suffer under the control of those directly descended from the Norman conquerors.

Writing roughly fifty years before Mannyng, Robert of Gloucester's English language chronicle also connects the successive invasions suffered by the peoples of the British Isles with their inability to stay in a right relationship with the Almighty. Unlike Manning, however, Robert does not declare the English descendants of the Anglo-Saxons as the true inhabitants of the land swindled by the Normans. His language is telling of this difference. After the customary recounting the plenitude of island's flora and fauna, he turns to the people who have inhabited the British Isles by saying:

³²¹ Mannyng shows his awareness of the narrative Geoffrey created by having Ine of Wessex subdue an uprising by Ini and Iuore who are said to be cousins of the departed Cadwallader at the beginning of his narrative.

³²² Thorpe, 9.

Engolond haþ ibe ynome and iworred ylome.
 First þoru grete lords þe emperoures of Rome,
 þat fozte and wonne Engolond, and þat lond nome.
 Seþþe þoru Picardes and Scottes, þat to Engolond come,
 þat worrede and destruiode, ac al clene ne wonne it nozt.
 Seþþe þoru Engliſche and Saxones, þat hider were ybrouzt
 þoru Brutones forto helpe hem, and seþþe hem ouercome
 þe Brytones, þat them hyderbrouzte, & þat lond hem binome.
 Seþþe haþ Engolond ybe ywerred ylome
 Of þe folc of Denemark, þat beþ nozt zet wel ysome
 þat ofte wonne Engolond, and hulde yt by mayſtrie.
 þe fyfte tyme won Engolond þo folc of Normandie,
 þat among vs woneþ zet, and ſchulleþ euer mo³²³

(England has frequently been taken and warred [upon]. Frist through great lords, the emperors of Rome, who fought and won England, and took the land. After them the Picts and Scots, came to England and fought and destroyed so that the [clean of heart] could not hold it. After them the English and Saxons, who were brought here by the Britons to help, overcame those who had brought them and took the land. After this England was frequently warred [upon] by the Danish (with whom there is not yet accord) that often won England and held it through mastery. England was conquered a fifth time by the people of Normandy, who dwell yet among us and shall ever more.)

The use of the plural pronoun in the last line notwithstanding, it is England, not the English people, the descendants of the Anglo-Saxons, that has been made to suffer these five waves of invaders. Equally valid arguments can be made here as to whether Robert is treating the physical landscape and its inhabitants together as one or referring to the pre-Roman British inhabitants in a roundabout way. The point is that, unlike Mannyng’s text where the “Inglis . . . lyue in seruage” (“English live in servitude”) under the Normans in “þralle” (“bondage”) and were previously “so fre” (“so free”), Robert simply notes that the Normans are the most recent foreigners to establish themselves.³²⁴ Rulers as diverse as Vortiger (Vortigern), Arthur, and Aylfred (Æðelred) are all

³²³ Gloucester, Robert. *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle*. Ed. Thomas Hearne. Oxford: Samuel Bagster, 1810. 3.

³²⁴ Pierre de Langtoft. *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft (as illustrated and improv'd by Robert of Brunne)*. Vol. I. Trans. Thomas Wright. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866. 8. In citing Mannyng I use the pagination established by Thomas Hearne in 1725 for ease of reference.

described as “our” king. This sentiment is reiterated just before reign of William the Conqueror begins:

Muche aþ he sorwe ybe ofte in Engeland,
As 3e mowe here & er yhure & vnderstonde,
Of mony batayle þat aþ ybe, & þat men þat lond nome,
Verst, as 3e abbeþ yhurd, þe emperours of Rome.
Supþe Saxons & Englysse myd batayles stronge.
Atte laste hey of Normandy, þat maystrus bet 3ut here.³²⁵

(Sorrow has often been in England, as you might hear, have heard and understand, from the many battles that have been [here] and the men that took the land. First, as you have heard, the emperors of Rome and afterwards [the] Saxons and English with strong battles. Finally, those of Normandy, who are masters here still.)

As in the forgoing passage it is ambiguously England that has suffered in the successive waves of invasion which have come ashore since the days of Imperial Rome. The English people (here the Saxons and English as two branches of the same force) do not get any special attention as the rightful holders of the land. Their most significant contributions are the English language and their resistance of the Danes.³²⁶

In adapting the established narrative of the history of the isles for his purposes, Mannyng gives special treatment to the Anglo-Saxons and their English descendants. Before turning to the evidence of this in his chronicle, however, it will be helpful to discuss some of the reasons why depictions of English identity so consistently hold up Norman and French identities as the antitheses of Englishness. In a roundabout way, the appeal of pitting these identities against each is revealing of the socio-political repositioning taking place in the opening decades of the

³²⁵ Gloucester, 356-7.

³²⁶ “Now ne kouþe þe Britones non Englisch ywys, / Ac þe Saxones speche it was, & þorw hem come yt ys.” (“Now, as I understand, the British knew no English, but it was the Saxon’s speech, and through them it is [here].”) (125-6)

fourteenth-century. However, I am more interested in showing that English identity-formation in literature was a process more complex and nuanced than terms like *remembering* and *borrowing* indicate, and that the context in which Mannyng wrote was significantly different from earlier depictions of English identity penned while Anglo-Norman was the prestige vernacular. Nevertheless, a brief review will help elucidate the points I want to make about how foundational the assignment of blame and juxtaposition of English and Norman are in Mannyng's chronicle.

The simplest, most widely-accepted answer as to why the derision of French identity was so central to English identity-formation involves the growing sense of what is today called nationhood in both kingdoms. In other words, the roots of the growing antagonism was political: territorial holding and language were more prominent markers of national identity than in either the Anglo-Saxon era (unified for a relatively short amount of time) or during any of the preceding Anglo-Norman dynasties. The Norman, Angevin, and Plantagenet kings, with varying degrees of success, all tried to hold land and command loyalty on both sides of the channel. These cross-channel interests connected the legacy of the Norman Conquest with the political and military endeavors of successive royal dynasties. As discussed in chapter three, the poet of the *Owl and the Nightingale* has the Norman nightingale proclaim a preference for southern lands, a reflection of the fact that numerous kings from William I through Edward III spent more time abroad than in England. Today it might come as surprise that English writers in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries still thought of the county's aristocratic overlords as being foreigners who held the masses in servitude, but substantial evidence exists that these sentiments were very much at the forefront of social commentary and popular literature two hundred fifty years after the Conquest.

The feeling of being wrongfully conquered on the part of writers who identified with the Anglo-Saxons may yet have even deeper roots. As both Robert of Gloucester and Mannyng's chronicles attest, English writers were also keenly aware that the English political state had been under the domination of a foreign power even before William the Bastard became William the Conqueror. As Elaine Treharne discusses in *Living Through Conquest*, the loss of sovereignty by the House of Wessex in the beginning of the eleventh century to Sweyn Forkbeard and his son Cnut was as significant as the Norman Conquest fifty years later in establishing a pattern of foreign conquest that would come to characterize eleventh century England.³²⁷ From a modern vantage point, the reign of Cnut and his sons Harold and Harthacnut can appear to be an uncontentious, brief interruption to rule of the House of Wessex. But as Treharne points out, the conquest of 1016 and Cnut's reign was, "founded on violence, [and] had major consequences for the Anglo-Saxon political state", and the benign rule that has sometimes been credited to Cnut is a modern creation based, erroneously, on his effectiveness as a ruler.³²⁸ Concerning English attitudes toward the ruling class, Treharne's point is that the Norman invasion was not initially seen as the definitive end of the Anglo-Saxon political state in the decades that followed the death of Harold Godwinson. For all that was known at the time, William and his sons could have held the throne for a few decades as Cnut as his sons did before the Anglo-Saxon line retook the throne. Obviously this is not what happened, and later English writers had quite a different perspective from those writing in the decades following the Conquest. Even for writers with less patriotic fervor than Mannyng, the eleventh century marked the end of uncompromised English

³²⁷ Treharne, Elaine. *Living Through Conquest*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012. 9-28.

³²⁸ Treharne, 8, 10.

rule. From the turn of the thirteenth century onwards, the dissolution of the Anglo-Saxon political state was permanent and, in hindsight, inevitable.

Once the permanency of the Conquest had been cemented by the reigns of William I and his sons William II and Henry I, those who wrote about English history had to confront the social dynamic left by the arrival of the Normans. Some writers contrived a kind of dynastic synthesis. Robert Allen Rouse has characterized William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester's understanding of Anglo-Saxon England as, "a once-virtuous kingdom that had fallen from God's grace, and which had been healed by Henry I's marriage to Edith . . . niece of Edgar Atheling and grand-niece of Edward the Confessor".³²⁹ Gloucester takes this perspective as well: "And of þe ryzte kunde of Engelond, kyng Henry to wyue nome . . . Mold þe gode queen" ("And from the right lineage of England, King Henry took [his] wife, Mold, the good queen").³³⁰ For Mannyng, however, the trauma of the Conquest had not healed so neatly. His English adaptation of Peter Langtoft's chronicle is not representative of all English attitudes concerning the Norman Conquest, but it is revealing of an understanding in which he was not alone among writers in the early fourteenth century. He is at pains, as Turville-Petre points out, to define Englishness at all turns.³³¹ Mannyng's revisions of the section of the text covering the Anglo-Saxon era, the twenty-six years of Danish rule, and the arrival of the Normans makes it clear that from his vantage point the blame for contemporary woe should be placed on treasonous actions among the nobility at the end of Anglo-Saxon era and the unjust seizure of the English throne by foreign

³²⁹ Rouse, Robert A. *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005. 11.

³³⁰ Gloucester, 353.

³³¹ The traditional date for Mannyng's chronicle is the 1330s and his familiarity with the reign of Edward III seems to corroborate that dating. Turville-Petre gives 1338 as the date of the chronicle's completion.

rulers. Instead of exploring identity through fairly specific topical and ethical concerns as the poet of the *O&N* does, Mannyng's Englishness is tied directly to concerns over ethnicity and sovereignty.

Mannyng's Anglo-Saxon Kingship

Like most medieval writers, Robert Mannyng understood his world to be in decline, but in his chronicle England's current unfortunate state is the result of two very temporal forces: the moral and political weakness of the later Anglo-Saxon kings and the unjust conquest of the Normans. Unlike the poets of English romance who subtly and artfully adapted and Anglicized Anglo-Norman romances about English knights and kings, Mannyng's harsh words for the Normans sit right at the surface of his narrative. Still, his chronicle does not derive the entirety of its pathos from the evil of the Normans alone. Concerning the story of the English, the emotional draw comes from Mannyng's subtle imitation of the dynastic rise and downfall established by Geoffrey of Monmouth for the British. By framing the story of the Anglo-Saxon kings in the same manner as the British kings in the established narrative, Mannyng is able to emphasize the connection between his English speaking audience and the pre-Conquest rulers of the land, just as Geoffrey provided an opportunity for his Normans patrons to see themselves as rightful descendants of the British driven out by the Saxons. At the climax of the Anglo-Saxon era Mannyng juxtaposes saintly, righteous kings, potential saviors of the state, with unfit, treacherous kings who irreparably weaken England.

After rehearsing the Trojan heritage of the British as established by Geoffrey, the first English king Mannyng turns his attention to Ine of Wessex. He implies that Ine had control over most of England with the exception of Essex, and offers him as a prototype for later rulers explicitly granted the title, King of England.³³² In his treatment of Ine's reign, Mannyng also establishes a pattern of description that he recursively employs to heap accolades on successive generations of Anglo-Saxon rulers. Throughout this portion of the chronicle good, effective kings are defined by a specific set of traits. They maintain peace among their retainers, show prowess in battle, are righteous before God, and secure the succession. Ine, as the prototypical Anglo-Saxon king, is said to have prevailed in twenty battles: “[f]ulle wele he ȝemed þe lond fro wo & fro wehere” (“he ably guarded the land from woe and danger”).³³³ In the face of the death of his son, Adellus, the righteous king goes on a pilgrimage to Rome before naming his cousin, Adelard, as his successor. Adelard is described in similarly grand fashion: “He ne suffred neuere wrath to be aboue / Bituex kyng baron, þat ne he mad ay loue” (“He was never wrathful to get ahead / Among king [and] baron was naught but love”). Succession for the English crown begins as an easily assured matter. Even when Adelard's throne passes to a cousin instead of son, his disappointment does not prohibit him in his duty to secure the succession: “Tille Uttred his kosyn, a stiffe knyght in stoure, / He gaf his kyngdom, & died in langoure” (“To Uttred his cousin, a strong knight in combat, / he gave his kingdom, and died in longing”) (6). Together these early kings establish the Good King paradigm by which succeeding kings will be measured.

³³² “Bot Ine had þe Inglis euerilkon at wille, / Bot Segbert of Estsex at home left stille” (3).

³³³ Mannyng, 6.

From a modern perspective, Mannyng's early history of English kingship is selective at best, he ignores numerous kings outside of the line of Wessex as well as the many political and military missteps of those he does include, but his point is not to catalogue reigns as much as it is to paint a particular picture of Anglo-Saxon kingship. After opening with the reigns of Ine and Adelard, Mannyng establishes the dynamic that will support his entire treatment of the Anglo-Saxon kings: the juxtaposition of good kings with bad ones. No ambiguous depictions of kingship are to be found in Mannyng's chronicle; a king is one or the other. As the kings of Wessex consolidate power and bring the rest of the English kingdoms under their control, Mannyng catalogues the reigns of numerous effective leaders. However, a glaring exception in this ascension stands out. With Sibriht (Sigeberht of Wessex, 756-757) Mannyng provides a bit of foreshadowing that, at this early point, has the effect of drawing the image of the Good King template into sharper focus. Sibriht is said to have, "luffed wele þe Bretons, þat com tille ille fyn" ("loved the British who come to bad ends") and, as a result, he draws the ire of his retainers so, "þat noiþer 3ong ne olde / Wald vnto him bowe, ne bliþeli of him holde" (that neither young nor old / would bow to him, nor hold him in high regard"). Accordingly, Sibriht is said to have been chased from the land and, in two short lines, is neatly replaced with Kynewolf who, "lufed þe Inglis , & wele with þam stode" ("loved the English and stood with them").³³⁴ Sibriht's secures the paradigms Mannyng wants to establish for good, righteous and bad, misguided kings. When compared with other accounts of Sigeberht's reign, Mannyng's editorial agenda emerges. In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Sebright is deprived of his kingdom by Cynewulf with the consent of the other West Saxon leaders for unspecified "unryhtum dędum" ("unrighteous deeds").³³⁵ In Langtoft's chronicle Sibert is also an "amys al Brettoun" ("friend to the British"), but his

³³⁴ Mannyng, 9.

³³⁵ All quotations from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MS A (hereafter ASC) cited by year unless otherwise specified. 755.

successor Kynnulphe's primary appeal is that he is of "estait de real nacioun" ("royal race").³³⁶ The two kings are not fully opposed in allegiance until Mannyng makes an explicit contrast between the king who favors the Britons and one who favors the English. For Mannyng, good kings hold peace between their retainers and secure their succession. Bad kings are self-interested, treacherously consort with foreigners (those who do not speak English), and create division among the English kingdoms and their retainers.

In his build-up to the zenith of Anglo-Saxon kingship, Mannyng continues the pattern he established with the early rulers; but, beginning with the reign of Egabriht (Egbert of Wessex, 802-839), attacks from the Danish "paiens" play an increasingly prominent role and take the place of the British as the race against which Englishness is defined. Throughout the chronicle the Danish are a formidable foe, but the English have God on their side. In Langtoft, the dynamic is present but much less dramatic. During an early incursion, the Danish "tuz awaynt hidour" ("were all struck with terror") at the sign of the cross the English carried in the name of the Savior. In Mannyng, by contrast, the cross is carried "In wirschip of Jhesu, & of his passion," and the pagans are so afraid that they lose their strength and vigor ("foyson"). Another instance indicative of Mannyng's molding of the pre-Conquest English as a chosen people of God can be seen when the collective forces under Egabriht, "hewe on þe paiens, as men of wille gode" ("cut down the pagans as men of good will")³³⁷. In Langtoft this line reads: "Se medlent des espeyes sur les renayez" ("They fight with their swords against the infidels").³³⁸ The difference between

³³⁶ All quotations from and translations of Langtoft's chronicle: *The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*. Vol. I. Trans. Thomas Wright. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866. 290.

³³⁷ Mannyng, 17.

³³⁸ Langtoft, 302-3.

fighting with swords and cutting down pagans or being terrified as opposed to being so afraid that all strength is lost might seem minor, but together these details emphasize and expand the moral and martial superiority of the English in Mannyng's interpretation. As they rise to power, the English fight with the favor of the Almighty.

Though several kings to this point in the chronicle have come close to being the king of all England (cf. Ine), Mannyng first grants the title to Adelwolf (Æthelwulf of Wessex, 839-858) amid the escalating presence of the Danes. Concurrent with the consolidation of English rule during Adelwolf's reign, Mannyng reemphasizes the good king paradigm, emphasizing duty to countrymen and God:

At Chestre sette his parlement, his tenantz þerto bede.
He sent for alle þe kynges, fro Berwik vnto Kent,
& þei with fulle gode wille alle vnto him went,
& mad tille him feaute, withouten any chest,
& cleymed him for þer chefe of West & of Est,
Of North & of South in length & in brede,
Fro Kent vntille Berwik, als lastes alle þat thede.
He was first of Inglond, þat gaf God his tīpe
Of Isshue of bestes, of londes or of liþe.³³⁹

(At Chester he held his parliament calling his tenants thereto.
He sent for all the kings from Berwick to Kent,
And they, with good will, all went to him,
And made fealty to him without argument,
And proclaimed him their chief: West and East,
North and South, in length and breadth,
From Kent to Berwick, all that realm finally [together].
He was the first of England that gave God His tithē:
The best issue of lands and people.)

³³⁹ Mannyng, 19.

Like Ine, Adelwolf goes on pilgrimage to Rome, gives generously to the church, keeps the peace among his retainers, and secures a successor.³⁴⁰ Duplicating pattern seen in the early Wessex line, Mannyng juxtaposes the laudable Adelwolf with a bad king. His son, Edbalde (Æthelbald of Wessex, 858-860), is a weak ruler whose reign echoes that of Sibriht: “[o]f his body was no force, non for him wild murne” (“He was weak in body and none would mourn him”), and after his father’s death, “His stepmoder Juwet he weddid agayn þe lawe” (“His stepmother Juwet he wedded against the law”)³⁴¹. In wedding his stepmother, Edbalde puts a foreigner (she is daughter of the French king) before the interests of the English people and retainers. This is an action put him in the company of Sibriht who loved the British more than the English. One holds a French woman in high regard and the other the British, but both forsake the interests of their English retainers for those of foreigners. Through Adelwolf and Edbalde, the templates for both a good and bad kings are renewed with dramatic intensity. At this point in the narrative, however, the stage is a united England not just Wessex.

King Alfred (871-899) plays the central role in both the fight against the omnipresent Danes and Mannyng’s molding of the Anglo-Saxon era. He enjoys more accolades than any king before him. He is a “gode clerk” (“good scholar”), more “douhty” (“doughty”) of body than anyone else in England, and after his brother’s death he is described as rescuing the crown.³⁴² Alfred does not replicate the role of any of the figures from Geoffrey’s history, but, in much the same manner as the great British kings (Brutus, Belinus, and Arthur), his character is

³⁴⁰ On his way back from Rome, Adelwolf stops to speak with the King of France. The daughter of the King, Juwet, becomes smitten with the English king and she returns with him to England where she becomes, presumably, his second wife (20). It is important to recognize here that Adelwolf is not consorting with enemies in violation of the established paradigm. He deals with the King of France and equals and takes his daughter in marriage without any concessions.

³⁴¹ Mannyng, 20.

³⁴² Mannyng, 24.

significantly more developed than those that precede him. In Mannyng's portrait of Alfred readers can clearly see the momentous ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy. After fighting twenty-two battles within a year of being crowned, Alfred's first pivotal fight against the Danes comes against not the Guthrum of historical record, but the Viking leader Rollo (Hrolf Ragnvaldsson, 846-932) the first Duke of Normandy. Following Langtoft, Mannyng has Rollo undergo a conversion experience after fighting against Alfred, a duplication of the conversion ascribed to just Guthrum in the *ASC*.³⁴³ Whether the inclusion of Rollo in Alfred's reign was the invention of Langtoft or one of the Anglo-Norman writer's sources, the pairing of the founder of the Norman line with Alfred was evidently distasteful for Mannyng who maintains a level of enmity between the two and makes it very clear that God is ultimately responsible for Rollo's conversion. The Norman-to-be does not convert through his own volition. Mannyng's careful reworking of Alfred's interaction Rollo also allows him to establish a connection between the Danes of the ninth and tenth centuries with tyrannous Norman kings who would later plague the English.

When he enters Mannyng's text, Rollo is said to have "had envie" ("had envy") because of Alfred's success against the Danes. Like Guthrum, Rollo is eventually converted to Christianity after his battles with Alfred and takes the name, Roberd, but Mannyng's reconfiguration of the scene, by way of details added to and omitted from Langtoft's account, make Rollo more explicitly part of the succession of foreign enemies that challenge English authority. In Langtoft's account the two famous kings are described more as noble adversaries than enemies.

³⁴³ Rollo is mentioned in MS E of the *ASC* for the year 876 but only as point of reference in Latin: *Rollo cum suis Normanniam penetrauit et regnavit annis .liiii.*

A la guere s'en vount, Elfrede á ly se lye,
Ilokes entre les deus fu mainte beal coup d'espeye.
Deus par sa vertue á Rollo taunt otrrye,
Ke pur l'amour Elfrede de batesme ly prie.
Rollo est Cristien, et de amour se affye
Al bon rays Alfrede; or sunt ly deus amye.³⁴⁴

(They go to the war, Alfred clings to him,
There between the two was many a fine sword blow.
God through his virtue has shown so much grace to Rollo,
That for the love of Alfred he asks him for baptism.
Rollo is now Christian, and sets his love
On good king Alfred; now are the two friends.)

In addition to being envious of Alfred's success in Mannyng's retelling, Rollo is distanced from the English king in other ways. Instead of being fond friends in the English chronicle, God's grace intervenes in their fighting to bring the two together temporarily:

God, þorgh his grace, þat day so wele sped,
þat Rollo asked Cristendom at þe kyng Alfred.
þorgh þat Cristendom, þo, þat were so wroþe,
At haly kirke's fayth alle on were boþe.³⁴⁵

(God, through His grace, achieved much that day,
So that Rollo asked to be christened by King Alfred.
Through that christening, those that were so wroth,
By the faith of the Holy Church were united.)

After his christening, Rollo, now Roberd, prepares his navy and crosses the channel to conquer Normandy.³⁴⁶ He is then given the title of duke after he subdues the land "þorgh conquest of hond" ("through conquest of hand-to-hand [fighting]").³⁴⁷ This emphasis on conquest is purposeful and meant to foreshadow the actions of the Normans who descend from Rollo. The specific term is repeated twice in consecutive lines and has not be used by Mannyng since

³⁴⁴ Langtoft, 316.

³⁴⁵ Mannyng, 24.

³⁴⁶ "Now is Roberd Cristen, he dightes his nauie, / & ferde ouer þe see, & conquerd Normundie" (25).

³⁴⁷ Mannyng, 25.

William I was described as one of the five sorrows to have beset England at the outset of the text. Neither as a title or verb is the term used in conjunction with any Anglo-Saxon ruler. In Langtoft, Rollo takes Normandy while Alfred remains (“demort”) in England.³⁴⁸ By contrast, Mannyng has Roberd leave Alfred in England: “Alfrid he left stille here in Ingland” (“He left Alfred in here in England”). In the Anglo-Norman telling it is ambiguous as to whether or not Alfred chose to stay behind. In Mannyng’s hands, Roberd explicitly leaves by his own desire. The former foreign threat has been converted, but his conquest of Normandy makes readers question the sincerity of his conversion. Perhaps most telling about Mannyng’s treatment of the encounter is that the two are never described as becoming friends or coming to an understanding through love. It may or may not have been Langtoft’s ultimate purpose to present Rollo and Alfred as equals, but whatever the case, this is clearly an episode in which Mannyng saw an opportunity for disambiguation and a chance to begin to move English and Norman identities into position against each other.

Alfred’s son, Edward (Edward the Elder, 899-924), fits Mannyng’s mold of a good king to perfection: his coronation is confirmed by all the lords of the land; the whole of England is unquestionably his, he secures the succession (he and his wife have six sons), he fights off the Danes, maintains peace with the Scots and Welsh, and holds the admiration of the people.³⁴⁹ Following Edward, Athelstan (Æthelstan, 924-939) again fits the good king paradigm, but here Mannyng reintroduces the figure of the treacherous noble (as seen in Sibriht and Edbalde). Edwyn, the brother of the king, is said to have fallen in with “wiknes men” (“wicked men”) and,

³⁴⁸ Langtoft, 317.

³⁴⁹ Mannyng, 27-8.

as a result, is bound and thrown into the Thames.³⁵⁰ Like Ine, Adelwolf, and Alfred, Athelstan is also compared with the French monarch of his day. Early in his reign he visits King Charles of France who gives the English king a “present withouten pere” (peerless present”), which includes numerous relics from the Crucifixion, because he wishes to bind himself to Athelstan by marriage to his sister.³⁵¹ The image of English and French kings (as opposed to Norman lords) dealing with each other on equal terms and drawing themselves, and by extension their kingdoms, together through traditional gift-giving is a recurrent theme in Mannyng’s version of Anglo-Saxon kingship before the Conquest. Its twofold purpose, which becomes apparent in hindsight, is to contrast the noble Anglo-Saxon state with illegitimacy of the William I’s claim to the throne in the eleventh-century.³⁵²

The Twilight of Anglo-Saxon Kingship

Beginning with the reign Edmund (Edmund I, 939-946), it is easy to see that Mannyng is approaching the zenith of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Edmund and his son Edred (Eadred, 946-955) fit the good king mold for the most part, but they are unable to hold the whole of England as Alfred, Edward, and Athelstan were. During their reigns they are beset by Scottish uprisings, and rebellious Northumbria continuously seeks to ally itself with the Danes. Then with Edwy (Eadwig, 955-959) Mannyng gives readers an unquestionably bad king.

So foole a man of his life non was seene,
þe hie men of þe lond conseild þam bituene,
To do doun Edwy at a parlement,

³⁵⁰ Mannyng, 28.

³⁵¹ An argument could be made for the superior position of either king, but Mannyng clearly gives the upper hand to the good English king. Charles’s herald announces that he is a king without peer, but it is the French king who seeks to bind himself to Athelstan and is willing to give up the most sacred of relics in Christendom to do so.

³⁵² The separation is not always completely clear, but through the Anglo-Saxon period Mannyng distinguishes between Norman and French. The former are those descended from Rollo and his army while the latter are part of the long-standing kingdom without Danish roots.

& tille his broþer Edgare gyf þe tenement³⁵³

(So foolish a man in his life had never been seen,
So the high men of the land held counsel between themselves,
To dispose Edwy at a parliament,
And give his brother Edgare control of the land)

Like the other misguided royals who came before him, Edwy is quickly replaced. But the manner in which this is done makes an important comment on the function of the Anglo-Saxon political state. Edwy is removed through the wise counsel of the high men of the land through mutual agreement. The underlying implication is that the Anglo-Saxon political state is still strong enough to withstand the short reign of an ignoble king. It is also important that while Edwy is said to be foolish, readers are given no indication that he acted treacherously. Always looking ahead, Mannyng wants to make it clear that treasonous actions are what ultimately undoes English rule, not a bad ruler by himself. Edwy's reign is easy to miss because it is so short and because of the glowing terms with which Mannyng describes his brother and successor, Edgar (959-975).³⁵⁴ But his is an important reign because, though it shows that the kingdom as whole is still strong, the Anglo-Saxon nobility is not yet marred by the treacherous actions that arise later.

³⁵³ Mannyng, 34.

³⁵⁴ S. Donstan þe bisshop was at his coronment,
& of alle his ancestres was neuer better kyng.
He was boþe gode & wys in alle his dedis,
& right vnderstandyng, to help at alle nedis. (35)

(Saint Dustan, the Bishop, was at his coronation,
And of all his ancestors never was there a better king.
He was both good and wise in all his deeds,
And right understanding, [able] to help in all cases.)

As the counterweight to Edwy, Edgar is the most spiritual of his line, even when compared with his laudable ancestors. He worships God and “serue[s] our Lady” (“serves our Lady”). He founds abbeys and “kirkes of pris” (“expensive churches”).³⁵⁵ On the advice of his counsel he takes a wife to avoid a lecherous life. After his exploits against the Scots and the Welsh he engages in a second round of church and abbey building. As a final confirmation of Edgar’s holy life Mannyng includes a story in which, two dozen years after his passing, an abbot at Glastonbury named Edward reinterred the king in a tomb constructed in his honor only to find that “þe blode” (“the blood”) of the corpse “was boþe warme & fresh” (“was both warm and fresh”), proving the incorruptibility of the holy king.³⁵⁶

With Edgar, Mannyng beings to replace the succession of good kings with exceptional martial prowess, seen earlier in the narrative, with good kings who are incrementally more and more spiritual. All of the good kings in the chronicle support the Church and recognize the role of God in their lives, but by making spiritual gifts the primary virtue of the kings at the end of the Anglo-Saxon era, Mannyng is able to draw a stark contrast with the rulers and royalty who act selfishly and treacherously. In this dynamic the holiness of Edgar serves, in part, to make the turn of events following his death all the more lamentable. The king’s first son, Edward (Edward the Martyr, 975-978), is given all the praise of the most accomplished Anglo-Saxon kings, and his coronation comes at the hands of no less than St. Dunstan:

³⁵⁵ Mannyng, 35.

³⁵⁶ Mannyng, 36.

A gode man he was, & stalworth knyght als stele.
In Ingland neuer before was kyng lufed so wele,
Ne of þe folk strange non honourd so mykelle.
þe right lawes did he loke for fals men & fikelle.
Boþe riche & pouere he ʒemed in euenhede,
Non suld do oþer wrong for couetise no drede³⁵⁷

(He was a good man and a knight, stalwart as steel.
Never before in England was a king loved so well,
Nor honored as highly by the powerful people.
He set righteous law in place for false and fickle men.
He cared for both rich and poor alike:
Neither should wrong the other for covetous nor dread)

But treachery awaits in the form of his stepmother, Estrild.³⁵⁸ Desiring to have her son, Eilred (Æthelred the Unready, 978-1013, 1014-16), made king, Estrild has Edward murdered.

Recounting the sum of Eilred's shortcomings is not necessary. He is far and away the worst of the Anglo-Saxon kings; however, it is important to see how Mannyng is shaping his narrative. Eilred's reign is the antithetical counterpart to Edgar's and Edward's. Mannyng's harmonious description of Edward's brief reign serves the purpose of sharply contrasting the woeful reign of Eilred. In addition to his stalwart nature, Edward was loved by both rich and poor alike and through "right laws" expunged the false and fickle. This is an important. The emphasis on treating rich and poor alike is foremost biblical, but judging both rich and poor by the same standard and ruling through equality was remembered as a feature of Anglo-Saxon kingship in earlier texts concerned with English identity.

³⁵⁷ Mannyng, 36-7.

³⁵⁸ Probably Edgar's second wife, Ælfthryth.

The following passages from the *Proverbs of Alfred* (Chapter Two) provide a good example:

þe eorl and þe eþeling
ibureþ, vnder góðne king,
þat lond to leden
myd lawelyche deden.
And the clerk and þe knyht
Shulle démen euenliche riht;
þe poure and þe ryche
[hi schulle] démen ilyche. (ll. 74-81, Jesus College MS)³⁵⁹

(The earl and the noble
[it] behooves, under a good king,
To lead the land
With lawful deeds.
And the cleric and the knight
Shall make equal judgements;
The poor and the rich
They shall judge the same.)

At chepynge and at chyrche
freond þu þe iwurche
wyþ pouere and wiþ riche,
wiþ alle monne ilyche. (ll. 372-376, Jesus College MS)

(At market and at church
Make friends
With poor and with rich,
With all men alike.)

It is doubtful that Mannyng's emphasis on Edward's admiration by both rich and poor alike is coincidental. As presented, England was on the cusp of prospering under its most able, beloved king when treachery and jealousy created a permanent fracture in the Anglo-Saxon state. In the text, St. Dunstan foresees the injustice and problems that will come from Edward's murder: "For slauhter of þi broþer has þou þe coroune, / Wele weld it salle þou neuer, þou has it þorh tresoune" (You have the crown because of your brother's murder, [so] it will not bring you

³⁵⁹ See: Skeat, Walter W. *The Proverbs of Alfred*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.

wealth; you gained it through treason”).³⁶⁰ Eilred, as his title implies, is a weak king and tries to pay off the Danes instead of engaging them in battle.³⁶¹ The good kings who come before him always engage foreign threats in battle. Within a year of his coronation, various Danish fleets burn Southhampton and Ipswich, rob Cornwall, and defeat the Earl of Kent at Midway so soundly that the people saw that they were “in þe woulfe's mouth” (“in the wolf’s mouth”).³⁶² Eilred eventually loses control of the country to Suane of Denmark (Sweyn Forkbeard, 1013-1014) and retreats to France. The Danish king is aided by the false earl Edrike, a figure who compounds the treachery among the ruling class. When Suane comes to take the land by force Mannyng explicitly notes twice that, as “Criste's malison” (“Christ’s malediction”), he destroys churches, actions that will later characterize Norman seizure of the land.³⁶³ The arrival of the Danes in 1016 is a deliberate foreshadowing in miniature of the Norman Conquest that will take place fifty years later.

Yet, for all of Eilred’s cowardly actions and poor decision-making, he can no more cause the downfall of the Anglo-Saxon state than any other single king. It is highly likely as well that Mannyng knew his audience was anticipating the triumphant (if short-lived) restoration under Edmund the Confessor. Likewise, he had to account for the continuing popularity of Eilred’s son, Edmunde (Edmund Ironside, 1016). To dramatize the forthcoming arrival of the Normans, Mannyng gives his audience glimpses of the rising wave of trouble behind the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Edwy, Estrild, and Eilred introduce a pattern of discontent, treachery, and

³⁶⁰ Mannyng, 37. To cement the foreboding that comes with the coronation of Eilred, both Langtoft and Mannyng associate the king with the blood-red sky mentioned in the *ASC* for the year 979 in the *C MS*: “Py ilcan geara wæs gesewen blodig wolcen on oftsiðas on fyres gelicnesse” (“This same year a bloody sky was frequently seen in the likeness of fire”).

³⁶¹ He is, of course, ill-advised not unready.

³⁶² Mannyng, 38.

³⁶³ Mannyng, 43-44.

misrule behind giants like Edgar, Edward (the martyr), Edmund, and eventually Edward (the Confessor).

After Eilred's death, Mannyng describes his popular son carefully in terms that compensate for his short reign. Edmund is said to have stayed behind with his brothers after their father fled to France to escape Suane. As one of the last ripples of Anglo-Saxon military strength, Edmund, while his father lives in self-imposed exile, confronts the Danish king in battle and his wrathful appearance is enough to cause Suane to drop dead: "Help knyghtes, if 3e may, I may no ferrer go./ I se Edmund with me wroþe, I wote he wille me slo. / With þat word he felle doun dede as any stone" ("Help knights, if you can, I can go no further. I see that Edmund is angry with me [and] I know he will kill me. With that word he fell down, dead as any stone").³⁶⁴ Yet, Edmund's battlefield prowess can do little to keep the evil earl, Edrike, from again betraying his country to Suane's son Knoute (Cnut, 1016-1035). After returning from exile, Eilred's reign lasts only another two years before he dies and Edmund takes the throne. From the beginning, however, Edrike, seeks Edmund's undoing. Early in Knoute's campaign to retake England, Edrike prevents the young English king from confronting the invader to preserve Knoute's life. The mismatch is unmistakable. Edmund's forthright battle savvy is no match for the treacherous schemer. Unfortunately for the English, Edmund rules only two years before, "God had don his wille" ("God had his will") of him, leaving the path open for Knoute to take control of the country and the crown.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Mannyng, 44.

³⁶⁵ Mannyng, 48.

As Mannyng's chronicle approaches the end of the Anglo-Saxon era, he inverts the pattern in which it began. Instead of a line of good kings briefly interrupted by bad ones, interspersed among saintly, pious kings are a steady stream of weak rulers and treacherous, self-interested nobles. Anglo-Saxon England could withstand a bad king, but it could not survive weak rulers and treasonous, self-interested retainers. The early English kings ruled with the consent of the nobility or were raised to the throne by them. After Edgar the good kings rule in spite of discord among their retainers.

Danish Rule

When the period of Danish rule begins in 1016, Mannyng, with no small significance, has Knoute divide the land. Knoute himself controls only the western part of the country. He gives the traitorous earl Edrike charge of Lindsay and Lincoln, Uctred (another English earl who betrayed his country) Northumberland, and Thurkille, one of his Danish retainers, the remainder. This division is obviously symbolic of the fracturing unity of the Anglo-Saxon political state and it compounds the troubles for the English people who are now under control of four evil leaders instead of one, just king. Mannyng has less to say than perhaps might be expected on Knoute's reign as a whole, since he was the first foreign king to actually take the English crown. However, Mannyng does offer a short but poignant story that underscores what he perceives to be the source of discord at the end of the Anglo-Saxon era.

After taking homage from his new retainers, Knoute is advised by Edrike to kill Edmund's young son and take Emma, Elired's widow as his wife. Knoute does both. Yet,

Edrike's advice to the king is also his undoing. Once married, the queen reminds Knoute of the betrayal Edrike perpetrated against her former husband:

Listen me, lord Knoute, if it be þi wille,
"How he betraied my lord, & my sonne fulle ille.
Whilom Eilred my lord he him bitraist to 3ow,
& my sonne Edmunde þorgh treson he slouh,
& if he regne long he salle haf þe same,
He was neuer with no man, þat he ne did him schame"³⁶⁶

(Listen to me, Lord Knoute, if it is your will,
[To] How he foully betrayed my lord and my son .
Once he betrayed by lord Eilred to you,
And he slew my son Edmunde through treason,
And if he reigns long, he shall do the same to you,
He was never connected to any man that he did not bring to shame")

Upon consideration of the queen's advice, Knoute has Edrike hanged so that "alle his kynd, þat it sees & wote" ("all his kind would see and know").³⁶⁷ The lesson of this story for Mannyng's audience is that all of Edrike's scheming, positioning, and treachery got nothing in the end and, in fact, caused his undoing. The same Dane Edrike helped take the English crown had him hanged. Edrike is not an English doppelganger of Vortigern (the British ruler who invited the Saxons), but the sum of the treacherous figures at the end of the Anglo-Saxon era recreate the dynamic established by Geoffrey. Together they underscore the idea that treason, self-interested behavior, and consorting with foreigners were the real threats to English sovereignty just as they were to British sovereignty. Despite the tragic results of the treasonous behavior that put Knoute on the throne, the English nobility are depicted by Mannyng as either unwilling or unable to learn from their mistakes, and the pattern of deceit and betrayal is repeated once more.

³⁶⁶ Mannyng, 49. Edmund Ironside was not Emma son but Ælfgifu of York's. A version of this story can be found in Langtoft's chronicle, but gets a lighter treatment as Emma says only that Edric has betrayed his two previous lords instead of naming her husband and son (369). In Mannyng's telling more emphasis is placed on the English nobility Edrike has betrayed.

³⁶⁷ Mannyng, 50.

On his death, Knoute is condemned by Mannyng because he was “kyng þorgh conquest & desceit” (“king through conquest and deceit”).³⁶⁸ This is a telling statement. The first accusation marks Knoute as a foreigner invader, but the second is just as important because in Mannyng’s depiction of pre-Conquest England deceit and treachery are what ultimately bring down the Anglo-Saxon political state. Knoute’s sons Harald (Harold Harefoot, 1035-1040) and Hardeknout (Harthacnut, 1040-1042) do not bring peace and justice to the English people. Harald is first described as having the bearing of a king, but he is unable to stand up to his brother or Earl Godwyn of Kent (who kills Alfred the brother of St. Edward), and he exiles Emma his stepmother because of a dispute with Hardeknout.³⁶⁹ In the end, “Harald for his trespas 3it felle a vilany” (“Harald fell into villainy because of his trespasses”).³⁷⁰ In Mannyng’s estimation, Harald was willing but weak. Hardeknout, on the other hand, is described as being nothing short of awful. On his brother’s death Hardeknout is said to have dragged Harald’s body through puddles “þat foule were & depest” (“that were foul and deep”) before throwing his remains into the Thames.³⁷¹ But while reprehensible, it is not Hardeknout’s violent nature that cements his reputation as a bad king. The bigger issue is that he taxes and exploits the English people. “H[ardeknout] did charge þe lond in suilk treuwage, / þat noiþer erle no barone myght lyue for taliage” (“Hardeknout put the land under such taxation / that neither earl nor barren

³⁶⁸ Mannyng, 51.

³⁶⁹ In this version of the story, Cnut gives Harold England and Harthacnut Denmark before his passing, but once he has died Harthacnut reveals that he does not think Harold should be king of England because he is a bastard. Harthacnut therefore threatens to invade and the brothers come to an agreement whereby Harold retains the “Northende” while Harthacnut gets the “Southside” (51). Presumably the dividing line is the Thames since Harold remains in London. Regardless, it is hard to imagine a scenario where this division could be deemed good for either Harold or the English people.

³⁷⁰ Mannyng, 53.

³⁷¹ Mannyng, 54.

could live for the taxes”).³⁷² The new king also does not hold to his word. He forgives earl Godwyn for the killing of Alfred only to later strangle him at the dinner table. When his tax collectors, Pader & Thurston, are beheaded by the outraged people of Worcester, Hardeknout sends the army and burns the town to the ground.³⁷³ Finally, as a fitting end to his sinfulness, the king dies at the wedding of his daughter, whom he has given to a Danish duke. “After mete in þe haule þe kyng mad alle blithe. / In alle his joy makyng, among þam ilkone, / He felle dede doun colde as any stone” (“After dinning in the hall, the king made merry. / In all his joyfulness among his kind, / he fell down dead, cold as any stone”). In the end, Hardeknout dies not only in the midst of a gluttonous celebration, he does so immediately after rewarding a Danish noble, not an English retainer, with marriage to his daughter. His reign, like that of his father, was born of conquest and perpetuated through exploitation, the two actions that later define Norman rule. The years of Danish rule are a foreboding of the greater ill to come. The English of Mannyng’s chronicle do not know this, but his audience does.

The Norman Invasion

At the outset of his chronicle, Mannyng, like Langtoft, lists William I and the Normans as the fifth of the invading forces that have beset the land, noting that the freedom of the English is still compromised at the time of his writing because of their conquest:

Sipen he & his haf had þe lond in heritage,
 þat þe Inglis haf so lad, þat þei lyue in seruage,
 He sette þe Inglis to be þralle, þat or was so fre³⁷⁴

³⁷² Mannyng’s use of *tallage* (see: “Tallage.” *OED*.) is interesting in that the term refers specifically to the “arbitrary tax levied by the Norman and early Angevin kings” on the lands claimed by the crown. Here not just the just the narrative structuring but the terminology itself foreshadows the coming of the Normans.

³⁷³ Mannyng, 55-6.

³⁷⁴ Mannyng, 8.

(From that time he and his [kind] have held the land as their heritage,
So that the English have been made to live in servitude,
He set the English in bondage who were so free)

Even while still dwelling on the misdeeds of the Danish kings, Mannyng takes time to remind his audience of the consequences of William's invasion. At the time Harald and Hardeknout are dividing up the country, Roberd of Normandy passes away and William receives his title as heir: "Died þe duke Roberd, þat regned in Normundie. / William was his heire, resceyued þe heritage, / þat we kalle þe bastard, þat sette vs in seruage" ("Duke Roberd who reigned in Normandy died. William, who we call the bastard and set us in servitude, was his heir recued his inheritance").³⁷⁵ Despite the scattered references to the servitude William and "his" imposed, Mannyng still strives to make the Norman Conquest itself as dramatic as possible when it comes.³⁷⁶ Apart from his choice of language, a lot of the tension he creates comes from a repetition of the betrayal and deceit that enabled the Danish to take the throne. The Norman Conquest is, of course, depicted with even greater dramatic intensity because the Normans, unlike the Danes, did not leave.

With Mannyng's condemnation of William and the Normans, his truly unique addition to the story of kingship in the British Isles becomes apparent. In the passage quoted above it is the English who live in servitude. In the second it is William who set "us" in servitude and who "we" call the bastard. Statements like these clear away any ambiguity regarding Mannyng's sympathies. He sees himself as an English writer addressing for an English audience. As such, he

³⁷⁵ Mannyng, 52.

³⁷⁶ It is important here to consider Turville-Petre's words about the relationship between an English text and an English audience. As he puts it, [a] clerical author writing a narrative in English at this [time] was doing so with an eye to a lay audience" (27). To take this a step further, in the process of telling the story of the English to an English audience in English it should be expected that the audience of Mannyng's chronicle were unfamiliar with the general story. In this view in the details and patterning of the telling from which the narrative draws its appeal.

is not content to leave the narrative he inherited as one in which the Normans are the rightful heirs of the kingdom through a distant connection to the British. The circumstances which brought them to the isles notwithstanding, the English are the ones who look back on their past and lament the loss of the sovereignty they had just as Cadwallader looks back on the land from his ship as he departs for Brittany and bemoans the mistakes his people made in Geoffrey's history.³⁷⁷

The Norman Conquest closely mirrors the Danish Conquest, but everything is intensified. In the build-up to the Danish invasion, Mannyng vests Edgar with holiness and incorruptibility. Edgar's counterpart preceding the Norman Conquest is Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), a ruler who was eventually canonized. The ante is raised. Within twenty lines of his entrance into the chronicle, Edward is able to right all the wrongs done by the Danish kings. "A[lle] þe baronage" ("All the baronage") comes to his coronation, symbolically reuniting the country. Suane of Denmark (1047-1074) even seeks Edward's aid against Magnum (Magnus of Norway, 1042-1047) reversing the dynamic of the past three reigns where the English were beholden to the Danish.³⁷⁸ Likewise, for coming to the aid of Suane, Edward and the English no longer have to pay the Danegeld, which had been exacted regularly since the reign of Edward's father, Elired (Æthelrede).

³⁷⁷ Thorpe, 281.

³⁷⁸ Most modern historians argue that the conflict involving England, Denmark, and Norway was quite different than it is depicted in the chronicle with Magnus having aspirations to the Danish and English throne. See: Barlow, Frank. *Edward the Confessor*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. 58-9, 79.

Through the eyes of modern historians the glaring shortcoming of Edward's reign is his lack of an heir and establishment of a clear succession, but for Mannyng the confusion is part of the inevitable punishment of the English for their sinfulness. Edward's saintliness absolves him for his lack of children, and when he does wed, it is to secure peace with the rebellious Godwyn of Kent. Initially the strategy pays off: "Sithen in alle his courte were non so wele him with, / þei halp him at þare myght to maynten pes & grith" ("Afterwards in all his court, none were so wealthy as they were with him. So they helped him with their power to maintain peace and security").³⁷⁹ On one hand Mannyng is careful to show Edward putting the welfare of his people, the English, before any desire of his own, but at the same time he cleverly positions the parties that will vie for the throne after the saintly king's death. The situation is one where Edward, during his reign, is able to make productive allies out of both his cousin, William, and the Godwyns through his holiness and lack of guile. While Godwyn and his sons, Harald and Lofwyn, are exiled in Ireland, the cousins meet on friendly terms and William crosses the channel to visit Edward, "se þe lond" ("see the land"), and present the king with unnamed gifts.³⁸⁰ Yet, for all of Edward's holiness and diplomacy this was, as Mannyng's audience knew, a balance that could not be maintained.

Mannyng addresses the issue of Edward's handling of the succession head-on. When the king sees his end coming (as most of the kings in the chronicle do) he declares that "þe regne wille best falle" ("it is best the reign fall") to Harald, Godwyn's son. After this phrase, the narrator intervenes and declares the following:

³⁷⁹ Mannyng, 60.

³⁸⁰ Mannyng, 59.

Me meruailes of my boke, I trowe, he wrote not right,
 þat he forgate Wiliam of forward þat he him hight.
 Neuerles þe forward held what so was in his þouht,
 I wote wele Criste it wild, þat Edwarde's wille wer wrouht,
 Who so lokes his life, & redis his vision,
 What vengeance ordeynd was on Ingland to be don
 Of princes of þe lond, it sais of þam þis sawe,
 þat þei dred no þing God, no 3emed euenhed of lawe,
 Bot felawes vnto þefes, to robbours of ilk cuntre,
 þar wilkednes was fulfilled, venged behoued it be ³⁸¹

(I marvel because of my book, I think, he (the author) wrote incorrectly,
 That he (Edward) forgot William for the advancement he had commanded.
 Nevertheless the advancement stalled (whatever was in his thoughts).
 I know well Christ willed it that Edward's will was done,
 Whoever looks at his (Edward's) life and understands his vision (knows this).
 The vengeance ordained for England was to be done.
 Of the princes of the land, it says of them this saying:
 That they had no fear of God, nor cared for the equality of the law,
 But fellows became thieves, robbers of the same country,
 Where deception was fulfilled, vengeance is called for.)

Here, Mannyng directly confronts Langtoft's accusation that Edward forgot about his promise to William. In Langtoft's text the first of the accusations against Edward take place when he brings Edmund home from Hungary: *Le covenaunt kef u fete par fiaunce assurez / Al duk de Normendie est tost ublyez. / Ore ad le rays Eduuard chaungé voluntez* ("The agreement which was made with plighted faith / With the duke of Normandy is immediately forgotten. / Now has king Edward changed his will").³⁸² At the end of the corresponding passage to Mannyng's cited above, Langtoft makes his accusation: *"Le duk de Normendye ublyez avayt, / Du covenaunt k'il ly fist null y mentyvayt"* ("He had forgotten the duke of Normandy, / Nobody reminded him of the covenant he made to him").³⁸³ For Mannyng, however, the confusion over the succession after Edward is ordained by God as a means of punishing the nobility of England who have

³⁸¹ Mannyng, 65.

³⁸² Langtoft, 390.

³⁸³ Langtoft, 398.

forsaken Him and the righteousness of the law. The reasons for Harald's (Harold Godwinson, 1066) ineffectiveness are made plain. He had "no grace" ("no grace") and "was forsuorn" ("was forsworn") and "þerfor he lost alle" ("therefore he lost everything").³⁸⁴

Fulle wele his awen suld hald, if he had kept his treuth.
Bot þat he was forsuorn, mishappyng þerfor he fond,
Suld he neuer els haf lorn for William no lond,
Ne bien in þat bondage, þat brouht was ouer þe se,
Now ere þei in seruage fulle fele þat or was fre.
Our fredom þat day for euer toke þe leue,
For Harald it went away, his falshed did vs greue

(His own should have held well, if he kept his troth.
But he was forsworn, and misfortune he therefore found,
He should never have lost any land to William,
Nor been in that bondage that came from across the sea,
Now before they, who were free before, completely fell into servitude.
Our freedom left forever that day,
Because of Harald it went away, his falseness shamed us.)

The motif of divine punishment and the loss of sovereignty for unrighteous living is not, of course, original to Mannyng, Langtoft or even Geoffrey. Its origins are Biblical and the theme would have been familiar to all of the medieval chroniclers mentioned. Geoffrey of Monmouth, however, does get credit for being the first writer of record to lift the theme from the story of the Hebrews and apply it to the British.³⁸⁵ Through various rewritings in Latin and translations into Anglo-Norman and eventually English, this arrangement of Geoffrey's history remained unaltered. Even *Lazamon's Brut*, the earliest English retelling of the narrative, does not reposition the English people of Geoffrey's story as much as it uses the English language and uniquely English imagery to Anglicize the narrative. Mannyng, however, alters the direction of

³⁸⁴ Mannyng, 71.

³⁸⁵ In Geoffrey's *HRB* king Cadwallader, as he sails off to Brittany, sums up the woeful situation in which the remaining British find themselves: 'Woe unto us sinners,' he cried, 'for our monstrous crimes, with which we never stopped offending God, as long as we had he time for repentance. The vengeance of His might lies heavily upon us, even to the point of uprooting us from our native soil' (xii. 15).

the narrative by making the English the people bereft of land and liberty. The English kings of Mannyng's chronicle are not a neat copy of the British; instead, they evoke the same rise and fall. Other alterations had to be made too. Unlike the British in Geoffrey's history, the English remain in their homeland to suffer under the yoke of Norman domination, a fate arguably worse than retreating to another land. As Mannyng describes it, William is directly connected with the elite of his own day. "þe Inglis," ("the English") he says, "þorgh taliage lyue 3it in sorow fulle soure" ("through taxation live still in great sorrow").³⁸⁶ As corroborated by the *ASC* and other English accounts from the end of the eleventh-century, the action that marks William's campaign after securing London is his acquisition of land from the English nobles and redistribution of it among his followers. Still, while William and his Normans are the agents of punishment, Mannyng, like Geoffrey before him, is abundantly clear that the real force behind the downfall of the English is God. Just before the passage that describes William's coronation, Mannyng tells how England's archbishop, Stigand, was suspended by no less than the pope himself.³⁸⁷ In the end, no single king is depicted as causing the downfall of the English. It was the compounding of treachery and treason among the nobility over several generations, numerous weak rulers who consorted with or hid from foreign threats, and the inability of English to recognize mistakes that led to the Danish conquest.

Though the underlying direction of the narrative is not his own invention, Mannyng adds details to his version of the Anglo-Saxon era that give an unmistakably pro-English perspective to Langtoft's account. When compared to Mannyng's rewriting, Langtoft's chronicle, like Robert of Gloucester's, presents a synthesized version of English history which downplays the

³⁸⁶ Mannyng, 66.

³⁸⁷ Mannyng, 73.

separation between English and Norman. Langtoft's writing is less sensational, and while not objective in the modern sense, the narrative voice in his account does not intervene to correct mistakes. Mannyng emends his source material to make the English the rightful rulers of the land. Unlike other versions of the narrative that stem from Geoffrey's history, the British, Scottish, Danish, and Normans are challengers to and usurpers of English sovereignty. The Normans are certainly not entitled to the land through vague, fanciful connections with the British. Mannyng account dramatizes each episode in the Anglo-Saxon era. The good kings are impossibly noble; the bad, sinister and treacherous. William and his Normans are noticeably more antithetical in Mannyng's account than in any chronicle of English history which came before. He draws connections between events throughout the Anglo-Saxon era that link the Norman elite of his day with the pagan Danes that harried the English in the ninth century. Finally, by fitting the English into a story that his audience already knew, he was able to lament the continuing domination of the Norman-descended elite as well as sound a note of hopefulness. Those familiar with the story know that the Israelites were eventually led back to their homeland and, for those who bought into mythology, the descendants of the British returned as Normans.

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