

LITURGICAL LANDSCAPES IN POST-CONQUEST ENGLAND: COMMEMORATING KING OSWALD IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

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Abstract: Bringing together the work of musicologists and historians, this essay interrogates the contents of secular and monastic offices for Oswald of Northumbria in the northern province across the high and late Middle Ages, identifying the ways in which perceptions of St. Oswald and his relationship to communities in northern England and Scotland were articulated through the night office. It argues for the importance of considering a liturgical office in its entirety, demonstrating that they were not static, but could be adapted to differing needs. In the northern province the inclusion of geographical and topographical markers within these liturgies was central to the construction of a complex liturgical web connecting the historical Oswald to the communities where the offices were recited. Saints' offices collapse time and mediate between historical figures and the communities in which they are present through liturgical veneration. Particular places can also act to suggest connections across time and that essay argues that the invocation of local landmarks such as Lindisfarne, Bamburgh and Hadrian's Wall in matins readings for Oswald in the northern province enabled the communities of the north to navigate between their historical pasts and their liturgical presents.

Keywords: liturgy, matins, landscape, Oswald, Lindisfarne, Bamburgh, Durham, Coldingham, Bede.

Liturgical practices, especially the daily rhythm of the office hours, evoke a sense of timelessness that can easily be misinterpreted as stasis. Likewise, we also experience certain places as almost immutable, although this is often deceptive, masking profound changes that have formed and transformed landscapes. Given that saints' offices purposely collapse time to make the saint present in the liturgy, it is perhaps not surprising that the alternate temporalities of liturgical offices can mislead us, but saints' offices in the medieval period were not eternal and static, but instead were flexible and dynamic, being adapted by different religious communities across time and space.¹ When we visit the tidal island of Lindisfarne, given by King Oswald to Aidan for the foundation of his episcopal see, many of us experience a profound sense of connection to Northumbria's early-medieval past. Yet what we see, having most likely arrived via a causeway constructed in the 1950s, are the ruins of a high-medieval priory and a sixteenth-century artillery fort that was thoroughly remodelled in the early twentieth century by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. Looking south across the Ross Back Sands and Budle Bay towards the Northumbria royal stronghold at Bamburgh, one can see the hulking outline of the castle, whose Norman keep is surrounded by a complex of late-medieval and Victorian buildings. It is not just manmade edifices that have changed, the sand dunes that characterise this stretch of Northumberland's coast, for example, are naturally dynamic and ever-shifting environments too. Despite these many layers, this land- and seascape with its tidal rhythm acts powerfully to suggest continuity with an early-medieval past. This essay, which analyses the contents of offices for Oswald of Northumbria as they survive in liturgical books from northern religious houses, argues that the inclusion of geographic and topographical references in these offices was a particularly potent way of creating connections across time. It contends that landscape features such as Hadrian's Wall, Lindisfarne and Bamburgh function as liturgical waypoints, that enabled monks and canons to navigate between their presents and their pasts, from the physical landscape the historical Oswald once inhabited, and in which their communities were situated, to the liturgical landscapes in which the saint was present with them.

Oswald was a seventh-century king of Northumbria, who had converted to Christianity during his youthful exile amongst the Irish. On his return to his native land in 634, he won a decisive victory over the pagan ruler Caedwalla, before sending for a bishop to Christianize his people. In Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which is the dominant early source for Oswald's life and a fundamental source for high-medieval liturgies, the king is presented as a great hero of the Northumbrian church, who was

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¹ On liturgical time see Margot E. Fassler, "The Liturgical Framework of Time and the Representation of History", in *Representing History, 900–1300: Art, Music, History*, ed. Robert A. Maxwell (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 149–71 and Arnold Angenendt, "Die liturgische Zeit: zyklisch und linear", in *Hochmittelalterliches Geschichtsbewußtsein im Spiegel nicht historiographischer Quellen*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 101–15.

actively involved in the Christian mission of bishop Aidan, acting as interpreter when Aidan preached the Gospel in the Irish language. This king, “most beloved of God”, met his death in 642 at the hands of the Mercian ruler Penda. Oswald was soon venerated as a saint and his cult, from its very beginning, had a significant popular element as well as being propagated by royal and ecclesiastical elites, who installed parts of his body (which had been dismembered on the battlefield) in high-status religious communities at Lindisfarne, Bamburgh and Bardney.² By the time of the Norman Conquest Oswald was a hugely popular saint across the British Isles, although his early popularity in Ireland, as recounted by Bede, does not appear to have been particularly durable.³ His feast is found in the majority of liturgical calendars from the provinces of Canterbury and York and numerous churches were dedicated to him.⁴ As a model of Christian kingship from the Pre-Conquest past, Oswald was an important legitimizing saint for the Norman and Angevin kings and it is in this capacity that we find him as one of three saints invoked for the king in the twelfth-century *laudes regiae*, the liturgical acclamation to the ruler sung at coronations and on other significant royal occasions.⁵

While two versions of a mass for Oswald’s feast on 5 August were widespread in England in the Middle Ages, evidence for the contents of his proper office is fragmentary.⁶ Partial offices, supplying some proper material structured around the common of a single martyr, are transmitted in numerous manuscript breviaries conforming to the Uses of Sarum and York. The more extended proper office, however, endures in only a handful of liturgical manuscripts, suggesting Oswald was of particular importance in only a limited number of religious foundations.⁷ With the exceptions of an unlocated fifteenth-century breviary conforming to the Use of Sarum and containing an office celebrating Oswald’s feast as one of three lessons,⁸ the rest of these manuscripts are linked to the two major centers of Oswald’s cult in post-Conquest England: Durham and Peterborough, home to Oswald’s head and incorrupt right arm respectively. A late thirteenth-century breviary from Coldingham,⁹ a dependent priory of Durham, and several earlier historical and liturgical compilations in which Oswald’s office is partially transmitted along with information about Cuthbert and Aidan, provide evidence from Durham.¹⁰ From Peterborough survives a fourteenth-century antiphoner, supplying the complete chant cycle for his feast,¹¹ and a fifteenth-century diurnale,¹² containing the chant cycle for the daytime hours. In addition, in her important study of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a source of lections, Teresa Webber demonstrated that copies of Bede from both Durham¹³ and Peterborough¹⁴ were marked up for liturgical reading on Oswald’s feast day.¹⁵

² Cubitt points to the open-air character of early cult sites and the inclusion of rural dwellers in miracle accounts. Catherine Cubitt, “Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England”, in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 245–8. On the king’s dismembered body see Alan Thacker, “Membra Disjecta: The Division of the Body and the Diffusion of the Cult”, in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 97–127.

³ On the early cult of Oswald amongst the Anglian-influenced milieux on the Irish mainland see Thacker, “Membra Disjecta”, 114–5.

⁴ Alison Binns, “Pre-Reformation Dedications to St. Oswald in England and Scotland: A Gazetteer”, in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 241–71.

⁵ Johanna Dale, *Inauguration and Liturgical Kingship in the Long Twelfth Century: Male and Female Accession Rituals in England, France and the Empire* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 64.

⁶ On the masses see Nicholas Orchard, “The English and German Masses in Honour of St. Oswald of Northumbria”, *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 37 (1995): 347–358.

⁷ On the main types of manuscript used in the office see Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 160–244.

⁸ Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud MS misc. 299.

⁹ London, British Library Harley MS 4664.

¹⁰ Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.3.55; Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale de Dijon MS 657; Oxford, Bodleian Library Digby MS 175.

¹¹ Cambridge, Magdalene College MS F.4.10.

¹² Oxford, Bodleian Library Gough MS liturg. 17.

¹³ Durham, Dean and Chapter Library MS B.II.35.

¹⁴ Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley MS 163.

¹⁵ Teresa Webber, “Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a Source of Lections in Pre- and Post-Conquest England”, in *The Long Twelfth-Century View of the Anglo-Saxon Past*, ed. Martin Brett and David A. Woodman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 55. Webber also identified a manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 368.) of Bede from Winchcombe being marked up for liturgical reading on Oswald’s feast day, but no other liturgical material for Oswald’s office survives from this Benedictine foundation.

This essay builds on the work of musicologists, foremost amongst them David Hiley, on Oswald's office and Webber's on manuscripts of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.¹⁶ It will consider the interrelation between chants and readings in the monastic matins office, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between different elements of the office, in the manner in which Henry Parkes has so fruitfully analyzed the office for another pre-Conquest king at Bury: Edmund of East Anglia.¹⁷ In doing so it contributes to wider discussions about the relationship between liturgy and history and how the past was shaped through the liturgy to fit the needs and aspirations of varying communities.¹⁸ Furthermore, it will analyze hitherto neglected or overlooked sources for Oswald's matins lections in the northern province demonstrating that Oswald was commemorated and remembered in subtly different ways by different communities, even within the bounds of his former Northumbrian kingdom where veneration of Oswald remained rooted in the history and landscape of the early-medieval church.

Shortly before the Norman Conquest the monk Winegot removed Oswald's incorrupt right arm from the former Northumbrian royal city of Bamburgh and took it to Peterborough, the major center of Oswald's veneration in southern England.¹⁹ This geographic translation of the relic from the north to the fens saw commemoration of Oswald become detached from the northern landscape and the history of the northern church and adapted instead to the needs of the fenland monks.²⁰ Justifying the theft of the arm, Henry of Avranches, writing at the behest of the Peterborough monks in the thirteenth century, claimed that although Oswald had originally wished to be venerated at Bamburgh he now preferred Peterborough, for while "the clergy of that former place are diligent in the psalms" the monks of Peterborough were more diligent!²¹ Recitation of the psalms was the foundation of the medieval office. The whole Psalter was recited each week as part of the daily office, however, increasingly the use of particular (or proper) psalms for particular feasts meant that the principle of weekly recitation in order was disrupted. The daily office comprised seven daytime hours and one night hour—matins.²² Matins was the longest hour and is the focus of this essay because it is in its complexity and potential flexibility that one can most obviously see the interaction between liturgy and history in the dialogue between the liturgical chants (antiphons and reponsories) and the readings. The majority of lections were drawn from hagiographical texts, in the case of Oswald (and several other early-medieval saints) from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (Table 1). I believe this relationship between chants, lections and Gospel reading is key to understanding the dynamics behind liturgical

¹⁶ David Hiley, "The Music of Prose Offices in Honour of English Saints", *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 10 (2001): 23–37; David Hiley, "The Office Chants for St. Oswald King of Northumbria and Martyr", in *A Due: Musical Essays in Honour of John D. Bergsagel & Heinrich W. Schwab*, ed. Ole Kongsted, Niels Krabbe, Michael Kube & Morten Michelsen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2008), 244–59. See also Sean Dunnahoe, *English and German Influences in the Production of Music-Liturgical Manuscripts in Sweden up to the Thirteenth Century*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London (2017), 194–240.

¹⁷ Henry Parkes, "St. Edmund Between Liturgy and Hagiography", in *Bury St. Edmunds and the Norman Conquest*, ed. Tom Licence (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 131–159.

¹⁸ See, for example, Katie A.-M. Bugyis, A. B. Kraebel and Margot E. Fassler, ed., *Medieval Cantors and Their Craft: Music, Liturgy and the Shaping of History, 800–1500* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017); Margot E. Fassler, *The Virgin of Chartres: Making History Through Liturgy and the Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Susan Boynton, *Shaping a Monastic Identity: Liturgy and History at the Imperial Abbey of Farfa, 1000–1125* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Significant relics of Oswald had already travelled beyond the confines of his Northumbrian kingdom. Bede recounts miracles associated with Oswald's body being taken to Bardney, from where his body was moved in 909 to Gloucester. The Bardney monks were initially resistant to accept the body of a king of Northumbria, but Bede tells us that miracles convinced them of his sanctity. Unfortunately, scanty liturgical evidence survives from St. Oswald's Gloucester. On the 909 translation see Carolyn Heighway, "Gloucester and the New Minster of St. Oswald", in *Edward the Elder 899–924*, ed. N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (London: Routledge, 2001), 102–11 and Michael Bintley, "The Translation of St. Oswald's Relics to New Minster, Gloucester: Royal and Imperial Resonances", *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 19 (2014): 171–181.

²⁰ This process continued as Oswald's cult spread into German-speaking regions, where he became, in some vernacular legends, completely divorced from his historical context. We find him in some vernacular sources, for example, described as being King of England, King of Norway, or King of the Tirol.

²¹ Henry of Avranches, "Vita et Passio Sancti Oswaldi Regis et Martyris", in *Saints' Lives*. Edited by David Townsend (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1:204–257, at 254–5.

²² On the structure of the medieval office see John Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 73–108 and Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office*, 50–80.

change (and exchange) and the shaping of communal identities through liturgical commemoration.²³ Although the analysis in this essay is confined to the textual content of the office, it is important to appreciate that communal worship was (and is) a multi-sensory experience.²⁴

The structure of matins varied depending on the status of a feast and whether it took place in a secular or monastic setting (Table 2). In the secular cursus of the northern province Oswald's feast was celebrated as a feast of nine lessons.²⁵ Our evidence for secular commemoration of Oswald in the north comes chiefly from York breviaries, in which some proper material is provided to supplement the common of a single martyr. One cannot, therefore, say too much about the relationship between different aspects of the secular office as the common by definition provides generic and not specific texts and chants. In the monastic communities from which evidence of particular veneration of Oswald survives, including Durham, Coldingham, Peterborough and Winchcombe, the Northumbrian king was commemorated following the basic structure of monastic matins on Sundays, double feasts and feasts of twelve lessons. Where Oswald was commemorated by monastic communities using a lengthy and intricate proper office it is not only possible but desirable to analyze this relationship. It is fundamental to understanding the way in which communities venerated their most important saints and, in turn, how this molded their communities. The monks met in church at least eight times a day and, as Parkes has argued in the context of Bury, the liturgy was "the most direct means by which they verbalized their perceptions, and by which perceptions were formed, both of St. Edmund as a saint and of his specific relationship to them as a community."²⁶ This was certainly the case for Oswald at religious foundations in the north, where perceptions of him as a saint and of his specific relationship to different communities was articulated through liturgies in which the landscapes associated with the historical Oswald and that the monks and canons now inhabited became part of a complex web connecting historical past and liturgical present.

The liturgical commemoration of Oswald in the York Breviary

The Surtees Society edition of the York Breviary provides six proper readings for Oswald.²⁷ Whereas we often expect to find miracles as the focus of these kinds of readings, the lections in the Surtees York Breviary are firmly focused on Oswald's life and the history of the two famous relics associated with him, his head and incorrupt right arm. The readings are obviously based on Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* but are heavily abbreviated. The first reading describes Edwin's death and Oswald's succession, his summoning of Aidan and the foundation of Lindisfarne.²⁸ The second reading begins the story of Oswald's generosity at the Easter Feast and this is also the subject of the

²³ Whereas, once established, "sungtexts" tended to stability, there was greater variability in lections.

²⁴ On liturgy and the senses see Eric Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy and the Five Senses", *Viator* 41 (2010): 25–56; On the experience of worship see the essays in Sally Harper, P.S. Barnwell and Magnus Williamson ed., *Late Medieval Liturgies Enacted: The Experience of Worship in Cathedral and Parish Church* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2016); For an example of how the sung delivery of a chant could emphasise particular messages see Parkes, "St. Edmund", 134–5.

²⁵ In the Use of Sarum Oswald's feast was designated as a feast of three lessons.

²⁶ Parkes, "St. Edmund", 132.

²⁷ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*. Edited by S. W. Lawley. 2 vols. Surtees Society 71, 75 (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1880, 1883). Although the printing of breviaries for different Uses tends to the artificial construction of fixed rites that did not necessarily reflect general practice (see Matthew Cheung Salisbury, *The Secular Liturgical Office in Late Medieval England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 1-5 and on the gap between text and practice see Richard W. Pfaff, "Perception and Reality in the Rubrics of Sarum Rite Service Books", in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*, ed. Lesley Smith and Benedicta Ward (London: Bloomsbury, 1992), 197–206.), the Surtees edition of the York Breviary provides a useful starting point for our investigation. The Surtees Society edition is a transcription of the 1493 York Breviary printed in Venice, with apparatus indicating reference to a number of later editions, which show no variants for Oswald's feast (On the 1493 printing see Andrew Hughes, Matthew Cheung Salisbury and Heather Robbins, *Cataloguing Discrepancies: The Printed York Breviary of 1493* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011)). Sixteen full or partial manuscript breviaries of the Use of York survive, dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, along with several fragments. While there are variations between them as Matthew Salisbury has clearly demonstrated, his analysis does not suggest there are significant differences between the texts given for Oswald's office, which is in any case not present in all of them due to the incompleteness of some of the manuscripts. In his descriptive catalogue of liturgical manuscripts, Salisbury includes the information that the northern saints, including Oswald, have been annotated in the Sanctoriale in Cambridge, University Library MS Additional 3110, a fifteenth-century breviary of the Use of York. Matthew Cheung Salisbury, *The Secular Liturgical Office in Late Medieval England*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford (2011), 2: 318.

²⁸ *HE* iii. 1, 2 and 3.

third and fourth lections, which cover Aidan's blessing of Oswald's arm, its subsequent incorrupt nature and its installation in the church at Bamburgh.²⁹ The fifth and sixth lections detail his death in battle against Penda, Oswald's proverb, and Oswiu recovering his head and arm from the battlefield. It is mentioned again that Oswald's arm was taken to Bamburgh and also that his head was buried at Lindisfarne.³⁰ The final three readings are to be an exposition on the gospel, *si quis venit*, by Pope Gregory the Great taken from the common of a single martyr.³¹ The proper lections in the Surtees York Breviary thus focus on Oswald's relationship with Aidan as epitomized in the story of the Easter Feast, their joint foundation of Lindisfarne, Oswald's martyrdom and his famous relics. Given that manuscripts breviaries of the Use of York are all late medieval and the Surtees edition is based on the 1493 printed breviary, it is significant that two mentions are made of Bamburgh as the resting place of Oswald's right arm. For the arm had long since been removed to Peterborough, suggesting that the clergy of the northern province either shared William of Malmesbury's skepticism about Peterborough's claim to possess this relic, or that Bamburgh's association with Oswald remained important to northern identities even though the famous relic was no longer there.³²

The references to both the church of Lindisfarne and royal city of Bamburgh at the conclusion of the sixth lection serve to locate Oswald physically within the landscape and topography of the early Northumbrian church. As David Petts has argued, Lindisfarne and Bamburgh, which are intervisible, were at the heart of a major nexus of early medieval landscape features, which included, ecclesiastical, eremitical and royal sites.³³ While Bede depicts Cuthbert's retreat to a hermitage as motivated by a desire to withdraw from the world, Petts points out that Inner Farne is clearly visible from Bamburgh and lies on the main deep-water shipping lane.³⁴ Sites such as Inner Farne and Holy Island were not marginal or isolated, but highly visible landscape features that were closely integrated into wider landscapes of power.³⁵ In the Post-Conquest period the Bamburgh-Lindisfarne nexus was reactivated. Shortly after the Norman Conquest a stone keep was erected at Bamburgh and placed under new Norman earls. Following the rebellion of Robert de Mowbray in 1095, Bamburgh was taken into the direct control of the crown and remained a royal castle until the early seventeenth century.³⁶ During the so-called harrying of the North, the monks of Durham briefly returned to Lindisfarne to seek refuge from the Conqueror's punitive expeditions.³⁷ St. Cuthbert himself was held to have altered the tide to ensure the safe passage of the fugitive monks to the island.³⁸ Over the succeeding centuries a number of hermits, either former members of the community or otherwise closely connected to Durham, are known to have lived on Inner Farne. The earliest was probably Ælric, who lived there from c. 1150.³⁹ These hermits were not completely cut off from the community at Durham and many visited the island, a major cult site of St. Cuthbert, staying at the guest house.⁴⁰ From the 1120s, when the monk Edward was stationed there, Durham recolonization of Lindisfarne itself began and progressed to the establishment of a fully-fledged cell by the end of the century.⁴¹ The Romanesque priory church, which had a three-story elevation, was a prominent and highly visible stone statement of the Durham monks' return to Holy Island. Today, as Clare Lees and Gillian Overing have commented, Lindisfarne, "retains its stunningly distinct geographic identity as a tidal

²⁹ *HE* iii. 6.

³⁰ *HE* iii. 9 and 12.

³¹ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*, 2:23, 453. The common provides a choice of two other homilies for the final three lections for a single martyr, Jerome on John 12:24 or on Matthew 10:26.

³² William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*. Edited by Michael Winterbottom. OMT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1:448–9, 480–3.

³³ David Petts, "Coastal Landscapes and Early Christianity in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria", *Estonian Journal of Archaeology* 13 (2009): 79–95.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁶ Joanne Kirton and Graeme Young, "Excavations at Bamburgh: New Revelations in Light of Recent Investigations at the Core of the Castle Complex", *Archaeological Journal* 174 (2017): 146–210, at 150–1.

³⁷ Charles C. Rozier, *Writing History in the Community of St Cuthbert, c. 700–1130: From Bede to Symeon of Durham* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 75–6.

³⁸ Rozier, *Writing History*, 159.

³⁹ Victoria Tudor, "Durham Priory and its Hermits in the Twelfth Century", in *Anglo-Norman Durham, 1093–1193*, ed. David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998), 67–78.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

island, and it sits ready to conjure for any visitor, medievalist or otherwise, powerful evocations of solitude, interiority, and community.”⁴² The former royal center at Bamburgh also retains a distinct geographic identity, sitting atop a striking outcrop of dolerite: “you can’t miss it.”⁴³ Lindisfarne and Bamburgh are places that sit at the juncture between the past and the present, the rhythm of the tide both evokes an alternative temporality and, in the case of Lindisfarne, also a sense of limited accessibility that belies its status as a significant node in a wider interconnected network. In commemoration of Oswald these places became part of a liturgical landscape that mediated between the historical Oswald and the saint present in his liturgical veneration.

As the Surtees York Breviary lections commemorate the historical Oswald and his role in establishing Christianity in the north, it is instructive to consider the offices of other saints in the edition in which Oswald is mentioned. As his bishop Aidan features in Oswald’s office so too does Oswald feature in Aidan’s. Aidan was commemorated as a feast of three lessons and the first lesson describes him being summoned by Oswald and the establishment of Lindisfarne.⁴⁴ Oswald is also linked to two important figures in the history of the diocese of York. In the eighth lection of the feast of York’s first bishop, Paulinus (termed an archbishop in the breviary), Oswald is described as completing the church at York begun by Edwin and Paulinus.⁴⁵ In some manuscript breviaries of the Use of York Oswald is also mentioned in the first lection for the feast of the translation of another bishop of York, Wilfrid, who is described as being born in the reign of Northumbria’s most holy king Oswald.⁴⁶ Another local saint, Everilda, whose legend is known only through her feast of nine lessons in versions of the York Breviary, is also linked to Oswald. Everilda was a member of the Wessex nobility and is described as converting to Christianity alongside King Cynigils, whom St. Oswald supported at his baptism.⁴⁷ Oswald’s standing as godfather to Cynigils is also referenced in the commemoration of St Birinus on 4 September, which was celebrated in combination with the translation of Cuthbert’s relics.⁴⁸ Thanks to these relationships, Oswald became present in liturgies for other significant northern saints. His liturgical presence was therefore not confined solely to his own feast day, with his significance in establishing the Northumbrian church making him a cornerstone in the construction of a larger northern edifice.

Further evidence of the commemoration of Oswald in a secular community in the northern province is provided by a set of lections written in a sixteenth-century hand at the end of an early eleventh-century copy of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*. This manuscript, now Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.7.5, has long been accepted as having a northern provenance, primarily because of the inclusion of the Oswald lections and a short passage about Lindisfarne, which was added in a twelfth-century hand.⁴⁹ Though probably written in southern England, where its closest textual exemplar resided, the book was likely in the north from shortly after ca. 1100.⁵⁰ An analysis of the sixteenth-century lections strengthens the supposition that the manuscript belonged to a foundation in the province of York, although making more precise arguments for particular foundations is beyond the

⁴² Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, “Anglo-Saxon Horizons: Places of the Mind in the Northumbrian Landscape”, in *A Place to Believe In: Locating Medieval Landscapes*, ed. Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2006), 1–26, at 10.

⁴³ Kirton and Young, “Excavations at Bamburgh”, 146; Lees and Overing, “Anglo-Saxon Horizons”, 7–11.

⁴⁴ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*, 2:522.

⁴⁵ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*, 2:613. Information found in *HE* ii.14.

⁴⁶ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*, 2:257.

⁴⁷ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*, 2:388.

⁴⁸ *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesie eboracensis*, 2:532.

⁴⁹ Montague R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 11:222.

⁵⁰ The text found in Trinity MS R.7.5 is of the *c* type and is extremely close to the oldest *c* manuscript, London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius C. II, which was written in the second half of the eighth century in Southern England, where Old English glosses were added in the ninth century. On the different textual traditions and manuscripts see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, OMT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), x–lxi; On the post ca. 1100 northern provenance see Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c. 1066–1130)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), no. 176; Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 241 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), no. 181; Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Biographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014), no. 181.

scope of this essay. The first lection, which is written out in full, is a summary of information in *HE* iii. 1 and significantly mentions Paulinus, the first bishop of York. As in the reference to Oswald in the lections for Paulinus' feast in the Surtees York Breviary, here Oswald is being tied into the foundation story of the archdiocese. Bede tells us that Paulinus had baptized Oswald's predecessor Edwin at York and that Edwin had subsequently begun the construction of a stone church, which was completed by Oswald.⁵¹ The lection ends with Oswald's victory over Caedwalla, and the return of Northumbria to the Christianity originally instituted by Edwin and Paulinus. The second lection describes Oswald summoning Aidan and the establishment of his see on Lindisfarne, including the description of the island's tidal nature.⁵² The remaining seven lections describe Oswald's piety and the Easter Feast,⁵³ his death (including the sentence that he was killed by the same heathen king who had killed Edwin) and the miraculous nature of his death spot,⁵⁴ the healing of the horse and the girl at Oswald's death spot,⁵⁵ the dust that could repel fire,⁵⁶ the column of light that appeared over his bones during their translation to Bardney, and the miraculous properties of earth that had been watered by the water used to wash his bones,⁵⁷ and miracles associated with his tomb.⁵⁸ These lections are considerably lengthier than the short, abbreviated lections found in the Surtees York Breviary. They likewise invoke places of significance for the development of the Northumbrian church, namely York and Lindisfarne, and the same core material as found in the Surtees York Breviary is further augmented with additional miracle stories of the kind that are most frequently found in matins readings.

Liturgy and landscape at the monastic communities of Durham and Coldingham

Although overshadowed by St. Cuthbert, King Oswald was an essential component in the story of the once peripatetic but now settled-in-Durham monastic community. This is made apparent in the opening of Symeon of Durham's *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie*, written between 1104 and 1115:

Gloriosi quondam regis Northanhymbrorum et preciosi martyris Oswaldi feruentissima in Christo fide, hec sancta ecclesia...sui status ac religionis sacre sumpsit exordium. Licet enim causis existentibus alibi quam ab ipso sit locata, nichilominus tamen stabilitate fidei, dignitate quoque et auctoritate cathedre pontificalis, statu etiam monachice habitationis que ab ipso rege et Aidano pontifice ibidem instituta est, ipsa eadem ecclesia Deo auctore fundata permanet.⁵⁹

[This venerable church derived its status and its divine religion from the fervent faith in Christ of the former glorious king of the Northumbrians and estimable martyr Oswald...Although for various reasons this church no longer stands in the place where Oswald founded it, nevertheless by virtue of the constancy of its faith, the dignity and authority of its episcopal throne, and the status of the dwelling-place of monks established there by himself and bishop Aidan, it is still the very same church founded by God's command].

Symeon has little else to say about Oswald, who is mentioned most often in this context of his founding of the episcopal see at Lindisfarne with Bishop Aidan.⁶⁰ Paradoxically he appears at once to be both central and peripheral to Symeon's account of the Durham community's history: Oswald is the founder of the Durham community, but Cuthbert is the true hero of Symeon's story. We also know,

⁵¹ *HE* ii. 14.

⁵² *HE* iii. 3.

⁵³ lection 3, *HE* iii. 6.

⁵⁴ lection 4, *HE* iii. 9.

⁵⁵ lection 5, *HE* iii. 9.

⁵⁶ lection 6, *HE* iii. 10.

⁵⁷ lection 7, *HE* iii. 11.

⁵⁸ lections 8 and 9, *HE* iii. 11 and 12.

⁵⁹ Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie*. Edited and translated by David Rollason. OMT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16–17.

⁶⁰ Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de exordio*, 152–3, 258–9, 262–3. On Symeon's role in the liturgy at Durham see Charles C. Rozier, "Symeon of Durham as Cantor and Historian at Durham Cathedral Priory, c. 1090–1129", in *Medieval Cantors and their Craft: Music, Liturgy and the Shaping of History, 800–1500*, ed. Katie A.-M. Bugyis, A. B. Kraebel and Margot E. Fassler (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 190–206.

however, that Symeon was involved in the production of a volume containing lives of Cuthbert, Aidan and Oswald, in which Oswald was less peripheral.⁶¹ As the twelfth century progressed increasing evidence for interest in Oswald survives from Durham, not least the *vita* of Oswald by Reginald the monk, written in the 1160s, and Oswald's office, which Hiley considers to date from the twelfth century for stylistic reasons.⁶² In the various liturgical and historical compilations from Durham, which contain Oswald's office, material about the king is found in the company of *vitae* and offices for Cuthbert and Aidan as in the volume produced by Symeon and as is the case in Cambridge, Trinity College MS O.3.55, for example.⁶³ The three saints are also depicted in the extremely rare medieval edge paintings on Durham, Dean and Chapter Library, MS A.IV.35, which contains Bede's life of St. Cuthbert and other accounts of Cuthbert's life and miracles. However, although playing a supporting role, Oswald was increasingly visible and, as Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge have pointed out, despite the development of the iconography of Cuthbert holding Oswald's head, the Northumbrian king continued to be more frequently represented on his own as a saint in his own right rather than merely as an attribute of Cuthbert.⁶⁴ Cuthbert's preeminence has tended to overshadow Oswald's significance at Durham, but liturgical sources make apparent that Oswald was also central to the community's self-perception.

As a late thirteenth-century breviary, a liturgical book containing the texts necessary for the celebration of the divine office, survives from Durham's dependent priory of Coldingham, we know most, though not all, of the contents of the Durham matins office for Oswald.⁶⁵ While only the incipit of the psalm that opens the first nocturn is given as part of the office itself, the sequence of psalms can be deduced from those given common for a single martyr, found later in the breviary, where the psalms for the first nocturn can be identified from their incipits as 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 10 and those for the second nocturn 14, 20, 23, 63, 64 and 91.⁶⁶ The use of these proper psalms as the cornerstone of the matins office for a single martyr was widespread, with only the occasional slight variation between monastic houses.⁶⁷ Many of these psalms have obvious thematic relevance to martyrdom. Psalm 8, for example, praises the special place of mankind in God's works and references a crowning. Psalm 20 is a praise to God for Christ's exaltation after his passion and features a king. Both these psalms were drawn on in prayers for St. Oswald that were used in both his mass and office. In the Sarum Missal the opening prayer is "Gloria et honore coronasti eum: et constituisti eum super opera manuum tuarum" (You have crowned him with glory and honor and set him over the works of your hands) drawing on Psalm 8:6–7 and the gradual "Posuisti, Domine super caput eius coronam de lapide pretioso" (You have set, O Lord, a crown of precious stones on his head) is a paraphrase of Psalm 20:4.⁶⁸ The potential play on the dual meaning of the crowning—both as a king and a martyr—provided a particularly rich seam of symbolism for royal martyrs like Oswald.

The cycles of chants that accompanied the psalms and readings were known as *historiae* as they tended to draw on the biography of the saint whom they lauded. Many of the chants in Oswald's

⁶¹ Michael Gullick, "The Hand of Symeon of Durham: Further Observations on the Durham Martyrology Scribe", in *Symeon of Durham: Historian of Durham and the North*, ed. David Rollason (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1998), 14–31, at 24 (item 2).

⁶² Reginald's *vita* is available in an imperfect modern edition: Reginald of Durham, "Vita Sancti Oswaldi", in *Symeonis monachi Opera Omnia*, 2 vols. Edited by Thomas Arnold, Rolls Series 75, (London: Longman, 1882–85), I, 326–85. On Reginald and the shortcomings of this edition see Victoria Tudor, "Reginald's *Life of St Oswald*", in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 178–194; Hiley, "Office Chants for St. Oswald", 255.

⁶³ On lives of Cuthbert being accompanied by those of Oswald and Aidan in Durham manuscripts see David Rollason, "St. Oswald in Post-Conquest England", in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 164–77, at 176; A. J. Piper, "The First Generation of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert", in *St. Cuthbert, his Cult and Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason and Clare Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1989), 437–446, at 443.

⁶⁴ Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, "Introduction", in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 1–16, at 9.

⁶⁵ BL Harley MS 4664, fols. 248v–250r.

⁶⁶ BL Harley MS 4664, fols. 303v–304r.

⁶⁷ Harper, *Forms and Orders*, 261; cf. the psalms sung for St. Edmund at Bury, which differ slightly: Parkes, "St. Edmund", 141.

⁶⁸ *Missale ad usum insignis et praeclarae ecclesiae Sarum*. Edited by F. H. Dickinson (Burntisland: E Prelo de Pitsligo, 1861), 840.

office as found in Durham sources (Table 3) are generally laudatory and describe Oswald or events in fairly conventional ways and, moreover, the cycles of antiphons and responsories do not form an entirely smooth narrative when performed in liturgical order.⁶⁹ There are no identifiable direct quotes in the chant texts from surviving *vitae* of Oswald, suggesting that Bede is the obvious base source. One might speculate that the lack of affinity between the chants and Reginald of Durham's *vita*, perhaps suggests the chant cycle was composed before Reginald became active in the mid twelfth century and that his *vita* was therefore not available to the composer of the cycle.⁷⁰ However, Reginald's text lacks coherence and often lapses into verbosity, so perhaps would not have provided a suitable reference point anyway.⁷¹ Bede was in any case Reginald's main source and was also the fundamental base of lections in all English sources of the office containing them, whether in abbreviated form, as in the Surtees York Breviary, or taken almost verbatim. In terms of chants, *HE* iii. 2, describing Oswald's victory over Caedwalla at Heavenfield and miracles associated with the cross he erected, was the source for the greatest number, with material from it being referenced in two antiphons and three responsories in the first nocturn.⁷² The remaining chants in the first nocturn are rather general, lauding Oswald's piety and faithfulness, with one chant mentioning his sending for bishop Aidan, which as we have seen, was fundamental to his place in the Durham community's historical self-consciousness.⁷³

While the first nocturn focuses on Oswald's success against Caedwalla and his promotion of Christianity, the narrative thread of the second nocturn chants is a little confused, although to an extent this reflects the order in which Bede presents information. It opens with an antiphon that foreshadows Oswald's fate—he rules as one who desires the heavenly rather than the earthly kingdom.⁷⁴ The chant cycle then skips over his martyrdom to reference the healing power of the spot where Oswald died and the heavenly column of light that illuminated his bones when they were translated to Bardney.⁷⁵ The final antiphon references Oswald's head, interned with Cuthbert's body in Durham's church when these chants were composed, and in particular the miraculous powers of the wooden stake on which the head had originally been impaled on the battlefield.⁷⁶ The head itself never seems to have been associated with miracles, but St. Willibrord, who possessed a splinter of the wooden stake, told how water in which the splinter had been dipped healed a doubting Irish scholar of plague.⁷⁷ The responsories combine material from *HE* iii. 5 and iii. 6 and describe Oswald acting as interpreter for Aidan and how his incorrupt right hand, blessed by Aidan, was hewn off from his body on the battlefield.⁷⁸ The final responsory in the second nocturn appears to refer to Bede's account of Oswald meeting his death while uttering a prayer for his soldiers leading Bede to assert that “God

⁶⁹ Hiley, “Office Chants for St Oswald”, 249–51.

⁷⁰ Reginald's *vita* does not ever seem to have been drawn upon for lections, however, one of the two surviving manuscripts of Reginald's *vita* contains a rubric designating a section of his work to be read in the refectory on Oswald's feast day. This section in Reginald's Book III is a recapitulation of Bede rather than material original to Reginald. Oxford, Bodleian Fairfax MS 6, fol. 155v.

⁷¹ Tudor is scathing about Reginald's *vita*, describing it as having all the faults of Reginald's better-known works about Cuthbert and Godric of Finchale and none of their virtues! Tudor, “Reginald's Life”, 178.

⁷² The full texts of the chants are given in these notes. For their place in the complete office see Table 3. A3: “in signo dominice crucis immanes copias fudit que crux regis meritis innumeras uirtutes attribuit”; A4: “inter cetera de huius crucis musco gestato in sinum sanatum est cuiusdam brachium confractum”; R1: “Rex sacer oswaldus senas acies feriturus spem crucis erexit et in hoc signo superauit”, V: “ut constantinus de celo uincere doctus”; R2: “hec crux oswaldi fuit una sue regioni primaque credentes christo dedit hoc duce gentes”, V: “hec erat exemplum diuina trophea colentum”; R3: “Per crucis huius opem populi rapuere salutem congaudent una uarie clades medicina”, V: “oswaldi regis meritum tot subuenit egris.”

⁷³ A6: “Assumpsit sibi pontificem sanctum aydanum et in eo gentes ydolatrias conuertit ad christum.”

⁷⁴ A7: “Sic beatus osuualdus regnabat ut qui celeste non terrenum regnum desiderabat.”

⁷⁵ A10: “In loco regis excidio sacro homines et iumenta saluantur ipsa terra in multorum salutem exhauritur” (*HE* iii.9); A11: “Super sancti reliquias per totam noctem columpna lucis affulsit etherea per totam prouinciam conspicua” (*HE* iii.12).

⁷⁶ A12: “De ligno cui coronandum caput regis prefixum erat scolasticus iam moriturus accepit et de inferni periculo conualuit.”

⁷⁷ *HE* iii. 13.

⁷⁸ R5: “Pontificem sanctum sumpsit sibi rex aydanum Doctor aydanus rex interpres fit honorus”, V: “Dulce fuit regem prouate uidere loquentem”; R6: “Regnorum rector sed egenorum miserator fudit opes larga dextra cum mente benigna”, V: “Hanc incorruptam petit aydanus fore dextram”; R7: “Rex anime fortis cadit hostia martyrialis cesus pro patria cesa est et prodiga dextra”, V: “Integra carne sua dat dona dei benedicta.”

have mercy on their souls, said Oswald as he fell” is now a proverb.⁷⁹ The responsories for the final nocturn reference the holy nature of the spot where Oswald died,⁸⁰ the miracle of the holy dust that repels fire,⁸¹ again reference the column of light,⁸² before the cycle concludes with a chant about how earth which had been watered with the water used to wash Oswald’s bones at Bardney could expel devils from the possessed.⁸³

The first nocturn chant cycle has the most coherent narrative out of the three nocturns. In its focus on Oswald’s victory against Caedwalla at Heavenfield and his promotion of Christianity it seems to anticipate an overall narrative structure that does not materialize. When we consider the evidence for lections at Durham, the focus on Oswald’s cross is strengthened. Sean Dunnahoe has analyzed the lections found in the Coldingham breviary, demonstrating that the first lection is the opening of an anonymous Passion, which provides a summary of the historical material found at the start of Bede’s account of Oswald’s life.⁸⁴ The remaining seven lections are drawn directly from the concluding lines of *HE* iii. 1 and the opening half of *HE* iii. 2, which describe the battle of Denisesburn at which Oswald defeated Caedwalla, having first erected a cross at Heavenfield.⁸⁵ Lections are typically a couple of sentences long and Dunnahoe sees the divisions as purely practical. The series ends seemingly rather abruptly with the description of the geographical location of Heavenfield on the northern side of Hadrian’s Wall. Dunnahoe comments that at first glance the lesson selection in the Coldingham Breviary is rather surprising, especially in its sparse inclusion of miracles, which normally dominate matins lections. The only mention of any miracles comes in the sixth lesson, which describes how people came to the site to collect splinters of the cross for their healing properties. Dunnahoe sees this inclusion as a practical consideration in that the reference to the miraculous properties of the splinters is simply sandwiched between the sentences used for the fifth and sixth lessons. He suggests that, for example, the rest of the second chapter of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which includes the miracle of moss from the cross that heals the fractured arm of Bothelm, a monk of Hexham, and is directly referenced in the chant cycle, might have provided a closer thematic connection.⁸⁶

Dunnahoe explains the choice of lections in the Coldingham Breviary by arguing that the readings “provide something that the musical and prayer texts of the office do not: they physically locate the events of Oswald’s earthly reign within Northumbria, sites which must have held some real familiarity, geographically and socially, to the brothers at Durham and its cell in Coldingham.”⁸⁷ He suggests that this might explain why these readings were not used at Peterborough, on the continent or in Scandinavia, where the sites of Denisesburn and Heavenfield had only “abstract significance.”⁸⁸ Webber has shown that the Peterborough copy of Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* was marked up for liturgical reading not only on Oswald’s feast day.⁸⁹ It contains marginal markings for two sets of eight lections and four sets of three lections, with the latter for reading during the octave. The two longer sets for the feast and octave are both focused on miracle stories, with one set covering the healing

⁷⁹ R8: “Inclitus osuualdus domini bello moribundus clamat in extremum miserere salus animarum”, V: “Commendans secum spiracula commorientum.”

⁸⁰ R9: “O felicem locum illum et omni dignum preconio ubi inclitus rex osuualdus occubuit in prelio”, V: “Oblatus est enim ibi domino uiua hostia in sacrificio” (*HE* iii. 9/10).

⁸¹ R10: “Puluis sacer de occasu regio in accensa pendens domo ignem depellit de poste suo”, V: “Omni consumpta domo flagrante incendio” (*HE* iii. 10).

⁸² R11: “Sub divo relicto martyrii diuinitatis non defuit obsequium columpna enim lucis a corpore ad celum usque porrecta effulsit ad iacentis meritum”, V: “Omnis quoque adiacens regio hoc illustrata miraculo” (*HE* iii. 11).

⁸³ R12: “Quam precelsa sunt in celo regii martyris Oswaldi premia de cuius etiam locis membris terra irrigata fugat demonia et dat salutaria”, V: “Regis pro regno christi bellantis et martyris per regno christi occumbentis quanta est corona” (*HE* iii. 11).

⁸⁴ Dunnahoe, *English and German Influences*, 197.

⁸⁵ For an analysis of Bede’s depiction of Oswald at Heavenfield see Julia Barrow, “Oswald and the Strong Man Armed”, in *The Land of the English Kin: Studies in Wessex and Anglo-Saxon England in Honour of Professor Barbara Yorke*, ed. Alex J. Langlands and Ryan Lavelle (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 183–196.

⁸⁶ Dunnahoe, *English and German Influences*, 198.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸⁹ Webber, “Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a Source of Lections”, 59–60. The different sets of lections were not all marked up at the same time but at different points between the late eleventh and mid twelfth century, suggesting an incremental process.

powers of the dust at Bardney, made miraculous by water that had been used to wash Oswald's bones, and the exorcism of a traveler.⁹⁰ The other set of eight lessons is drawn from the miracle in which an outbreak of plague at Selsey came to an end of Oswald's feast day.⁹¹ One set of three lections is also about Oswald's cult at Bardney, covering the miracle of the pillar of light that appeared over Oswald's bones. The remaining three sets of three lections are drawn from the opening of Bede's account of Oswald. One set comprises the entirety of the first chapter of Book 3, setting the scene for Oswald's victory at Heavenfield and another focuses on the miracle of the moss. It is only in the final set of lections that there is any overlap with the Coldingham breviary. This set of lections was supplied, written out in full, by a mid-twelfth-century scribe who also revised the text at the start of the copy. They comprise a reworking of Bede's description of Oswald erecting the cross and the healing miracles associated with the spot where he prayed and splinters of the cross. However, the lections conclude before the geographical description of Heavenfield and, overall, the different sets of lections in the Peterborough Bede are dominated by miracle stories.⁹²

Heavenfield was of interest to the monks of Peterborough only in the abstract, as a site of Oswaldian miracles, whereas to religious communities in the north it was a visible and active node in networks of veneration. Soon after the foundation of the nearby monastery of Hexham by St. Wilfrid, it had become customary for the monks to celebrate Oswald's vigil and feast at Heavenfield. By the time that Bede wrote, this custom had become so popular that a small church had been built on the site. Hexham disappears from the records in the early ninth century, but when it reemerges in the eleventh century the connection to Heavenfield appears to have been reactivated. By the late thirteenth century, Heavenfield was the site of a hermitage connected to the abbey.⁹³ As we have seen, the lections of the Surtees York Breviary also situated the historical Oswald firmly within the landscape of the early northern church. I would argue, however, that we can take Dunnahoe's suggestion further and identify an additional reason for the choice of these readings, which demonstrates greater thematic coherence within the monastic office than previously recognized. It also enables us to appreciate that the link between liturgy and landscape, both physical and mental, ran deeper still. If we look to the Gospel reading in the Coldingham Breviary, which is the same as that found in the Surtees York Breviary and in masses for Oswald, it is identified by the incipit "Si quis venit", a Gospel passage (Luke 14:26f) that stresses the necessity of renouncing all to follow Christ.⁹⁴ This passage was highly appropriate for Oswald and resonates strongly with the lections found in the Coldingham Breviary.⁹⁵ In it Jesus exhorts his followers to carrying their own cross: "And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). The fourth lection, which describes Oswald taking the hastily constructed cross and holding it upright with his own hands, thus takes on added significance: he is literally carrying his own cross as Jesus mandates his disciples must. This significance is only accentuated by another verse in the Gospel: "Or what king, about to go to make war against another king, doth not first sit down, and think whether he be able, with ten thousand, to meet him that, with twenty thousand, cometh against him?" (Luke 14:31), for the second lection explicitly mentions that Oswald's army was small in numbers compared to Caedwalla's large army and the fourth lection also describes Oswald summoning his army together and exhorting them to kneel to pray to God for help against the enemies they are soon to meet on the battlefield.

Although Bede does not himself make the reference explicitly, perhaps because the parallel was not exact, Constantine's victory at Milvian Bridge, having seen a vision of a cross, provides an obvious model for Oswald's erecting of a cross at Heavenfield, as many scholars have previously

⁹⁰ *HE* iii. 11.

⁹¹ *HE* iv.14.

⁹² Webber, "Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a Source of Lections", 55. At Winchcombe the eight lections are drawn from *HE* iii. 9, iii. 12 and iii. 13 and focus exclusively on miracles.

⁹³ James Raine, *The Priory of Hexham, its Chroniclers, Endowments, and Annals*, vol. 1, Surtees Society 44 (Edinburgh, 1864), Appendix, xxiii, doc. 22.

⁹⁴ BL Harley MS 4664, fol. 249v.

⁹⁵ The Coldingham Breviary gives John 12:24 as the Gospel for a single martyr. BL Harley MS 4664, fol. 304v.

discussed.⁹⁶ The connection between Oswald and Constantine is made explicitly in the office in the first responsory:

R1: Rex sacer oswaldus senas acies feriturus spem crucis erexit et in hoc signo superavit.
V1: ut Constantinus de celo uincere doctus.

[R1: Holy king Oswald, about to fight six battlelines, raised the hope of the cross and in that sign conquered.
V1: As Constantine showed victory comes from heaven.]

Given that the responsories in an office framed the delivery of the lections within it, it is pertinent to consider the way in which this opening reference to Constantine in the first responsory intentionally draws the explicit parallel between Oswald and Constantine that is absent from the lections themselves. When this office was composed, some time in the twelfth century, the belief that Constantine had been born in Britain was being circulated by numerous historical writers.⁹⁷ His legend in Britain was used to legitimize Henry II's right to rule in England and, following the capture of the True Cross by Saladin at the Battle of Hattin in 1187, English participation in expeditions to Jerusalem.⁹⁸ Oswald is here a proto-crusader marked by the sign of the Cross and placed in a tradition stretching from the Romano-British past through to the twelfth century.⁹⁹ The reference to "the wall which the Romans built from sea to sea...to protect Britain from the attacks of barbarous peoples", in the final lection accentuates the framing of Oswald within this Romano-British tradition.¹⁰⁰ Constantine himself had also fought against the attacks of barbarous peoples in this very same region north of Hadrian's Wall.¹⁰¹ The opening responsory of the first nocturn with its reference to Constantine and the closing lection of the second nocturn with its invocation of Hadrian's Wall, a highly visible Roman monument in the landscape, described elsewhere by Bede as "a famous wall...eight feet wide and twelve feet high...as is plain for all to see, even to this day"¹⁰² and prominently featured on Matthew Paris's mid-thirteenth-century map of the British Isles, emphasize Oswald's place in this Romano-British tradition of Christian kingship. They also serve to actively locate this tradition within the northern landscape and topography familiar to the monks of Durham and Coldingham and essential to their understanding of the history of their communities.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ Peter Clemeoes, *The Cult of St. Oswald on the Continent*, Jarrow Lecture (Jarrow: St. Paul's Church, 1983), 3; John M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 88–9; Ian Wood, "Constantinian Crosses in Northumbria", in *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, Sarah Larratt Keefer and Karen L. Jolly (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), 3–13; Barrow, "Oswald and the Strong Man Armed", 191.

⁹⁷ Katherine L. Hodges-Kluck, "Helena, Constantine and the Angevin Desire for Jerusalem", *Haskins Society Journal* 27 (2015): 129–148, at 131–2. Constantine legends were also very popular in Wales, see Ben Guy, "Constantine, Helena, Maximus: On the Appropriation of Roman History in Medieval Wales, c. 800–1250", *Journal of Medieval History* 44 (2018): 381–405. On the possible influence of Constantinian legends on post-Conquest architecture in England see T. A. Heslop, "Constantine and Helena: The Roman in English Romanesque", in *Architecture and Interpretation: Essays for Eric Fernie*, ed. Jill A. Franklin, T. A. Heslop and Christine Stevenson (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 163–175.

⁹⁸ Hodges-Kluck, "Helena", 135.

⁹⁹ On Oswald as a model for contemporary crusaders see Dagmar Ó Riain-Raedel, "Edith, Judith, Matilda: The Role of Royal Ladies in the Propagation of the Continental Cult", in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 210–229, at 223.

¹⁰⁰ On post-Roman responses to Hadrian's Wall, which emphasises the wall's changing contexts through time see Richard Hingley, "Living Landscape: Reading Hadrian's Wall", *Landscapes* 2 (2011): 41–62.

¹⁰¹ On Hadrian's Wall and the northern frontier see Rob Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire: The Roman Frontier in the 4th and 5th Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2012), 9–35; for an overview of Constantine's career see Noel Lenski, "The Reign of Constantine", in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 59–90; see Ian Wood, "The Roman Origins of the Northumbrian Kingdom", in *Italy and Early Medieval Europe: Papers for Chris Wickham*, ed. by Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow and Patricia Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 39–49, for the suggestion that the Northumbrian kingdoms were largely a regrouping of forces already present in the area in the late Roman period.

¹⁰² *HE* i.12.

¹⁰³ London, British Library Cotton MS Claudius D VI, fol. 12v. Whitnah has pointed to the fact that another office in the Coldingham Breviary, that of Oswald's half-sister Æbbe, also roots commemoration of the saint in particular geographical and topographical features of the northern landscape. Lauren Whitnah, "Reshaping History in the Cult of Æbbe of Coldingham", in *Medieval Cantors and their Craft: Music, Liturgy and the Shaping of History, 800–1500*, ed. Katie A.-M. Bugyis, A. B. Kraebel and Margot E. Fassler (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 207–21, at 220–1.

Previously overlooked evidence for a further set of eight lections partially survives from Durham in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 175, which is another compilation of material about Cuthbert, Oswald and Aidan dating from the late eleventh century. The imperfect *vita* of Oswald in the manuscript, which is compiled from Bede, begins on fol. 40r with the last sentence of *HE* iii. 2. In the margin can be seen lection marks indicating the seventh and eighth lections. The seventh lection covers Oswald sending for Aidan and the eighth the establishment of the see on Lindisfarne and Oswald's acting as an interpreter. These two lections are significantly longer than those found in the Coldingham Breviary, meaning that it seems reasonable to suggest that the first six lections would have covered, in reverse order, the miracle of the moss, the building of a church on site of Oswald's victory over Caedwalla by the monks of Hexham, and all the material covered in the Coldingham Breviary lections discussed above. This also happens to correspond with the first three chapters of the *vita* of Oswald found in Trinity O.3.55, which contains a text, beginning on fol. 61r, which is rubricated "Hic describuntur uita et miracula gloriosissimi et sanctissimi regis osuualdi sicut in libro ecclesiastico gentis anglorum continetur" (Here are described the life and miracles of the glorious and holy king Oswald just as are contained in the ecclesiastic book of the English peoples), but which in fact begins with the summary found in the anonymous Passion, which is used as the first lection in the Coldingham Breviary.¹⁰⁴ The text of the remaining seven lections follows, with the only difference from the Coldingham Breviary lections being that a sentence Dunnahoe identified as being skipped over in the breviary is included in the Trinity text.¹⁰⁵ The *vita et miracula* continues beyond the section used in the Coldingham lections, excerpting material from Bede to form a text focused on Oswald and close to that found in Digby 175. While this text is not itself marked up for liturgical reading, the fact that it opens in an identical manner to the Coldingham lections is striking, as is the fact that it appears as part of a section of the manuscript that also provides explicitly liturgical texts for Oswald. On the bottom half of fol. 60r (the top half was originally blank though is now filled with notes in a later hand) we find prayers for the mass on Oswald's feast day and on fol. 60v a hymn for Oswald, with music on a three-line stave. The *vita et miracula* is followed by a similar text for bishop Aidan, before the manuscript ends with an incomplete office for Oswald's feast day. Although the lengthier lections marked in Digby 175 mean the cycle of hagiographic readings does not end with the Romano-British reference to Hadrian's Wall, the additional material covered does still relate thematically to the chant cycle. The final antiphon of the first nocturn invokes Oswald sending for Aidan and the fifth and sixth responsories of the second nocturn describe Oswald acting as an interpreter for Aidan and Aidan blessing his right arm.

There are several ways one might seek to explain the difference in lection lengths in Digby 175 and Harley 4664. As the Harley manuscript is later in date, it perhaps indicates that by the late thirteenth century when the Coldingham Breviary was written, the lections had been shortened and the lection marks in Digby 175 reflect an outdated practice. Anselme Davril has pointed to a wider phenomenon of matins readings becoming shorter in the high Middle Ages, seeing this as related to a general shift away from the night office, and it is possible that this is the process we can see here too.¹⁰⁶ Matins was a lengthy office and 5 August, being in the height of summer, is not a particularly

¹⁰⁴ This text is also found in Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale de Dijon MS 657. There is a strong affinity between the contents of Trinity MS O.3.55, a twelfth-century manuscript with a secure Durham provenance, and Dijon MS 657, an early thirteenth-century compilation that was in the library at Notre-Dame de Cîteaux by the later Middle Ages. The contents are not identical, however, nor are the items that are shared found in the same order. For example, the list of relics and bishops found on fols. 2r–v in Trinity MS O.3.55 are found in Dijon MS 657 on fols. 39r–v and fol. 48v respectively. The final item in the Trinity manuscript is the incomplete Oswald office. Dijon MS 657 provides the full office and is followed by additional texts all of which are also related to Durham: a note on William of Saint-Calais, the list of bishops, a *life* of Godric of Finchale and a *life* of Bartholomew of Farne. An English origin is assumed for this manuscript, and Durham seems the most likely candidate, but a closer study of the Dijon manuscript is required. Interestingly, given the Cistercian connection, the *life* of Godric and a fragment of the *life* of Bartholomew are found in London, British Library, Royal MS 5 F. VII, which is a composite manuscript primarily made up of works of Bernard of Clairvaux, including his letters to several northern churchmen and to David, king of the Scots. On the *life* of Bartholomew of Farne see Helen Birkett, "Constructing the Text: A Comparative Study of Two Saints' Lives Written c. 1200", in *Hagiography and the History of Latin Christendom, c. 500–1500*, ed. by Samantha Kahn Herrick (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 13–32.

¹⁰⁵ The sentence skipped in the Coldingham breviary is at the end of Oswald's speech at Heavenfield. See Dunnahoe, *English and German Influences*, 198.

¹⁰⁶ Anselme Davril, "Le longueur des leçons de l'office nocturne", in *Rituel: mélanges offerts à Pierre-Marie Gy*, ed. Paul de Clerk and Eric Palazzo (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 183–197.

long night—matins was often shortened in the summer months for this reason and this could be a contributing factor here.¹⁰⁷ We could also speculate, however, that the monks of Coldingham were not as invested in the Oswald-Aidan-Lindisfarne origin story as were the Durham community and that they therefore dispensed with these lengthy sections in their community's celebration of Oswald, focusing on his Constantine-like triumph north of Hadrian's Wall and finessing the relationship between chant cycle, lections and the Gospel reading. The office as found in the Coldingham Breviary does not necessarily reflect exactly the office as it was celebrated at Durham itself. While Coldingham was a dependency of Durham, its liturgy did not follow Durham's exactly, with St. Æbbe's cult, for example, being significantly more important in Berwickshire than in Northumberland.¹⁰⁸ Around the time Oswald's office was composed the monks of Durham had begun the active re-colonization of Lindisfarne, reshaping its landscape through the construction of buildings and the cultivation of the land. Lindisfarne was central to their community's historical self-consciousness and this can be seen in their construction of the priory and also in their choice of lections for Oswald's feast, which include a description of the island: "as the tide ebbs and flows, this place is surrounded by sea twice a day like an island, and twice a day the sand dries and joins it to the mainland."¹⁰⁹

Another set of eight lections for Oswald have been identified by Teresa Webber in her study of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a source of liturgical readings. Durham, Dean and Chapter Library MS B.II.35 contains the *Historia Ecclesiastica* alongside additional historical works by Bede and others, which were bound together by ca. 1500.¹¹⁰ The *Historia Ecclesiastica* is a late eleventh-century copy, originally given by William of Saint-Calais, bishop of Durham (1081–1096). The lection marks are partially trimmed, but the hand is certainly earlier than that of the Coldingham Breviary. These lections cover the miracles of the horse and the girl healed at the site of Oswald's death and the power of earth from this site over fire, all episodes that are also referenced in the chant cycle.¹¹¹ Although it is possible that lection marks in this manuscript signaling other passages for reading have been completely lost due to trimming and rebinding, there are no surviving markings of the passages found in Harley 4664 or marked in Digby 175. Given that the same lections are present in Harley 4664 and, in longer form, in Digby 175, it seems that what Webber found in Durham B.II.35 is a set of lections for use on a different day. Most likely, those in the Coldingham Breviary and Digby 175 are for Oswald's feast day and those marked in Durham's late-eleventh-century copy of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are to be read on his octave. In the calendar of the Coldingham Breviary, Oswald's feast day is entered in gold and his octave in red, demonstrating that both were important feasts.¹¹²

Conclusion

All the lections of northern provenance discussed in this essay locate Oswald's commemoration within the Northumbrian landscape. While in individual communities across the centuries the emphasis was subtly different, the relationship of Oswald to religious communities in the north was articulated through liturgies in which geographical and topographical references played an essential role and miracles stories were less prominent than in liturgies surviving from outside of Oswald's former Northumbrian kingdom. In the office in the Surtees York Breviary, which can tentatively be taken to represent a broad regional pattern of commemoration, Oswald is understood in relation to the important episcopal and royal sites of Lindisfarne and Bamburgh. In the monastic community at Durham and at her cell at Coldingham veneration of Oswald reached its liturgical apogee in the north. At both foundations the monks commemorated Oswald with a proper office in

¹⁰⁷ Monastic matins on summer ferias from Easter to 1 November included only one short scriptural lesson in the first nocturn, whereas winter ferias had three lections. Harper, *Forms and Orders*, 92.

¹⁰⁸ Whitnah, "Reshaping History". Furthermore, the relationship between Coldingham and Durham was severely strained by Anglo-Scottish conflicts from the late thirteenth century. In July 1378 Robert II expelled the Durham monks from Coldingham and replaced them with other Benedictines from Dunfermline. On the shifting relationship between Coldingham and Durham see R. B. Dobson, "The Last English Monks on Scottish Soil: The Severance of Coldingham Priory from the Monastery of Durham 1461–78", *Scottish Historical Review* 46 (1967): 1–25.

¹⁰⁹ *HE* iii. 3.

¹¹⁰ Webber, "Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* as a Source of Lections", 55.

¹¹¹ *HE* iii. 9 and *HE* iii. 10. As we saw above, these miracles are also included in the set of sixteenth-century lections in Trinity R.7.5.

¹¹² BL Harley MS 4664, fol. 129v.

which chants, lections and the Gospel reading combined to situate Oswald's famous victory over Caedwalla within a longer tradition of Romano-British Christianity in the north. Hadrian's Wall, Lindisfarne and Bamburgh are places that sit at the juncture between past and present. When we visit these sites today, we feel that connection to the Roman and early medieval past while also being aware of their simultaneity in the modern landscape of Northumberland. As Lees and Overing have argued, Hadrian's Wall, Lindisfarne and Bamburgh "are monuments that mark the complexities of chronology, events and memories".¹¹³ Liturgy too, with its "complex web of sounds, sights, and actions", operates within this space.¹¹⁴ Saints' offices collapse time and mediate between historical figures and the communities in which they are present through liturgical veneration.¹¹⁵ The inclusion of these places, which are both physically present in the landscape and also act as portals to the past, creates a potent layering of physical and mental geography within the liturgy. In offices for King Oswald with a northern provenance Hadrian's Wall, Lindisfarne and Bamburgh have the function of liturgical landmarks enabling the communities of the north to navigate between their presents and their pasts and to orientate themselves in both the physical landscape which they inhabited and also the liturgical landscape in which the saint was present with them.

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¹¹³ Lees and Overing, "Anglo-Saxon Horizons", 10.

¹¹⁴ Parkes, "St. Edmund", 134.

¹¹⁵ Parkes points out that chants for Edmund's feast at Bury are addressed to him as if he is present and the same is true of chants for Oswald. Parkes, "St. Edmund", 132–4.

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